



For the Citizens'
Rights Agreements

Assurance Review (Looked after Children and Care Leavers) Annex 12: Northern Ireland

Health and Social Care Trust responses on support for Looked after Children and Care Leavers in making applications to the EU Settlement Scheme

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Executive Summary

In March 2023, the Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements (IMA) wrote to all five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland. The IMA is seeking assurance that Health and Social Care Trusts are providing appropriate support with relation to making and supporting EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) applications on behalf of all eligible looked after children, children in receipt of Health and Social Care Trust care and support, and care leavers. Further details of the IMA's methodology on looked after children and care leavers is outlined in our [Assurance Review](#).

All five Health and Social Care Trusts responded by the agreed upon deadline, and the IMA has assessed these responses according to the following three categories:

- robustness of the identification processes;
- accurate record keeping; and
- completion of retrospective checks

The IMA has identified no overarching concerns based on the responses from all five Health and Social Care Trusts. Based on the information provided, the IMA is sufficiently assured on the robustness of identification processes, record keeping and retrospective checks.

This report will outline the key findings from the responses received. The IMA will not be undertaking individual assurance reviews with these Health and Social Care Trusts as the IMA are assured that all five have provided sufficient information to demonstrate they are providing appropriate support to children and care leavers under the Withdrawal and Separation Agreements.

1. These Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCT) comprise of Belfast HSCT, Northern HSCT, Southern Eastern HSCT, Southern HSCT and Western HSCT.

Responses from Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland: Summary

1. In order to establish whether all children and care leavers under a Health and Social Care Trust are being identified and supported to make applications to the EUSS, the IMA wrote to all five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland. A series of questions were asked with regards to the identification of all those eligible to apply, and subsequent support and monitoring of these applications.²

2. The IMA received responses from all five Health and Social Care Trusts and has assessed these responses according to the following three areas:

- the identification of eligible children and care leavers;
- record keeping processes; and
- retrospective checks³

3. The IMA has assessed the information provided by each Health and Social Care Trust using a Red-Amber-Green (RAG) grading system (see definitions below), with the aim of identifying potential good practice and/or areas for improvement.

4. The RAG gradings are based on our review of the initial response received from each Health and Social Care Trust. The IMA has informed each Health and Social Care Trust of their current RAG grading separate to this report.

2. Where this review refers to '(all) children and care leavers', this includes looked after children, children in receipt of Health and Social Care Trust support and care, and care leavers.

3. Retrospective checks here refer to a Health and Social Care Trust checking historical records to identify any eligible children or care leavers who require support in making an EUSS application where they are up to the age of 21 or up to the age of 24 and actively engaged in a recognised course of education (in Northern Ireland) and may have left care up to six years ago.

Identification**Record keeping****Retrospective checks**

Green	Response provides a detailed process for identification of eligible children and care leavers under the remit of local government, including non-EEA family members of EEA citizens ⁴ . This includes the provision of supporting documentation outlining their process, and details of how the process and awareness of the EUSS has been disseminated to those identifying and supporting eligible children or care leavers.	Response explains a clear record keeping process which includes record of the EUSS application status/outcomes, contact details, and when the child or care leaver would be eligible to upgrade from pre-settled status to settled status.	Response confirms that retrospective checks have been completed and are based on an identification process which has also been graded as green.
Amber	Response provides a process for the identification of eligible children and care leavers under their remit in little detail. Local government body does not have supporting documentation or has not provided details of dissemination of information and the EUSS guidance to staff.	Response explains record keeping process. However, it is unclear, or it is not the case that all details of the EUSS application status/outcomes, contact details, and eligibility to upgrade from pre-settled status to settled status are consistently recorded for all eligible children and care leavers.	Unclear from response whether retrospective checks of all children under the local government bodies' remit and care leavers have taken place, or checks based on identification process which has been graded as amber.
Red	Response provides unclear identification process (for example, refers to identification of children using recorded ethnicity), and the local government body does not provide supporting documentation or detail of dissemination of information and process guidance to staff.	Response does not provide record keeping process or explains that it has not yet been established for the EUSS by the local government body.	Response indicates that retrospective checks of all children under the local government bodies remit and care leavers have not taken place, or checks based on identification process which has been graded as red.

4. Where this assurance review refers to non-EEA family members, this refers to non-EU and EEA EFTA citizens who are family members of EU and EEA EFTA citizens.

RAG Grading: Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Responses⁵

Local Authority	Identification	Record keeping	Retrospective checks
Belfast HSCT			
Northern HSCT			
Southern Eastern HSCT			
Southern HSCT			
Western HSCT			
GREEN	5	5	5
AMBER	0	0	0
RED	0	0	0

5. This assurance review has considered record-keeping, for example as to when a citizen is required to upgrade from pre-settled status to settled status, as well as (inherent within this workstream) any support of other assistance health and social care trusts may need to provide with any application to upgrade status. However, this is completely without prejudice to the IMA's judicial review against the Home Office, further details of which can be found [here](#).

The position in Northern Ireland

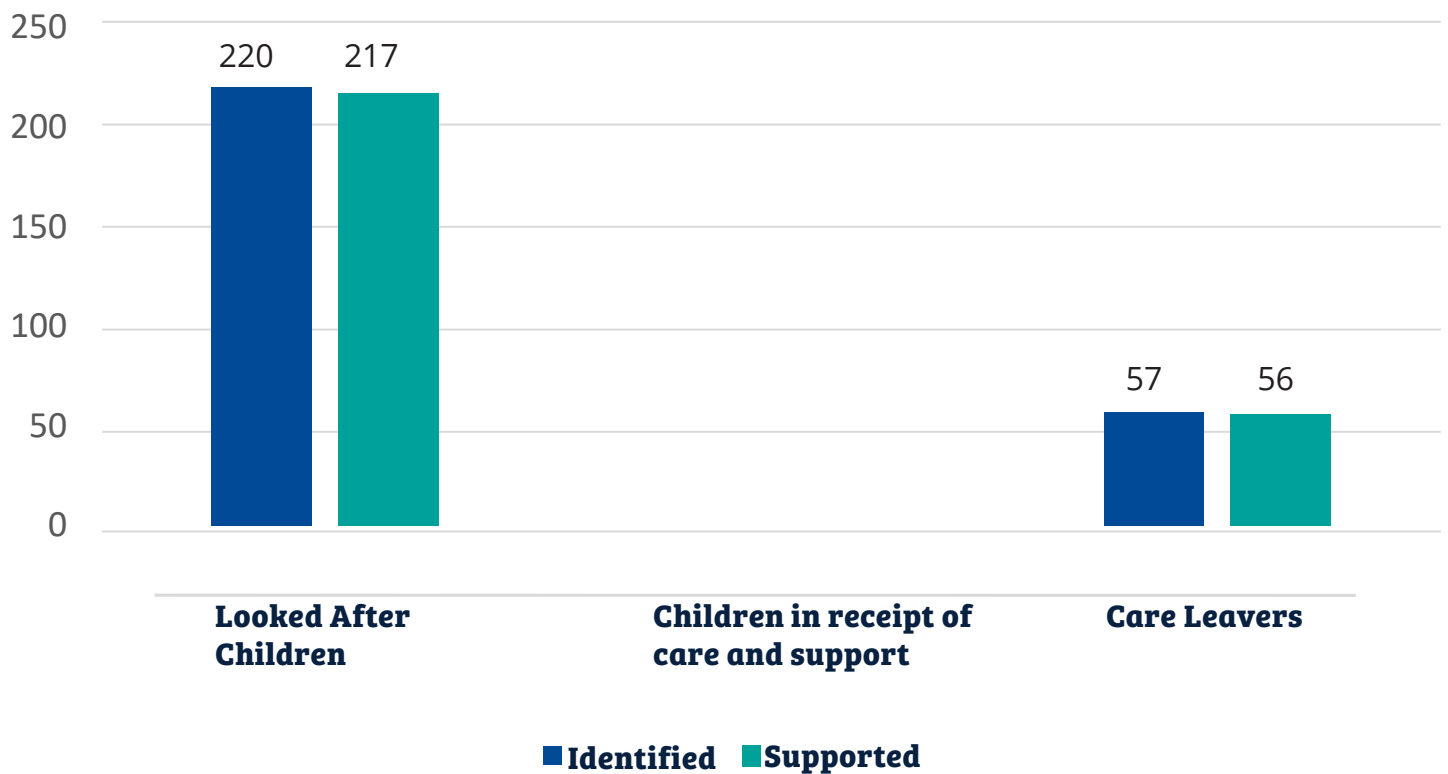
Support for identified eligible children and care leavers

All reported looked after children and care leavers identified are being supported by their Health and Social Care Trust.

5. The IMA requested the numbers of eligible looked after children, children in receipt of Health and Social Care Trust care and support, and care leavers who have been identified and received support. Figure 1 compares the total number of children and care leavers identified who are eligible to apply to the EUSS, versus those who have been supported as detailed in Health and Social Care Trust responses.

6. No figures were provided for children in receipt of care and support. The regional EUSS coordinator for every Health and Social Care Trust did not maintain a record of other young people ("known to Trusts") however all teams were provided with the relevant information to signpost such cases to "[stronger together](#)" to support any applications, with Social Workers consulted regularly with the regional coordinator in such cases.

Figure 1. Graph comparing numbers of LAC, care leavers and children in receipt of care and support, identified vs. supported



7. Figure 1 demonstrates that the majority of looked after children and care leavers identified by Trusts were subsequently supported to submit EUSS applications. 99% of looked after children and 98% of care leavers were reported to have been supported by a Health and Social Care Trust.

8. Although there are some discrepancies in the numbers between those identified, and those supported to make an application, the IMA is assured that these have been fully accounted for in the responses received. For example, one Trust told us that a care leaver had refused to engage with them, and another noted that three looked after children who had been initially identified were later confirmed as British citizens and therefore not eligible for the EUSS. As such, according to responses provided, the IMA concludes that all looked after children and care leavers who were identified were either supported or accounted for.

4. Of the 27 local authorities included in this figure (see paragraph 8).

Identification of eligible children and care leavers

On the basis of the responses received, the IMA is sufficiently assured at this stage that all eligible children and care leavers are being identified and supported.

9. All of Trust responses provided sufficient information to assure the IMA that there were appropriate processes in place for identifying potentially eligible children for the EUSS.

10. All five responses sufficiently outlined their identification processes for eligible children and care leavers in their remit, including non-EEA family members. All responses also provided supporting documentation and details of how information about the EUSS has been disseminated to those supporting eligible children and care leavers.

Record keeping processes

The IMA is sufficiently assured that based on responses provided, accurate and up-to-date records are being kept in relation to EUSS applications of all eligible children and care leavers in each Health and Social Care Trust.

11. All of the responses included sufficient information to assure the IMA that accurate and up-to-date records are being kept in relation to EUSS applications for children and care leavers in each Trust.

Retrospective checks

The IMA is sufficiently assured that retrospective checks (underpinned by adequate identification processes) have been completed by Health and Social Care Trusts.

12. All of the responses received from Health and Social Care Trusts assured the IMA that retrospective checks have been completed in respect of all children including all care leavers up to the age of 21 and those aged up to 24 who are in a recognised course of education.

Next Steps

13. Analysis of the responses received from all five Health and Social Care Trusts has sufficiently assured the IMA that each Trust is discharging their responsibilities and are providing appropriate support in relation to making and supporting EUSS applications on behalf of all eligible looked after children, children in receipt of Health and Social Care Trust care and support, and care leavers.

14. Based on the information provided, the IMA does not at this stage consider that further compliance action is required by any Health and Social Care Trust in relation to this assurance review. The IMA will share our findings with key stakeholders for the purpose of knowledge sharing.

15. The IMA may contact any Health and Social Care Trust in the future should we require further information, or if any subsequent issues arise after this assurance review.

16. The IMA has welcomed the positive engagement with each Health and Social Care Trust, The IMA are aware of the operational pressure Health and Social Care Trusts are under and are thankful for their collaboration with this assurance review.