
Staying in Kent

Safeguarding
Unaccompanied
Children who arrive in
Kent

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Data Sets provided by Kent County Council.

Section 1 – Terms of reference

- 1.1. This work was commissioned by Kent Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) and the work was undertaken in November and December 2012
- 1.2. The report was commissioned in light of two earlier reports by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner for England (OCC) exploring the experiences of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) arriving in Kent¹. KSCB were also concerned about the number of UASC going missing and whether their policy, practice and procedures needed improvement to ensure all measures were in place to militate against this and other risks to their safety and well-being.
- 1.3. The terms of reference for the work were to:
 - Provide a report outlining key issues facing KSCB in relation to protecting UASC and other vulnerable children from trafficking and/or sexual exploitation.
 - Provide clear recommendations for KSCB to ensure that statutory agencies effectively protect children, including UASC from trafficking in Kent.
 - Clarify obstacles to tracking individual children and confirm trends in relation to data/intelligence from UK Border Agency (UKBA), Kent Police and Kent County Council (KCC).

Within these terms of reference, the report was also to take account of the findings and recommendations of a number of policy and other documents (see Appendix A).

Section 2 –Evidence gathering

- 2.1. This report is based on data and information provided by Kent Specialist Children’s Services (SCS), UKBA, the police and health professionals, and on interviews with key people identified by KSCB. There were four distinct work areas in the evidence gathering for this report:
 - Preparation work – analysis of relevant policy and other documents and determining the outline for areas to be explored.
 - Field work in Kent.
 - Identifying data to be provided by Kent
 - Analysis of data and evidence from interviews.
- 2.2. The field work took place between 26th and 30th November 2012 and interviews were held with key individuals identified by KSCB. Agencies interviewed were: SCS (including the dedicated USAC service); the police; UK Borders Agency

¹ *Landing in Kent: the experience of unaccompanied children arriving in the UK* and *Landing in Dover: the immigration process undergone by unaccompanied children arriving in Kent*. Office of the Children’s Commissioner for England. London. February 2011 and January 2012

(UKBA); safeguarding professionals, health professionals, the Kent Youth Offending Service (YOS), the lead member for Looked After Children (LAC) and a voluntary agency (see Appendix B for details). Interviews were face to face or by telephone and interviewees were sent the notes from each interview and had the opportunity to correct, amend or make additions.

- 2.3. Hard data on UASC was provided by the lead member, KCS management information team via the LAC performance manager, the UASC service manager and UKBA.

Section 3 – Services for UASC in Kent

- 3.1 SCS provides a dedicated service for UASC consisting of a service manager who has line management responsibility for a duty team, two long term teams and a core team at Millbank - a residential reception and assessment centre for 16 and 17 year old male USAC.
- 3.2 All USAC who arrive in Kent and assessed as being 18 or under are deemed to be accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, and are eligible for services as 'relevant' children under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. Managers and others in SCS report that all Accommodated UASC are subject to the same policies and procedures as all other LAC in Kent.
- 3.3 The UASC service duty team conducts a Core Assessment which includes an assessment of age on all those Accommodated.
- 3.4 Supported lodgings, specialist fostering services for trafficked children (currently funded by the Department for Education (DfE) Safe Accommodation fund), outreach and mentoring services and fostering for under 16s or particularly vulnerable UASC are contracted from Barnardo's. Barnardo's also currently provide volunteers to act as independent adults during some core assessments – I was informed that this is likely to be formalised by way of a service level agreement in April 2013.
- 3.4 KSCB has established a specific sub group to address issues of trafficking and sexual exploitation for USAC. Representatives from the police, health and UKBA are members of this sub group. The subgroup has produced a toolkit on trafficked children for use by all agencies in Kent.²
- 3.5 KCC has established an 'alerts' system for all significant incidents relating to LAC. This identifies missing incidents as a second level priority for alerting managers. It provides a definition of 'missing' and outlines the reporting process. All alerts are monitored by a performance and standards officer. UASC are explicitly included in the procedure and processes.

² Kent and Medway Safeguarding Trafficked Children Toolkit 2012.

3.6 Kent's Safeguarding Children Procedures include sections addressing sexual abuse, sexually active children, children living away from home and children who go missing.³

Section 4 – UASC arrival in Kent

- 4.1 UKBA report that 99 UASC arrived and were referred to KCC in 2011-12; of these 24 were placed in foster care and 75 went to Millbank – those going to Millbank were transported alone by taxi arranged by KCC. UKBA assess age based predominantly on physical appearance and will '*err on the side of caution*'. The UKBA procedure for initial interview with UASC has been amended in light of the concerns expressed by the OCC. There is a set pro forma in place which collects only basic details and focuses on the well-being of the child⁴. A Grant Funding Agreement sets a target of two hours for a KCC worker to attend the port and be present at this interview, UKBA report that this target was met for 92 of the 99 entries in 2011-12. Translation for the initial interview is via telephone.
- 4.2 Full screening interviews take place about two weeks after arrival; for those placed at Millbank a member of staff attends along with an interpreter and legal representative. UKBA report that Millbank staff very rarely contribute during this interview. Millbank confirm that their staff attend the interviews and the manager described the role as: '*to act as an independent person to be mindful of impact of the interview on the UASC*'. He told me there was no specific guidance or training for staff in this role but he felt that they were all confident enough to challenge when necessary.
- 4.3 Social workers from the UASC duty team conduct a Core Assessment which will include an age assessment. An independent person (a Barnardo's volunteer) attends some of these assessments to support the UASC – while they may intervene if they feel necessary and appropriate, they do not take notes or keep a written record, this is by specific request from the UASC team. Education staff from the 'virtual school' will contribute to the age assessment but no health staff are involved.

Section 5 – Data on UASC in Kent

- 5.1. A number of data sets were provided covering a range of information about UASC in Kent:
- The case load of the UASC service between 1st April 2011 and 31st March (Data set 1 from LAC performance manager).

³ Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Procedures. September 2007

⁴ UKBA Children's Current Circumstances Pro Forma. Appendix C

- Numbers of UASC processed by UKBA and subsequently referred to KCC between 1st October 2011 and 31st September 2012 (E mail information given by UKBA)
- Young men aged 16 and 17 placed at Millbank between 1st November 2011 and 18th November 2012, including those assessed as over 18 and returned to UKBA (Data Set 3 provided by UASC service manager).

5.2. Three data sets were provided relating to UASC who went missing:

- Number of UASC who were 18 or under and LAC reported as missing – information on this set covered the year 2011–12 with no specified dates but presumed to be 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012, including the number of incidents and type of placement (Data set 4 from LAC performance manager)
- Episodes and numbers of UASC LAC reported missing, dated 2011 -12 presumed to be 1st April to 31st March. (Data set 5 from KCC management Information provided by the lead member)
- Number of incidents of UASC reported missing including type of placement and numbers of those subsequently located between 1st November 2011 and 31st October 2012 (Data set 6 from KCC management information provided by UASC service manager).

5.3 Data on the numbers of UASC going missing in transit between the port and subsequent KCC placement, and the numbers referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), was also requested. **To date this has not been provided**, however the duty team manager reports that he could not remember any UASC going missing in transit in the last two years.

Section 6 – UASC who go missing

6.1 The data sets provided do not necessarily cover the same time periods and there are variations between each of them which makes robust analysis problematic. It is therefore difficult to identify with any degree of accuracy the numbers of UASC who went missing in 2011-12. The following points indicate some of the discrepancies and endeavours to draw some relevant information from them.

6.2 Two figures are given for the number of UASC aged 18 or under going missing – 57⁵ and 54⁶ (with a further 11 over 18's also having gone missing).

6.3 Two data sets show differing figures for the number of UASC missing incidents, 94⁷ and 174⁸.

⁵ Data set 4

⁶ Data set 5

⁷ Data sets 4 and 5

⁸ Data set 6

- 6.4 28 UASC are recorded as going missing from residential accommodation⁹ not subject to Children Act legislation, and 12 are recorded as specifically missing from Millbank¹⁰ – it is unclear whether other such accommodation is also used which would account for the discrepancy, if so no information about this was provided.
- 6.5 The data suggests that of a total of 95 UASC who went missing, 50 were subsequently located¹¹. The data also says that 5 UASC were still missing¹² – presumably as of 31.03.12?
- 6.6 Information is given on the time between referral from UKBA and going missing and it would appear that the peak risk periods are within the first five days or after 101 days¹³.
- 6.7 The data indicates that UASC of Afghani or Vietnamese ethnicity are those most likely to go missing.¹⁴
- 6.8 The Police use a universal electronic recording and investigative system (Compact) which records and logs all activities in relation to any reported missing person. The system can be interrogated but it does not easily provide specific information about UASC without manual intervention, although the system is being further developed. The KSCB trafficking sub group did undertake a specific piece of work on amalgamating data on UASC held by the Police, Health and SCS, however this was a resource heavy piece of work and cannot be routinely replicated. While this exercise did identify the numbers of UASC going missing, the only other solid conclusion drawn was that Vietnamese UASC were most likely to go missing during or after the initial assessment period. The exercise also identified a lack of coordination between agencies in relation to referrals to the NRM, leading to some overlap.

Section 7 – Health, sexual health and exploitation

- 7.1 The initial physical health needs of UASC appear to be well met with systems in place for immunisation and TB screening and LAC health assessments completed.
- 7.2 The GP practice serving Millbank reports very good compliance with appointments and also offers a ‘drop in’ clinic specifically for UASC. There is a concern that compliance and attendance drops off when UASC leave Millbank

⁹ Data set 5

¹⁰ Data set 6

¹¹ Data set 6

¹² Data set 4

¹³ Data set 6

¹⁴ Data set 6

and move to community based accommodation and there is no current health service 'tracking' of whether they re-register for local GP services.

- 7.3 Health professionals express concern that emotional and mental health needs are less well met, particularly in relation to dealing with trauma and distress immediately after arrival in the UK. The designated LAC nurse is concerned about waiting lists and a 'gap' in CAMHS provision for 16 and 17 year olds. She has recently discussed this shortfall with commissioners and will advocate for better and specific services for UASC. Currently CAMHS services are commissioned separately for east and west Kent; east Kent services will take referrals on 16 and 17 year olds, and have a shorter waiting time. There are plans for commissioning a single service across the county in 2013.
- 7.4 The LAC assessment process is currently being reviewed and the designated LAC nurse is working with Catch 22 to establish a more accessible system for those over 16. This will take the form of 'health days' which will offer a drop in service including dental and sexual health.
- 7.5 Health services have concerns about the risk of sexual exploitation for LAC children, including UASC. This concern is exacerbated by the large numbers of LAC placed in Kent and the proximity of accommodation to bail and other hostels, houses of multiple occupation etc.
- 7.6 Some services in Kent have been provided with training from Barnardo's in relation to sexual exploitation. It was unclear who had received this training but I was able to ascertain that the UASC service, staff at Millbank and Kent YOS had not.

Section 8 – Trafficking

- 8.1 I was unable to ascertain the numbers of UASC thought to be at risk of or trafficked or who were referred to the NRM.
- 8.2 The KSCB sub group has developed a tool kit for use by staff across all agencies in Kent which includes a risk matrix and a quick reference guide. This was initially piloted by the UASC service about two years ago and has since been rolled out to other services and agencies.
- 8.3 The UASC duty team manager told me that the toolkit was in place but that he felt that its value was more for other agencies than the UASC service because it is based on observations over a period of time, whereas the duty team had to make more immediate assessments.
- 8.4 Health staff are aware of the toolkit but told me that a national toolkit specifically for health was in development; therefore they would use this when available.
- 8.5 Health professionals are not identified as first responders for the purposes of referrals to the NRM; where there are concerns a referral is made to SCS via the

Central Referral Unit. This Unit operates under thresholds agreed across all relevant agencies and has been operational for about nine months. Some concerns expressed by health workers about threshold levels may be as a result of the 'bedding in' of the unit and the mechanisms in place for escalation if referees are unsure of any actions taken as a result of their referral.

- 8.6 The Kent YOS does not use the trafficking tool kit, although staff are aware of it. The YOS Manager reports that the ASSET assessment used by all youth offending services: *'does not have any specific prompts which might support the thinking or consideration of the practitioner'*.
- 8.7 No interviewees were aware of any special protection measures, outside of Kent safeguarding procedures¹⁵, for UASC at risk of or trafficked. Barnardo's expressed some concern about UASC at risk or trafficked being placed at Millbank as they felt the low staffing levels, particularly at night did not offer sufficient protection.
- 8.8 There are specific problems with UASC believed to be trafficked who go missing and are subsequently located in criminal situations – most commonly in cannabis farms. If the police have intelligence about UASC, they will endeavour to treat the search and arrest with sensitivity; nevertheless they are constrained by the criminal justice system and have to present a criminal case to the CPS. The potential criminalisation of UASC who are in effect victims rather than perpetrators is documented by the OCC¹⁶.

Section 9 – Support in the community

- 9.1 After assessment UASC will remain in placement at Millbank or with foster carers until they are deemed ready to move into community placements. A number of different placements are available – supported lodgings, a residential hostel facility and shared independent living in social housing – the latter is specifically commissioned for the UASC service clients and UASC accommodated do not share with other LAC or with adults.
- 9.2 Following the core assessment UASC cases are transferred to the long term teams of the UASC service who will continue to support them until they cease to be looked after, Where the team identify a need for additional support, a referral can be made to Barnardo's who provide volunteer mentors who undertake a twelve week independent living skills programme. Acceptances of referrals are dependent on the assessment and the availability of volunteers.

¹⁵ Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Procedures. September 2007

¹⁶ *Landing in Kent: the experience of unaccompanied children arriving in the UK* The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England. P.28. February 2011

- 9.3 Barnardo's report that their experience suggests that those UASC who have been in foster care or supported lodgings do better when moving to independent living than those who have been placed at Millbank prior to independence. On average UASC stay at Millbank for between 6 and 8 weeks. In 2011-12, of 47 UASC leaving Millbank for move on accommodation (not with their own family), 1 went to foster placement, 1 into a hostel and the remainder into shared independent accommodation.¹⁷
- 9.4 All interviewees reported that UASC who had reached the end of any appeals process were more likely to go missing.
- 9.5 SCS takes the view that UASC are eligible for services as relevant children under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, and will continue to support them until age 21 regardless of their immigration status. However, there are issues around funding particularly for accommodation if/when appeals processes are exhausted.
- 9.6 Some practitioners expressed concerns as to whether the level of support for older UASC was at the right level to meet their on-going needs as care leavers. By way of example, there was an (unverifiable) anecdotal report of a UASC being given notice to quit his accommodation (because funding had ended) by text message.
- 9.7 Barnardo's report that they have a good working relationship with SCS and that safeguarding concerns are responded to quickly and appropriately. There is some concern that risk assessments and/or strategy meetings in relation to missing UASC do not always utilise 'soft' information held by volunteers and foster carers; for example they cite a case where a UASC living independently went missing, the UASC was in contact with another child placed with foster carers who knew of his whereabouts but there are no formal mechanisms in place for sharing this information.

Section 10 – Millbank

- 10.1 KCS provides a residential facility for male UASC assessed as being aged 16 or 17. This 'reception and assessment centre' can accommodate up to 33 young people who receive a core assessment, language tuition and the opportunity to access community work or some limited education. There are also facilities for access to a training flat to assist with independent living skills.
- 10.2 It is unclear what the status of Millbank is – it is not a registered children's home – in 2010 SCS took legal advice from Ofsted which led them to believe the accommodation was exempt from registration. The building is rented and the

¹⁷ Data set 3

landlord provides cleaning and reception staff and two security guards who are responsible for the building and residents between 10pm and 8am. It is recommended that the legal status of Millbank is clarified.

- 10.3 SCS provide a core team of four staff at Millbank who provide cover on shifts between 8am and 10pm – these are all unqualified staff supervised by the duty team manager. The manager describes two of these as ‘*assistant social workers*’ with greater levels of experience and training. This core group is supplemented by the use of agency staff from the KCC in house agency.
- 10.4 An external practitioner had received reports of other young people and particularly girls, staying overnight at Millbank, leading to subsequent unrest and, on one occasion a fight between residents. Millbank does not allow overnight stays, I was told there had been perhaps a couple of occasions where a non-resident had stayed, but this had never involved girls.
- 10.5 UASC at Millbank are given information individually about their looked after status during an initial admission meeting. The information leaflets - for example about complaints procedures – are only provided in English; a face to face interpreter gives an explanation but does not make a direct translation. Individual UASC can ask for this at a later date if they wish, and the information given is reinforced by the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) at subsequent statutory reviews.

Section 11 – multi agency working

- 11.4 The multi- agency KSCB sub group on trafficking and CSE brings together Kent Police, SCS, health professionals, UKBA and safeguarding representatives from across Kent and is chaired by a Detective Superintendent from the public protection unit of Kent Police. This provides a forum for information sharing and opportunities to contribute to policy development. The group has recently considered the recommendations of a report on missing children produced by the All Party Parliamentary Group¹⁸ but the chair comments on the constraints of implementing many of these locally: ‘*For example 21 of the 32 APPG recommendations require national change before the benefit can be realised*’
- 11.5 Both east and west Kent hold bi-monthly multi agency meetings as a forum to discuss issues in relation to vulnerable children. Barnardo’s report that the UASC service previously held quarterly multi agency meetings, including representation from the refugee children’s council (RCC). These were discontinued following a

¹⁸ *Report from the joint inquiry into children who go missing from care*’ The APPG for Runaway and Missing Children and the APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. June 2012

change of manager; Barnardo's are unsure whether the RCC attend the bi-monthly meetings.

- 8.6 There is evidence of local initiatives to address issues of risk and vulnerability. For example, the Margate Task Force Board was established and mapped risk indices such as deprivation, mental health, criminality and victimhood and co-location of perpetrators and vulnerable families and children. While this resulted in some good 'on the ground' multi agency responses, the police officer who initiated it felt that there was insufficient over-arching responsibility at the top level in agencies; and that performance targets for individual agencies did not encompass such work. There is a danger that such initiatives are championed by individuals and the impetus is not sustained when these individuals move or take on different responsibilities.
- 8.7 I was informed that there had been discussions to explore the establishment of a multi-agency information sharing hub but was unable to get further information as a planned interview with the key agency¹⁹ was cancelled and not re-scheduled. The establishment of a hub would be in line with the recommendations of the Education Committee report on child protection.²⁰

Section 12 – Summary and recommendations

12.1 Arrival in Kent –

- The overarching recommendation for the OCC²¹ in relation to screening interviews would appear to have been addressed by UKBA. A new format for initial interviews focuses on the well-being of the child and a grant funding agreement has established a time scale for social workers to attend the port to be present at this interview. The main screening interview now takes place at least two weeks after arrival and UASC have legal representation and an interpreter at this interview. A social worker or a member of staff from Millbank also attends the screening interview and while there is a confidence in their ability from SCS, this does not appear to be reflected in the experience reported by UKBA, for example there was an anecdotal report of a member of staff reading a magazine throughout the interview.
- It is to be commended that SCS are seeking to formalise the arrangement for Barnardo's to act as an independent person during core assessments and to be present when UASC are informed of the result of their age assessment

¹⁹ DS Steve McLean, Kent Police Joint Intelligence Unit

²⁰ ²⁰ 'Children First: the child protection system in England'. House of Commons Education Committee. Fourth report of session 2012-2013. Volume 1

²¹ 'Landing in Dover: the immigration process undergone by unaccompanied children arriving in Kent' Office of the Children's Commissioner for England. London January 2012.

Recommendation 1 - SCS should agree with UKBA the remit and parameters of the role of all UASC staff attending UKBA screening interviews. KCS may wish to consider whether this role should be akin to that of an Appropriate Adult²² for children held in the police station. All staff attending screening interviews should be fully cognisant with the agreed role and should note and record on the child's file any interventions made.

Recommendation 2 – SCS should ensure that the service level agreement with Barnardo's has clear definitions and expectations of the role of independent person attending any meetings connected with the core assessment and age assessment process. This should specifically include a remit to ensure that UASC know how to make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the age assessment process.

12.2. Transport from the port to placement – there appears to be a lack of clarity on the procedure for transporting UASC from the port to placement with different interviewees providing differing information. For example, one interviewee reported that foster carers are sometimes asked to collect children from the port whereas another said it was always done by social workers. It is unclear how the taxi firm used for Millbank is contracted and what checks are made on individual drivers. (see Recommendation 5)

12.3 Data collection, collation and analysis – data on UASC is collected by UKBA, by SCS and, when reported as missing, by Kent Police and there is currently no system or measures in place for routinely collating and sharing these various data sets. Within SCS the data sets collected do not appear to be systematic resulting in different figures being provided by Management Information Systems and the UASC service.

Recommendation 3 – the KSCB sub group should urgently require SCS, UKBA and Kent Police to identify key data needed to enable the KSCB to monitor, review and identify patterns or trends in relation to safeguarding UASC.

²² Police and Criminal Evidence 1984. Code C (Revised).

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/police/operational-policing/pace-codes/pace-code-c-2012?view=Binary>

12.4. Going missing, exploitation and trafficking –

- SCS is to be commended for commissioning specialist foster care placements for trafficked children and for their commitment to maintaining these when the current DfE funding ends in 2013; this is in line with recommendations made by the parliamentary inquiry into missing children.²³ However, these places are only available for small number of identified USAC with the majority being placed in 'ordinary' foster placements or Millbank.
- All interviewees expressed concern about the risk of going missing although there appeared to be a somewhat fatalistic attitude that there was little that could be done without the recourse to secure accommodation. This was particularly so when the perception was that UASC are complicit in their own exploitation, either by compliance with their trafficker or going missing when all appeals processes had been exhausted. The data provided indicated two specific risk periods for UASC going missing but no evidence was given to suggest that these had been identified as times when extra measures or interventions could or should be put in place.
- A recent report by the House of Commons Education Committee²⁴ highlighted concerns about lack of awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues for older children amongst professionals and specifically noted the particular needs of UASC.
- Both Kent and Medway Safeguarding services are aware of the risks of exploitation and both have measures in place to map and enumerate those deemed to be at risk; UASC are included in this process. While it appears that some social work staff have received recent training relating to exploitation, this did not include the UASC service.
- The Safeguarding Trafficked Children Toolkit while not academically tested, does provide a useful guide and the risk matrix should help staff in their assessments. I am concerned that the UASC duty team manager felt that it was not necessarily needed by his team as he felt it was based on longer term observations. There are clear immediate identifiers outlined in the Toolkit which are as relevant to newly arrived UASC as to those who have been in the UK for longer periods.

²³ *Report from the joint inquiry into children who go missing from care* The APPG for Runaway and Missing Children and the APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. June 2012. Recommendation 5.

²⁴ *Children First: the child protection system in England*. House of Commons Education Committee. Fourth report of session 2012-2013. Volume 1

Recommendation 4 – KSCB should require SCS to test the hypothesis that UASC in foster care or supported lodgings do better in independent living than those from Millbank, including whether they are less likely to go missing. KSCB should consider measurements which include: going missing; maintaining stable accommodation; maintaining education or training; involvement in criminality; contact with support agencies.

In light of the findings, SCS should consider whether a 6 to 8 week period is sufficient to fully prepare UASC for independent living, whether the period of residence should be extended or whether resources should be re- invested from the residential assessment service into specialist fostering or other services.

Recommendation 5 – KSCB should satisfy itself that policy and procedures for safeguarding pay sufficient attention to the needs of children aged 16 and over, in line with the recommendation by the House of Commons Education Committee.²⁵ In particular, SCS should satisfy itself that the arrangements for transporting UASC from the port are compliant with all LAC guidance and regulation, including CRB check requirements.

Recommendation 6 – KSCB should ensure that training on trafficking and exploitation is extended to the UASC and other relevant services such as the YOS, as soon as is practicably possible. KSCB should also ensure that the measures in place to monitor the use of the Trafficking toolkit are robust and give accurate and measurable information about its use and impact.

Recommendation 7 – the UASC service should, in conjunction with Kent Safeguarding Unit, explore what measures and interventions can be put in place at the periods of highest risk of going missing, as indicated by the data. They may wish to consider models used for children at risk of sexual exploitation which include safe drop in facilities and aggressive outreach.²⁶

²⁵ Ibid: Recommendation 8.

²⁶ For example, Barnardo's publication '*Reducing the risk*'
http://www.barnardos.org.uk/reducing_the_risk_report.pdf

12.5. Support in the community –

- SCS are to be commended for their view that UASC should become LAC and should also be eligible as relevant children to services under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. Because of the unique situation of Kent in relation to UASC, there may have been an initial logic in having a specialist service to liaise with UKBA and deal with arrival and initial assessments of UASC. However, I would suggest that better access to main stream LAC services could assist with the integration of UASC.
- When UASC transfer to the long term teams in the UASC service and move to live in the community, all interviewees confirmed that policies, procedures and services for care leavers should be applicable. Therefore all UASC living independently should be allocated a personal advisor and have a pathway plan in place.²⁷
- The data from Millbank indicates that efforts are made to place UASC with others of the same or similar ethnicity/country of origin. The UASC service manager indicated that the accommodation is commissioned separately from that used for other care leavers in Kent but it is unclear whether accommodation for other young people or adults are provided in the same houses. The police expressed some concerns about where UASC are placed and their vulnerability, particularly in relation to known criminality and gang affiliations among other and adult foreign nationals.

Recommendation 8 – KSCB should satisfy itself that UASC have access to all the services and policies due to them as ‘relevant’ children under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. SCS should consider whether the UASC should have access to main stream LAC services, in particular the skills and knowledge of specialist leaving care support services. SCS should also consider whether the integration of UASC may be better served if independent accommodation for them is commissioned in the same way as for all other LAC.

12.6 Millbank –

- The OCC²⁸ noted that UASC accommodated at Millbank spoke positively about the staff and standards of care they received. Neither the UASC service manager or the manager responsible for Millbank were able to tell me what

²⁷ Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulation. Volume 3 Planning transition to adulthood for care leavers (Including Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010.

²⁸ *Landing in Kent: the experience of unaccompanied children arriving in the UK* Office of the Children’s Commissioner for England. London. February 2012.

arrangements were in place for ensuring that the staff employed by the landlord were appropriately checked in line with Children Act regulations. Both informed me that their presumption was that this was organized by those responsible for commissioning, but I was unable to verify this.

- While efforts are made to give information about LAC status, I am unsure whether this is sufficient to enable UASC to fully understand their rights and entitlements.

Recommendation 9 – SCS should consider whether key documents in relation to LAC status, and in particular those relating to complaints, should be routinely translated or available in other languages for UASC.

Recommendation 10 –KSCB should clarify the legal status of Millbank and satisfy itself that this is appropriate to meet the safeguarding needs of LAC.

12.7 Multi agency working –

- I was unable to establish whether the east and west Kent bi-monthly meetings include representation from UKBA and the RCC.
- While the KSCB sub group has provided a useful and regular forum for information sharing between agencies, there appear to be no formal and routine measures in place to collect and share relevant data.

Recommendation 11 – SCS should ensure that UKBA and RCC are included in all relevant information sharing forums. They should consider whether there would be any value in reinstating the quarterly UASC service multi agency meetings.

Recommendation 12– KCSB should consider an approach to the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, the new clinical commissioning groups and KCC to explore the feasibility of establishing a multi- agency information sharing hub as part of their safeguarding duties.²⁹

12.8 Age assessments

- It is to be commended that SCS undertake a full assessment on USAC including an assessment of their age. This is a complex area and is done without the involvement of health practitioners using the social work skills and

²⁹ *Report from the Joint Inquiry into children who go missing from care* APPG for runaway and missing children and the APPG for looked after children and care leavers. June 2012.

knowledge in relation to child development and with input from education staff. There is no specific guidance in place for the staff undertaking age assessments.

Recommendation 13 – KSCB should consider commissioning a review of the best available evidence in relation to age assessment and use this to produce guidance for staff undertaking these assessments.