

# **Assurance Review (Looked after Children and Care Leavers) Annex 7a: East of England Final Regional Report May 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 11 local authorities in the East of England.

Individual assurance reviews were conducted with local authorities who had not, during a previous information gathering exercise conducted in January 2023, 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

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1. The IMA is assured that all local authorities in the East of England 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 included strategies for the identification and support of non-EU and 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 these identification and record keeping processes in their initial reply. These were then 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 was 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 request and clarify information. This subsequently resulted in all the local authorities in this region engaging fully.
6. 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, four local authorities were able to identify and implement improvements before meeting with the IMA. These improvements are outlined below.
7. Three 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.
8. As a result of IMA engagement and implementation of enhanced identification, record keeping and retrospective checks processes, there were a further 236 looked after children and care leavers identified as eligible to apply for the EUSS and subsequently supported.

# Improvements by local authorities

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## System Improvements:

9. One local authority stated, following IMA engagement, they updated their recording systems. This included, creating new data fields for Social Workers to complete regarding immigration status: EU Not Applied for Settled Status, EU Settled, EU Pre-Settled, EU Waiting Decision. This allowed for data to be recorded accurately and easily extracted for reporting purposes.
10. Four local authorities reported they had implemented changes to their case management systems. These changes ensure that nationality and immigration status are recorded in line with the Home Office guidance.
11. One local authority reported that following IMA engagement, manual reviews of individual records were introduced to ensure all children eligible for EUSS were identified. A tracking spreadsheet was also devised in-line with the guidance and system changes have met the required expectations as set out by the Home Office.
12. One local authority confirmed that technical changes were made to their IT recording system to update the child's immigration status to ensure these were captured correctly for all children and young persons which supported their identification processes.
13. One local authority reported that they created specific data reports to support management oversight regarding Social Workers keeping up-to-date records of children and young people's nationalities, immigration statuses and all associated ID documents.
14. One local authority made proactive changes by improving the monitoring and the recording of immigration status. Their data dashboard has been further developed which has enabled the local authority to identify those children whose immigration status has not been recorded.
15. One local authority reported that they developed a monitoring process to ensure all children with pre-settled status who are still in care, are assisted to apply for settled status at the relevant time, that a review date is set, and that their social worker is aware of the necessary steps to re-apply to the scheme.
16. Further to IMA engagement, one local authority confirmed that they had created a monitoring spreadsheet and maintained this throughout the period to ensure up-to-date information was available for each case.

## **Policy Improvements:**

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

18. Several local authorities reported that they had delivered EUSS training to Social Workers, Family Support Workers and support teams, using their internal hubs to promote awareness.

19. Several local authorities have reported that they have created and updated guidance documents to improve EUSS training and awareness to their workforce.

20. Two local authorities reported that information required by the Home Office 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:**

21. Several local authorities reported undertaking further, manual, and extensive checks of all their records to assist with the identification of eligible children and young persons, and dedicated resource to complete this work. They performed retrospective checks, going back seven years, resulting in many more identified children and care leavers who were eligible to apply for EUSS.

22. One local authority introduced a specialist cross-directorate team to support practitioners with benefit, housing, health, and social care issues arising from a child or adult's status under the EUSS. This team is familiar with Home Office guidance, has established and maintained regular contact with the Home Office local partnership manager and has access to escalation routes for prioritising EUSS applications.

23. One local authority introduced a Financial Inclusion Officer who is attached to the team that routinely assists with late applications and is able to signpost families to late application advice.

24. One local authority introduced a more pro-active approach to identifying eligible care leavers over 21. They have contacted all of the care leavers to offer support on the application process.

25. The IMA has welcomed the positive engagement with each local authority in the East of England 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 is aware of the operational pressure local authorities are under and is 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 (2025)		
	Identification	Record keeping	Retrospective checks	Identification	Record keeping	Retrospective checks
Bedford						
Cambridgeshire						
Central Bedfordshire						
Essex						
Hertfordshire						
Luton						
Norfolk						
Peterborough						
Southend-on-Sea						
Suffolk						
Thurrock						

# Next Steps

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

27. 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 East of England in relation to this assurance review. The IMA will share its findings with key stakeholders for the purpose of knowledge sharing.

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