

DETENTION OF CHILDREN

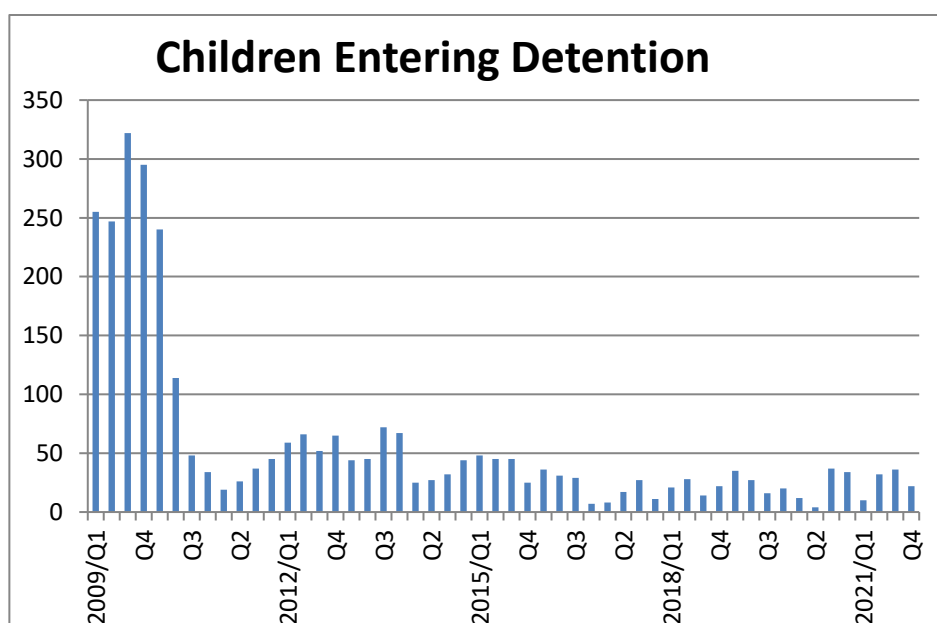
February 2022

In May 2010 the Government announced its intention to end the detention of children, followed by the announcement in December 2010 of a new process to arrange for the departure of families with children, including the use of secure 'pre-departure' accommodation for families refusing to cooperate with the departure process.

The pre-departure facility Cedars opened in August 2011 but was closed in October 2016. Families with children may still be held in short term holding facilities at ports of entry, at Gatwick Pre-Departure Accommodation, or at Tinsley House Immigration Removal Centre (but not always in the Family Unit), pending admission to the UK or removal. Detention at other Immigration Removal Centres, particularly Yarl's Wood and Harmondsworth, does still occur. Tinsley House Family Unit and Gatwick PDA have not been used during the Covid-19 pandemic.

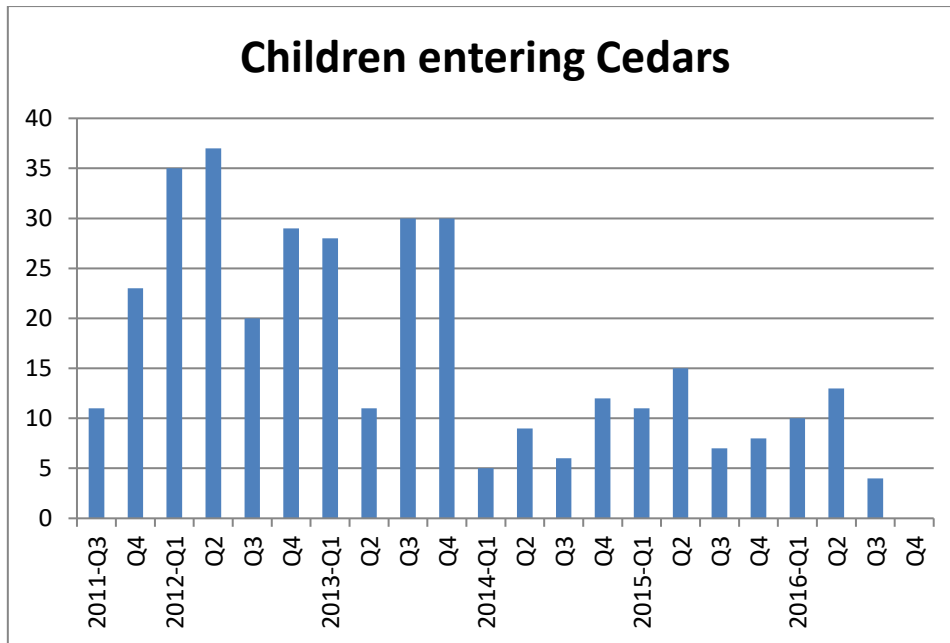
The number of children detained has undoubtedly fallen as a result of the changed procedures, but children are still being detained.

The chart below shows the number of children entering detention each quarter since the beginning of 2009. The numbers dropped sharply during 2010 and have remained relatively low compared with earlier years. In 2021 a total of 100 children entered detention, 42 of them at Yarl's Wood IRC, 24 at Harmondsworth IRC and 22 at Tinsley House IRC.

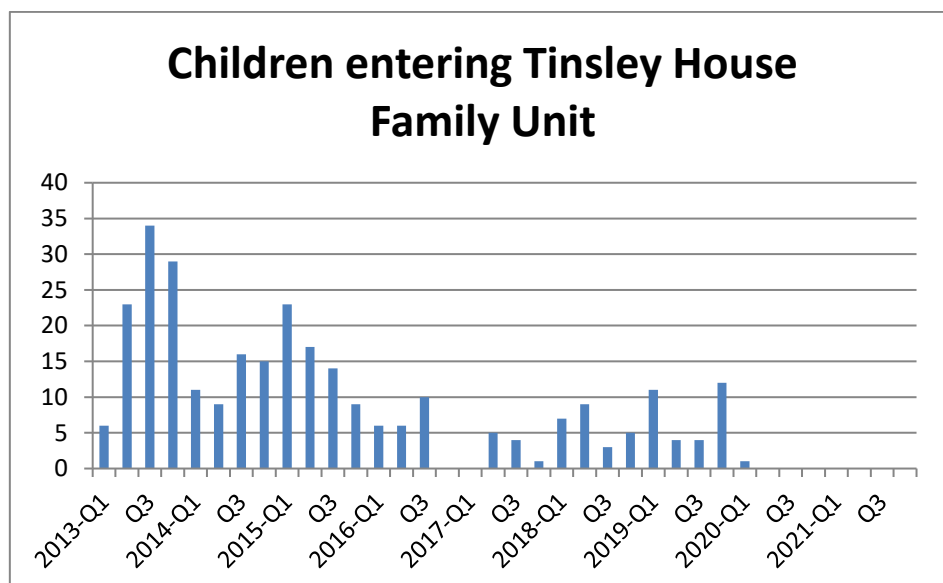


After the opening of Cedars the majority of detained children were at either Cedars or Tinsley House until the closure of Cedars. In the last quarter of 2016 the family unit at Tinsley House was closed for refurbishment, and this is reflected in the small number of children detained in that quarter and the first quarter of 2017. In 2017 the Home Office started to use the pre-departure accommodation at Gatwick.

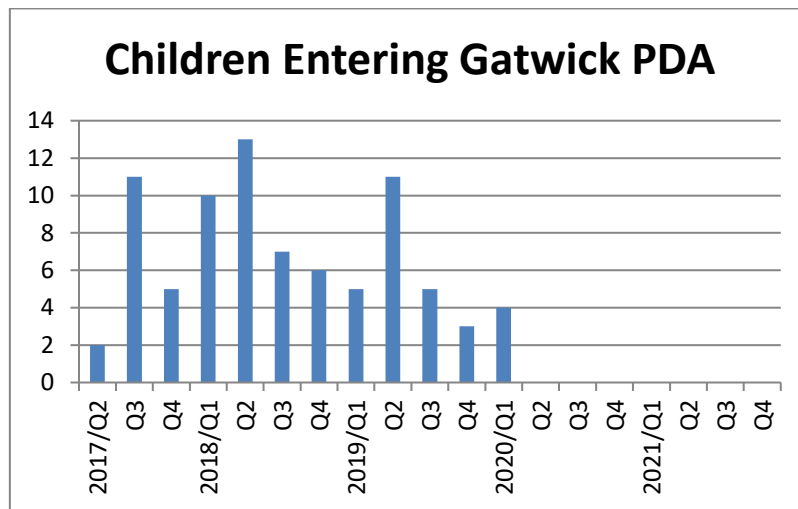
The quarterly figures for the number of children entering detention at Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation are shown in the chart below. The figures for the 3rd quarter of 2011 relate to two months only as the centre opened in August.



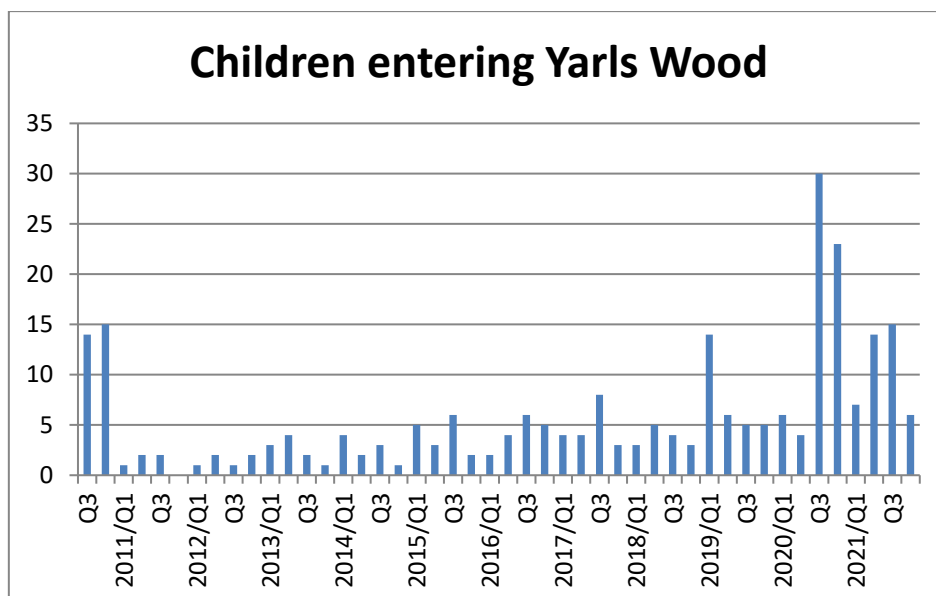
The quarterly figures for the number of children entering the Tinsley House Family Unit are shown in the chart below. It has not been used in recent quarters.



In the 2nd quarter of 2017 the Home Office started to use the Pre-Departure Accommodation at Gatwick. The quarterly figures are shown in the chart below. Again this has not been used in recent quarters.



There has been a noticeable increase in the numbers detained at Yarl’s Wood in recent quarters. Before the policy changes in 2010 numbers detained at Yarl’s Wood were large. In the first quarter of 2010 there were 178 children detained there and there were 58 in the second quarter. The chart below shows the number of children entering detention at Yarl’s Wood since then. This may be due to the use of Yarl’s Wood as a short term holding facility for people who have arrived having crossed the channel over the sea e.g. in small boats.



For some time the Home Office published monthly statistics for the detention of children, but that has now ended, mainly because they believe that the quarterly data is more robust.

The full statistics can be found via the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-december-2021/list-of-tables>

Each Immigration Removal Centre has an Independent Monitoring Board which monitors and scrutinises the operation of the IRC and publishes an annual report. The latest one for the Gatwick PDA can be found [here](#)

About the Refugee Council

The Refugee Council is one of the leading organisations in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. We give help and support to asylum seekers and refugees, and also work with them to ensure their needs and concerns are addressed by decision-makers.