

Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium

Lost Childhoods: The consequences of flawed age assessments at the UK border.

March 2025

Summary

In 2023, over 4,800 unaccompanied children sought asylum in the UK.¹ These are children who have faced atrocities, have had to flee war, persecution and human rights abuses, and have endured perilous journeys. Many of them, instead of receiving the support and protection they needed on arrival, had to fight for months or years to be recognised as children because they were disbelieved about their age. Hundreds more were excluded entirely from the child protection system because the Home Office decided they looked like adults. Under the previous government, the Home Office took increased control over the age determination process, leading to an increase in flawed decision-making, and hundreds of children being put at risk.

This short report from the Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium – a coalition of over 100 organisations - provides an update on previous work in this area, specifically a joint report by Helen Bamber Foundation, Humans for Rights Network, and the Refugee Council entitled '*Forced Adulthood*'² from January 2024.

Key Issues

- In the six months leading to the 2024 UK general election, **the Home Office continued to incorrectly assess children arriving in the UK as adults based on their appearance and demeanour**, leading to their placement in adult accommodation or detention, resulting in a safeguarding failure on an alarming scale.
- Between January and June 2024, 63 local authorities in England and Scotland received 603 referrals of young people wrongly placed in adult accommodation or detention due to flawed Home Office age assessments. Of the 493 cases where age was determined, 53% were found to be children - **at least 262 children were misclassified as adults in just six months** (see Annex for more details), exposing them to safeguarding risk and even criminal charges in some cases.
- The proposal to **use 'scientific methods' for age assessment is not going to resolve the root of the problem**, i.e. flawed at-port assessments. These methods are ineffective, expensive and harmful and can only, at best, indicate whether an age is 'possible'. Children refusing scientific age assessments risk being automatically treated as adults.
- The National Age Assessment Board (NAAB) is hugely expensive, costing £1.7 million a year, and to date, **one in seven of its assessments have been ordered by the Home Office, despite local authorities already accepting the children's claimed ages**.
- **The Home Office's handling of age disputes generates misleading statistics**. For instance, if 100 young people are wrongly assessed as adults at port but later found to be children through local authority assessments, the data will record 200 disputes - 100 resolved as adults and 100 as children. This creates a false impression that only 50% were children, when in fact all were. Such misrepresentation undermines trust and highlights the unreliability of visual assessments (see Annex for more details).

The current system could be improved significantly. Strengthening safeguards and enhancing support for age assessments conducted by local authority social workers should be a key priority.

Key Recommendations

Reduce the risk of misclassification:

- Limit Home Office age determination and treat young people asserting they are children as adults on arrival only in exceptional cases (e.g. evidence they are in their late 20s).
- Notify relevant local authorities (LAs) when a purported child is treated as an adult, and refer all cases where they are charged with illegal entry offences to the relevant LA.
- Publish and monitor statistics on age-determination outcomes.

Ensure age assessments are local authority-led:

- Update social work guidance to support holistic, multi-disciplinary age assessments.
- Abandon 'scientific' age assessment methods and repeal related legislation.
- Abolish the NAAB and redirect funds to country-wide training and support of local authority social workers.

Challenges in demonstrating age

Many children who come to the UK on their own from countries such as Afghanistan, Sudan and Eritrea are unable to show official identity documents, such as passports or birth certificates, because they have had them, they've been destroyed, lost or taken, or the child has been forced to travel on false documentation. Without identity documents, it is extremely difficult to determine a child's age, and many will have their age 'assessed' by the Home Office and/or local authority children's services. Age determines the support an individual receives and how their asylum/immigration application is processed.³

Statutory guidance from the Department for Education⁴, Association of Directors of Children's Services guidance⁵ and international standards⁶ all make clear that age assessments should not be 'routine' and should only be carried out where there is 'reason to doubt' that the individual is the age they claim. This is to prevent children from going through a traumatising process unnecessarily. Yet **in 2023, there were five times the number of age disputes than in 2019** – far greater than the increase in people seeking asylum in those years.⁷

Where an individual is not accepted to be a child, the Home Office will come to a view on their age based on their 'appearance and demeanour' – deciding either:

* Treat them as a child but 'dispute' their age and refer them to a local authority for further assessment OR

* Treat them as an adult (if their "physical appearance and demeanour very strongly suggest they are significantly over 18") and move them straight to adult accommodation/detention.⁸

These assessments, intended for immigration control rather than safeguarding children, fail in their original purpose and are unreliable as they rely solely on visual evaluation.⁹

Much more robust and holistic age assessments, known as 'Merton-compliant' assessments, are carried out by local authority social workers as part of their duty to support children under the Children Act 1989 (or equivalent in devolved administrations), supported by non-statutory guidance in England,¹⁰ Scotland¹¹ and Wales.¹²

Children wrongly treated as adults by the Home Office

Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium (RMCC) members routinely see unaccompanied children wrongly assessed as adults upon their arrival in the UK by the Home Office and treated as such, only to be later accepted to be children after further assessment by social workers.

The Home Office does not publish clear statistics on how many young people it treats as adults following a decision at the border, nor does it monitor what happens to them.

This is despite repeated requests from civil society for over a decade; repeated concerns raised by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration; calls from MPs¹³ and Peers¹⁴ for this information; and a system that should mean the numbers are straightforward to track.¹⁵ **Without its own published disaggregated data, the government does not know how its own policies and procedures are working.**

Data collected by the Helen Bamber Foundation via Freedom of Information requests for January to June 2024 showed that:

- 63 local authorities in England and Scotland received 603 referrals to their children's services department of young people who had been sent to adult accommodation/detention.
- Of the cases when a decision on age was made/age assessment concluded (493), 53% were found to be children - meaning that in just six months at least 262 children had been wrongly placed in adult accommodation or detention at significant risk.

The actual number is very likely to be significantly higher because:

- Not all local authorities responded to the requests for data, and many don't capture it.
- Not all children are being referred to children's services.
- Some local authorities had received a high number of referrals but could not confirm how many of those had been accepted as children, so the numbers were not included in the final calculation.

Data for January 2022 to June 2023 showed that more than 1,300 children had wrongly been assessed to be adults by the Home Office and sent to adult accommodation or detention before (sometimes months later) being referred to local authority children's services.¹⁶

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration has noted concerns at the quality of the age assessments being undertaken at the border, described as 'perfunctory' with minimal engagement with young people, and the failure by frontline staff to adequately record the age dispute process, as well as the "strong suspicion amongst some staff and stakeholders that migrants are noted as adults in order "to pass the problem of minors onto someone else".¹⁷

As mentioned, many children arrive without official identity documents. However, even when individuals arrive *with* evidence of their age, the Home Office may dismiss or not request this documentation, contributing to incorrect age determinations. NGOs often see that some forms of identity, like the Afghan taskira,¹⁸ are not accepted, or it is not recorded that a child has a copy of documentation with them, either in a physical form or on their phone.

Children have reported:

- being asked to point to a number to indicate how old they are;
- dates of birth have been incorrectly translated into the Gregorian calendar;
- not being provided with the correct interpreter;
- being mocked and/or being told they are lying;
- being told they cannot possibly be a child because they are too tall, their hands are too big, they are too hairy or another similar inappropriate comments relating to their physical appearance;
- being told 'there will be a lawyer at the hotel, you can fix the (age) problem there' or not being provided with any information as to how to challenge the decision made about their age at the point of arrival.

Case study 1

Samuel (name has been changed), aged 16 from Sudan, was determined to be an adult by border officials on arrival because he did not have documents to prove his real age. The boat that he travelled to the UK on was deflating slowly while crossing the Channel, and those on the boat were rescued and brought to Dover due to the extremity of the situation. Samuel was interviewed about his age shortly after his arrival but was not provided with a place to rest. He slept on the floor until he was called for his interview.

During the age interview, he was provided with a remote translator, but the translator spoke a different Arabic dialect. He could not sufficiently understand the content of the interview and struggled to understand why he was assessed to be an adult.

Humans for Rights Network became aware of Samuel because Red Cross France contacted them to say Samuel was known to them as a child and now needed support in the UK. UK border officials did not consider the fact that Samuel was known to child protection actors in France at all.

Samuel was referred to a local authority where social workers accepted his claim age without having to undergo a full 'Merton compliant' age assessment. He is now a 'looked after child' and has enrolled in a local college.

Harm caused by being routed into the adult system

The previous government emphasised the threat posed by adults seeking asylum who pretend to be children if they are placed in schools. But it underplayed the real risk of harm a child faces when wrongly assessed as an adult and placed in adult accommodation with no specialist support or help, no access to education and crucially, no-one to look after them. **Children as young as 14 have been placed in hotels or detention and many have been forced to share rooms with adults, with no safeguards in place.** Horrifyingly, there have been reports of incidents of violence and sexual assault against children in hotels.¹⁹ When the Rwanda scheme was introduced, there were a number of cases of children who had been detained as adults being issued with 'notices of intent' to remove them to Rwanda.²⁰ Children have also been wrongly moved to 'large site' accommodation such as RAF Wethersfield, which has been repeatedly found to cause harm to the mental and physical health of those placed there.²¹

Case study 2

Edris (name has been changed) first arrived in the UK in March 2023. He arrived with a National ID card and an identity document from a third country on his phone. Edris confirmed to Human for Rights Network (HFRN) when they first met with him that Immigration Officials had not allowed him to access his phone to present the photo of his ID(s) as his phone had been confiscated upon arrival. Edris explained that this interview with Immigration Officials about his age was conducted around two hours after arriving in the UK and that there was only one official present in the room during the interview, in which his request to show his IDs on his phone was refused.

Edris was detained in Western Jet Foil (Dover) for around 24 hours, then moved to Manston Short-Term Holding Facility, where he was detained for a further two days. He was then sent to a Home Office hotel, where he stayed for three months prior to getting in touch with HFRN. Edris shared a room with an unknown adult male, he felt very unsafe and unable to sleep. He told hotel staff about his age, and they provided HFRN's number to contact. At one point, Edris left the hotel and took himself to a local police station to seek help resolving his age, as he felt desperate. Edris was then removed from the Home Office hotel due to his distress and made destitute. HFRN helped him contact Migrant Help, but he was then relocated to another hotel. HFRN then referred Edris to a local authority. Shortly after this, he was visited by social workers. The local authority accepted Edris's claimed age, 17 years old, without the need for a full 'Merton compliant' age assessment.

Wrongly charged with criminal offences

Not only are these children put at risk in adult accommodation, including large sites where they are forced to share dormitories with much older men, but they are now also at risk of being wrongly convicted for crimes of illegal entry or facilitating illegal entry under the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 (NABA).²² Between June 2022 and September 2024, the best available data shows that 510 people arriving on 'small boats' were charged with 'illegal arrival'.²³ HFRN has identified 26 cases where children wrongly treated as adults have been charged with offences under NABA, with at least 16 individuals spending periods of time held with adults in adult prisons.

Criminal courts can decide on a defendant's age, taking 'such evidence as may be forthcoming at the hearing of the case'. In practice, this results in the court accepting the Home Office decision that a child is an adult, which is often presented as fact with no acknowledgement that there was a dispute about age. Many judges believe that the dates of birth have been provided to the Home Office by the children themselves. They have little understanding of the flawed age determination process that takes place upon arrival and that immigration officers arbitrarily assign these dates.

While some adults may claim to be under 18, the answer cannot be a system designed to catch the more extreme cases at the cost of harming hundreds of children. Furthermore, in light of the supervision and safeguards provided in children's placements, the risks associated with a young adult being placed temporarily in children's accommodation can be managed much more effectively than the risks facing a child incorrectly treated as an adult and placed in unsupervised accommodation or detention, sharing a room with adults. ***Placing hundreds of children each year in an adult asylum system raises serious national safeguarding concerns.***

Case study 3

Amin's (name has been changed) claimed age was disputed upon arriving in Dover in October 2023. He was eventually moved to RAF Wethersfield, a camp designed to hold adult male asylum seekers. Amin explained to the staff at Wethersfield that his age was wrong, but he was told his issue would be resolved once he applied for section 95 support. Amin also shared that while he did not have official ID documentation from Sudan, he did have copies of his identity provided at the Sudanese refugee camp where he was raised.

Prior to being moved to Wethersfield, Amin was briefly accommodated at a Home Office hotel in Luton, where he also shared that he was age disputed, and staff told him it would be resolved after he had his tests completed (blood tests) and applied for section 95 support. Despite telling multiple staff members at two different Home Office-run accommodation sites that he was a child, he was placed in a bedroom with five unknown adult men at Wethersfield. Amin shared that the conditions were dirty and crowded, and there were considerable restrictions if he needed to leave the camp. After Amin requested support from Humans for Rights Network, they referred him to the local authority. He is now in their care pending an age assessment.

Lack of safeguards

It is important to note that **staff in asylum accommodation are deterred from referring people claiming to be children to local authorities due to Home Office guidance**. They are told that if the Home Office has already conducted an assessment, they should only refer the child to a local authority if the individual is 'childlike, is highly vulnerable and/or not behaving like an adult'.²⁴ In practice, this has been interpreted by staff as meaning they should never refer a child to children's services. **Children wrongly treated as adults receive no information or support on how to contact a local authority to address what has happened to them**. When children are then referred to local authorities, the Home Office frequently refuses to accept the local authority's decision on age if they decide not to carry out a full assessment.

At present, the process for identifying children wrongly treated as adults relies heavily on the role of charities and NGOs working in hotels, detention and other accommodation sites. NGOs try to intervene to ensure these children receive the care and support they need, including education, healthcare, and legal representation. However, because of its unpredictable nature and the lack of published data, it is nearly impossible for NGOs to foresee the numbers they will encounter when they visit asylum accommodation and immigration removal centres. As such, there is significant pressure on NGOs, not funded by the government to do this work, to fill the gap resulting from the government's failure to safeguard children.

Increased burden on local authorities

In response to repeated concerns and evidence about children wrongly treated as adults, the previous government's response focused on two new changes brought under the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 as offering a solution: the introduction of the National Age Assessment Board (NAAB) and the power to use 'scientific methods' to assess age. Neither of these measures tackle the key problem of children wrongly treated as adults at port and instead increase the burden on local authorities.

The NAAB, run by the Home Office, can undertake age assessments on behalf of local authorities. Launched in March 2023, its stated intention is to “strengthen and improve processes” for assessing age.²⁵ Ethical concerns raised by the British Association of Social Workers) about social workers working for the NAAB.²⁶ NAAB assessments have been shown to be flawed²⁷ and 14% of assessments have been ordered by the Home Office even though a local authority had accepted a child’s age (or assessed them to be under 18).²⁸ Costing £1.7 million in its first year of operation²⁹ the NAAB appears to be wasting time and resources and resulting in unaccompanied children seeking asylum going through unnecessary and harmful assessments.³⁰ Recent clinical research has shown that the age assessment process has a profound negative impact on the mental health of unaccompanied children seeking asylum.³¹

Professional medical bodies have been unequivocal in their rejection of the use of ‘scientific methods’, such as dental X-rays, as being unethical and extremely imprecise as methods for assessing age. Furthermore, the Home Office’s own Interim Age Estimation Science Advisory Committee made clear that biological age assessment can be used “to assess whether the age claimed by UASC is *possible*” and only as part of wider lawful social work assessment.³² Social work assessments should already include a wide range of evidence – it is very unclear what benefit adding another costly and time-consuming element to a system that is already lengthy and onerous would bring.

Alarming, children who refuse to undergo X-rays or MRIs will be threatened with being identified as over 18 by default. Section 52 of NABA outlines that if a child decides not to consent to the use of a scientific process, this should be seen as ‘damaging’ their credibility. Section 58 of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 goes further, allowing for an automatic assumption of adulthood if a person refuses to consent – we welcome this being repealed under the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill.

Conclusion

The asylum system must differentiate between adults and children when people cross our border to seek protection. However, visual assessments of age at the port of entry are deeply flawed. They result in hundreds of children being placed in the adult system without safeguards and protection.

For years, the Home Office has failed to improve the port procedure to tackle the problem at the source. Instead, resources have been allocated to creating the National Age Assessment Board and developing scientific (biological) age assessment methods. These solutions fail to tackle the key problem and simply further complicate the age-determination process. Under the current system, a child could end up with as many as four determinations of age: an initial ‘assessment’ at the port of entry; a local authority assessment; a NAAB assessment; and a finding by the court. This means that a process that has already been found to be harmful and costly will be made even longer, delaying a child’s access to support and a decision on their asylum claim even further.

Rather than focussing on extreme ‘outlier’ cases and giving the Home Office more and more control, it is time for the government to look at what actually works in age assessments and invest in supporting local authorities in carrying ***them out using their expertise as child protection professionals.***

Above all else, the failings in the age dispute process constitute a systemic and large-scale safeguarding failure by the state to protect some of the most vulnerable children in our society.

Recommendations

Reduce the risk of children being wrongly treated as adults and improve safeguards to protect children

- **Limit Home Office age determinations** to those with relevant training and only treat someone claiming to be a child as an adult in exceptional circumstances, i.e. if there is evidence that they are in their late 20s or older.
- Where a person claiming to be a child is being treated as an adult and to be moved to adult accommodation/detention, the Home Office should **notify the relevant local authority** so that they are aware that there is a putative child in their area.
- **Publish separate statistics** on the number of people claiming to be children whom border officials have determined to be adults on the basis that their ‘physical appearance and demeanour very strongly suggested that they were significantly over 18 years of age’ and put in place independent monitoring processes so it can track the outcomes for those who are later determined to be children.
- **If charging an individual** who says they are under 18 with the offence of illegal entry, or facilitating illegal entry, the Home Office must **make a mandatory referral** to a local authority for an age assessment.

Ensure age assessments are local authority-led and the process causes as little harm as possible

- **Abandon plans for the Home Office-led codification of the age assessment process** under the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 (repeal section 53 of the Act).
- **Publish an updated version of the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) guidance** in England to provide clear and consistent information for social workers on conducting age assessments. This guidance should reiterate support for age assessment as a holistic, multi-disciplinary process that is social work led.³³
- **End the failed exploration of inaccurate ‘scientific’ methods of assessing age. Repeal section 52 of NABA which would force children to undergo scientific tests or risk their credibility being undermined.**
- **Abolish the National Age Assessment Board.** Redirect its funding to providing direct training and support to local authorities to ensure that age assessments are conducted by *independent* social workers in local authorities, not Home Office employees.

The [Refugee and Migrant Children’s Consortium](#) is a coalition of over 100 organisations working to promote and protect the rights of young refugees and migrants. For more information contact:

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APPENDIX: Data on age disputes:³⁴

The previous government claimed that [‘nearly half of those whose ages are disputed are adults posing as children’](#). This claim is clearly false because, we don’t know how many of those ‘age dispute’ cases have been sent into the adult system after a flawed decision on age. Even based on the data the Home Office *does* publish, the claim is still false – in 2023 over 2/3 of ALL age dispute cases were found to be children (see table below).

Furthermore, in the explanatory notes accompanying the Home Office’s published statistics it is made clear that for both age disputes ‘raised’ and ‘resolved’, separate disputes raised/resolved for the same individual in separate periods will be counted and “therefore the figures relate to disputes resolved rather than people”. This makes the published data even more unreliable and will lead to an underreporting of age dispute cases found to be children. This is explained in the following example:

- There are 100 age disputes raised at Western Jet Foil and all 100 will be treated as resolved as adults;
- All these 100 seek a referral to a local authority for a ‘Merton compliant’ age assessment. Therefore 100 further age disputes will be raised.
- All 100 are subsequently resolved as children following a full age assessment;
- The Home Office data will record that there have been 200 age disputes raised and 200 age disputes resolved of which 100 are adults and 100 are children. Therefore, the data will record that 50% are found to be children whereas in fact the true figure is that 100% are children.

	2021	2022	2023	January - June 2024
Age disputes raised	2,539	4,675	4,500	3,567
Age disputes resolved	2,295	3,211	3,724	2,736
Found to be under 18	1,168 (51%)	1,629 (51%)	2,721 (73%)	1,419 (52%)
Found to be 18 or over	1,127 (49%)	1,582 (49%)	1,003 (27%)	1,317 (48%)

To obtain the data cited in this briefing re: the number of children treated as adults and *then* assessed to be children, local authorities in England and Scotland responsible for social care services for children were sent the following request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

- *In [add period] how many individuals claiming to be children (aged under 18) were referred to your children’s services department having been assessed to be an adult by the Home Office and placed in adult asylum accommodation or detention?*
- *Of those referred, how many were subsequently assessed by your children’s services department to be under 18?*

Endnotes

- ¹ Home Office [Immigration Statistics](#), June 2024
- ² See Helen Bamber Foundation, Humans for Rights Network, and Refugee Council, [Forced Adulthood: The Home Office's incorrect determination of age and how this leaves child refugees at risk](#), January 2024
- ³ Home Office, [Children's Asylum Claims](#), December 2020
- ⁴ Department for Education, [Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery: Statutory guidance for local authorities](#), November 2017, p 13
- ⁵ Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), [Age Assessment Guidance](#), 2015
- ⁶ UNHCR, [Guidelines on Assessing and Determining the Best Interests of the Child](#), 2018; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, [General Comment No 6. Treatment of Unaccompanied and 16 Separated Children Outside their Country of Origin](#), 1 September 2005, CRC/GC/2005/6
- ⁷ In 2019, 798 age disputes were raised, compared to 4,500 in 2023. The number of people seeking asylum in 2019 was 35,737, compared to 72,464 in 2023. See Home Office [Immigration Statistics](#), June 2024
- ⁸ Home Office, [Assessing age for asylum applicants](#)
- ⁹ Local Government Lawyers, [Asylum seeker wins age assessment case against London borough](#), June 27 2024
- ¹⁰ Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), [Age Assessment Guidance](#), 2015
- ¹¹ Scottish Government, [Age Assessment Practice Guidance](#), 2018
- ¹² Welsh Government, [Unaccompanied asylum seeking children: age assessment toolkit](#), 2021
- ¹³ See Stuart McDonald MP in Home Affairs Select Committee evidence session on 'The work of the Home Secretary', 23 November 2022.
- ¹⁴ See Baroness Lister in the House of Lords debate on 21 July 2022.
- ¹⁵ Home Office guidance makes clear that all those treated as adults should be issued with an IS97M form and that CID (its case management system) "must be updated with confirmation why it has been agreed to treat the claimant as significantly over 18 and note who the assessing officer and countersigning officer were." Consequently, the numbers treated as adults should be easy to track, but the Home Office claims its case management system will not allow it to access this data. Additionally, a local authority that takes a child seeking asylum into their care would approach the Home Office to receive funding for that child, therefore it is possible to extract and cross-reference information on the number of de-facto children taken into care from at least two sources that the Home Office has easy access to.
- ¹⁶ See Helen Bamber Foundation, Humans for Rights Network, and Refugee Council, [Forced Adulthood: The Home Office's incorrect determination of age and how this leaves child refugees at risk](#), January 2024, p. 9 and Helen Bamber Foundation, Asylum Aid and Humans for Rights Network, ["Disbelieved and Denied: Children seeking asylum wrongly treated as adults by the Home Office."](#) April 2023, p. 4.
- ¹⁷ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An inspection of the initial processing of migrants arriving via small boats at Tug Haven and Western Jet Foil, December 2021 – January 2022](#)
- ¹⁸ Taskira is an official national identity card in Afghanistan.
- ¹⁹ The Independent, Labour MPs raise concerns over welfare of child migrants, 7 November 2022
- ²⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/05/uk-accused-of-attempting-to-deport-children-to-rwanda>
- ²¹ Helen Bamber Foundation, [The psychological impact of the age dispute process on unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the UK](#), May 2024
- ²² The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 (NABA) amended sections 24 and 25 of the Immigration Act 1971 so that now both arrival without entry clearance and entry without leave to enter are criminal offences.
- ²³ [No such thing as justice here: The criminalisation of people arriving to the UK on small boats](#), February 2024
- ²⁴ AASC/AIRE Provider Age Assessment Standard Operating Procedure, 06.07.2022 v1.6, section 3
- ²⁵ <https://careers.homeoffice.gov.uk/news/socialworker-oct23>
- ²⁶ British Association of Social Workers, [UK Statement: National Age Assessment Board](#), March 2023
- ²⁷ Garden Court Chambers, [Home Office concedes age dispute challenge and accepts child refugee wrongly assessed as adult in Criminal Court](#), January 2025
- ²⁸ The National Age Assessment Board (NAAB) carried out 21 age assessments in 2023 and 114 in 2024. There were 116 local authority referrals and 19 Home Office referrals. Information from Freedom of Information request FOI2025/00266, answered by the Home Office on 27th January 2025
- ²⁹ Freedom of Information request reference FOI2024/05630, answered by the Home Office on 16 July 2024
- ³⁰ Helen Bamber Foundation, [The psychological impact of the age dispute process on unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the UK](#), May 2024
- ³¹ Helen Bamber Foundation, [The psychological impact of the age dispute process on unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the UK](#), May 2024
- ³² Interim Age Estimation Science Advisory Committee, [Biological methods to assess unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's age](#), January 2023
- ³³ This should also reference the British Association of Social Workers [Guide to best practice in age assessments](#)
- ³⁴ Home Office, [Immigration Statistics](#), June 2024