

North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board



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Information Pack for Foster Carers, Children Home Staff and
Other Providers of Care and Accommodation.

Re: Unaccompanied Children who may be seeking asylum
and/or who may have been trafficked.

(Also includes additional notes to support Emergency Duty Team staff)

October 2011

Initial Actions:

Please see the attached flowcharts that illustrate the initial actions that have already been taken by the various authorities (UK Border Agency (UKBA), airport police, local police), prior to the child coming to stay with you.

It is important to recognise that whilst North Somerset has two ports of entry in its boundaries (Avonmouth and Bristol Airport), it is rarely that North Somerset is the destination of an asylum seeking child or a trafficked child. They are most likely to arrive via North Somerset ports on route to a larger city or community.

Safety of the Child:

In most cases an unaccompanied child seeking asylum in this country will comply with the need to remain in placement whilst the UKBA and Immigration authorities make enquiries to assist them.

However, in cases where the child is suspected of being trafficked there are some extra protective measures that you can put into place that will help to better safeguard the child.

Recent experience has shown that children who are being trafficked go missing from North Somerset care within a very short time and it is crucial that the following issues are taken into account in the first 24-48 hours:

Children who have been trafficked may be expected to make contact at an early point with an adult who either brought them into the country or are part of the arrangements to move them on to their further destination.

It is important to note that the port authorities will look thorough a child's possessions and confiscate objects (paperwork, phones, money). However the child may still have a mobile phone or mobile phone 'sim' card with them with which they intend to make contact to an adult. Therefore it is critical that communication by the child and communication with the child from other adults does not occur until social workers have and the opportunity to assess such contact.

This is critical over weekend periods. As the carer/professional you should intercept any communication attempts and inform the unknown adult that the child cannot be contacted directly until social work has made an assessment. Where such contact from an unidentified adult persists please contact the police to assist.



In addition, a child may wish to go outside of your accommodation to look for landmarks and make a public telephone contact giving the landmark to an adult from which they can be later picked up. Please don't allow a suspected trafficked child to leave your premises without a care/professional accompanying them.

Age Assessment:

Normally an age assessment will have been undertaken prior to the child being placed with you. The method used complies with prior court rulings in respect of this issue but ongoing assessment is also important. Whilst in your care it will be important that you share any observations that you have which might lead to a review/amendment to the initial age assessment.

Missing:

It is regrettable that a number of unaccompanied children go missing within the first 24-48 hours of being in the area. As already stated, for many cases North Somerset's ports are simply a means to arrive into the country rather than the area being a destination point.

In most cases we are unable to locate these children following their going missing and there are obvious concerns as to the life that they lead once they go missing from the area.

The police will already have some knowledge of the child as a result of involvement with the port authorities and social workers (incl. EDT) and so it is critical that there is an early contact with the police giving any up to date information that you can.

On-going Support:

Cases of unaccompanied children are dealt with by the Referral and Assessment team in the first instance (tel 01275 888266) and they will be the first point of contact in respect of issues such as age assessment, legal status, support needs, translation services and inter-country liaison.

There will be cases where the out of hours emergency service (EDT tel. 01454 615165), will deal with a case over the weekend/bank holiday period. In these cases it is important to liaise closely with that service until such time that the Referral and Assessment team take over the case in normal working hours.



Emergency Duty Team (EDT), Staff Notes:

As part of ensuring that relevant actions have been taken prior to the child being looked after, it is important that EDT staff are aware of the flowcharts and that they check that the actions outlined in the flowcharts have occurred.

Issues include:

- The child being photographed.
- Baggage has been searched for mobile phones/sim cards.
- Fingerprints being taken.

In out of hours periods, age assessment will be an approximate assessment undertaken by practitioners involved at the time (to help avoid placing an adult into children placements and conversely, placing an under 16 year old in adult accommodation).

A more detailed and 'merton compliant' assessment will be undertaken during normal office hours.

EDT staff can also give the following website link to carers/accommodation providers to give them access to these guides.

<http://www.northsomersetscb.org.uk/trafficked-children.htm>