



## DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2017-0208, 31 October 2017

# Calais and unaccompanied child refugees in Europe

## Commons Chamber, Thursday 2 November 2017

A Backbench Business debate on a motion relating to Calais and unaccompanied child refugees in Europe will be held in the Commons Chamber on Thursday 2 November 2017. The debate will be opened by Heidi Allen MP.

The text of the motion is:

That this House notes that it is one year since the Calais jungle camp was demolished; further notes that the UK demonstrated moral and political leadership in transferring 750 child refugees from intolerable conditions in that camp to be reunited with family members in Britain and provided those children with protection under Section 67 of the Immigration Act; and believes that as the UK prepares to leave the EU provision must be made to ensure that unaccompanied children in Europe can continue to access the safe and legal means to reunite with family and relatives in EU as is currently provided for under EU Dublin III Regulations.

The Backbench Business Committee has a page [MPs debate unaccompanied child refugees in Europe](#).

The proceedings of this debate may be watched on [parliamentlive.tv](#).

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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# 1. Background

## Summary

### Calls to extend the scope of UK refugee family reunion rules

Calls to widen the scope of the UK's refugee family reunion rules, in order to provide more safe and legal routes for refugee family reunion, are being given greater urgency by campaigners in light of the UK's pending exit from the EU.

The EU's 'Dublin III Regulations', which determine which Member State should be responsible for deciding an asylum claim, prioritise respect for family unity over certain other considerations.

Campaigners want the Government to extend the scope of the family reunion rules, so that they would apply to all dependent relationships. A particular concern for some is that, currently, there is no provision in the Immigration Rules for children who have been recognised as refugees to sponsor family members.

The Government has previously expressed concern that more generous family reunion rules might act as a pull factor for asylum seekers to come to the UK. It also argues that giving child refugees the right to sponsor family reunion applications might put children at greater risk of trafficking.

### Refugee resettlement schemes

For similar reasons to the above, the Government's preferred approach is to offer resettlement to refugees directly from conflict regions rather than to those who have already arrived in Europe.

However, during the last Parliament it established a targeted scheme for resettling some unaccompanied refugee children already in Europe (the 'Dubs scheme'), in response to pressure from campaigners and Parliamentarians. It plans to resettle 480 children who are currently in France, Greece or Italy under this scheme; much less than the 3,000 or so that campaigners had originally hoped for.

## 1.1 Refugee family reunion: provisions in UK and EU law

### The UK's Immigration Rules

The UK's Immigration Rules allow for people who have been granted Refugee status or Humanitarian Protection to be joined in the UK by immediate family members (i.e. partner and dependent children under 18) who were part of their family before they fled to claim asylum. Different rules, with more restrictive eligibility criteria, apply for other

relations, such as dependent adult relatives, adopted children, and 'post-flight' family members.

Campaigners want the Government to extend the UK's refugee family reunion rules, so that they would apply to all dependent relationships. A particular concern for some is that the current Rules do not allow for children who have been recognised as refugees in the UK to sponsor applications from their family members (although there is scope to make exceptions in special cases).

The Government has previously expressed concern that more generous rules might act as a pull factor for asylum seekers to come to the UK. It also argues that giving child refugees the right to sponsor family reunion applications might put children at greater risk of trafficking.

## The Dublin III Regulations

Separate to the Immigration Rules, EU law provides a route of entry to the UK for people who have already entered Europe as asylum seekers and have family living in the UK.

The 'Dublin III Regulations' determine which Member State should be responsible for deciding an asylum claim. They prioritise respect for family unity over certain other considerations, such as which country the asylum seeker originally entered.

The Dublin system has been criticised for being difficult to access in practice, and slow and bureaucratic. There are concerns that some eligible cases are not being identified, particularly in relation to unaccompanied children.

There is uncertainty over whether the UK will continue to participate in the Dublin system after it leaves the EU.

## 1.2 Calls for reform in advance of Brexit

Campaigners are reiterating their calls to widen the scope of the UK's refugee family reunion rules in order to provide more safe and legal routes for refugee family reunion in light of the possibility that the UK will not participate in the Dublin system after it leaves the EU.

The Government has not yet published a White Paper on its plans for the post-Brexit immigration policy.

## 1.3 Refugee resettlement schemes

The Government's preferred approach is to resettle refugees directly from conflict regions rather than offer protection to refugees who have already arrived in Europe. It has argued that resettling refugees from other European countries acts as a 'pull factor' and encourages refugees to take unsafe journeys to Europe.

However, during the last Parliament it established a targeted scheme for resettling some unaccompanied refugee children already in Europe, in response to pressure from campaigners and Parliamentarians.

## The 'Dubs' Amendment

[Section 67 of the \*Immigration Act 2016\*](#), often referred to as the 'Dubs amendment', requires the Home Secretary to make arrangements to resettle in the UK an unspecified number of unaccompanied children in Europe, in consultation with local authorities.

Unaccompanied children who had registered in Greece, Italy or France before 20 March 2016 are eligible under the scheme. Priority is being given to children with family links in the UK.

Lord Dubs and other campaigners have expressed disappointment at the slow progress being made in resettling children under these arrangements. It was originally hoped that the scheme would resettle around 3,000 children, but the Government has confirmed that 480 children will be transferred to the UK under the scheme.

## Other resettlement schemes

The UK operates various refugee resettlement schemes which can also apply to refugee children:

- The ["children at risk" scheme](#), which was first announced in January 2016, is intended to provide a route for up to 3,000 children at risk in conflict situations in the Middle East and North Africa to resettle in the UK by 2020, where this is judged by UNHCR to be in their best interests. Unaccompanied children and children who have become separated from family members may be eligible for consideration under the scheme, alongside other vulnerable children (and their family members).
- Under the [Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement scheme](#), the UK is seeking to resettle up to 20,000 refugees from Syria by 2020. Having family links in the UK is one of the grounds for potential eligibility under the scheme.
- The longstanding ['Mandate' and 'Gateway' schemes](#) provide a route for recognised refugees living overseas to be resettled in the UK, where this is deemed to be in their best interests. Refugees who have a close family tie in the UK may be eligible, particularly under the Mandate scheme. Typically, family ties means applicants who are the spouse, minor child or parents/grandparents over the age of 65 of someone settled in the UK. In exceptional circumstances it can apply to those who are a parent/grandparent under 65, or adult son, daughter, sister, brother, uncle, aunt.

## 2. Media

### 2.1 Press releases

UNICEF UK

[Calls for urgent action as situation for children worsens a year on from Calais camp closure](#)

23 October 2017

Scottish Government; Welsh Government

[Unaccompanied child refugees: joint letter to UK Minister for Immigration](#)

24 July 2017

Safe Passage (Citizens UK)

[Independent inquiry into the situation of separated and unaccompanied minors in Europe](#)

12 July 2017

Human Trafficking Foundation

[Nobody deserves to live this way \(report of Independent inquiry into the situation of separated and unaccompanied minors in parts of Europe\)](#)

10 July 2017

UNHCR; UNICEF; International Rescue Committee

[Europe: new Roadmap to improve the situation of unaccompanied and separated refugee and migrant children](#)

10 July 2017

UNICEF UK; Save the Children

[Brexit risks leaving refugee children stranded from family](#)

22 June 2017

UNICEF

[Five-fold increase in number of refugee and migrant children traveling alone since 2010](#)

17 May 2017

Home Office

[Unaccompanied minors arrive in UK ahead of Calais camp clearance](#)

17 October 2016

## 2.2 Articles and blogs

Independent

[French police 'tear-gassing refugee children and tearing up tents' near former Calais Jungle site as government condemns abuses](#)

29 October 2017

Guardian

[Children needing asylum in UK not being helped by Dubs scheme](#)

23 October 2017

European Council on Refugees and Exiles

[One step forward and two steps back for unaccompanied minors from Calais](#)

13 October 2017

Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales

[BHRC publishes fact-finding report on Calais and the plight of child refugees](#)

9 October 2017

Guardian

[Asylum: up to 400 refugee children stuck in France, lawyers say](#)

8 October 2017

Guardian

[Revealed: rescued refugee children facing limbo – and worse – in UK](#)

19 October 2017

Telegraph

[Brexit must mean more, not less for child refugees](#)

Heidi Allen 28 September 2017

Guardian

[Refugee children 'could be separated from their families after Brexit'](#)

4 August 2017

Guardian

[Child asylum seekers may have been illegally detained, rules court](#)

9 March 2017

## 3. Parliamentary Business

### 3.1 Written Statement

#### [Safeguarding](#)

#### **Edward Timpson (The Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families):**

I am pleased to publish this statement about the safeguarding of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children jointly with Robert Goodwill, Home Office Minister of State for Immigration.

The Government is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and providing help for those in genuine need of international protection. The UK takes its responsibilities towards children extremely seriously, and we already have a comprehensive approach to safeguarding children, including unaccompanied children.

We recognise that the number of unaccompanied and refugee children arriving in the UK has risen over the last few years, including through the transfer of hundreds of children from Calais. Some of these children can be amongst the most vulnerable in society. That is why we are, today, committing to publishing a strategy, by 1 May 2017, which will set out further detail on how these children should be safeguarded and their welfare promoted. This strategy will complement and build on existing safeguarding guidance and procedures, in recognition of the increased numbers and specific needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children already in the UK, unaccompanied children who we transfer to the UK from Europe, and unaccompanied children who we resettle directly from outside Europe. It will also set out the practical steps the Government will take to implement this plan.

In recognition of the important role fostering plays in caring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children the strategy will set out plans to increase the number of foster carers. This will include evaluating the need for any additional training needs required by foster carers and support workers in looking after unaccompanied children. Supported lodgings, where young people can live in a shared and supportive environment, can also play an important role in meeting the needs of these children as well as ensuring placement capacity so we will set out our plans to encourage provision of this type.

We recognise that these children may have family or potential carers with whom they are seeking to be re-united, under the Dublin Regulation. The Department for Education and Home Office will work together to make sure the system for identifying these children and uniting them with family or potential carers is further strengthened bearing in mind that the primary responsibility of all involved must be safeguarding and promoting the best interests of the child. We are already working closely with the Local Government Association and local authorities where children are arriving, and will look to build on

these strong relationships. Specifically, we will regularly review funding to support and care for unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children, working closely with the LGA and local authorities.

In developing our strategy we will evaluate the procedures for, and speed of, transferring unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children who have been identified for transfer from Europe. We will also ensure that the strategy is informed by evidence from other immigration programmes, including the measures in place to ensure sufficient safeguarding and security checks are undertaken on those being transferred to the UK.

We recognise the particular vulnerabilities of these children and will review the information currently provided to asylum-seeking and refugee children about their rights, their current circumstances, and the role of local authorities in caring for them.

We will also consult the devolved administrations to ensure a joined up approach across the United Kingdom. We will also consult with all relevant public bodies on the strategy, including local authorities in England, NGOs, the Children's Commissioners for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In doing so, we will seek the views of local authorities to identify any further action that might be taken to prevent unaccompanied asylum-seeking or refugee children going missing and we will consider whether to introduce a new set of standard actions for the police on first encountering an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child. We will also consider arrangements for Children's Commissioners across the UK to make representations on behalf of children transferred where appropriate and consistent with their statutory remit.

In taking forward this work my Department will also revise the statutory guidance published in 2014 on the care of unaccompanied and trafficked children so it covers the safeguarding of children transferred under Dublin provisions and unaccompanied asylum seeking children who arrive spontaneously who then explain that they have family in the United Kingdom with whom they wish to live.

Finally, in recognition of the importance of this issue, we commit to updating Parliament annually on delivery against the strategy and providing quarterly updates to the Children's Commissioners for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, ensuring transparency and appropriate scrutiny. We will also commit to publishing regular updates on the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children transferred to the UK.

The Government's strategy has been to support efforts to find a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the refugee crisis; we must deal with the root causes of this crisis, as well as respond to the consequences. The UK has been at the forefront of the response to the crisis in Syria and the region. The Government has pledged over £2.3 billion in support of the crisis in Syria; our largest ever humanitarian response to a single crisis. Under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) scheme, the Government has committed to resettle

20,000 of the most vulnerable refugees direct from the region. Around 2,800 people have arrived in this country since the Syrian VPR scheme began, around half of them children, and we are on track to meet this landmark commitment. The Government has also established a new resettlement scheme focused on children at risk in the Middle East and North Africa, the first of its kind focused on the region and which will see up to 3,000 people, of all nationalities, resettled to the UK over the next four years. We have worked closely with the UNHCR to develop this scheme and it reflects their advice on how best to safeguard the children caught up in this conflict.

**1 November 2016 | Written statement | HCWS 232**

## 3.2 Urgent Question and Oral Statement

[Immigration Act 2016: Section 67](#)

### **Urgent question**

**HC Deb 19 July 2017 c854-63**

Extract c854:

#### **Tim Farron:**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will update the House on the implementation of section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016.

#### **The Minister for Immigration (Brandon Lewis):**

The Government are fully committed to helping and supporting the most vulnerable children, and we are contributing significantly to hosting, supporting and protecting vulnerable children affected by the migration crisis. This is part of our wider response of taking 23,000 people from the region. We have already granted asylum or another form of leave to more than 8,000 children and local authorities across the country are supporting more than 4,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Children transferred under section 67 are being cared for by local authorities across the country and we and they take our responsibility to those children very seriously. Safeguarding those children is paramount. Following consultation with local authorities, the Government have set the number of children who will be transferred under the scheme at 480. We have invited referrals of eligible children from France, Greece and Italy and our officials at the Home Office have visited those countries in recent months to put in place processes further to identify and transfer eligible children. In the past week I have spoken to my counterparts in Greece and Italy specifically on this issue, and I shall follow that up with face-to-face meetings in both countries next week.

It is important to remember that the processes for transferring children must be implemented in line with each member state's national laws and all transfers of children to the UK must be carried out safely and with the best interests of the children at the centre of all decisions. The ongoing work to transfer children under section 67 is in addition to our other commitments and we continue to work closely with member states and relevant partners to ensure that children with family in the UK can be transferred quickly and safely.

Our approach continues to be to take refugees directly from conflict regions, providing refugees with a more direct and safe route to our country rather than risking hazardous journeys to Europe. We are committed to resettling 23,000 people from the region and our resettlement schemes are some of the largest and longest-running in the EU. So far, we have resettled more than 7,000 people under the Syrian vulnerable persons resettlement scheme and the vulnerable children resettlement scheme. Our schemes allow children to be resettled with their family members, thereby discouraging them from making perilous journeys to Europe alone.

It is worth noting that families continue to arrive from the region. Just yesterday, 199 individuals arrived and another 80 are due to arrive next week. That is all part of the Government's approach to helping the most vulnerable.

## [Calais](#)

### **Oral statement**

**HC Deb 24 October 2016 c55-70**

Extract c55-7:

#### **The Home Secretary (Amber Rudd):**

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on Calais.

The French Government today began the clearance of the migrant camp. I am clear that that is in the national interests of both the UK and France. It is the start of a challenging but necessary humanitarian operation and an important step in bringing to an end the difficult situation.

Our priorities are to keep our border secure, to tackle the criminal gangs that profit from the lives of the vulnerable, and to ensure that those in the camp in need of protection are moved to places of safety. Today's camp clearance supports all those objectives.

On 10 October, I updated the House, having just met my French counterpart, Bernard Cazeneuve. We had discussed, among other things, the importance of keeping all children safe during the camp clearance operation. My officials have been working with the French authorities to ensure that that protection is provided, and UK personnel are taking an active role on the ground today, helping to move all

children to a place of safety. They will continue to do so for as long as necessary.

That meeting with Monsieur Cazeneuve was one of many over the past few months, and we have made good progress to speed up the process for transferring children with a close family link to the UK. More than 80 children with a family link to the UK were transferred from France in the first nine months of this year under the Dublin regulation, but I have been pressing to go even further. The House will recall that on 10 October I stated my absolute commitment to bring to the UK as many children as possible with close family links before the closure of the camp. I also made clear my intention to transfer unaccompanied refugee children from Calais who meet the criteria of the Dubs amendment to the Immigration Act 2016.

Since my statement, working in partnership with the French, we have transferred almost 200 children, including more than 60 girls, many of whom had been identified as at high risk of sexual exploitation. They are receiving the care and support they need in the UK. I want to make it clear to the House that the Government have sought every opportunity to expedite the process to transfer children to the UK. My officials were given access to the camp to interview children only in the past week and, similarly, we have only recently received agreement from the French Government that we could bring Dubs cases to the UK. Before that, we worked closely with the French behind the scenes, but without their agreement it was not possible to make progress on taking non-family cases from Calais.

In the past seven days, my officials have interviewed 800 children in the camp claiming to have close family in the UK, working in conjunction with non-governmental organisations and charities. Every child who presented in the past week has been interviewed by UK staff. Much of this work has been carried out in difficult conditions, and on a number of occasions interviews have been paused and UK staff have withdrawn for safety reasons. I would like to thank the French authorities for the additional protection they have provided throughout and to put on record my gratitude for the work done by my staff in what have been pretty challenging conditions.

Until a few weeks ago, the French Government requested that we did not transfer children outside of the Dublin regulation process. Again, that was due to their concerns that it might encourage more children to come to Calais. That is why, until recently, we focused our efforts under the Dubs amendment on children in Greece and Italy, where we have 50 cases in progress. It is only in recent weeks that that has changed. Looking ahead, we will bring more children from Calais to the UK in the coming days and weeks. As well as the remaining children with close family in the UK, we will continue to transfer unaccompanied refugee children from Calais under the wider criteria of the Dubs amendment. We will follow three guiding principles in determining whom we bring to the UK from Calais under the Dubs amendment. We will prioritise those likely to be granted refugee status in the UK; we will also prioritise those 12 years old or under; and we will consider those assessed as

being at a high risk of sexual exploitation. In doing that, we will also establish whether it is in each child's best interests to come here.

Throughout this process it is important that we do not encourage more children to head to Calais, risking their lives in the hands of traffickers. That is why we will consider only those present in the camps before the start of the clearance operation today. We will continue to do that quickly, but it is essential that we carry out the proper safeguarding, age assessment and security checks, working closely with local authorities and social workers in the UK to ensure that the children are eligible and that it is in their best interests to come.

I am pleased that my French counterpart has agreed to support minors in safe facilities in France during the weeks in which we need to carry out those important checks. It is important that on arrival in the UK the identity of those children is not compromised, and they are allowed to begin their life here with the support that they need. It is crucial that we ensure that local authorities can manage the numbers coming here. As part of our commitments under the Dubs amendment we have consulted local authorities on capacity. It is clear that there is capacity to support the children we intend to take from Calais, as well as continuing to meet our other commitments. The key now is to make sure that we get those places up and running as soon as possible. I pay tribute to the work and generosity of local authorities so far in providing both the temporary and permanent support that the children arriving require. However, as more children arrive in the coming weeks we will need to identify further places, and we will work with local authorities over the coming days to ensure that that happens.

While responsibility for Calais lies with the French Government, the juxtaposed controls are a vital part of the UK's border security, and are a valuable economic link. That is why the UK Government will contribute up to £36 million to maintain the security of the controls, to support the camp clearance and to ensure in the long term that the camp is kept closed. The funding will also be used to help to keep children safe in France. That contribution is not made unconditionally and we will continue to work with the French Government to ensure that the clearance operation is full and lasting.

Work in Calais is important, but the situation there is a symptom of a wider migration crisis. We are clear about our moral responsibility to assist those who are suffering, including by providing support in conflict regions, development work upstream and protection to those who need it.

The French authorities face a huge challenge over the coming days and weeks to move people out of the camp in Calais, but let me be clear—neither Government is prepared to allow people to continue to live in those conditions, and neither Government is prepared to allow people smugglers to continue to profit from risking the lives of the people there. We will continue to support the French Government in the operation and we will continue with our progress in bringing those children with a right to come to the UK as quickly and safely as possible.

Clearing the camp is not just about our legal and moral obligations; it is also in our national interest. The rise in the number of people in the camp has led some in France to question the Le Touquet agreement. That agreement has helped us better protect our borders and ensured strong trade links between Britain and France. By clearing the camp, we can help to secure the future of the juxtaposed controls, as well as playing our part to help those most in need in Calais. I commend this statement to the House.

### 3.3 Parliamentary Questions

#### [Asylum](#)

**Asked by: Heidi Allen**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions her Department has had with its French counterpart on plans in place to provide shelter and help to refugees who may have a legal right to claim asylum in the UK who are currently residing in the Grande Synthe refugee camp in Dunkirk.

**Answered by: Brandon Lewis | Home Office**

The provision of accommodation for asylum-seekers in France is a matter for the French authorities. The UK has regular engagement at ministerial and senior official level with the French authorities regarding the situation in Northern France, including the provision of accommodation for asylum-seekers. French officials are clear that everyone has the right to claim asylum in France.

In addition to the existing welcome centres across France, France has recently opened four new centres, away from the Grande Synthe area, where those wishing to claim asylum will be supported through the asylum process. There is regular transportation from Grande Synthe to these centres for those wishing to claim asylum.

Under the Dublin Regulation, France may make a request to the UK to take responsibility for an asylum claim where the relevant criteria are met. This requires an asylum claim to first be made in France and a take charge request made of the UK. We continue to work closely with the French authorities to ensure the quick and effective operation of the Dublin Regulation.

**30 October 2017 | Written question | 109757**

[Refugees: Children](#)**Asked by: Alex Sobel**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure the safe passage to the UK of child refugees sleeping rough in Calais who (a) meet the Dublin III Regulation family reunification criteria and (b) could be offered a place by local councils under the Dubs scheme.

**Answered by: Brandon Lewis | Home Office**

The primary responsibility for unaccompanied children in France lies with the French authorities. It is vital that children claim asylum in France rather than risking their lives by attempting to enter the UK illegally. That is the fastest route to safety.

The Dublin III Regulation is the mechanism which determines the Member State responsible for the consideration of an asylum claim. In order for an application to be transferred from France to the UK, an asylum seeker must first claim asylum in France, and the French authorities can request to have the claim transferred to the UK. We continue to work closely with France, other EU Member States and partners to ensure the timely and efficient operation of the Dublin III Regulation.

We are fully committed to delivering our commitment to transfer the specified number of 480 children under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 (the 'Dubs Amendment') and are working very closely with Member States, as well as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and NGO partners to identify and transfer children to the UK in line with each individual Member State's national laws. Children have been transferred from France under section 67 this year and we have received further referrals. More eligible children will be transferred from Europe under the scheme in due course.

**27 October 2017 | Written question | 109274**

[Refugees: Children](#)**Asked by: Roger Godsiff**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason the UK has not yet facilitated the transfer of any child refugees to the UK under the Dubs amendment; and what steps she has taken to ensure that that facilitation takes place.

**Answered by: Brandon Lewis | Home Office**

We are fully committed to delivering our commitment to transfer the specified number of 480 children under section 67 and transfers are ongoing.

We are working very closely with Member States, as well as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and NGO partners to identify and

transfer children to the UK in line with each individual Member State's national laws.

In 2016, we transferred over 900 unaccompanied children to the UK from Europe, including more than 200 children who met the criteria for section 67.

**25 October 2017 | Written question | 106768**

[Refugees: Children](#)

**Asked by: Stephen Timms**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of closing the refugee camp in Calais on the availability of data on unaccompanied child refugees.

**Answered by: Brandon Lewis | Home Office**

The primary responsibility for unaccompanied children in France lies with the French government. Following the closure of the Calais Camp, French authorities transferred all children formerly resident to specialist centres across France. It is vital that children claim asylum in France; that is the fastest route to safety.

We have a strong track record of cooperating with France to manage the situation in Calais and to protect our shared border. We supported the humanitarian operation to clear the Calais migrant camp in October 2016, which involved the transfer of more than 750 children to the UK and funding to help provide migrants in Calais – including children – with suitable facilities elsewhere in France. Our law enforcement agencies work closely together to tackle smuggling and trafficking. Home Office officials meet with their French colleagues on a regular basis.

According to Eurostat data, 63,300 unaccompanied children claimed asylum in the EU in 2016:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/8016696/3-11052017-AP-EN.pdf/30ca2206-0db9-4076-a681-e069a4bc5290>

This includes a breakdown of asylum applications by EU Member State.

**17 October 2017 | Written question | 108251**

[Refugees: Children](#)

**Asked by: Stephen Timms**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will introduce a central database of unaccompanied children entering the UK.

**Answered by: Brandon Lewis | Home Office**

All asylum claimants, including unaccompanied children, are recorded on the Home Office's Case Information Database (CID) system. Information recorded on this system is used to publish a range of data about asylum claims from unaccompanied children, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-april-to-june-2017/how-many-people-do-we-grant-asylum-or-protection-to>

**19 October 2017 | Written question | 107991**

[Refugees: Children](#)

**Asked by: Stephen Timms**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on which the principal pull factors are for unaccompanied children choosing to come to the UK.

**Answered by: Brandon Lewis | Home Office**

The Government's clear strategy has always been that we do not want to encourage people traffickers and incentivise perilous journeys to Europe, particularly by the most vulnerable children.

Our policy is to support families to stay together and we have granted over 24,000 family reunion visas over the last five years. We are clear, from discussions with other Member States, that any schemes to transfer unaccompanied should not act as a draw. The Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme is a bespoke scheme to resettle 3,000 vulnerable children together with their families directly from the Middle East and North Africa region.

**18 October 2017 | Written question | 107559**

[Refugees: Children](#)

**Asked by: Luke Pollard**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that family reunion provisions for unaccompanied children are not restricted in the event that the UK ceases to be bound by the Dublin III regulation.

**Answered by: Brandon Lewis | Home Office**

The UK strongly supports the principle of family unity and there are already legal routes for families to be reunited safely that are not dependent on our EU membership. The UK's family reunion policy is generous; we have granted over 24,000 family reunion visas over the last five years. Further, children recognised by UNHCR as refugees can join close family members here in the UK through our Mandate resettlement scheme.

Unaccompanied children cannot make applications for family reunification under the Dublin Regulation. The Dublin Regulation is a mechanism to determine the Member State responsible for the consideration of an asylum claim; it is not, and never has been, a family reunification route in itself. The Immigration Rules provide for family reunion and allow extended family members to sponsor children where there are serious and compelling circumstances. The Immigration Rules are entirely separate from the Dublin Regulation, and will remain in force when the UK leaves the European Union.

We expect cooperation on asylum and migration with our European partners to continue after the UK leaves the EU, and will discuss the exact nature of this cooperation in the negotiations.

**18 October 2017 | Written question | 107528**

[Refugees: Children](#)

**Asked by: Barry Sheerman**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many unaccompanied minors have arrived in the UK under the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme; how many of those minors went into foster care; and how many have been sponsored or hosted by communities.

**Answered by: Brandon Lewis | Home Office**

Our prime concern is the safety and protection of unaccompanied minors resettled in the UK as they arrive in this country. We want to protect their privacy and ensure their recovery and integration, as they rebuild their lives in safe and secure surroundings, among supportive communities in the UK. We will not, therefore, be providing a running commentary on numbers of unaccompanied children resettled through the scheme. Progress on resettlement under the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement scheme is indicated in quarterly immigration statistics. The last set of statistics, published on 24 August, showed that 280 vulnerable people have been resettled since the scheme began in 2016. The statistics are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>

**17 October 2017 | Written question | 106316**

[Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking and Refugee Children](#)

**Oral questions**

**HC Deb 11 September 2017 c444-5**

Including, c444:

**Asked by: Heidi Allen**

When she plans to publish the Government's strategy on the safeguarding of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children.

**Answered by: Robert Goodwill | Department for Education**

The safeguarding strategy, bringing together all work in this area and setting out further detail, will be published later this autumn.

**Asked by: Heidi Allen**

This strategy was due on 1 May, so I am keen that we see it as soon as possible. I would like to understand the reasons for the delay and to know whether the Minister has looked at whether independent guardians might work. I was struck when I visited Lesbos and Calais that there is no admin support or signposting at all for unaccompanied children seeking to make asylum claims, so having somebody with them would definitely help.

**Answered by: Robert Goodwill | Department for Education**

We had a general election this year, which derailed some of the timetables for these things, but it is certainly absolutely vital that all unaccompanied children seeking asylum have access to independent legal advice and are referred to the Children's Panel.

[Child Refugees](#)**Oral questions****HL Deb 29 June 2017 c551-3**

Including, c553:

**Asked by: Baroness Butler-Sloss**

My Lords, I have been to Calais and have talked to priests there who on a daily basis are being teargassed along with children aged under 18, and some of them as young as 12. Do the Government understand that that is happening? I also understand that Northern Ireland has not been asked to take any of these children but I gather has expressed a willingness to do so.

**Answered by: Baroness Williams of Trafford | Home Office**

My Lords, if children are being teargassed, that is very regrettable and I will certainly follow up the point made by the noble and learned Baroness because we would not want that to be happening. Obviously the latter point is a matter for Northern Ireland and we are grateful for any resettlement activity which takes place there. Some 440 people have been resettled in Northern Ireland under the Syrian vulnerable persons resettlement programme. Clearly that is voluntary but we would welcome anything in addition to it.

## 4. Further reading

### *Library papers*

[Refugees and Migrants in Calais](#), Lords Briefing Pack 2017-0090, 27 October 2017

[The UK response to the Syrian refugee crisis](#), Commons Briefing Paper SN06905, 14 June 2017

[The UK's family reunion rules: striking the right balance?](#), Commons Briefing Paper 7511, 28 November 2016

### *Home Affairs Committee*

Home Affairs Committee, [Migration Crisis: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report](#), HC 1017, 22 February 2017

Home Affairs Committee, [Migration Crisis](#), HC 24, 3 August 2016

### *Others*

Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales, [Breakdown: the dismantling of the Calais "Jungle" and of the promises to its unaccompanied children 24-25 October 2016](#), Fact Finding Report, October 2017

[Report of an Independent inquiry into the situation of separated and unaccompanied minors in parts of Europe](#), Human Trafficking Foundation, July 2017

Jointly Chaired by Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart and Rt Hon Baroness Butler-Sloss GBE. Sponsored by the Human Trafficking Foundation. Author: Christine Beddoe.

UNHCR, UNICEF and International Rescue Committee, [The way forward to strengthened policies and practices for unaccompanied and separated children in Europe](#), July 2017

Save the Children, [Keeping families together: retaining children's rights to family reunion through Brexit](#), June 2017

Oxfam, [Brexit and the refugee crisis](#), 15 June 2017

UNICEF, [A child is a child: protecting children on the move from violence, abuse and exploitation](#), May 2017

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