



A BRISTOL BITE SIZE BRIEFING:

UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN: UNDERSTANDING THE ROUTES BY WHICH CHILDREN MAY ARRIVE – CLARIFYING THE REFERRAL AND ALLOCATION PROCESS FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

WHAT IS IT?

This briefing clarifies the routes into children's social care teams for unaccompanied asylum seeking children. It should be read in conjunction with Bristol's [online procedures](#) that detail arrangements for working with unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people.

WHO IS THIS BRIEFING FOR?

Social Workers

Consultant Social Workers

Practice Leads

Team Managers

Group Unit Managers

PRINCIPLES

- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children and child victims of human trafficking are some of the most vulnerable children in the country. They are alone, in an unfamiliar country and are likely to be surrounded by people unable to speak their first language;
- Trafficked children can be at risk of returning to their traffickers and of further exploitation for sex, forced labour, domestic servitude or criminal activities. Both groups may have experienced emotional trauma in their country of birth, in their journey to the UK or through their treatment by adults in the UK. They are likely to be uncertain or unaware of who to trust and of their rights. They may be unaware of their right to have a childhood;
- The local authority has a duty to provide for their care, to protect and support these highly vulnerable children. Unaccompanied children, where the age is uncertain, should be presumed to be a child and protected as such until an age assessment has been completed;
- The circumstances faced by unaccompanied and trafficked children mean they often have complex needs in addition to those faced by looked after children more generally. The special support required to address these needs must begin as soon as the child becomes looked after. It will be most effective where this support is provided through a stable, continuous relationship with the child.

THREE GROUPS OF CHILDREN WHO WILL ARRIVE IN THE CITY

- **Spontaneous arrivals** are those children and young people who present in the city. This is often at the port, at a police station or are identified through police investigations;
- The **National Transfer Scheme** is administered by South West Councils who coordinate the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership of Local Authorities in the South West. This is the mechanism by which children and young people are relocated across councils in England, who have arrived in Kent or other areas of the country where there is a higher than average ratio¹ of unaccompanied children to total child population. Local Authorities work on a voluntary and in this region, rota'd, basis to accept children through the national scheme;
- **'Dubs' children** are those accepted from Europe and the camps in Northern France or elsewhere. Bristol has committed to taking 10 children through this route.

PROCESS FOR REFERRAL AND ALLOCATION

Spontaneous arrivals: will be referred through First Response for allocation to a Social Work Unit in the area where they have been found. The responsibility of the Unit is to place the young person in identified accommodation and alert the asylum team who will undertake a screening interview with the allocated social worker to determine whether an age assessment should be completed. The becoming looked after process should be started and all BLAC notifications completed. Particular care should be taken to ensure that a full health assessment is completed and the HOPE School notified at the earliest stage. Transfer to the Through Care Teams should be initiated once the age assessment process has been completed and the Care or Pathway Plan for the young person is established.

National Transfer Scheme: will be referred through First Response for allocation to an area based Social Work Unit on a rota'd basis. The becoming looked after process should be started and all BLAC notifications completed. Particular care should be taken to ensure that a full health assessment is completed and the HOPE School notified at the earliest stage. Transfer to the Through Care Teams should be initiated once the age assessment process has been completed and the Care or Pathway Plan for the young person is established.

Dubs Children entering the country from European camps: will go through First Response to the Asylum Team who will initiate the becoming looked after process and undertake the necessary assessments and BLAC notifications. Transfer to the Through Care Teams should be initiated once the age assessment process has been completed and the Care or Pathway Plan for the young person is established.

¹ No region is expected to have in excess of 0.07% in relation to their current total child population with each region expected to increase their numbers to this threshold where appropriate. The ratio does not include children leaving care or out of area placements, with the plan that the transfer scheme will be used to enable out of area placements to be transferred to the host authorities where this is mutually agreed.