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Views expressed in this report are based on evidence provided by local authorities and other sources during the project. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the precision of the information contained in the report, we cannot guarantee its accuracy or currency.

With many thanks to:
All local authorities who participated in this research
and yet again provided responses
with such positivity.

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FOREWORD AND CURRENT CONTEXT

Data from local authorities submitted to ADCS for Safeguarding Pressures research Phase 5, which will be published in November 2016, gives information about the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in local authority care as at 31st March 2016.

Recent world events however have led to a significant increase in the number of UASC coming into the country through various means. The number of UASC looked after by all local authorities in England more than doubled from 2,050 at 31st March 2014, to 4,210 at 31st March 2016. A relatively small number of local authorities (largely the 'port' authorities) have been supporting a disproportionately large number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children. To address this, the National UASC Transfer Scheme (NTS), which is a voluntary scheme, came into force on 1st July 2016. It is predicated upon each local authority accepting UASC up to 0.07% of its child population in order to ensure a more equitable distribution across the country. If every local authority were to reach this proportion of UASC, that would equate to 8,114 looked after by local authorities in England. There is no clear indication from the government as to whether or by when this 'ceiling' might be met.

Events in October 2016, which saw the clearance of the migrant camp in Calais, and the government's acceptance of Lord Dubs amendments have altered national expectations as to the pace of arrival and cohort characteristics of unaccompanied minors.

In light of these events, this themed report is being shared ahead of the main Safeguarding Pressures Research report, to do two things:

1) **To acknowledge the change in context since 31st March 2016**

Prior to events in October 2016, approximately 100 UASC had been dispersed from Kent and other local authorities with particularly high numbers of UASCs, to local authorities across the country via the NTS. Between 17th and 31st October 2016, close to 300 UASCs who were eligible to be brought to the UK either because they had family members here or because they were particularly vulnerable (Dubs Amendment children) were brought to the UK as a result of the clearance of the migrant camp at Calais.

Moreover, the government plans to bring up to 3,000 refugee children from the Middle East and Africa to the UK; the Lord Dubs amendments which secured a commitment that Britain would give homes to some of the estimated tens of thousands of child refugees believed to be travelling through Europe; 20,000 Syrian refugee families to be settled through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS).

Whilst intake of the above cohorts of vulnerable and unaccompanied children and young people may be planned, numbers remain uncertain and the pace of arrival has significantly altered. Furthermore, it is not possible to forecast the number of children who will continue to arrive through clandestine routes and the ‘lorry stop lottery’.

2) To provide information about the characteristics and needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children, and the services delivered to meet their needs

Data to 31st March 2016 are used within this report, as the latest available collected during the research. Whilst these numbers provide the view (as at 31st March 2016), new information provided above in this *Foreword and Current Context* supersedes the data on numbers of UASC, making analysis of current service provision and sufficiency even more critical.

There have been significant changes to the national context in 2016, particularly in terms of legislation and policy. The Immigration Act 2016 provides major revisions for the immigration system focussing on measures to reduce illegal migration, failed asylum seekers, the transfer of unaccompanied children, and former UASC who are Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE). Some of the Act’s provisions come into force in Spring 2017, which may have a further impact on local authorities.

The table below provides a summary of commitments and funding as at 1st October 2016 which is pertinent to this research and key references to policy and other documents are referenced at the end of the report.

Scheme	Government Commitment and Funding
Asylum Dispersal	The government has a statutory duty to provide support to destitute people claiming asylum. Under the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, asylum seekers must show that they have a well-founded fear of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group. In 2012 Home Office introduced a model of asylum dispersal for adults and families called COMPASS (Commercial and Operational Managers Procuring Asylum Support Services), which is operated by the private sector.
Syrian Refugee resettlement (Vulnerable persons resettlement scheme)	Scheme to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees in the UK by 2020. Local authorities will receive a contribution to their costs for five years. £460 million of the overseas aid budget will be used by 2019-20 across the statutory sector to assist with first year costs, and around a further £130 million by 2019-20 to local authorities to contribute to the costs of supporting refugees up to their fifth year, including an 'extreme cases' fund that will assist with high cost cases. Regional coordination of this scheme is undertaken by Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships (RSMPs).

<p>UASC (New National Transfer Scheme – excludes care leavers)</p>	<p>Each region taking a proportion of total child population (ceiling 0.07%) based on 2014 Mid-Year estimates. This percentage is agreed for the year 2016-17 and will be reviewed annually. Individual local authorities can take more or less if agreed regionally. See Flowchart in Appendix A. From 1st July 2016 until 31st March 2017, local authorities will receive enhanced daily rates for children transferred under the new scheme: £114 for under 16 year olds and £91 for 16-17 year olds. (The rule that authorities do not receive funding for the first 25 UASC has been waived alongside operation of the National Transfer Scheme).</p>
<p>UASC (Legacy cases – entering care before 1st July 2016)</p>	<p>The daily rates for UASC taken into care before 1st July 2016 are £95 for under 16 year olds and £71 for 16–17 year olds. Any local authority taking responsibility for a UASC before 1st July will continue to receive old rates – existing UASC that remain within their current area will not receive the enhanced rate (apart from transfers from Kent as per letter to local authorities from James Brokenshire, Immigration Minister, dated 13 May 2016).</p>
<p>UASC (Lord Dubs amendments)</p>	<p>The Lord Dubs amendment to the Immigration Act 2016 will see the resettlement of unaccompanied children in the UK from within Europe (specifically Greece, Italy and France) where it is in their best interests to do so, and who had registered there before 20th March 2016. The numbers are not yet known, but it is likely to be several hundred. The government is required to consult local authorities about their capacity to take Dubs Amendment children prior to their arrival in the UK. The funding available from the Home Office is the same for all UASC, irrespective of the means by which they arrive.</p>
<p>Children ‘At risk’ scheme</p>	<p>This is to be run by the Syrian resettlement programme whereby up to 3,000 children currently living in the Middle East and North Africa region are to be identified by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and re-settled over the lifetime of this parliament. Whilst this will not target UASC specifically, it will include children travelling with extended families or communities that have been separated from parents/close family as well as individuals deemed as vulnerable, including child carers, those at risk of child labour, child marriage or other forms of neglect, abuse or exploitation. The funding available from the Home Office is the same for all UASC, irrespective of the means by which they arrive.</p>
<p>Care Leavers</p>	<p>The Immigration Act 2016 will introduce new provisions on the support for care leavers who have been refused leave to remain. Councils will receive £200 per week for former UASC leaving care who have leave to remain in the UK, regardless of numbers.</p>

A CHILD'S JOURNEY: 'R' – AN UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILD

The vignette below illustrates the experience of just one of the many children that arrive in the UK as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child.

1. Describing R and his situation then:

R presented 18 months ago (April 2015) as a 14 year old boy from Iraq, having been found by Police in the carpark of a local motorway service station. He did not have any documentation.

R was wary of contact with adults. He was hungry, confused and scared, but otherwise looked physically well. On appearance, he looked relatively mature for a 14 year old. He said he had been in the back of the lorry for a 'long time' but he was unclear about his journey up to that point.

4. Describing R and his situation now:

R initially struggled with school, but as his English improved he began to make rapid progress and is taking some GCSEs. R has decided that he wants to pursue a career in accountancy which his foster carers are supporting. He is settled in his foster care placement.

As his fluency in English increased he also became more sociable and outgoing, with peers and with adults.

A small local Kurdish community group offers drop-in sessions, but R's enthusiasm for attending is variable and he prefers to spend time with his own peer group from school.

R's asylum application is not yet resolved.

2. Needs were assessed as:

- Immediate need for somewhere to live and be safe.
- Be reunited with family, if family members are identified and this in his best interests.
- Understanding his journey, his current circumstances and learn about living in England. Improved emotional well-being.
- Better skills in English language to help him attend and thrive in school.
- Practice his faith.
- LA statutory duties: to accommodate as a UASC under S20 of the Children Act, and undertake duties as for all looked after children

3. What happened:

- Social Worker allocated to work with R to undertake assessment to further understand his needs and his views and wishes.
- Placement with agency foster carer (no in-house foster care placements available).
- Health assessment undertaken (no specific health needs identified).
- Establishing if there are any family members that R may be reunited with if it was in his best interests. However, no family members have been identified.
- For the first two months, R had weekly counselling sessions to help him come to terms with what he had experienced and the loss of his family.
- Foster carers provide support for R to continue his faith.
- Enrolled in ESOL classes until start of new school term.
- Asylum process with Home Office commenced including solicitor to assist R through the asylum process.
- Merton age assessment undertaken in light of his 'older' appearance, which confirmed his age as 14-16 at the time.

SAFEGUARDING PRESSURES PHASE 5: KEY FINDINGS ON UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING AND REFUGEE CHILDREN

1 PURPOSE

ADCS Safeguarding Pressures research Phase 5, through this special thematic report, seeks to understand the prevalence of, and service provision to unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children including local authority data to 31 March 2016. This includes:

- The characteristics and needs of children and young people, and the services being accessed
- The challenges and enablers to meeting these needs (including language and cultural needs)
- The impact of the asylum process and what happens if asylum is refused
- Whether central government funding is meeting the true costs of supporting UASCs in local areas.

2 METHODOLOGY

In July 2016, a request for qualitative and quantitative data was sent to all 152 local authorities in England as part of ADCS Safeguarding Pressures research Phase 5. Response rates were as follows:

- Main data collection form: 106 authorities provided data about the number of UASC in their care
- 60 responses to questionnaire question 3b) “Are refugees and asylum seekers, including UASC impacting upon safeguarding activity?”
- Additional data collection form, asking for more detail: 103 responses providing further detail on country of origin, age, gender, type of placement and educational provision as well as qualitative question on needs and services
- 16 interviews with Directors and Assistant Directors of Children’s Services asking: “Over the past two years, what difference have you seen in your local area in terms of refugee and asylum seeking families and UASC? What do you think will happen in the next two years?”
- Four detailed case studies were undertaken to understand further financial information and the processes for making financial claims to the Home Office. This report has also

drawn upon the generic content from a needs assessment undertaken across the West Midlands region by the West Midlands ADCS group, in June 2016.

In addition, information has been gathered from a range of sources such as national data and literature, search of key websites, media, government and other organisations. Sirriyeh (2011) has been used throughout as it provides a concise summary of other research.

3 CONTEXT

3.1 Refugee and Asylum Seeker Statuses

The circumstances in which a person may arrive in the country (how and why) determines their legal and immigration status and thus their entitlement to support. Whilst this affects the funding that individuals and local authorities are able to claim for provision of services, everyone has common needs such as being safe, having somewhere to live, health and wellbeing needs met, and an education placement for children and young people under the age of 18. For unaccompanied children, there is a further and significant layer of vulnerability and need in terms of the sometimes horrific histories and traumatic journeys they have experienced to find themselves alone in an unfamiliar country.

The legislation and duties of a local authority in relation to UASC are clear, but understanding other statuses of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants is complex in terms of their legal status, but also the services and support they are entitled to access. A brief overview is provided below.

An asylum seeker is someone who has applied for asylum in the UK (Refugee Convention or Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights).	Asylum seeker: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flees their homeland and arrives in another country, whichever way they can• Makes themselves known to the authorities• Submits an asylum application, and is waiting for a decision on his or her claim• Has a legal right to stay in the country while awaiting a decision• No access to public funds e.g. welfare or housing support.
	Refused asylum seeker: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has been unable to prove that they would face persecution back home• Has been denied protection by the authorities• Must now leave the country, unless they wish to appeal the decision or there are legitimate reasons why they cannot yet return home.

	<p>Unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children who have applied for asylum in their own right, who are outside their country of origin and separated from both parents, or previous/legal customary primary care giver • Automatically becomes a looked after child under The Children Act 1989 and subject to regulations such as <i>Care of unaccompanied and trafficked children statutory guidance</i> (DfE, July 2014). <p>Care Leaver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An eligible, relevant or former relevant child as defined by the Children Act 1989 who has previously been a UASC.
<p>A refugee is a person who ‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.’ (Definition: 1951 Refugee Convention).</p>	<p>Refugee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has proven to the authorities that they would be at risk if returned to their home country • Has had their claim for asylum accepted by the government • Can now stay here either long-term or indefinitely • Access to public funds. <p>Refugee arrived under a Resettlement Scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has refugee status under humanitarian protection and access to public funds.
<p>An economic migrant is not a legal classification, but rather an umbrella term for a wide array of people that move from one country to another to advance their economic and professional prospects.</p>	<p>Economic migrant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has moved from another country to the UK to work • Could be legally or illegally resident, depending on how they entered the country • May or may not have a legal work permit.

Sources: Home Office, *Immigration Statistics*; UNHCR *mid-year report 2015*; Office for National Statistics.

4 NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

This section provides an overview of the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children, including where they have come from, how they got here and their characteristics. This information is important to understand the ‘unofficial’ channels which children and families both arrive and depart from, so that they can be better identified, safeguarded and their specific needs met. It also helps to give a picture of wider migratory pressures.

4.1 Population data - migration

The full Safeguarding Pressures research Phase 5 report (to be published in late November) provides greater detail about population changes. ONS 2016 shows a net gain of 104,454 children and young people aged 0-19 through international migration, and a 0.8% increase from 12,907,331 in the year.

Estimated Population 2014	12,907,331
Births	662,014
Deaths	3,898
Internal Migration Inflow	628,878
Internal Migration Outflow	635,070
Internal Migration Net	-6,192
International Migration Inflow	127,045
International Migration Outflow	22,591
International Migration Net	104,454
Other	1,895
Estimated Population 2015	13,005,727

Figure 1: Population change ages 0-19 – all children and young people (Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates 2015 – analysis tool)

The net international migration (increase in population due to migration) is highest for 15-19 year olds but the increases in the other age groups are also significant.

Age	International Migration Inflow from 2014	International Migration Outflow from 2014	International Migration Net from 2014	Estimated Population 2015
0-4	33,856	5,677	28,179	3,434,680
5-9	24,054	4,627	19,427	3,357,463
10-14	21,971	2,732	19,239	3,000,295
15-19	47,164	9,555	37,609	3,213,289

Figure 2: International migration (Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates 2015 – analysis tool)

4.2 Asylum Seeking Families and Refugees

Home Office (2016) provides statistics to June 2016 for all ages, showing that there is a general increase in immigration and migration:

- There were 38,805 family-related visas granted in the year ending June 2016, a 10% increase on previous year
- In the year ending March 2016 estimates from the International Passenger Survey (IPS) showed that 47,000 non-EU nationals immigrated to the UK to accompany or join others long-term (that is with the intention of staying for a year or more)

- Asylum applications in the UK increased by 41% to 36,465 in the year ending June 2016, the highest number of applications since June 2004. The largest number of applications for asylum came from nationals of Iran (4,910), Iraq (3,199), Pakistan (2,992), Eritrea (2,790), Afghanistan (2,690) and Syria (2,563). The majority of applications for asylum are made by people already in the country (90% of applications in the year ending June 2016)
- A total of 3,439 people (which includes adults and children as part of families) were resettled in the UK in the year ending June 2016 under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS), the Gateway Protection Programme and the Mandate Scheme
- Enforced returns from the UK decreased by 9% to 12,846 in year ending June 2016 compared with the previous 12 month period. There were 26,985 voluntary returns (excluding returns from detention) compared to 25,856 in the previous period.

4.3 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Three main information sources have been triangulated here to illustrate the number of UASC in this country:

- Nationally published data (DfE SSDA903 statutory return) report UASC at 31st March each year (DfE, 2016)
- Nationally published Home Office immigration statistics to June 2016 (Home Office, 2016)
- Data to March 2016 collected as part of ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 5 research in July/August 2016.

4.3.1 New arrivals

Nationally published figures only provide a snapshot in time (cohort as at 31st March 2016) so it is also important to look at the number of UASC beginning or ceasing to be looked after at any point during the year. In the 106 local authorities responding to the ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 5 research, there were 3,200 UASC who started to be looked after in 2015/16, compared to 5,673 supported at any time during the year. The increasing number of new arrivals, when added to those already looked after, indicates a significant and cumulatively growing cohort.

4.3.2 Numbers of UASC at 31st March

DfE SSSA903 data relating to all children in care in England published in September 2016 (DfE, 2016) shows that the current surge in numbers of UASC at 31st March is 8.6% higher than in 2011, but follows a reduction in the intervening six years. There has been a 54% increase in numbers of UASC supported at 31st March 2016 compared to the previous year, with the rise continuing.

The 126 local authorities that responded to the ADCS Safeguarding Pressures research Phase 5 data collection reported that they were supporting 4,034 UASC, which extrapolates to 4,689 across all 152 authorities based on population, and is a greater number than reported by DfE for the same period, which is 4,210. The rate of 4.0 per 10,000 0-17 population is a significant increase than the rate of 1.3 reported in ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Research Phase 4 report for 2013/14. This increase is not equal across the country and both DfE and ADCS data show significant local authority and regional variances.

Number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children looked after at 31 March						
Region	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
North East	30	20	20	20	10	20
South West	90	60	60	40	40	80
North West	140	90	60	50	60	100
Yorkshire and the Humber	130	90	60	50	70	110
East Midlands	200	160	120	140	190	280
West Midlands	350	270	190	130	170	370
East of England	230	190	150	190	290	450
South East	530	430	410	450	680	1350
London	1050	920	880	970	1230	1440
England	2740	2230	1950	2050	2740	4210

Figure 3: UASC at 31st March by region (Source: DfE LAIT. Note: DfE rounding and suppression methods mean numbers are reported to the nearest 10. Percentages have therefore not been calculated).

Regional averages also mask significant variations between authorities, for example:

- In the West Midlands, the range of UASC as a percentage of total child population ranges from 0% (no UASC) to 0.15% - more than double the national goal of an equitable dispersal rate of 0.07%
- There is an average rate of 4.6 per 10,000 0-17 population in London, almost three times that of the next highest region and eight out of the ten authorities with the largest rates of UASC are in London
- For some local authorities, UASC make up over 10% of their total looked after child population and for others, such as those with dispersal centres, it is significantly higher.

	2014	At 31 st March 2016			
	0-17 population	Number of LAC	Number of UASC	UASC as % total LAC	UASC as % 2014 pop
North East	524,417	4400	20	0.5%	0.004%
South West	1,082,081	5710	80	1.4%	0.007%
North West	1,521,365	12550	100	0.8%	0.007%
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,145,643	7240	110	1.5%	0.010%
West Midlands	1,261,883	9240	370	4.0%	0.029%
East Midlands	971,538	5230	280	5.4%	0.029%
East of England	1,299,984	6330	450	7.1%	0.035%
NATIONAL CEILING					0.070%
South East	1,918,075	9880	1350	13.7%	0.070%
London	1,952,870	9860	1440	14.6%	0.074%
TOTAL	11,677,856	70440	4200	6.0%	0.036%

Figure 4: UASC as a proportion of LAC and population (Source: DfE and ONS)

Whilst a national and regional view is important, the significant differences between authorities means that a single authority local area view is also critical to understand what support and services are required and/or available to meet the specific needs of UASC.

4.3.3 Ceasing to be an unaccompanied asylum seeking child

Unlike other looked after children who may return to family or achieve other permanence arrangements, UASC are likely to remain in local authority care until they are 18 and become care leavers, requiring support from the local authority until they are 21. Data submitted to ADCS as part of Safeguarding Pressures research Phase 5 showed that there were 2,269 former UASC aged over 18 (care leavers) at 31st March 2016 within the 78 LAs which provided this information, equating to 12% of their care leaver population. This number will increase as more and more vulnerable children and young people arriving under the various resettlement programmes and schemes turn 18. This is a growing concern for local authorities.

5 CHARACTERISTICS

5.1 Country of Origin

There are changes to where UASC originate from, which to some extent reflect the changing profile of theatres of war. Whilst UASCs have traditionally come from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, authorities reported more from Albania, Africa and the Middle East. In some cases, UASC from certain countries tend to go to the same area in the UK where there are settled communities of their compatriots. For example in the West Midlands the majority of Vietnamese children are the responsibility of two local authorities and most of the Eritreans are in two other local authorities.

“Children’s country of origin continues to primarily be Afghanistan or Eritrea but there have been an increasing number of children presenting as Syrian (a small proportion of whom are later determined to be other nationalities)” – South East LA

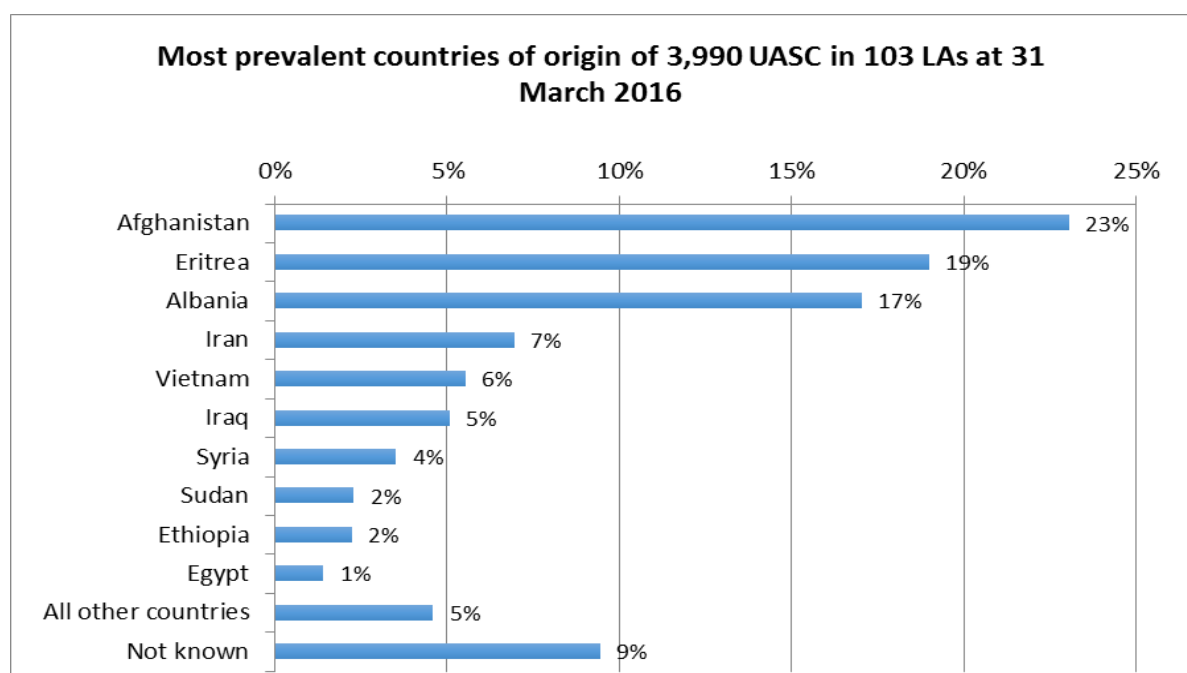


Figure 5: Countries of origin of UASC (Source: ADCS)

5.2 Entry and Settlement Points

Some local authorities are taking refugee families for the first time via the Syrian VPRS, other areas have historically been part of regional asylum seeker schemes, or areas with more diverse populations have been receiving and supporting people for a long time.

48 LAs provided information on the routes that UASC come into their authority. Outside of London, Kent and those with Home Office screening units such as Solihull, the most significant majority arrive by clandestine methods. Whilst re-distribution of UASCs from Kent and elsewhere, via the National Transfer Scheme is working, it remains the case that the most common means of arrival is directly into local areas via the 'Lorry Stop Lottery' - motorway services or major trunk roads. One fairly typical local authority estimates the proportion arriving via this route into their authority to be about 75% of their cohort of 101 UASCs.

The map below shows how higher concentrations of UASC in March 2015 (now over a year out of date) tended to be in the South East and Eastern regions, with some movement up the arterial routes of the road network.

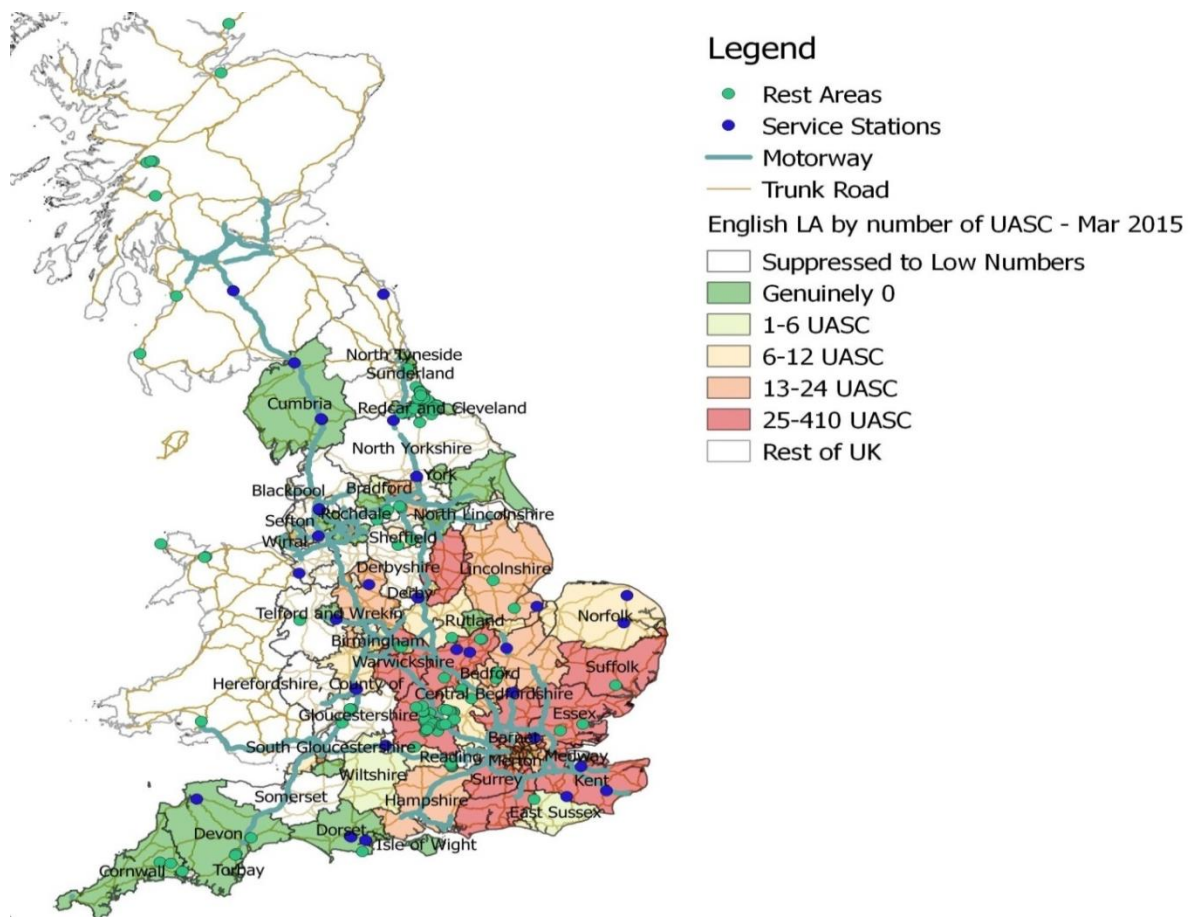


Figure 6: UASC and routes (March 2015)

The second most common means by which UASC become known to local areas is via presentation at police stations, or found by police when conducting raids. Other unaccompanied minors turn up at airports and ports; petrol stations; or are dispersed as adults and then subsequently request an age assessment.

There are concerns that some UASC are trafficked entering the UK in the back of lorries and 'dropped off' with specific instructions to present at police stations or council offices.

“There has been an increase in UASC “presenting” at Police Stations or Social Care offices and being supported by an adult who states that they have found the UASC. This was identified as being suspicious on two occasions and the Home Office were notified of possible trafficking concerns” – East of England LA

More planned arrivals via the National Transfer Scheme will change the pattern of intake, but a two faceted approach for authorities is likely to continue – direct ‘clandestine’ arrivals and planned arrivals including those from the migrant camp in Calais.

5.2.1 Age and gender breakdown

Most asylum seeking or refugee children that are accompanied by their family are aged 0-4, and very few have been recorded above the age of 12.

106 authorities provided valid data about age of UASC at 31st March 2016 which showed that 76% were aged 16 or 17. The age profile is similar across the country with slight regional variations - North East and South West have a lower proportion aged 16+, but the overall number of UASC in these regions is far fewer.

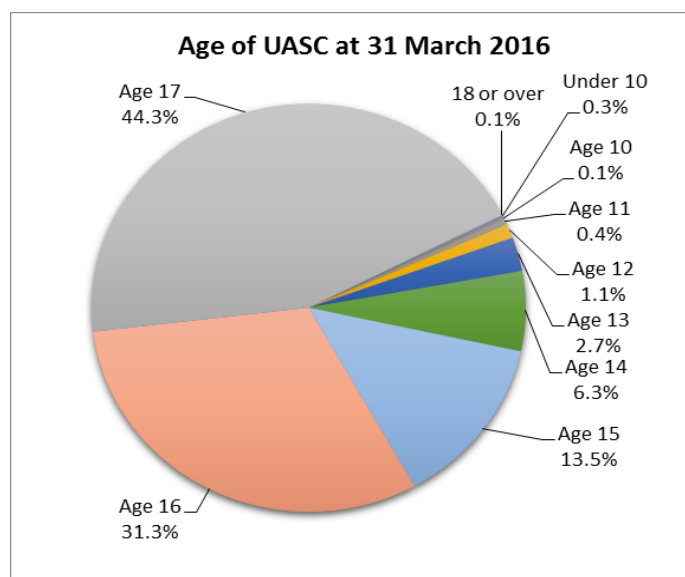


Figure 7: Age of UASC at 31st March 2016

Respondents report a recent rising trend of individuals presenting as UASC but appear to be an adult, and age is disputed. A greater number of age assessments were reported to be undertaken. This is a complex and time-consuming process and each individual social worker undertaking age assessments requires specialist training.

Home Office (2016) figures show that 789 age disputes were raised in 2015, compared to 318 the previous year. Of this number around two thirds were considered to be over the age of 18 when the assessment request was raised.

Of the 3,900 UASC reported in the 106 authorities, 92% were male. 43 authorities reported only male UASC and only one LA had all female UASC (total number of UASC less than 5). There does not appear to be any significant regional differences in gender.

6 NEEDS AND HOW THEY ARE BEING MET

This section focusses on placements; health; education; culture, language; and, asylum processes in relation to:

- The identified needs of the child or young person
- Service provision available
- Solutions or enablers that authorities have developed or are developing.

Some factors have not changed since Soper *et al* (2008) outlined that UASC “*are, de facto, children in need [of help], and therefore there is no complex decision making procedure before they can be placed*”. The study noted that costs are likely to be increased at the start of care by the probability that a translator will be required for all discussions and case management processes. Whilst it may be true that the decision to take a child into care is more clear cut for UASC than for UK children, it is likely it will take a significant period of time before the necessary family information, history, views and wishes of the children, their health and education records, are gathered and accumulated to create a picture of the lived experiences of the child. For UASC, this information needs to be gathered in a very short space of time often whilst the child is still traumatised, which is particularly challenging.

6.1 Planning and Strategic Management

50 authorities provided information about how services are strategically managed and/or adapted to meet the diverse needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children. Authorities new to taking UASCs found it helpful to get support from an experienced local authority and there were reports of effective regional and sub-regional working. A multi-agency approach and strong links with communities was felt to be critical.

13 authorities had created, or were creating new teams or skilled up team member(s) with specialist knowledge and expertise around, for example, immigration law; use of interpreters; or undertaking Merton age assessments. One local authority stated that they were having difficulty recruiting to the new specialist team they had just created to handle the increase in number of UASC, and had to rely heavily on agency workers, which is more costly.

6.2 Housing and Placements

6.2.1 Needs of the child and provision

Like any child in care, unaccompanied children need an age-appropriate, safe, stable placement. Sirriyeh (2011) reports that some older UASC do not want placement in a foster family, they wish instead to build a better life for themselves, independently, to grow and study – they do not want or necessarily need to be in care. This presents a particular challenge for local authorities as they seek to increase significantly the capacity of appropriate ‘independent living’¹ arrangements, and in the meantime, a high proportion are being placed in foster care and residential care². Both of these markets are experiencing a shortage of capacity, for a variety of reasons.

Within the 105 responding local authorities, just over half of the UASC population at 31st March 2016 were in foster care placements. Kent County Council, a local authority with significant expertise and long standing experience of supporting UASC, accommodates less children in foster placements and is able to place more children in specialist independent living arrangements, for older children in particular.

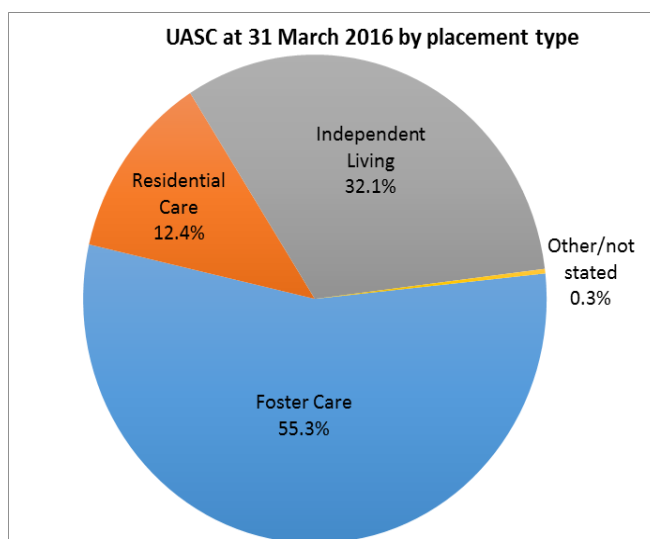


Figure 8: Placement of UASC at 31 March 2016

The impact of the national shortage of foster care placements was cited as the main challenge by most authorities – in January 2016 the Fostering Network calculated that an estimated 7,600 foster carers were urgently needed in England. Over three quarters of respondents talked about the struggle to identify placements and are unfortunately competing with other local authorities facing the same pressures. This lack of in-house fostering capacity drives the need to place in Independent Fostering Agency placements, often outside the authority, and significantly more costly. Pressures are heightened when there are peaks in numbers of incoming unaccompanied children arriving at pace, together with the length of time it rightly takes to recruit and approve carers.

¹ DfE (2016b) guidance gives examples of ‘Independent living’ as flat, lodgings, bedsit, B&B or with friends, with or without formal support. This may also be supported lodgings.

² DfE (2016b): ‘Residential’ includes: Residential accommodation not subject to children’s home regulations, (which may include some supported lodgings); children’s homes; secure units and young offender institutes or prison; residential employment; care homes; residential schools.

We do not know from the data collection how many UASC are placed outside of the local area in other local authorities, for example in private children's homes, independent living or independent foster care arrangements. However, we know from interviewees and questionnaire respondents as well as DfE data that this is considerable, and sometimes unavoidable. This was a particularly significant issue for authorities with a large number of independent children's homes or low cost housing, such as some areas around London and in the North West. This is a concern but it is recognised that the practice is driven by necessity due to lack of local provision and time constraints.

While it is of course desirable, authorities stated that it is not always possible to provide placement choice or achieve cultural and religious synergies between child and carers, or finding placements in locations where there are settled communities of people from the child's country of origin. Overall, most unaccompanied children are placed trans-culturally so there are matters for fostering teams and social workers to consider in terms of preparation, planning, and engendering a sense of belonging for this cohort of vulnerable children and young people.

"There are challenges in terms of placing young people in communities which represent the social, religious and cultural needs of UASC in a large rural county. As a result, most under 16 are placed with independent fostering agencies in larger culturally diverse areas which are better equipped to address these needs. This in turn places a financial pressure on the authority as these placements tend to be more expensive and there are considerably more costs in terms of staff time and servicing their Looked After Children needs" –East Midlands LA

Whilst some authorities have managed to commission or develop their own supported lodgings, others said that there is not enough affordable/appropriate accommodation for over 18's and support for care leavers is also challenging and particularly acute if young people cannot claim housing benefit due their immigration status.

6.2.2 Solutions and enablers

Seven authorities described the development of commissioning arrangements for specialist supporting lodgings and placements, training carers, or talked about how their placement sufficiency strategy has, or is starting to, address how they will recruit in-house carers for unaccompanied asylum seeking children, with the aim to place all UASCs either in foster care or supported lodgings placements. Commissioning additional supported lodgings, some with "floating support" for older UASC (and other children in care) was one of the solutions employed.

“The biggest challenge is to ensure the sufficiency of placement options in that all UASC under the age of 16 will be placed in a foster placement and those aged 16-18 to be placed in supported accommodation. Over the past months specific voluntary / not for profit organisations have been engaged to enhance the numbers / opportunities for UASC aged 16-18 to be placed within a family setting through [name]. This option is both cost effective and affords the option for the YP to remain in that family placement post 18.” – West Midlands LA

6.3 Health, including Mental Health

6.3.1 Needs of the child

Access to timely and suitable health assessments and services that take into account the unique experiences, needs and limitations of some young people is vitally important. Unaccompanied children and young people are more likely to have different health needs, and often present with complex physical health needs for a variety of reasons including previous abuse or as a result of poor conditions whilst travelling. Lack of comprehensive health history on arrival adds a further layer of complexity. We know from Kent’s review of 154 initial health assessments that health needs were:

Physical	Mental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17% Dermatological • 12% Musculoskeletal • 12% Anaemia • 9% Gastrointestinal • 9% Cardiac • 5% Respiratory • 5% Infectious Disease • 100% Unknown Vaccination History 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41% Psychological Symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – Depression – Sleep Disorder – Flashbacks.

A common concern amongst responding local authorities was the prevalence amongst UASC of psychological trauma as a result of their experiences, and how those needs could best be met. Sirriyeh (2011) reported that several studies have found that unaccompanied minors have high levels of post-traumatic stress symptoms (around 50%). This is broadly in line with Kent’s experiences (above).

6.3.2 Service provision

The trauma experienced by some UASC increases the likelihood of need for mental health support, and places additional pressure on local children and adolescent mental health

(CAMHS) services. Of those respondents providing information about health, the most common concern was the availability of specialist mental health support for UASC.

Urgent health assessments are critical but this process is likely to be more time consuming to ensure health needs are fully identified and appropriate health plans put in place. Some local authorities reported a lack of resource for undertaking health assessments or placing additional demand on services already stretched, although others provided examples of how needs were being met. Capacity, given the number of new UASC arriving was said by some local authorities to be challenging, resulting in a reduction in the proportion of initial health assessments completed within 28 days, especially those placed out of the local authority area.

6.3.3 Solutions and enablers

Responding local authorities reported the following were helpful: fast track health assessments that are informed by existing knowledge on countries of origin and journeys, and awareness of blood borne viruses, immunisation issues and similar factors; designated LAC nurses holding surgeries in residential unit; and School Nurses undertaking holistic assessments of new arrivals.

Whilst this research has focussed on local authorities rather than partners such as health services, it is likely that entirely new and bespoke pathways will need to be developed given the numbers of UASC, their complex health needs, the impact on their health of the experiences of their journeys from areas of conflict, and the health implications of poor nutrition or living in deprivation.

6.4 Education

6.4.1 Needs of the child

Educational needs are the same for all children - timely access to age-appropriate education, training and employment opportunities with suitable support based on the needs of individual young people, that relate directly to future plans and aspirations. In addition, help to develop improved English skills through access to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes and additional support outside of, as well as inside school, is likely to be required. Meeting these needs is more difficult when the young person's future asylum status is unclear.

6.4.2 Service provision

66 local authorities provided information about the type of education provision of 2,353 UASC at 31st March 2016, indicating that a third attend further education/college, 26.3% attend a maintained secondary school or Academy, and there is just over a third where provision was not stated. 'Other' includes private tuition; applied for/awaiting college place; not in education employment or training; Pupil Referral Unit.

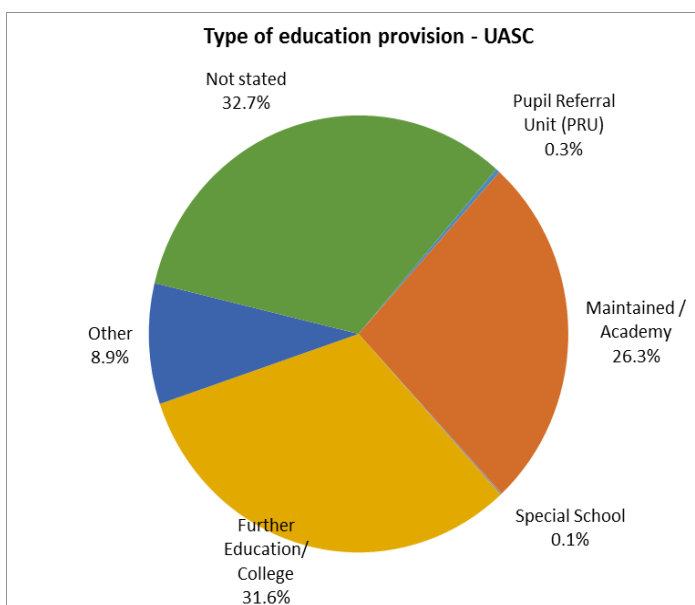


Figure 9: Education Provision at 31st March 2016

Young people will have had a range of education experiences prior to their arrival in the UK. Some may have regularly attended schools in their countries of origin and received a high standard of education. Others may have had limited access to formal education or this may have been interrupted due to conflict and their subsequent journey to this country. Therefore, it is important that once they are in the UK, assessments are conducted that ensure they are placed in a suitable education placement with the appropriate support.

"The UASC's we have accommodated appear to have had a mixed educated background. Several of the young people...have often come from families where they have been provided with an education and once language issues have been addressed have settled well into school... However, we have also had a smaller group of UASC who have had minimal education and struggle being in mainstream school." – South West LA

Local authorities reported that schools and colleges are generally responding positively to meet the needs of unaccompanied and refugee children, and trying to minimise the impact for them, their peers and educational professionals, especially in joining a class mid-year, although there are serious challenges in making the most suitable education placements. It can be difficult for young people to access education or training without the language skills or ESOL provision required to fully engage with the courses on offer.

Some schools, usually those with good practice in supporting UASC and those which are nearest to where UASC are accommodated, are reaching ‘a tipping point’ in terms of ability to take more UASC due to pressures of places and capacity to support. Access to Further Education provision on arrival was reported to be problematic in some areas as Further Education colleges only accept admissions at certain fixed times of year. Some local authorities are experiencing a lack of secondary school places, and apprenticeship schemes were reported to be open only to those in the country 3+ years – which effectively excludes UASCs arriving aged 16+ from apprenticeship schemes. Age disputes also lead to delays in accessing education, as establishments assess and manage risks that may arise.

“Some schools are reluctant to offer places to Year 10 and 11 students due to the focus on GCSE exams for the age group and the lack of resource to provide bespoke curriculum activities outside of the statutory timetable. Changes to the funding arrangements for Colleges of Further Education in 2015, directly led to the closure of courses designed to meet the needs of students, aged 16-18 years, whose English is at pre-entry level (the majority of our unaccompanied minors). Many older teenagers could not immediately enter college as their understanding of the English language is very limited at the point of entry.” – South East LA

Without sufficient education, employment and training provision at the level of need, large numbers of UASC are likely to become ‘NEET’ (not in education, employment or training), which presents additional challenges to local authorities and to the government, as well as the young people themselves.

6.4.3 Solutions and enablers

The role of the Virtual Head was described as pivotal, intervening to resolve issues, securing and promoting the educational needs of UASC as with all looked after children. Other solutions cited include the flexible use of the wider workforce in children’s services, including Personal Advisers, Specialist Youth Support Workers and volunteers to provide teaching, English language/ culture classes to support children and young people.

6.5 Culture, Language, and Claiming Asylum

Literacy and English language proficiency are critical enablers for new arrivals to settling quickly; so too is access to advice and guidance including immigration and legal advice. Meeting these needs requires confident interpreters and translators working alongside social workers, education providers and community volunteers. Newly arrived unaccompanied children can find the cultural differences and their new communities

(whether rural or urban) difficult to understand and navigate which can result in isolation and increased vulnerability to running away or exploitation.

Young people were reported by responding authorities in general to have a strong sense of faith and were anxious to find places of worship after settling into their placements. Local authorities are keen to assist in meeting cultural and religious needs.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children often have uncertainty around their immigration status in the UK. Many cite anxieties associated with their immigration cases as being the most difficult aspect of their lives and having negative effects on their mental health (Chase 2008; Hodes 2008). Immigration issues, include delays in Home Office decision making for 15+ age group, impacts upon a young person feeling settled. Responding local authorities felt that asylum application decisions were taking far too long – sometimes two to three years after the initial screening, creating deep anxieties for the young people concerned.

Respondents commonly described challenges around the asylum process, and in acquiring sufficient numbers of legal aid solicitors which young people are entitled to, as well legal counsel for the authority to navigate the asylum process. The rising demand has, and is likely to continue to put additional pressure on the system. An interviewee and a case study local authority also described the growing challenge of age assessment disputes resulting in Judicial Review where the cost to the local authority is significant.

The impact of the asylum decision-making process was reported to be greater as young people cease to be an unaccompanied asylum seeking child and become a care leaver. Dixon and Wade (2007) state that *“Pathway planning is made more complicated by the asylum decision-making process. Many unaccompanied young people have approached 18 without a final decision on their asylum claims...These factors add significant layers of uncertainty and point to the need for a ‘multi-dimensional approach’ to transition planning”*.

“We have experienced some care leavers who are detached from the reality of what happens if you become “appeal rights exhausted” and potentially being removed from the UK. Our social workers are going to ensure that the process of asylum is explained at the first possible opportunity to the UASC, although there is a definite lack of understanding by some young people.... Currently [LA] has 14 cases where a decision on the asylum claim has not been made prior to their 18th birthday....Due to the backlog in the Asylum and Immigration Tribunals, appeals could take years to process.” – London LA

Home Office (2016) states that the number of asylum applications increased by 29% between 2014 and 2015, to 3,253 applications. 38% of these (1,222) were granted to under 18s, and 2% (67) granted to over 18s. 295 applications were refused.

6.6 Human Rights and Safeguarding Issues

There is evidence and research (The Children's Society 2009) of particular risks that unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children may be exposed to in addition to their earlier experiences, including going missing or trafficking. Absconding is a real concern for authorities, who reported that some children are going missing within hours of arriving. In January 2016, Europol estimated that 10,000 migrant children in the EU have gone missing in the past two years, warning that many of these children were being forced into sexual exploitation and slavery. A Freedom of Information request to 140 local authorities by BBC 5 Live shows that in 2015, 239 unaccompanied migrant children disappeared permanently from local authority care - a 75% increase on the previous year.

The length of time the Home Office takes to make decisions post-18 was reported to exacerbate these risks and insecurity for the young person, as there were reports of young people going missing just before their 18th birthday. One LA stated that *"the abrupt nature of their disengagement is more often than not centred on a decision of the Home Office in terms of all appeal right exhausted."*

7 VIEWS AND WISHES OF CHILDREN

The ADCS Safeguarding Pressures research is designed to garner evidence from its members rather than illuminating perspectives from young people directly – other research has done so, including *Going it alone: children in the asylum process* (The Children's Society, 2007).

52 authorities responded to the question "to what extent are professionals confident in gathering the views and wishes of UASC, including in assessment and planning?" The majority of respondents who expressed an opinion said that staff are confident but a number of factors can impact upon this:

- Young people may be more concerned that they will not be eligible to access services so are guarded about their wishes and views
- The breadth of different professionals whom UASC are required to build a relationship with, and provide their views and wishes to, can be daunting for the young person, without understanding fully the role of those professionals
- Alongside carers and social workers, interpreters are key to understanding the wishes and feeling of UASC
- Post-traumatic stress issues can sometimes make it difficult for children to share their feelings and experiences

- Difficulties in checking accuracy of information provided as there are no other family members with whom to triangulate information. Hek (2007) talks about difficulties talking about their past or incoherent stories, adding that *“It is unlikely that anyone will have this information except the child themselves. This can make it difficult for social workers, for foster carers to support them”*.

Approaches which were cited as helpful by local authorities include having an asylum seeking care leaver working in a participation role within the LA to support training of relevant front line staff; or having specialist teams or workers who have knowledge about the countries the young people may have come from and the context in which they will have been raised.

8 RESOURCES AND FUNDING

From 1st July 2016, Home Office funding increased for newly arrived UASC, with those who had already come into the care of an authority prior to this date remaining on the previous rate.

	Legacy Cases (entered UK before 30 th June)	New arrivals from 1 st July 2016
Under 16	£95	£114
16 and 17	£71	£91

Figure 10: Home Office rates per child per day

ADCS asked respondents if funding is sufficient to meet costs, and if not, how authorities are meeting the shortfall? The result was overwhelming, 43 of the 44 local authorities who answered this question felt that national funding was not sufficient, despite examples of robust action being taken to manage and reduce costs. Just one local authority felt that funding would be sufficient if the child received an in-house foster placement, but not other placement types. 38 authorities described the gap as being of concern, but six added that the gap for care leavers who were UASC was an even greater concern.

Authorities provided examples of their calculations of costs based on assumptions of age and the needs of the current and anticipated increase in UASC:

- A shortfall in 2015/16 of £60,580 per child under 16 in one authority
- A local authority reported that for its existing UASC (just over 50) it receives £1.3m from Government, but spends £2.1m, giving a shortfall of £0.75m for the 12 month period
- A spend of £3.711m per annum based on a UASC population of between 70 and 80
- Three authorities predicted budget pressures in the region of £1.5m- £2m as a result of supporting increasing numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking and migrant children.

“We have calculated that as our own in house fostering placements are becoming “blocked” through increases in staying put arrangements, and a reduction in our own foster carer population, we are having to use more Agency Fostering placements.... the UASC funding is still below the cost of our usual placement costs, before any social work or administration costs can also be recovered” – London LA

There was consensus that the enhanced funding rates for new arrivals at best covers the cost of some types of accommodation only (in-house fostering; supported lodgings), which due to other demands is becoming increasingly difficult to procure and more expensive. The increase in number and geographically diverse placements has also necessitated a greater allocation of social worker and IRO time, for example staff travel to out of area placements, sometimes at great distances.

The table below illustrates the initial work undertaken to map out the potential costs that a local authority may incur. It is based on the following criteria and caveats:

- A sample of costings from LAs and other sources has been used to generate average costs but this is by no means exhaustive. Some assumptions have been made; not all costs were identifiable from the research; and costs will vary between local authorities
- The appropriate placement will vary according to the child’s needs and availability (e.g. in house foster care, independent fostering agency, supported lodgings, residential care) but a breakdown in line with research findings has been used
- The true cost of providing any type of social, health and education service to any child or young person is a complex calculation based around their specific needs.

Service provided ⁽¹⁾	LA or other agency costs ⁽²⁾	Likelihood of UASC requiring this ⁽³⁾	Minimum unit cost ⁽⁴⁾	Maximum unit cost ⁽⁴⁾	Average unit cost ⁽⁵⁾	TOTAL COSTS ⁽⁶⁾ 100 UASC	Notes ⁽⁷⁾
1. Social Work - case management (including assessment, care planning etc)							
1.1 Referral processed and allocation	LA	100%					Included in social work costs below
1.2 Social Work Management ⁸	LA	100%			547	52,686	
1.3 Social Workers (non-agency) ⁹	LA	100%	1484	3241	2,294	229,385	Permanent staff although may be higher cost agency staff
1.4 Ind. Reviewing Officer (non-agency)	LA	100%	527	863	674	67,399	
1.5 Social work support staff	LA	100%	228	442	331	33,138	Admin or family support roles
1.6 Trafficking Assessment	LA	not known					Some costs may be included in social work time, but specialist input also likely to be required. Costs not known as part of this research.
1.7 CSE risk assessment	LA	not known					
1.8 If Missing, return interviews	LA	not known					
1.9 Merton Age Assessment	LA	60%					
Sub-total (LA costs) based on known costs only						382,608	
2. Placement and Related Costs (proportions of UASC by placement types from the research provides likelihood, but this will vary from LA to LA)							
2.1 Placement finding	LA	100%	251	1867	1,059	105,900	
2.2 Placement Costs (weekly):							
In-House foster care placement	LA	27%	361	722	574	839,958	Under or over 16s not split
Independent foster placement	LA	29%	774	850	787	1,187,530	Under or over 16s not split
Residential	LA	12%	2450	3170	2,920	1,882,558	
Independent Living	LA	32%	351	977	600	1,000,975	
2.3 Misc payments	LA	100%			548	54,750	Costs as for all looked after children
Sub-total (LA costs)						5,071,670	
3. Education							
3.1 Virtual school support: personal adviser	LA	100%	289	504	385	38,500	
3.2 Primary or secondary school place	Other	26%			5,655	147,030	
3.3 Further Education/College	Other	32%			5,460	172,536	
3.4 Alternative/PRU/special school	LA	0.4%					not calculated
3.5 Other Education Provision/not known	Other	42%			5,460	229,320	based on same FE
3.6 EHC assessment & SEND provision	LA	not known					not calculated
3.7 Equipment to support education & home to school transport	LA	80%			5,000	400,000	
3.8 ESOL training	LA	50%			840	42,000	
Sub-total (LA costs)						480,500	
4. Health costs (not included - immunisations, optician, school nurse, other health needs)							
4.1 Health assessment (1 per year)	Other	100%			37	3,700	
4.2 LAC designated nurse (1 follow up)	Other	100%			74	7,400	
4.3 Immunisations	Other	100%					Not calculated
4.4 Doctor (registration)	Other	100%			21	2,083	
4.5 Dentist	Other	100%			70	7,000	Registration and one treatment
4.6 Optician (registration)	Other	100%					
4.7 School nurses	Other						Not calculated
4.8 Mental health support	Other	50%			7,427	371,350	Likelihood from Sirriyeh (2011)
4.9 Other health needs	Other	10%					Not calculated
Sub-total (LA costs) - it is difficult to assess how much would be LA costs - mostly Health						not calculated	
5. Asylum Claim							
5.1 Legal and appeals	LA	90%			8,717	784,530	Based on one LA only - low cost
Sub-total (LA costs)						784,530	
6. Other Costs (not including transport, cultural and religious needs)							
6.1 Interpreters	LA	80%			398	31,861	
6.2 Advocacy and children's rights	LA	100%			122	12,200	
Sub-total (LA costs)						44,061	
7. Transition to Leaving Care & provision as a Care Leaver (These costs are not included here)							
Total (LA costs)						6,763,369	
Total (Other Agency costs)						940,419	
Notes							
¹ The service or provision that is required							
² Whether the costs for the service or provision are met by the Local Authority (LA) or other agency, eg health							
³ There are some services that all UASC require, for example a social worker, health check etc. The likelihood is therefore 100%. Evidence from the research has been used to determine the likelihood of any UASC requiring this activity. For example, if 60% of UASCs have an age assessment completed in the past, this is the value that has been used as the likelihood and the total cost for a cohort of 100 UASC includes costs for 60 UASC. This is not, however, a robust predictor of future likelihood.							
⁴ The maximum and minimum from the range of valid data sources has been included to show the differences.							
⁵ Average unit cost is an average of valid data sources							
⁶ The total costs for a specific cohort is calculated as the average unit cost (5) x likelihood (2) x cohort size							
⁷ There are a range of sources, which are listed here together with any notes.							
⁸ Social work management is based on social work team manager (grade 13) salary and on costs at 30.6%							
⁹ Based on caseloads between 15 and 25							

Figure 11: Estimated costs associated with UASC

The summary below shows a projected cost to local authorities of £3.4m per annum per 100 UASC over and above the Home Office grant. Estimates are based on a cohort of 100 unaccompanied children, presuming 25% of which will have already been in the care of the authority prior to 1st July 2016, and 75% subsequently arriving and therefore on the new rates. The age breakdown is based on average age profile within the research. Annual cost per child to the local authority does not include health or other costs that are not funded by the local authority.

LA costs only	Number of Children	% of Total Children	Annual Cost per Child	Total Cost	Annual Home Office Funding	Variance (Total cost less funding)
Pre July 2016: Under 16	6	6%	67,634	405,802	208,050	-197,752
Pre July 2016: 16 or 17	19	19%	67,634	1,285,040	492,385	-792,655
From July 2016 : Under 16	19	19%	67,634	1,285,040	790,590	-494,450
From July 2016: 16 or 17	56	56%	67,634	3,787,487	1,860,040	-1,927,447
All UASC	100			6,763,369	3,351,065	-3,412,304

Figure 12: Estimated costs for 100 UASC and variance to Home Office funding

Currently, and at best the enhanced Home Office grant rates cover no more than 50% of costs incurred by the local authority. Potential costs to other public services, including for police forces if UASC go missing, has not be included in these estimates.

Although we do not know how many, we do know that children brought to the UK under the Dubs Amendments are likely to be younger than those UASC arriving in the UK hitherto, and a greater proportion will be girls. Supporting a larger proportion of UASC under the age of 16 will increase the funding shortfall even further.

Existing budgets, which are already under pressure and subject to further cuts are generally used to fund the shortfall, such as children in care/agency placement budgets; through growth bids for additional funding from other council funds, or shortfall will have to be met by diverting funds from other activities which in turn puts pressure on other services.

Ways in which local authorities are mitigating these growing costs include smarter commissioning: securing better cost and value placement options, block purchasing, specialist teams, regional collaboration, use of voluntary organisations and developing different housing solutions.

Whilst the majority of this research has focussed on prevalence, needs and cost of unaccompanied children under 18 years of age, information about UASC care leavers who were UASC has been referenced, including the uncertainty of their status. Recently, the Home Office confirmed funding of £200 per week per care leaver would be available. If a UASC care leaver is not granted leave to remain, or is 'Appeal Rights Exhausted', local authorities receive no other funding to assist in supporting these vulnerable young adults

and in order to avoid young people in these circumstances becoming destitute, local authorities have a legal duty to support UASC care leavers under *Section 17 - no recourse to public funds*. This report has not attempted to quantify costs to local authorities and to police with regard to children settled in the UK under Dublin Treatise arrangements, with their families. Local authorities receive no funding for these children and young people unless the family placement subsequently breaks down, in which case UASC funding rates apply.

The number of people with no recourse to public funds has grown significantly. We know that of 24 authorities providing both cost and numbers of families supported, that £8.2m was spent in 2015/16 on 983 families, with half spending in excess of £1m. Respondents cited the increase in numbers of families and care leavers, and the spend through no recourse to public funds as another major budgetary challenge.

9 CONCLUSIONS

We have evidenced the doubling of numbers of UASC in the last two years to 4,210 as at 31st March 2016 and at time of publication of this report numbers have further increased, with predictions of further significant growth at pace.

The prevalence of UASC across the country has been diverse with local authorities falling broadly into three groups:

- Those who do not yet have any, or few UASC in their care. These authorities are starting to 'gear up' to develop services. These tend to be in the South West, some parts of the West Midlands and some, but not all, of the North of England
- The second group are those local authorities which have seen an increase in numbers, especially more recently. These are finding it difficult to manage the resource requirements at present from existing budgets
- The third group is those which have high numbers already and have already developed and funded specialist services and are more confident in their approach, but a further increase in numbers and the funding climate is challenging, as it is for all local authorities.

Data for this report are to the year ending 31st March 2016; the National Transfer Scheme went live on 1st July 2016, and so areas with few or no UASCs at the start of the financial year 2016/17 will have very different experiences several months on.

In August, we asked authorities to predict the direction of travel and some of the key changes we will see in the next two to three years that will influence activity and services provided for asylum seeking children. 43 out of 49 authorities were expecting an increase, using the 0.07% of the 2014 population as an expected amount, but the scale and pace of change in recent weeks requires authorities and services to mobilise extremely quickly. The direction of travel needs a strategic, operational and resource response that is realistic and achievable and one that takes into account the dual and longitudinal pressures of supporting UASC when they become care leavers.

This research has focussed primarily on local authority children's social care, however the breadth of professional and community engagement required (for example Police, education, health, community, leisure, faith, interpreters, local communities) also requires attention to ensure a whole system approach is provided and adequately resourced.

Those working with unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children need to be kept up to date with current policy and evidence about presenting issues. Front line professionals who may be working with families or children for the first time, especially in the critical initial weeks, may be confident in cultural practice, but not entitlements.

Workers need to facilitate access to key services such as education and health, and to support young people through the immigration process. As most of the current cohort of UASC is over the age of 15, a key task for social workers is also to prepare these young people for transitions to adulthood in the context of the uncertainty of their immigration status. Delays in Home Office making immigration decisions are contributing to the extension of unnecessary costs but also delaying the time it takes for young people to settle and engage in UK life.

Ongoing demand for placements for UK children in care and unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children is exacerbated by a national shortage of placements (particularly fostering and supported lodgings). All local authorities are competing for the same placements and the market is becoming febrile. Now more than ever there needs to be a concerted effort from central and local government working together to increase the number of affordable short and long term foster placements.

Many of the local authorities responding to this research are concerned about availability of the right services to meet the needs of these vulnerable young people in a context of uncertainty over factors such as disputed age and status. Key concerns are shortage of school places; shortage of suitable accommodation; shortage of affordable rented housing for refugees and asylum seekers; enhanced risk of UASC going missing; inability to access mental health services in some areas; community cohesion tensions which impact upon a

young person's sense of belonging. These are common concerns but are felt more acutely in areas which do not have the history of taking larger numbers of refugees, asylum seekers or UASC.

These concerns, about the availability of and impact upon services, come at a time of unprecedented pressure on local authorities' budgets and public frustration with reductions in services, including pressure on health care, are likely to be a continuing feature of political discourse requiring careful local and national political leadership.

Local leaders of children's services are currently planning for increased intake of refugees, asylum seekers and UASC as far as they can within existing budgets, or putting cases to the Political Leaders for further funds but a lack of clarity about the exact numbers of children, young people and families arriving in the UK via various schemes is making this much more difficult. The strengths already within regions of local authorities working together to share expertise, services and knowledge will assist others to a significant degree, however, it seems essential to develop a stronger role for local communities to support the needs of and engender a sense of belonging amongst asylum seekers and refugees, to complement the role of the 'state' .

Whilst it is clear under The Children Act 1989 that local authorities are responsible for accommodating UASC under Section 20 of the Act, this is increasingly untenable, particularly for UASC arriving age 16 and 17. This is an uneasy balance for everyone.

As one interviewee stated *"I feel strongly morally that we should do our bit"*. There is undoubtedly a real commitment amongst local authorities to work with partners and communities to meet the needs of these vulnerable children, young people and families, but they are seeking to do so in a climate of significant funding shortfalls in local authority and other public services against funding deficits and real challenges to do so.

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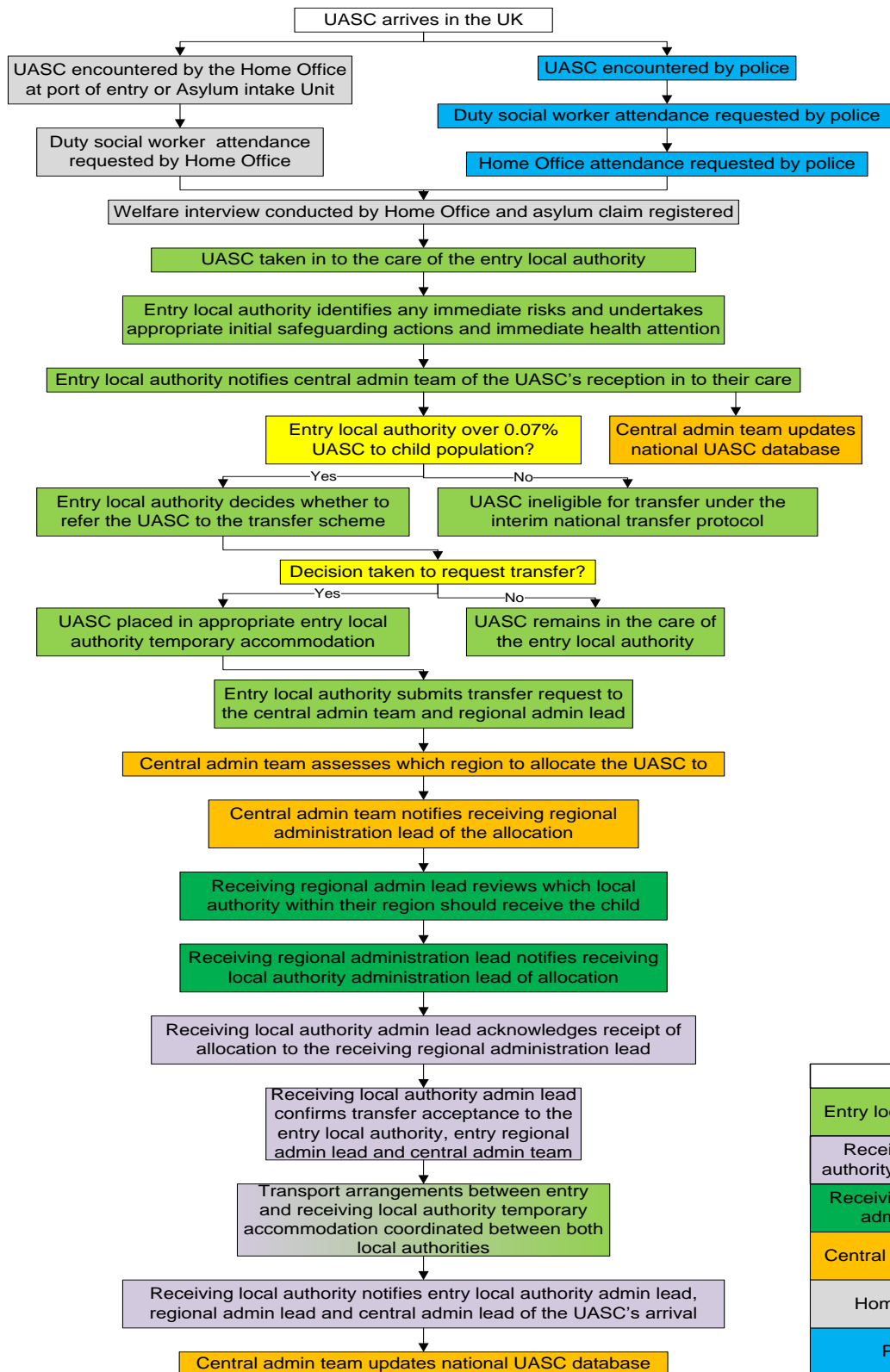
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APPENDIX A: NATIONAL TRANSFER SCHEME FROM 1 JULY 2016



Key
Entry local authority
Receiving local authority admin lead
Receiving regional admin lead
Central admin team
Home Office
Police

The Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd (ADCS)

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