

Question:

Please provide the information for the period 1 April 2024 to the latest full month for which data is available. Where possible, please provide data broken down by financial year and by Health and Social Care Trust.

1. Please provide any centrally held dataset, dashboard, management information return, commissioning return or performance report showing the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and/or separated children known to each Health and Social Care Trust.
2. Please provide any centrally held dataset, dashboard, management information return, commissioning return or performance report showing, by Trust where held:
 - a) The number of referrals to the Independent Guardian Service;
 - b) the number of referrals accepted by the Independent Guardian Service;
 - c) the number of referrals not accepted, rejected or closed without allocation;
 - d) the referral source;
 - e) the Trust area;
 - f) the number of referrals involving age-disputed children or young people;
 - g) the number of referrals involving children or young people recorded as potentially trafficked, suspected trafficked, referred to the National Referral Mechanism, or otherwise recorded as having modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation concerns.
3. Please also provide any centrally held dataset, dashboard, management information return, commissioning return or performance report showing, by Trust where held:
 - a) The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and/or separated children recorded as age-disputed, potentially trafficked, suspected trafficked, referred to the National Referral Mechanism, or otherwise recorded as having modern slavery, trafficking, exploitation or safeguarding concerns;
 - b) of those children, the number referred to the Independent Guardian Service;
 - c) of those children, the number not referred to the Independent Guardian Service, where held;
 - d) of those children, the number for whom IGS referral status is not recorded or not known.
4. Please also provide any centrally held dataset, dashboard, management information return, commissioning return or performance report showing, by Trust where held:
 - a) The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and/or separated children recorded as missing, absent, missing from care, missing from placement, or missing while open to Trust children's services or the Independent Guardian Service;
 - b) of those children, the number referred to the Independent Guardian Service;
 - c) of those children, the number not referred to the Independent Guardian Service, where held;
 - d) of those children, the number for whom IGS referral status is not recorded or not known;
 - e) of those children, the number whose IGS case or Trust case was closed while they were still recorded as missing, where held.
5. Please provide any centrally held data or monitoring report showing the timeliness of referral to, acceptance by, or allocation within the Independent Guardian Service, including

any average, median, longest wait, waiting-time category, or number awaiting allocation, where held.

6. Please provide any current contract monitoring return, reporting template, dashboard template, service specification or key performance indicator document used to monitor the Independent Guardian Service, including any field or indicator relating to:
 - a) referral source;
 - b) Trust area;
 - c) referral acceptance;
 - d) waiting time or allocation time;
 - e) age-disputed children or young people; f. trafficking, modern slavery or National Referral Mechanism status; g. missing, absent, or missing-from-care children or young people; h. whether the child or young person has an allocated Trust social worker or Personal Adviser.
7. Please provide the current regional guidance, procedure, template or screening tool concerning referral of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children or separated children to the Independent Guardian Service.

Response:

1. Table 1 provides the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and/or separated children known to each Health and Social Care Trust at the 31 March 2025.

Table 1

Open Separated and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children (S/UASC) Cases Under and Over 18 at 31/3/2025

HSC Trust	Under 18	Over 18	Total
BHSCT	36	61	97
NHSCT	36	43	79
SEHSCT	40	37	77
SHSCT	34	46	80
WHSCT	31	47	78
Total	177	234	411

Table 2 provides the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and/or separated children known to each Health and Social Care Trust at the 31 March 2026.

Table 2

Open Separated and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children (S/UASC) Cases Under and Over 18 at 31/3/2026

HSC Trust	Under 18	Over 18	Total
BHSCT	28	80	108
NHSCT	25	70	95
SEHSCT	26	76	102
SHSCT	24	70	94
WHSCT	25	76	101
Total	128	372	500

- Table 3 provides details of the number of referrals received and accepted by the Independent Guardian Service including the referral source.

Table 3

Financial year	Number of referrals received by IGS	NHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	BHSCT	SEHSCT
1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025	84	15	15	18	22	14
1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026	█	█	13	16	13	19

You will note some minor redactions throughout the information provided in this response, in relation to suppressing small numbers or those totals which would allow discovery of those small numbers. I would direct you to appendix 1 attached in regards to the applicable exemption in this instance.

The Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the DOH does not hold the information requested relating to points c, e, f and g of your request.

- Table 4 provides information on the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and/or separated children recorded as age-disputed.

Table 4

HSC Trust	Number of age disputes resolved 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025	Number of age disputes resolved 1 April 2025 – 31 Mar 2026
BHSCT	12	6
NHSCT	█	6
SEHSCT	7	5
SHSCT	10	█
WHSCT	5	6

Note: Whilst centrally held data cannot accurately record how many children were age disputed in a particular time frame it does record how many age disputes were resolved in specific timeframes.

The Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the DOH does not hold the information requested relating to point a in particular “.....potentially trafficked, suspected trafficked, referred to the National Referral Mechanism*, or otherwise recorded as having modern slavery, trafficking, exploitation or safeguarding concerns;”, b, c and d of your request.

*Note: The Home Office (as the Single Competent Authority) will hold central data relating to referrals to the NRM since 02/01/2026 following the commencement of the NI Devolved NRM Decision Making Pilot.

You may wish to contact the Home Office who may be in a position to provide further information and I have included their FOI contact email address for convenience:

foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk

4. Table 5 provides details of the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and/or separated children recorded as missing, absent, missing from care, missing from placement, or missing while open to Trust children's services or the Independent Guardian Service;

Note: This is for children reported missing for more than 24 hrs

Table 5

	WHSCT	SHSCT	SEHSCT	NHSCT	BHSCT	Total
1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025	■	■	■	■	■	6
1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026	■	■	■	■	■	11

Please note that the large majority of these children were subsequently recovered.

The Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) of the DOH does not hold the information requested relating to points b, c, d and e of your request.

5. Table 6 provides information on the total number of open cases, number of referrals, number of closures and number of cases awaiting allocation for each quarter from 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2026.

Table 6

Quarter	Total open cases	Referrals	Closures	Cases awaiting allocation
April 24-June 24	161	20	19	Not stated
July 24-Sep 24	170	22	16	35
Oct 24-Dec 24	171	25	23	44
Jan 25-Mar 25	168	17	27	32
April 25-June 25	134	26	10	41
July 25-Sep 25	126	12	13	47
Oct 25-Dec 25	123	12	19	44
Jan 26-Mar 26	113	14	26	41

Please note: The total number of open cases reported by the IGS includes cases awaiting allocation in 2024-25. The total number of open cases reported by the IGS includes cases awaiting allocation in 2025-26 does not include cases awaiting allocation.

6. I have provided a copy of the latest version of the monitoring report document, I refer you to appendix 2 attached.
7. I have provided a copy of The Independent Guardian Service for Trafficked and/or Separated Children/Young People Guidance on Section 21 of Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, see appendix 3.

A copy of the Independent Guardian Service Referral Form, see appendix 4.

Appendices may be requested from the Information Management Branch (IMB) if required at the following address:

- FOI@health-ni.gov.uk

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