

Someone

I've got at least five cases where the kids don't know who their social worker is, so they don't know where to get help.
Charity worker.

[We] had a college that created lots of places and was very inclusive. It was a good place to put these young people. We knew it was a good college and accommodation was readily available. However the relevant district council became disturbed about community cohesion, and now the college no longer does English as a Second Language. ...It's difficult.
Social work professional.

The few kids I've got from Kent have got into some kind of trouble [for minor criminal offences] perhaps because of being, kind of, left.
Lawyer.

My bed is broken. I sleep on the floor. I don't know who my social worker is to get it fixed.
Edward, 17.

Breakfast: eggs. Lunch: eggs. Dinner: eggs. No change. Robel, 15, living in semi-independent accommodation.

I've been too many times to the GP. They give me all these tablets which don't help that much.
Bashir, 19, on the difficulty of accessing mental health care.

It took 11 months to get into school. I was 13 years old. I didn't even have English lessons.
Hussein, 19.



else's problem? Unaccompanied children seeking asylum in England

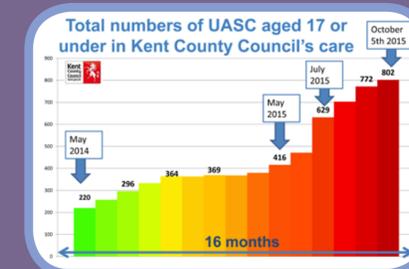
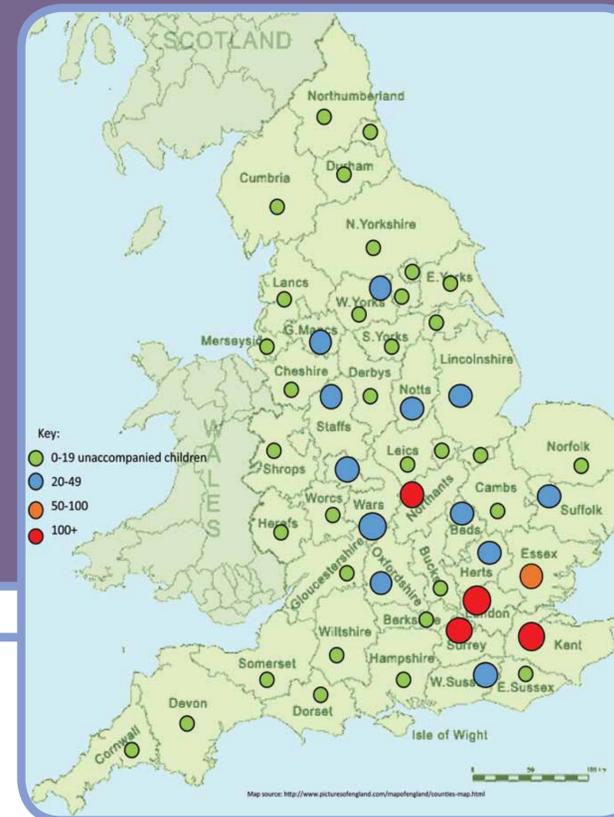
Unaccompanied children are looked after by the local authority wherever they first come to attention (s20, Children Act 1989).

Freedom of Information requests to all 150 Children's Services departments in England showed a very uneven distribution of unaccompanied children.

Why? Because most refugees/migrants arrive at the main ports, lorry depots or at the Asylum Screening Unit in Croydon. But children, unlike adults, are not "dispersed" to other parts of the country.

What's the problem?

The higher-intake authorities cannot act in the children's best interests.



Kent received 521 children between 1 July and 6 October 2015.

By September it ran out of foster beds and could no longer allocate a social worker to new arrivals.

Schools and colleges could not or would not accept new children.

Doctors and mental health services were full.

Legal representatives had no more capacity for new cases.

What's the solution?

Low and medium intake authorities taking on responsibility for some of the children. Brighton took on responsibility for ten children from Kent in November. BUT almost all other authorities refused.

Why?

Mainly because of funding. The Home Office pays a daily rate to cover accommodation/foster care, food, social workers, transport and so on, but local authorities say it is not enough and each child creates a financial deficit.

Evidence from our partner research teams in France and Austria, and a pilot scheme in England in 2001, shows that responsibility sharing only works when it's properly funded by central government.

Yet without responsibility sharing, this research suggests children's best interests – and their legal rights – cannot be fully implemented.