

ALLIES OR ADMINISTRATORS? THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS WITH UNACCOMPANIED YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND

An Abstract of the Thesis By
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In this thesis I set out to examine whether social workers can act as allies to unaccompanied young people or whether they act in a more administrative role, ensuring basic needs are met but failing to engage at a relational level. I was also interested in considering to what extent social workers operate at a structural level and are aware of issues impacting on unaccompanied young people with a particular focus on the so called ‘hostile environment policy’ pursued by the UK government. I believe I have shown that, from the testimony of social workers, other professionals and young people themselves relational social work is possible. While there is evidence of social workers as ‘administrators’ – distant, only available when young people pursue them and lacking in human connection – there is also evidence of social workers as allies, struggling to support young people within a hostile immigration system which does not put young people’s needs at the centre, and which does not put the best interests of children and young people first.