

Update - Separated Children - Vulnerable, Alone and in Need of Our Protection

30.5.14

NICCY has been particularly concerned about the support for separated children, the small and largely invisible group of children who arrive into Northern Ireland on their own and who are likely to have experienced difficulties and traumatic experiences before, during and after they arrive here. You can read the [report I commissioned in relation to this here](#) and the [press release here](#).

Since launching the report in October 2013, NICCY has been monitoring the progress of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill, which is currently going through the Assembly, and which includes a proposal to provide a 'Guardian' to assist, support and protect child victims of trafficking. [You can read more about this here](#).

NICCY is fully supportive of this proposal and alongside other key stakeholders has called for this provision to be extended to all 'separated' children in line with the [recommendations from the Committee on the Rights of the Child](#). Separated children would include trafficked children, asylum seeking children arriving without the support of their parent or carer or a migrant child arriving alone.

Identification and disclosure of trafficking can be difficult; research has reported cases where victims have been identified more quickly when guardians have been in place. ([She Endures Me, Scottish Guardianship Research](#)). Separated children are extremely vulnerable; extending the remit of the guardian would fit with the overall intention of the Bill which is to prevent crime or further harm. This would require no or minimal additional resources due to the small numbers involved.

NICCY is currently engaging with the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety, other relevant departments, agencies and the NGO sector on all recommendations coming from our Guardianship Research.

If implemented, the recommendations have the potential to make Northern Ireland a model of good practice for the rest of the world and be the first part of the UK to make the appointment of a guardian a legal right for all separated children.