Unaccompanied Migrant Children in the United Kingdom

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Unaccompanied migrant children
Topics to be addressed

• Main children’s groups seeking entry
• Legal requirements for children coming to the UK
• Procedure for children claiming asylum
• Measures to protect children
• Types of legal status and the care system
• Children’s legislation in UK
• On reaching 18 years
• Other issues
Unaccompanied migrant children
Main children’s groups seeking entry

• “Regular” child migrants - often in families, or on visit visas
• Can be unaccompanied, not seeking asylum
• Some are unaccompanied and seeking asylum

**In 2014:**
• 350,000 visas for children as visitors issued
• 28,214 non-EU children obtained permanent residence (In 2010 was 51,000)
• Asylum applications from unaccompanied children
  = 1,861 and highest since 2009

• Top countries: Albania, Eritrea, Afghanistan.
Unaccompanied migrant children
Requirements for entry / asylum seeking children

- Procedures for children to apply for asylum:
  - In person
  - Recovery period
  - Register or “screening”
  - Confirm or make allocation to care system
  - Interview for asylum claim
  - Make and communicate decision
  - Post-decision

- Process for other unaccompanied children
Types of legal status

- Refugee status
- Humanitarian protection status
- Discretionary leave
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking leave (UASC leave)

Until recently, latter most frequent:

- Lasts until 17½ years
- Cannot be renewed
- Before 17½ can apply in another category
- Limited return policy, no detention of children
Unaccompanied migrant children
Care of children

• Function of local government not central government

• Law requiring particular services for children is based on presence in that locality

_all children entitled to:_

• Education to 16 years (soon to be 18 years)
• Health-care
• Protection from harm

• Policy is to “mainstream” migrant children within population as a whole
Unaccompanied migrant children
Children’s legislation in the United Kingdom

• Key legal obligations ("children in need" / "looked after children")
• Priority for children whose parents cannot care for them

• Requirement is to provide:
  – Social worker
  – Assessment of needs
  – Accommodation
  – Financial support
  – Access to legal support

• Asylum seeking children also referred to panel of NGO’s – voluntary support

• Local authority does not take on role of parent
• Agencies seek to work together
Unaccompanied migrant children
Accommodation provided to children

• Important for care and for management of the child’s case
• For adults and families – provision is role of central Government

• For children – provision is role of local Government
  – Supervised hostel
  – Foster care, that is placed in a family situation
  – Bed and breakfast

• Central Government pays back the costs
• Basis is “personal” care but now under pressure – and for how long

Home Office
Unaccompanied migrant children
On reaching 18 years of age

- Claimant now requires permission to stay in UK
- For some, already permitted; for others, not.

- “Failed asylum seeker” category? Or some other?

- Continuing education issues
- “Loss of time” issues
- Numbers involved

- Solutions?
Unaccompanied migrant children
Some particular issues

• Age – assessment

• Family tracing

• Safe and adequate reception – what does it mean?

• UK - Albania project

• Link with trafficking work / all unaccompanied migrant child work