

LEADING ORGANISATIONS UNITE TO OPPOSE CHILD MIGRANT CENSUS

AGAINST BORDERS FOR CHILDREN MEDIA RELEASE

Under embargo until 00.01, 26th September 2016

Over 20 leading organisations have today written to the Secretary of State for Education opposing plans for a child migrant census, including Liberty, the Refugee Council, the Institute for Race Relations and the Latin American Women's Rights Service (1). The letter is in support of the Against Borders for Children campaign, launched earlier this month (2) to overturn a new policy which seeks to collect immigration data on every child aged between 2 and 19 in England.

Like ABC, the organisations behind the letter are concerned that this data could be used in future by immigration enforcement against individual children and families. The campaign is urging parents to refuse to take part, as they are legally entitled to do, as part of a national boycott (3).

The Department for Education (DfE) has explicitly linked this policy to immigration in the past, saying it is "to assess and monitor the scale and impact immigration may be having on the schools sector" (4).

The Home Office and the police already have access to information on the National Pupil Database (5), but most parents and school staff do not know about plans for this information to be added to the National Pupil Database or that existing data is already being used by third parties.

Gracie Mae Bradley, from Against Borders for Children, said:

"It's inspiring to see so many of this country's leading organisations with an interest in migrants' rights come on board with this campaign. The pressure is now really on the Secretary of State to change her mind and abandon this risky and unnecessary policy.

"School should be a place where all children are treated equally. In the context of a 'hostile environment' in which employers, landlords and even healthcare workers are being turned into border guards, we believe this new requirement could be used to add school administrators to the list. We are also deeply concerned that this data will be made available much more widely outside the schools system, which cannot be acceptable.

"Over the coming weeks we expect the organisations opposing this divisive approach to be joined by many more, and for parents and schools to join the boycott and protect young people from this dangerous threat to their privacy."

[Signatory organisation quotation 1]

[Signatory organisation quotation 2]

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

All press enquiries to be sent to press@schoolsabc.net, and both Gargi Bhattacharyya and Arun Mistry are available for further comment.

1. For the text of the letter, see:

The full list of signatories is:

Gracie Mae Bradley, Founding Member, Against Borders for Children

Zita Holbourne, Co-Founder / National Co-Chair, Black Activists Rising Against Cuts

Sabir Zazai, Chair of Trustees, City of Sanctuary

Jen Persson, Coordinator, defenddigitalme

Remi Joseph-Salisbury, Founding Member, Critical Race and Ethnicities Network

Liz Fekete, Director, Institute for Race Relations

Rizwaan Hussain, Founder and Director, Jawaab

Saira Grant, Chief Executive, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

Carolina Gottardo, Director, Latin American Women's Rights Service

Bella Sankey, Director of Policy, Liberty

Stephanie O'Connor, Chair, London Campaign Against Police and State Violence

Wayne Myslik, Director, Migrants Resource Centre

Don Flynn, Director, Migrants' Rights Network

Malia Bouattia, President, National Union of Students

Gus Hosein, Executive Director, Privacy International

Jabeer Butt, Deputy Chief Executive, Race Equality Foundation

Rita Chadha, Chief Executive, RAMFEL

Maurice Wren, Chief Executive, Refugee Council

Lisa Matthews, Coordinator, Right to Remain

Pragna Patel, Director, Southall Black Sisters

Suresh Grover, Director, The Monitoring Group

Gargi Bhattacharyya, Co-Convenor, UK Coalition of Black Trade Unionists

2. Against Borders for Children is a new coalition of parents, teachers, existing data protection campaigns and migrant rights organisations. The campaign is online at:

<https://www.schoolsabc.net>

http://twitter.com/schools_abc

<https://www.facebook.com/schoolsabc>

3. Data on young people aged from 2 to 19 is sent three times a year to the National Pupil Database using the School Pupil Census and Early Years Census. The National Pupil Database was established in 2002, and already contains personal and identifiable records on more than 20 million people. In May 2016, the Department for Education announced the policy of adding nationality and country of birth to the requirements, which is effective from Autumn Term 2016. More information is available in the DfE's recent guide to the school census here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/544214/2016_to_2017_School_Census_Guide_V1_2.pdf

3. The School Census Guide 2016-17 (above, pages 64 - 66) says schools may also record Not Yet Obtained or Not Known or Refused. Parents, carers and pupils may withhold this information and ask for that to be recorded instead of the country of birth.

4. DfE quote given here:

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/laurasilver/parents-are-worried-about-schools-plan-to-ask-what-count-ry-t>

5. An FOI request, answered here, discovered more than 50 requests between the two since 2012:

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/pupil_data_sharing_with_the_poli#incoming-846569