Refugee & Migrant Children's Consortium

Terms of Reference – updated December 2024

The Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium will work collaboratively to ensure that the rights and needs of refugee and migrant children[1] 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 work 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 (including those in the refugee, immigration, trafficking and children's sectors)
- 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 and confirm they agree with the RMCC principles (found at http://refugeechildrensconsortium.org.uk/rmcc-principles/).

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 principal contact point. 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 in the involvement of individual staff from member organisations.

Membership is also extended to the following: The British Red Cross, UNICEF, UNHCR, and the Office of the Children's Commissioner. The British Red Cross, UNICEF, UNHCR, and the Office of the Children's Commissioner have observer status – they are welcome at meetings and to be involved in the work of the Consortium as appropriate. They are not necessarily party to joint statements/position papers and public activities.

Further, observer status membership will be open to certain individual academics working in relevant areas with a policy focus, in an individual capacity rather than representing their institution. They will not sign up to joint letters, briefings or statements. This will be strictly limited to select academics whose research is directly policy-related and whose membership can actively assist in furthering the policy work of the Consortium.

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.

Interest in membership should be directed towards the Chair(s) of the Consortium in the first instance. The expression of interest will be sent by email to members and if no objections are received within one week, the organisation will become a member, be added to the lists and invited to meetings.

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 individuals 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 purpose of the Consortium and its principles (available at http://refugeechildrensconsortium.org.uk/rmcc-principles/).

2) Chair of the Consortium

The Consortium will be co-chaired by two member organisations. Coram Children's Legal Centre will hold one of the co-chair positions in order to provide the ongoing resource, institutional memory, meeting venue and website maintenance needed at the heart of the consortium. The other co-chair will rotate between member organisations. There is no set term but the non-Coram co-chair will serve for a long as they are able. When they stand down, the membership will be invited to express interest by email to the Coram co-chair in taking on the co-chair role.

The Chair/s 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/video link etc.);
- Calling and servicing ad-hoc meetings of the Consortium as appropriate;
- Setting a timetable for full Consortium meetings throughout the year;
- Circulating information to Consortium members arising from the work of the Consortium;
- Maintaining the mailing list for the Consortium and circulate information specific to the Consortium;
- Representing the Consortium in relevant forums, or appointing an appropriate Consortium member to do so, requesting the view of members in advance and feeding back to the Consortium after meetings.
- Co-ordinating joint activity of the Consortium, such as the preparation of joint briefings. 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-ordinating the work of any working groups. This does not mean that they service or are participants of each working-group. Rather that they have an understanding of which working groups exist and who is leading them and ensure that other Consortium members are aware of the work of that working group.
- Co-ordinating external contact made in the name of the Consortium.
- Receiving any expressions of interest in membership of the Consortium and sharing this with the full membership for consideration.

The Chair can be the chair of a working group but preferably other members will chair or co-chair the working groups so that the consortium is genuinely participatory and the work load shared.

4) Full Consortium Meetings

Full meetings of the Consortium that are open to all should occur at least four 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 briefing. 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 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) Role of the Working Group Chairs

The working groups are also known as sub-groups. They are used to share information and foster collaboration on the issue, and undertake work together such as producing RMCC briefings, writing joint letters, meeting to discuss issues/agree lines, and more.

The role of the Sub-Group Chair/Co-chair is to:

- Take the lead in thinking what the group could do and commit to thinking about the given issue from an RMCC (not just individual organisation) perspective. This does not mean that there always has to be RMCC action; individual organisations may be better placed to act individually, but the sub-groups can be effective in promoting information-sharing and collaboration at least.
- Maintain the email list for the group (in coordination with the RMCC co-chairs).
- Update the email group of important developments if no other member does.
- Convene any sub-group meetings as necessary.
- Inform the Chairs of key sub-group actions including joint letters before sending so that wider Consortium involvement can be sought as necessary.
- Feed back to the wider RMCC meetings on what is happening in the specific area.

There is no requirement for the group to meet or for emails to be sent with any particular frequency.

All RMCC work is obviously dependent on the capacity of members and how much time they can give. Sub-group chairs are likely to be well placed if they are working a lot on the issue in question anyway but there is still an important convening role even if other members are in practice able to devote more time and resource to the issue.

7) 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 Chairs. 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, or it would be preferable to message as a list of named organisations, 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.

8) Resources

The Consortium does not exist as an organisational entity and therefore no specific funds are received as the Consortium. The Consortium's work is made possible by the time, commitment and skill given by the members and the funding that they have for their own individual organisation's work needs to be able to cover their work with the Consortium. In this sense all of the above will by shaped by how much of that time is available at any given moment.

When an opportunity arises, funds may be raised by the co-chairing organisations to cover the time spent administering the Consortium or for specific projects to be implemented through the Consortium. The Consortium is not a legal entity; therefore it will be clear to the donor and all involved that the grantee of any such funding is the co-chairing organisation. The Consortium is simply part of the delivery plan for the work. Where such a funding arrangement occurs for work through the Consortium, the membership will be informed.

9) Review of these Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference should be periodically reviewed, ideally on an annual basis. The full membership will be emailed any changes and there will be an opportunity for comments in writing and at a Consortium meeting.