

# **Assurance Review (Looked After Children and Care Leavers) Annex 5a: East Midlands Final Regional Report January 2025**

**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

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The Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements (IMA) has completed individual assurance reviews with all ten local authorities in East Midlands.

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
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 East Midlands had (or have now implemented) robust processes 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 included 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 clear processes in place to identify and support eligible cohorts but did not provide details of identification and record keeping processes in their initial reply. These were evidenced during individual assurance reviews.

4. Many local authorities 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 pages four, five and six of this report.

5. The IMA notes that it experienced difficulty engaging with one local authority in this region to gather additional information. Once the IMA were able to secure a meeting, additional steps were taken to support the local authority with the review, answering questions via email, telephone calls and MS Teams meetings to clarify information which subsequently resulted in all local authorities engaging fully.

6. Two local authorities reported that the Home Office guidance was unclear and made it difficult to create and implement their own guidance. Following engagement with the IMA, these local authorities had a clearer understand of their obligations and amended their systems to make their processes clearer and more streamlined.

7. Where appropriate, the IMA shared best practice principles and further guidance with local authorities. This assisted local authorities to undertake proactive reviews of their processes, ensuring nationality is captured for all children and care leavers, and dates for when pre-settled status can be changed to settled status are logged. As a result, two local authorities were able to identify and implement improvements before meeting with the IMA. These improvements are outlined further on pages four, five and six of this report.

8. 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.

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

# Improvements by local authorities

## **System Improvements:**

10. One local authority stated, following IMA engagement, they had created a Looked after Children and Care Leavers Register. This included a filter function to include place of birth, ethnicity, nationality, and subethnicity. This will ensure all children eligible to apply for the EUSS are detected and fully supported through the process, as well as being able to check future eligibility of new children entering their service.

11. Three local authorities reported they had implemented changes to their case management systems. These changes ensured that nationality, ethnicity, and immigration status are recorded in line with the Home Office guidance.

12. One local authority reported that following IMA engagement, their system had been developed further and updated to filter for European nationals, ensuring all eligible cohorts were identified.

13. One local authority confirmed that technical changes were made to their system to update the child's immigration status to ensure the status is captured correctly for all cohorts.

14. One local authority reported that they developed a workflow step, where they recorded all the required information. This meant they could upload the EUSS confirmation letters with an identifiable name, so they could easily be located in the future.

15. One local authority reported that they had added a reference number to the front screen of each record to document whether the child/young person had settled or pre-settled status and added a workflow task for children with pre-settled status which will flag as they approach their five-year date. This made their status clearly identifiable for all staff and to allow further action to be taken to secure settled status.

16. One local authority reported that they have created a template email which will be used by social workers when making EUSS applications. This ensures consistency and stops the need to amend the email every time a case transfers to other social workers.

17. One local authority reported that mobile phone permissions had been amended by their IT department to allow the EU Exit: ID Document check app to be downloaded onto work phones. This was done so applications could be made, using real time photos, streamlining the process.

18. Further to IMA engagement, one local authority confirmed that nationality is now recorded as a mandatory field on their case management system and all records have been updated. This has allowed for further retrospective checks and allows the local authority to assess and capture nationality for all new children entering their service.

## **Policy Improvements:**

19. Three local authorities reported specifically using IMA 'Best Practice' guidance that was shared with them, to either implement their own written guidance, implement improvements, and enhance their guidance further. This ensured all eligible children and care leavers would be identified and retrospective checks conducted to make sure none had been previously missed.

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

21. Several local authorities have reported that they have created/updated guidance documents to improve training of their workforce and social worker teams.

22. One local authority reported that the Home Office stipulated information was not being routinely recorded when they checked their systems. A manual check was conducted for every eligible child and their records retrospectively amended to include all the information required.

## **Process Improvements:**

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

24. The IMA has welcomed the positive engagement with each local authority in the East Midlands region, noting the collaboration with the Association of Directors of Childrens 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

| Local Authority        | Initial Local Authority Response (2023) |                |                      | Individual Assurance Review Outcome (2024) |                |                      |
|------------------------|---|----------------|----------------------|--|----------------|----------------------|
|                        | Identification                          | Record keeping | Retrospective checks | Identification                             | Record keeping | Retrospective checks |
| Derby                  |   |                |                      |  |                |                      |
| Derbyshire             |   |                |                      |  |                |                      |
| Leicester              |   |                |                      |  |                |                      |
| Leicestershire         |   |                |                      |  |                |                      |
| Lincolnshire           |   |                |                      |  |                |                      |
| Nottingham             |   |                |                      |  |                |                      |
| Nottinghamshire        |   |                |                      |  |                |                      |
| Rutland                |   |                |                      |  |                |                      |
| North Northamptonshire |   |                |                      |  |                |                      |
| West Northamptonshire  |   |                |                      |  |                |                      |

# Next Steps

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25. Each local authority in East Midlands has been notified of their re-grading following the conclusion of all individual assurance reviews along with a copy of their revised assessment.

26. Based on the information provided, the IMA does not at this stage consider that further compliance action is required by any local authority in East Midlands in relation to this assurance review. The IMA will share our findings with key stakeholders for the purpose of knowledge sharing.

27. The IMA may contact any local authority in the future should we require further information, or if any subsequent issues arise regarding this review.