

Detention of unaccompanied children arriving in Kent during 2020

Policy briefing

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Summary

This briefing looks at the immediate conditions unaccompanied asylum-seeking children faced after travelling to the UK, usually via boat, during 2020. Specifically, it focuses on the children who arrived at the Kent Intake Unit, where children's identities are checked and their initial asylum claims are processed before they can be accommodated by local authorities. After visiting this unit in August 2020, the Children's Commissioner had some concerns about how long children were being held there. In order to investigate further, the Commissioner requested data from the Home Office¹ on how long unaccompanied children were kept at the intake unit between April and December 2020, when high numbers of children were making this journey across the English Channel to the UK. The Commissioner used her statutory powers of data collection² to obtain this information, as it is not publicly available. This briefing contains the key findings from this data.

The data shows that children, who had just arrived in the UK after difficult and often traumatic journeys fleeing violence or persecution, were frequently being held at the unit for extensive periods of time. Nearly 1 in 5 unaccompanied children were detained for over 24 hours between April and September³, even though detention over 24 hours is banned under the Immigration Act 2014⁴, and longer detention is only permitted in 'exceptional circumstances' following Home Office Secretary of State authorisation.⁵ Additionally, from September onwards children were staying for very long periods in another waiting area straight after being released from detention. Durations in this non-detained area sometimes exceeded 95 hours – around 4 days on end – during which time their movements were still very limited.

This means that some of these highly vulnerable children were being held for long periods in places which cannot meet their needs and are detrimental to their wellbeing. When detained, children go without proper sleeping facilities and access to fresh air, yet they are required to attend official interviews and give information which could have serious implications for their asylum claims and future in the UK. Long waiting times in confined conditions are particularly alarming in the midst of a pandemic in which people's health and safety is dependent on social distancing.

Key findings were as follows:

- > The numbers of children arriving on small boats steadily increased between April and September, peaking in August when 239 children passed through the intake unit – 108 unaccompanied children and 131 children with parents/guardians.
- > In each month for which we have data, some unaccompanied children were being detained for over 24 hours. Overall nearly 1 in 5 of these children (18%) were detained for over 24 hours between April and September. This does not include time they spent in the non-detained area afterwards.
- > Average (mean) waiting times in the non-detained area significantly increased from a few hours between April and August, to 32 hours in November. Average waiting times decreased in December to 9 hours.
- > The longest an unaccompanied child was detained was around 65 hours in August. During

¹ The CCO holds data on child detention between April – September 2020, provided by the Home Office, and non-detained waiting times from April – December 2020, in relation to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children only. Data on non-detained waiting times between September – December was provided by the Refugee Council which are contracted by the Home Office.

² Section 2F of the Children Act 2004: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/section/2F>

³ On average 17.7% of children. Full data tables can be found in the appendix.

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/22/part/1/crossheading/detention-and-bail/data.pdf>

⁵ Short-term Holding Facility Rules 2018:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721583/STHF-rules-operational-guidance-v1.0-EXT.pdf

this month almost a third of children were detained over 24 hours.

- > Almost 1 in 6 children (16%)⁶ entered the non-detained area between the hours of midnight and 7am suggesting that important interviews took place at antisocial hours in the night.

The figures show why there is a pressing need to improve processes for these children upon arrival at Kent. It also highlights the need for a more proactive approach to provide care and asylum by the French government, better co-operation between the governments and more safe and legal routes of entry into the UK immigration system, to prevent children risking their lives to gain entry to this country. This briefing also highlights the need for a Government strategy to stop the events of 2020 being repeated in 2021. The Children's Commissioner is calling for urgent action to better safeguard child refugees who are some of the most vulnerable in our society and whom we have a moral and legal duty to protect.

Background

In 2020, the numbers of refugee and asylum-seeking children arriving in the UK dramatically increased to levels not seen since the migrant crisis in 2015⁷. As living conditions worsened for many asylum-seeking children and families in France under Covid-19, with less assistance from charities and more restrictions on travel, many sought the services of criminal traffickers and people smugglers as a last resort. Almost 1000 children arrived in Kent after perilous channel crossings between April and September last year⁸. Around half of these children (456) made this journey alone, unaccompanied by a parent or guardian.

On arrival all children are taken to the Kent Intake Unit to have their identities and asylum claims registered. During this time, they are detained in a Short Term Holding Facility (STHF), in an area they cannot freely leave for the duration of detention⁹. The length of detention, for both adults and children, is intended to be "for the shortest possible period of time"¹⁰ and for "not more than 24 hours unless a longer period is authorised"¹¹.

⁶ Based on the logs provided to the CCO which span April – August.

⁷ As reported by leader of Kent County Council: <https://www.itv.com/news/2020-08-18/kent-council-reaches-capacity-to-care-for-migrant-children>

⁸ Data does not include numbers of children from boats arriving in other local authorities such as Portsmouth, which have received fewer people.

⁹ Defined as a 'holding room': <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2018/409/article/6/made>

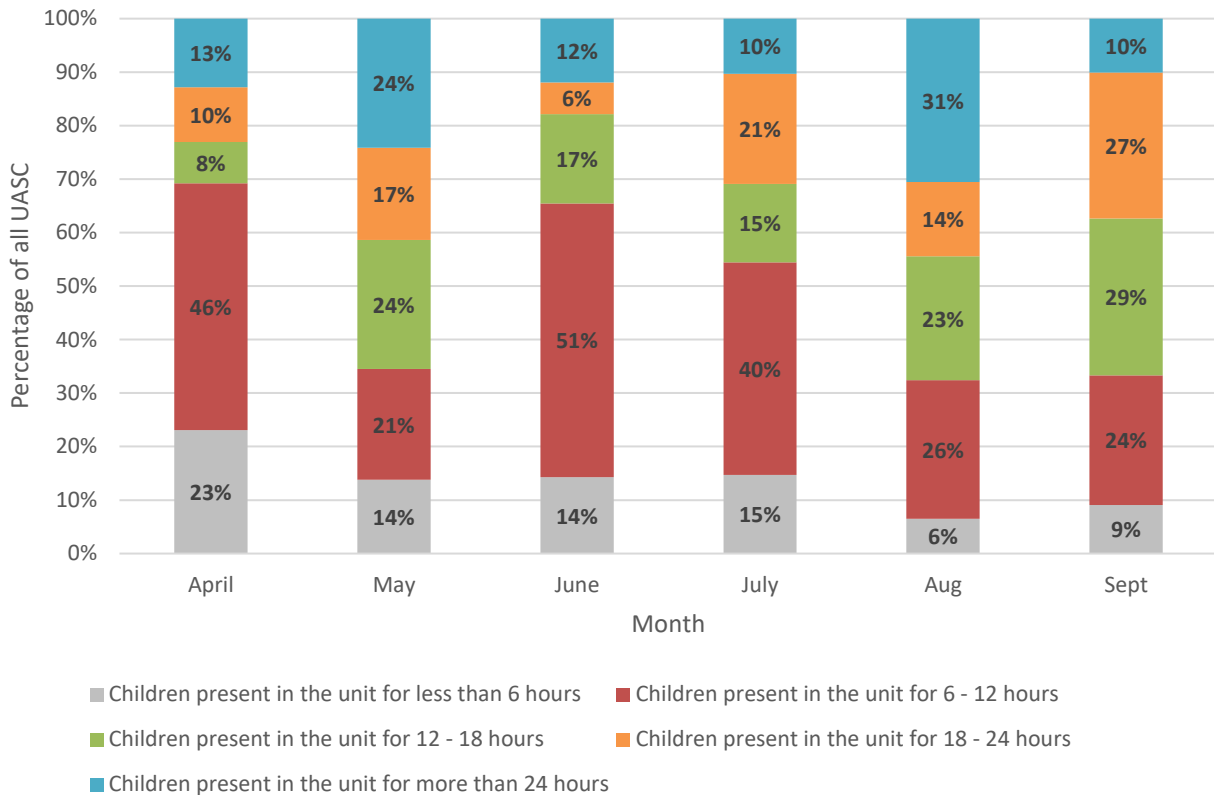
¹⁰ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/our-expectations/immigration-detention-expectations/short-term-holding-facilities/safety/safeguarding-children/>

¹¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721583/STHF-rules-operational-guidance-v1.0-EXT.pdf

Key findings

Data obtained from the Home Office tells us that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were regularly being detained for over 24 hours on arrival in the UK after surviving boat crossings. On average across the 6 months nearly 1 in 5 unaccompanied children were detained for over 24 hours. This peaked in August when almost 1 in 3 children (31%) were detained over 24 hours.

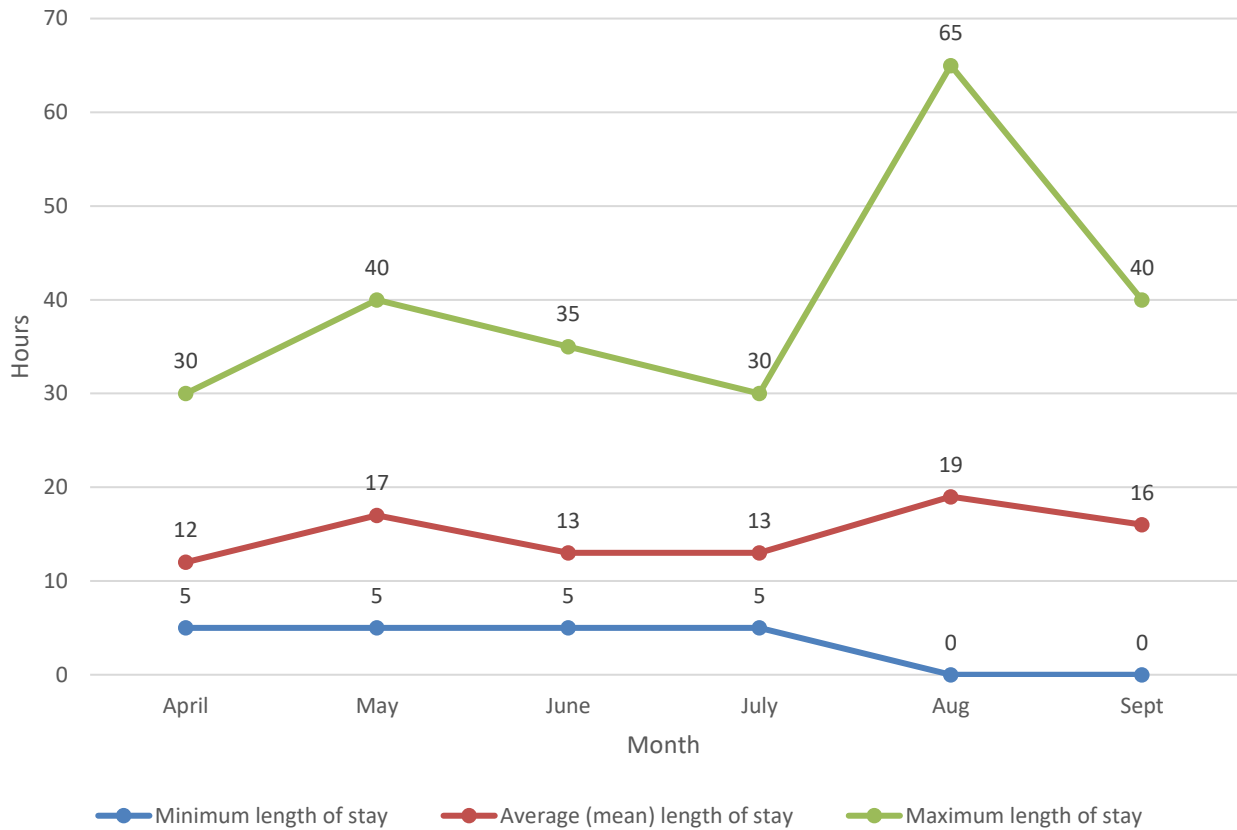
Figure 1 – Distribution of length of stay (in hours) in the STHF of unaccompanied children at the Kent Intake Unit, April – September 2020



While the average length of stay of 16 hours for unaccompanied children across these 6 months is within legal timeframes, it is still an extremely long time for children to be detained in these limited facilities. This average also hides the fact that some children are detained for much longer periods. In August the maximum detention was around 65 hours – almost 3 days – an increase of around 35 hours from the maximum detention in the previous month. According to the latest inspectorate report¹² one child was detained for 66 hours, yet there were no records detailing the reason for this, despite the unit being required provide one when seeking formal authorisation from the Home Office Secretary of State for detention over 24 hours.

¹² The HM Chief Inspector of Prisons' report published in November 2020: https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/10/Dover-detention-facilities-web-2020_v2.pdf

Figure 2 – Minimum, mean and maximum length of stay in the STHF of unaccompanied children arriving at the Kent Intake Unit, April – September 2020



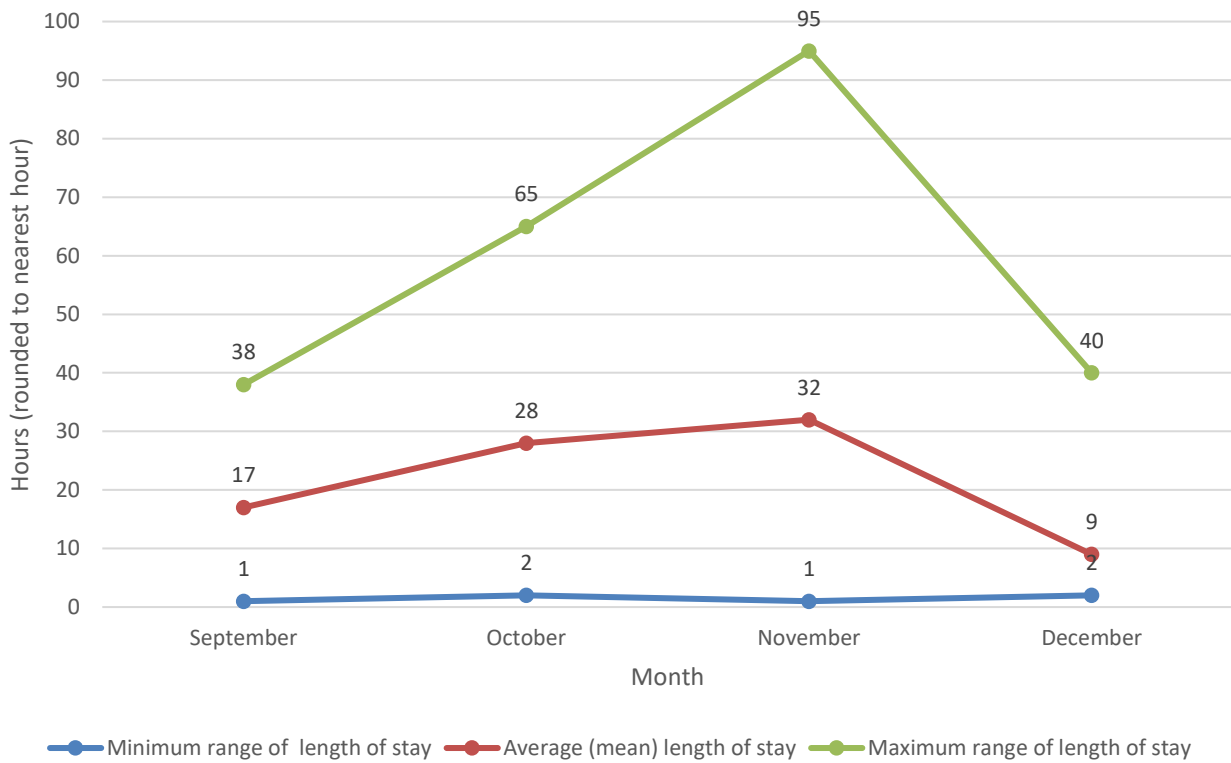
Note: Minimum and maximum lengths of stay have been rounded to the nearest 5 to prevent disclosure. This means that minimum detention times of less than 2 ½ hours have been rounded to 0.

It is important to note that detention data, as displayed in the above graphs, only shows half the story. This is because it only relates to how long children were detained in the STHF and does not include the additional time they spend waiting in the non-detained ‘Atrium’ area afterwards.¹³ Between April and August, children only spent a few hours waiting in the Atrium¹⁴, but this jumped dramatically in September to an average of 17 hours (on top of the previous time they spent in the STHF, an average of 16 hours). By November, half of all unaccompanied children were waiting in the Atrium for over 24 hours – 32 hours on average – with the longest waiting times being in excess of 95 hours. The average length of stay for the longest three stays was 108 hours.

¹³ The Atrium is a non-detained area where people can wait after they have had their identities and initial asylum claims registered. The Atrium has a specific area for children operated by the Refugee Council. There are no legal limits on how long children can stay in the Atrium for. The CCO’s concerns about Atrium waiting times are outlined in a later section.

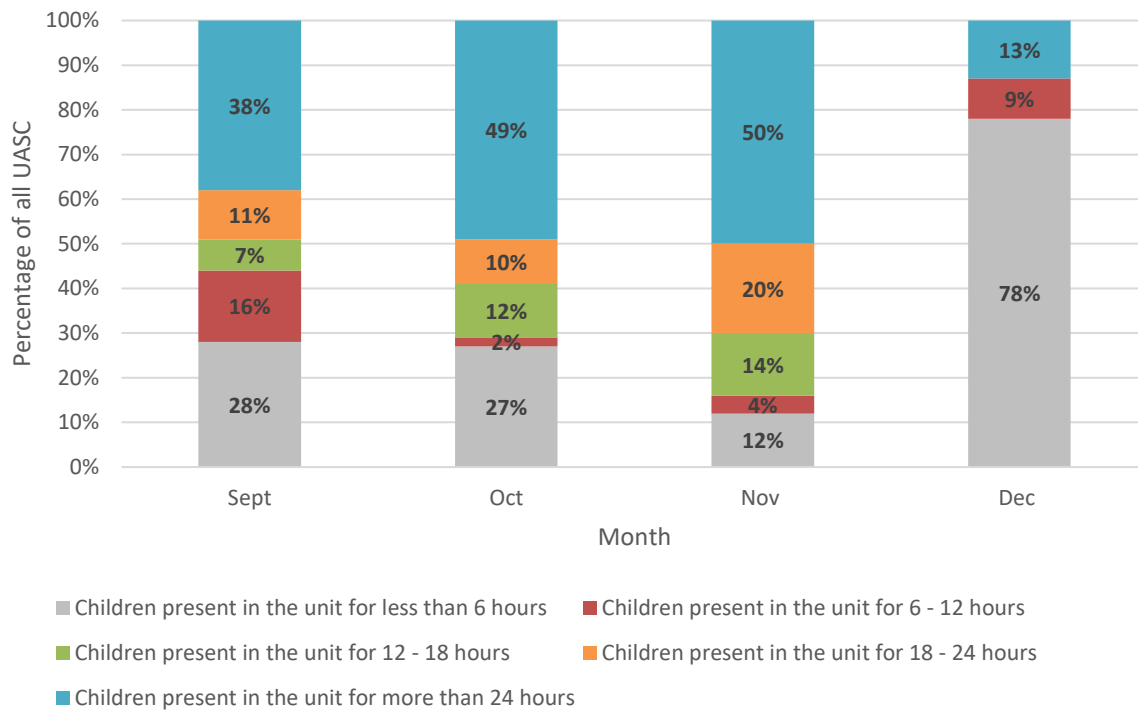
¹⁴ The average waiting time in the Atrium was 2 hours 39 minutes in August, for example.

Figure 3 – Minimum, mean and maximum length of stay in hours of unaccompanied children from entry into the Atrium to point of departure to receiving LA, September – December 2020



Note: The maximum and minimum lengths of stay are provided as a rounded figure based on the three longest/shortest stays, thus for September-December the maximum length of time will be a slight under-estimation of the true maximum, and the minimum will be a slight over-estimate of the true minimum. The approach used to prevent disclosure in this graph (Figure 3) is different from that used in Figure 2.

Figure 4 – Distribution of length of stay, in hours, of unaccompanied children from entry into the Kent Intake Unit Atrium to point of departure to receiving LA, September – December 2020



Therefore, while STHF data in the initial graphs suggests that September was an improvement from August, the Atrium data reveals the opposite. It appears that children were actually waiting at the intake unit for longer between September and November, sometimes much longer. Although they were technically free to leave the Atrium, in practice they could not go far because they were waiting for collection from children’s social care. If children were to leave of their own accord and not return, they would be referred to police as missing. Atrium waiting times improved significantly in December when the majority of children (87%) waited less than 12 hours in the Atrium.

In a letter to the Children’s Commissioner in December, the Home Office outlined steps it had taken to mitigate the risk of children staying in the intake unit overnight and/or in excess of 24 hours. It stated that unaccompanied children are being prioritised for screening, medical cover is now available 24 hours a day, and changes have been made to speed up movement through the unit on arrival. These steps are welcome, but without public data on waiting times the impact of these changes cannot be independently monitored.

Reasons for delays

A key reason for longer detention times leading up to summer 2020 was the higher volume of asylum-seeking adults and children passing through the unit, affecting the time taken to process individual cases. The Refugee Council was also not operating on-site from the start of the first national lockdown in March until late August. Without this protected space for children in the non-detained area, children were more likely to be held for longer in the STHF.

The increased waiting times in the Atrium from September onwards coincided with Kent County Council's decision on 17th August to stop accommodating new children who had arrived at the unit, because it was unable to safely care for any more unaccompanied asylum-seeking children¹⁵. After Kent County Council resumed these duties on 7th December, the average length of stay in the Atrium dropped from 43 hours to 4 hours.¹⁶ This appears to show the effect of certain councils being put under too much strain, in the absence of a functioning national system to fairly share caring responsibilities.

In August, when Kent County Council became unable to accommodate any new children, the intake unit had to rely on other local authorities to make offers of accommodation. This resulted in children being collected by more distant local authorities not accustomed to rapidly taking children directly from the intake unit. The process of enlisting other LAs to help accommodate children also contributed to delays, since these other authorities are not currently required to offer assistance in these circumstances, therefore many did not volunteer to help.

Plans are underway for reform of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) which was designed to coordinate children moving to new areas.¹⁷ This data shows why it must happen urgently to prevent LAs such as Kent from becoming overwhelmed again in future, and to establish a faster, more effective system for spreading the responsibility between other regions. It is now 4 months since the Home Office and Department for Education completed their consultation on how the NTS should change¹⁸ yet there is still no clarity on the new system, funding or timeframe for its implementation. Questions remain about whether a voluntary rota system, as proposed in the consultation¹⁹, will be a strong enough response.

¹⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-53811228> In August 2020 Kent County Council was caring for over double the number of children required of them under the National Transfer Scheme protocol, which allows LAs to apply to transfer unaccompanied children to another region if they have reached the threshold of 0.07% UASC to total child population.

¹⁶ This is the comparison between the days in December prior to 7th December and the days in December after 7th December.

¹⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/750913/NTS-Protocol-Final-October-2018.pdf
¹⁸ <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/article/home-office-launches-consultation-on-national-transfer-scheme-for-migrant-children>

¹⁹ The consultation proposal suggested that regions take turns to accommodate a pre-agreed number of children, with the hope that increased predictability would help areas manage better.

The impact on children

There are a number of reasons to be concerned about prolonged detention and waiting times. The first is that extended detention is damaging for children's wellbeing, including their mental health and personal dignity. Many unaccompanied children who arrive at the intake unit will have been travelling for months in pursuit of safety, after fleeing their home countries. During this time many will have slept rough, gone hungry, been exploited, intimidated or subject to abuse. Crossing the channel, which can take 12 hours in poor quality boats and dinghies²⁰, is an additional trauma for children. They may have been threatened onto boats, faced extreme weather and feared death. Some arrive suffering from hypothermia, dehydration and other injuries. Many children who arrive at the intake unit are extremely tired; their emotional state is fragile.

Staff at the intake unit have been commended for their respectful attitudes towards those in their care, however some of children's most basic needs are still not being met. The report by Her Majesty's Prison Inspectorate (November 2020)²¹ made the following observations about the STHF's physical environment and facilities:

There were no proper sleeping facilities and detainees slept on the floor on thin mattresses, mats and beanbags, which were not cleaned between uses.

Kent Intake Unit (KIU) ... provided acceptable accommodation for short periods but were not suitable for very lengthy detentions. Some detainees were held for more than two days in rooms with no sleeping facilities, showers or access to the open air. KIU in particular was crowded and poorly ventilated. Social distancing was not possible and there were some basic omissions, such as not providing hand-washing facilities or even sanitiser in the women's toilets.

The holding rooms at KIU ... had seen some refurbishment since our previous inspection, but they remained cramped and inadequate for the large number of detainees who frequently stayed there a long time.

The report highlights the lack of beds, showers, hand-washing facilities, space, privacy and access to fresh air. This is despite STHF rules stating that all detainees should have an hour of access to open air within a 24 hour period, unless the building layout means that this is not reasonably practicable.²²

Most of these problems come down to the fact that the unit was never designed or intended to accommodate children for prolonged periods and overnight, yet this is increasingly common. The STHF only consists of a main room containing fixed rows of seats and tables, and a very small 'family room' (picture below) containing some toys for young children. The Children's Commissioner's Office has been informed²³ that there are plans to relocate to a new building; timescales for this, however, are unclear. There is a risk that future relocation plans will prevent upgrades being made to the unit to improve conditions in the coming years, despite this being urgently needed.

²⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/aug/16/priti-patel-migrants-crossing-channel-uk-they-believe-france-racist>

²¹ https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprisoners/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/10/Dover-detention-facilities-web-2020_v2.pdf

²² Rule 20 – Time in Open Air: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721583/STHF-rules-operational-guidance-v1.0-EXT.pdf

²³ During its visit in August 2020



Photograph of the small family room and basic sleeping facilities within the STHF holding room at the Kent Intake Unit. Source: Her Majesty's Prison Inspectorate report, November 2020

Facilities are better in the non-detained Atrium, which has a specific area for children run by the Refugee Council. This area has two main rooms for children affording more privacy, along with more comfortable seating, a TV and child-friendly signage. However, the space still falls short of the expectations set for children staying overnight in other establishments such as care homes.²⁴ Unfortunately Covid-19 also affected the environment for children who arrived during the first wave of the pandemic. Prior to Covid-19, for example, camp beds were available, however from April to September these were out of operation while the Refugee Council was offsite and due to infection control measures on its return.

²⁴ For example, in terms of children having their own personal space:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/463220/Guide_to_Children_s_Home_Standards_inc_quality_standards_Version_1.17_FINAL.pdf



Photograph of the Refugee Council operated area in the Atrium of the Kent Intake Unit. Source: Her Majesty's Prison Inspectorate report, November 2020

The conditions at the intake unit also have implications for children's rights. While detained, children are required to have a Welfare Interview in which the child will be asked questions about their identity, family, and how and why they travelled to the UK²⁵. This interview helps the Home Office categorise the child's asylum claim. The HM Chief Inspector of Prisons' report found that welfare interviews with unaccompanied children arriving in the daytime were regularly taking place in the early hours of the next morning, at times such as 4.55am. Our analysis of the intake unit's Atrium logs²⁶ found that almost 1 in 6 children entered the non-detained area between the hours of midnight and 7am, suggesting that interviews frequently took place during the night. This evidence suggests that children are regularly being interviewed when sleep-deprived and may be unable to think as clearly as usual.

Although the Welfare Interview does not determine a child's asylum outcome – the longer Substantive Interview which takes place weeks later is the basis for this decision²⁷ – the answers children give can have implications for their claims. Children may be asked to explain inconsistencies between accounts given in Welfare Interviews and Substantive interviews²⁸, which could open up doubt about their claim. One young person, for example, told us he was asked the name of a particular schoolteacher in a

²⁵ More information on Welfare Interviews is available here: https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Claiming-asylum-as-a-child-May.2017.final_.pdf

²⁶ Based on the logs provided to the CCO which span April – August.

²⁷ More information on substantive interviews is also available via the previous link.

²⁸ Page 31: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/947812/children_s-asylum-claims-v4.0ext.pdf

Welfare Interview, which he struggled to recall²⁹. He was anxious about his answer being used against him in his age assessment³⁰ which was in progress.

Interviews take place at all times of day, most likely so that children can be released from the STHF as quickly as possible. Some children, such as those with disrupted sleep patterns who cannot sleep at night, might prefer an interview during the early hours if this enables them to leave sooner. The timing and content of Welfare Interviews should be reviewed, so that children cannot be disadvantaged in any way by how the interviews are conducted.

²⁹ The young person spoke in hindsight about his experiences passing through the intake unit.

³⁰ Age assessments are undertaken by local authorities if the age of a child is disputed. The outcomes have serious implications for how an individual is supported. More information is available here: https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Age-assessment-process.march_2017.pdf

Conclusion and recommendations

The global refugee crisis shows no signs of abating.³¹ The UK's departure from the EU could also lead to more channel crossings from desperate children in need of asylum, driven by the lack of other options, as since Brexit the few remaining safe and legal routes to the UK have become even more precarious.³² One example is the ability for children to claim asylum on family reunion grounds, which has been weakened by the UK departing from the EU legislation on asylum procedures known as the 'Dublin III Regulation'.³³ There are concerns that domestic immigration policy will make it harder for children to reunite with their families via legal routes.³⁴ Withdrawal from Dublin III may also make the UK more attractive to people smugglers and traffickers if it is harder for the UK to return refugees back to the first safe country they entered, as is EU protocol. Lorry transport via the channel tunnel will be further restricted post-Brexit, leaving clandestine passage in small boats as the alternative.³⁵

The Government's recently stated intention³⁶ to prioritise resettling children directly from conflict zones rather than those who have fled to Europe, is worrying. This excludes the vast majority of highly vulnerable children living in appalling conditions overseas. Additionally, much more needs to be done to improve the treatment of children on arrival at a pace which will ensure children arriving in 2021 are protected.

The Children's Commissioner is calling for:

1. The UK Government and French Government must work together to protect unaccompanied children. Agreements must be drawn up to determine when transfer to the UK is safe and appropriate; outside of these parameters the French government needs to provide asylum and care for vulnerable child refugees.
2. More safe and legal routes of passage for children to travel to the UK.
 - > The upcoming government review of asylum on family reunion grounds should be completed within 3 months of its launch in February and should at the very least match family reunion criteria under Dublin III.
 - > A commitment to continue offering asylum to the most vulnerable child refugees in Europe, for example, via a replacement to the Section 67 (Dubs) scheme which ended in May.³⁷ Over 200,000 unaccompanied children travelled to Europe seeking refuge over the past 5 years³⁸ and the UK has played an important part in helping them. This needs to be maintained, especially for those living in the most dangerous and unsanitary conditions.

³¹ More than 8,400 migrants and refugees crossed the English Channel to the UK in 2020 - quadruple the number for 2019: <https://news.sky.com/story/migrant-crisis-record-year-sees-quadruple-number-of-people-make-dangerous-journey-to-uk-on-dinghies-and-kayaks-12179159>

³² This is in addition to the Government announcing the end to its commitments under Section 67 of the Immigration Act ('Dubs Amendment') in May 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/policy-statement-section-67-of-the-immigration-act-2016/factsheet-section-67-of-the-immigration-act-2016>

³³ Background on Dublin III Regulation: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9031/?mc_cid=1dcf0ddfce&mc_eid=3652503539

³⁴ For this reason the government has committed to reviewing this in early 2020.

³⁵ <https://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/brexit-news/europe-news/sarah-wolff-on-migrant-channel-crossings-1848362>

³⁶ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-refugees-legal-route-home-office-b1792353.html>

³⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/policy-statement-section-67-of-the-immigration-act-2016/factsheet-section-67-of-the-immigration-act-2016>

³⁸ <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/news/media-centre/press-releases/200000-lone-child-migrants-in-europe>

3. The strategy and timeline of National Transfer Scheme reforms should be published and rolled out as a matter of urgency.
 - > This must be properly funded so that all LAs have the resources to support greater numbers of unaccompanied children and feel confident they can meet children's needs. The replacement scheme needs to be stronger than the current voluntary scheme so children can be quickly and easily settled into new homes.
 - > In the event that Kent County Council reaches capacity again before the NTS is reformed, contingency planning such as expanding and improving the current site, either on a temporary or permanent basis.
4. A strategy for monitoring processes and improvements made at the Kent Intake Unit in relation to child safeguarding and welfare.
 - > Data on a) child detention, b) non-detained waiting times and c) reasons for detention over 24 hours should be published twice a year, so the outcome of the unit's improvement measures can be monitored.
 - > The unit should publish a report one year after the publication of its service improvement plan³⁹, which was developed in response to the recent inspectorate report. This report should summarise all the improvement measures which have been put in place and outline what the impact on children has been.

³⁹ As detailed in its service improvement plan: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/10/2020-Migrants-Arriving-in-Dover-in-Small-Boats-final-SIP.pdf>

Appendix

Number of children who arrived at the Kent Intake Unit between April and September 2020 by family status

Family status	Total number of children					
	April	May	June	July	August	Sept
Unaccompanied children	39	58	84	68	108	99
Children with families	49	92	52	89	131	117
Total	88	150	136	157	239	216

Minimum, mean, median and maximum length of stay (in hours) in the Short Term Holding Facility (STHF) of unaccompanied children arriving at the Kent Intake Unit

Month	Minimum length of stay (hours)	Average (mean) length of stay (hours)	Median length of stay (hours)	Maximum length of stay (hours)
April	5	12	8	30
May	5	17	16	40
June	5	13	10	35
July	5	13	10	30
Aug	0	19	15	65
Sept	0	16	15	40

Note: Minimum and maximum lengths of stay have been rounded to the nearest 5 hours

Distribution of length of stay in the Short Term Holding Facility (STHF) of unaccompanied children of unaccompanied children arriving at the Kent Intake Unit

Month	Percentage of children present in the unit for the given length of time				
	less than 6 hours	6 - 12 hours	12 - 18 hours	18 - 24 hours	More than 24 hours
April	23%	46%	8%	10%	13%
May	14%	21%	24%	17%	24%
June	14%	51%	17%	6%	12%
July	15%	40%	15%	21%	10%
Aug	6%	26%	23%	14%	31%
Sept	9%	24%	29%	27%	10%

Number of children recorded entering the non-detained Atrium between the hours of 00:00 and 07:00am between April - August 2020

Monthly logs	Total entries logged	Number entering Atrium between hours of 00:00 - 07:00
April PDF	60	16
May PDF	32	2
June PDF	59	8
July PDF	54	3
Aug PDF	109	22
Total	314	51

*Atrium logs analysed do not correspond exactly to a specific calendar month, for example, the April log covers the period from 4th April – 9th May. However, an average can be obtained from the total entries logged between April – August.

Minimum, mean, median and maximum of length of stay (in hours) of unaccompanied children from entry into the Atrium to point of departure to receiving LA

Month	Minimum length of stay (hours)	Average (mean) length of stay (hours)	Median length of stay (hours)	Maximum length of stay (hours)
Sept	<1	17	16	>38
Oct	<2	28	23	>65
Nov	<1	32	24	>95
Dec	<2	9	4	>40

*Atrium data has only been processed for September-December. The Children’s Commissioner has been provided with hand-written logs for the months April-August indicating that the duration of stay in the Atrium prior to September is around 2-3 hours, which shows the drastic impact that action taken by Kent County Council had on waiting times.

Distribution of length of stay (in hours) of unaccompanied children from entry into the Atrium to point of departure to receiving LA

Month	Children present in the unit for the given length of time				
	less than 6 hours	6 - 12 hours	12 - 18 hours	18 - 24 hours	More than 24 hours
Sept	28%	16%	7%	11%	38%
Oct	27%	2%	12%	10%	49%
Nov	12%	4%	14%	20%	50%
Dec	78%	9%	0%	0%	13%

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