



FACT SHEET: Children from Abroad

Unaccompanied children or those with someone, who is not their parent, are vulnerable, especially if the adult does not have Parental Responsibility for them. If the child is alone, in the care of someone without any documentation or in the care of an agent, they will need assistance to access care, health and education services. Some children may be exposed to domestic, sexual or commercial exploitation.

Key Principles

- The child should be assessed as a Child In Need
- The child must be seen and spoken to in their own language and alone in a safe setting
- The child's history including traumatic experiences, culture, legal status and the impact of just arriving must be considered
- Information must be sought actively in partnership with other agencies in the UK and abroad.

Legal duties and child's status

Different legislation and duties apply (see the Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board Procedures chapter 3.4 for details and links) depending on the circumstances on arrival and whenever practitioners meet a child they should seek to clarify the following basic information in a sensitive manner:

- the child's identity and immigration status
- the relationship of the carer to the child
- the health and education services being provided to the child.

If the information indicates that the child has come from overseas and is not cared for by someone with Parental Responsibility, Children's Social Care must be notified in order to undertake an assessment to clarify the statutory responsibilities to the child and assess the Child's needs for services.

The child's identity and age

Age is central to the assessment and affects the rights to services, which should be age appropriate. The assessment of age is complex and there is mandatory Guidance issued by the Home Office 'the Age Assessment Guidance'. The assessment must be completed by at least one, preferably two qualified social workers and the advice of a paediatrician may be needed.

Assessment and Safeguarding concerns

Any unaccompanied child or a child with a carer without Parental Responsibility should receive an Initial Assessment to establish not only their needs for universal services such as education and health services but to link them into these quickly in order to engage with the family and the local community.

Guidance about the specific aspects of an assessment can be found in chapter 3.4 in the SSCB procedures.

Any information about safeguarding concerns or of exploitation whether domestic, financial, commercial or sexual must be acted on with a child protection referral to Children's Social Care taking into account additional factors like:

- Perceptions of authority and the possible level of fear
- Implications of deportation if a prosecution follows
- Balancing the impact on the child of separation with the likely history
- Child care practices in different cultural backgrounds and experiences.