

We understand that un-managed immigration is a cause of concern to many people, but something that seems to get forgotten often in the rhetoric around illegal immigrants and failed asylum seekers is the impact on children.

We see every day the emotional impact that living in destitute has on children- being moved from city to city, not having enough to eat, not having coats to wear in winter, and often not even having a bed to sleep in. These children also witness the constant stress and strain that their parents are under; in our experience, unhappy parents mean unhappy children. Most of the parents we support have experienced trauma (rape, witnessed murder of relatives etc) which has a huge impact on their mental state (many are admitted to hospital due to psychosis & depression), which impacts hugely on the children.

For many of those seeking asylum, they have little or no support networks in place. They are separated from friends and families, most parents do not even know if their own relatives back home are dead or alive. We hear all the time from these families, that they had no one to turn to before Home-Start.

We sometimes need to remind ourselves what these children may have experienced in their own countries and the emotional turmoil they may have seen their parents go through. We need to remind ourselves why they are often seeking asylum in the first place.

As a family support charity, we are concerned about the plans to remove the £36 per week entitlement currently given to those families seeking asylum. That small amount of money is all these human beings have to survive on. Removing this money could potentially mean that children of failed asylum seekers will be placed into care and their parents, left destitute, are then deported. Breaking that crucial link with their parents. The resulting trauma for children of being removed from their parents and family home and the subsequent costs to the care system is far more costly than £36 a week. It would simply transfer the burden of financial responsibility but have a devastating impact on families.

We have to think of the long-term implications of this. No child deserves to grow up in care, regardless of their country of origin. The impact of the care system on young children is enormous, and lasts a lifetime.

Home-Start, like so many other front line charities is keenly aware of funding cuts and reductions in public services. We know there's lots to be done in Welfare Reform, but we also know that children are often the innocent victims in central decision- making, please let's not us forget that.

---