



Greater Manchester  
**IMMIGRATION AID UNIT**

**"Living in constant fear":  
The impact of reporting  
conditions on children, young  
people and families in  
Greater Manchester**

**May 2022**



Summary .....	2
Introduction.....	3
About reporting .....	4
What is reporting?	
Joseph's story.....	5
Alice's story and Nazreen's story.....	6
About reporting .....	7-8
Who does reporting affect?	
Changes to the reporting regime from 2020.....	9-10
Data: reporting in Greater Manchester.....	11
The impact of reporting .....	12-17
What needs to happen? .....	18
Recommendations	
Thanks and acknowledgments.....	19



Thousands of people in Greater Manchester have spent years living with the fear and dehumanisation of the Home Office's reporting regime. Part of the Hostile Environment, reporting is a system of immigration control imposed on people, requiring them to "sign" regularly in person. For people in the North West this means going to Dallas Court in Salford, at a time and frequency determined by the Home Office. Each time, they fear being detained. We have spoken to people about the impact this is having on children, young people and families in our city-region. We found, largely hidden from view, that there are children in Greater Manchester living in fear that their parents will leave home and never come back, children who are missing school because of their parent's reporting appointments, young people living under threat of deportation, and families forced to use limited income to pay travel expenses to Dallas Court.

This is happening because children are not exempt from having to report. Neither are young adults, care leavers who have been in the care of local authorities as children, or families with children. According to Freedom of Information Act responses, 1,340 people are reporting at Dallas Court and since 2016, 1,455 people have been detained while at reporting appointments, including two children.

We believe no one should have to report, and we are particularly concerned about the impact – direct and indirect – on children and young people. In our city-region, our children and young people should be growing up healthy, safe, and receiving a good education. Reporting makes these aims impossible to achieve because for children, young people and families it means:

### **Living with uncertainty and feeling helpless**

*"Why am I being treated this way? Why do they torture me? Why do they punish me?"*

### **Missing out on education**

*"My children go to school without eating."*

### **Increased family poverty**

*"That cuts down possibly 90% of their daily income, leaving them with 50p."*

### **Fear of detention and deportation**

*"I would tell my daughters that if they didn't see me, they should know that I've been detained. My children would be scared."*

### **Negative impact on mental wellbeing and parenting**

*"People with children should not be subjected to that kind of trauma. It's traumatising to adults but it's even more difficult with children."*

The pandemic created a potential for change to the status quo, and we recently heard the positive news that the Home Office plans to make permanent the emergency provisions which expanded telephone reporting and decreased in-person reporting. Our research exposes the reality of the reporting regime as it has existed in the last few years, the urgency of the need for change, and the importance of ensuring that any change leaves no one behind.

# Introduction

In Greater Manchester, we pride ourselves on looking after our children and young people. We believe they should be empowered and supported to live safe, happy lives and achieve their potential. But going unseen, there are children living in very real fear that their parents will leave home, or drop them at school, and never come back. There are children missing school on a regular basis. There are young people who live under threat of deportation. There are young care leavers who have experienced the terror of being detained and who are then expected to return regularly to the place where it happened, with no mental health support. It is happening because the Government has been subjecting thousands of people in Greater Manchester to its reporting regime.

At Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU) we see the enormous toll that the day-to-day reality of reporting has on people. Reporting is part of the Government's Hostile Environment, a set of policies rooted in racism, classism and misogyny that are designed to make life as unbearable as possible for people subjected to immigration control. We're particularly concerned about the impact on children, young people and families, because reporting cuts across the city-region's commitments for children and young people to be "healthy", "safe", "ready for life" and to be receiving "quality education and outcomes".<sup>1</sup>



## Who we are

Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU) was established in 1989, in the context of community-led anti-deportation campaigns in our city-region. We are the largest not-for-profit provider of immigration advice and representation for people in the North West of England, supporting thousands every year. A significant number of the people we support are children. This research is part of our work - funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation - to expose how children and young people are often invisible in the Government's system of immigration control. To create positive change, we work collaboratively with other organisations and with local authorities to ensure that children are seen as children first and foremost, and have their immigration needs met at the earliest opportunity. We want our region to tell a different story - rooted in our ambition for all our children and young people to thrive.

<sup>1</sup> Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2022 <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/2115/gmca-children-young-peoples-plan-2019-2022.pdf>

We've carried out research to expose how our children are the invisible casualties of the reporting regime in Greater Manchester. We've spoken to adults and young people with experience of reporting, practitioners who support them and experts who campaign to expose the harms caused by reporting. We've submitted Freedom of Information Act requests to gather data on who reporting impacts, how it happens and why. We're also proud to stand with campaigners in Greater Manchester and to support the #AbolishReporting campaign, whose own experience has led them to conclude with authority that "these conditions amount to unfair, unjust and unnecessary harassment of migrants".<sup>2</sup>

We are a region that welcomes refugees and is proud of our migrant communities. The warm and compassionate response to the Afghanistan crisis in 2021 and to the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 makes it clear where our values lie. There is no place for a practice like reporting which subjects Greater Manchester's children to fear, makes them miss school, and leaves them living in greater poverty.

## What is reporting?

Reporting is a mandatory condition imposed on people who are on "immigration bail". Following the Immigration Act 2016, anyone who could theoretically be detained for immigration reasons has to have certain "conditions" imposed on them.<sup>3</sup> One condition can be a requirement to "sign on" regularly at a reporting centre, a local branch of the Home Office. For people in Greater Manchester the local reporting centre is Dallas Court in Salford, and people have to go there as often as the Home Office specifies. This may be monthly, fortnightly or as often as weekly.

Reporting is part of a wider system of surveillance by the Home Office. Surveillance is a major part of the authoritarian way the government treats people with insecure status: from people seeking asylum being housed in camp-like accommodation, to digital surveillance, and data sharing between government agencies to prevent people accessing healthcare, banking, and other services due to their status.

The Home Office uses in-person reporting as an opportunity to detain people, transfer them to an immigration detention centre and try to deport them. This means reporting is more than a logistical nuisance: it is an act of terror. Before every trip to Dallas Court people in Greater Manchester have to mentally and physically prepare themselves, and their families, that they might not be coming home.

---

<sup>2</sup> Abolish Reporting <https://detention.org.uk/abolish-reporting/>

<sup>3</sup> If a person does not comply with bail conditions, then the consequence might be one of the following: more restrictive conditions; being charged with a crime; paying a fine; or being detained. <https://www.gov.uk/bail-immigration-detainees/conditions-of-your-bail>

# Joseph's story

## "Mentally, it's a nightmare"

Joseph has been represented by GMIAU for eight years.<sup>4</sup> He has four children under the age of 18 as well as older adult children. Joseph started reporting in 2012, when his indefinite leave to remain was revoked following a prison sentence for a non-violent offence. It took years of appeals to secure his right to stay with his family in the UK. Despite judges repeatedly saying that Joseph did not pose a threat of absconding, he had to report first every week, then every two weeks, up until February 2021. For him, and his family, that meant a weekly or fortnightly risk of him being detained at Dallas Court and not coming home.

"Every time I had to report, for twelve years, I'd prepare myself to be detained. Every time. Mentally, it's a nightmare."

In January 2021, as the country entered its third lockdown, Joseph asked to stop in-person reporting and instead to report over the phone, as he had done in the first lockdown in 2020. He was told that he had to keep reporting in person. Tens of thousands of people were testing positive every day with thousands admitted to hospital, the vaccine hadn't been rolled out and the NHS was overwhelmed with hospitalisations. Joseph's young son has asthma, and his partner works with vulnerable children for the NHS. He was terrified of catching Covid at the reporting centre or on his journey there. He said at the time, "I am very afraid for my life and my family's life."

Thankfully for Joseph, soon after he reached this crisis point, he was granted leave to remain in the UK. Thrilled to finally be able to work and support his family, he reflected on the impact years of reporting conditions had had on him and his ability to parent:

"The stress on it is just so much. The mental stress... It's draining. It's a good thing I didn't get angry, but I know some parents can't handle it and they might be in a worse situation than me and they might bring harm to their children."

The mental strain on Joseph not only affected his parenting – it meant his children came close to losing their father:

"There's a lot of times I thought I should just pack up and leave, I should just end my life. That thought went through my mind so many times when I just started reporting. They don't realise the impact on people until someone ends up taking their life."

Joseph's older son, who also has problems with his immigration status, inherited the inter-generational trauma of reporting. Joseph explained what reporting and the constant threat of detention meant for them both on a practical level:

"It made me feel scared. Anxious, sometimes. Because every time I'm going to report I have to make sure I either borrow some money from my friends, had £10 in my pocket, make sure I've got clean clothes on. I'd normally wear jogging bottoms and jeans over them, two t-shirts, just in case they detain me so I can keep warm and I've got extra clothes. I'd put on two pairs of socks just in case... When my son started reporting, I told him to do the same."

---

<sup>4</sup> All names of interviewees in this report have been changed.

# Alice's story

## "I don't have a voice to say no"

Alice and Nazreen are both single mothers who are seeking asylum. Before having children, Alice was detained on reporting at Dallas Court. "They handcuffed me, they put me in the van. They take everything from you. So now, when I went to sign, to me I'm reliving the trauma. Even though they say now you have kids, they're not supposed to detain you, I'm still worrying, thinking they're gonna detain me, detain me, detain me, to be put back there in a small room." "And then the fact they search you. I have my own traumas. I don't like being touched. But they touch you. I don't like it. But I don't have choice, I don't have a voice to say no. I don't know why they search you. They are searching the pram, your baby's bag." Alice recalls a memory from when her daughter was a baby: "my daughter was crying, she wanted to eat. There's no place you can breastfeed your kids. They said, you can go in the other building." When she returned to the main building, Alice had to be searched again.

I've been telling myself, why am I signing? I run away from my country, a young girl, 22 years old. To be safe. To be treated with kindness. I never hurt anyone. So why am I being treated this way? Why do they torture me? Why do they punish me? So I cry."

Once, Alice was told not to bring her young children to report. "I called them, like what can I do? Because I'm all by myself. I don't have a choice, I need to come with my children. The person who picked up the call said 'that is not our problem. Do you have any friends?' I was like, I don't have friends. So why are you in this country if you don't have anybody? Can't you go back to your country?' I was shocked. She made me cry all day. All day. She make me feel this small. I'm nothing. I'm not worth it. Like I'm not a human being."



# Nazreen's story

## "They don't understand"

Nazreen was subject to reporting conditions for ten years, until they were paused due to Covid. "My signing experience is very bad. For ten years I'm going to report at Dallas Court. For three years I'm going every week, early morning. I wake up at 7 o'clock and leave home and go stand outside for a long time. Sometimes it's a very big queue. Sometimes sunny, sometimes rain, sometimes snow, I'm waiting outside. When I leave home I can't make breakfast, and my children go to school without eating. When I come back I'm very tired, I can't make food for my children. All night I can't sleep because I have too much stress. It's scary. I saw many many women outside, they're tired and they're frightened."

After three years, Nazreen's weekly reporting was changed to reporting every two weeks, but it wasn't a process she understood. "I'm not sure why they changed it. It doesn't matter if you have problem, if you have children, if you have any health issue. It doesn't matter. They don't understand."

The strain of reporting impacted Nazreen's children. "If they see Mum is worried then the children are sad and they're worried. Sometimes I come back late and my children are very very worried about me. It affected my children's mind, affected their health."

People in communities across Greater Manchester either have to report or have people in their families who have to report. Home Office guidance subjects people to immigration bail and the reporting regime if:

- they are waiting for a decision on their immigration or asylum application or appeal. That means people like Nazreen or Alice, waiting years for asylum decisions while their children grow up, their education impacted by reporting and threats of detention.
- they have had a negative immigration or asylum decision. That means young people like those in GMIAU's All4One youth group who arrived in the UK as unaccompanied children following dangerous journeys, who have had their stories disbelieved.
- they are not a British citizen and have been given a criminal sentence (usually of 12 months or more) which has meant they have lost their immigration status. That's people like Joseph, bringing up his young children in the shadow of a decade-old conviction for which he's already served his sentence.

In their 2020 report, Migrants Organise found that reporting conditions were practically being imposed by default. Their analysis of data from September 2019 showed that 76.4% of people on immigration bail were made to report.

## Do children, young people and families have to report?

There is no prohibition on children reporting. Home Office policy guidance says: "You should not normally require children to report."<sup>5</sup> But it states these decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. The guidance is very limited, with a lack of accountability and oversight of the impact on children. We found that as of November 2021, 133 children under the age of 18 were still subject to reporting conditions nationwide.

In addition, the impact of the fear and anxiety of reporting on children is not taken into account when it comes to their parent reporting. Given that many people we spoke to bring young children with them to reporting appointments, these children's needs are flying under the radar. Many of the people we spoke to for our research told us this - parents who report are all too aware of the impact it has on their parenting.

Another vulnerable group who are not mentioned in Home Office policy guidance are care leavers - young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who were previously in the care of their local authority. This includes many children and young people under the care of local authorities in Greater Manchester. There is a lack of knowledge and support available for these young people at every stage - on how to resolve their status, on the reporting regime, and in the situation of detention or removal. The Independent recently found that almost 1,000 children who have left care since 2018 have been deported.<sup>6</sup> Some might be informed of deportation orders while serving custodial sentences, like the Roberts twins,<sup>7</sup> who were served deportation orders for two different countries they had never been to. Others may be unexpectedly detained at reporting events.

<sup>5</sup> Reporting and Offender Management, Version 4.0, May 2022 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1073781/Reporting\\_and\\_offender\\_management.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073781/Reporting_and_offender_management.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> The Independent, November 2021 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/trafficking-victims-county-lines-deportation-jamaica-home-office-uk-b1954502.htm>

<sup>7</sup> The Guardian, July 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/07/london-born-twins-face-deportation-to-different-countries>



## Rebekah's story – "it was really a nightmare"

Rebekah had to report regularly to Dallas Court while she was waiting for her asylum claim to be decided. She had to travel there with her three children. They couldn't go to school on days she was reporting, because the timings of her appointments wouldn't allow her to drop them off or pick them up. Rebekah recalls travelling to report with her children in heavy rain and snow. When she first started reporting she had to report every week.

"It was really a nightmare, it was not a good experience at all", she told us.

At this time, Rebekah describes feeling alone and without support that she would later find from community-based charities. She was threatened at one time with deportation and was told that preparations had to be made for her removal. At a reporting appointment, her child – then a baby – was taken away from her to have his passport photos taken. She describes it as a terrifying experience. "He was crying... It was a horrible experience."

Rebekah did not feel supported by reporting centre staff. She felt that one staff member was "picking on" her and said, "they just wanted to weaken me". Her conditions were changed only when a support worker at Rebekah's children's school, noticing their absences, contacted the reporting centre.

## Case study – Stoke and Dallas Court

In 2018, the reporting centre in Stoke-on-Trent closed down. Around 500 people seeking asylum who reported there were told that they instead needed to report to Dallas Court – 50 miles and several different forms of public transport away. This made the process of reporting – already distressing – a nightmare for those people, who included parents of young children and people with disabilities.

A volunteer in Stoke with lived experience described the financial burden of travelling to report. "Say someone lives in Tunstall, and he wants to go to Manchester, they have to take a bus from Tunstall to the train station... that cuts down possibly 90% of their daily income, leaving them with 50p. Not mentioning the train tickets or the bus tickets and...that puts them into a situation when they feel that they are running out of daily resources. They are ending up with 50p and with this 50p they have to decide whether to buy food, or to top up a mobile, and that really puts them into a situation where they are panicked sometimes, or anxious."<sup>8</sup>

Jude, who works at Stoke Citizens Advice Bureau, said this was the last straw for the mental health of people already terrified of reporting. "We had a guy try to take his own life because he was so sure they were going to detain him. He said he had been equally scared in Stoke but at least people would know where he was. This frightened him so much."

Eventually, a long campaign by Stoke Citizens Advice Bureau and others was successful, and management at Dallas Court agreed to vary the reporting conditions for each person from Stoke reporting there – some to much longer intervals, meaning they only had to make the journey every six months, and some to report over the phone, or locally in Stoke.

**If flexibility can be offered to the people of Stoke, it should be offered to people in Greater Manchester.**

<sup>8</sup> From 'Asylum Seekers in Stoke-on-Trent: Hardship Research Report', Sarah Page on behalf of the Staffordshire University Crime & Society Group – June 2019

In common with many parts of the Government's system of immigration control, the way most people experienced reporting changed during the pandemic. At the beginning of the Covid lockdown in spring 2020, many people who were regularly reporting in-person were able to stop. They were asked to stay in contact with the Home Office through "telephone contact". Since then, while some have been asked to re-start in person reporting, many have not.

## Tiwonge's story - "a sigh of relief"

"I have not been because the pandemic came in. That's how I never went again. It's a sigh of relief, honestly. It's not a good feeling, knowing that you might go and not come back. So it's been quite a relief, just the thought of not going there. It is a huge relief.

How have they managed to keep track of all of us during the pandemic without anyone reporting? I think whatever system they've used, to track whatever they've been trying to look at before the pandemic, they should keep that system."



The change in restrictions exposed discrepancies in how different members of the reporting population are treated. Home Office guidance specified that people in certain situations were still required to report in person, including "foreign national offenders" and people "who have not engaged with our Voluntary Return programme". In our experience this means that too many people have had to continue reporting - like Joseph, whose story is on page 5, whose vulnerable son and other family members were put at risk of contracting Covid. Reporting can be an ever greater burden on this group, because they cannot get travel reimbursed due to not receiving asylum support.

In July 2021 a "telephone reporting pilot" was announced by the Home Office, "for a small group of individuals who present a low risk to the public and are not immediately removable from the UK."<sup>9</sup> The published information about the pilot specified that telephone reporting is different from the "telephone contact" used during the pandemic for people who were not reporting. We are not aware of any conclusions from the pilot being published. But in 2022 it was announced that the Home Office will move to using telephone reporting as a mainstream reporting alternative. This is confirmed in guidance published in May 2022.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> General Instructions, Reporting and Offender Management: Telephone Reporting Pilot, July 2021

<sup>10</sup> Reporting and Offender Management, Version 4.0, May 2022  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1073781/Reporting\\_and\\_offender\\_management.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073781/Reporting_and_offender_management.pdf)

# Changes to the reporting regime from 2020

This is a win for campaigners who have been working hard to bring the dangers of the reporting regime to the attention of the Home Office. It means fewer people will have to make expensive journeys to report and face the indignity of being searched, queuing in the cold, and fearing detention on a regular basis. However:

- The guidance on this policy confirms that people whose reporting conditions are due to criminal convictions may still need to report in person. The harm this does is not something that can be overlooked. In Joseph and Michael's stories, the harm and suffering their children experienced is just as urgent as that experienced by the children of those reporting for other reasons.
- There will still be detentions when people report. People on telephone reporting may be asked on certain occasions to attend in person instead.
- We are concerned we may see people being penalised for missing phone calls due to circumstances they cannot control or because they have insufficient access to technology.
- There is still no prohibition on children, young people or families having to report.

## Michael's story – "I'm not a danger to anyone"

Michael has been in the UK since 2005. He started reporting at Dallas Court in 2008. "I've never missed my reporting at all, or absconded or disappeared." He has a criminal record, because he was caught looking for a job with false papers – a position many are forced into because of the ban on people working while waiting for asylum claims. "That was my criminal record, that's what I could be deported for, for looking for a job to support my family. I'm not a danger to anyone."

Earlier in 2022, Michael was detained unexpectedly. "They just detained me. I said but you've got my asylum claim pending, you need to respond. No, we have refused your claim so we are detaining you, we are deporting you."

Michael spent a month in a detention centre, where he struggled with depression. He told a doctor there about the torture he had experienced before he left Zimbabwe. The doctor told the Home Office Michael should not be in detention, but it took two more weeks after that for him to be released. When he was granted bail, it was with an extra condition – GPS monitoring.

As of May 2022, Michael is still reporting weekly at Dallas Court, as well as wearing his GPS tracker. "I'm being tracked everywhere I go. My daughter, she is only 8 years old, she keeps asking me what is this, why have they put this on you, what is it for. It's hard to explain to a child. They speak at school, they talk about it."

"I'm very very very disappointed and very depressed. It's like you are still in prison. And if it runs out of charge and switches off, you are breaching your bail conditions. It's really frustrating. I'm still going to sign at Dallas Court. So what's the point of giving people GPS when they are still coming and signing every week? Is it not a waste of public funds for the people? Is there not another way?"

As part of this research we asked a detailed set of questions to the Home Office through Freedom of Information Act requests. Many of our requests were turned down. This includes our requests for the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children subject to reporting conditions; the number of children in care and care leavers subject to reporting conditions; how many adults reporting had dependent children; how many people overall are currently on immigration bail and how many are children. We did find:

**65,190** people in the UK are subject to a reporting condition

**133** of those are under 18

**1,340** people are currently reporting at Dallas Court

**18,446** people have been detained at reporting events across the country since 2016

**1,455** people have been detained while reporting at Dallas Court since 2016

**22** children under 18 have been detained at reporting events since 2016. 2 of those were at Dallas Court.

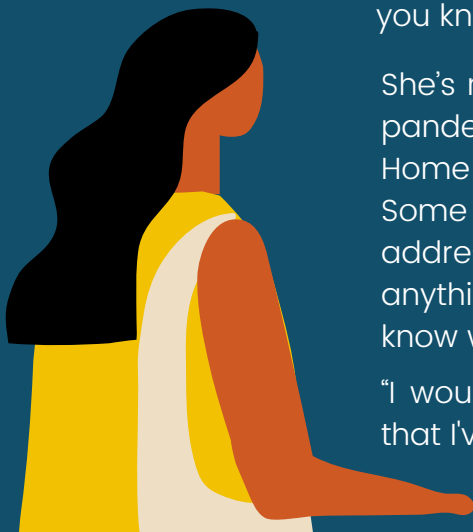
226 people have absconded from immigration bail in the last year – 0.3% of the current reporting population (not everyone on immigration bail will have reporting conditions). No children in the UK have absconded from immigration bail in the last five years.<sup>11</sup>

## Omolara's story – "the trauma is still with me"

"I used to sign every two weeks. It's so scary. In the signing sheet, it's written there that "you are liable to be detained". Since that time, I have that in my head, that I might go in and I might not be able to come out. And when you enter there, the security will be searching you. They will be searching all your body. I don't know what they are looking for. One day, they detained one man. I saw everything. Since that time, I'm so scared. It affects me mentally, you know, even up to now, the trauma is still with me."

She's relieved, like many others, that she hasn't had to report during the pandemic. But the lack of transparency and communication from the Home Office worries her. "Since the pandemic, they don't even call me. Some people, they say they call them that they should confirm their address and everything – they've not rang me. They've not done anything. And I'm now scared, I hope I'm not in trouble, because I don't know why they don't call me."

"I would tell my daughter that if they didn't see me, they should know that I've been detained. My children would be scared. It traumatised them as well."



<sup>11</sup> Data is from Freedom of Information requests 66114 (Shah), 66183 (Zon), 67287 (Shaw)

## What is the impact of reporting on children, young people and families in Greater Manchester?

The process of reporting is distressing for anyone who is subjected to it. It's an act of state violence and control, designed so that people feel under imminent threat of being taken away from family and community. While Government guidance acknowledges that it's usually not appropriate to impose this on children, our research found that children and young people are directly affected by reporting in Greater Manchester, and that they are largely invisible and unnoticed in decisions about who should report and how they should do it.

The main ways our research identified children as being impacted by reporting were when:

- significant adults in a child's life have to report (parents, siblings etc.) and a child either have to go and report with them or wait and see whether their adult will come home again
- children themselves are told to report
- young people have to start reporting after they turn 18

We spoke to people who were reporting up until the pandemic stopped it; to people who were forced to continue reporting while Covid-19 was at its highest levels; and to people who are still reporting now, in 2022. In our conversations, people spoke about the following ways reporting negatively impacted children, young people and their families:

1. Living with uncertainty and feeling helpless
2. Fear of detention and deportation
3. Increased family poverty
4. Missing out on education
5. Negative impact on mental wellbeing and parenting

### 1 Living with uncertainty and feeling helpless

The generic nature of the Home Office's reporting guidance makes it difficult for people to understand their own reporting conditions. Asked whether they knew why they were reporting, the majority of people we spoke to said they did not. Practitioners working at charities or local authorities who support people who report had no better sense of why and how these decisions were being made.

We found that people often did not know who set their reporting conditions or how to change them. People who did know that they could ask Reporting and Offender Management (ROM)/reporting centre staff to change their conditions, based on problems or vulnerabilities, were resigned to the fact that the answer would usually be no.

Here are some things people said relating to questions about why they were reporting or who is responsible:

I could not understand how that happened.

I can't understand the thinking behind it.

They just wanted to weaken me.

My question would be - why?

Often it was an intervention from elsewhere - like a school, a GP, a legal representative or a charitable organisation - that led to conditions finally being changed to a manageable level. In these cases, the people may not have been aware that their conditions could be changed, but equally they may not have been taken seriously if they had only been able to advocate for themselves. Combined with reports of staff at reporting centres being rude or impersonal - one person told us, "they treat you like you're not human" - it's unsurprising that many did not seek out the leeway in conditions that they were entitled to.

When we spoke to personal advisers working with care leavers, they told us that they had very little knowledge that reporting conditions could be varied, let alone how to go about advocating for their young people. They told us that they did not have any guidance or training on how to support young people with reporting and that they would welcome support in this area.

The laws and policies don't mandate that conditions must be changed where children are affected. This means that too often children's rights and needs are ignored and invisible.

## 2 Fear of detention and deportation

In our research it was very clear that reporting is bound up with the threat - and often the reality - of detention. Everyone spoke about their fear of detention. Some people we spoke to even used the phrase "detention centre" to refer to a reporting centre. The fact that 1,455 people have been detained at Dallas Court over the last five years suggests that most people who are reporting frequently will have witnessed friends and peers being detained, even if they have avoided it themselves.

*Victoria is seeking asylum. She has been in the UK for more than 8 years. Several years ago she was unexpectedly detained when reporting. She was put on a flight the same day, but was able to avoid removal following an intervention from her solicitor. In the subsequent years she had to continue reporting regularly, going back to the scene of that traumatic experience. When she gave birth to her daughter, she had to bring the baby to reporting appointments despite this fear. "The Home Office has been harsh through all the years," she told us. "What do they get causing so much stress and struggle?... How miserable can they make people?"*

*A personal adviser in a Greater Manchester leaving care team told us that a young care leaver she supports was detained during a reporting event at Dallas Court. He was taken to London and put on a plane to deport him from the UK, before being taken off the plane again because he had an ongoing fresh claim for asylum. He had warned his personal adviser the previous day to check up on him if she hadn't heard from him after his appointment. She did so, phoning the reporting centre, but was told he had already been taken to London. She followed behind the truck in her car. She told us that he had seen very frightening things while detained and on the plane, but had received no counselling or mental health support following his detention for the trauma he'd experienced.*

The BAIL 201 letters that everyone receives as their introduction to reporting say: "you are a person eligible to be detained". As one person we interviewed pointed out, many parents might ask their children to translate Home Office letters for them if their children have stronger English; a child having to read out to their parents the threat of being imprisoned and removed from the country where they're growing up.

The threat of detention means that people are terrified not only of going to report, but of missing appointments due to circumstances they can't control. Jude, of Stoke Citizens Advice Bureau, said: "we had people [from Stoke] whose appointment was too early in the morning to get public transport so they would go and sleep on the streets in Manchester the night before."

When you go you don't know if you will come back. You see people you always go in with, you see them and chat together, and sometimes they take them in. It's not a feeling I would want anybody to have.

I didn't sleep at all.

You'd be crying, totally scared.

# The impact of reporting

## Beatrice's story

### "I was threatened with detention while holding my baby"

When Beatrice first started reporting at Dallas Court she had a young baby. "In the morning I had to wake my baby up, get ready, it was stress for me, taking two buses to go to Dallas Court. When you get in there they will search you, search the pram, search everything. When you are in that place you are mentally disturbed. Because the way you see them treat people and the way they treat you, you know that this place is not for human beings.

"When you know your case has been refused, and you're going there, I just think I am not coming back. I would be so frightened, I couldn't eat. You know, I even wanted to commit suicide because of the stress."

She missed one reporting appointment due to sickness. She informed the Home Office, who said it was fine – she just had to make sure she attended her next appointment. When she arrived, "the lady said, you did not report the last time – you know you are supposed to be detained now. I said detained? What did I do? They said you did not report, and you did not tell us anything. So the next time you miss reporting, we are gonna detain you. With a baby, I had a baby in my hand. It makes me so anxious, so afraid."

"Home Office has all our details, has everything on the system, there is nothing hidden from them. During this pandemic they were able to call most of us to tell us don't come for reporting, and they got us on the phone. That's the strange thing. They have our addresses, they are the ones that put us in this house."

Beatrice does not understand why the Home Office ever required reporting when all of this information was available to them. "At that point in 2020 when they called me to tell me not to go there I was so so relieved, I was happy."





## 3 Increased family poverty

People who have to report are not allowed to work or access mainstream benefits, so the cost of travel to Dallas Court has a significant impact on the finances of a family. Several people we spoke to told us that this was a major worry.

Reporting centres are able to arrange payment for travel for people who are receiving asylum support, although this is dependent on 1) the person knowing how to advocate for themselves or having someone to do it for them, and 2) the discretion of the staff member making the decision.

Additionally, people who are not on asylum support – including people who are not in the asylum system, like Joseph – cannot access payment for travel. They have no option but to use money they need to feed and house their children for travel.

Care leavers are given a regular allowance from the local authority to live independently, but the people we spoke to told us there is no extra support for those who have to report. Like adults living without a safety net, those care leavers have to take the cost of travel to reporting out of their own budget that should be covering food and other essentials.

## 4 Missing out on education

Multiple people we spoke to talked about the disruption reporting caused to their children's education. One woman's son missed a day of school every two weeks for several years. He missed auditions and other important days in his years at school. It was only when a member of school staff intervened by getting in touch with the reporting centre that her reporting conditions were finally changed (the time was changed to work around school hours). Before school intervened, she hadn't even realised that it was possible to ask for her reporting conditions to be changed.

## 5 Impact on mental wellbeing and parenting

Unsurprisingly, given the financial strain and the constant fear of detention, people said that being subjected to reporting conditions has severely damaged their mental health. This in turn impacted people's ability to parent their children. Some parents told us that the strain made them suicidal. Many spoke about a lack of care from staff at reporting centres: "inhuman and degrading treatment"; "staff don't show any emotion or try to make children comfortable"; "sometimes they treat you like you're not human". This is the environment in which people are expected to "inform counter staff of any changes in their personal circumstances", flag vulnerabilities and ask for help. Where people feel unsafe and poorly treated, any attempts at safeguarding are highly unlikely to be effective.

# The impact of reporting

In their own words, parents who report describe how it impacted their mental wellbeing and their parenting:

I would tell my daughter that if they didn't see me, they should know that I've been detained. My daughter would be asking me why, because they are children, they don't know. I used to tell them that in the signing sheet they said you are liable to be detained at any time. My children would be scared. It traumatised them as well.

You are not yourself. You will not have the peace of mind to play, to make your child feel like he or she is a child. You're thinking about it, signing. A child is supposed to live a free life. They have their right to be with their mums. But the thought of going to sign spoils everything. All this pressure on you, you pile it on the children. You start screaming at them. I have screamed at my children before. My children are teens now. They always ask, Mama, what happened, do you remember that place?

The process of seeking asylum is very daunting, very depressing, very inhuman... Living in constant fear, in depression, they are so worried. Some don't find the courage to live any more.

I could see my son was losing his mind. He was so worried, he couldn't sleep. They come into families, take all the joy and turn it to bitterness.

People with children should not be subjected to that kind of trauma. I would be crying, any time I was there I was crying. It was really a nightmare. My children would be crying. It's traumatising to adults but it's even more difficult with children.

There's a lot of times I thought I should just pack up and leave her, I should just end my life. That thought went through my mind so many times when I just started reporting. They don't realise the impact on people until someone ends up taking their life, or taking someone's life in their family.

For children, going to a reporting centre in itself is traumatic. It's mental torture.

It's mentally harassing a person for nothing.

# What needs to happen?

Children, young people and families in our city-region should not have to report at Dallas Court. Everything we have heard about the impact of reporting in Greater Manchester leads us to conclude that the Home Office must **abolish reporting and the hostile environment**. Nothing else will free people in our communities of the fear of detention and deportation, of being torn away from their children unwarned, or of parents disappearing and not coming back. We reject the surveillance to which people in our communities are being subjected. We stand against the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 which will lead to more inhumane treatment of people seeking safety.

**1** In line with the **Abolish Reporting campaign**, we call for an end to all in-person reporting. This includes people who are reporting because their criminal record has made their immigration status insecure. They should not be treated any differently than those who are reporting because they are in the asylum system. The impact on them, and harm to their children, are the same, and so they should be included in new telephone reporting provisions.

**2** Because reporting is part of a larger system of immigration control, the Home Office must urgently **resolve the asylum backlog** that means people are left waiting months or years for a decision on their asylum claim. The Home Office should also stop making people apply for **short term leave** for years on end before being able to apply for settlement. This leaves people impoverished due to the cost of successive applications, at risk of losing their immigration status and being thrown back into the reporting regime.

**3** The problem of care leavers reporting without support, and some subsequently facing deportation, shows the need to **resolve young people's immigration status at the earliest opportunity**. This means local authority staff being trained to identify children in care with immigration issues and ensuring they access support and legal advice to make the best applications. Manchester City Council's pledge to children in care and care leavers is a good place to start.<sup>12</sup> We can offer more detailed recommendations to local authorities as part of this work.

**4** It became very clear through our research that there is a lack of transparency about reporting. The Home Office must **collect and make publicly available data about the reporting regime**, especially how it affects children, young people and families. This must include publishing the results of the telephone reporting pilot undertaken in 2021 and data about the switch to telephone reporting. The Home Office must also publish their learning from the changes to reporting made 1) due to Covid-19 and 2) at Dallas Court in relation to Stoke-on-Trent residents (p. 8).

**5** We urge Home Office staff responsible for reporting at Dallas Court to **work with us, key stakeholders and lived experience campaigners** so we can make these recommendations a reality in Greater Manchester.

<sup>12</sup> Manchester City Council Pledge, March 2021 [https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/8729/council\\_renews\\_its\\_commitment\\_to\\_help\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_affected\\_by\\_brexit\\_immigration\\_changes](https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/8729/council_renews_its_commitment_to_help_children_and_young_people_affected_by_brexit_immigration_changes)

# Thank you for reading our report.

For previous reports and to find out more about our work, visit [www.gmiau.org](http://www.gmiau.org). You can keep up with what we're doing on our Twitter account at [www.twitter.com/GMIAU](http://www.twitter.com/GMIAU), or sign up to our newsletter [here](#).

This piece of work was produced collaboratively. Thank you to the following organisations for their support:

[The Abolish Reporting Campaign](#)

[Anti Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit \(ATLEU\)](#)

[Bail for Immigration Detainees](#)

[BRAVE](#)

[Geeks for Social Change](#)

[Migrants Organise](#)

[No Borders Manchester](#)

[RAS Voice](#)

[Citizens Advice Staffordshire North and Stoke-on-Trent](#)

[These Walls Must Fall](#)

[Women Asylum Seekers Together \(WAST\)](#)

