

July 2023



Project Play is a grassroots NGO that aims to provide safe spaces for displaced children in northern France.

114
Children

67
In GS

47
In MA

We work with children in the informal living site in Grande-Synthe (GS), as well as in independently run safe houses and day centres (maisons accueillantes - MA).

This month, we worked with 114 children, and met an additional 53 children who didn't join our sessions. We expect the total number of children-on-the-move in northern France to be higher.

Separation from family



UNCRC Article 9: every child has the right not to be separated from their parent or guardian against their will.

UNCRC Article 10: governments must respond quickly and sympathetically to requests for family reunification.

This month, our team were told that **a mother and baby were separated from two young children**, whilst trying to cross. Our team also heard of **a father and baby being separated from a mother and siblings** whilst trying to cross to the UK.

Our team were also told that **a young child's father was in the UK**. The child reported that he was excited to be reunited with him. Following the end of the Dubs Scheme, **family reunification in the UK is increasingly harder** for people to access. 36% fewer reunion visas were issued in 2022 compared with pre-pandemic levels.*



Many children on the move are separated from family and caregivers. This month, our team worked with 16 unaccompanied minors.

Emotional well-being



UNCRC Article 31: every child has the right to rest, leisure and play.

UNCRC Article 24: every child has the right to the highest attainable standard of mental and physical health.

In 9/14 sessions this month, our team noted that children were **really struggling to share**, with **violent play being frequent**, and with children **acting younger than their age**.

In GS, the team also noted **a child becoming very emotional**, and also a child who had attended 6 sessions as having **a sudden change in mood**, being **much less excited and upbeat** than usual.

Many of the children we work with are trauma experienced. The **lack of accessible routes to safety** mean the children we work with are forced to live without access to safe spaces to play, socialise, rest or be themselves. This can **impact their physical, social and psychological development**.

New Hostile UK Legislation

On **07/07/2023**, the UK government moved the first people seeking asylum onto a barge (the "Bibby Stockholm"). As well as this, the government continues to **pursue policies which would deport those arriving in the UK** across the channel to Rwanda (the **Illegal Migration Act**), and more recently a suggestion that people could be deported to **Ascension Island**. UNHRC has noted that this amounts to an **asylum ban**.

In spite of concerns over **disease outbreak** and **fire safety** on the barge, the government plans to house up to 500 people seeking asylum on board.

These policies will not prevent people crossing the channel, only serving to make their journeys more dangerous and strip people of their human rights once in the UK.



www.project-play.org

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No childhood should look like this.

Project Play is a registered French Charity, No: W594012083. We also operate under Donate4Refugees, Charity No: 1168435.