



# AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE: LIFE FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE CALAIS "JUNGLE" POST-EVICTION

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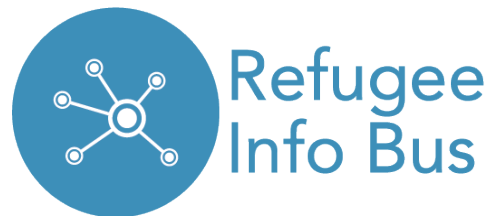




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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: Minor outside le CAP in "the Jungle".

During the eviction week of 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016, residents of "the Jungle" camp in Calais were required to register at Le SAS warehouse; adults were immediately transported via bus to *Centres d'Accueil et d'Orientation* (CAOs) and unaccompanied minors (UAMs) were accommodated in Le CAP container camp. Over 1500 minors were accommodated in Le CAP until 2<sup>nd</sup> November at which point they were dispersed by bus to *Centres d'Accueil et d'Orientation des Mineurs Isolés Étranger* (CAOMIEs) across France. Prior to their departure UAMs were assured by the UK Home Office and Prefecture de Calais that they would be given the opportunity to apply for legal transfer to the UK under the Dublin III Regulation or the Dubs Amendment (See **Appendix 4** and **6**).

Between 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> November 2016, report authors Benjamin Hunter and Rosie Pope

visited 12 CAOMIEs. From our experience of these CAOMIEs we can conclude that:

- The quality of amenities, provision of food and activities provided by CAOMIE staff varied, but was generally to a good standard. However, access to psychological support for minors is notably deficient.
- There has been a consistent lack of information provided by the Home Office to both the CAOMIE staff and UAMs regarding the transfer of minors to the UK.
- Misinformation and a lack of information from the Home Office is exacerbating the psychological distress of UAMs and causing them to leave CAOMIEs or express wishes of leaving. After leaving CAOMIEs, minors fall outside child protection mechanisms and are, therefore, in danger.



## 2.0 METHODOLOGY



Figure 2: Dining area, cleaned and prepared voluntarily by minors.

### 2.1 Aim and Objectives

The key objectives of our research were:

1. To observe and report on the accommodation provided in CAOMIEs.
2. To observe and report on the well-being of UAMs in CAOMIEs.
3. To report on situations where UAMs are not accommodated in CAOMIEs.
4. To map the Home Office progress in interviewing UAMs in CAOMIEs and observe the extent of information being shared by the Home Office with UAMs and CAOMIE staff across France.

In Calais, we worked with unaccompanied minors who had entered into legal processes for transfer to the UK under Dublin III Regulation or the Dubs Amendment (See **Appendix 6**). Therefore, the impetus for visiting CAOMIEs was to meet minors with whom we had worked in Calais in order to ascertain the stage of their family reunification process and reassure them of the progress of their cases.

We considered these visits to be a key opportunity to observe and compare standards of CAOMIEs, as well as observe Home Office presence and the degree to which information was being shared by the Home Office. It soon became apparent that in some CAOMIEs a trusted figure from Calais was helpful in advising minors to stay in their centres, and reassure them that they were in the best place for their cases to be assessed by the Home Office.

## 2.2 Research

12 CAOMIEs and 2 CAOs were visited (See **Appendix 1**). In both CAOMIEs and CAOs, information and opinions were collected through unstructured interviews with minors and centre staff.

On two occasions, we were present in locations while representatives from the Home Office were conducting interviews. In these cases, we were able to witness how interviews were conducted, receive feedback from minors following their interviews and gain insight into Home Office strategy through overheard conversations.

We assisted three UAMs who faced homelessness in Paris; two had been residents of “the Jungle” but had been hospitalised and therefore missed out on access to CAOMIEs. These interactions allowed us to track and record the

experiences of minors who had ‘fallen through the cracks’ of the French ‘post-eviction’ accommodation strategy and Home Office ‘post-eviction’ UAM interview process.

Information was recorded through note-taking and photography where appropriate.

## 2.3 Limitations

We were able to counter the implications of some limitations, however some were unavoidable due to time, financial and logistical constraints.

Foremost, as a team of two, we were able to visit on average two CAOMIEs per day to a total of 12 of the 85 CAOMIEs. Due to the fast-changing political environment surrounding Dubs and Dublin III transfers from France we felt a timely delivery of information was preferable to a very large research group. Visits were only



Figure 3: The view from Champtercier CAOMIE.



On a number of occasions we were not permitted access to the CAOMIE. To negate this risk, we telephoned each CAOMIE ahead of arrival to request visiting permission from staff members and minors. In the majority of centres we were given permission via telephone and allowed to speak freely with minors and staff members.



It is also important to note that CAOMIEs were visited before, during and after they had received the Home Office for interviews. As a result, information regarding the Home Office depended on the time they were visited both by researchers and the Home Office.

# 3.0 MINORS ACCOMMODATED IN CAOMIEs

## 3.1 General information on CAOMIEs

There are reported to be 85 CAOMIEs across France<sup>1</sup>. These centres accommodate unaccompanied minors who were evicted from “the Jungle” on 28<sup>th</sup> October and those who were accommodated in Le CAP and moved to CAOMIEs on 2<sup>nd</sup> November.

The centres are located throughout France; from Cayeux-sur-Mer, only 90 minutes drive from Calais, to Bagnères-de-Luchon on the Spanish border, 17 hours drive from Calais (See **Appendix 1** and **Appendix Map**).

The centres vary considerably in their amenities, facilities and in the type of building. CAOMIEs visited in this research included two disused old people’s homes, five summer camps/activity centres, one disused school for the deaf, one apartment block and one disused hotel. It was clear from visiting some CAOMIEs that there had been very little notice prior to UAMs moving in. One centre reported that they only had electricity two days before UAMs arrived and heating one day after; in a number of centres, staff reported that they only had been given 24 hours notice before starting work. Centres were organised and run by different organisations or corporations contracted by the French state. The service providers at those centres visited included: *Croix Rouge*, EDF Energy, *Coallia*, *Foundation OVA* and *Omn Oeuvre Normande des Méres* (a municipality association of social workers).

The populations and demographics of the CAOMIEs visited in the research also varied considerably, the smallest being 6 in

Grenoble and the largest being 51 in Le Havre. We met UAMs ranging in age from 13-17.

Seven of the CAOMIEs we visited were made up of a single nationality, whilst five were a mix of nationalities. Some CAOMIEs were extremely diverse, for example the centre in Rouen accommodated Sudanese, Afghan, Eritrean, Libyan, Egyptian, Sierra Leonean and Iraqi minors.

On the night of 1<sup>st</sup> November and morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> November there had been serious inter-racial and religious mob-violence in “the Jungle”. Violent attacks between Ethiopian and Eritrean Christians and (mainly) Afghan Muslims lasted throughout the night and considerable CRS presence was required to separate warring groups. It is therefore surprising that warring nationalities and religions had been required to mix on buses and in CAOMIEs the same day as the fighting. Thankfully, however, we found no reports of inter-racial or religious violence in CAOMIEs.

## 3.2 Evaluation of CAOMIEs

### 3.2.1 Amenities & Food

There was considerable disparity in amenities available across the CAOMIEs visited. This was largely dependent on the age, type and quality of building that was provided to the CAOMIE service provider for use, and the service provider itself.

UAMs mostly shared rooms in CAOMIEs – as many as five to a room – with shared washing facilities and toilets. However in the CAOMIE

<sup>1</sup>This figure was generated by InfoMIE sourcing local news outlets.







in Rouen, minors each had their own room in the facility, with their own kitchenette and balcony. In this centre minors were provided with €35 a week to buy food, clothing and hygiene products.

While some centres provided free WiFi to UAMs (some even in the bedrooms), others had no access to the internet, and children were dependent on those who had internet-capable mobile phones. Access to the internet was important for alleviating boredom in CAOMIEs and also for keeping contact with friends and family.

While in some centres, children were fully and appropriately clothed by staff (and through donations), UAMs in some centres had not received any clothes since arriving from “the Jungle.” In the CAOMIE in Le Havre, several minors were without shoes (one boy wore flip-flops). The situation

was similar in Auxonne and in Nancy, where UAMs spent most of their days outside (due in part to lack of activities) in unsuitable clothing for the weather. One minor in Nancy had raised this with centre staff, he reported to us: “I say: ‘I don’t have clothes, I don’t have jacket.’ They say, ‘we don’t have clothes.’”

In addition, access to places of religious worship was of prime importance to many UAMs, many of whom would pray in their own rooms. The cultural and community importance of the church or the mosque in “the Jungle” was not easily replaced in towns and villages without such amenities.

Food significantly affected the wellbeing of UAMs in their new homes. While in “the Jungle” children had access to culturally familiar food and the ability to eat independently, most minors in centres had to grow accustomed to different food and the lack of food independence. Minors in 7 of 12 centres reported that they had experienced problems with food; however, many centres had shown flexibility with food and mealtimes. In Bagnères-de-Luchon and Le Havre minors reported a lack of food



Figures 5 and 6: Bedrooms.

(with fights breaking out in Luchon as a result), but later portion sizes were adjusted. A number of minors reported disappointment at the lack of halal meat, but in Saint-Cast-le-Guildo and Ardes staff had created halal menus. However, this flexibility was not shown in all centres and a lack of culture-specific food was detrimental to some minors’ ability to adjust to a new life. In Auxonne, after minors complained about the food, the chef was quoted as saying “We are in France. They should eat French food.” As a result, the staff member confirmed minors’ reports that they did not eat the food provided. Having control over one’s own eating habits, as implemented in Rouen, Auch and Châtillon d’Azergues where minors had access to kitchens, had a visibly positive effect on the wellbeing of minors. Minors took pride in cooking for their peers and staff and showed enjoyment in preparing traditional cuisine.



### 3.2.2 Activities

In “the Jungle” there were many organisations providing activity services, such as those provided by the Refugee Youth Service, Jungle Books Kids Cafe and schools. In adjusting to the CAOMIEs, minors have used their experiences in “the Jungle” as a point of comparison. Some centres have risen to the challenge of entertaining, educating and distracting minors from their worries. Centres have provided sports equipment for football, cricket, table tennis, pool, as well as providing television, movie nights, board games, and bicycles for excursions into town. In Hostens, flood



*Figure 7: Back yard of CAOMIE, activity area.*

lights had been set-up around the central quadrangle so that minors could play football after dark. In several centres (incl. St-Cast-le-Guildo, Châtillon d’Azergues and Ardes) children were provided with lessons in French. In Ardes-sur-Couze minors had access to the local sports hall and gym and had been taken on excursions to the town, the zoo and on picnics, and in Saint-Cast-le-Guildo, staff had erected a whiteboard in the hallway for minors to write down their activity requests (See **Figure 4**).

Boredom was one of the most common complaints reported by minors in the CAOMIEs. In Le Havre, where the CAOMIE is an apartment block, minors complained of not having a communal room in which they could watch TV or play cards. In Rouen, minors had no access to WiFi, no sports programmes and only a few board games to distract themselves (however staff planned future excursions into the local area and cooking lessons). In one centre, minors were given a strict routine (woken up and made to get up at 7am) but had nothing to fill that routine with, other than loitering in the city. We met three Eritrean minors (16 and 17 year olds) at the train station at 2 p.m. when they had already drunk one crate of beer and proceeded to drink another crate later that afternoon. Auxonne CAOMIE is a summer activity centre, here staff reported that it was ‘too difficult’ to stimulate minors with activities because they simply wanted to sleep and play on their phones all day. Yet many UAMs here complained of boredom; they had made a cricket bat, but did not have a ball and they missed their bicycles in the “Jungle” (minors were not allowed access to the centre’s bicycles).

In this sense, staff in some centres were under-equipped and unprepared for dealing with the unique difficulties that arise in working with UAMs. Boredom and lack of purpose led to a

deterioration in mental health and visible distress in some of the minors we met during our research. Bored minors spoke more frequently of returning to Calais; “Some [minors] want to leave, they say they are wasting their time here” (UAM, Luchon).

### 3.2.3 The Staff

The Staff working at CAOMIEs were primarily administrators, social workers and ‘educators’ (activity coordinators or hosts). The majority of centres we visited did not have interpreters as part of their teams (only 4 out of 12 centres had interpreters). In those centres that had volunteer interpreters, or team members with language skills, minors were better able to communicate their needs and worries. In Ardes, there were no interpreters amongst the staff, and those working there spoke minimal English; messages were communicated through the one Afghan minor who had a good enough grasp of French.

There was limited mental health support in most centres visited. Minors in accommodation centres presented to us symptoms of increased anxiety, depression, PTSD, and psychological distress. The mental health grievances of minors went without professional support in those centres without psychologists. Of all the centres visited, only Châtillon d’Azergues had employed two psychologists to assist with the mental health of UAMs. A staff member in Auxonne commented that they could not employ psychologists, because they had no interpreters.

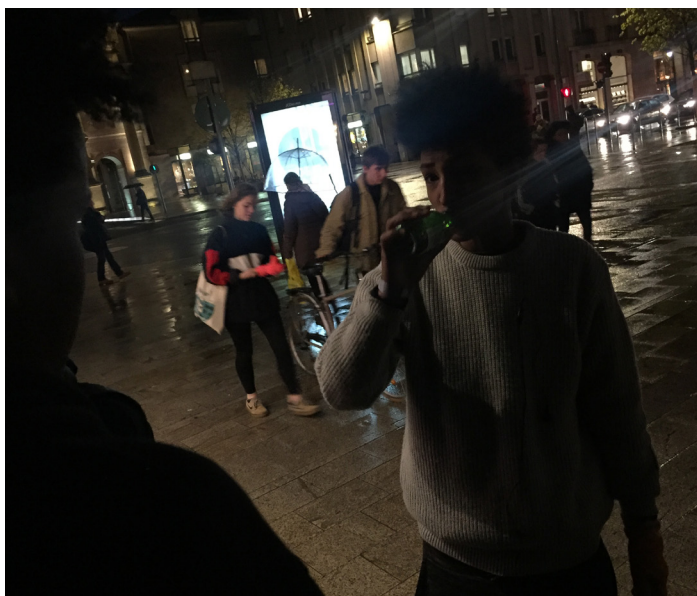


Figure 8: Minors drinking in town near CAOMIE.

In both Auch and Châtillon d’Azergues, the CAOMIE administration’s preparations were undermined by the misinformation provided by the authorities. In Châtillon d’Azergues the administration were told to expect Afghan and Eritrean minors, so hired Tigrinya and Pashtu translators (yet only Sudanese minors arrived), while in Auch the administration were told they would be housing asylum-seeking families, and so had made little preparations for the vastly different task of accommodating minors.

Some CAOMIE staff offered some unofficial legal support. Châtillon d’Azergues, Cayeux-sur-Mer and Auch were supporting UAMs in their cases for legal transfer to the UK. In Châtillon d’Azergues, staff had prepared files for each minor and assisted them in collecting documents to support their claims for family reunification in the UK, or their French asylum claim.

In some of the CAOMIEs, staff clearly have positive relationships with the minors. In Champier, minors joked, played and pranked the educators that spent time with them, in spite of language barriers. In Saint-Cast-le-Guildo, social workers had a firm but respectful relationship with minors and informed minors in an age-appropriate manner about their open door policy. While in some centres staff acted as protectors and invigilators, in others children had free rein to do as they wished and to leave the centres as they pleased. Minors in Hostens complained of never seeing the staff who worked at their CAOMIE.





Figure 9: Apartment block CAOMIE on French housing estate.



Figure 10: Resultant damage from arson attack on CAMOIE in Rouen.

### 3.2.4 Local Population & Safety

The reception of UAMs in their new localities has been mixed. In Saint-Cast-le-Guildo, members of the local community donated clothes and volunteered teaching French, supporting excursions, cooking and providing centre maintenance. One boy at this CAOMIE told us “It’s good here. It’s safe here. I’m good.” In Châtillon d’Azergues, the CAOMIE administration met with the local community and fifty persons came forward to assist with clothing and other donations. In this same village, Front National leafleted prior to the arrival of minors. In Auxonne, the local population had a negative view of refugees before the arrival of the UAMs. This view was unfortunately reinforced after it was reported that some older minors asked locals for drugs, thus painting the whole group in a negative light.

There have been several negative incidents between UAMs and local residents. After it was wrongly reported that 300 UAMs would be rehoused in Rouen, the CAOMIE experienced an arson attack on the 27th of October that resulted in a broken window and burnt out front porch (See **Figure 10**). Security was provided by the local prefecture for one week but was rescinded due to lack of funds (as we were told by centre staff). It was reported on 15th of November, in local media, that a group of approximately 150 anti-migrant protestors (incl. from the association ‘Libertés et Entraide’) stormed the CAOMIE in Port Navalo, Arzon<sup>2</sup>. They clashed with police officers and were ultimately detained. Despite incidents, UAMs mostly reported feeling safer in CAOMIEs than they did in “the Jungle”. One minor stated “We are safe here. In ‘the Jungle,’ there were fights, and the guys were raped.”

<sup>2</sup>La Manifestation Anti-migrants Degenere, *Le Telegraph*, 15/11/2016: <http://www.letelegramme.fr/bretagne/arzon-la-manifestation-anti-migrants-degenere-15-11-2016-11292254.php#closePopUp>

### 3.3 The Minors

#### 3.3.1 Health and Mental Health

Generally the minors who had physical health complaints were seen by a doctor the same day or in subsequent days after their initial request. In Bagnères-de-Luchon two minors had suffered from scabies and following the outbreak every minor in residence was treated. Organisations working with UAMs in “the Jungle” widely recognised that minors suffered from mental health issues. Citizens UK reported that psychiatrists working in “the Jungle” found 90% of the minors they assessed met the criteria of PTSD and depression<sup>3</sup>. Throughout the research we encountered UAMs, in whom we noticed a marked positive difference in their social and psychological well-being. Two minors had been seriously anxious, agitated and nervous in “the Jungle”; conversations had always been distressed and focused on reaching the UK. In the CAOMIEs they were considerably calmer and engaged in varied conversation. Similarly, while one UAM had become frustrated, closed, curt and had started smoking in “the Jungle”; during the research visit he was measurably more open, engaging, talkative and eager to show us around his new accommodation. The majority of UAMs we encountered in CAOMIEs looked better-rested, cleaner and healthier than they did in “the Jungle.”

By contrast, we also encountered UAMs who appeared to have experienced a deterioration in well-being and mental health since leaving “the Jungle” and a number who are self-harming. One minor has been hospitalised twice due to self-harm and several minors stated to us that they had suicidal thoughts with one boy saying about his brother in the UK: “I need my brother. I only want my brother. I will kill myself if I am not with brother”. One 17-year-old Afghan commented to us that “Everyone

here has mind problems, they are mentally depressed, they need to see a psychologist”. In a large proportion of the CAOMIEs visited, UAMs displayed some kind of anxiety, distrust or depression about their family reunification cases or chances of reaching the UK legally.

#### 3.3.2 Adjustment from “the Jungle” lifestyle

In all 12 CAOMIEs we encountered many minors who expressed that they missed “the Jungle”. Generally, feelings of missing “the Jungle” were centred around: food, friends, community, volunteers, religious freedom, freedom of movement and the opportunity to attempt to reach the UK through illegal means.

Community structures were present in “the Jungle”, with community leaders (or ‘elders’) who assisted with decision-making, peace-keeping and discipline. Often young people lived in groups with adult friends who supported and protected them. These groupings engendered a familiar sense of communal living and offered role models. That sense of community is understandably limited in CAOMIEs. One staff member in Auxonne complained of unruly minors and commented “If there was an older man who spoke Pashtu it would be totally different”. In Luchon an Ethiopian minor asked us where his community leader was.

Numerous minors suggested that in “the Jungle” they felt they had control over their own future as they still had the opportunity to ‘go trying’ (try to reach the UK via illegal routes): “at least in the Jungle we had hope” (UAM, Hostens). Minors in the majority of centres (including a 12-year-old) informed us they wanted to return to Calais to try to reach the UK on lorries.

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<sup>3</sup>Child refugees in Calais traumatised and depressed, *The Guardian*, 05/11/2016: [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/05/child-refugees-calais-traumatised-and-depressed?CMP=oth\\_b-aplnews\\_d-2](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/05/child-refugees-calais-traumatised-and-depressed?CMP=oth_b-aplnews_d-2)



## 4.0 MINORS NOT ACCOMMODATED IN CAOMIEs.



*Figure 11: CAOMIE with adjoined sports centre and gym.*

### 4.1 Minors who have 'slipped through the net'

We encountered three minors who had been residents of "the Jungle" but had not been accommodated in CAOMIEs. Two of these minors were in hospital during the eviction of "the Jungle". They were interviewed for Dublin III family reunification by the Home Office in Calais hospital on 3<sup>rd</sup> November. Another young person was hospitalised following a suicide attempt during the eviction and later accommodated in a charity safe house in Calais. The Home Office were made aware of his situation and living arrangements on 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

Since then, none of these young people have received any information from the Home Office regarding their cases or the UK asylum process. They are in unofficial forms of accommodation therefore do not receive any information from CAOMIE staff on the French asylum process and are not in a position to share worries or concerns with their peers. All three are extremely vulnerable, with both physical and mental health concerns, a lack of information and an uncertainty for their future has caused them further mental distress.









*Figure 12: Dawit on his arrival to Paris, without accommodation.*

#### **4.1.1 Dawit in Paris: A Case Study**

In October 2015, 15-year-old Dawit fled Eritrea to escape conscription and travelled overland to mainland Europe. During his journey he suffered numerous traumatic experiences. When crossing the Sahara desert on board a heavy-goods truck, a sandstorm hit, and five of his friends were thrown overboard, for whom the truck did not stop. In Libya, Dawit was captured, imprisoned and held at ransom. He was beaten and tortured with electric shocks and acid burns. His life was threatened on several occasions and he was released only after a family friend paid several thousand dollars in ransom. From Libya, Dawit crossed the Mediterranean Sea, reaching Italy and travelling overland by foot and public transport to Calais.

We met Dawit (now aged 16) in Calais on the night of the 24th of October, when “the Jungle” camp was on fire and its inhabitants were evacuated to its perimeter. He was refusing to go

to hospital for the abscess in his leg because he feared missing the opportunity to register for family reunification. The abscess eventually hospitalised him and during his stay he was interviewed by the Home Office (Dawit has family in the UK and as such is eligible for family reunification under the Dublin III agreement). Afterwards he was taken to a FTDA accommodation centre for minors in Saint Omer.

As a result of his life experiences, Dawit presents symptoms of PTSD, distrusts officials and fears entrapment, which renders him unable to make rational decisions in his own best interest. After we first met him, he'd often call in varying states of panic, unable to rationalise and explain his fears. It became clear that Dawit did not believe that the Home Office were legitimately considering his case for transfer to the UK and that since no timescale was made apparent to him, he believed his best option was to abandon the process and to return to the road.

Dawit travelled to Paris with the intention of meeting other migrants and sleeping on the streets of Stalingrad. He explained in agitated, broken English that his accommodation centre was 'no good'. Dawit was not aware of any official accommodation for minors in Paris. Calling the Police would have exacerbated Dawit's distress and Social Services were not answering the 115 emergency line. We were able to connect Dawit with *Collectif Parisien de Soutien aux Exilés*, a collective of concerned Parisian citizens, who then stepped in with a sofa bed in a warm apartment last minute.

Some days later, after being moved to another private individual's apartment, Dawit fled Paris for Belgium. There he was arrested by the police for travelling without documents and was later released. He spent two nights sleeping on the streets in Brussels with minimal food before deciding to return to Paris. He had been unable to access any support in Belgium and

found himself unable to reach the Netherlands, so turned back.

Dawit's long, treacherous and traumatising journey from Eritrea to England had led him here: with a crutch in one hand, navigating foreign arrest and sleeping rough in Belgium. His lack of faith in the HO providing him a legal route to be reunited with his family in the UK was exacerbated by the lack of information he received, and his own mental health difficulties, which went unsupported in his accommodation centre. We spoke with Dawit regularly on the phone after he absconded from the safety of the centre and the apartment in Paris; his concerns throughout his experience were the same: he continued to believe he would never be able to reach England legally.

At the time of writing, Dawit continues to wait for a response from the Home Office, whilst making plans to return to the road again: "There is nothing happen[ing] in France about going to UK and there is no way to go throughout this process so I think I will be trying to go on this week. There is no hope."

#### 4.2 Contested minors in CAOs

As well as the 12 CAOMIEs visited, two CAOs were also visited during the research trip. These CAOs accommodated young people who had declared themselves as minors in "the Jungle" and had already been interviewed by the Home Office in Le CAP in Calais for family reunification. Both had been age disputed at Le SAS warehouse during the eviction whilst they had queued for minors accommodation. Volunteers and minors reported that age disputes at Le SAS were made both by CRS police and by an employee of FTDA conducting rapid, visual age assessments in the queue for minors' accommodation, see **Appendix 2**. Following an age dispute young people were immediately transported to a CAO by bus.





*Figure 13: Minor en route to CAO in Caen.*

In CAO accommodation these young people were housed and supported in the French asylum system in the same way as the adults with whom they lived. In Caen, the young person had his own room; however, in Argenton-sur-Creuse the young person shared an apartment with adults.

In both CAOs, young people were offered support to make an adult application for asylum in France. CAO staff members in Caen were open to exploring the possibility of the young person being a minor. In Argenton-sur-Creuse staff members informed the researchers that if the young person was to maintain that he was 17 he would undergo an immediate medical age assessment, if the assessment proved him to be 18 he would be required to wait 18 months before claiming asylum in France. Through discussions with the young person it appeared he had believed he would 'have to go out from France' [deported] if he was found to be 18, this fear had been a considerable factor in his decision to apply for French asylum.

Both FTDA and the Home Office were made aware of young people who are living in CAOs. The Home Office stated that it was preferable for minors to be in CAOMIEs so they were aware of their location and their cases could be monitored accordingly, they advised that FTDA were responsible for accommodating minors. A request was made to FTDA to relocate these young people into CAOMIEs on 10th November. Since then, one young people have received no information about the possibility of being relocated to a CAOMIE. Neither have received any information from the Home Office regarding their cases, and they have both missed the opportunity of a second interview which the Home Office conducted as they visited CAOMIEs.

# 5.0 THE UK HOME OFFICE

As we conducted our research, 6 teams of Home Office representatives were travelling around France interviewing all UAMs in CAOMIEs<sup>4</sup>.

## 5.1 Information provided to UAMs and CAOMIE staff prior to Home Office interviews in CAOMIEs

In a large proportion of CAOMIEs staff members commented on a serious lack of information from the Home Office: “There is no communication [with the Home Office], it’s a big problem for us and for them [the minors]” (Staff member, Auxonne).

During the research period it became apparent that minors and CAOMIE staff were not given consistent information about when the Home Office would visit. Some centres were given a general guide of within 1-2 weeks. Often a few days notice was given and on at least one occasion no notice was given. On 4<sup>th</sup> November minors in Le Havre were informed by ‘UK officials’ that they would be visited by the Home Office ‘next week’; they were not interviewed until 24<sup>th</sup> November. Four boys were reported to have left on 19<sup>th</sup> November because they “lose hope” [sic] (UAM, Le Havre). From discussions with staff and UAMs, it appeared that the information regarding which of the minors in CAOMIEs would be interviewed, was also lacking. In Cayeux-sur-Mer minors were unsure of whether interviews would be reserved for those with family in the UK, or also for those without UK family. Throughout our research we encountered UAMs who had already been interviewed by the Home Office in Le CAP in Calais and those who had been interviewed by the Calais prefecture and accepted for transfer. These minors were consistently unsure of whether they would be required to partake in a second interview.

Prior to the Home Office interviews, minors in Cayeux-sur-Mer were told they would need to give fingerprints in France; they did not know why this was the case and whether the fingerprints would be for French or British asylum. This information had made minors extremely nervous.

It is clear from discussions with UAMs and CAOMIE staff that the information provided prior to the Home Office visit was inconsistent and sporadic. Minors were visibly anxious about when the

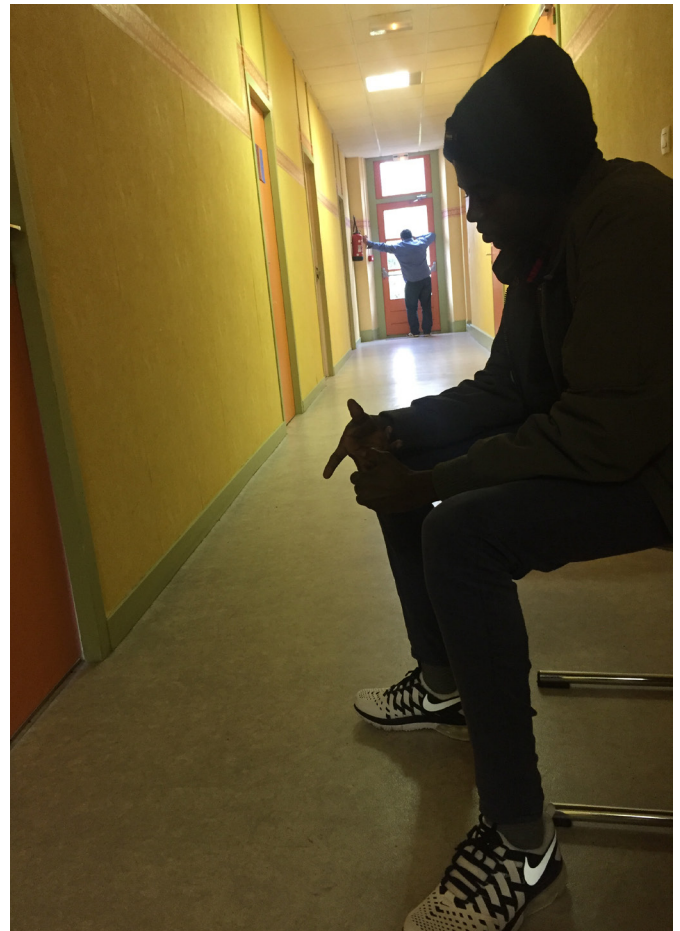


Figure 14: Minor awaiting Home Office interview.

<sup>4</sup>Reported by Save the Children UK on 10th November following a meeting with the Home Office.



Home Office would visit and who would be interviewed.

## **5.2 The Home Office Interview**

The interviews conducted in CAOMIEs were the same as those conducted in Le CAP in Calais, see **Appendix 3**.

In Auch, minors reported discrepancies in the way the Home Office interviews for family reunification were conducted. Those minors with parents, siblings, aunts and uncles were asked many questions and had lengthy interviews, while those who had cousins were asked considerably fewer questions. One minor in Luchon recalled not being asked for his cousins telephone number, upon realisation of this, he seriously panicked about what this would mean for his chances of reaching the UK.

When the Home Office were conducting interviews in Le CAP in Calais, rumours circulated that they were not accepting minors who had cousins in the UK. This was confirmed by a Home Office official in a remark to minors and Rosie Pope in Le CAP. This suggested that the Home Office only planned to accept minors under Dublin III Article 8.1, which reunites unaccompanied minors with mothers/ fathers/ brothers/ sisters and 8.2 which reunites minors with uncles and aunts. However, unaccompanied minors do have a legal right to be reunited with cousins and grand uncles in the UK if it is in their best interest, as stipulated in Article 17. Indeed, Safe Passage UK has had two successful cases of minors being reunited with their cousins in the UK under Article 17.

However, both in Le CAP and throughout the CAOMIE interviews, the Home Office has continued to interview minors with cousins in the UK. In Auch, one minor undertook an interview in which he stated that he wished to be reunited with his cousin in the UK. He reported being informed by the Home Office interviewer that his case had been accepted onto the application list. She had led him to believe that he would be in the UK "in 30 to 40 days."

Information around reuniting minors with cousins in the UK has been seriously lacking and misleading. There has been no widespread, child-friendly information to confirm whether minors with cousins in the UK will be given a fair chance to family reunification. Considering some minors were not asked for their cousin's telephone numbers, it appears evident that this is not the case.

In Hostens, no Somali interpreter was provided, interviews were conducted in English and dependent on minors' language skills.

Those age-disputed by police and FTDA officials in Calais and placed in CAOs have not been given the opportunity to be interviewed by the Home Office in their CAOs.

## **5.3 Information provided about the decision making and transfer process**

Feedback from minors and CAOMIE staff has revealed that accurate information about when minors might receive answers on cases has been extremely varied and non-specific. In a number of centres staff members were told minors would receive answers in 1-2 weeks; however in Auch, one minor was informed he would have to wait 30-40 days. Some centre staff believed it could be as long as their centres were contracted to be open (some until March).

There has been no information shared about how many minors will be accepted by the Home Office, or how or when minors will be transferred to the UK. This lack of information is causing visible mental distress amongst minors, some of whom are self-harming. One minor explained his reasons for self-harming saying: "Home Office take me for interview, but don't [give] answer. They don't call my family". Safe Passage UK reported that three 16-year-old minors in a CAOMIE had begun a hunger strike "in protest at the slow process of being reunited with their families in the UK"<sup>5</sup>

There are a number of minors who were accepted before October when the Home Office

moved to France and the expedited process began. While some have been waiting for as long as four months, they have witnessed minors, with and without family in the UK, register and be transferred to the UK in the space of a week. The Home Office has offered no explanation for this. These minors are understandably confused, frustrated and losing faith in the system intended to protect them.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of October a bus was scheduled to take 29 UAMs to the UK; it was cancelled without explanation after minors had been informed of their departure date. These minors were then dispersed randomly to CAOMIEs as far as Champertier and Ardes. Neither these minors, nor their family members in the UK, have been provided with any explanation nor information about when they might be transferred to the UK. This was evidently distressing for minors who had come so close to being reunited with their family: 'I am especially unlucky because I was meant to go from Calais, but my bus was cancelled. We have been here nearly 2 weeks and nothing has happened' (UAM, Ardes).

## 5.4 New Guidelines and Home Office Silence

On 14<sup>th</sup> November, during a visit to UAMs in Grenoble, Home Office staff were heard to state that the UK would not accept as many UAMs as was expected:

"We're not taking as many as they think we are" (Home Office Staff Member, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Sauvegarde Isere Centre (Interview location), Grenoble). This was the first time that organisations working with UAMs in Calais had heard sentiments of this kind. The following day, the Home Office shared new guidelines which considerably restricted (by age and nationality) (see **Appendix 5**) the number of minors who would be considered for transfer under the Dubs amendment. These guidelines had been published to Home Office staff on 8<sup>th</sup>



*Figure 15: Minor discussing family reunification case and Home Office interview.*

November but not shared with charities until the 15<sup>th</sup>. This is an example of the Home Office withholding information from minors and organisations whom it affected.

For our thoughts on these guidelines, see **6.1 Closing Thoughts**.

## 5.5 Expectation management

Conversations with UAMs and staff in CAOMIEs showed that it was widely expected that a considerable number of children would be transferred to the UK. The day before the transportation to CAOMIEs each minor in Le CAP was provided with printed information from the Prefecture de Calais. This stated in the CAOMIES all "applications to be transferred to the UK will be dealt with by British authorities", see **Appendix 4**. Considering many UAMs cannot read, and buses had been leaving everyday the previous week to transport UAMs to the UK, it is not unrealistic to assume that the

<sup>5</sup>'Desperate' Afghan children go on hunger strike...', *The Guardian* 14/11/2016: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/nov/14/afghan-children-hunger-strike-france-in-bid-to-rejoin-families-in-uk>



communication of the message was misinterpreted by minors. Indeed, during research, minors in more than one CAOMIE admitted that they had believed they were guaranteed passage to the UK and many continued to wear their wristband weeks later (See **Figures 16 & 17**).

'We are careful for these [bracelets] we don't break them, because it's our ticket [to the UK]' (UAM, Auch).



The act of partaking in an interview with the Home Office raises false hopes for unaccompanied minors; we met minors who excitedly described the Home Office interview as being "easy" and asked when they will be in the UK. By interviewing every UAM from Calais, the Home Office have unnecessarily raised the hopes and expectations of minors who are categorically not eligible under the new guidelines.

As interviews were being conducted in Grenoble on 14<sup>th</sup> November, a Home Office Staff member admitted that expectations of the number of children who would be transferred to the UK had been severely mismanaged:

"There is the expectation that we are clearing out the centres... We're not taking as many as they think we are... We're welcomed with open arms, there's a false expectation." (Home Office Staff Member, 14.11.2016, Sauvegarde Is-ere Centre (Interview location), Grenoble).



We consider raising the expectations of unaccompanied refugee minors who are not eligible for transfer to the UK to be potentially very damaging to their well-being and mental health. Non-eligible minors who have been allowed to believe they will be transferred to the UK will suffer severely when they receive rejection.

*Figures 16 and 17: Minors wearing Le CAP and bus wristbands.*

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Our research aimed to observe and assess the post-eviction plan for unaccompanied minors, as conducted by both the French authorities and the Home Office. From our observations we have drawn the following conclusions:

In the majority of cases we found the quality of amenities, provision of food and activities provided by CAOMIE staff to be of a high standard – and where there was requirement for improvement, in many centres it appeared that adjustments were being made. We acknowledge the difficulty of the situation posed for service providers running CAOMIEs – especially for those staff with no experience of working with refugee minors – and the need for an adjustment period. We would comment that a lack of information from the Home Office and a lack of preparation by the French state contributed to an often incomplete and/or lacking provision of support and activities for minors.

During our inquiry, we encountered a large number of minors in CAOMIEs who expressed feelings of anxiety and depression and displayed indications of suffering from mental distress. There was a great deal of variance in the standard of support provided for vulnerable minors. A minority of CAOMIEs had interpreters so that staff could properly communicate with minors and minors could successfully share grievances. Only one of the twelve CAOMIEs we visited had



Figures 18 and 19: Minors sleeping in woods (images sent by UAMs to Help Refugees volunteer).



psychologists on staff. This shortfall put a lot of pressure on UAMs, who were already dealing with the recent traumatic experience of their eviction from “the Jungle”; their relocation to new (and often remote) locations; their worries about their futures; their lack of independence and feelings of powerlessness. The burden of no psychological support contributes to the emotional distress they experience and consequently to minors absconding from centres.

During our research we were present in CAOMIEs prior to Home Office arrival, during the Home Office visit and afterwards. It was clear from our observations that the Home Office was providing misinformation and purposefully remaining silent on important issues that directly affected unaccompanied minors. This misinformation and lack of information was deeply distressing for unaccompanied minors who mostly remained in the dark about their chances of reaching the UK. In the lead up to the Home Office interview, a lack of information resulted in minors leaving centres. After Home Office interviews, a lack of further information and of a timeline also resulted in minors leaving centres.

For those unaccompanied minors who have cousins in the UK, and for those without family in the UK (who fall outwith the eligibility published in HO guidelines), expectations have been severely mismanaged. In the majority of circumstances, minors believed themselves to be fairly considered for transfer to the UK and for this to be a possible outcome. At no point during our research did we find evidence that the Home Office had been informing minors about the four criteria for eligibility (see **Appendix 5**) in their guidelines. Those interviewed and found to be outwith the eligibility were not informed of this at the time and continued to believe they were eligible for transfer to the UK. It is clear to us that the mismanagement of expectations has endangered the emotional and mental well-being of minors. There is risk of further endangerment to the emotional wellbeing of minors once they hear of the Home Office eligibility by other means, or when their application for transfer to the UK is rejected.

From our inquiry we can conclude that unaccompanied minors are leaving centres and voluntarily returning to Northern France to attempt to reach the UK by dangerous and illegal means (At least 12 people died in 2016 attempting to reach the UK from Calais by illegal means<sup>6</sup>) Minors that have left CAOMIEs and are no longer in the care of the French authorities are not being tracked by them nor the Home Office. There are insufficient measures in place to reconnect them with accommodation centres and re-enter them into child protection mechanisms. As such, minors who leave CAOMIEs are at risk of injury and death, as well as human trafficking and sexual exploitation<sup>7</sup>. As evidenced by images received from an unaccompanied minor who has left a CAOMIE (See **Figures 18 and 19**), minors who previously lived in Calais are now homeless and sleeping outside without proper provision for Winter. If minors continue to receive no information on their cases, and continue to be forced to wait without explanation this situation seems likely to worsen, with more children absconding. When the Home Office release their decisions on the transfer of UAMs to the UK, this number of minors leaving centres can be expected to increase further.

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<sup>6</sup> Calais quatre morts en 15 jours, *Medicine du Monde*, 27/07/2016: <https://www.medecinsdumonde.be/calais-quatre-morts-en-15-jours>

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF Report “Neither Safe nor Sound: Unaccompanied Children on the Coastline of the English Channel and the North Sea” June 2016

Home Office guidance on implementation of Section 67 of the Immigration Act states that:

“Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 requires the Secretary of State to carry out their immigration and asylum functions in a way that takes into account the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the UK. Where a child is outside the UK, the spirit of the duty should be applied.”

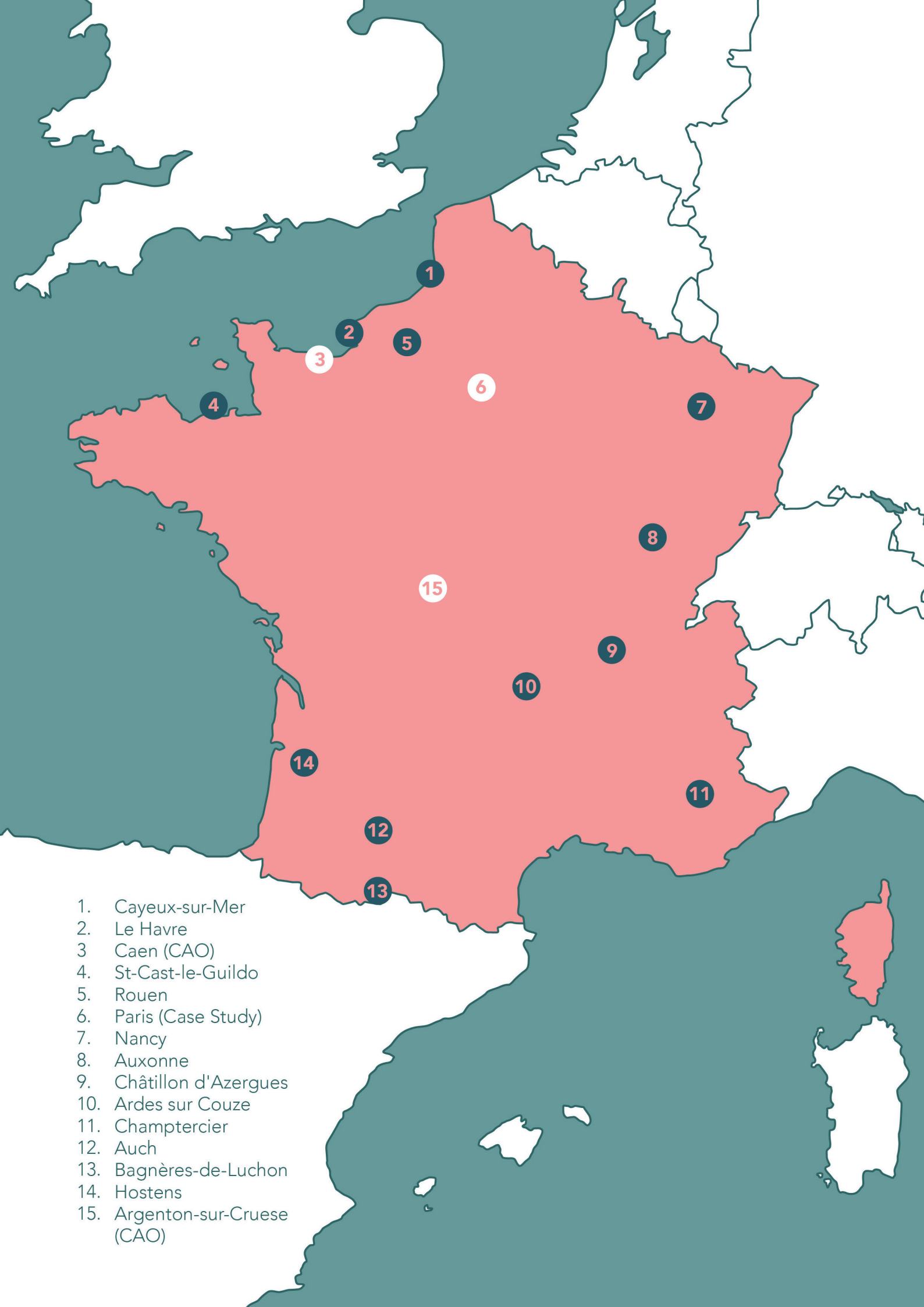
From our inquiry, we believe that the Home Office is not considering the wellbeing and safety of all children and is not operating, during the processing of transfers, in a manner that safeguards and promotes their welfare.

## **6.1 Closing Thoughts**

Although we wish to hold the Home Office accountable for not sharing their guidelines on implementation of section 67 of The Immigration Act with those whom it directly affects, we do not condone this document and believe it to be needlessly arbitrary and based on an unethical and inequitable ranking, by age group, of children under 18; on the presumption that boys are safe from sexual exploitation; and on wilfully misguided information on the ineligibility of certain nationalities for UK asylum.

As such, these guidelines will impact a large number of those minors residing in CAOMIEs, including vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds, as well as Eritreans, Ethiopians, Somalians and Afghans (amongst others) who are equally in need of protection. We are deeply concerned about what these guidelines will mean for minors who are already mentally distressed and who currently have no psychological support. We are also concerned what this will mean for those minors who do not see settling in France as an option, and who will simply return to trying to reach the UK by other means.





1. Cayeux-sur-Mer
2. Le Havre
3. Caen (CAO)
4. St-Cast-le-Guildo
5. Rouen
6. Paris (Case Study)
7. Nancy
8. Auxonne
9. Châtillon d'Azergues
10. Ardes sur Couze
11. Champtercier
12. Auch
13. Bagnères-de-Luchon
14. Hostens
15. Argenton-sur-Cruese (CAO)

# APPENDICES

## **Appendix 1**

### **CAOMIEs visited during research**

#### **1. Cayeux-sur-Mer, 05.11.2016**

- Around 45 Afghan UAMs
- 3 or 4 UAMs left the day after arrival
- 4 minors per room
- No permanent translators, volunteer translators visited occasionally
- Staff members experienced in refugee support and Dublin III family reunification.

The Home Office:

- 02.11.2016 UK officials travelled to CAOMIE with minors, they left soon after arrival
- 04.11.2016 UK officials visited to inform minors that the Home Office would be visiting in '1 or 2 weeks' to conduct interviews. Minors were unsure whether they would all be interviewed.
- 17.11.2016 Home Office officials conducted interviews in the CAOMIE.

#### **2. Le Havre, 06.11.2016**

- 51 Eritrean UAMs
- 19.11.2016: 4 UAMs left
- Centre run by the Red Cross
- No translators

The Home Office:

- 02.11.2016 UK officials travelled to CAOMIE with minors, left following morning.
- 04.11.2016 UK officials visited to inform minors that the Home Office would be visiting 'next week' to conduct interviews.
- 21.11.2016 UAMs reported that UKHO had not conducted interviews

#### **3. Caen, 07.11.2016**

- CAO accommodating Sudanese and Afghan adults
- 1 age-disputed Afghan UAM
- Container accommodation
- No translators

#### **4. St Caste le Guido**

- 31 UAMs– majority Afghan, 1 Kurdish, 2 Libyans
- 4 Social workers
- Staff employed by EDF Energy community sector
- No translators

The Home Office:

- 02.11.2016 UK officials accompanied UAMs to the CAOMIE and left after 10 minutes.
- CAOMIE staff and UAMs had received no information from HO about when they would be visiting.



## **5. Rouen, 08.11.2016**

- 46 residents: Sudanese, Afghan, Eritreans, Libyans, Egyptians, 1x Sierra Leone, 1x Iraqi
- 15 UAMs have left: 50 arrived 28.10.2016, 11 left 29.10.2016, 11 new arrivals 02.11.2016, 4 have since left.
- Staff employed by Omn Oeuvre Normands des Meres- a municipality association of social workers.
- One room each with kitchen and balcony
- No translators
- UAMs provided with €35/ week for food, clothing and hygiene products.

The Home Office:

- 3.11.16- UK officials accompanied UAMs to CAOMIE, left shortly after arrival.
- 4.11.16- Visit from UK officials at 5pm, requested an interview with each UAM. CAOMIE director requested UKHO came back allowing more notice.
- CAOMIE had received no news from UKHO following the visit on 4.11.2016.

## **6. Nancy, 10.11.2016**

- Approx 40 UAMs: Afghan, Eritrean and Sudanese
- 1 Pashtu/Dari translator
- UAMs provided with bus tickets and food tokens for local restaurant

The Home Office:

- UAMs informed of when UKHO would be conducting interviews
- 21.11.2016 and 22.11.2016 UKHO conducting interviews in CAOMIE

## **7. Auxonne, 12.11.2016**

- 30 Afghan UAMs
- 03.11.2016: 2 UAMs left
- No translators

The Home Office:

- 09.11.2016: 10 representatives interviewed all UAMs
- UKHO informed minors they would receive answers in 1-2 weeks
- UKHO informed CAOMIE staff they would be transferring 700 UAMs from across France.

## **8. Chatillon d'Azergue, 12.11.2016**

- 36 Sudanese UAMs, aged 15-16.
- CAOMIE organised by Foundation OVE
- 12 Staff members: 2 psychologists, 5 educators, social workers and translators.

The Home Office:

- 02.11.2016: UK officials accompanied UAMs to CAOMIE and left shortly after arrival
- UK officials had informed CAOMIE staff they would be conducting interviews on 16.11.2016
- 16.11.2016: UKHO conducted interviews with all UAMs.
- Interviews were conducted with telephone translators.

## **9. Ardes sur Couze**

- 30 Afghan UAMs: 26 Dari speakers, 4 pashtu speakers
- No translators
- 3 minors per room, each room with en suite shower and toilet

The Home Office:

- UAMs had received no information about when the UKHO would conduct interviews

#### **10. Champtercier, 14.11.2016**

- Combined CAO and CAOMIE
- Approx 50 UAMs: Eritreans, Sudanese, Somali and Afghan
- Arabic Translators

The Home Office:

- 14.11.2016: UKHO conducted interviews of all UAMs

#### **11. Auch, 16.11.2016**

- 19 Afghan UAMs
- Attempts to hire translators
- 2 social workers, 1 educator, 1 cook/assistant, 1 director.

The Home Office:

- 15.11.2016: UKHO conducted interviews of all UAMs
- Some UAMs were informed they would have answer/be in UK in 30-40 days.

#### **12. Bagnères-de-Luchon (a.k.a. Luchon), 17.11.2016**

- 52 UAMs: 47 Eritrean/Ethiopian, 5 Afghan
- 4 UAMs per room
- No translators

The Home Office:

- 16.11.2016: UKHO conducted interviews of all UAMs
- No information was shared with UAMs or CAOMIE staff about when they might receive answers.

#### **13. Hostens, 17.11.2016**

- Approx. 50 UAMs: 38 Sudanese, 7 Somalis and 5 Chadians
- 3 UAMs per room
- Arabic translator

The Home Office:

- 12.11.2016: UKHO conducted interviews of all UAMs
- UKHO did not have Somali translators

#### **14. Argenton-sur-Creuse, 18.11.2016**

- CAO accommodating approx 30 Afghans
- 1-4 residents per apartment block
- 1 resident age disputed in Calais when seeking UAM accommodation
- Residents partaking in French asylum process, fingerprints given on 17.11.2016



## Appendix 2

Image of unaccompanied minors being age assessed by CRS and an employee of FTDA as they queued for accommodation for minors. Photograph taken on 25.10.2016 at 12.12 p.m.



## Appendix 3

### **Information collected from unaccompanied minors in UK Home Office interview**

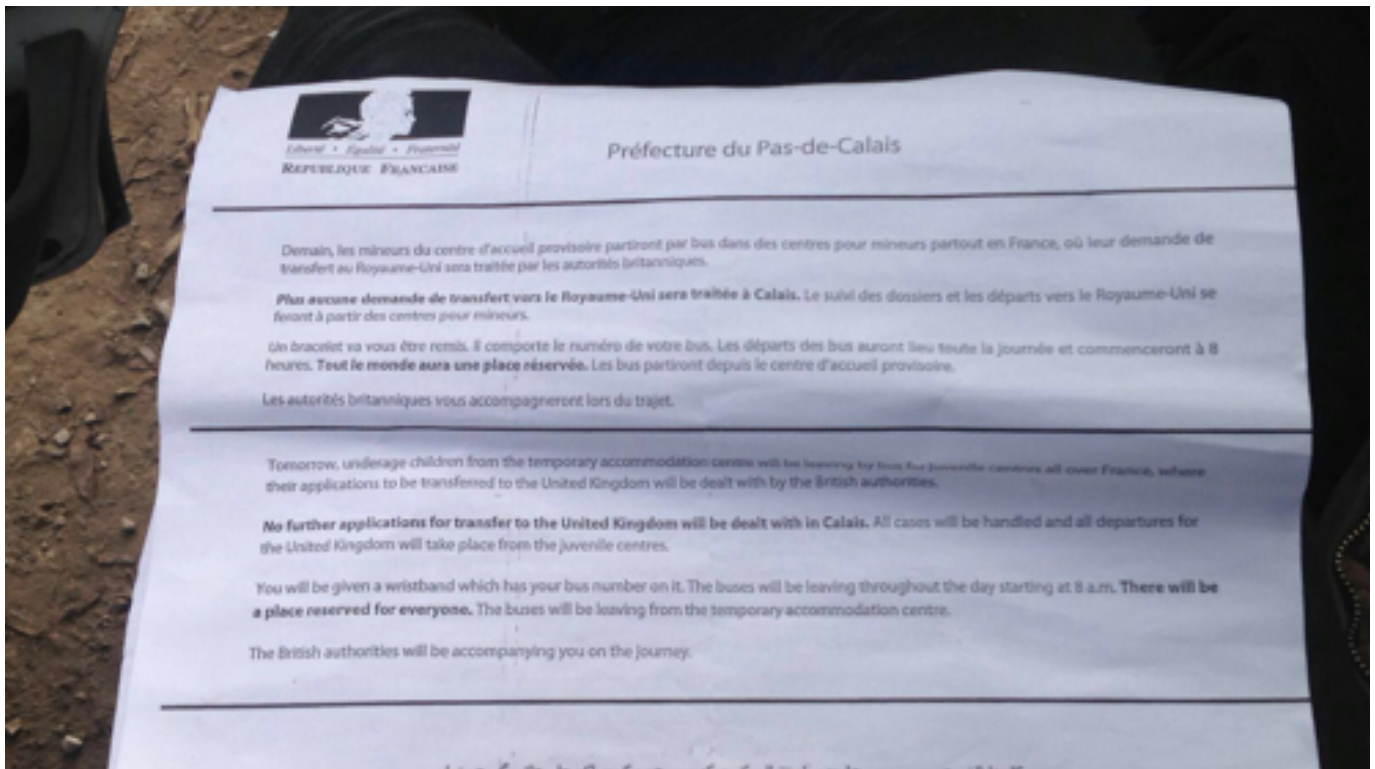
UAMs were required to give:

- Name, surname
- Sex
- DOB/Age
- Nationality
- Language spoken
- Telephone number
- Any health issues
- Name, surname of UK family member
- Telephone number and address (if known) of UK family member
- Last contact with UK family member.
- Names and contact details of any other family in Europe

Minors were also required to complete a family tree detailing the names, approximate ages and locations of each family member.

#### Appendix 4

Information provided to minors the day before they were transported to CAOMIEs. Photograph taken on 01.11.16.



#### Appendix 5

Extract from UK Home Office Guidance: Implementation of Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 in France, version 2.0, published 08.11.2016.

"General criteria for eligibility under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 for children in Calais. To be eligible a child must meet one of the following criteria:

- they are aged 12 or under
- they are referred directly by the French authorities, or by an organisation working on behalf of the French authorities, to the Home Office as being at high risk of sexual exploitation.
- they are aged 15 or under and are of Sudanese or Syrian nationality (these nationalities have a first instance asylum grant rate in the UK of 75% or higher, based on the asylum statistics for the period from July 2015 to June 2016)
- they are aged under 18 and are the accompanying sibling of a child meeting one of the three criteria outlined above

And they must meet all of the following criteria:

- transfer to the UK must be determined to be in the best interests of the child
- the child must have been present in the Calais camp on or before 24 October 2016
- the child must have arrived in Europe before 20 March 2016"



## **Appendix 6**

### Dublin III Regulation<sup>8 9</sup>:

European Union Regulation 604/2013, commonly known as Dublin III, establishes a method for deciding which country amongst the signatories should process a claim for asylum.

In the case of unaccompanied minors, Articles 6 and 8 state that the signatory state where the child lodges an asylum claim shall try to identify family members (parents or legal guardian), siblings and relatives (aunts, uncles, grandparents) legally present in other signatory states and subject to it being in the child's best interests, will transfer responsibility for the child's asylum claim to the signatory state responsible for the asylum claim of those family members.

Article 17 states that any signatory state can choose to examine an asylum application even when the regulation would ascribe responsibility to another signatory state. A signatory state can request another signatory state to take responsibility for the asylum claim of an applicant based on family links not covered in other Articles or on cultural and/or humanitarian grounds. There is no obligation on a signatory state to respond positively to such requests.

### The 'Alf Dubs' Amendment to Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016<sup>10</sup>:

Unaccompanied refugee children: relocation and support

(1) The Secretary of State must, as soon as possible after the passing of this Act, make arrangements to relocate to the United Kingdom and support a specified number of unaccompanied refugee children from other countries in Europe.

(2) The number of children to be resettled under subsection (1) shall be determined by the Government in consultation with local authorities.

(3) The relocation of children under subsection (1) shall be in addition to the resettlement of children under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.

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<sup>8</sup> 'Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council' of 26 June 2013 - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R0604>

<sup>9</sup> 'The 'Dublin' Regulation and family unity' Policy Briefing, November 2015, Refugee Council [https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/6143/Nov15\\_Dublin\\_III.pdf](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/6143/Nov15_Dublin_III.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Immigration Act 2016 c. 19, PART 5, Section 67  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/19/section/67/enacted>