



For the Citizens'
Rights Agreements

Assurance Review (Looked After Children and Care Leavers) Annex 4a: Yorkshire & Humber Final Regional Report

**Local authority responses on support for Looked after Children
and Care Leavers in making applications to the EU Settlement
Scheme**

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Introduction

The Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements (IMA) has completed individual assurance reviews with 15 local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber region of England.

Individual assurance reviews were conducted with local authorities who had not, during a previous information gathering exercise conducted in November 2022, provided sufficient information to demonstrate that they were discharging their responsibility to support eligible looked after children and care leavers to make an application to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). The methodology and rationale for this work has been outlined in our [main report](#).

To deliver these reviews, the IMA sought assurance in the following three areas:

1. robustness of the identification processes
2. accurate record keeping; and
3. completion of retrospective checks

This updated regional report will reflect the findings of these reviews.

Assurance Review findings

1. The IMA is assured that all local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber region had (or have now implemented) robust processes in place to identify eligible looked after children, care leavers and their family members. Local authorities demonstrated they were recording the nationalities and place of birth of children and young people who entered their care, assisting with the identification of potentially eligible applicants to the EUSS. This includes strategies for the identification and support of non-EU/EEA EFTA family members.
2. The IMA is assured that appropriate record keeping procedures are in place as set out in the [guidance](#) issued by the Home Office, along with confirmation that retrospective checks of all eligible children and care leavers in their remit have been completed and remain ongoing.
3. Many local authorities had processes in place to identify and support eligible cohorts but did not provide details of identification and record keeping processes in their initial reply. Many took proactive measures to review their current processes and implement changes as a result of this review and were keen to share these enhancements with the IMA. These are further outlined on page four and five of this report.
4. The IMA notes that it also experienced difficulty engaging with two local authorities in this region to gather additional information. The IMA took additional steps to support the local authorities with these reviews, answering questions via email, telephone calls and MS Teams meetings to clarify information which resulted in all local authorities engaging fully.
5. Where required, the IMA shared best practice principles and further guidance with local authorities, assisting local authorities to undertake proactive reviews of their processes. As a result, three local authorities were able to identify and implement improvements before meeting with the IMA.

6. Two local authorities reported that as part of their process, they consulted an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to review each case and check for potential eligibility for EUSS. This provided an additional level of assurance to the IMA.

7. As a result of IMA engagement and implementation of enhanced identification, record keeping and retrospective checks processes, as a region there were a further 75 looked after children and care leavers identified as eligible to apply for the EUSS and were supported through the process.

Improvements by local authorities

System Improvements

8. One local authority stated they had created a report that identifies any children that enter their care from a non-UK country. This will ensure all children eligible to apply for the EUSS are detected and fully supported through the process.

9. Four local authorities reported implementing a change to their systems, to ensure that nationality, ethnicity, and immigration status are recorded in line with the Home Office guidance.

10. One local authority reported that they have updated their online referral form for referrals into its Children's Services, so that nationality and key identifying information about families eligible for the EUSS is captured at the first point of contact.

11. One local authority reported they identified a service manager to take the lead on this work. The service manager reviewed all current children in care and care leavers to ensure that applications were made within the required timescales. They offered support to social workers, tracked applications, and linked in with the relevant embassies. They also provided information to social workers and colleagues across the service to raise awareness and understanding of the issues to strengthen practice in this area. The service manager also developed an understanding of the EU community in the area and the support available within the district.

12. One local authority reported that they have updated their guidance, referral form and flowchart to confirm a clear process for identifying and supporting all eligible children and care leavers, using nationality to do this. This includes being able to track when the child needs to apply for Settled Status, and it is easier to see where a child is within the EUSS process.

13. One local authority reported that they fully utilised the support offered from the Home Office EUSS Resolution Centre throughout the processing of applications and remain in constant dialogue to ensure all eligible Looked After Children and Care Leavers have a decision made about their status to remain in the UK.

14. The manager of children's services at one local authority was a keynote speaker at several communication and engagement events hosted by the Home Office. This engagement allowed networking across other local authority areas to seek best practice in the identification of all eligible Looked After Children and Care Leavers. They also established a Partnership Working Group which convened once a month to review progress as 'a place', on the EUSS, representation of council directorates and other sectors included Children and Young Peoples Services.

15. One local authority reported that they benefited from workshops and presentations from Migration Yorkshire, including specific presentations on Children in Care and Care Leavers. Relevant presentations were disseminated to teams, including their Early Help Teams.

16. One local authority reported that they use local community teams, their housing provider customer services staff, and social media to promote messages and to engage directly with those that might benefit from the EUSS. Where cases were identified, one-to-one discussions were completed, and support provided to submit applications.

17. Further to IMA engagement, one local authority confirmed that nationality is now recorded as a mandatory field and all records have been updated. Their contact information has been amended to identify eligible children and young people at point of contact with the local authority and a standalone form has been created to capture the necessary information when making the EUSS application.

Policy Improvements

18. Three local authorities reported specifically using the 'Best Practice' guidance that was shared with them by the IMA to either implement their own written guidance, implement improvements, and/or enhance their guidance further.

19. Several local authorities reported that they had delivered EUSS training to social workers and family support workers, utilising their internal hubs to promote awareness.

20. One local authority reported that since IMA engagement, they have reviewed their Looked After Children and Care Leavers that are from an EU background. They have done this periodically since June 2021, approximately every six months to ensure that it has tracked the progress of each individual child or young person regarding (1) their EU status (2) their citizenship status and (3) the progress on their Adoption application. They have also made the decision to review this work centrally to ensure that no child or young person is lost in the process, and it is able to centrally track all information and progress on every child or young person via reporting mechanisms.

21. One local authority reported they have developed a guidance document for teams to follow when notified through its MAST (Multi Agency Screening Team) of a family from EU/EEA or EFTA countries needing a service. The guidance document comes with two appendices, one for the EUSS notification, which will come to one of the Heads of Service, after which the details are added to the new tracker for Head of Service oversight. The other appendix is the flowchart showing each service's responsibility and the process to follow to either support the family to make the application, or for the local authority to make the application for the child.

22. Several local authorities have reported that they have created or updated guidance documents to improve training of their workforce and social work teams.

23. One local authority reported that they have established a clear identification process for all children by sharing their process and a link to their Immigration Policies. Seven-minute briefs were created to raise awareness of EUSS using a SharePoint system with links to policies and procedures.

24. One local authority reported that following IMA engagement, they undertook a proactive internal review where they identified their arrangements would benefit from a more robust recording system to allow them to be able to identify all eligible cohorts, including families and care leavers. The local authority identified the requirement to undertake further staff briefings, followed by developing ongoing guidance added to their continuous professional development programme. This will allow their workforce to be fully up to date with understanding EUSS eligibility and the process for making and supporting applications. This process and guidance have been developed and shared across teams with confirmation that briefings have been delivered to all relevant service areas.

25. One local authority reported that they had adapted their policy which included the identification and support for non-EU/EEA EFTA family members of EU/EEA EFTA Citizens, who may be able to apply to EUSS.

Process Improvements

26. Several local authorities reported undertaking further, manual and extensive checks of all their records to assist with the identification of eligible cohorts and dedicated resources to complete this work. They performed retrospective checks, going back seven years and one local authority identified six additional children eligible to apply for EUSS.

27. One local authority reported making significant changes to its processes following IMA engagement. This assisted in ensuring that manual retrospective checks would not be required again in future.

28. One local authority reported that following IMA engagement, they now have an ongoing process in place during each child's review, where this information is checked periodically. Each looked after child and care leaver have been checked for potential eligibility to the EUSS.

29. One local authority, following IMA engagement, undertook a proactive internal review where they identified their arrangements would benefit from a more robust recording system to allow them to be able to identify all eligible cohorts, including families and care leavers. They identified the requirement to undertake further staff briefings followed by developing ongoing guidance added to their continuous professional development programme. This will allow their workforce to be fully up to date with understanding EUSS eligibility and the process for making and supporting applications. They confirmed a clear process and guidance had been developed and shared across teams with confirmation that briefings have been delivered to all relevant service areas. They initially stated they did not maintain records in line with the Home Office guidance. Technical changes were made and implemented. All required fields are now recorded in their case management system.

30. The IMA has welcomed the positive engagement with each local authority in the Yorkshire and Humber region, noting the collaboration with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and their Regional Leads in encouraging local authority engagement with this work. The IMA are aware of the operational pressure local authorities are under and are grateful for their assistance with this assurance review.

RAG Grading: local authority previous and revised gradings

Initial Local Authority Response (2023)

Local Authority	Identification	Record keeping	Retrospective checks
Barnsley	Red	Orange	Green
Bradford	Orange	Orange	Orange
Calderdale	Orange	Orange	Green
Doncaster	Red	Orange	Green
East Riding	Orange	Orange	Green
Kingston Upon Hull	Red	Green	Green
Kirklees	Red	Red	Red
Leeds	Red	Red	Red
North Lincolnshire	Orange	Orange	Green
North Yorkshire	Red	Orange	Green
North-East Lincolnshire	Red	Red	Red
Rotherham	Red	Orange	Green
Sheffield	Orange	Green	Green
Wakefield	Orange	Orange	Green
City of York	Orange	Red	Orange

RAG Grading: local authority previous and revised gradings

Individual Assurance Review Outcome (2024)

Local Authority	Identification	Record keeping	Retrospective checks
Barnsley			
Bradford			
Calderdale			
Doncaster			
East Riding			
Kingston Upon Hull			
Kirklees			
Leeds			
North Lincolnshire			
North Yorkshire			
North-East Lincolnshire			
Rotherham			
Sheffield			
Wakefield			
City of York			

Next Steps

31. Each local authority in the Yorkshire and Humber region has been notified of their re-grading following the conclusion of all individual assurance reviews, along with a copy of their revised assessment.
32. Based on the information provided, the IMA does not at this stage consider that further compliance action is required by any local authority in the Yorkshire and Humber region in relation to this assurance review. The IMA will share our findings with key stakeholders for the purpose of knowledge sharing.
33. The IMA may contact any local authority in the future should we require further information, or if any subsequent issues arise regarding this review.