



## **OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER FROM TOP CHILDRENS CHARITIES: DITCH PLANS TO LOCK UP REFUGEE CHILDREN**

The UK's top children's charities have joined refugee charities, faith leaders, medical bodies and others to call on the government to scrap plans to lock up refugee children as part of the Illegal Migration Bill.

The 152 signatories to an open letter to the Prime Minister, coordinated by Together With Refugees, include NSPCC, Save the Children, Barnardo's, The Children's Society, Coram and Children England, as well as the BMA, MSF, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Choose Love, Freedom from Torture, Refugee Council, Safe Passage International, Citizens UK and Plan International UK.

Here is the full letter and list of signatories:

Dear Prime Minister,

The Illegal Migration Bill will not just strip people fleeing war and persecution of their right to seek safety but punish them, based simply on how they came here, not whether they need protection. UNHCR has stated that the bill, if passed, would amount to an asylum ban.

One of the most extreme and cruel aspects of the bill is the proposal to detain children who have already suffered the terrible trauma of fleeing their home and making a dangerous journey to the UK. A Refugee Council impact assessment found that this could affect over 45,000 children in the first three years of the bill coming into force, including nearly 15,000 children who have been separated from their parents and have come to the UK alone.

Before the coalition government ended the routine detention of children in the UK in 2011, medical experts found that almost all detained children suffered a significant deterioration in their mental and physical health as a direct result of their detention. Reported child mental health difficulties included emotional and psychological regression, post-traumatic stress disorder, clinical depression, and suicidal behaviour.

Most people would rightly be appalled by the idea of detaining thousands of children who arrive here in search of safety, having fled war zones and persecution. As a nation, we must stand firm in our commitment to uphold children's rights and show care and compassion to any child in desperate need of protection.

Today we stand together to call on your government to retain existing time limits which prevent the routine detention of refugee babies, toddlers, and children.

Your sincerely,

Aberlour Children's Charity, SallyAnn Kelly OBE, Chief Executive

African Rainbow Family, Aderonke Apata, Founder and CEO

Art Refuge, Bobby Lloyd, CEO

Article 39, Carolyne Willow, Director

Ashton Churches Asylum Project, Dr C Wooff, Joint Leader

Asylum Aid, Alison Pickup, Director

Asylum Matters, Paul Hook, Director

Asylum Welcome, Mark Goldring, Director

Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile, Sheila Melzak, Director

Baptist Union of Great Britain, Rev Lynn Green, General Secretary

Barnardo's, Lynn Perry MBE, CEO

BFAWU, Ian Hodson, National President

Big Leaf Foundation, Kayte Cable and Vicki Felgate, Co-founders

Birmingham City of Sanctuary, Dr David Brown, Chair

Black Europeans, Elmedina Baptista-Mendes, Chair

BMA (British Medical Association), Dr Jan Wise, Chair of Medical Ethics Committee

Bristol Refugee Rights, Qerim Nuredini, CEO

British Association of Social Workers, Dr Ruth Allen, Chief Executive

Calderdale Valley of Sanctuary, Amber Ray, Communications and Engagement Officer

Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Campaign, Adrian Matthews, Trustee

CARAS, Eleanor Brown, CEO

Care4Calais, Steve Smith MBE, CEO

Caritas Diocese of Salford, Patrick O'Dowd, Director

Caritas Shrewsbury, Ben Gilchrist, Chief Executive

Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN), Raymond Friel, CEO

Children England, Kathy Evans, CEO

Children's Rights Alliance for England (part of Just for Kids Law), Louise King, Director

Choose Love, Josie Naughton, CEO

Citizens of the World Choir, Tess Berry-Hart, Director

Citizens UK, James Blatchley-Asfa, Assistant Director

City of Sanctuary UK, Sian Summers-Rees, Chief Officer

Columbans in Britain, Mauricio Silva, IRD Coordinator

Communities Together Durham, Rev. Joanne Thorns, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Project Co-ordinator

Coram, Dr Carol Homden CBE, Chief Executive

Coventry Against Racism, Anthony Conway, Secretary

Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre, Toni Soni, Centre Director

Darlington Assistance for Refugees, Fran Wood, Chair

Daughters of Charity Services, Mark Choonara, Chief Executive Officer

Daughters of Charity, Rosalie Rendu Province, Elizabeth Ferrie, Representative

Detention Action, James Wilson, Director

Detention Forum, Jonathan Ellis, Project Director

Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support, Tom Rose , Case worker

ECPAT UK, Patricia Durr, CEO

Europaia, Kush Chottera, CEO

Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees, Ros Gowers, Coordinator

Fatima House, Nathalie Marytsch, Deputy Co-ordinator

FODI, Sunderland, Steve Newman, Chair

forRefugees, Amber Bauer, CEO

Freedom from Torture, Sonya Sceats, CEO

Friends of Refugees London, Shaharazad Abuel-Ealeh, Trustee

Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group, Anna Pincus, Director

Global Link, Gisela Renolds, Executive Director

Govan Community Project, Traci Kirkland, Head of Charity

Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, Denise McDowell, CEO

Harrogate District Of Sanctuary, Catherine Margham, Volunteer

Hastings Community of Sanctuary, Polly Gifford, Co-Chair

Hay, Brecon and Talgarth Sanctuary for Refugees, Ailsa Dunn, Secretary

Helen Bamber Foundation, Kerry Smith, Chief Executive

Home Office Vigil, Barbara Kentish, Co-organiser

Hope for the Young, Matt Blacker, Chief Executive

Horsforth Chaplaincy Project, Rose McCarthy, Refugee Support Worker

Humans for Rights Network, Maddie Harris, Director

Humans of Wolverhampton, Mary Solomon, Lead

Islamic Relief UK, Tufail Hussain, UK Director

Jesuit Refugee Service UK, Sarah Teather, Director

Justice and Peace Coordinating Council Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, Phil Watson, Chair

JustRight Scotland, Emma Hutton, CEO

Kids in Need of Defense UK (KIND UK), Katie Fennell, National Coordinator

Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network, Jon Beech, Director

Leicester City of Sanctuary, Pete Hobson, Chair of trustees

Liberty, Ruth Ehrlich, Head of Policy and Campaigns

Magic for Smiles, Jamie Balfour-Paul, Founder and Performing Magician

Malvern Green Space, Nadia Abdo, Chair of Trustees

Manchester Community Central, Molly Lipinski, Violence Reduction Alliance Facilitator

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) UK, Dr Natalie Roberts, Executive Director

Medical Justice, Emma Ginn, Director

Methodist Central Hall Manchester, Revd. Ian Rutherford, City Centre Minister

Migrant Democracy Project, Lara Parizotto, Co-Director

Migrant English Project, Maude Casey, Volunteer Caseworker

Music Action International, Lis Murphy, Creative Director

Muslim Council of Britain, Zara Mohammed, Secretary-General

National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW), Margaret Clark, NBCW President Emeritus

NNRF, Debbie Royle, Deputy Director

NSPCC, Sir Peter Wanless, CEO

NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service), Rita Waters, Group Chief Executive (England and Wales)

Opora, Stan Beneš, Managing Director

Our Lady of Kirkstall Friends of Refugees, Angela McNulty, Retired Teacher

Our Second Home, Amos Schonfield, CEO

PAFRAS, Karen Pearse, Director

Pax Christi Scotland, Marian Pallister, Chair

Plan International UK, Rose Caldwell, CEO

Prisoners of Conscience, Gary Allison, Director

Project 17, Abi Brunswick, Director

Project Play, Katie Hall, Advocacy Coordinator

Rainbow Refugees NI, Niamh Rowan, Chair

RAPAR, Alimamy Bangura, Co-Chair

Red Leicester Choir, Charlotte Knight, Secretary

Refugee & Migration Forum of Essex and London (RAMFEL), Nick Beales, Head of Campaigns

Refugee and Migrant Centre (West Midlands), Shari Brown, Partnership and Development Manager

Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium, Kamena Dorling, Co-Chair

Refugee Council, Enver Solomon, CEO

Refugee Education UK, Catherine Gladwell, Chief Executive

Refugee Psychology Service, Kideshini Widyaratna, Clinical Psychologist

Refugee Resource Centre for Churches, Dave Smith, Coordinator

Refugee Support Group – Berkshire, Nick Harborne, CEO

Refugee Women Connect, Alison Moore, CEO

Refugee Youth Service, Camilla Gordon, Chair of Board

René Cassin, the Jewish voice for human rights, Mia Hasenson-Gross, Executive Director

Restore – a project of Birmingham Churches Together, Jeremy Thompson, Manager

Reunite Families UK, Caroline Coombs, Chief Executive Officer

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Professor Andrew Rowland, Officer for Child Protection

Safe Passage International, Katie Morrison, CEO

Saheliya, Shruti Jain, Chairwoman

Sanctuary on Sea, Fatehullah Naserzai, Coordinator

Save the Children, Gwen Hines, Chief Executive

Scotswood Garden, Karen Dobson, CEO

Scottish Refugee Council, Sabir Zazai, Chief Executive

Seeking Sanctuary, Phil Kerton, Co-Director

Seraphus, Christopher Desira, Director

Shpresa Programme, Luljeta Nuzi, CEO

Six Ways Erdington Baptist Church, Rev Gerard Goshawk, Pastor

Skipton Refugee Support Group, Charles Dobson, Chair

Social Workers Without Borders, Naomi Jackson, Development Lead

Solace Surviving Exile and Persecution, Anne Burghgraef, Clinical Director

South London Refugee Association, Celia Sands, CEO

St Chad's Sanctuary, Abigail Martin, Manager

St Paul's Church Birmingham, David Tomlinson, Vicar

STAR (Student Action for Refugees), Emily Crowley, Chief Executive

Stories of Hope and Home, Stephanie Neville, Project Manager

Street Talk, Pip Hockton, Director

Suffolk Refugee Support , Rebecca Crerar, Charity Manager

Tees Valley of Sanctuary , Satinder Collins, Chair

The Angelou Centre, Nikita Kaur, Children and Young Survivor Service Manager

The Baca Charity, Jimmy Zachariah, CEO



The Babylon Project, Ali Ghaderi, Founder

The Children's Society, Mark Russell, CEO

The Separated Child Foundation, Richard Hammond, CEO

The William Gomes Podcast, William Gomes, Director

Thread Ahead, Saskia Borchardt-Hume, CEO

Thrive Trafford, Caroline Lewis, Communications & Service Delivery Manager

Together with Migrant Children, Nick Watts, Director

Tuned2Reflection Limited, Tony Lambert , Director

Tynemouth Together with Refugees, Penny Henry, Spokesperson

Voices in Exile, Mel Steel, Director

Voices Without Borders, Ewa Lelontko, Co-founder

Walking with In North Tyneside, Joan Hout, Chief Executive Officer

Welcome Group Halesowen, Andrew Harwood, Project Manager

Welsh Refugee Council, Andrea Cleaver, CEO

Women for Refugee Women, Alphonsine Kabagabo, Director

Women's Support Project, Claire Cooke, Project Coordinator

Yorkshire and Humberside Maternity Stream of Sanctuary, Diana Flores Gallardo,  
Senior Project Manager

Young Roots, Jo Copley, CEO