

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [English Channel migrant crossings](#),
HC 1900

Tuesday 22 January 2019

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Members present: Yvette Cooper (Chair); Rehman Chishti; Sir Christopher Chope; Stephen Doughty; Chris Green; Kate Green; Tim Loughton; Stuart C. McDonald; Douglas Ross.

Questions 1-90

Witnesses

[I:](#) Maddy Allen, Field Manager, Help Refugees, Olivia Long, Project Co-ordinator, Help Refugees, Judith Dennis, Policy Manager, Refugee Council, and Clare Moseley, Founder, Care4Calais.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Maddy Allen, Olivia Long, Judith Dennis and Clare Moseley.

Q1 Chair: I welcome everyone to the Home Affairs Committee inquiry into English Channel crossings and welcome our panel of witnesses today. Can I ask each of you to briefly introduce yourself, the organisations you work for and the work that you do in this area?

Maddy Allen: I am Maddy Allen, Field Manager for Help Refugees in northern France. Thank you for inviting me to speak today. Help Refugees is the largest facilitator of grassroots aid across Europe and the Middle East. We have been on the ground in Calais since 2015 and continue to be. We are the lead humanitarian providers there.

Olivia Long: I am Olivia Long. I am also with Help Refugees. I am the Project Co-ordinator there.

Judith Dennis: I am Judith Dennis. I am Policy Manager at the Refugee Council. We work here in the UK with refugees through resettlement and the asylum processes. We have a big team working with unaccompanied children in the asylum process.

Clare Moseley: Clare Moseley from Care4Calais. We work with refugees along the north-west coast of Belgium and France, from Brussels in the north down to Caen. We do three things. We provide direct aid, which is food, clothes and sleeping bags. We spend time with the refugees, doing services and activities designed to combat the depression and despair that we see. In the UK, we campaign for a more welcoming and tolerant attitude towards refugees.

Q2 Chair: Thank you very much. We want to look into this based on the increase in boats crossing that we saw over the Christmas period and the Government's response to that. Could you start by telling us a bit about what you think the current situation is, whether the patterns of attempted crossings have changed and, if so, why? By the way, don't feel obliged to answer every question that we put, if you want to come in on some questions rather than all of them.

Maddy Allen: We are currently supporting about 1,000 refugees, who live between Calais and Dunkirk, of which over 150 are unaccompanied children. What we are seeing at the moment are really desperate conditions. This is a combination of the freezing temperatures that we are experiencing—the temperature in Calais yesterday was minus 3 degrees—high levels of police violence, and harassment and intimidation from the French state. There is poor access to water and sanitation and an almost total lack of shelter. The majority that we are supporting are living in tents on the sides of roads, next to motorways, under bridges, and are on the margins of society. The increase in Channel crossings is and was inevitable given the conditions at this time. We continue to support these children without adequate accommodation.



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We are seeing a spike in the Iranian population in Calais but it continues to be incredibly diverse. The last census that we did just over a month ago showed that there were over 28 different nationalities in Calais, which is more than there were at the time of the Jungle. It is still incredibly diverse and we are supporting people from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Afghanistan; families are coming from Yemen. It remains a diverse and very fluctuating population.

Clare Moseley: You asked about the numbers trying to get to the UK. Clandestine arrivals are, by their nature, hard to manage, but I found a report by the MAPP Committee that showed that last year they thought there were 1,800 clandestine arrivals in the UK. That is approximately 150 a month. It is not very much out of the line with the 300 in two months that we saw over Christmas.

Judith Dennis: We have a small team that works in the immigration unit in Dover. From what we know of children arriving there, routes do change according to the conditions and the security measures. The biggest change was that when the Calais camp was cleared in autumn 2016 we started to see more arrivals through Portsmouth. They were obviously leaving from a different place in France or Spain. The average monthly arrivals were about 14 unaccompanied children in 2018. We saw a little spike in November where 21 arrived in a single week and 31 in the month. In December it was back to the average. We don't routinely ask children, but you do pick up that security measures, walls, fences and so on, have an impact on the route that people take. It is inevitable, in a way, that people are going to try a different route if the original route that they planned is cut off.

Q3 **Chair:** What is behind the switch to the dangerous boats? It is incredibly dangerous in such a busy shipping channel. What is your assessment of what is behind the increase in the use of those really small, dangerous boats?

Maddy Allen: I think it is clear that there is a high price attached to the crossings by boat and, therefore, they are only available to the higher socioeconomic group of the Iranian population that are there, but people are continuing to use the other forms of getting to the UK, on lorries and without there being any legal routes of passage. There is more and more barbed wire in Calais every single day. There are more fences going up around the lorry parks. The securitisation at the ferry port and the Eurotunnel and the Eurostar has increased dramatically through 2018. As other routes to cross to the UK become more difficult, on a sunny day in Calais, you can see the white cliffs of Dover and, therefore, that crossing, which we know is incredibly dangerous, seems to be within reach.

Q4 **Chair:** Is it your assessment that the number of people trying to cross has changed, increased, decreased, or is it simply that people are trying different routes?



Clare Moseley: Based on the numbers that I just told you, it does not feel like an increase, it feels steady. It is a change of method but not an overall increase. On the question about what is driving people to cross in the boats, always in Calais it is desperation. That is what we see every day. A lot of that is linked to the factors that Maddy talked about, the terrible living conditions and the situation that people are in. The single biggest factor that we see of why people are trying to get to the UK is because of family ties. As I am sure you know, most refugees in Europe do not try to get to the UK. Most of them go to Germany, Italy and France. France takes a lot more refugees than the UK does. For those who come to Calais, by far the biggest reason is because they have family in the UK.

In September 2015 when the camp was there, MSF did a survey and at that point they found that 50% of refugees in the camp had family ties to the UK. Last weekend, after receiving the invitation to talk here, we did a small survey of the refugees who are there now. We wanted to get you a snapshot of some more up-to-date data to answer the questions that I was told you would ask. Of the refugees that we asked, it came out exactly the same: 50% have family in the UK and that is completely in line with our experience. People always say to us that they have family in the UK. If you have gone through conflicts or war or persecution and you have family, it is a really strong tie; it is what people need to get to. If you are thousands of miles away from home in a culture that is foreign to you, where the language, the smells, the sights, the written signs, everything is foreign to you and you have a family member, you are desperate to get to them. That is the single greatest factor that we are repeatedly told drives people to get to the UK. That is why they take these risks. Even though they are so desperate and so scary and so horrible. They are risking their lives in the boats.

Another question that we asked was about the boat crossings. We mainly did the survey with the Iranians because that is what everybody has been talking about recently, so we thought that is what you would be most interested in. We also did it because for the last three years we have been doing a lot of work with Africans and Afghans and we have a lot more experience with them whereas the Iranians is a newer phenomenon. What came out of the survey is that about 50% of the Iranians are still trying with lorries. That is slightly more hidden because we are not getting the numbers on that all the time, but it is still happening. The boats are an additional new factor. When we asked them why they were trying with boats—equally we asked the people who were trying with lorries why—we kept getting the same answer all the time: “I will do anything, I will try anything. I don’t care. I will take the risks. I just want to get to my brother. I just want to get to my wife. I just want to get to my uncle”. We got the same answers back again and again and again.

Q5 **Chair:** If we have somebody who is talking about his wife or somebody who is a close family member where there should be a legal route



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available, why is that not working?

Clare Moseley: My understanding is that the process is not working. You might remember that there was the Sandhurst Treaty last year and we had really hoped that that was going to make things work better. It was agreed that the period for the claims was going to come down, but my understanding is that that has not happened. It is taking months and months for claims to go through. They do not always go through correctly. People do not trust the system, particularly after what happened with all the children who were transferred out of the Jungle and were supposed to have their claims processed correctly but a lot of them did not. A lot of them ended up getting thrown out of the centres. They did not have reasons given for their claims not being processed. The refugees simply do not trust the system anymore.

It does not work, in that you need to have NGO intervention to make it work, and really people should be able to have their rights processed without having to have a charity do the work for them. There should be Government facilities for these things but it is not happening. The timescales are not realistic for a child. If a child in Calais knows that they have a relative in the UK but they are being told that they have to wait six months, eight months, a year, it is too long for them to understand and if they see other people trying other ways, they are going to try them. There are a lot of reasons why it is not working.

Judith Dennis: There is an additional issue that relates to the trust. There are some discretionary elements of the Dublin regulation. It is more likely to work for you if you have evidence that your mother is in the UK. If you don't have any evidence of familial links, we know that the UK Government will often question that and ask for evidence that possibly does not exist. With other family members, there is an assessment that has to take place with relatives. If you have an aunt in the UK, it will require an assessment to ensure that that relative can take care of you. If you take the risk and have gone into the French system and that is refused, that is possibly a reason why people are fearful of entering a system where they don't know what the outcome is going to be. They may feel they prefer the risks that Clare talked about because they have more control over that. That is something that we have heard.

I know that the UK Government do look into some of the cases and refuse some of the cases. Colleagues here may have more knowledge of that. There was a recent court challenge against that, about what is reasonable for the UK Government to do in making efforts to look into family relationships and try to help family members join together rather than, as it might be seen, looking for a reason to refuse in the first instance.

Q6 **Tim Loughton:** To be clear, Ms Moseley, on the stats that you just gave us, you said there were 1,800 clandestine arrivals last year, inasmuch as one can know the real facts about clandestine arrivals. We have not seen



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any real increase in it. It is just that it has become more visible in boats rather than through stowaways in trucks or whatever before. Is that what you are saying?

Clare Moseley: That is what it sounds like, yes.

Q7 **Tim Loughton:** The other feature, certainly in the run-up to Christmas, was the large concentration of Iranians. Are you saying that there are just as many Iranians but they have switched from the more clandestine means to boats, which inevitably means having more money in order to pay the people traffickers controlling the boats?

Clare Moseley: Sometimes people have to pay when they try the lorries as well.

Q8 **Tim Loughton:** Sure, but my understanding is that the boats are more expensive than being told you can get on a truck somehow and obviously much more dangerous. I am trying to understand what the rationale behind this is. Notwithstanding the conditions in the camps, which are obviously not acceptable, why are Iranians in particular not registering with the French authorities, on the basis that France is a safe country with a much higher population of Iranians than we have in the UK and then, having been officially recognised and takinh whatever support is available, which must be better than what is happening in the camps, apply, for however long it takes, to the family reconciliation scheme, if it is appropriate for them, for the UK? Why is it not happening like that? Are most of these Iranians not registered at all? Have they come into the EU covertly without registering at the first port of entry, in somewhere like Athens or Italy, or have they registered there and then made their way through France to Calais?

Clare Moseley: There are quite a few different questions there,

Tim Loughton: Sorry. I am just trying to build up a profile of why we now have this big concentration of Iranians in particular. There is a real problem with Iranians in that you can't return them to Iran because Iran refuses to take them if they don't have a case in the UK.

Clare Moseley: I will try to work my way through those and if I miss anything please tell me.

It is a relatively new development for us having more Iranians in Calais. It seems to have happened over the last three to four months and it appears to me, from what they have told me, to be due to conditions worsening in Iran, tensions getting up. The whole time that I have been in Calais, things have changed all the time. The refugees exist because bad things happen in the world and from wherever bad things are happening we see people arrive in Calais, so the situation is always changing.

The Iranians are slightly different. A lot of our refugees are from Africa and Afghanistan and are fleeing due to conflict. The Iranians are not



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fleeing due to conflict. They are fleeing due to political persecution or religious persecution, so they are in a slightly different situation. They might, for example, have had to sell their house and their possessions and that is a really big decision. You know how much people in the UK stress about house prices; imagine having to sell everything you have ever worked for, probably at a very low price. It is not the same as conflict but it is still very bad, thinking that you might never go home again, you might lose everything, you might not see your family again, but it does mean that in some cases you will have more money. You do not have to be poor and to have lost everything to be a refugee. They might have more money.

They are also quite often better educated than people from Afghanistan or Africa. They can probably speak French. They look slightly less foreign to French people. They are in a different situation and they might be able to access things that Africans and Afghans are not able to access.

I am certainly not going to say that I know a lot about how people smugglers work, but the survey showed that a lot of them are still trying with lorries. I have not heard anything that would suggest to me that boats are more expensive than lorries, but I don't know. I don't know about people smuggling. The people who are in Calais are desperate to get to the UK and that desperation means that it is all they think about, all they talk about, what they are superstitious about. People in the UK have superstitions about football. When people are talking about something all the time it is very important to them, so if one person makes it to the UK it goes around like wildfire. It is gossip. Maybe somebody was successful and that goes around very quickly.

Q9 Tim Loughton: Okay, but for all those reasons—and you have sketched out some good reasons for why Iranians are fleeing whatever persecution it may be, and there are many others beyond those you mentioned—they have every reason to want to stay in France: they are more used to a Francophone environment; they are just as likely to have family connections, given the Iranian population in France; France is a safe country. We certainly have a duty of care to those who have genuine family connections. You are saying that in your survey 50% of them did not and the other 50% may also have family connections elsewhere, but they seek to come to the UK as their first safe haven. I am trying to understand why, particularly when the alternative is living in terrible conditions in the French camp and then risking their lives on a perilous journey across the Channel, especially if they have money, which means that they could survive outside those squalid conditions. That is what I am trying to understand.

Clare Moseley: As you said yourself, a lot more Iranians claim asylum in France than do here. They will be the ones who have family in France and more of them claim in asylum in France. It is a small proportion who are trying to get to the UK and let's say half of those are the ones who do have family in the UK. The ones who have family in France will be trying



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to claim asylum in France and the ones who have family in the UK will be trying to claim asylum in the UK.

The other thing that is very specific to Iranians that came up with a few of the people that we talked to—and I apologise for not being an expert in this—is that there is something historical that happened with famous Iranians, possibly politicians, who I think were murdered in France over the last 40 years. Iranians feel that in particular for them France might not be a safe country. That came up a few times. They said something had happened. I am so sorry for not knowing the history of it, but something happened between France and Iran specifically that makes Iranians feel that France in particular is not a safe country. That only covers France. It does not explain why not Italy and there are different reasons for it not being Italy, because they do pass through Italy and that is a totally different case.

Some of them said language. A lot of the Iranians are quite highly skilled. We have a lot of doctors, engineers, people with a high level of skills, and the ones who speak only English and don't speak French want to be able to use their skills and so they say the UK. But as you said, more of them speak French than speak English and those who speak French will stay in France. It is really important to remember that there are more staying in France than there are staying in the UK. The ones who want to get to the UK are those who have very specific reasons for it.

- Q10 **Douglas Ross:** To follow on with these questions before I come on to some of the other points, you are saying that 50% of those who you surveyed in the camps had family ties to the UK. That would presumably result in those who try to make the crossing and end up in the UK being almost 100%, because the 50% who do not have ties to the UK will not be trying to make that crossing. Is that correct?

Clare Moseley: Sorry, no, that is not quite right. What I mean is that, for 50% of them, that is the reason that they have this very strong desire to get to the UK. The other 50% have other reasons. When we ask for the reasons, the top one that comes out, which is at least for 50% of them, is family. That is the biggest reason but there are other reasons.

- Q11 **Douglas Ross:** Of all those who come here, roughly 50% do have family ties but 50% don't. What is their desire? They may have family ties in France, as you were saying to Tim Loughton, but still they don't want to stay in France. What is their main reason for coming to the UK?

Clare Moseley: The second reason that we hear is language. People who are highly skilled and have a good standard of English want to be able to use that skill. The third reason that we hear, which is I hope something that you will be very proud of, is that a lot of people, particularly from Africa, say that they really believe in the UK as being a bastion of human rights and democracy and things that they don't have in their countries. They believe that these really high ideals are the things that they want to have that they don't have. Some of it even dates back to colonial times.



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You hear this from people from Sudan especially. They say that they have grown up learning about how the UK is the place that has all these ideals that they want to aim for. They believe in safety, freedom and democracy and that they will see that in the UK, which I think is amazing.

There is a whole section at the bottom, probably another 20%, who either don't want to answer the question or don't want to tell us because it is personal to them. There is a lot who have not answered, but they are the top three reasons.

- Q12 **Douglas Ross:** On that last reason you gave about the image they have of the UK, they don't have that impression of any other European country they have gone through to get to the UK?

Clare Moseley: As I said at the beginning, it really needs to be clear that the majority of refugees in Europe don't come to the UK. I think Germany is the main destination. All those who think that Germany is great will go there; those who think France or Italy are great will go there. It is a really small number that is coming to the UK and it is just that small number that we are talking about.

- Q13 **Douglas Ross:** Of the ones who have family ties—the Chair mentioned the legal routes and Tim Loughton looked at that—is there work done to find out, for those who do make it to the United Kingdom, how close the family ties are and if they are ultimately successful? You said earlier that if one crossing is successful, it spreads like wildfire. If people are getting over here and still facing the same challenges, either in meeting up with or gaining access to their families, does that not get around like wildfire as well: that coming over by illegal means does not help to make the connection with the family again?

Clare Moseley: I don't understand your question 100% but I would suggest that—

Douglas Ross: Sorry, and just in case there is confusion, when we have people coming here by boat crossings or other means who have said their main reason for coming is to reconnect with families, do we know how many are successful? If they are not successful, does that not get fed back to the camps: "This is not the way for us to make connections with our families again. We should really go down the legal route"?

Judith Dennis: They are not all successful. Some of them will be returned under the Dublin regulation to the first country where they—

- Q14 **Douglas Ross:** Is that because they have said they have family ties but really they don't or—

Judith Dennis: No, I think for adults the family ties have to be very close, so it has to be a spouse really. If I have a child of 19, he or she would not be allowed to come and join me. They are very tight on adults. For unaccompanied children, the regulation itself and the guidance is written much more with the child's best interests in mind, so that they



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would join a wider set of family members and could, subject to assessment, join relatives, aunts, grandparents and so on. That is not the case for adults.

We don't distinguish in the statistics between those who have come here and get returned because their family relationship is not seen as fitting with the regulation and those who have simply come here having not had family. The statistics don't reflect that. I can have another look to see how many requests there are. But I think if you come here because your cousin is here—which we might all think is reasonable if that is your only family member who has survived or a person with whom you have a particular relationship—when you get legal advice, the lawyer will say that is not a reason to reunite them under the Dublin regulation. I am not sure whether those requests are made when a person comes to the UK.

- Q15 Douglas Ross:** Ms Allen, you were speaking about the police brutality in France and the very negative conditions people have to live in in these camps and other parts of Calais. What is the public reaction in France to that? I assume if that was happening in the United Kingdom, it would never be off the television screens. There would be calls for Government intervention and so on. Does the public accept it or is there a big uprising? There is a number of uprisings in France at the moment, but what is the perception of that?

Maddy Allen: I think it is important in looking at the scale of the situation, keeping an eye on the proportion of it, that this situation is not working for anyone. There are no winners here. It is not working for us as aid organisations on the ground; it is definitely not working for the people who we are supporting and the refugees; it does not work for the British Government or the French Government, short or long term. If you are a local citizen, you have armed police officers firing teargas grenades off your roundabouts while you are trying to drive to the supermarket. The hostile environment it has created for the people that we are supporting is definitely felt by the people who are living in Calais, but because the people who we are supporting are so much pushed to the margins of society, it is relatively easy—although we have a lot of people in Calais who are supportive of our work—to forget about these people who are living underneath the economy and barely getting by and being supported by humanitarian aid organisations that have a presence in northern France.

As both Clare and Judith have said, there is the idea of wildfire and the rumours that get passed around the displaced population in Europe. It is the responsibility of both the French and British states to provide adequate legal support and legal advice that is not currently present so that people do not rely on hearsay and wildfire rumours and have access to legal support. It is particularly evident for children we are supporting.

- Q16 Douglas Ross:** On that point, you said earlier there is a lack of trust. Even if that information and advice was available, do you think it would be accepted or is there still, "Someone tells me I can't get across there



but I am going to try anyway because I don't trust this person who has told me that"?

Maddy Allen: There definitely is a lack of trust and this is something that needs to be built up. The other issue that we deal with in Calais is that a lot of the people we are supporting, although it is a relatively small number in the European migrant population, are kind of political footballs of the Dublin regulation. Answering the previous question, a lot of people have previously claimed asylum in Germany or in Italy and have been so-called "Dublined out" of that country back. They are being manoeuvred around Europe with a lot of them having previously been in the UK and then being sent back to France, and they are starting to make that journey again because of networks and connections they have here in the UK, because of all the reasons that Clare has already given.

We cannot detach from the conditions that are there in asking, "Why are people now starting to make these incredibly dangerous crossings?" You cannot say, "These are the conditions in the camps, why are people starting to make these journeys?" The conditions at the camps are the reason. It is a push more than a pull factor. There is no longer a myth that the streets of London are paved with gold—that has been blown a very long time ago—but I think there is definitely a feeling that when we are trying to give legal information, when legal information is available, that says, "France is a safe country, you can claim asylum here, these are the procedures that are in place", if you are being teargassed awake in the morning, beaten by police, that push factor across to the UK is incredibly strong.

Q17 **Douglas Ross:** Finally, you mentioned what the UK state and the French state can do to pass on legal advice and so on. How do you think both Governments are working in terms of trying to stop these crossings happening? Everyone agrees that no one would condone people trying to get across in such a dangerous way and the hazards that involves both for the refugees trying to get across but also, in fairness, people trying to help them out at sea. The Home Secretary has announced further measures on the UK side but from your view in Calais, is it enough and is as much being done to stop them starting the journey as we are trying to do to intercept them potentially at the end of the journey?

Maddy Allen: "What is being done to stop them" is a concerning way of looking at it, because our experience is that people will make these journeys anyway. They are often happening in the middle of the night, round 3 o'clock, 4 o'clock in the morning and people are being pushed into more dangerous—incredibly dangerous—crossings, and without there being those legal routes of passage, people are being forced into those desperate conditions and clearly the French and British Governments both working together, both in the Channel and in the search and rescue operations—the hostility that is created by more barbed wire and more fences around the petrol stations in Calais, these are not—

Q18 **Douglas Ross:** Surely that is for the refugees' safety? It is for their own



safety to stop them even trying to do this.

Maddy Allen: People are still going to try to get to the UK. This is the thing that we are not seeing.

- Q19 **Douglas Ross:** I think you said earlier—or someone said—that there may be less trying to get in lorries and such like and through the tunnel because of these better security measures. If that has worked to an extent to push some people away from those methods of getting to the UK, surely we should then double the efforts to stop them using an even more dangerous crossing? Whether you agree with their right to come here or not, people are dying in these waters and surely everything should be done on the Calais side to stop them even starting that perilous journey.

Maddy Allen: Their concern with trying to make the boat crossings more dangerous by putting extra securitisation in—and obviously none of us in this room want anyone to die in the Channel—means that people will be forced to make alternative journeys. You see the way that people are getting on to lorries. This is not something that has changed massively since the eviction of the jungle two years ago. We continue to see very fluctuating numbers of population, but geographically Calais is the closest point to Dover and therefore there has always been migration in Calais. There will always be migration in Calais and we, therefore, have a responsibility to create border policies around both the Dover and the Calais ports to ensure that there is not death at the border.

- Q20 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Can I first just ask what impact have the camp clearances had on conditions in the Calais internment area, the total numbers of people in the area and also the numbers that engage with NGOs and legal processes, for example?

Maddy Allen: If we are speaking in terms of camp clearances, through 2018 we saw a huge number of dispersals where people were being asked to get on to buses and be transferred to accommodation centres around France. What we see normally following these accommodation removals is that people will start to make their way back to Calais to make this crossing.

Clare Moseley: You asked two questions, one was in terms of numbers and the other living conditions. Numbers: because it was a dispersal policy, people are now dispersed right the way along the north coast. We have around about 700 people in Brussels, maybe 100 in Zeebrugge, probably 700 in Calais. At the moment we only have about 250 in Dunkirk, but in the summer there were about 1,000 there. We have another probably 250 in Amsterdam. We have a few scattered in between along the coast. We have probably about 1,500 in Paris. We probably have around 3,000 people altogether who are trying to get to the UK. When the camp was at its height, we had maybe 9,000 people there, but of those, there were probably a good couple of thousand who were seeking French asylum but were destitute and had nowhere else to live.



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Numbers are lower but entrants across Europe are lower now, they have come down quite a lot. What closing the camp has not done is stop people coming to Calais.

We were told that closing the camp would stop people coming, stop people trying to cross—it has not. It is a dispersal policy and it has dispersed people but it has not significantly changed the scale of the numbers. The numbers are still in the thousands.

Q21 Stuart C. McDonald: Does it make it harder for people to access NGOs because they are dispersed over a wider area?

Clare Moseley: Absolutely, yes. The other part to your question was what impact it has on the living conditions. It has made the living conditions a lot worse. We all thought the Jungle camp was horrible—we thought it was terrible; we used to say how bad it was—but it is worse now. We cannot centralise facilities because a lot of people don't even have tents, they are sleeping rough out in the open in the middle of winter. We cannot centralise medical facilities because there is no community as the police are so very, very aggressive towards them. A lot of the medical complaints we see are simply from people sleeping rough: permanent coughs, colds, chest infections, skin infections, feet infections from walking, from being permanently wet. It has made the conditions even worse.

Q22 Stuart C. McDonald: Just following up on a couple of things that you said. Maddy, you spoke about camp clearance and people being bussed off to Paris. We have read that a lot of people end up essentially on the streets of Paris. Was there an attempt to try to engage these people in the processes for claiming asylum or making Dublin transfers or whatever else? Do we know what the outcomes were?

Maddy Allen: The conditions in Paris are equally dire as the conditions in Calais. The lack of adequate legal protection and medical care is also apparent in Paris. In a city we see as this sort of rich international city, we also see huge exploitation and trafficking and a huge amount of drug use and alcohol abuse of people who are living rough. I think it is important that, despite the legal status of someone—essentially the situation we are dealing with in Calais, in Paris and across northern France is mass homelessness. In Calais we are supporting over 500 homeless people in really desperate conditions.

On your first question around the evictions of people from their living spaces, our human rights observer team on the ground observe that daily police evictions that are happening. At the moment, up to 20 of these evictions are happening a week. We have yet to see any legal grounding from the French state or requisitions as to what these are on.

In the first 19 days of this year, there were 47 police clearances. It is very clear that the mandate from the state is that there will not be



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another camp in northern France and therefore to keep people mobile and on the move. If this continues, there will be 902 evictions this year.

Q23 **Stuart C. McDonald:** What are the French Government trying to achieve through this?

Maddy Allen: I would love to know.

Q24 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Clare, you spoke about 1,000 people that you were engaged with who had claimed asylum in France but were destitute, did I pick that up right?

Clare Moseley: In the Calais camp, the old Jungle, there were a lot of people, yes, who were claiming asylum in France. We get this in the UK as well. People who are claiming asylum but while they are in that system they still become destitute. That is why we have this movement in the UK at the moment to campaign for the right to work, because refugees who claim asylum are not allowed to work and have absolutely minimal benefits.

Q25 **Stuart C. McDonald:** At the very least in the United Kingdom, you would be provided with accommodation if you are destitute. What is the equivalent in the French asylum system?

Maddy Allen: Although accommodation is ultimately provided, there is a massive gap in accommodation. A number of the people we are supporting in Calais are in the French asylum system and there is not the process that you would have in the UK where you get transferred to accommodation immediately. Normally the gap is around six months. Once you initially claim asylum, particularly in northern France where there is a lack of adequate accommodation, people are left on the streets for about six months while entering that process.

Q26 **Stuart C. McDonald:** I will turn to the ability to use safe legal routes or get involved in some of the legal systems that are available. You have already said that if your experience of French authorities is police violence and destitution, you are not likely to want to engage with that system, but even if somebody did make the decision that they wanted to claim asylum—well, first, is there a problem with people being aware of what their legal rights are and, secondly, if somebody did want to avail themselves of their legal rights, how would they go about trying to access them?

Maddy Allen: It is a good question. There is a huge amount of pressure on associations, charities and NGOs to provide this information and there is not enough emphasis and funding available to have adequate legal information for people to be able to know their rights, so often it is down to us bringing in external organisations. There are charities, such as the Legal Shelter, that are operating in Calais to provide people with their rights. There are three volunteers working at the Legal Shelter in Calais for a population of over 500 people that are on the streets. There is definitely not enough access to information about people's rights and



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there is a lot of confusion about what the system is that they are entering into.

Q27 Stuart C. McDonald: If they are able to, for example, claim asylum and they want to make a Dublin transfer request, in the past there have been issues about how long that has taken, do those problems persist or are they better than they were?

Maddy Allen: There are huge waiting times for both Dublin transfer, so from the unification, and obviously the Dubs amendment that we have done a lot of work on, but there is still indefinable waiting times on this. For example, a lot of the children are transferred to Saint Omer, the French child protection state accommodation. There are children in there who are eligible and have passed all the criteria for family unification. There is a child in there who has been waiting for over a year and there is no understanding—I would love to ask the Committee where the blockage is on this because from our partners, Refugee Youth Service, that are the lead child protection team on the ground, it is unclear where the gap is. From our work with Safe Passage in this country, we know there are, and have been over a number of years, beds waiting in the UK, children in Calais and somewhere along the way there is bureaucracy that means that that child is not in that bed and everything associated with that. The children are not accessing education, do not have access to social workers, psycho-social support and counselling to get over the trauma that they have experienced in their journeys.

Q28 Chair: What stage have some of those children got to?

Maddy Allen: They have passed the criteria.

Q29 Chair: Applications have gone in, evidence has gone in on their behalf and so on?

Maddy Allen: We have over 30 children who are eligible and have passed the criteria for Dubs in Calais at the moment. They are in Saint Omer child protection and they are not making that journey to the UK.

Q30 Chair: The British Government has agreed they have passed the criteria?

Maddy Allen: Yes.

Q31 Stuart C. McDonald: Judith Dennis, you spoke about the Dublin rules and limited number of criteria that applied, particularly in the case of adults. There are discretionary clauses as well in Dublin rules, are you saying they do not work particularly well or are rarely accepted?

Judith Dennis: Some feel like it. I can send you some stats; they are the Government stats anyway. There are many more requests than there are agreements. We have seen cases where it is a post-flight spouse, so it might not qualify, but you would argue in those cases that discretion should be used, particularly if the person is here and it is the UK Government looking to send them back to a country where—we take 6% of Europe's people in the asylum system, so it is likely they are going to



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get sent to a country where there are a more people in the asylum system.

The fact that UK didn't take part in relocation—it still looks to use the Dublin regulation to remove people to those third countries in quite large numbers, or larger numbers than the ones that are accepted back here.

Q32 Sir Christopher Chope: Following on from the questions about Dublin, do we know how many have been sent back from the United Kingdom following the assessment as to whether or not Dublin should apply?

Judith Dennis: Under the unaccompanied children—

Sir Christopher Chope: No, in general, because obviously they get across the Channel, they arrive in the United Kingdom, they claim asylum, they may have been registered with Eurodac and then it is open to the United Kingdom authorities to say, under the Dublin arrangements, "You must go back to Greece or Italy or France or wherever". How many times is that happening?

Judith Dennis: Under Articles 13 and 18, which are those criteria that you talk about, in 2017, which is the latest that we have figures for, there were 314 of those. Another member state might ask the UK to use their discretion in sending. Say a family member is in Sweden, Sweden might say, "We will have this person, we will take them". There will be small numbers of those, but the main articles are the ones that you talked about where somebody has been registered—either made an asylum claim or been fingerprinted—in another member state.

Q33 Sir Christopher Chope: That is the number who are referred back. How many are accepted under the Dublin regulations as having a good claim?

Judith Dennis: I don't know. I have written myself a note to look up whether or not we can distinguish between claims made under particular articles and those refused. I do not have those to hand. I just have the ones that are accepted here because of Article 8—that is, the children. I don't have all the raft of requests and acceptances. I will have a look for that and try to send it in. It will be Government figures.

Just to note this, the Dublin figures are only released annually and they will come out at the end of February for 2018.

Q34 Sir Christopher Chope: Related to Dublin, obviously you are giving these people advice in Calais, to a large extent. Do you advise them that if they get to the United Kingdom then they should claim asylum immediately they arrive?

Clare Moseley: We are not allowed to give them legal advice.

Q35 Sir Christopher Chope: I know, but what about non-legal advice—not illegal advice but non-legal advice? Do you not give any advice to these people?



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Maddy Allen: We give legal information. The distinction is that we provide information about the asylum systems across France, Germany, Sweden, across Europe and what the situation is when you arrive in the UK.

- Q36 **Sir Christopher Chope:** Don't you give them information about how dangerous it is for them to try to get across the Channel? How reckless it is for them to spend their family money or perhaps indebt their family in the future if they do not have the money? They effectively are then in hock to the people smugglers. Do you not give them any advice at all on any of these issues? You are completely neutral, are you, in all this?

Maddy Allen: We provide information about how dangerous the crossing is across the Channel.

- Q37 **Sir Christopher Chope:** You do? Okay.

Maddy Allen: In the same way that it is dangerous to get in a lorry, with the risks attached to that, but the individual autonomy for people to make those choices remains.

It is also important to remember that in our work on the ground, we are operating in emergency survival mode a lot of the time. We are operating a huge firewood yard, we are cooking over 2,000 meals a day, we are providing material aid and our responsibility in Calais is as humanitarian aid providers, providing child protection and safeguarding and legal information so that people can hopefully make sensible choices. What we are seeing at the moment with the conditions is a real deterioration in mental health conditions of the people we are supporting; people not in adequate accommodation and not in a stable enough place to make sound decisions about their futures.

- Q38 **Sir Christopher Chope:** How are you getting on with the Calais authorities? It sounds as though you do not have a very good relationship with the mayor, for example.

Maddy Allen: We have an interesting relationship with the Mayor of Calais and a different relationship again with the Mayor of Dunkirk. Our work is split fairly equally between Calais and Dunkirk. It is separated between two departments that operate very, very differently. Between Pas-de-Calais and Nord there are very different policies around supporting the migrant population. For example, the mayor's office in Dunkirk has opened a gym through the cold winter. That is not at state level, but the mayor's office level. They both conduct some accommodation, although it is not enough to provide—

- Q39 **Sir Christopher Chope:** Do you think that the Mayor of Calais was misquoted when he was quoted as saying—not necessarily you personally or your agency—that aid agencies in general were using the migrants to exist? In other words, the aid agencies are encouraging migrants, because without migrants there would not be any need for the aid agencies and you would all be out of a job.



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Maddy Allen: We are trying to work towards a point where we are not in a job. None of us want to be here in Calais. In five years' time I do not want to be giving out emergency blankets and socks to these people that we are supporting. We will continue to remain in Calais while there is still a need and while there are people that are living without state protection, without adequate accommodation and without access to their legal rights and proper medical care. We are having to fill those gaps of both the French and British Governments.

Q40 **Sir Christopher Chope:** I am not disputing that. My question was whether you think, on the evidence you have from your dealings with the Mayor of Calais, that the quotes attributed to him, which I have just referred to, are accurate and are a fair reflection of his attitude, or whether you think that it is unfair to attribute those remarks to him.

Maddy Allen: I would say, personally, I think it is unfair to attribute these to the aid organisations that are working tirelessly, the majority of them with volunteer-run populations, to try to support and sustain these people that are in desperate need.

Q41 **Sir Christopher Chope:** I said, "Is it unfair that the Mayor of Calais is being attributed with these remarks attacking the aid agencies?" From your dealings with the Mayor of Calais, you were saying earlier that he was a very compassionate, generous figure. It seems to me odd in the light of that that these remarks have been attributed to him. I am asking whether it is accurate, this condemnation of the Mayor of Calais—what do you think?

Maddy Allen: I think the attribution was to the Mayor of Dunkirk, which is different, as opposed to the Mayor of Calais. We do have very different working practices and I would like to see more support from Natacha Bouchart towards the work that we are doing in Calais.

Q42 **Sir Christopher Chope:** You commend the Mayor of Dunkirk but you would not be quite so enthusiastic about the Mayor of Calais?

Maddy Allen: Yes.

Q43 **Rehman Chishti:** I have a question for Ms Allen, with regard to the numbers coming in. The trend, whether it will be on the higher trajectory or moving down the lower trajectory, is that we have seen the numbers trying to come into the United Kingdom over the Christmas period or just before being at quite a high end. Being a Kent Member of Parliament, I see that the number of boats coming in is being significantly increased. Will the extra enforcement action the Government has put in place—the two cutters, the Royal Navy, the surveillance—act as a real deterrent to the number of individuals trying to come into the United Kingdom, whether by boats to start with or by lorry?

Maddy Allen: I would say that search and rescue operations and the boats that have been put into the Channel from the UK Border Force are not acting as a deterrent towards the people that we are supporting.



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Anecdotally, from speaking with people on the ground on a daily basis, we know people that have made those journeys. Recently, a 50-year-old Iranian man whose son is here in the UK made that journey. He was picked up by the Border Force only 4 km off the coast of Dover, he was brought back to France and hospitalised, and he is attempting to make that journey again because he is not deterred by that operation. Ultimately, his goal in trying to cross to the UK is that his son is here.

- Q44 Rehman Chishti:** Of course, everyone understands the UK is a country that stands for justice, the rule of law and liberty. Looking at the numbers, I think we have taken in 15,000 asylum cases that have gone through the appropriate routes. There are real concerns about those who try to come into the country illegally, and every country has a duty to protect its borders. My question to you, Ms Allen, is this: you said that 28 different languages are being spoken in Calais, and you have given some of the countries—Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Eritrea. You said that some of those are fragile states, and people are coming from those fragile states to the United Kingdom. Iran is slightly separate and I will come to that in a minute. The top five countries that the United Kingdom gives aid to through DfID are Pakistan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Syria. In 2016, about £13.3 billion was given. Are you saying, in terms of those fragile states, that the £13.3 billion the Government has given through DfID is not being used the way it should be, and that if it was being used the way it should be, you would not get this number of people trying to come into the United Kingdom?

Maddy Allen: I cannot comment on specific spending of the aid in those countries. I think what we see is that for people who are coming to claim asylum in Europe, they are claiming asylum on grounds of individual persecution. That is not necessarily attached to aid operations that are happening on the ground in the countries that they are fleeing from. People are leaving due to the laws in their country around sexuality or gender, for example, or around individual family situations—complex family situations—and they have a right under international law to seek humanitarian protection.

- Q45 Rehman Chishti:** My final question is this: you talked about refugees coming in from Iran, and I think the figure given earlier by Ms Moseley was that 50% of them purport to have links to the United Kingdom and 50% do not. Just looking at where Iran is geographically, you have Iran, then you have Turkey, and then you have countries the refugees are moving in—Bulgaria, Romania, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Belgium and then many others—before they get to France. Why are those 50% who do not have purported links in the United Kingdom not applying to those other countries en route before they get to France?

Clare Moseley: There are completely different answers to that. It is the answers I spoke to your colleague about. As well as family ties, we have other reasons like language and practicality—reasons that they like the UK.



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The other side to it is why don't they stop in the countries en route? Often the countries en route, once they are in Europe, would be Italy or France. The purpose of the Dublin system of allocating refugees in Europe is to make sure that people cannot apply for asylum in more than one country, which is sensible, but there are a lot of reasons why that system is seen to be dysfunctional. What we have ended up with is certain countries like Italy and Greece having a very large amount of refugees that they cannot cope with and then other countries having a much smaller amount. It has not resulted in what you might call a fair allocation of refugees across Europe.

The consequences of that are that countries like Italy and Greece are simply not coping, and that means that the protection that people might claim in those countries is not giving them what they need. For example, I talked to a man from Afghanistan last week who tried to claim asylum in Italy and was granted it. However, he then lived in Italy for two years and twice took a job that, on €5 a day's pay, meant he could not afford to live properly. He was sleeping rough and working for six months, because he was promised that at the end of that six months he would be given a proper job. Both times, at the end of the six months he wasn't given a proper job—he was just sacked. He basically found that he could not have a proper life in Italy, even though he had claimed asylum. The asylum was not worth his future, if that makes sense. These are the sorts of problems that are coming out of the fact that this Dublin system is somewhat dysfunctional.

If they find that they, for whatever reason, cannot make a life in that country, for example Italy, then there is a point where it starts to tip and people start to move on. That is the problem in countries at the moment like Italy and Greece, because they have taken so many refugees they are not coping with it.

We talked a little bit before about the reasons why people do not want to stay in France. The end of that is the people who come on to the UK. Whatever table you look at—whether it is on land or GDP or whatever—the UK has taken fewer refugees than a lot of our European neighbours.

Q46 **Chris Green:** What is the typical route for someone from Iran to get to Calais? Do they fly part of the way? Are they in the back of a lorry for most of the journey? What is a typical route for someone from Iran to Calais?

Maddy Allen: There are a number of routes. Specifically some of the reports of the recent pre-Christmas spike that we saw in the Iranian population was connected to a specific visa restriction that had been lifted in Serbia, so a number of Iranians were flying into Serbia and then continuing their journeys on from there through Europe.

Q47 **Chris Green:** How have they carried on their journey? What transport did they use?



Maddy Allen: A combination of trains, lorries.

Q48 **Chris Green:** Conventional transport, not hidden away like an asylum seeker would be typically thought of in the back of a lorry?

Maddy Allen: A combination of both because across Europe, as we have seen, there are corridors opening and closing and there are a lot of the European borders that are incredibly closed, so there are not legal routes of passage across.

Q49 **Chris Green:** They started off with a conventional flight and then—

Maddy Allen: It might have been a conventional flight or it might have been people are fleeing and have had to go through the unconventional routes, through the land border from Turkey into Greece, or some people have already done the journey across the Mediterranean in a boat and been a sea arrival into either Italy or Greece.

Q50 **Chris Green:** You raised earlier a point about push and pull factors. It does seem to be extraordinary that people are travelling across the Mediterranean, facing such grim conditions in so many European countries, with treatment that falls way below what we would expect in the United Kingdom—risks at sea, risk with the authorities in these countries, risks with criminal gangs—and then people are desperately trying to get to Calais to make that transition over to the United Kingdom. Push factors alone would mean people, for example, would leave Iran, but what is the pull factor to get to the UK? You did highlight the family relationships earlier. I was wondering about that, because no doubt people are saying, “This is my family relationship”, and it has been highlighted that extended family, in a sense, does not count. What verification, in terms of legitimate familial relationships, has been done of that 50%?

Clare Moseley: There are two different issues there, or two different points that we need to be clear on. Yes, the pull factors are family, but just because you have family there are two different families that I am talking about. There is the family that draw you to be in the UK because you want to be with your family, because family is so important to you, but at the moment the definition of family that gives you the legal claim to be transferred to the UK is very narrow and there is a campaign at the moment to try to extend that.

Q51 **Chris Green:** That 50% is a very significant figure—half the people trying to get to the UK have a family relationship. It is quite useful to know how much of that has been verified, because if it helps your claim to get to the UK and is supporting you to get to the UK, you can understand people making that claim. It is important that we recognise if most of that 50% is legitimate or if it is only a fraction of that. I am just trying to get a sense of that. Do you have a sense of that?

Clare Moseley: It is not the same definition of family as you would use for the legal claim purposes.



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Q52 **Chris Green:** In terms of the legal claim, what proportion meets the legal claim?

Clare Moseley: That I do not know, I am sorry.

Q53 **Chris Green:** It could be closer to that 50% or it could be significantly lower?

Clare Moseley: Yes. It is a different definition, so the work has not been done.

Q54 **Chris Green:** Yes, and it is going to be very difficult to verify as well, I suppose. There has been what is regarded as an unprecedented rise in migration in this way across the Channel with the boats, but it is extraordinary again, the Mayor of Calais, highlighting that of the people in Calais only 10% want to claim asylum in France. Is there a major piece of work that the European nation states need to do in recognising their own responsibilities to people? Is there a major failing there? Are they just trying to drive people on and on ultimately to a different country, in this case Britain?

Clare Moseley: No, it is the other way around. The people who want to come to the UK are the ones who get to Calais. Calais is right at the top of France, and they have had to come all of the way through France to get there, so that the people—

Q55 **Chris Green:** Presumably they would have had to come from Serbia, through other countries, through Germany?

Clare Moseley: Yes, a lot of them come through Italy.

Q56 **Chris Green:** So in a sense they are turning every single country down until they get to France and then carrying on?

Clare Moseley: Yes, but they are a small proportion of the refugees. It is really important to remember that it is only a small proportion, and that the larger proportion have stopped on the way. If you can imagine them filtering out on the way down, most of them have already stopped and the reason that they have reached Calais is they are the ones who want to get to England. All of the ones who wanted to get to France have stopped on the way. If they all started in Calais and you had to take out 90% there and persuade them to stay in France then that would be the right way round of thinking about it, but you do not, because the ones who want to stay in France stop on the way in France and they do not get to Calais. In fact, they have deliberately designed it so that if you do want to claim asylum in France it is incredibly difficult to do so in Calais, because they do not want migrants in Calais. They have made it almost impossible to claim asylum in France from Calais, so you have to go to a different town to do it, to keep all those people out of Calais.

Q57 **Chris Green:** So it is a question about the authorities, in that sense, doing the right or wrong thing.



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Judith Dennis: I do also think you make a good point about the way that people are treated in those countries, but you do have to see that in the context of how many people there are. For instance in Greece, at the height of Europe trying to cope with the number of people that had arrived, you can have several stages to the process. You might have a pre-registration of a claim, and then it might be some months before you get into the system and get a legal representative, for instance, to advise you. So although we have minimum standards across Europe, across the EU member states, around how things should be dealt with, when you have high numbers and you have one lawyer for hundreds of people, it is inevitably going to put pressure on that system, and people will move on. That is not to say, as Clare says, that they are all going to one country, but people will inevitably move on if they are not being—

- Q58 **Chris Green:** But in the months, perhaps even years, that people are in that part of France there must be motivation for it and even if it was family ties with 50%, there are significant other motivations. Again, the lack of regulation about combating illegal employment practices in the UK is a draw. It is a major factor. “Come to the UK. It is easy to find a job”, a decent job probably, not ideal, but certainly better than the example of Italy that has just been given.

Judith Dennis: It is not very easy to work without leave unless you are working in the underground economy and open to exploitation.

- Q59 **Chris Green:** That is the other point, that the UK does not effectively combat illegal employment practices.

Judith Dennis: It is not something I know about. I think it is going to be very difficult to find out what the average rates of pay are and how they compare across Europe when you are talking about an issue such as the underground economy.

- Q60 **Chris Green:** It may be going over the top to say that the United Kingdom is not an El Dorado for these migrants—perhaps somebody else might be better informed—but the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford has reported that economic and labour market factors are a major attraction of the UK for migrants. Is this not a factor? Many people would think that if you are getting here from Iran, you are seeking asylum, refuge and safety, but actually there is a significant narrative behind other draw factors for people that are not fundamentally about asylum, but about economic migration.

Clare Moseley: I do not know which report you are referring to there, but—

- Q61 **Chris Green:** There was a report in October 2017 that the Migration Observatory produced.

Clare Moseley: Is the report on immigration?

Chris Green: Yes, it is the Migration Observatory.



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Clare Moseley: Okay, so last year net immigration into the UK was in the region of 300,000. Asylum applications were in the region of 28,000. That is something like 9% of it, so refugees are a very small part of net immigration. Immigration is much bigger than refugees, so yes, there will be a lot of immigrants coming for work, but the refugees that we are talking about are a really small proportion of that, and that is something that I think causes a lot of confusion in the minds of the public. Refugees are different and specific.

Q62 **Chris Green:** I was just trying to understand the perceptions, the understanding of the people in Calais in that area seeking to come to the UK rather than find a home in France.

Clare Moseley: I understand that but because you are referring to why people migrate into the UK for jobs or many other—

Q63 **Chris Green:** No, I was reflecting on the people having transited across Europe, putting their lives at risk, getting to Calais and perhaps living, as we have heard, in very miserable conditions for a drawn out period of time and still persisting in getting to the UK. What is it in terms of migration?

Clare Moseley: In the survey that I mentioned to you, we asked a few questions in different ways to try to get slightly different answers, so we asked things like, "Why do you want to go to the UK?", "What do you want to happen when you get to the UK?", and "What do you most want in the UK?" When we asked them what they most wanted in the UK, we overwhelmingly received the same response again and again: "I just want to be safe", "I just want safety" "I just want to be safe", "I want to be safe and contribute", "I just want to be safe". It is like the only word they can think about: "I want to be safe". But it would not be working illegally, because that is insecurity. They do not want to live outside of the law, because they have had enough of worrying about their situation and not feeling safe. They just want to be safe. It is overwhelming how that comes out every time: "I just want to be safe".

Q64 **Stephen Doughty:** I have met a number of people who have made these types of journeys, both in my own constituency and in general. In particular, I met some young people under Dubs last year, which was an eye-opening experience, hearing some of the stories. My first question, following on from what we have discussed, is do you think that this whole situation has been blown out of proportion to an extent? Obviously nobody wants anybody to be making that dangerous journey and the individuals are of a great concern to many of us, but when you look at the facts, you just gave one about 9% of total immigration and I think the UK only took 4% of the total asylum applications in the EU in the last few years. Do you think this has just been blown out of proportion?

Maddy Allen: I think it has been massively blown out of proportion and I think it is a highly political agenda point. It has come at a very apt time in relation to Brexit votes that are going on. We did not get to November



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and think, "Oh my goodness, we are dealing with something that is completely unprecedented here in Calais". Our work has continued fairly steadily and statically and it is not as volatile as it has been portrayed. It is not this hugely spiking, dramatic situation; unfortunately, we are at a very static point where it has been blown out of proportion. We are still dealing with a very small number of people.

It is also important to acknowledge, when we talk about people wanting safety, that it is not our job to assume and try to cast judgment at this stage about why people want to get to the UK and what their reasons are. They have a right under international law to seek asylum and to go through the relevant processes, which are in themselves flawed, and have their stories heard by legal professionals.

Q65 **Stephen Doughty:** Do you think there would be less of a problem if the UK was taking more people through legitimate, safe routes rather than people having to make that dangerous journey?

Maddy Allen: Definitely. You would see less desperation in Calais but I think it is also important to remember that this rhetoric that we have of invasion or that in some way the floodgates will open from Calais and we will suddenly have thousands of people flooding into Dover is just not the case. There are no floodgates to be opened. There are people who have already made very long and dangerous journeys, are fleeing war and persecution, and have a right to have their voices heard in this country.

Q66 **Stephen Doughty:** You specifically raised this issue about the 30, I think you said, Dubs children still in Calais whose applications have been approved by the UK Government. How long have they been waiting there?

Maddy Allen: Varying lengths of time, from some who have been approved recently in the last month to people who have been waiting for upwards of six months, either through Dublin III family reunification or through Dubs.

Q67 **Stephen Doughty:** What are the reasons you have been given for that?

Maddy Allen: Very little. We have very little information as it is clear that there is a blockage somewhere in the system. We are working with local authorities in the UK through our partners to ensure that there are spaces available and I know that certain local authorities are pitching more places to be available specifically for Dubs children and children that are being transferred through family reunification, but there appears to be a blockage somewhere in the system.

Q68 **Stephen Doughty:** What would be your best guess as to where that blockage might lie? Is it the Home Office?

Maddy Allen: Yes, I would say it is somewhere in the Home Office and to do with the systems that they are going into in the UK, so they are being held by French child protection systems at the moment. They are



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waiting to be transferred into the British child protection systems. At that point the Refugee Youth Service transfers a CTAC file, transfers the case file, across to the UK and there is a blockage at some point in that system. Speaking with social workers and community resource workers within local authorities in the UK, there are specific authorities that have spaces available and have the infrastructure waiting to accept those children, and they do not understand why the children are not on the Eurostar on their way across to Britain.

- Q69 **Stephen Doughty:** Do you believe with better attention and leadership from maybe some senior officials or Ministers that that issue could be quite quickly resolved and most of those children could be in a safe place?

Maddy Allen: Yes.

- Q70 **Stephen Doughty:** Can you give me an idea of some of the stories? Do not breach any confidences, but can you give me a couple of examples of the sorts of conditions that those 30 are in? What have they been through and what are their situations?

Maddy Allen: The children are staying in the Saint-Omer child protection system, in the accommodation centre. We will submit a piece of written evidence to the Committee with testimonies about the conditions in that accommodation, but we have had reports that there are around 80 beds there in huge dormitories. People have to eat on their beds. We have had reports of blood on the mattresses and stained sheets. There are no education systems in those accommodation centres, so children are being held in these spaces and being denied the settlement and security and support that they could have if they were transferred into the system in the UK. Some of the children in that centre are claiming asylum in France, so those children are being held in those spaces in France as well. The conditions are very poor.

There are also children who do not go into those systems. For example, the youngest child, who I mentioned, is 12 and is currently living among adults in a tent in one of the distribution points we support in Calais. He is highly vulnerable to exploitation, as you can imagine, and entirely reliant on our organisations for all his basic needs and security. Our Refugee Youth Service works with him through cultural mediators every single day to support him with even just basic necessities. A phone in that situation is the difference between life and death, if he were to get into a particularly vulnerable situation. He is incredibly under the influence of peers and he has had other children—friends—who have gone into the child protection system and seven months later are still waiting. He believes he will get to the UK quicker by getting a lorry than if he enters into the child protection system that we know will keep him safe.

- Q71 **Stephen Doughty:** So essentially, in a way, it is leading children to take more dangerous routes and potentially to be exploited, rather than go



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through the route that is supposed to be open for them. I would be very interested to get some further details on the specific 30 children and I would certainly be happy to raise this directly with the Home Office, as I am sure would others on this Committee.

Q72 **Chair:** Olivia, do you have any other examples?

Olivia Long: Just following on from what Maddy was saying, I think a large issue for children trying to claim asylum in France is that they often get sent to these centres far away from the Calais that they know. They do not know much about the rest of France, because they went straight to Calais, and sometimes they get sent to these centres that are similarly inadequate. Even if they are claiming asylum in France, the difference between the accommodation centre for those staying in France and for those hoping to go to the UK is not much. Sometimes we hear of children heading down to similar dormitories, not being given enough sustenance—one meal a day—and deciding just to walk back to Calais on their own, alone or in groups. Then they reach Calais and it is just one more border to cross to get to the UK. No matter how much the border is further fortified, it is not really going to dissuade anyone from crossing if they feel like they are still unwelcome in France.

Q73 **Kate Green:** First of all on this point about children, are you able to tell us the age range? You may have said this already, and I apologise, because I came in late.

Maddy Allen: The youngest unaccompanied minor that we have at the moment is 12 through to 18 and the majority are around 15 or 16, although we also work with a number of very young children that are in family units.

Q74 **Kate Green:** This is a very naive question, but as they are approaching the age of 18, and given the delays and blockages you are talking about, what will happen to the route you are hoping to set them down of going through the child protection system if they reach their 18th birthday and that is not resolved?

Maddy Allen: If they have entered the French state child protection system then they will continue to be involved in that. Once they are transferred to the UK, because we deal with leaving care children up to the age of 25, they will continue to get support, but they need to be in the system before they reach 18.

Q75 **Kate Green:** Have you seen any blockages at that point, of moving them into the French child protection system?

Maddy Allen: There are huge blockages. It is reliant on our partner Refugee Youth Service to be entering them into that system. For example, through the Sandhurst Treaty there was a £3.6 million development fund that was allocated to northern France that we are yet to see any evidence of. There is a UK Home Office liaison officer who is based in Paris, who is supposedly responsible for helping to assist these transfers with the UNHCR protection associate in France. We have no



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communication with that UK Home Office liaison officer, nor are we aware of what that specific role is, so we would like to know some more about what their specific responsibilities are supposed to be.

It requires teams we are putting on the ground to engage these children, build up the relationships of trust with these children and then enter them into the protection system, and at that point to continue to follow their case until they are either safely in asylum in France or are transferred to the UK.

- Q76 **Kate Green:** It seems from what you are saying that international co-operation—British, French and perhaps indeed beyond that across Europe—at least in relation to managing people’s safety and safe passage to a country where they might secure refuge, is not working as well as you would like it to. Perhaps the claim that relationships are very good between Britain and France reflect more on enforcement than on a humanitarian approach.

Maddy Allen: That is a very accurate perception of it, yes. I think we are definitely very quick to jump into how we are going to secure the Channel and the boats that are put into the Channel, but very slow to respond in understanding these issues that have been here for a long period of time. This is not something new. These children have not just suddenly appeared in Calais. We have been working with them day in, day out for years and they will continue to be here. That humanitarian response from both Governments, which they both have a responsibility for, is not there.

- Q77 **Kate Green:** How can the UK Government exert influence to ensure that at every stage of the system on both sides of the Channel, that humanitarian pathway works smoothly and effectively?

Maddy Allen: There were a number of recommendations in the written evidence that we have submitted, but I think a part of it is ensuring that funds are put in place on both the British and French sides for adequate numbers of social workers on the ground, interpreters, translators, access to legal information and the provision of adequate state accommodation. Through last year, the refugee service received 274 refusals from Saint-Omer protection—the children’s accommodation centre there—because it was full, so there was no space for those children. Those children were left outside, but the potential response to that would be, “We need more space, we need to build a bigger centre, we need to have more space for these children”, and although that is one solution it is also still a very temporary sticking plaster. Until we have funds being placed into social workers that are on the ground and with those children, letting them know their legal rights for safety, they will continue to use exploitative routes.

- Q78 **Kate Green:** Whose responsibility is it to supply the response?

Maddy Allen: I would say a combination of both the British and French Governments.



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Q79 **Kate Green:** Do you see meaningful discussions about that taking place between those two Governments?

Maddy Allen: I do not see evidence of that at present. Following the Sandhurst Treaty and what we thought could be interesting conversations between Theresa May and Macron in January of 2018, we have seen very little evidence of anything from that treaty coming to fruition.

Q80 **Kate Green:** Would you encourage the Committee to raise this point with our Government at least?

Maddy Allen: Yes.

Q81 **Kate Green:** Thank you. May I just ask, on a completely different point, about resettlement schemes generally? I appreciate this may be stepping beyond some of the very tight issues that we are talking about today. There is quite a multiplicity of resettlement schemes and some are now reaching capacity—or so the Government would say—yet there is uncertainty about what is going to replace them. What would be your ambitions for a resettlement policy and the map of the resettlement offer that the UK Government should have in future?

Judith Dennis: I think we would like to see one programme. It is not a criticism of how the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme was set up, because it was evident that there was a huge need to alleviate pressure on the neighbouring countries, but now we have had time to have that embedded I think everybody probably agrees that there should be one programme for people who are coming from camps, for instance, under the Gateway Protection Programme and the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme. We know that there have been discussions going on to that end.

So there should be one programme. We would like it to be ambitious. The resettlement numbers globally show that only about 1% of refugees get resettled. The UK is playing a big part in that. It has really increased in recent years and we commend the UK Government for that. We would say the programme has been a success, so continue it, but it absolutely needs to be planned now really. If the next programme is to start smoothly, running on from the last one we need some commitments now: some requests of local authorities and some commitments as to what the funding will be and what the programme will look like.

Some local authorities contract to agencies such as ourselves so we do a lot of resettlement on behalf of Migration Yorkshire, for example, in that region. That takes time; the expertise is currently there and the systems are currently there and we would not want to lose that by neglecting to plan for the next programme.

Q82 **Kate Green:** I think it is the wish of the sector that the Government would have made some decisions about this in the course of last year. What is holding up the UK Government's progress on this in your view?



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Judith Dennis: I do not know. I think we did expect an announcement because we know that the programmes take time to bed in. I do not know. It would be a question to ask the Government and certainly we would encourage you to ask when they expect to make an announcement.

Q83 **Kate Green:** Have you asked them what is holding them up?

Judith Dennis: We have not asked the Minister.

Q84 **Kate Green:** The third area that I would like to ask a little more about very specifically—again, I apologise if you covered it while I was not in the room—is the issue of where, ultimately, asylum seekers want to seek asylum and where they make their claim, despite having passed through a number of other countries. You will be aware of this having been quite a lively subject of discussion in response to the Home Secretary's statement to the House on 7 January. Can you articulate for the Committee your understanding of the legal framework in which people are making an asylum claim in relation to the first country that they reach, or whether they should do so?

Judith Dennis: The first thing I would say is there is not any obligation on any individual to make an asylum claim in the first country they reach.

Q85 **Kate Green:** Where does that come from?

Judith Dennis: The obligations are on states rather than on individuals under international law. It has been encouraging to see more people have that understanding, because that is a myth that the Refugee Council has dealt with a lot, not just recently. There is no obligation on an individual. We have the Dublin agreement that lots of people know about. There are also some bilateral agreements around sharing fingerprints, for instance, with the US.

There is a policy that has been in place for a number of years around safer country removals, where if certain criteria are met someone seeking asylum here can be returned to a safer country outside of the Dublin arrangement, but it is done on an individual basis. It has to be really, because you have to make sure that certain criteria are met, such as that the country will not send them back to their country of origin, that it has a functioning asylum system or that the person has already received protection in that country. We do remove some people to safer countries on that basis. I do not know the breakdown of the criteria. I would guess that they will include a high proportion of people who have protection in that country already and/or have family members in that country.

As it is an individualised decision to make, we would also warn against trying to use your resources looking for other countries that can take the refugees when we do not take that many. If we put the resources into the decision-making here, those officers that make those life or death decisions, if you like, could be making good decisions, but if the person needs protection and there is no specific reason to send them to that



third country then we would say that the situation should remain as it is, whereby they would be given protection here.

- Q86 **Kate Green:** Are there any concerns or comments that you would offer in relation to the Home Secretary's remarks in the House about those crossing the Channel, having come from and through a safe country—France in this case? He said that the Government's approach would be to seek to refuse them asylum in this country.

Judith Dennis: They could deem them inadmissible under the Dublin regulation. If they have come from another European country then that mechanism exists already, and I assume that they will be subject to the same investigation as to whether another European member state or another Dublin signatory state should take them. I have no reason to believe that it is any different for these individuals.

Clare Moseley: You have mentioned that there are different criteria under the Dublin regulations. The primary criterion is family and that supersedes everything else, so that has to be looked at first. Also the Dublin criteria do not apply to children, so you cannot send children back to a first safe country, and as you said there is a procedure that has to be followed. There is evidence that has to be taken and the primary evidence is fingerprints. There are some countries, for example Hungary, we cannot send people back to because they do not have a correct human rights record.

According to EUROSTAT, in 2016 and 2017 the UK had more people transferred to it than out of it due to the Dublin regulations, so we had more people coming in. That is because the majority of the transfers are down to family ties. There are more transfers due to family ties than there are due to safe country. Not many of those are made.

- Q87 **Kate Green:** To be absolutely clear, in relation to what the Home Secretary was saying about seeking to refuse people, you are saying that should be within the terms and criteria of Dublin, and not some blanket assumption?

Clare Moseley: Yes, it is impossible for it to be a blanket assumption. It has to be within the law and it has to be following the correct procedure.

- Q88 **Chair:** If there are no Dublin provisions post-Brexit, what does that mean?

Judith Dennis: Those returns will not take place, or those transfers will not take place. What we would worry more about of course is the family reunification elements of the Dublin regulation. I suspect it is not as high on the priority list as some of the other elements of what happens after we leave the European Union. I know that some efforts have been made to raise this issue and to try to get some guarantees. I think it is dependent on a lot of things.

- Q89 **Chair:** So if you did not have the Dublin family route, would you expect



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to see more pressure on the clandestine crossings or journeys?

Judith Dennis: It is possible. We do get people coming anyway, as we have said—children who have not entered the asylum system of another country. We know about the time delays and the worries, so we do get some children who arrive clandestinely anyway and who have family here. If there is no provision it is unlikely that it is going to improve matters.

Q90 **Chair:** A final quick question: did the Sandhurst Treaty make any difference at all?

Maddy Allen: We have seen no evident difference from the Sandhurst Treaty on the ground in the spending of the development fund that was supposed to be put in place. The UK Home Office liaison officer, as I have already mentioned, is processing some of those Dubs children and is dealing with some of the more complex cases, but this is one person who is based in Paris and, as we have already explained, there are thousands of people across northern France and the idea of co-operation between the two Governments has not translated down to the work that is happening daily on the ground.

Chair: Thank you very much for your evidence today. We all very much appreciate it.