



Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Great Smith Street
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copied to:

Josh MacAlister MP, Minister for Children and Families
Alex Norris MP, Minister for Border Security and Asylum
Baroness Merron, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women's Health and
Mental Health

7th April 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you with concern about the rising deaths of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people in receipt of support from local authorities¹.

In 2021, alongside 45 other organisations from across the refugee, mental health and children's sectors, we [wrote to the government](#) asking them to address concerns we had that unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people were dying by suicide. It was unknown at that time whether those deaths we were aware of were part of a larger cohort.

Since writing that letter, Da'aro Youth Project has continued to be very concerned by this issue and has commissioned research on this topic.

We provide alongside this letter our report, '*Deaths of unaccompanied asylum-seeking youth in the care of, or supported by, local authorities*'. This report shows, for the first time, how many unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people have died in recent years, and provides information on cause of death and also demographic information.

Our research shows that over a ten-year period between 2015 and 2024:

- At least **54 unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people died** whilst in touch with a local authority.
- Of this number, **a majority died by suicide** (at least 31 young people).
- Of those known to have died by suicide, more than **two-thirds were teenagers** and **more than half were Eritrean nationals**.

¹ This includes both i) unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are looked after (17 and under) and; ii) care leavers who are formerly unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (ages 18 to 24).



Our research also shows that **deaths are rising** – that more young people died in the last five years than the previous five – and that 2024 was the year with the highest number of deaths.

Our research also finds that these deaths have resulted in only four case reviews, and no known prevention of future deaths reports that might follow an inquest. We are deeply concerned that **inquests are occurring without local authority involvement**, and therefore that the lives of these young people, and the care and support they were receiving, have received very little attention, investigation, or inquiry.

There is a **complete lack of transparency** from the government about these deaths. The Department for Education and the Home Office have both withheld requested information – with the Home Office pursuing a number of appeals to the information tribunal.

There has been **no known attempt to review these deaths as a group** and to understand whether there are commonalities, or patterns, or what lessons could be learned that might prevent other young people from dying by suicide after travelling to the UK in search of sanctuary.

We believe that all children and young people matter, regardless of their immigration status, national origin, or ethnicity. We believe that one death alone is a terrible tragedy. We know from first-hand experience that any death of a young person – but especially a death by suicide – has the capacity to have enormously devastating impact on the lives of those who knew them.

As Secretary of State for Education, you have governmental responsibility for children's social care and for the safeguarding of children and young people. We therefore write to you asking that you consider the recommendations in our report and to **please act** to prevent future deaths.

We would gladly meet with you to discuss our research and our recommendations.

Kind regards,

Sarah Robson

Director of Da'aro Youth Project

Benny Hunter

Research lead and co-founder of Da'aro Youth Project