

215,000

The latest research tells us that there are at least **215,000** undocumented children living in the UK today.

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INTRODUCTION

We strive for a world where the rights and well-being of all children are protected by ensuring access to high-quality, free legal assistance to navigate a complex immigration system. We also pursue systemic change by seeking to influence policy and practice affecting children impacted by UK immigration and nationality law.

Children in the UK with insecure immigration status are at the heart of what we do. With research suggesting that there are 215,000 undocumented children living in the UK, a number which, in the wake of Brexit, may be an underestimation, we will continue to support them on their path to British citizenship.

It's estimated that half of the undocumented children in the UK were born here and most have been educated in the UK and speak English as their main language. However, all lack the security provided by British citizenship or, at least, secure immigration status. This has practical, social and economic impacts and permeates their everyday lives. It affects family life, employment prospects,

social networks, friendships, housing, access to medical help and justice. As they transition into adulthood these young people are excluded from work and higher education and may even be removed to a country they have never lived in or even visited. It is our ambition to change this and create a world where every child has the opportunity to thrive.

As Kids in Need of Defense UK sets out into a new phase of its development we will use our learning and expertise to help a broader range of children impacted by the UK's post-Brexit immigration laws and policies. In particular, we will seek to reunite separated children on the move in Europe who have family living in the UK. Many of these children are fleeing war, exploitation, poverty, and other trauma in the Middle East, Africa, or Asia. Most are unaware or unable to access the protection and support for which they are eligible, including legal, health, housing, and education assistance. As a result, they are extremely vulnerable to violence, trafficking, exploitation, abuse, and other harm.

VISION AND MISSION

OUR VISION

A world in which every child and young person has access to their legal rights and entitlements. We look forward to working with our partners and supporters to achieve this vision.

In 2016, with the support of KIND US, and a long term funding relationship with Microsoft, four UK not-for-profits together pioneered a UK first: a ground-breaking pro-bono model of legal support with the potential to help thousands of children and young people achieve secure immigration status, opening up opportunities for them to fulfil their potential.

OUR MISSION

To provide access to justice and due process to resolve the immigration status of children, young people and their immediate family members in the UK. We achieve this by harnessing the legal skills of lawyers working on a pro bono basis to provide specialised immigration legal advice and representation and by advocating for improvements in policy and practice

To achieve our mission, we are guided by the following principles:

1. We maintain a child rights-centred approach, which means:
 - The aim of our programme is to ensure the realisation of children's rights
 - Children's rights principles inform the way we plan and carry out our work
 - We promote the respect for, protection and fulfilment of children's rights
2. Our services are accessible, specialist, professional, expert, high quality; and they are free.
3. We only provide services that are not eligible for public funding, or where public funding is inadequate or inaccessible.
4. We safeguard our independence, remain politically neutral and always act in the best interests of our client.
5. We adopt a learning approach, seeking to continuously improve and innovate.
6. Our organisation is shaped by learning from those we seek to help, from our partners and KIND in the US and elsewhere in Europe.
7. We are flexible and adaptable to meet changing needs and emerging problems as case demand dictates, while ensuring quality mentoring to support pro bono lawyers throughout the process.
8. All colleagues play an equal role in achieving our goal, and all acknowledge responsibility to each other in the way we play our part.

2019 – 2022 ACHIEVEMENTS

In the last three years we have deepened our commitment to creating a national pro bono movement that can address the needs of children with unresolved immigration status. Using our tried and tested pro bono model we have expanded the programme to support the work of 25 law firms and two corporate partners across five hubs, in four regions.

Additionally, we have developed the skills and expertise of our supervising solicitors and pro bono lawyers enabling them to take on complex cases, including applications in the High Court. This means that we can provide a service which most children and young people with complex citizenship legal issues would not be able to access anywhere else.

Building on insights from our casework and the expertise of our hubs we embarked on a programme of local authority policy influencing. Developing a framework, and the means with which to embed it in local authority practice, more children and young people will receive the help they need at the earliest opportunity.

700

We provided legal assistance to over 700 individuals.

99%

We achieved a 99% success rate.

450

We engaged over 450 lawyers working on 1 case or more.

OBJECTIVE ONE

To build upon our existing success and continue to develop our national pro bono movement to better meet the legal needs of children and young people with unresolved immigration issues.

Continued limitations in the provision of legal aid across the UK mean children and young people do not always qualify for free and specialist legal help with citizenship and immigration applications. Families rarely have funds to pay for legal advice or representation in addition to application fees; a wasted fee may mean a family cannot afford to try again. They may be unable to access specialist advice particularly when the application is complex and sometimes they won't be able to access any advice at all. In this context, securing permanent solutions to children and young people's immigration status can be challenging.

HOW

Our pioneering work with partner law firms and KIND in the US has shown that it's possible to build an effective national model of pro-bono engagement to take on this challenge. We will continue to invest in our established pro bono partnerships and work to build new ones so that we can continue to help children and young people, particular for children with complex nationality law issues who cannot access help anywhere else. We will build and sustain relationships with a wide range of funders and supporters to sustain the movement financially.

BY 2025

- **We will have served a further 1200 children and young people**
- **250 lawyers a year will work on one at least one case**
- **25% of lawyers will have taken on three or more cases**
- **We'll be working with 35 law firms or corporations**
- **We'll have built a regular and sustainable income stream**

OBJECTIVE TWO

To expand the programme to address the needs of migrant/UK-born children living in the UK with unresolved immigration status and those living overseas with family in the UK.

HOW

Developing a remote service to support legal representation for those living in advice deserts.

Strengthening our presence and casework capacity in London.

Utilising our unique position as part of the wider KIND network to help children on the move in Europe access safe routes to the UK.

Continuing to build and sustain relationships with a wide range of funders and supporters to sustain the movement financially.

By 2025

- **We will be operating in at least one advice desert**
- **We will be operating in a new London hub**
- **We will be operating a family reunion programme in partnership with KIND in mainland Europe**

OBJECTIVE THREE

Kids in Need of Defense UK utilises its learning and expertise to advocate in support of children and young people's rights and access to justice.

The situation for children and young people with insecure immigration status is exacerbated by complex and inadequate laws, procedures and policies at both a UK and international level. We want to advocate for change in these areas.

HOW

Building on policy influencing work started in 2021 we will:

Develop a long-term implementation plan for our child rights framework for local authorities.

Seek to broaden its use to multiple governmental institutions that interact with children.

Spread a message that children with unresolved immigration issues must be seen, heard and helped.

Utilise the expertise of KIND's partners in mainland Europe to seek to influence at an international level.

We will use our position to involve all partners in a determined and comprehensive effort to seek policy change and influence the public narrative. We will engage pro bono lawyers involved in this work to build a greater understanding of the issues affecting children and young people with insecure immigration status. We will work with others in the sector to build relationships of influence. We will continue to support strategic litigation. We will work with KIND in the US and Europe to strengthen the global voice for children and young people with unresolved immigration issues.

By 2025

- **We will have developed a childrens rights focussed framework and resources for training relevant professionals**
- **We will have piloted different approaches with at least one local authority**
- **We will develop an awareness raising campaign to support the work**
- **We will develop a long- term implementation and systems change plan**

OBJECTIVE FOUR

We will use technology to connect with clients and professionals and provide more efficient advice.

The number of children, young people and families requiring help is vast and the number of experienced immigration solicitors is small, this limits the amount of casework we can supervise. We will utilise technology to drive efficiency and direct our supervising solicitor's expertise where it can have the greatest impact.

We will improve the speed and reliability of our initial referral process, improving service-user experience by shortening waiting times and reducing duplication. We will empower more service-users to improve their situation by themselves where this is possible and sensible.

HOW

We will deploy a new and overhauled client referrals data collection system

We will develop and a “guided dialog” system to completely remodel our client referrals process

For the most straightforward cases, we will use our guided dialog referral pathway to provide service-users the option to download pre-filled personalised forms and documents which they can then use to engage with their immigration issue

We will work with the SRA to inform the development of a regulatory framework around artificial intelligence driven legal advice

THANK YOU!

We achieve nothing without our pro bono partners, funders, and allies.

Kids in Need of Defense UK's work is only possible because of the support and generosity of our law firm partners, the commitment of individual lawyers and trusts, foundations and Microsoft, who are providing funding to make it happen.

Thank you for all you do for children, young people and their families.

Together we will achieve the objectives in this strategy.



Strategic Plan

2022 – 2025