

Refugee Children's Consortium

Terms of Reference

The Refugee Children's Consortium will work collaboratively to ensure that the rights and needs of refugee and migrant children¹ are promoted, respected and met in accordance with the relevant domestic, regional and international standards, in particular:

- The United Nations 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The European Convention on Human Rights and Human Rights Act 1998
- The Children Act 1989 & Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- The United Nations 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
- Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009

In furthering this purpose the Consortium will:

- Meet regularly to bring together the members of the Consortium to share views, experiences and agree joint work and action points
- Act as a vehicle for sharing information and ideas
- Work collaboratively to avoid duplication and maximise impact
- Produce joint briefings and position statements for parliamentary lobbying and advocacy
- Seek joint meetings with Ministers and officials
- Monitor policy and legislation
- Identify gaps in the information and evidence base
- Work collaboratively to collect evidence to support positions and policy
- Pool information on activities of members
- Pursue issues through working groups that report-in to the rest of the Consortium
- Work in an atmosphere of transparency and tolerance
- Actively promote links to other networks (both those for refugees and for children)
- Promote examples of good practice
- Commission and influence research
- Shape views through advocacy and media work

¹ The term 'refugee children' is used here to mean: children seeking asylum, those with refugee status or leave to remain, those within families or in the U.K. without their usual caregiver. The focus will be on those children under 18, but may include elder siblings of the above and those who, although over 18 are still entitled to services under The Children (Leaving Care) Act.

1) Membership

Membership of the Consortium is open to registered charities (or similarly constituted organisations) committed to pursuing the purpose of the Consortium in the manner indicated and who are able to sign-up to these Terms of Reference. Membership is also extended to the following: The British Red Cross, , UNHCR, the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Barnardo's.

Organisations are members rather than individuals. An individual attending on behalf of an organisation is seen as a representative of that organisation. They therefore must be able to do so with the permission of their organisation. They must take principal responsibility for communicating back to their organisation the work of the Consortium and as such be seen as the primary contact point for that organisation with regards to the Consortium. It is also acceptable for different individuals from the same organisation to be on the membership mailing list, although one would be the principle contact point as mentioned above. Normally up to two people from each organisation would attend Consortium Meetings, although in certain circumstances this may be increased. It would further the work of the Consortium if there is some consistency regarding involvement of individual staff from member organisations.

It is expected that members should participate fully in the work of the Consortium by attending most meetings and being actively involved in working groups and other work of the Consortium as this reflects the action-orientated nature of this body.

The British Red Cross,, UNHCR, the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Barnardo's have observer status—they are welcome at meetings and greater involvement in the work of the Consortium as appropriate. They are not necessarily party to joint statements/position papers and public activities.

Interest in membership should be directed towards the Chair(s) of the Consortium in the first instance.

All members are, quite rightly, answerable to their own organisation in the first instance. Membership of the Consortium in no way implies any legal, financial or other obligation to the Consortium before that which they have to their own organisation. This is a Consortium founded upon transparency and tolerance working in an informal atmosphere of shared values and professional respect. It can only work if it assists members to achieve their own organisational aims by collaborating with other organisations.

Membership of the Consortium may be refused or withdrawn if it is felt by other Full Members that it is running counter to the principles set out by the Consortium (available at <http://www.refugeechildrensconsortium.org.uk/index.php/about-the-rcc>) .

2) Chair of the Consortium

One member organisation will be the Chair of the Consortium or the Consortium may be co-chaired by two member organisations. The Chair will be reviewed annually at the end of each financial year. A non-chair RCC member will oversee the review. and, where possible, a 'Chair elect' should be identified towards the end of the year so as to ensure a smooth handover of the role.

The Chair should be agreed upon by consensus amongst the Full Members.

3) Role of the Chair

The Chair is held by an organisation and is responsible for the strategic overview of the Consortium. In furthering this they will be responsible for:

- Servicing full meetings of the Consortium (consult about agenda, circulate minutes, arrange venue etc.).
- Call and service ad-hoc meetings of the Consortium as appropriate.
- Set a timetable for Full Consortium Meetings throughout the year.
- Circulate information to Consortium members arising from the work of the Consortium
- Maintain the mailing list for the Consortium and circulate information specific to the Consortium.
- Representing the Consortium in relevant fora, or appointing an appropriate Consortium member to do so, requesting the views of members in advance and feeding back to the Consortium after meetings.
- Co-ordinate joint activity of the Consortium, such as the preparation of position statements and the 'signing-off' of any joint statements or positions. This does not necessarily mean that the Chair writes the statements or takes the lead. Rather that they have an understanding of who is doing so and that they ensure that other Consortium members are aware of this. The Chair has the final role of 'signing-off' any statements or position papers produced on behalf of the consortium.
- Co-ordinate the work of any working groups. This does not meaning that they service or are participants of each working-group. Rather that they have an understanding of which working group exists, who is leading it and ensuring that other Consortium members are aware of the work of that working group. The Chair will also ensure that any action points arising from working groups are circulated to the rest of the Consortium.
- Co-ordinate external contact made in the name of the Consortium.
- Receives any expressions of interest in membership of the Consortium and share this with the Full Membership for consideration.

The Chair cannot simultaneously be the chair of a working group.

4) Full Consortium Meetings

Full meetings of the Consortium open to all should occur six times a year. The dates should be set out at the beginning of the year.

5) Working Groups

Working groups of the Consortium will be formed from the Membership to take forward specific tasks or activities relating to the work of the Consortium. These may be short-term or one-off activities, such as preparing a joint statement in response to a specific development. Or they may have a longer view such as monitoring the implementation of legislation. These working groups will feed back into the Consortium membership as a whole and will normally communicate their work to the other members through the Chair. The Full membership will agree to the establishment of the working groups and their specific terms of reference at Consortium meetings. It is envisaged that by definition working groups will be small and that they should cease to operate when no longer needed.

6) Speaking in the name of the Consortium

Work done in the name of the Consortium, such as joint statements, can only be issued after consultation with Full Members and will be co-ordinated through the Chair. This is particularly relevant for issues that relate to the core values of the Consortium. If for some reason consensus cannot be reached about speaking in the name of the Consortium then certain aspects of the work may be taken forward in the name of a more defined group of agencies within the Consortium. At all times such work of the Consortium must be undertaken in an atmosphere of trust and transparency. There should also be recognition that collaborative work often entails some element of compromise to maximise the undoubted benefits of joint working.

7) Resources

In general no specific monies or funds are raised for the work of the Consortium. The work is made possible by the time, commitment and skill given by the members. In this sense all of the above will be shaped by how much of that time is available at any given moment. For some activities of the Consortium monetary contributions may be requested from members, to pay for a joint publication or for mail-shots for example.

8) Review of these terms of reference

These Terms of Reference should be periodically reviewed, ideally on an annual basis. The Full Membership at a Consortium Meeting will do this.