



## What we do in England

- We're campaigning for an end to the detention of children seeking asylum
- We've trained young refugees and asylum-seekers to run their own campaigns against discrimination and racism
- We're helping children facing exclusion from school to have their voice heard



There are more than 20,000 asylum-seeking children in England. Many have fled conflict and abuse. Many young asylum-seekers do not have their basic rights respected and are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. We believe that these children should be given the same protection and rights as other children in the UK.

Many children in England are missing out on a good-quality education. Some 9,000 are permanently excluded from school each year. An additional 10,000 are simply not getting an education.

England has one of the worst rates of child poverty in the industrialised world: more than one in four children live in poverty. That's over 3 million children. Almost one in ten live in severe poverty. This is unacceptable and we're determined to change it.

### Save the Children in England

We've campaigned for the rights of children in England for over 80 years. Our work today is focused on the most deprived communities in four regions: London, the Midlands, the North West, and the North East. We want long-term change for some of the most vulnerable children across the country: those growing up in poverty; those missing out on a good quality education; those who have come to England to seek refuge and asylum.

Children and young people take an active part in all our work. We consult with them to find out about their experiences and ideas for tackling the problems they face. We help them

develop these ideas and put them into practice. And we help them present their views to people in power, so they can play a part in bringing about lasting changes.

## **Key Areas of Work**

### **We're helping refugee and asylum-seeking children to have their rights respected**

About 2,000 asylum-seeking children are detained every year for the purpose of immigration control. We are appalled at this. In April 2006 we launched the No Place for a Child Campaign, aimed at ending this practice. We are now working to develop alternatives to detention.

There are currently more than 9,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the UK. These children, separated from their families, are particularly vulnerable. Save the Children believes that these children are currently not adequately protected and cared for. The majority face an uncertain future. We're calling on the government to set up a system of guardianship for all separated children subject to immigration control in order to ensure that the child's best interests are taken into account. When these young people turn 18, they no longer have any of the protection afforded to them as children. They need support at this point and we run workshops and training for the young people concerned, and the professionals working with them.

We've also set up a number of projects working with young refugees and asylum-seekers. Brighter Futures enables groups of these young people in Tees Valley, Manchester and London to speak out on their own behalf and run campaigns on the issues that affect them. The groups have produced publications and posters, set up a website, arranged workshops and taken part in conferences and consultations. Through this work the young people have learned communication skills and gained self-confidence. This helps them to integrate into the communities where they live. Their activities have been reported in the regional and national press, TV and radio. Currently they're working on campaigns to stop racist bullying and to get better access to higher education and social services.

BUMP is the Befriending Unaccompanied Minors project in Birmingham. It gives young people the opportunity to meet with members of their own communities and with British young people. It aims to help them overcome isolation and develop the confidence and skills to help them rebuild their lives in the UK. BUMP runs a drop-in session, advice surgery and one-to-one befriending support.

In Newcastle, the Kumasi Project works with 150 unaccompanied young refugees and asylum-seekers. It enables them to meet and take part in group work and social activities. It also offers support and advice relating to social services and asylum processes.

Young refugees and asylum-seekers face a great deal of discrimination, fuelled by hostile media coverage. Through the Positive Press project, Save the Children is helping over 75 young people in London, Coventry and Newcastle to work together, using different forms of media to challenge racism and bullying and reduce community tension.

Some children arriving in the UK from abroad have been the victims of child traffickers. There is a lack of awareness of this problem among local authorities. We are working partners such as children's services, Local Safeguarding Children's boards and the Police to strengthen the

response to this and ensure children are adequately protected. Together with ECPAT UK we undertook research which highlighted the depth of the issue in Manchester, Newcastle, Coventry and Birmingham. Of grave concern were the 52 children who had gone missing in those locations. This gives an indication of the scale of the problem across the country. In the Midlands we organised a conference on child trafficking, and a task force is being set up to work on the recommendations that were drawn up. We've helped the government develop an anti-trafficking action plan, with children as a priority group. These trafficked children are in urgent need of appropriate protection and care, and we're calling for the government to make sure that they get it.

### **We're working to help excluded children get back into education**

Many children in England miss out on education, and we want to change this. About 9,000 children are permanently excluded from school each year, and many more are at risk of exclusion. Another 10,000 are missing from the education system altogether. Those most at risk from exclusion include children with special educational needs, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and boys from an African-Caribbean background.

We're working directly with pupils facing exclusion. We believe that these children should have the opportunity to state their case, and have an independent advocate to make sure that their interests are properly represented. Our "EAR to Listen" project aims to reduce the number of children excluded from school or at risk of being excluded. We've set up independent education advocacy and mediation services across the country. The advocates listen to children, work with them and their teachers to find ways of getting them back into school, and then support them to stay there.

Altogether we've contacted 200 pupils, 271 parents and 311 professionals. More than half the cases are children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. They include refugees and asylum-seekers, young carers, children in care, those with special educational needs, and those using drugs and other harmful substances.

We run a project to help Gypsy, Roma and Traveller preschool children to help them access good quality, inclusive early-years education. In partnership with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, we've produced a guide for people working in early years centres. The aim is to help 3,000 children from these communities to get access to appropriate early years education.

We are now beginning to develop new work to ensure that children from deprived backgrounds have the same opportunities to achieve highly in their education as their peers. We know that education is one of the surest routes out of poverty and believe that all children deserve a good quality, appropriate education.

### **We're lobbying government to ensure children's rights are respected**

The UK ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991. But children's rights are still being violated in this country. We work with others to monitor the UK government's observance of the UNCRC. Countries have to produce a report every five years on their progress on meeting the UNCRC provisions. We were a member of the consortium that the UK government contracted to consult with children and young people on their views about education, physical punishment, poverty and other issues that affect them. The government will include these views in the report it will submit in 2008 – the first time this has happened.

Under the Convention, states should give refugee children special protection and assistance. But the UK has reserved the right to exclude children subject to immigration control from the Convention's provisions. We are campaigning for the government to withdraw this reservation.

### **We're calling for all smacking to be banned**

We believe that smacking children is a breach of their fundamental human rights. We should protect children from physical assault in the same way that we protect adults. The 2004 Children Act did introduce a partial change in the law, but hitting children can still be justified as 'reasonable chastisement'. We are campaigning for further legislation to change this. Meanwhile, we've produced videos and training materials to help parents and childminders find non-violent alternatives to smacking.

### **We're lobbying the government to end child poverty**

Many low-income families struggle to pay for basic necessities such as adequate heating and nutritious food. Poverty also causes social exclusion and limited access to local services such as leisure activities. The government has promised to halve poverty by 2010 and end it by 2020. We monitor the government's progress and we've found it is nowhere near meeting its targets. We've been lobbying the government to make seasonal cash grants to low-income families. These would help them meet particularly high costs in winter, such as fuel and warm clothes. Partly as a result of our campaign, 100 MPs signed an early day motion to introduce seasonal grants.,



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