

Project AEGIS:
Advancing Equity for Children and Young People Seeking Asylum and Refugees
(AEGIS)

A youth-friendly summary from Project AEGIS
May 2026

Who we are and what we do:

We are the AEGIS team! A group of researchers from social and health backgrounds. We are working on a project that focuses on understanding and improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people who have experience of the asylum system, including unaccompanied young people.

Why did we do this?

Project AEGIS is about understanding what health, wellbeing and care are like for children and young people seeking asylum and refugees in the UK.

We wanted to learn:

- What young people think is important to feel well
- What good care looks like
- How young people want to engage in research
- And what should change

Why young people are central to our work:

Your ideas are essential. Over the last months we've spoken to many young people - and those who care for them - to better understand some of these topics. We've also been working hard to understand how they would like to participate in research.

What we learned:

1) Life doesn't stand still



Many young people seeking asylum arrive in the UK after long, difficult and sometimes traumatic journeys. Some arrive alone.

But arriving does not mean everything suddenly becomes easy. Young people still experience:

- Housing problems
- Money worries
- Loneliness and missing home
- Legal uncertainty
- Language barriers
- Understanding new systems

It can be hard to get consistent support. Their information does not always move with them and systems do not always keep up. This can make young people harder to see in data and easier to “lose” between services. For example, if they went to the doctor and got a blood test but then moved to another city, the result of this blood test can sometimes be lost and they may have to repeat it. This can be frustrating and should not be happening.

Also, the support that young people receive should not stop abruptly when they turn 18. They should be supported in the transition to adulthood, until they are ready to be independent.

2) Carrying a lot at once



After arrival, many young people are trying to manage a lot at the same time.

Sometimes young people may miss an appointment. We have learned that this does not always mean they do not want or need support. It may mean they are dealing with too many things and carrying too much.

Support should respond to the reality of the many things young people are managing and to the things they feel are most important.

3) Health means more than medicine



Young people told us that health is about much more than blood tests or vaccinations.

Feeling well and healthy can be shaped by:

- Food that is tasty and familiar
- Feeling safe in your accommodation
- Housing that is comfortable
- Learning English
- Getting legal support
- Connecting with community
- Playing sports and being active

These things are connected. When one part of life is difficult, it can affect others. When one part is good, others also start to improve! Professionals working with young people should understand this, and look at them as a whole person.

4) Good care looks at the whole person



Young people told us they had many different experiences when receiving care or advice from healthcare workers, social workers and other adults responsible for them.

Good experiences of care happens when there is:

- Attentive listening
- Respect
- Clear communication
- Trust and continuity
- Flexibility and safety

Care works better when support is joined up, easy to access and in places that young people already are, like schools, communities and trusted services.

5) Young people want to engage in meaningful ways

Young people like sharing their opinions and being heard. It feels good to know that there are people working to make a change. But, they are also busy and have many things going on. If they are going to take part in research, there should be something they too can gain from it.

Compensation for time and travel is a minimum. More importantly, young people are interested in gaining skills and work experience.

They also care about things being explained carefully and having time to ask questions. Importantly, they want to know what happens with the information they shared.

“Was there a publication? Send it! Was there a report? I would like to see it!”

What needs to change?

We need to:

- Make young people more visible in systems
- Look at the whole picture of wellbeing
- Make care easier to navigate
- Keep young people involved

Thank you!

Thank you to the young people who shared their experiences, ideas and time with Project AEGIS.

Want to get in touch?

If you have any questions, thoughts, or would like to get involved, we'd love to hear from you.

You can contact us at: uclh.aegisproject@nhs.net

Or check out our LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/projectaegis/>