



Department
for Education

Study of children joining family in England under the Dublin III Regulation

November 2020

**IFF Research on behalf of the
Department for Education**

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Glossary

Calais Camp clearance	During Operation Purnia, between October 2016 and July 2017, when the Calais Camp was being cleared many children were transferred to live with family as “Calais family cases” and not under the criteria of the Dublin III Regulation (see definition below).
Care leavers	Young people who have spent at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 as a “looked after child” (see definition below) and having stopped being looked after any time from the age of 16. On leaving care, Children’s Services still have a duty to provide Personal Adviser support until the age of 25. Care Leavers are also entitled to support with the costs of participating in education, employment or training.
Child in Need (CIN)	Defined in section 17(10) of the Children’s Act 1989, which provides that a child shall be taken to be in need if (a) he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a la under this Part; (b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of such services; or (c) he is disabled.
Dublin III Regulation	The Dublin III Regulation (not to be confused with the Dubs Amendment) is a long-standing mechanism between EU Member States, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein (“Dublin States”) to determine responsibility for examining asylum claims.. In the case of unaccompanied children, the responsible “Dublin State” shall be that where a parent (or an adult responsible under the law or practice of the “Dublin State” where the adult is present), sibling(s), adult aunt, uncle or grandparent is legally present ,provided it is in the child’s best interests. It provided a legal route for asylum seeking children who are unaccompanied in Europe to come to the UK.
Early help	Support for a child and their family, provided by local agencies (e.g. the la, school or GP), to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed via an assessment under the Children Act 1989. This can be provided at any point in a child’s life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.
Looked after Child	A child who is in the care of the la. In general, they either live with foster parents, a residential children's home or in residential settings like schools or secure units. A child stops being looked after when they are adopted, made subject to a special guardianship order, return home or the la decides to stop looking after the child from when the child turns 16. However local authorities are required to support children who are no longer being looked after until they are 21 and to continue an offer of support from 21 to 25 if the young person requests it. This may involve them continuing to live with their foster family.

<p>Section 17</p>	<p>In the Children Act 1989, this covers 'Provision of services for children in need, their families and others'. This places a general duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children 'in need' and to promote the upbringing of such children by their families. In meeting this duty, la social services have the power to provide a wide range of services for those children's needs, including accommodation and financial assistance, even if they, or their parents, do not have recourse to public funds (NRPF), which for many Dublin III children or young people they do not.</p>
<p>Section 47</p>	<p>In the Children Act 1989, this set outs that if a la has reasonable cause to suspect that a child living in their area is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, they are under a duty to investigate. This is to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Such enquiries, supported by other organisations and agencies, as appropriate, should be initiated where there are concerns about all forms of abuse and neglect.</p>

By Executive Summary

Research Background

The 2017 Safeguarding Strategy for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children recognises that very little is known about the experiences and needs of children who have been transferred to England to live with relatives under the Dublin III Regulation.¹ The Department for Education (DfE) committed to *'commissioning research to develop a clear picture of their experience and a comprehensive understanding of the impact and challenges facing local authorities which are supporting them'*.

In order to fulfil this commitment, in 2018 the DfE commissioned IFF Research to conduct quantitative and qualitative research into experiences of the Dublin III Regulation among local authorities, children and young people, and their families.

This was a new area of activity for both local and central government, and children being brought over to join family members in England under the Dublin III Regulation. They are a distinct cohort, highly vulnerable and may have been trafficked, or experienced other harm, in their journey to Europe.

The aim of this research was to develop a clear picture of the needs and experiences of these children and the local authorities that support them by;

- Providing a full quantitative picture of the arrangements and outcomes of children transferred under Dublin III;
- Understanding, and providing evidence of, how a range of children and their families in different circumstances have experienced this;
- Providing an understanding, and evidence, of the needs of children and their families, and the support they have received;
- Assessing what aspects of the local authority (or local authority facilitated) interventions are key in supporting children to remain with families, where this is the most desirable outcome;
- Providing an evidence-based analysis of the factors causing arrangements to breakdown; and how they can be prevented; and
- Using the qualitative evidence to consider what the key challenges are for local authorities as facilitators of these arrangements.

Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU it is no longer bound by the Dublin III Regulation. The findings of this research will be taken into account in the development of

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/656425/UASC_Safeguarding_Strategy_2017.pdf

any future policy in this area where appropriate. It also meets the commitments outlined in the “Safeguarding Strategy for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children”.

All local authorities in England were invited to participate and share their experiences of receiving and supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children through the Dublin III Regulation. IFF also spoke with Dublin III children and their families in order provide a clear picture of the impact and challenges faced by local authorities and Dublin III children and their families.

This research focuses on experiences *after* coming to England: it does not cover assessment and decision processes which are conducted prior to this point, by participating Member States and the Home Office (HO).

Policy Background

The Dublin III Regulation is a longstanding agreement between European Union (EU) member states, plus Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, to determine responsibility for assessing asylum claims. Specifically, Article 8 of the Dublin III Regulation sets out the procedure for assessing the claims of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Under the Dublin Regulation, unaccompanied children seeking asylum in an EU country, with ‘qualifying’ family in another EU country, are transferred to said country to join them and to have their asylum claim assessed. ‘Qualifying’ family members include parents (or an adult responsible under the law or practice of the member state), sibling(s), adult aunt, uncle or grandparent. These individuals must be legally present, and the transfer should be in the best interests of the child.

The Home Office (HO) operated and oversaw the system for receiving unaccompanied children. However, cases involving children require support from local authority Children’s Services where the family member lives. From the point that local authorities become involved, the process at the time of the research was as follows:

- HO asked the local authority where the family member or relative lived to have a social worker assess whether the child would be safe with the family member or relative and if they were able to take care of the child, including in terms of parenting capacity, suitability of accommodation and financial resource. The local authority shared that assessment with the HO.
- HO then considered the assessment and made an overall decision on whether the child should be transferred.
- At the time that this research was conducted, where a child was eligible England had a legal obligation to accept transfers, except in very exceptional circumstances. Where the child is eligible for transfer, a la made an assessment of the family member’s parenting capacity If the local authority assessed that the family member lacked parenting capacity the

child may have had to be taken into the care of the local authority (becoming a 'looked after child'). If the family members lacked suitable accommodation and/or financial support they may have had to be supported by the la, or by the Home Office, depending on their immigration status².

- When a child is in England, the local authority either looked after them or supported them with accommodation and/or financially to enable them to live with the family member. Where they met the relevant thresholds, they were supported them under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as a 'child in need' or referred to early help.

However, it should also be noted that the operation of the Dublin Regulation in respect of unaccompanied children was still relatively new. Many of the processes that had been developed since 2016 may not have applied at the time of transfer of children covered in this study. It is important to understand the exceptional circumstances of the Calais camp clearance in 2016, which participants in this study may be referring to. This was a complex and fast paced operation in highly unusual circumstances which is not directly comparable to the more routine operation of the Dublin Regulation which has prevailed since.

Methodology

The study began with a feasibility stage involving in-depth visits to four local authorities, to understand the type and quality of information they held about children and young people settling in England under the Dublin III Regulation or as a Calais Camp family case, and whether this was sufficient to make the rest of the research viable. Findings were used to inform the design of the subsequent research, which considered the perceptions and experiences of a range of individuals involved in this process. This entailed:

- An online census survey of all 152 local authorities in England, asking for anonymised case-by-case information about in-scope children and young people who had come to England since the start of 2016. The survey was open between June and October 2019, achieving a response rate of 52%. Of the 79 local authorities who submitted a response, 48 did not deal with any relevant cases. The remaining 31 local authorities submitted data covering 150 children and young people.
- Qualitative follow-up research with 10 local authorities, involving interviews with senior managers and social workers, and – where possible – young

² Under the Dublin III regulation, if the family assessment is negative for reunification under take care grounds then at present the case will be rejected as this element of the regulation is not fulfilled.

people themselves. Although the research achieved its target to include 10 local authorities, the number of interviews with young people (and their families) was lower than originally planned. Nine young people were interviewed directly for this research (against an original target of 20). Researchers developed additional case histories from discussions with local authority social workers and/or detailed open-ended responses in the survey.

Interpreting the data in this report

Findings from the online survey are drawn from an attempted census of all 152 local authorities in England, which was completed by 79 local authorities. Of these, 31 had received relevant cases and provided data on 150 individual children and young people. Without any contextual data on the size of the population, or the number of local authorities who have received relevant cases, it is not possible to assess the representativeness of the survey and the findings should, therefore, be treated with caution. The survey, however, does provide detailed case-level data on all relevant young people and their outcomes, within the local authorities which took part. Qualitative findings are based upon the views and experiences of local authorities, social workers and children or young people involved in the case studies, and provide more in-depth information about their experiences. All findings relate to these sources unless otherwise stated.

Key findings

Profile of the children and young people

The majority of children and young people recorded by local authorities in the survey came to England under the Dublin III Regulation (73%) with 19% who came as a Calais Camp Clearance family case. Local authorities were unsure about the status of one in ten cases (13%)³. Nearly half (46%) of Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people identified by local authorities in the survey were 16 or 17 when they arrived in England, and the vast majority (90%) were male. This is in line with wider published profile figures for unaccompanied asylum seeking children conducted in 2016, which found that 92% of all UASC were male.⁴

³ It is possible that not all local authorities would have known the difference between Dublin III and Calais Camp cases and that the numbers they gave may have been conflated.

⁴ <https://adcs.org.uk/safeguarding/article/unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-and-refugee-children>

The age profile in the ADCS study found 76% of all UASC to be aged 16 or 17, but these figures related to the time at which the research was conducted rather than their age upon arrival as provided in our findings, so are not directly comparable.

Most typically, Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people were recorded by the local authority as due to join an uncle or aunt (47%) or a sibling (31%) on their arrival.

Initial notification and assessment

Local authorities identified that they received notification in a variety of ways. The majority stated the most effective method was when it was directed to a first response service and provided longer notice periods prior to assessments taking place. Local authorities broadly felt that they did not receive enough information about Dublin III children and young people prior to conducting family assessments, which often had to be done at pace and at very short notice, ranging between two working days⁵ to two weeks. It should be noted here that for Dublin III and Calais camp children it is not possible to access the same level of information that is ordinarily available in the case of UK national children (such as medical records, information from other family members or the school). In addition, it is important to note that the Dublin III regulation states that a decision on whether to accept a TCR must be made within 2 months of receipt.

Most assessments (69%) resulted in the arrangement being deemed suitable. For just over one-quarter of Dublin III or Calais Camp Clearance arrangements, local authorities had deemed the arrangement to be unsuitable (27%), and the young person became a looked after child directly on arrival⁶. This was more common for children and young people due to join siblings (48%) than those due to join their uncle or aunt (13%). The main reasons that arrangements failed assessments included a lack of suitable accommodation (31% of cases which did not pass the initial assessment) or the family member being unable or unwilling to provide care (24%).

Lack of clarity about the exact assessment requirements created difficulties for local authorities when conducting assessments, which could lead to negative consequences for some children and young people when the arrangement later broke down. There was a lack of certainty among some case study local authorities about the result of a prospective arrangement failing its assessment, especially if the young person was already on route. Although, this specific scenario would only be the case if the young person had arrived via a Calais Camp clearance.

⁵ Family assessments requested with 2 days notice is likely to indicate a child being transferred through the expedited Calais camp clearance process.

⁶ Local authority family assessments that reveal significant concerns do not necessarily always lead to a child becoming looked after. Depending on the individual circumstances, children under 8.2 whose family assessment revealed significant concerns about the child's potential welfare in the event of a transfer would usually not transfer.

Outcomes for children and young people

Based on the cases covered by the survey, more than half of children/young people initially joined family (54%), with the rest (46%) being taken into the care of the local authority as a looked after child. Nearly one-third of the family arrangements ended up breaking down (31%). Typically, the child/young person then became looked after child.

Family breakdowns were more common where the young person went to live with an uncle or aunt. They were usually influenced by negative relationships between the young person and family members (mentioned in 52% of cases where the arrangement broke down). Qualitative interviews revealed that cultural and religious gender norms were often underlying tensions between family members. Other common reasons were the young person deciding to end the arrangement (28% of those which broke down), overcrowding (24%) and financial issues (16%). Multiple factors were usually involved.

The majority of children/young people (61%) had been a looked after child since arriving in England. If the child was under 16, they tended to go into foster care. Local authorities deemed that foster placements where there was a shared religion or culture were more likely to be successful.

Typically, looked-after children aged 16+ moved into shared housing. In this arrangement, young people usually had to demonstrate and develop household skills and responsibilities; young people viewed this arrangement positively as it equipped them well for independence.

At last known arrangements for those children and young people covered by the survey:

- just over one-third (36%) were still in the care of the local authority as a looked-after child ;
- just under one-third (31%) were still living with family; and
- one-quarter (25%) had turned 18 and were living independently (this includes care-leavers who are living on their own).

Support provided to children and young people and their families

Just under half (46%) of Dublin III children or young people received any additional support. As may be expected, children or young people who arrived and stayed with their relatives typically received far less support those who went into looked after care fairly soon after their arrival. Case study local authorities reported that family members often had a misconception of what support they might get, specifically financial and housing support.

Of the Dublin III children and young people who received support, more than one-quarter received Section 17 support as a 'child in need' (28%)⁷, and one-fifth received early help services (20%).

Although nearly all local authorities that took part in the case studies recognised that there was no legal obligation to provide initial support to the child or young person and their family, there was a strong sense that the living arrangements could be more successful with more initial support.

⁷ Section 17 of the Children's Act sets out when a child will be classified as a child in need and requires the la to provide appropriate support to meet those needs. It is possible that the 28% referred to here are the same 28% who received section 17 support.

1. Introduction and Methodology

Background

The Dublin III Regulation is a longstanding agreement between European Union (EU) member states, plus Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, to determine responsibility for assessing asylum claims⁸. Specifically, Article 8 of the Dublin III Regulation sets out the procedure for assessing which Member State has responsibility for determining the claims of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Under the Dublin Regulation, unaccompanied children seeking asylum in an EU country, with (close) family in another EU country, are transferred to said country to join them and to have their asylum claim assessed. In 2016, 558 children arrived into the UK under Dublin III Regulation. Numbers increased: between 2017 and 2018, where 461 arrived in 2017 and 1,215 in 2018. It is possible that children who arrived during the Calais Camp Clearance process are reflected in the figures discussed here⁹. Children transferred from Calais during this process, on the basis of qualifying family members in England under Dublin III, will also be within the scope of this research.

How does the regulation work?

‘Qualifying’ family members include parents (or an adult responsible under the law or practice), sibling(s), adult aunt, uncle or grandparent. These individuals must be legally present, and their care of the child/young person should be in the best interests of the child. In addition, an adult aunt, uncle or grandparent must also establish that they can take care of the child.

The Home Office (HO) operates and oversees the system for receiving unaccompanied individuals, however cases involving children require support from local authority Children’s Services where the family member lives. The intended process for receiving a minor can be summarised follows:

- 1) HO receive a transfer request from another “Dublin state” – they seek to locate the family member or relative, undertake basic checks (security and immigration) and ask if the family member or relative is willing to care for the child/young person. They will also

⁸ When this research was carried out England (like the rest of the UK) was subject to the Dublin Regulation. The UK has now left the EU and is no longer bound by the Dublin Regulation but these findings will be taken into account in developing any future policy in this area where appropriate.

⁹ Up to date figures on arrivals, returns and requests for transfer into and out of the UK under the Dublin Regulation are available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/885484/asylum-summary-mar-2020-tables.xlsx

notify the la and ask them if they hold any information than can assist in establishing the claimed family link.

2) Once a family link is established, the HO ask the la where the family member or relative lives to have a social worker assess whether the child will be safe with the family member or relative and if they can take care of the child, including in terms of parenting capacity, suitability of accommodation and financial resource. The la share that assessment with the HO.

3) HO then considers the assessment and makes an overall decision on whether the child should be transferred to the UK¹⁰.

4) Where a family member qualifies, the UK has a legal obligation to accept transfers, unless in very exceptional circumstances. If the local authority assesses that the family member lacks parenting capacity the child may have to be taken into the care of the local authority (becoming a 'looked after child'). If the family members lack suitable accommodation and/or financial support they may have to be supported by the la, or by the Home Office, depending on their immigration status.

5) When a child is in the UK, the local authority will either look after them or support them with accommodation and/or financially to enable them to live with the family member. Where they meet the relevant thresholds, they will support them under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as a 'child in need' or refer them to early help.

Research aims and objectives

As noted in the Executive Summary of this report, the DfE commissioned this research in response to the fact that the 2017 Safeguarding Strategy for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children recognised that very little was known about the experiences and needs of children who have been transferred to England to live with relatives under the Dublin III Regulation. In response to this, the DfE commissioned IFF Research to conduct quantitative and qualitative research into the experiences of the Dublin III Regulation among local authorities, children and young people, and their families in order *'to develop a clear picture of their experience and a comprehensive understanding of the impact and challenges facing local authorities which are supporting them'*. At the end of the EU transition period, England (like the rest of the UK) will no longer be bound by the Dublin III Regulation. The findings will be taken into account in the development of future policy in this area as appropriate.

More specifically, this research seeks to achieve these objectives by;

¹⁰ This decision on whether a child or young person can join the family member or relative is made before the case is referred to the local authority. The Home Office does not refer cases for family assessment where the link has not already been accepted.

- Providing a full quantitative picture of the arrangements and outcomes of children transferred under Dublin III;
- Understanding, and providing evidence of, how a range of children and their families in different circumstances have experienced this;
- Providing an understanding, and evidence, of the needs of children and their families, and the support they have received;
- Assessing what aspects of the Ia (or local authority facilitated) interventions are key in supporting children to remain with families, where this is the most desirable outcome;
- Providing an evidence-based analysis of the factors causing arrangements to breakdown; and how they can be prevented; and
- Using the qualitative evidence to consider what the key challenges are for local authorities as facilitators of these arrangements.

Methodology



Feasibility study: Site visits to local authorities (LAs) to better understand process of receiving Dublin III children / Calais camp clearance family cases, and feasibility of proposed methodology.

When: November 2018 – January 2019

With who: Four local authorities



Online survey: Online data collection tool to gather information about the number of Dublin III children / Calais camp clearance family cases LAs had received since the start of 2016, and what has happened to the child/young person since arriving (support and arrangements).

When: June – October 2019

With who: 79 LAs completed the survey, with 31 able to provide data on 150 children/young people



LA case study visits: To carry out face-to-face interviews with LA staff, to better understand their experiences of receiving and supporting Dublin III children.

When: October 2019 – January 2020

With who: 10 local authorities



Depth interviews with children/young people: Face-to-face during case study visits, or over the phone, to understand the experiences of these individuals since they have arrived in England

When: October 2019 – January 2020

With who: Nine young people

Feasibility study

The primary aim of the feasibility study was to understand the type and quality of information held by local authorities about unaccompanied children settling in England under the Dublin III regulations or as a Calais Camp family case, to understand whether the records kept are sufficient to make the rest of the research viable. Findings were also used to inform the design of the subsequent phases of the research and identify potential risks and solutions.

The feasibility study consisted of two key stages:

- 1) Half-day site visits to local authorities, to understand the process of receiving these children/young people, data held on them, and views on subsequent stages of the research
- 2) Development and testing a pilot online data collection tool

In total, 22 local authorities were approached with the aim of conducting site visits in five to seven of them. Communications were sent via post and email from IFF Research, introducing the study and inviting each local authority to take part. Contact with 22 Local authorities was built up in incremental stages, following rejections and non-response from the first Local authorities contacted. Four Local authorities took part in the site visits, seven declined and 11 did not provide a definitive response.¹¹

The site visits covered a range of local authorities in terms of number of children received (see Table 1.1) and geographical location.

Table 1.1 Overview of Local authorities in feasibility stage, by number of children received under Dublin III Regulations

No. of children received	No. local authorities included
1 – 9 children	1 local authority
10 – 19 children	1 local authority
20 – 29 children	1 local authority
30+ children	1 local authority

Following the site visits, IFF developed a data collection tool and invited the same participating local authorities to test it. IFF also reached out to an additional two local authorities that showed interest in taking part in the feasibility stage but who were unable to commit to a visit.

¹¹ Difficulties in recruitment are explored in greater depth in Appendix A: Lessons learned

Survey of local authorities

IFF Research created an online survey to gain an overview of the different experiences of local authorities who have received children or young people that have come to join family under the Dublin III Regulation or during the Calais Camp Clearance (Operation Purnia) as a Calais Camp clearance case.

This online survey collected information about children or young people received by local authorities that have come to join family under either arrangements since the start of 2016, including:

- Type of arrangement that the child or young person was due to join family under
- Demographic information about them and their family
- Assessment outcomes and initial arrangements
- Subsequent changes to arrangements
- Support needs of the child or young person and any support services accessed.

Initial invitation emails were sent to all 152 local authorities in England on 24th June 2019 and the survey was closed on 21st October 2019. During this period, a series of reminder emails were sent to local authorities to encourage them to complete the survey and a specialist interviewer at IFF Research was tasked with following up these emails via telephone. The initial aim of these calls was to obtain confirmation from each local authority that they had received the email invitation and to identify the best contact for future liaison. Subsequent calls were purposed to encourage local authorities to complete the survey in the lead up to the deadline.

During this fieldwork period, 79 out of 152 local authorities completed the survey (52% of all local authorities). Most local authorities (48) completing the survey indicated that they had not received any children under the relevant regulations. The remaining 31 local authorities provided data. A further 11 local authorities stated that they were unable to participate in the research.¹²

From the 31 local authorities that completed the survey, data was provided for 150 individual Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people. The majority of these children and young people had joined under the Dublin III regulation (73%), while 29% had arrived as part of the Calais Camp Clearance.

¹² Difficulties in recruitment are explore in greater depth in Appendix A: Lessons learned

Qualitative fieldwork

Qualitative case studies with local authorities and Dublin III children and young people who joined family in their area was in integral part of this research. The purpose of this fieldwork was to provide an in-depth understanding of:

- Children and young people's experiences of joining family in England; the interventions or support they received, how they experienced support and what the outcome was of the living arrangement was (i.e. whether the living arrangement continued or broke down and the reasons for that outcome).
- Local authority experience of initial assessments and support for these children/young people through initial and subsequent arrangements

Recruitment

At the end of the quantitative online survey, local authorities were asked whether they agreed to be re-contacted to take part in a qualitative case study and/or whether they would be willing to assist with the recruitment of Dublin III children and young people, and their relatives, to take part in interviews. Twenty-two local authorities stated interest in taking part in the local authority case studies, of which 19 also stated interest in assisting IFF Research with the recruitment of Dublin III children or young people and their relatives.

These 22 local authorities were sent an initial invitation letter shortly after they completed the online survey, between 9th August 2019 and 21st November 2019. These emails were followed up with recruitment calls until 21st January 2020. The purpose of these calls was to discuss the research further, with the view to confirming the date for participation.

Case study visits and interviews with young people were carried out between 8th October 2019 and 24th January 2020. In total, case study visits were conducted with 10 local authorities, and depth interviews were carried out with nine young people. Further detail on this recruitment process and the challenges faced can be found in Annex A: Lessons Learned.

This report

This report draws on findings from all elements of the project: feasibility study, the local authority survey, and qualitative fieldwork among Local authorities and children/young people.

As outlined, the survey includes both Dublin III Regulation and Calais Camp clearance family cases, and figures cited refer to both unless otherwise stated.

Qualitative discussions were focused on Dublin III regulation cases; findings from these case study visits and interviews refer to these cases unless explicitly mentioned, for example where Local authorities draw useful comparisons between case types.

During the course of the qualitative fieldwork, IFF Research interviewed three young people in one local authority who were identified by their local authority as having arrived in England under the Dublin III regulation. However, during the interviews with the young people and their social workers, it became clear that they had arrived in England as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASCs) under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 (also known as the Dubs Amendment) and had then been placed in the care of a local authority.¹³ In discussion with DfE, it was decided to include these young people in the research as they were able to provide further perspectives on experiences of local authority support.

Report structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** presents the demographic and regulatory profile of children and young people local authorities provided data for in the survey
- **Chapter 3** explores the experiences of local authorities preparing for the arrival of a child/young person, captured through the case study visits, with a focus on experiences of the assessment process
- **Chapter 4** explores the different arrangements children and young people have experienced since arriving in England, from initial arrangements through to local authorities last known situations. Data on this from the survey is presented alongside insight from qualitative fieldwork
- **Chapter 5** describes the different types of support provided to children/young people and their families
- **Conclusions**
- **Appendix A** focusing on methodological lessons learned from the study.

¹³ The National Transfer Scheme is a voluntary agreement between Local authorities that allows for the safe transfer of UASC from one local authority to another. It was created with the intention to ensure that unaccompanied children can access the services and support they need and to ensure a more even distribution of UASC across Local authorities. For more details, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-interim-national-transfer-scheme>

2. Profile of young people

This chapter explores the arrangements that children and young people arrived in England under, and the demographic profile of these individuals including their age and gender.

Summary

- The majority of children and young people included in the survey came to England under Dublin III regulation.
- Most typically, Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people were due to join an uncle, aunt or sibling on their arrival.
- Nearly half of Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people were 16 or 17 when they arrived in England, and the vast majority were male.
- September to December 2016 was the most common period for local authorities receiving Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people.

Details of the arrangement

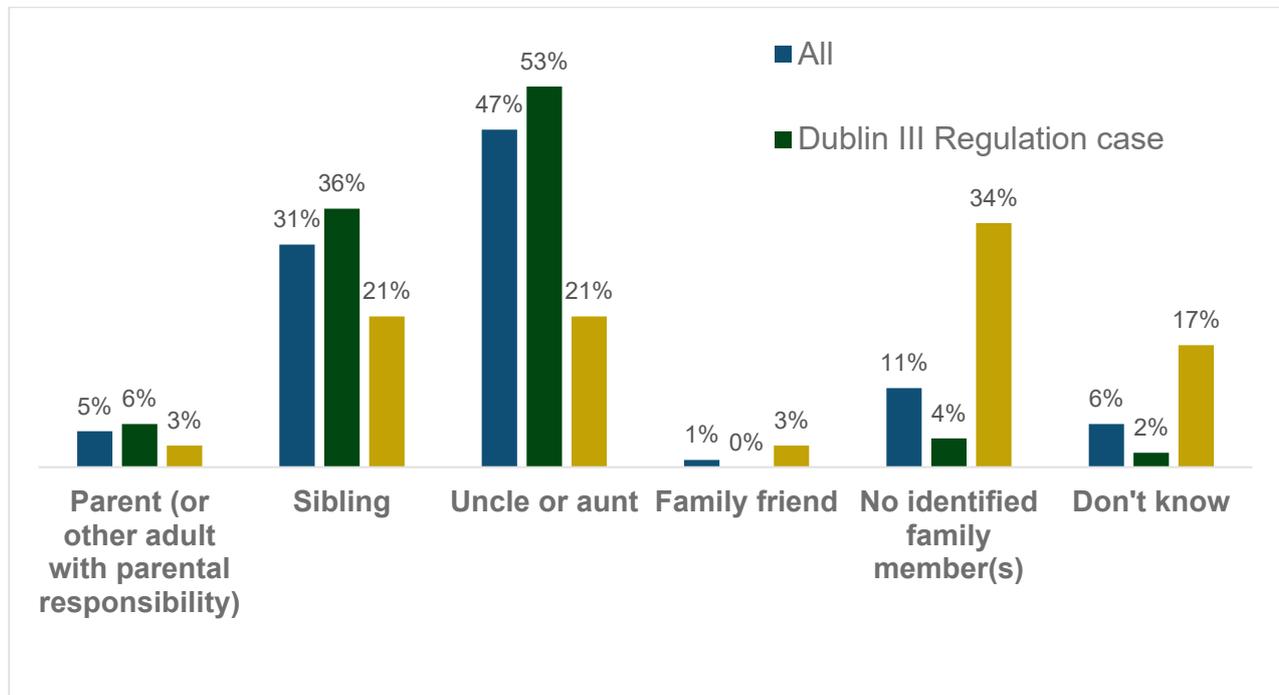
Most children (73%) came to England under the Dublin III Regulation while around one in five arrived as Calais Camp Clearance cases (19%). A minority (5%) were cited as arriving under both criteria. For around one in eight children and young people, local Authorities reported that they were not certain which of the two criteria applied (13%). This degree of uncertainty reflects the relatively inconsistent way that local authorities recorded information about the Dublin III children and young people that arrived in their areas, as was described by various social workers and social work managers in qualitative discussions and during feasibility testing. Different local authorities indicated differing approaches to recording Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people in their systems, varying from those who were able to identify them easily in their records to those who retained no identifier for them. As such, it is unsurprising that different local authorities demonstrated differing abilities to identify the type of arrangement that applied to the children and young people that had joined family in their area.

More than half of Dublin III Regulation and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people arrived in England between October and December 2016 (52%). A further 19% of children and young people arrived in 2017, while 7% arrived in 2018 and 9% in 2019. Levels of uncertainty around when children arrived in England were again relatively high: local authorities did not know when 16% of children/young people had arrived.

Most typically, Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people were due to join an uncle or aunt (47%) or sibling (31%) on their arrival. In 11% of cases,

children or young people were not expected to join any specific identified family member, although this was more common for Calais Camp Clearance Cases (34%) than Dublin III Regulation cases (4%).¹⁴ Figure 2.1 provides a full breakdown of the relationship of the family member to the child or young person.

Figure 2.1: Profile of family members that the Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children or young people were due to join (survey data)



Base: All (150)

Demographic profiles

The vast majority of Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people were male (90%); only one-tenth (10%) were female. There was little variance in this when considering Dublin III children and young people in comparison to Calais Camp Clearance cases. This matches figures from a 2016 report published by the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS), which found that around 92% of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) were male.¹⁵

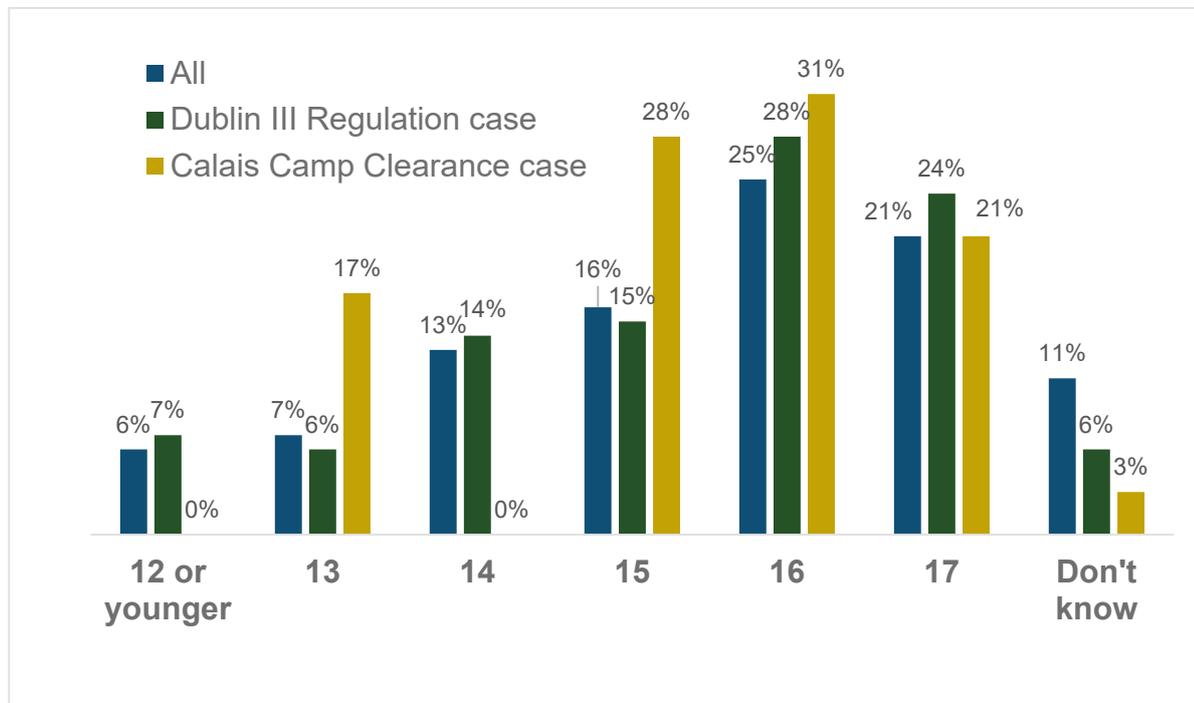
Age on arrival ranged from two years old to 17, with nearly half (46%) aged 16 or 17. The most common age on arrival in England was 16, which was the case for around one-

¹⁴ The urgent nature of the transfer of children from the Calais Camps in 2016 meant there was not time to complete the robust processes that have since been introduced.

¹⁵ http://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation/ADCS_UASC_Report_Final_FOR_PUBLICATION.pdf

quarter of Dublin III children and young people (25%). Figure 2.2 provides the full age distribution.

Figure 2.2: Profile of Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children or young people by age upon arrival



Base: All (150)

Qualitative discussions gave an indication of the country of origin of many of the Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people; in general, individuals tended to have travelled to England from countries in the Middle East and North Africa such as Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Sudan and Syria. Further details of the origins of Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people are provided in case studies 2A-C.

Case studies 2A-C: Dublin III children and young people cases

Case study 2A – Sayed¹⁶

Looking to escape conflict in his home country of Afghanistan, Sayed, a 14-year-old boy, left home and travelled across Europe for a year to Calais. He anticipated finding a home and more stable life on his journey but did not intend for this to be in the United Kingdom. Sayed lived in Calais for around a year and during this time became aware of the potential to join family members in other European countries.

Sayed recalled that his Grandmother mentioned that his uncle lived in England and so asked his friends from the Calais camp, who had entered England, to locate his uncle. Eventually a friend found somebody fitting the description. Sayed established that the man was his uncle by confirming details about his background, and so applied to move to England under the Dublin III Regulation. Applying to enter England involved a six-month process that resulted in Sayed relocating to live with his uncle.

Sayed met his uncle for the first time at the airport and both were delighted to meet each other.

Case study 2B – Solomon

A woman born in Africa had three children in Africa before she moved to England on a spousal visa. In England she had another two children with another man and is now a UK citizen. Since moving to England her African-born children, who range from 11 years old to late teens have been living with different relatives in Africa. The Mother says she has spent thousands of pounds trying to bring her children across to England for several years, but she has largely been unsuccessful.

Her youngest child still living in Africa was her 11-year old son, Solomon. Solomon was missing his Mother more than his older siblings and the family who was caring for him in Africa no longer could. Feeling pressured to be with her son and remove him from his relatives, the Mother acquired a fake passport for Solomon and moved with her son through Africa to France where they tried to cross the border into England. Border control stopped Solomon from entering the UK and he was then detained in France and eventually moved to a foster care arrangement in Paris. Now that her son was in Europe, and not Africa, he was eligible under Dublin III to move to England where they could be reunited. While he was detained, the Mother applied for reunification under Dublin III and visited Solomon in Paris several times. As part of the process they both had DNA tests to prove their relationship and Solomon moved to England to live with his Mother in what was considered a successful reunification.

¹⁶ All names utilised in case studies are pseudonyms.

Case study 2C - Hassan

Hassan, a young man, originally from Sudan, came to England to join his older brother in 2016, at the age of 15 or 16 years old. Hassan had a very long and traumatic journey to England, having travelled for about 5 years.

In Sudan, he lived with his mum and dad. Hassan's older brother had been living in the UK for around 10 years and he had a young family of his own. When living in Sudan, Hassan did not have much contact with his older brother.

Hassan had made his way to the Calais camp and had planned to come to England to meet his older brother. His older brother came to the Calais camp and they found each other there and they applied for the young person to join his older brother and his brother's young family in England under the Dublin III Regulation.

Hassan moved to England to live with his brother after his accommodation was checked and approved by the local authority. Initially, this worked well but over time the relationship between Hassan and his brother's wife became tense and hostile. The local authority attempted family mediation between Hassan, his brother and the brother's wife. However, it became apparent that it was no longer tenable for Hassan to remain with his brother's family, and he was subsequently supported by the 'through care' team and lived with a 'host' family in a semi-independent arrangement.

3. Preparing for a young person's arrival

This chapter considers the preparations that local authorities undertake before the arrival of a child or young person under the Dublin III Regulation or Calais Camp Clearance process. This includes exploration of how the local authority was notified about a child/young person due to arrive, the information they received at this point in relation to the individual and their family, and the subsequent assessment of the intended family home. Local authority considerations during the assessment process and reasons why some arrangements/homes were considered unsuitable are also explored.

Key findings

- Local authorities received notification in a variety of ways, the most effective being when it was directed to a first response service and provided longer notice periods prior to assessments.
- Local authorities broadly felt that they did not receive enough information about Dublin III children and young people.
- Lack of clarity about the exact requirements of assessments created difficulties for local authorities when conducting assessments, which led to negative consequences for some children and young people.
- There was a lack of certainty across local authorities about the result of a prospective arrangement failing its assessment.
- Most assessments resulted in the arrangement being deemed suitable, although reasons that arrangements failed assessments included a lack of suitable accommodation or the family member being unable or unwilling to provide care.

Home Office notification

How notification was received by local authorities

Local authorities tended to receive notification of a child or young person due to join family under the Dublin III Regulation through one of two routes; via their Director of Children's Services¹⁷ (DCS) or through a first response service within the Children's Services department. Overall, local authorities considered that it was easier and more efficient to handle if notification came directly to the first response or similar team. One local authority explained how they had received a notification through their DCS, who

¹⁷ Although the initial instruction was to approach the Director of Children's Services, the notification process may have differed between local authorities. Each authority will have a preferred notification process.

was extremely busy. In this instance, the notification was not actioned immediately, causing what one local authority termed as two or three weeks of “drift” before it was forwarded to the correct team:

‘It is a referral so it should come through our customer first service, like a MASH [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub] team but it was just a head up in the Home Office sending it to a head up in our office. Whereas if it went to the customer first team, they would have known immediately to come to us to ask us if it looked like a case we should deal with, and we would have been able to sort it out within minutes.’ – Consultant Social worker, Local authority

In contrast, a local authority that received notice through their first response service mentioned that they were able to direct the case to the right team quickly.

Information included within notifications

Although local authorities received notifications through different routes and in a variety of formats, they all described the information that they received in a similar ways, describing receiving a limited amount of information from the Home Office. This was usually basic information, including name, age and nationality of the child or young person and the contact details and family relationship of the relative that they were due to join¹⁸. Some local authorities complained about the lack of information that they felt that they had access to:

‘There is a sense from the Home Office that they think: "we just need to provide data" rather than any information on need, health or identity. You can't get any sense of a young person from the information that you first get.’ – Social worker, Local authority

This local authority felt that it would be beneficial if they were given more contextual information about the child or young person and the family that they were due to join. One social worker felt that important information was missing from the process, including details of the child or young person’s health requirements, special educational needs or disabilities, potential signs of trauma and existing relationship with the family member that they were due to join. This additional information was viewed as important in terms of informing decision-making around the potential suitability of the placement as well as the extra support that may be offered to meet a child or young person’s specific needs. This information may be difficult or impossible to gain during the relatively brief assessment process of the suitability of the arrangement, but if it had been provided in

¹⁸ Whilst the Home Office will seek to pass on all available information onto local authorities, the reality is that under the Dublin Regulation, only a limited amount of information is exchanged as part of the take charge process. As a result there is often only limited information to share with local authorities.

advance it may have been crucial in ensuring that the correct decisions were made for the child/young person.

Local authorities' experience of assessments

Usually, notifications from the Home Office came with the request for an assessment of the intended family home. Most local authorities (72%) conducted initial assessments of proposed Dublin III living arrangements. Assessments were more common for Dublin III arrangements (84%) than for Calais Camp Clearance cases (38%). Often, local authorities described the assessments as being challenging, with the two key causes of this being the amount of time that they had to conduct assessments and limited guidance from the Home Office about how to conduct them and what criteria to assess against.

Length of time to conduct assessments

The amount of time that local authorities had for carrying out these assessments varied from as little as 24 hours to two weeks: very fast turnaround times placed pressure on the social workers conducting the assessments¹⁹. Local authorities regarded the timescales around assessing potential arrangements during the Calais Camp clearance to be particularly challenging, with many children/young people already in England when the request came through. Local authorities acknowledged the pressures the Home Office was under at that time, but felt this pressure was then cascaded down to their teams. Additionally, a few local authorities felt that the short amount of time between notification and arrival curtailed the extent of the assessment that it was feasible to conduct.

In qualitative interviews, a few local authorities suggested that the timescales involved in assessments increased pressure because they believed that the child was coming to their area regardless of the outcome of the assessment and, in the context of having limited time to find alternative arrangements, they had little choice but to pass them. While this was certainly not uniformly expressed by local authorities, it was clear that a few felt that this was the case. This was most clearly articulated by one local authority, which reported receiving notice that a child was to arrive in their area within 36 hours; this was received by a social worker at the end of one working day, who had to organise an assessment the following day ahead of the child's arrival. This social worker found conducting the assessment to be stressful and difficult due to the time that they had to conduct the assessment, and felt that the short timeframe contributed to the sense that they were pressured to pass the assessment:

¹⁹ The shorter timescales would be for Calais Camp cases. In addition, the Home Office may also receive court orders to bring children in immediately. Therefore, all agencies do what they can in very short time period to ensure the child can be safely supported on arrival.

‘There wasn’t a particular policy or procedure in place at that time when we received them, and nobody really knew what to expect. We were told that we needed to go out the next day and do an assessment and that the child was essentially on their way already... I do think we were under pressure because we were told that [the child or young person] was on his way and effectively that he was coming anyway.’ – Social worker, Local authority

Local authorities which received more notice - around one or two weeks – found it easier to prepare for the child/young person’s arrival and broadly considered it was easier to arrange an assessment.

Assessment process

In addition to concerns about time pressure on assessments, a handful of local authorities indicated during qualitative discussions that they felt that there had been a lack of guidance / lack of clarity about where to find guidance given the relatively specialist nature of the subject. Local authority confidence in their understanding of the requirements of the assessment process was mixed; this was predominantly driven by limited information on the necessary level of detail and scope of these assessments. Most local authorities were relatively confident that, since this was a child due to join their family, the process was less rigorous than for a foster assessment. For one local authority, this sense that they were unprepared regarding the level of detail to go into as part of the assessment was compounded by their lack of prior knowledge of the children or young person and their familial situation.

‘We had so few details that it felt like cold calling on a family.’ –
Social worker, Local authority

In the case studies, a few local authorities expressed uncertainty regarding which form to use to conduct the assessment, with a few stating that they were not aware of the template form provided by the Home Office. Even in cases where local authorities were aware, they did not feel that it was satisfactory in guiding the assessment process. One local authority indicated that the proposed assessment form had not been shared with them ahead of a Dublin III child or young person arriving in the area, so they developed their own, based upon a basic risk assessment form. They felt this lacked structure and hindered them in conducting a methodical assessment, so they adapted and lengthened it before the second assessment. Another local authority also felt that the form provided was very basic and simplistic, despite finding the process of assessing potential Dublin III arrangements to be smooth overall.

‘We found a basic template, not really a proper form, just a risk assessment form that wasn’t very thorough. We just used that.’ –
Social worker, Local authority

Lack of guidance also meant that case study local authorities felt unclear about the criteria they should be checking against during assessments; this resulted in assessments between and sometimes within local authorities varying in practice. For example, one local authority said the initial assessment involved checking who the child or young person will be living with, what the conditions of the arrangement were like and whether they felt that the child or young person's needs could be supported financially. Others stated that the assessment simply involved a basic check of the suitability of the living situation; unless any safeguarding issues were raised the assessment was likely to be passed.

'We normally focus on if the home is suitable for that child to be in the house? Where the child is going to sleep? Does the family have the financial means to support that child and what are their plans? Are there any concerns for the family? Any needs that they need support with to be able to care for that child?' – Social worker, Local authority

For some, a key criterion for passing an assessment was the willingness of the relative to accept the young person in conjunction with their ability to provide a bed for the child to sleep in (but not necessarily their own room). A few case study local authorities highlighted that assessments of Dublin III arrangements were not as thorough as assessment conducted for families under Section 17.

A few local authorities indicated during qualitative discussions that their assessment was limited to questioning the relative of the child or young person and, if time allowed, a cursory check of the living arrangement. One local authority expressed the view that the claims of the relative did not need to be evidenced, with another felt that there was an increased need to take relatives at their word because of the fact that children or young people under Dublin III regulations were due to join family imminently, rather than going through a phased introduction to their new environment as with other similar processes.

"We take their word for it that they can support them, we don't need to see evidence that they can." – Social worker, Local authority

Relatedly, several local authorities that were interviewed felt that the only requirement was that the arrangement was not dangerous, summarised by one local authority as needing to be 'good enough, however basic'.

Some local authorities interviewed during case study visits described noticing potential 'red flags' during these assessments but the lack of clarity around requirements for passing, in conjunction with a sense of pressure for these children/young people to join family, meant they usually approved the assessments. A handful of local authorities felt they could keep an eye on any concerns once the child was living with their relative.

One local authority noted that they had been uncertain regarding the required extent of the assessment, and so had authorised the child or young person to join their family member even though they had considerable concerns about the suitability of the arrangement. The social worker from this case had expressed concern that the living arrangement was unsuitable due to the lack of space in the prospective home and the complicated mental health problems that the family member exhibited. However, the social worker had not been confident about their authority to reject the arrangement because they were unsure about what constituted an acceptable arrangement under the Dublin III Regulation²⁰. The social worker regretted the fact that the arrangement had been passed, feeling that the child or young person had experienced unnecessary hardship as a result of being placed with their relative. Further details of this child's experiences are provided in Case study 2A. This local authority felt that by the time they received their second Dublin III child or young person, they were more prepared to conduct the assessment, having consulted more guidance around the requirements.

'We need better communication from the authorities informing us that a young person is coming to live in the area, so that we can make sure where they are going to live is appropriate, safe and can meet their all-around needs.' – Social worker manager, Local authority

Another local authority felt that their assessment duties were more extensive, commenting that they had undertaken detailed and involved assessments over the course of 35 days with one child or young person and the brother that they were due to join.

Only one of the case study local authorities interviewed felt that they were required to incorporate the views or wishes of the Dublin III child or young person, whose arrangement they were assessing. All other local authorities did not consider this as a requirement. That said, one local authority mentioned that they would have liked to have taken the young person's views into account in order to provide crucial context to inform their assessment of the arrangement. This local authority would have liked to have been able to visit the child or young person before they arrived in England²¹, which they felt may help to reduce arrangements that break down:

'There is a lot to be said, as a social worker, for going out and meeting them, explaining to them what we do and what is going to happen as part of the assessment. It helps to understand what that the young person's expectations are. What we've realised is that the

²⁰ As an EU wide regulation, care provisions will be different in different Member States. It would be up to the care providing authorities in Member States to define appropriate care arrangements and what is acceptable in line with domestic legislation.

²¹ It should be noted that children and young people receive support from legal care workers or social workers in the Member State from which they are transferring.

preparation work is extremely cursory or non-existent. So when they arrive we are already on the back foot; we know that preparing the young person properly is critical in making sure the arrangement works.’ – Senior Social Worker Manager, Local authority

Case study 2A (continued) – Sayed: Concerns during assessment - a young person who joined family and subsequently became a LAC

As established in the first part of Case Study 2A, Sayed travelled to England from Afghanistan looking to find a home and, having located his uncle in England through friends, was arranged to live with his uncle in England.

Sayed met his uncle for the first time at the airport and both were delighted to meet each other and were emotional about the conclusion of Sayed's long and difficult journey. However, the social worker who conducted the assessment was less convinced that this was a positive outcome and had concerns about the arrangement due to the uncle's poor mental health and the inadequate housing situation, which involved both individuals sleeping in the living room of the uncle's flat. However, without guidance about suitable arrangements in Dublin III cases, the social worker passed the assessment. The social worker felt that if she had been more confident about the assessment requirements, she would not have approved the arrangement.

The social worker's concerns turned out to be well-placed. For around a year Sayed lived with his uncle, who was emotionally abusive and expected his nephew to undertake all of the housework. The uncle's poor mental health made living in the flat difficult because he would not let Sayed use his possessions, which were all permanently wrapped in plastic. The uncle also suffered from insomnia and regularly woke his nephew during the night with abusive tirades.

During this year, Sayed had no access to social services and struggled with many of the aspects of his life that he cared most about including school and learning English. After approximately one year, Sayed was interviewed by the Home Office and referred to social services. After discussions with social workers, Sayed moved into supported housing because his living situation was no longer tenable. After this was agreed, his uncle evicted him from his flat, so for around two weeks Sayed was homeless and alternated between staying with a friend and sleeping on the streets.

Sayed, who is now aged over 16, now lives in supported housing and still has contact with his uncle. He is very happy with the way that social services progressed his situation and he feels that his life is much better now. While he feels that he struggles in college because of language barriers, he has made friends in England, has a better relationship with his uncle and is making progress with learning English. Sayed's main desire is to move out of supported accommodation into independent living, although he is mostly very happy with his life currently. Both Sayed and his social workers felt that this positive outcome could have been reached sooner had social services been involved earlier, which would have improved his experience significantly and avoided further trauma. Additionally, social workers felt that this process may have been easier if the guidance about the assessment had been clearer, hence avoiding Sayed being placed with his uncle in the first place.

This journey was shared by the young man that arrived in England under Dublin III regulation, and social workers involved in the assessment and arrival processes.

Local authorities' understanding of the consequences of failed assessments

Some local authorities also held concerns about the consequences for children and young people if their prospective arrangement failed an assessment. For example, one local authority was unclear as to whether the child would be relocated to their area regardless of the outcome of the assessment, or if a failed assessment would mean that the child would not be placed in the area at all. This lack of clarity made assessing arrangements more difficult; one local authority used the example of a child or young person that was being relocated from the Calais Camp, querying whether they would be relocated from the camp if the assessment was failed. This led one social worker to wonder under what circumstances failing an assessment could be in the best interests of the child or young person, given the difficult conditions they were facing already. Although several case study local authorities understood that a child or young person would be located in their area and placed under the care of the local authority if the arrangement was assessed as being unsuitable, at least one case study local authority felt that greater clarity would have aided the assessment process.

'If it's assessed as not viable, we recommend that the young person doesn't come to live here, but it's up to the Home Office. Sometimes they are already on their way.' – Outreach Social worker, Local authority

Assessment outcomes

Arrangements were considered suitable and plans for the young person to join their family were approved in just over two-thirds of cases (69%) reported in the local authority survey. For just over one-quarter of Dublin III or Calais Camp Clearance arrangements, local authorities had deemed the arrangement to be unsuitable (27%), and the young person became a looked after child directly on arrival. This was more common for children and young people due to join siblings (48%) than those due to join their uncle or aunt (13%): in no cases did any local authority deem an arrangement unsuitable if a child or young person was due to join their parent, although very low base sizes (n=6) mean that this finding should be treated as indicative.

Most often, arrangements were considered unsuitable because the family member's accommodation was not deemed suitable (31%) or the family member was unable or

unwilling to provide care (24%). Figure 3.1 provides a full list of the reasons provided by local authorities for why they did not consider intended arrangements to be suitable.²²

Figure 3.1: Reasons that an intended arrangement was considered not to be suitable



Base: All cases where intended arrangement considered to not be suitable (29)

The main reasons that arrangements in which children and young people were due to join siblings broke down were that the sibling was not living in suitable accommodation (42%) or that they were a care leaver themselves (16%). Comparatively, by far the most common reason for arrangements in which children were due to join their uncle or aunt were regarded as unsuitable was that the family member was unable or unwilling to provide care (63%).

²² As a result of the low base size of arrangements that were not considered to be suitable (n=29), it is worth exercising caution in interpretation of these results.

Case study 3B – Asif: Assessment outcomes - a child joining an under 18 relative

One local authority provided some insight into an example of a Dublin III arrangement that was considered unsuitable due to the family member being under 18. In this instance, a child, Asif, was placed with their sibling, who was also under the age of 18 and therefore could not provide security for the Dublin III child or young person. The la assessed both the needs of Asif and their sibling over a period of around 35 days after the child's arrival in England. Work was done in conjunction with the sibling's own social worker to ensure that the needs of both Asif and their sibling were being met.

The conclusion was that Asif joined his older brother in his pre-existing semi-independent housing for children, which took the form of a shared house. This was considered to be the best solution for both individuals, ensuring that they had suitable living arrangements and were cared for by the la while also being settled with each other, enabling them to maintain their close relationship.

In the survey, local authorities provided more detailed explanations for why some arrangements were not deemed suitable. This included:

- One case in which a child or young person was due to join their uncle, who had criminal history and where there were concerns about him re-offending.
- A case where a child or young person was unable to join their family because the relative's landlord refused permission for the child or young person to move in.
- A case where the family member lived in shared accommodation that did not allow guests to stay overnight. More commonly in cases where the relative lived in shared accommodation, issues revolved around the unsuitability of the other tenants.

4. Arrangement journeys since arriving in England

This chapter explores the different living arrangements Dublin III and Calais Camp clearance children and young people have experienced since arriving in England, from initial arrangements through to their local authorities known situations. It presents the common reasons for family arrangements breaking down and provide case study examples of each type of journey.

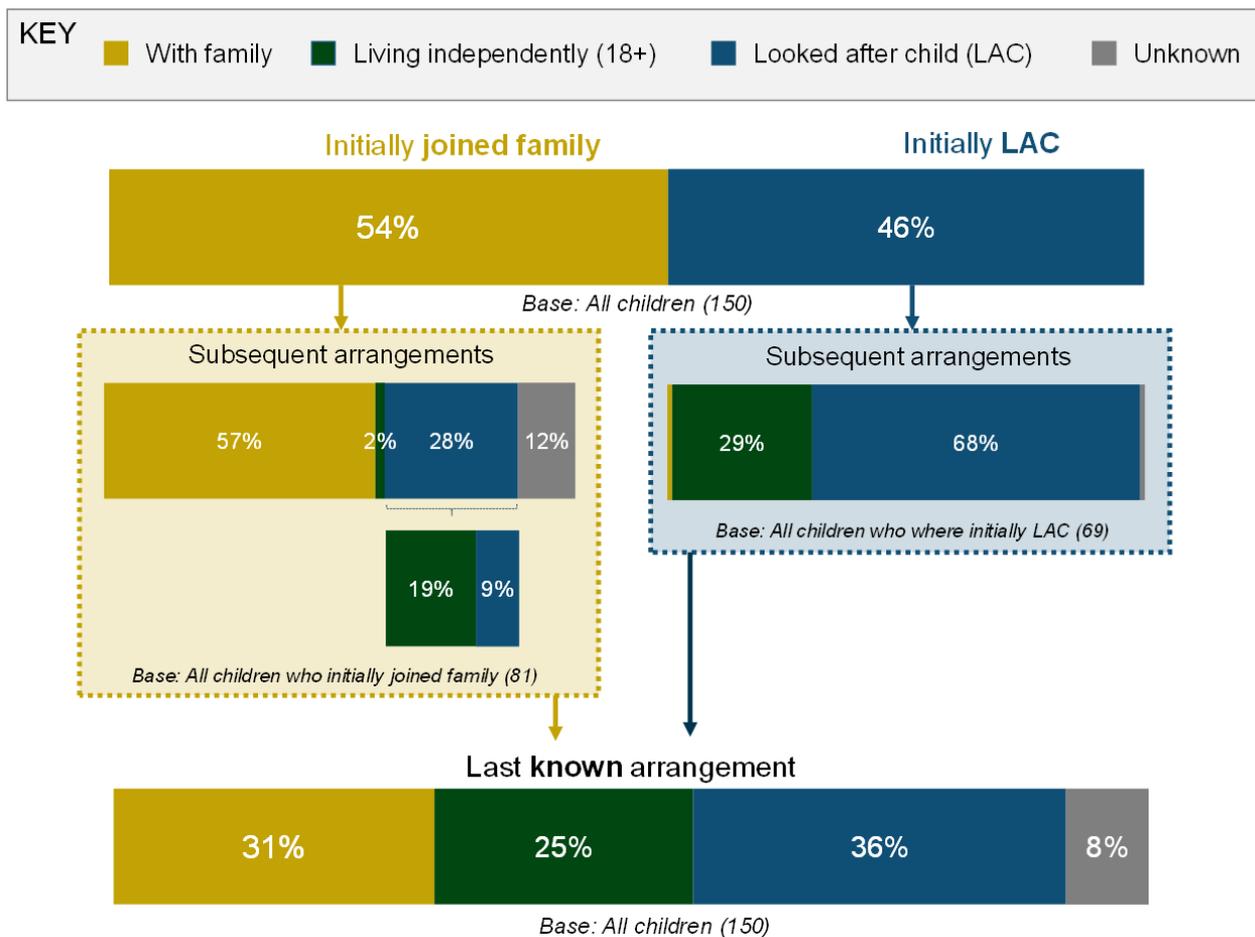
Key findings

- More than half of children/young people initially joined family, and nearly one-third of these arrangements ended up breaking down. Typically, the child/young person then became a looked after child.
- Family breakdowns were usually by negative relationships between the young person and family members. Qualitative interviews revealed that cultural and religious gender norms were often underlying tensions between family members.
- The majority of children/young people had been a looked after child since arriving in England. If the child was under 16, they tended to go into foster care. Foster placements where there was a shared religion or culture were more likely to be successful.
- Typically, looked after children aged 16+ moved into shared housing. In this arrangement, young people usually had to demonstrate and develop household skills and responsibilities; young people view this arrangement positively as it equipped them well for independence.
- At last known arrangements, one-quarter of young people from the online survey had turned 18 and were living independently (this includes care-leavers who are living on their own).

Overview of arrangement journeys

Figure 4.1 provides an overview of survey findings for the different living and care arrangements that have transpired for Dublin III and Calais Camp clearance children and young people following their initial arrangement.

Figure 4.1: Initial and subsequent arrangements of Dublin III and Calais Camp clearance children and young people (survey data)



Overall, just over half (54%) of Dublin III and Calais Camp clearance children and young people joined relatives after arriving in England²³, while the remainder (46%) went into the care of the local authority i.e. they became a looked after child. Likelihood of the latter was lower among children who came to England under Dublin III regulation (39%); this is unsurprising given the earlier finding that fewer Calais Camp clearance children had relatives to join.

The most common local authorities known arrangement was being a looked after child; this was the case for more than one-third (36%) of children/young people. Just under one-third (31%) of children were living with family members still. One-quarter (25%) of all children and young people had had turned 18 and were last known to be living on their own in shared or single accommodation; some of these individuals were still supported

²³ Qualitative interviews with Local authorities indicate that this was an assumption in some cases where the local authority did not have any further contact or feedback from the young person or their relatives following confirming suitability of the living arrangement.

by the local authority as a care-leaver, but support was reduced to scheduled key and/or social worker visits. For a minority of children and young people (8%), their current arrangement was unknown; this was more common among those who had initially joined family.

The survey showed journeys to last known arrangements followed one of six main routes:

- Initially joined family – stayed with family (31% of all)
- Initially joined family – looked after child (5%)
- Initially joined family – looked after child – living independently (10%)
- Initially joined family – living independently (1%)
- Initially looked after child – stayed looked after child (31%)
- Initially looked after child – living independently (13%)
- Initially looked after child - joined family (1%)

The rest of this chapter will draw on both survey data and qualitative interviews to explore experiences of children/young people at different and stages within these journeys.

Experiences of family arrangements

In line with pre-assessment *intended* arrangements, children and young people included in the local authority survey tended to go and live with an uncle or aunt (60%); 28% joined a sibling and a minority (7%) joined a parent.

Qualitative fieldwork among children/young people and local authorities indicated that, although all Dublin III children and young people were joining close blood relatives (as per the criteria for living with them), there was variation in the quality of that relationships. There were cases where the relatives had not met before or had last seen them a long time ago when the child was young. There were other cases where the Dublin III child or young person had maintained semi-regular contact with their relative over the years, such as telephone contact / or visits.

In addition, Dublin III children and young people who were placed with an uncle or aunt had often not met their relatives partner and their own children (sometimes babies or very young children).

The quality of the relationship between the Dublin III child or young person and their relatives(s) was identified by Local authorities as a key factor in whether the initial arrangement is successful or not; this and other factors contributing to a family arrangement breaking down are discussed later in this chapter.

In all cases referred to in qualitative interviews, Dublin III/Calais Camp clearance children and young people joined their family either immediately or very shortly after they arrived in England. There were examples of the child or young person meeting their relative for the first time on the day they were due to live with them, such as at the airport. Others had had some recent contact with their relative prior to going to live with them; this was typically in the case of a sibling meeting the child in Calais where they prepared for the child or young person to transfer to England under the Dublin III regulation.

Local authorities interviewed in qualitative fieldwork said that this manner of introduction was unlike that of other children and young people they work with, where there is often a 'phased introduction'. In a phased introduction, the child or young person gradually increases the frequency of time spent with their new carer over a period of time, for example beginning with staying over for one night a week, and then a weekend, until the young person gains confidence and a sense of security to live full-time with their new carer.

Outcomes of a family arrangement

More than half (57%) of children and young people who initially joined family had, to the knowledge of the local authority, stayed with this family. This equates to just under one-third of all children/young people (31%). The least is known about this outcome; if a family arrangement was considered successful and the family did not require further support from the Local authority, it was unusual for contact to be maintained (see case study 4A).

Case study 2B (continued) – Solomon: Child remained with his Mother

After the initial legal difficulties trying to get her 11-year-old son to England from Africa, Solomon's Mother was informed the Dublin III regulation was applicable.

At the time of the home visit assessment the social worker was briefed about the Mothers' attempts to bring in a child with a fake passport, and the on-going trial that was happening because of this. The social worker was warned that it was possible that the Mother was trying to smuggle in a child that was not her own into England and so the social worker was advised to explore this claim and ensure there were no safeguarding concerns if Solomon were to join her under Dublin III.

During the assessment, the social worker determined that the two children already living with her were not-at-risk, and while the mothers' previous actions to move her 11-year old son to England were illegal, they were understandable. The Mother was extremely excited that the social worker had come to visit and the process of living with Solomon was progressing. The Mother provided the social worker with a tour of the home, showing her where Solomon would sleep and detailing which school he would be enrolled in and how their family life would operate. The social worker felt that the close relationship between Solomon and his Mother meant that this placement was likely to be successful as the Mother was clearly motivated and excited to be with her son again. The social worker was satisfied that it was a safe environment for the son to join and advised that the reunification should go ahead. As far as the social worker was aware, the son had come over and successfully reunited with his Mother in England as the social worker heard nothing else from the Home Office or from the Mother following her visit.

This journey was shared by the social worker who had met with the Mother and did the assessment ahead of Solomon coming to join her in London.

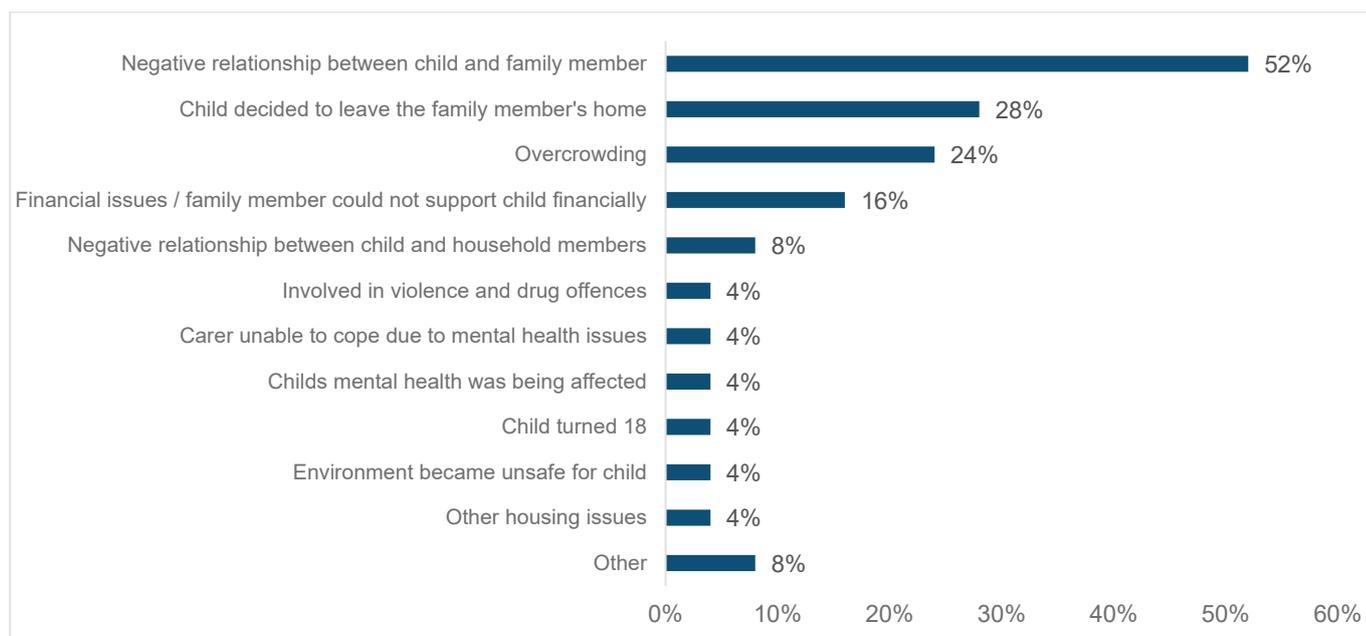
Local Authorities completing the survey reported that nearly one-third of family arrangements broke down (31%); this was more likely if the child/young person had been living with an uncle or aunt (41%). Only 17% of arrangements with a sibling broke down, and there were no instances of a breakdown where the child/young person was living with a parent.

More than two-fifths of children (42%) who originally joined family were then looked after by the local authority. Over time, this proportion reduced to around one-quarter (26%), as some young people turned 18 and moved into independent living. Only a minority (2%) of young people who joined family moved out of this arrangement to live independently straight away.

Reasons for family arrangements breaking down

As shown in Figure 4.2, more than half of breakdowns (52%) were attributed to negative relationships between the child and family / household members. The child/young person deciding to leave the family member's home (28%) and overcrowding (24%) were also relatively common.

Figure 4.2: Reasons given for family arrangements breaking down



Base: All cases where family arrangement broke down (25)

A child/young person deciding to leave the care of their family was often reported in conjunction with other breakdown factors. For example, more than half of these cases also cited financial issues (57%) or a negative relationship within the family (57%), and overcrowding was also reported among 43%. Qualitative interviews with local authorities and Dublin III young people supported the notion that various factors tended to interplay and contribute to a family breakdown.

Local authority and young people interviews indicated that in many of cases where negative family relationships drove a breakdown, tension had arisen between the young person and the spouse of their relative. These tensions were commonly rooted in gender-related cultural and religious norms. One local authority described how the presence of a male who was not mahram²⁴ for the relative's wife meant the wife was required to observe hijab in her home where she had not been before:

²⁴ In Islam, a mahram is a member of one's family with whom marriage or sexual intercourse would be considered haram (illegal in Islam); from whom purdah, or concealment of the body with hijab, is not obligatory.

‘A young person I was working with, his family were Muslim. Because of the relationship between this young person and his family, [his uncle’s] wife couldn’t take her hijab off at home, which became a massive issue and affected her quality of life. Ultimately, that was one of the main things which meant this young person couldn’t carry on living there’ – Senior Social Worker, Local authority

In some, less overt, situations, the presence of a relatively unknown male was not custom and simply made the female occupants and the young person themselves feel uncomfortable.

Another social worker explained one situation where a young person had gone to join his sister and her husband. The husband refused to financially support the young person and, because of the cultural norm for the husband to control the household and finances, the sister had no means to try and support her brother herself and the situation became impossible for the young person to continue living in.

Local authorities and young people explained how, in many situations where a rift had formed within the family, the young person put forward the request for the arrangement to change. Some young people explained how they feared they were negatively impacting on their relative’s family life and wanted to remove themselves from the situation. In extreme situations – usually when other factors were at play too – the young person left the home despite having nowhere else to go (see case studies 4B and 4C).

Case studies 4B and 2C: Young person decided to leave family arrangement to avoid impact on their relative's relationship

Case study 4B – Ibrahima

Ibrahima came to England in 2016 when he was 16 years old. He was originally from Senegal. He came under the Dublin III regulation, and initially went to live with his Uncle and his Uncle's family. His Uncle lived with his wife and 3 children under the age of 10. There was an existing relationship between Ibrahima and his uncle because the uncle would visit Senegal on occasion. The young person described how he struggled in Greece, Italy and Calais because he was not with his community anymore; he was not with people he knew from home except a small number of friends he made along the way that were from the same area as he was. When Ibrahima lived with his uncle, he liked that he was with family as he had not been for a long time.

After 4 months of living with his uncle, the arrangement started to break down because of a negative relationship with his uncle's wife. Ibrahima thinks that she found it difficult having him in the house and he was therefore made to feel unwelcome – she would say and do unkind things to him. *Ibrahima did not elaborate on what these things were.* The house was also quite small (two bedrooms) for the number of people living there, which did not help the situation.

Ibrahima started to recognise that the issues between himself and the wife were affecting his uncle's marriage. He said that tried to speak to his social worker about it but felt his social worker did not believe some of the things he said were happening and that the situation needed to change. Ibrahima felt he had no other option but to leave the family home; this was 6-7 months after joining them.

Ibrahima was homeless and missing during this time (at this point he had not made any friends and felt he had nowhere to go). After a couple of weeks his school and the social services in the local authority found him. He lived with a teacher for 1 month before moving into shared accommodation with 3 other people.

Ibrahima felt if he was listened to / believed by social services sooner he could have avoided a lot of the conflict in the home and not been homeless for a few weeks.

Ibrahima now lives with one other person in a flat organised by social services and is working towards living on his own (at the moment a social worker checks them once a week to see how they are getting on with living independently). He is currently studying Maths and English GSCE 3 days a week so that he can go on to study Aircraft Engineering.

Ibrahima still visits his Uncle's family every week.

Experience shared by the young person.

Case Study 2C – Hassan

As outlined in the first part of Case Study 2C, Hassan, originally from Sudan, arrived in England to live with his brother under Dublin III Regulation. This older brother had lived in the UK for at least 10 years and had children of his own (aged 3-, 4- and 8-years-old).

Hassan was met at the Calais camp by his older brother. During the pre-arrival checks, the older brother stated that he was very happy to receive his younger brother. As time went on however, there were tensions between Hassan, his brother and his brother's family due to living in cramped conditions and having limited privacy. Hassan was sleeping in the living room which he described as 'cold and small' and he also wanted to be able to invite his friends to the home but did not feel able to.

Hassan described how he felt that his sister-in-law did not want him to stay with them, and he felt that it was best that he left before a 'big argument' happened. He said that this sister-in-law used to shout at him, but he didn't want to tell his brother in case that caused problems between them.

Hassan's social worker also explained how he found his older brother to be really demanding and placed a lot of pressure on him, in terms of expected behaviours and achievements including in their school grades and their standard of behaviour in the household.

A multi-agency approach was taken to help support Hassan and he was encouraged to join groups and classes to help develop a social network, for example music and football classes. He was also helped to register with a GP, as well as being assigned a family support worker to help them with various appointments / services they may need (e.g. education, housing).

Initially things improved for Hassan and their case was considered closed. However, within a year, it was re-opened. The family situation had broken down due to a fallout between Hassan and his brother's wife. Hassan left his brother's home and was sleeping rough outside on a bench.

The local authority attempted family mediation between Hassan, his brother and the brother's wife. Once it became apparent that it was no longer tenable for Hassan to remain with his brother's family, he was then subject to a Section 20 and was then supported by the 'through care' team.

Throughout all of this, Hassan's older brother was still supportive of him and attended meetings. Hassan went to live with a 'host family', a more independent style of living for young people aged 16+ where they live with a family who have a spare room, where he had more freedom and was able to come and go as he pleased. Hassan pays a small service charge, and this is designed to build his independence and work towards fully independent living.

Hassan is now aged 18. He will soon be able to bid independently for a council property. He is at college studying courses in construction as well as English and Maths.

Hassan is happy in his current accommodation (a studio flat), is enjoying college and has a lot of friends. He is happy to have his own room and space. He is also happy to have met people from the Sudanese community and felt this has contributed to his settling in.

Story told by the young person, with additional details filled in by his social workers.

Social workers described how arrangements with family members where the level of familiarity was previously low often resulted in a low sense of obligation or a strong sense of duty but low emotional investment in the child/young person. Both could be equally detrimental. For example, some relatives agreed to have a child/young person live with them because they felt it was their duty to care for a siblings child, but were not financially or situationally secure enough to do so; these strains combined with low emotional investment often resulted poor levels of care for the young person and in the arrangement breaking down (see case study 4D).

Case study 4D – Anwar: Child abandoned by uncle

Anwar arrived in England in 2015, aged 15, and was originally from Afghanistan. He came to live with his uncle who was living in shared accommodation and was in his late 20s. After 6-7 months Anwar got back in touch with the local authority to request help as he had nowhere to live. His uncle had asked him to move out, after losing his job he could no longer support Anwar financially and decided to move away to look for work. The local authority tried to stay in touch with the uncle, but he did not respond to their attempts. Anwar became looked after and was housed in a residential care unit for 16-18-year-old male UASCs.

Anwar attended college between the aged of 16-18. When he turned 18, he moved into shared accommodation. He receives support from a key worker and has also been referred to various advocacy services. He had a mental health assessment from CAMHS but chose not to engage.

Anwar is now aged 19 and NEET. He is looking for work and has done some agency work in the past (he now has refugee status and can work). He still has poor English which the key worker feels is holding him back, and possibly has an undiagnosed learning difficulty.

Story shared by a social worker.

Experiences of being a Looked After Child

In total, just over three-fifths (61%) of child/young people included in the local authority survey have been a looked after child at some point since arriving in England.

According to case study local authorities, if the child was under 16 years of age at the time of arrival in England and became a looked after child, they were typically placed in foster care, while those aged 16 years or older at the time of arrival were placed in supported accommodation. The child or young person will be provided with a social worker and/or a support worker, as well as a personal education plan (PEP) and healthcare plan. This is no different to the type of support that another looked after child would receive. A similar process was followed in most cases of a child becoming looked after at a later stage.

Local authorities reported that for children/young people that become looked after straight away, they continue to explore the possibility of the young person living with their relative in the longer-term. This might include helping the relative(s) to explore different housing options for their family unit if their current accommodation was assessed as being unsuitable.

'We would do everything we can to ensure the child could join their family.' – Social Worker, Local authority

That said, only one child reported on in the survey moved from being looked after child to joining family.

Experiences of children/young people in foster care

Local authority and children/young people interviewed indicated that the experiences of children/young people who went into foster care varied. Local authorities were able to identify factors that tended to contribute to the success or failure of a foster placement:

Shared culture and/or religious beliefs. Numerous social workers stated that this was key to the success of many foster placements. Local authorities felt that this helped children/young people settle into the home and bond with their carer(s). It meant they were able to share routines with their carer of going to a place of worship once a week, and the fact they were like-minded in their beliefs gave the young person a sense of familiarity and understanding with their carer. See Case Study 4E and 4F.

Case Study 4E – Ahmed: Young person with positive foster placement after family arrangement broke down

Ahmed came to England in October 2016, aged 15. He came to the country under Dublin III regulation, on the proviso of living with his maternal uncle. The local authority were under the impression the arrangement was going well (the assessment went well and they had limited contact with the young person after he initially settled), but about 18 months later Ahmed came to the local authority with a letter from his uncle saying he could no longer take care of him. The reasons given were ‘financial burden and overcrowding’. On further investigation of the case, the local authority found out that his uncle’s wife had given the uncle an ultimatum, ‘it’s either your nephew or us’. Because of this, Ahmed was at risk of being homeless when he came to the local authority. After an assessment to determine the best way to support the young man, the local authority decided he should be taken into foster care. Ahmed then lived with a foster family of the same religion. The local authority described the relationship between the young person and this family:

‘There is a strong connection; they share the same religion, they worship together, they eat together.’ – Social Worker, Local authority

At one point Ahmed had requested he move into supported living as he wanted a bit more independence, but because the arrangement was otherwise going well the local authority was mindful to see how he continued with this family. Throughout this process, Ahmed maintained a positive relationship with his uncle.

Ahmed is now “thriving” – he is in college and recently won an award at the local authority for commitment and hard work. He has high aspirations and is working to realise them. He is now a care-leaver and maintains contact with the local authority through his care-leaver coach.

Story told by a social worker who worked with Ahmed when they were at risk of being homeless; the social worker discussed the individual with colleagues who were involved at various points of his journey ahead of the interview.

Level of independence given to young person. As with family arrangements, Local authorities described how some young people struggled to adapt to living under a carer’s roof and rules after living independently for so long with their journey’s to England and considering themselves grown-up. In contrast, Local authorities mentioned that some children and young people craved rules, routine and structure because of their experiences and it therefore worked well and was appreciated when carers provided this environment. Even where foster arrangements were considered successful and a

positive relationship existed between the young person and their carer, as they got older some craved a more independent way of living and therefore made the request to move into supported/independent housing (see Case Study 4F).

Case study 4F – Ali: Young male goes into foster care and supported accommodation before living independently

Ali arrived in England in 2017 when he was 17 years old. He had travelled from Eritrea. Before arriving in England, he wasn't given any information about where he would be living and what it would be like. He was living with two friends in one room in Calais when he started engaging with a charity worker and lawyer from England who eventually supported his transfer to England under Dublin III Regulation. He was originally meant to live with his sister and her family, but this arrangement never came to fruition. Ali said this is because it would have been 'uncomfortable' to live there, because of overcrowding and being in their way. *It is unclear from the young person's account whether this was the decision of the local authority or his sister's family.* Instead, he went to live in a foster arrangement. In this arrangement, Ali lived with an older English man who had grown up children. His children were at university or living elsewhere so it was just the two of them in this home. This arrangement went well, and the young person described his foster carer as 'like a father'. While he lived there, his social worker supported him in finding education and healthcare. Ali stated that he was very content and there was nothing more he could have wanted from the process.

At some point after turning 18, Ali made the decision to leave the foster arrangement because the journey to college was too arduous and he wanted to get experience of living alone. He moved into a shared house for one year, which he enjoyed; he was living with another male from Eritrea and said this arrangement helped him take responsibility and built skills/experience for looking after himself:

'When you're living in shared house you can start to take responsibility and start doing everything for yourself, it's good experience.'

Ali now lives in his own, unsupervised flat. He is happy here, and particularly enjoys how quiet it is.

Ali still sees his sister once a week and enjoys these visits. He is doing a plumbing course at a college near his accommodation which he attends 3 days a week. Before this, he attended an ESOL course for 4-5 months and then studied in another college 4 days a week. He hopes to gain work experience through an Apprenticeship next year.

This journey was shared by the young person.

Relationship between carer and child/young person. Local authorities felt that, in some cases, the arrangement simply didn't work because a positive relationship between the child/young person and their carer never developed. For example, one local authority described one situation where the child did not feel nurtured by their male carer; as a result, the placement broke down. The child is now in a placement which is working well, living with a female foster carer, described as "caring and motherly". The same local authority gave a contrasting example where, because of cultural norms in the country the child was from, as they struggled to adapt to having a female main-carer; this and some other tensions in the situation, including the **presence of other children**, lead to the placement breaking down (see Case Study 4G).

Case Study 4G – Ayaan and Hamza: Cousins with initial family arrangement and foster placement breakdowns, now living together in a successful foster placement

Two family members Ayaan, a boy aged 7 years old, and his male cousin Hamza, aged 15, came to England together under Dublin III regulation and initially lived with their shared uncle. After this arrangement broke down, the children went into foster care. Their first foster arrangements were separate, and both broke down.

Ayaan first moved into a foster arrangement with a single female carer with her own children. Ayaan missed his own parents a lot (they had not been able to leave his home country), and felt the carer was treating him differently to her other children which upset him. He also struggled to adapt to having a female primary carer; in his own country males usually fulfilled this role, and he was not used to going to a woman if he needed something. Eventually, the decision was made to move Ayaan out of this placement.

Meanwhile, Ayaan's older cousin Hamza was also having difficulties in his initial placement. He felt he was restricted in this home and not given an appropriate amount of independence. For example, Hamza felt the carer was "on his back" a lot when he went out; he was required to check-in and keep the carer up to date with his movements a lot. Ultimately, this arrangement broke down.

The cousins were then placed with a male carer with no other children. This placement is going well. The carer shares their religion and they all go to mosque together. The carer looked after them well, investing time and care in them. For example, he takes Ayaan to the swimming pool every day which he thoroughly enjoys. The carer was also described as having high aspirations for Ayaan and Hamza. The plan is that they stay in this arrangement together long-term.

Story told by a social worker who worked with the two children after the arrangement with their uncle broke down. Understanding of the experiences of the family arrangement and why it broke down are therefore limited and not explored.

Positive relationship still existing with relative(s). this was true for a few cases described by Local authorities and young people. The presence of family members in a young person's life still was thought to create a sense of continuity and created a stronger support system for them which tended to result in more positive outcomes. For example, in the previous situation of a child now living with a "motherly" foster carer, the uncle lives nearby, and the child will regularly have sleepovers with him. The local authority felt this more holistic experience of care worked well where the foster system

was able to provide him with a stable home, but the child still had someone he knew in his life worked well.

Experiences of shared housing

In qualitative interviews, young people who had moved into a shared housing/supported living arrangement while still a looked after child (i.e. under 18) were positive about this experience. As exemplified in previous case study 5F, this situation gave the individuals a sense of independence and calmness in surroundings they might have been craving. Young people and local authorities alike described how it was a good steppingstone to living on their own as it equipped them with the necessary skills for, for example, looking after a home and the related responsibilities. It was also an opportunity to make friends, which many individuals had previously struggled with.

Missing children/young people

Around one in ten (11%) young people who came to England under Dublin III or as part of the Calais Camp clearance were reported missing at some stage. In all cases, they were subsequently found. Anecdotal evidence from qualitative interviews indicates that this was usually following the family breakdowns described earlier, where a young person felt they had no other option but to leave the family home and did not know where to go next.

5. Types of support used

This chapter considers the types of support offered by local authorities to Dublin III children and young people and their families. (It does not review the support offered to Calais Camp Clearance children). The proportion of children, young people and families that arrived under these regulations is analysed, alongside the reasons that local authorities offered or did not offer support to Dublin III children and young people. Based upon both quantitative survey data and qualitative discussions, this chapter will consider the types of initial support that was offered as well as the areas where support was required, alongside detailing the support services that were accessed. This chapter also considers the difference in the types of support, as well as the regularity with which it was offered, based upon whether a child or young person was in care or lived with their relative. The familial expectations of Dublin III children and young people are also considered.

Key findings

- Just under half (46%) of Dublin III children or young people received any additional support. Children or young people who arrived and stayed with their relatives typically received far less support those who went into looked after care fairly soon after their arrival, as may be expected.
- Family members often had a misconception of what support they might get, specifically financial and housing support.
- Of the Dublin III children and young people who received support, more than one-quarter received Section 17 support (28%) or were designated as a 'child in need' (28%), and one-fifth received early help services (20%).
- Although nearly all local authorities that took part in the case studies recognised that there was no legal obligation to provide initial support to the child or young person and their family, there was a strong sense that the living arrangements could be more successful with more initial support.

Provision of additional support

Two-fifths (43%) of Dublin III children or young people included in the survey did not receive additional support or, if they did, the reporting local authority was not aware of the additional support received. This resonated in the depth interviews with local authorities who completed the initial assessments of the family before the child arrived in England under the Dublin III Regulation. The interviews revealed that children or young people who arrived and stayed with their relatives typically received far less support those who went into looked after care fairly soon after their arrival.

Several case study local authorities mentioned that because it is rare for them to meet the child or young person, and observe them interacting with the family, it is difficult to anticipate in this one-off visit what support they may actually need, or to know how they are coping in their new environment.

‘We don’t get to meet the children and that’s something that I think there is a big gap in there in terms of follow-up (and checking what support they need).’ – Senior social worker, Local authority

A number of local authority staff in the case studies commented on the contrast between required initial or ongoing support for children or young people arriving under the Dublin III regulation, compared with the required routine check-ins and support given to families who foster a child. The majority of local authority staff interviewed in the case studies pointed out that once a Dublin III child is with their family it is expected that they would be treated like any other family in their borough; only receiving support if it comes to the attention of the local authority that the family is struggling.

‘If there are any additional needs in the family, let’s say the child’s got learning needs and obviously that would be scope for providing additional services for that child. I don’t know. Holiday clubs, you know. Weekend respite or whatever. That’s open to any family in the borough regardless of the circumstances whether they have recourse to public funds or not it’s open to them.’ – Senior social worker, Local authority

Although nearly all local authorities that took part in the case studies recognised that there was no legal obligation to provide initial support to the child or young person and their family, there was a strong sense that the living arrangements could be more successful with more initial support. Irrespective of whether the child or young person was living with their relatives or in ‘looked after’ care, interviews with social workers as well as with Dublin III children and young people highlighted that there were some common areas where support was required:

- Financial assistance: Social workers and Dublin III young people and children recognised that access to financial assistance was the key issue for many of the relatives who were taking on the care of the child or young people and for young people who were wanting to live independently.
- Language barriers: The Dublin III children and young people often required interpreters and access to English language classes.
- Education: Including assisting the relatives to identify and enrol the child or young person into an appropriate school or college.

- Access to health and universal services: As with education, often the child or young person and their family needed supporting enrolling with a GP and gaining access to medical and dental assistance:

‘Ensuring that the family knows how to get them into the universal services like GPs and things like that’ – Social worker manager, Local authority

It was noted that there can often be “dental issues if they have been travelling a long time and haven't had access to a dentist” which was another expensive exercise to undertake.

- Community support: One social worker noted that “just wider community support is needed”, whereas others specified that family members and young people sometimes required assisting linking into community activities where they can meet people, such as cricket clubs or religious groups.
- Furniture and essential items: For families who care for a Dublin III child or young person they can need help preparing for their arrival. One social worker manager recalled using the family support services to help purchase bunk beds for relatives who were preparing to care for two Dublin III siblings, under the age of ten. The social worker noted that the family needed ‘basic things, [the local authority] are not refurbishing people’s houses, we’re providing basic things like a bed, some sheets, some bedding, some clothes’ – Social worker manager, Local authority
- Parenting support: For some of the family members it will be their first time needing to look after a child or young person and the local authority can assist with helping them to set up parenting routines.
- Immigration status: The legal status of Dublin III children and young people is complicated and often the families need assistance understanding their own, as well as the Dublin III child or young person’s immigration status as this impacts on their access to further support, including financial support.

It is important to note that local authority lack of awareness about initial and ongoing support provided to the child and family appears to stem from the lack of legal responsibility for the local authority to stay in touch with children and families as well as the absence of knowledge sharing between different teams within each local authority. If the child or young person requires additional assistance this would be provided through another social work team and the initial assessment team would not always be aware of this. The social worker interviewed might also be unaware of whether the child or young person had become looked after, and therefore received additional support, following their assessment.

Family expectations of support

Several social workers and managerial staff within the case study local authorities mentioned that the families were disappointed in the local authority's inability to proactively provide support, specifically financial and housing support, to assist them as they take on care for the Dublin III child or young person. A social worker explained how the older brother who was taking on guardianship of his young brother expected more assistance from the local authority than they were able to provide:

'He presumed that a social worker would help him find schools and things like that. He knew he could do it himself, but he presumed there would be some initial support given the circumstances.' – Consultant Social worker, Local authority

'I think the only thing that people often find disappointing is we cannot help them with housing.' – Senior social worker, Local authority

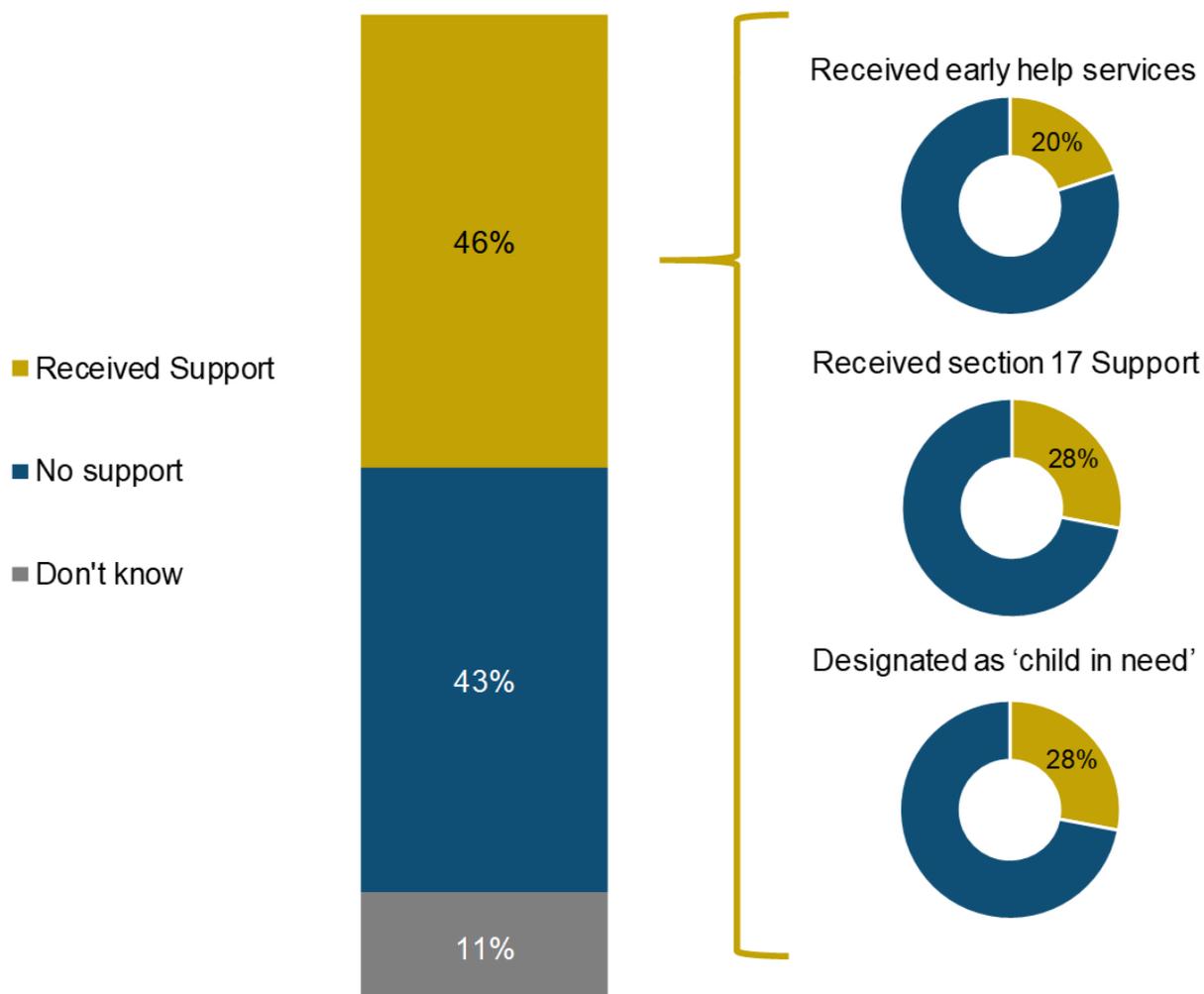
Discussions with local authorities also revealed that tension between families receiving children and young people under the Dublin III arrangements could arise due to misplaced expectations of support among families, that was not always forthcoming from local authorities. One local authority noted that this was particularly the case regarding the potential for the local authority to provide financial support. This local authority had received several children or young people under the Dublin III Regulation and had observed multiple families that expected financial support to cover the cost of care. This local authority felt that the potential for the government to contribute towards financial assistance for the families of children or young people settled under the Dublin III Regulation would have helped to ease their transition into their area. Further, financial support seemed particularly appropriate in cases where a child or young person was coming to join an unknown relative in England. Under Article 8(1) it is evident that recourse to financial assistance either from the Home Office or the local authority depends on the child and family's immigration status.

'Some of these relationships were very weak to the extent that some of the people that were being proposed as the main carer for the young person had never met them. And, therefore, they wouldn't necessarily feel responsible for that young person. We are asking them to take on a huge commitment to invite someone into the house, to provide and care for them for an indeterminate period, and they've never met them... and a lot of these families were already experiencing financial hardship or have their own unresolved stuff.' – Senior Social Worker, Local authority

Type of support received

Just over two-fifths (43%) of Dublin III children and young people did not receive additional support from the local authority, while a similar proportion (46%) did. As can be seen in Figure 5.1, more than one-quarter of the Dublin III children and young people who received support, received Section 17 support (28%) or were designated as a 'child in need' (28%), and one-fifth received early help services (20%).

Figure 5.1: Types of support received by Dublin III children and families



Base: All Dublin III cases (109)

To be eligible for section 17 support is dependent on being designated as a 'child in need'.

- 'A child in need' is defined in section 17(10) of the Children's Act 1989, which provides that a child shall be taken to be in need if (a) he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a la under this Part; (b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or (c) he is disabled.²⁵
- Section 17(1) of the Children Act 1989 [1] places a general duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children 'in need' and to promote the upbringing of such children by their families. In meeting this duty, la social services have the power to provide a wide range of services for those children's needs, including accommodation and financial assistance, even if they, or their parents, do not have recourse to public funds (NRPF), which for many Dublin III children or young people they do not.²⁶
- Early help services cover a broad range of vital services and support that are brought in before any formal interventions (such as when children are placed on child in need or child protection plans, or taken into the care of the council) to help children, young people and families achieve good outcomes. While early help is led by local authorities, the local offer usually includes the work of a wide range of agencies, including: the health system; schools; the police; and the voluntary and community sector. According to the Local Government Association, early help services take a whole family approach as they are intended for everyone and are available from the foundation years through to the teenage years.²⁷

Although the majority of the local authorities interviewed for the case studies did not have the capacity to provide initial, proactive support to the children or young people and their families who started living together, a handful were slightly more hands-on in their approach. Some local authorities stated that their initial assessment team would provide the family members with contact details for the family support team and local charities that could assist them if they reached out and requested further assistance.

'If we feel that, actually, they would struggle for whatever reason, let's say family don't speak very good English and so they might struggle

²⁵ Briefing notes from Department for Education on commissioning this project

²⁶ Coram Children's Legal Centre: Migrant Children's Fact Sheet. <https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Section-17-support-July-2019-FINAL.pdf>

²⁷ Local Government Association. <https://local.gov.uk/early-help-resource-pack>

to get child to school. They might struggle to get the child to settle down and support with everything the child needs so we can say, 'Listen, we've got Early Help,' and it's called Family Support actually... we always tell the families about the family support team and encourage them to get in touch if they need additional assistance.' – Senior social worker, Local authority

One local authority was particularly proactive as they described assigning all Dublin III children and young people to Section 17 care, and did a full 'Strengthening Families assessment' to determine what the likely child and family needs would be:

'One of the things that we did, which I don't think all local authorities did, was take a very deliberate decision that for all young people coming in, if they were going to live with a family, we did a full "Strengthening Families assessment", which is our assessment that all of the social work teams use when they are assessing families that are referred into us. This was because we felt we really needed to understand the needs, not only of the young people, but of the families. Often young people were coming into families that had their own struggles, they perhaps didn't have prior relationships with each other, they were families that had their own journeys into the UK, perhaps their own unresolved trauma, sometimes living in quite impoverished conditions; overcrowding.' – Senior Social Worker, Local authority

In the survey, local authorities were asked about the types of early help services that they provided to Dublin III children and young people and their families. Local authorities provided a range of different services and of the 22 children or young people who received support:

- Nine children or young people had received family support and youth services
- Two children or young people had received:
 - Early Help services
 - Support through the Pathway Plan Branchout scheme
 - Support for education activities and enrolling in courses
 - Through Care Team support
 - Advice Point support
 - Benefits and housing advice
 - Counselling / mental health advice
- Other services that were received by just one child or young person included:

- Counselling or mental health advice
- Community activities
- Home support such as purchasing a bed
- Legal help
- Housing association assistance
- Medical treatment
- Personal allowances
- Team Around the Family (TAF) support.

It is important to note, that it is not clear that these 'other' services provided to just one child were provided in addition to, or as examples of, specific support provided by other named services such as Family Support and Youth Services.

The holistic approach of the Family Support and Youth Services served well to support Dublin III children and young people who were still living with their family. One social worker described this service in more detail:

'They work a casework model, so they will go out and visit families, they'll allocate workers to work specifically with the family, they'll be looking at what are the needs of the child, what do the family need in terms of support. So, they may be able to help with identifying the school, identifying a GP, health visitor, just looking at what are the support systems that the family need to. Then, if there are issues around, you know, trying to parent a child that you've never parented before is a big ask, so helping them deal with day-to-day issues that might come up around boundaries, bedtime routines. There's all these kinds of things that, you know, the average parent would be providing. So, it's a casework model and each family, I think, and each time will be completely different, in what are the services that they need.' – Social worker manager, Local authority

A number of the services accessed were offered to Dublin III children and young people who had become looked after and were no longer living with their family but had been taken into the care of the local authority. For instance, the 'Pathway Plan Branchout' is a scheme for young people aged 16 years old and above who are leaving care, the 'Through Care Team' prepares and implements pathway plans for young people to help them develop independent living skills and prepare them for leaving care and it is likely that young people who intend to live independently would be seeking benefits and housing advice.

The survey and case study evidence from social workers and young people suggests that while some support was provided to some Dublin III children and young people, and

their families, it was not delivered in a consistent way across local authorities. Local authorities were uncertain about how best to support arrangements where the child had remained with the family. They also varied in the methods that they used to provide support (e.g. whether it was through the family support team, charity organisations, the early help team, etc.), and who they targeted their support towards – with most of those interviewed focusing their attention towards children or young people where arrangements had broken down and the child or young person became a looked after child (LAC).

6. Conclusions

This study has attempted to fill the evidence gap about what happens to Dublin III and Calais Camp Clearance children and young people, their support needs, and the experiences of the local authorities they move into, from the perspectives of staff within local authorities and the children/ young people and their families. It has found a mixed picture in terms of outcomes for children and young people, with the majority of those covered by the available data having become a looked after child at some point.

Family living arrangements broke down in around one-third of cases. Upfront assessments are sometimes squeezed by time or information and local authorities would feel more confident making recommendations if they could do a more in-depth, holistic assessment, which they felt would also help to identify potential issues that might affect the sustainability of the arrangement in the longer-term. This is important as the survey identified that relationship issues were the biggest factor in the breakdown of an arrangement. Assessments therefore need to look beyond finances and housing to consider wider issues such as how it will impact on the dynamics of wider family (which would involve a more in-depth assessment). Local authorities also emphasised the need to make very clear to families that no extra substantive financial support or housing support will be on offer, to manage their expectations.

As some problems with the family arrangements typically emerge after a few months (related to mental health of the young person or their family member, or relationships with other household members) it may be helpful for local authorities to do some light-touch monitoring for the first few months or, if this is not possible, to provide signposting to wider support organisations/charities to enlarge the 'safety net' for the young person. Evidence from the study shows that if the arrangement breaks down for whatever reason, it can take time for this to come to the attention of the local authority and this can sometimes lead to difficulties/ distress for the young person (such as temporary homelessness). This risk might be reduced if there was more ongoing contact between the local authority, the young person and their family after the initial arrangement is made.

Overall, local authorities approached the process in different ways and some voiced the need for more guidance both about the initial assessment and about how best to support arrangements where the child had remained with the family.

Once they become a looked after child, children and young people do appear to have access to a wider range of support, including more specialist support for mental health and English language needs, and this is important as they continue to navigate towards living independently. Transition points can continue to be difficult for the young person if their family arrangement broke down and they became a looked after child, as they may have very limited or no family support to act as a safety net. Little is known about

outcomes for those young people who continue to live with their family as local authorities do not (and are not required to) collect this information.

Appendix A: Lessons learned

This appendix considers the challenges faced while arranging research with Dublin III children and young people, incorporating: methodological challenges; challenges specific to the unique circumstances faced by these children and young people; and challenges linked to the relationships that they have with local authorities. Each challenge is considered in these contexts, while lessons learned for potential future research have been drawn out in order to provide insights regarding potential future research with children and young people in general.

The original target for the qualitative phase was 20 case studies with children or young people and their families, but recruitment of these audiences presented a number of difficulties, despite utilising recruitment methods which have previously been successful in recruiting vulnerable children and young people through local authorities. The qualitative strand of this research comprised of a total of nine interviews with children and young people from four local authorities, out of the target of 20. Of the nine interviews, six had arrived under the Dublin III regulation (as expected), and three had arrived under section 67.²⁸

Methods

It was imperative that the voice of children or young people and their family was included in discussions about the child or young person's journey and the interventions and support that they needed and received. It was therefore critical to include their views in research in order to create a holistic understanding of how children or young people receive and understand the support that they receive.

In this study IFF Research planned to conduct the qualitative research with children or young people and their families in the same local authority areas as the social workers interviewed as part of the qualitative phase of this project. It was felt that interviewing social workers, children and young people and families from the same local authority would allow for the triangulation of the local authority's views of the services that they provide with those of the children or young people and their families receiving the support. Further it was expected that such a holistic approach would be more ethical.

During the feasibility study, it became apparent that where a local authority was able to facilitate contact, it would work best to approach the child and their relatives via the social worker (or other local authority staff engaging with the individual(s)). Consequently, the proposed methodology was adapted to focus upon trying to build rapport with local

²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/policy-statement-section-67-of-the-immigration-act-2016>

authorities and the social workers, who may participate in the research themselves and also assist with contacting Dublin III children and young people and their families.

Summary of the recruitment issues encountered

A successful reunification leads to no further local authority contact: Consider the time lapsed and brevity of relationships between social workers and children

Although 19 local authorities indicated that they were interested in assisting with the set-up of the 20 case studies, when contacted to participate in the research the vast majority no longer had contact with the children or young people and their relatives. Although IFF and DfE anticipated that it would be difficult for local authorities to make contact with children and relatives where the arrangement had been successful, it was unforeseen how few local authorities would have ongoing communication with the families and be able to facilitate contact.

Lessons learned for future research

When considering future research with children and young people that received social care support, but no longer do, the time elapsed between when the child or young person was last contacted as well as the brevity of the interactions that social workers had with the child or young person should be carefully considered. Where a long period of time (six months or more) has passed since the child or young person was in contact with their social worker, then further inquiries should be made about whether the local authority still holds the child or young person and their relative's up-to-date contact records, and if so, whether they would be able to facilitate contact with the research team or pass over these contact details (after complying with GDPR requirements by asking the family/ young person for permission to do so). Where the interaction between a social worker and the child or young person is brief then alternative recruitment methods, and the ability of third parties to identify eligible children or young people and then assist with recruitment, could offer an alternative solution if this is appropriate in future.

Additionally, starting research projects early in the process of an intervention or regulation being introduced may allow local authorities to better collect contact details and maintain contact with children and young people that may be critical for research or evaluations of these interventions and regulations. Allowing for more lead-in time may allow researchers and local authorities to have better access to children and young people for these purposes.

Where child and family contact is managed by different departments: Gain cross-team buy-in for the research from Child and Family Services

Within Child and Family departments, teams of social workers tended to work independently of each other. While one team might be willing and able to assist with the research, another team within the same local authority might not be. When contacting the local authorities about the research, the request was typically referred to Assessment

Teams as they had the most involvement with the child or young person. The key contacts who arranged case study visits tended to work within the initial assessment team, and the lack of contact with other teams meant it was extremely difficult to arrange interviews with social workers in teams not directly linked to the social worker that was helping to facilitate the research. It can be difficult to source a single point of contact who is aware of the whole interaction with and outcomes following an intervention from children's social care.

It was not within the remit of the Assessment Team to do follow up check-ins to see how the child or young person and the relatives were adjusting to their new life together. As stated above, once the child or young person was reunited with their relatives, the local authority was expected to treat the family like any other in their borough – intervening only if additional support were to be requested. As a result, if the living arrangement breaks down and the child and / or relatives needed additional support from Child and Family services they would not be put back in contact with the social worker who did the initial assessment, but instead with a social worker in another team such as the Early Help or Family Support Services team.

Lessons learned for future research

It is important to consider the working relationships within local authorities and to scope out the makeup of teams within local authorities to understand their abilities to act as conduits between the research team and the children and young people. Properly understanding instances in which local authorities may have no further contact with children and young people is also critical to any scoping stage of future research projects that aim to interview children and young people, with contact facilitated through local authorities.

Terminology is often not shared across teams, which can lead to difficulties in recruiting potential participants as the specifics of who the research is focused upon may not be clear. Lessons learned for future research

Future research should consider gaining cross-team buy-in from Child and Family services ahead of starting to recruit for research. To gain a holistic view of the journey and outcomes of children or young people who receive support, the disjointed nature of how teams operate and how information is shared within Child and Family services should be explored fully. This cross-team approach to working was explored during the feasibility phase of the research, and as a result approval from Directors and senior members of the local authority Child and Family Services was sought prior to carrying out the research within their department.

Lessons learned for future research

Cross government department collaboration and information sharing would have greatly assisted the ability to use alternative recruitment methods.

It would also have been useful to have been able to contact charities, to see which refugee children or young people they were working with and, before working with the charity to invite these children and young people to take part, check the individual names of the children and young people to see if they were in-scope. For the purposes of this particular research, however, this approach may not have helped to identify children and young people that had specifically arrived under the Dublin III Regulation.

The important need to protect vulnerable young people may affect research timescales: Future research should expect some booked interviews with supported children to need rearranging or be cancelled at short notice

When engaging with children's social care services recipients for research, it is important to bear in mind that other circumstances or events may take precedence over research participation. This is often unavoidable. Should research plan to conduct primary research with children and young people in the future they should consider contingency options such as over-sampling where possible and considering alternative routes to accessing children and young people, such as through schools or third sector organisations as appropriate.

Lessons learned for future research

A high drop-out rate is to be expected when conducting research with vulnerable groups. Future research with children who are receiving support from Child and Family Services should aim to over-recruit participants (if feasible) in anticipation of drop-outs.



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