

A photograph of a child jumping on a bed, split vertically. The left half is in deep blue, and the right half is in light blue. The child is in mid-air, with their legs bent and arms outstretched. The bed has white, wrinkled sheets.

**SUPPORTED OPTIONS INITIATIVE
PHASE TWO**

Independent Evaluation Final Report

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This evaluation was commissioned
by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation

About this report

This report sets out the findings from an independent evaluation of phase two of the Supported Options Initiative (SOI).

The Initiative, which has been designed, led and funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) and Unbound Philanthropy (Unbound), aims to

“ support and encourage migrant, youth and advice organisations to better understand, respond and reach out to young people and children with irregular immigration status, and capture and share learning to improve practice and policy. ”

This evaluation report aims to describe the evolution of what has been a complex programme of work, make an assessment of its impact against its objectives, and draw out the learning for the two funders, participants and other interested parties. The report focuses on phase two of the Initiative (from July 2014-January 2017), but includes some discussion of earlier phases of work in order to tell a more complete story about the Initiative as a whole.

The evaluation team would like to thank the funders and participants for kindly giving up their time to talk to us about their work. We hope this report will prove useful in supporting future work in this area.

Links to the outputs, research and films mentioned in this report can be found at www.supportedoptions.org and at www.phf.org.uk

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SUPPORTED OPTIONS INITIATIVE – PHASE TWO

SECTION 1 outlines the context for the initiative, describes its evolution and aims, and provides an overview of the work undertaken in phase two.

‘Irregular’ migration: definitions, routes and numbers

Various terms have been used to refer to the immigration status of young people SOI set out to support, including: “illegal”, “irregular” and “undocumented”. Programme leaders currently favour the term “irregular”, since many of the people have had some kind of (often temporary) permission to remain in the UK.

The varied routes into irregular status have been summarised as:

1. Entering the UK unlawfully and never acquiring any form of regular immigration status.
2. Coming to the UK on a visa (eg as a visitor or student) and remaining here beyond the date at which that leave expires (research suggests “overstaying” is the most frequent route into irregular status.)
3. Making an asylum claim which is unsuccessful and “appeal rights exhausted”; and
4. Being born in the UK to parents with irregular immigration status; – a child born in the UK does not automatically acquire British citizenship (CCLC, 2016).

It is important to note that some people included in this cohort may actually be British, but lack the documentation to prove this (ie they are “sans papiers”).

It is difficult to estimate the numbers of people with irregular immigration status in the UK as data is “by definition not recorded” (Migration Observatory, 2011). However, one study suggested there may have been 120,000 under 18s in this situation at the end of March 2011, with 60-65,000 of these young people having been born here (Sigona and Hughes, 2012).

There is little robust data on countries of origin for foreign-born people with irregular status. However one study from 2008 suggested the most prevalent countries might be: Jamaica, Nigeria, Pakistan, China, Turkey and India (Vollmer, 2008).

The long view

Growing concern about migration

Immigration into the UK has increased substantially in the past twenty years, driven by changes in the UK economy, colonial and network ties within migrant communities, and the impact of migration policies (Migration Observatory, 2014). After reaching a peak of +336,000 in the last quarter of 2014/first quarter of 2015, net annual migration plateaued (ONS, 2016), with figures to the end of September 2016 suggesting a slight fall following the Brexit referendum (ONS, 2017).

Increasing immigration has been accompanied by growing public concern and in response, governments have introduced a large amount of new policy and legislation. Since 2010, immigration policy has been officially driven by an aim to reduce “legal” net migration to “*the tens of thousands*” (Migration Observatory, 2014).

As part of these efforts, particular attention has been given to irregular migration, which is thought to be especially unpopular with the public. The last two governments have continued the approach, begun under previous administrations, of aligning the housing, welfare, health, and legal aid systems to create a “hostile environment”, with the aim of discouraging irregular migrants from coming to the UK and from staying here (CCLC, 2013).

Situation for children and young people

Children with “*irregular*” immigration status have been said to be “*in a position of triple vulnerability: as children, above all; as migrants; and finally...as undocumented migrants*” (PICUM, 2008). Children and young people in this situation have also been said to be the group “*most at risk of exceptional poverty and destitution*” (CCLC, 2013). Yet while there has been increased concern about irregular migration in recent years, the specific needs of children and young people have received little attention.

Under UK law, refugee and migrant children currently have the same entitlements as citizen children to compulsory education, primary healthcare and rights set out in the 1989 and 2004 Children Acts. However, there has been widespread confusion in policy terms about whether they should be protected as children or controlled as migrants, and their rights have not always been upheld in practice (CCLC, 2013).

It is critical to support children and young people to resolve their immigration status as early as possible since this becomes much more difficult, protracted and expensive after they turn 18. A focus on youth is also important since lack of status impacts on key entitlements for young people (such as access to higher education as a home student), and there remain some avenues open to regularise immigration status for those aged 18-25.

Key changes to the context since SOI began

Since the start of phase one (2012-2014), this work has become very much harder because of further changes in the environment in which participants and funders have been operating. Changes to the Immigration Rules in 2012 abolished what were previously relatively swift routes to indefinite leave (permanent status), creating a new ten-year route to settlement, even after establishing long residence. This greatly increased the numbers of people with temporary leave, forced to reapply every 30 months for 10 years before they can settle, with no access to free secondary healthcare, further and higher education, or welfare in the meantime. In addition, the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LAPSO) 2012 took the vast majority of immigration cases “*out of scope*”, making it much more difficult for people to access legal advice. Cuts to wider services and support have also made it increasingly difficult for children and young people with irregular immigration status, and their families, to survive in the UK.

The context for phase two of the Initiative has got tougher still, with the passing of two new Immigration Acts in 2014 and 2016 specifically designed make it easier to identify people with irregular status and remove them, and to make it harder for them to continue to live in the UK (Home Office, 2013, 2016). Immigration was also a deciding issue for those people who voted to leave the EU in the referendum on 23rd June 2016 (Ipsos Mori, 2016, Buzzfeed, 2016). Although it is not yet clear what impact leaving the EU will have on migration to and from the UK, it will clearly be a central issue in the negotiations (HM Government, 2017).

Funders' interest in the issue and in collaboration

For PHF, interest in this topic links to commitments to improve the lives of young people, protect their rights, and ensure their safe transition to adulthood. For Unbound, ensuring migrants and refugees are treated with respect and can integrate into their new communities is core to their overall mission.

PHF's involvement in this area began in 2007, when one of the Foundation's advisors carried out some initial investigations on behalf of the Board. A team of researchers from City University and the University of Oxford were commissioned to carry out a pioneering study, *No Right to Dream*, to explore young people's first-hand experiences (Bloch, A. et al 2009). PHF also began conversations with Unbound, one of very few organisations in the UK that were active in this space, to explore possible ways of working together.

In Autumn 2010, PHF's Board decided to proceed with a Special Initiative on undocumented young people, in collaboration with Unbound. Supported Options was conceived as an Initiative in recognition of the complexity of the issues and the fact that the work was unlikely to be funded by others. As an Initiative, it benefitted from longer timescales, a more substantial budget, deeper engagement with participating organisations, and a stronger focus on learning than might otherwise have been the case. SOI was designed by

the Initiative Coordinator, in consultation with children and young people's organisations, legal experts, and partners in the migration sector.

SOI has supported a diverse cohort of organisations to undertake a wide range of work, including legal and social support for children, young people and families and activity to influence professional practice and policy. The funders decided explicitly not to fund service delivery alone (since this would be unsustainable once funding ended), nor to fund only specialist migration and advice organisations (since a broader holistic approach was needed to meet children and young people's needs). SOI has supported participating organisations through a mix of grant-making, commissioning and convening, making it a good example of a "*grants-plus*" or "*high engagement*" approach to funding (Cairns and Buckley, 2012).

Aims and focus: phases one and two

The Initiative was designed initially to run from July 2012-July 2014 with specific aims to:

- Provide better advice services for young people through holistic approaches to their advice, support and information needs (both legal and social)
- Improve provision of online information and support to young people, and
- Increase understanding of the issues facing young people leaving the UK, forcibly or voluntarily, and pilot options to better support them.

After an open call for proposals, nine organisations were awarded grants in this phase. In addition, the funders made a number of commissions, including for an award-winning blog on the experiences of young people with irregular status, and a piece of research on routes to regularisation for people without legal status in the UK. This “broad start” enabled the funders to listen to the field, explore the issues and begin to identify possible solutions.

In the Autumn of 2013, PHF and Unbound decided to proceed with a second phase of work to run from July 2014-July 2016, with specific aims to:

- Increase the registration of UK-born children, who support organisations argue “*belong in the UK*” and “*know no other home*” (CCLC, 2016)
- Improve support to young people through capacity building of leading organisations, and
- Understand young people’s experiences and share this with practitioners and policy-makers.

Organisations were invited to apply in this phase. All nine organisations funded in phase one continued to be funded, with four new organisations also receiving funding. The focus in phase two was on increasing the numbers of young people supported to regularise their status, raising the visibility of the issue, and funding some practical solutions. While participants largely focused on crisis support in phase one, there was a marked shift towards prevention in this phase.

Funding and current status

While in phase one, Unbound's funding contribution was fairly limited (amounting to around 10% of total funds), during the course of phase two this grew to around 50%, as more funds were aligned to support shared Initiative goals. In total in phase two, the funders made grants to the value of £1,231,201 (£801,201 from PHF and £430,000 from Unbound). PHF and Unbound also continued to jointly fund central coordination of the Initiative, as well as convening, commissioning, sharing and learning activities, and evaluation. In total in phase two, the funders spent a further £262,689 on these costs.*

Largely as a result of what has been learnt and achieved through SOI, *"improving support for young people who migrate and strengthening integration so that communities can live well together"* is now one of six priorities in PHF's current (2015) UK strategy, with funding for work on children and young people with irregular status ring-fenced in the new Shared Ground Fund. The funders have recently agreed to continue to work together on these issues. For Unbound, collaboration with PHF is a key way in which, in the UK, they meet the second of three priorities in their strategic plan (2014-2018) on migrant integration.

*Cost data relates to actual spend from start of April 2014-end of January 2017 (the formal cut off date for the evaluation). It includes two grants that were not explored in this study: "Campaign Boot camp" and an extension to Praxis' work.



SUPPORTED OPTIONS INITIATIVE – PHASE TWO

SECTION 2 describes the experiences of young people with “irregular” status, the direct support participants have provided and the influencing activities they have undertaken, and how participants and funders have worked together.

Young people and their experiences: overview and trends

Confirming some of the themes previously identified in literature on this topic, experience in phase two suggests young people with irregular status feel their life is in limbo and experience frustration born of prolonged periods of uncertainty, in which it is not possible to take steps to build a more secure future and realise their dreams. Actual experience or fear of negative attitudes from others often leads young people to isolate themselves from friends and other potential support networks, which is a risk factor for abuse (Skehan et al, 2017). Evidence suggests young people's identity is also put in jeopardy as they begin to conflate this with the narrow "*immigration story*" they are forced to tell over and over again to those in authority. Together with financial hardship, and restricted access to healthcare and support services, these factors often lead to psychological distress, anxiety and depression.

In phase two, participants report that young people are finding it increasingly difficult to access legal advice, as the lack of free support reaches crisis point. Reflecting policy changes, they also report a big increase in the numbers of young people who have some kind of (temporary) permission to remain in the UK, often with No Recourse to Public Funds. Financial hardship, coupled with significant increases in application fees over the past few years, means more young people are "*bouncing in and out of legal status*", dispelling popular myths about "*good migrants*" who have status and "*bad*" migrants who don't. Participants in phase two have also seen many more young people for whom there is no short or medium-term way of resolving their status under revised Immigration Rules on long-residence.

The evaluation confirms that young people with irregular immigration status are a diverse group, facing a wide range of challenges. The next page sets out some fictionalised, composite scenarios that young people supported by the Initiative have found themselves in, based on conversations with participating projects.

Young people and their experiences: a diverse cohort

Young person with no immediate hope of resolution

"I was brought here by my mother when I was 14. I'm now 19. I want to regularise my status but I've been told I can't do anything about it right now. I have to wait. My whole life's completely on hold."

Young person refused registration after caution

"I'm 15 and was born in the UK, but my parents didn't know about registration when I was young. I recently put in an application but this was refused because I got a caution last year and they said my character was no good."

Young person escaping persecution/abuse at home

"I'm 20 and moved from Rwanda because I was pressurised into getting involved in military activities there. It was awful, but I'm just so grateful I managed to escape here."

Young person blocked from accessing student finance

"I was born here and only found out I wasn't a British Citizen when I applied for student finance. It was such a shock! Now I feel my career path is blocked and I can't progress like all my friends."

Young person trafficked into the UK

"I was brought here by my 'auntie' and made to work in her house for 16 hours a day. She wouldn't let me go to school. I spoke to a lawyer in the past about this, but they didn't seem to be that interested in what I said."

Appeal Rights Exhausted asylum-seeking young person

"I arrived in the UK from Afghanistan at 15 and was taken into care. Now I'm turning 18, I'm facing removal to Kabul, a place I've never even visited before. If someone had looked into my asylum case properly years ago, I might not be in this situation now."

Young person facing destitution

"I'm 22 and came here when I was three. My mum never tried to sort out my status and she left me anyway and I grew up in care. I recently lost my job, but I can't get benefits. I've got a young son and we just don't have any money for advice or application fees."

Young woman abandoned by British partner

"My child was born here. Her father is British, but we're not really in contact anymore. He promised to provide the papers to prove that she's British, but now he's disappeared again and my lawyers says her birth certificate is no longer good enough evidence."

Mother & child homeless after relationship breakdown

"I came to the UK as a visitor, met someone from France and over-stayed. After my son was born, he became violent and we split up. My son is now registered and I have limited leave, but we have no support from the Council and are sleeping on friends' sofas."

Direct support for young people and families: overview

In phase two, participants have provided a wide range of direct support to young people and, in some cases, to their families. This has included tailored legal or social support (delivered individually or as part of a group) as well as general awareness-raising activities of various types.

awareness-raising

A wide range of activity to raise awareness of rights and entitlements, including workshops, informal talks, targetted letter mail outs etc.

For example, the Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens (PRCBC) ran workshops at a local health centre, Islington Law Centre raised awareness via local primary schools.

legal support

Help to access a lawyer or advice worker, provision of individual advice and, in the case of Central England and Islington Law Centres and PRCBC, full representation. Some projects also helped young people to access funding so a lawyer could take on their case. For example, Coram applied for Exceptional Case Funding from the Legal Aid Agency for some of its clients.

other expert support

Support to help young people cope with their current situation and explore future options. For example, help to find emergency housing, deal with debts, access counselling and education services, and to set up work experience and training.

peer support

Support to meet, share experiences and form supportive relationships with other young people in a similar situation. This includes providing group support alongside one-to-one work (eg Praxis' Brighter Futures group), connecting people to informal community support (eg Central England Law Centre & Grapevine), and "buddying" schemes (eg at Praxis & Just for Kids Law).

Direct support: awareness raising and legal advice

Awareness raising activities have been important in establishing trust with communities, providing a wider pool of people than before with more intensive support and the ability to build productive relationships with partners. Activity revealed poor levels of understanding of irregular status and routes to regularisation among migrant and diaspora communities, especially of the fact that a child is not automatically British if they are born in the UK.

The experience of providing legal advice and representation has confirmed the complexity of many young people's cases, which require advisors to have a wide knowledge of immigration, nationality, EU and international law. SOI funding has enabled participants to operate in new, more flexible ways in order to establish trust, explore case histories in full, and better support this group of clients. Case work has revealed numerous examples of poor practice and lack of understanding on the part of some private sector solicitors. It has also revealed numerous examples of poor decision-making on the part of the Home Office (eg where a child's *best interests* have not been given appropriate weight and attention), and poor communication (eg where short, identical, refusal letters have been sent that do not engage with the evidence or legal arguments in a case).

In an exciting development in phase two, Coram Children's Legal Centre has developed a new probono model for registering children as British Citizens, in collaboration with two leading city law firms. Initiative leaders also facilitated contact between Coram, Islington and Central England Law Centre and Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), a US-based organisation that supports probono lawyers to represent unaccompanied immigrant and refugee children in deportation proceedings. With support from Microsoft, PHF and Unbound, the three law centres are now developing Kids in Need of Defense UK, which aims to build a probono movement with the capacity and scale to address the legal needs of children and young people with unresolved immigration status.

Direct support: other expert support and peer activity

Wider support, beyond help with immigration and nationality issues, has also been crucial in helping young people improve their immediate quality of life and plan for their future. This support has been critical since many young people are facing such hardship that they cannot begin to tackle their immigration status until this is resolved. As Home Office decision-making is often so protracted (a “marathon rather than a sprint”), on-going support of this nature is also required to sustain a young person while their case is in train. Providing holistic support has required participants to develop new forms of collaborative working to avoid continually passing young people between different professionals within their own organisation and between partner organisations.

Peer support has been an important way of helping young people overcome the stigma associated with irregular status and building their self esteem. Being able to open up and share experiences with others in a similar situation has helped young people to feel less alone and to see their own experiences in a wider context. In phase two, The Let us Learn Project at Just for Kids Law and Citizens UK’s Stand Up Stand Out group have taken this focus further to support young people’s development as leaders of a nascent movement to improve the lives of young people who migrate, including those with irregular status. Let Us Learn have focused in particular on supporting young leaders to narrate their “*story of self*”, or explain their situation in a way that helps others to understand and connect with it. Peer support of all types has been crucial in challenging straightforward notions of vulnerability and overcoming the traditional divide between providers and beneficiaries of support.

Sharing learning and influencing law and policy: overview

In addition to providing direct support, participants have conducted a wide range of work to share their experience and expertise with other practitioners and to try to influence law and policy.

Sharing learning with other practitioners

This has included providing advice to other professionals, carrying out and disseminating research, producing awareness-raising films and guidance, sharing insights at conferences and other meetings.



**Activity
has
reached:**



- social workers
- Independent Reviewing Officers
- lawyers/advice workers
- staff at children's charities and youth organisations
- healthcare professionals
- teachers
- prison service
- housing sector staff

Influencing law & policy

This has included involvement in strategic litigation, carrying out and disseminating research, sharing insights at conferences and other meetings, conducting media interviews, writing articles and blogs, responding to public consultations, briefing MPs, and providing evidence to various committees and forums.



**Activity
has
reached:**



- **journalists**
- **local councillors**
- **MPs, Peers, civil servants**
- **voluntary sector policy leads**
- **policy-makers at various international organisations and institutions**

Sharing learning: professionals, VCS and local authorities

Raising awareness of the issues among other professionals, especially teachers and social workers, is crucial if children and young people are to be signposted to specialist support before they reach adulthood (when the now very much tougher rules on long-residence apply). However, participants reported very little or poor understanding of the issues among other professionals. It was common for professionals to think that asylum claims were the only route open to young people.

Participants also reported poor understanding of the issues among voluntary sector organisations, especially in the children's and youth sectors. Some VCS organisations were fearful of tackling such a "*politically toxic*" issue, especially larger organisations that are dependent on government contracts. Participants highlight that the specialist migration sector has largely evolved to meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers; the full diversity of the cohort of young people with irregular status is not well-understood or catered for. Even where specialist support exists, it tends to be provided by small, local groups, raising concerns about sustainability.

In phase two, much sharing and influencing work has targeted local authorities, who have a key role to play in supporting destitute migrant families and children in care. Participants' experience suggests that many local authorities don't understand their duties to support families with No Recourse to Public Funds, while others are increasingly confident about refusing support as part of their "*robust front door*". Although under statutory guidance social workers are supposed to facilitate access to legal advice for children in care who need this, research suggests that local authorities often lack an understanding of the numbers of children in their care who may require advice (CCLC, 2016) and are unwilling to pay for this (TCS, 2015, CCLC, 2013). SOI participants suggest local authorities also often refuse to pay for citizenship or immigration application fees for care leavers (which are not free for this group).

Influencing law and policy: strategic litigation and policy

In phase two, SOI participants have intervened in a number of strategic litigation cases, playing a lead role, providing witness statements or expert evidence, or supporting legal teams. Cases have focused on wide range of issues, including: interpretations of “best interests” and “good character” criteria; Home Office “profit” on applications; the impact of new “appeal first, deport later” provisions on children; and legal aid for separated migrant children in immigration cases. Although there is still legal aid for judicial review, there is no legal aid for pre-litigation research so funding from SOI has been especially helpful. Despite some positive outcomes for individual young people and families, numerous cases have settled before a full hearing, preventing a wider legal precedent from being set.

Given the hostile environment, participants’ different organisational agendas and priorities, and the diversity of the cohort of children and young people affected, it has been challenging to develop a coherent, overarching, influencing strategy in phase two. However, following a residential session in Oxford in July 2015, convened by Coram, SOI participants have begun to develop a shared influencing platform and strategy, centred on the notion of permanence and shorter, lower-cost routes to settled status. Initiative leaders and participants have also begun to explore ways to improve policy and services at a city or city-region level. Events run in London and Manchester with the support of the New Economics Foundation, as well as engagement with the Mayor’s office in London, are promising new developments with clear potential for the future.

Collaboration: achievements

Overwhelmingly, participants described their experience of taking part in Supported Options in very positive terms, confirming the benefits of this type of “*high-engagement*” funding (Cairns and Buckley, 2012). Although some participants had experience in this field prior to SOI, involvement in the Initiative has enabled them to expand their activity and refine and strengthen their approach. For those who were new to the topic, the Initiative has provided a safe and supportive environment in which they could develop their expertise. Being able to work alongside organisations with similar values and a sense of mission has been an important source of “moral support” at a time when the external environment has been so hostile. Having the backing of the two funders, was also seen to give status to the work: “*It really helps give your work credibility, having these Foundations behind you.*”

Involvement in SOI has also been helpful in building the capacity of participating organisations in a number of different ways. Given cuts to legal aid, funding has been invaluable, in particular for legal advice and representation and to carry out pre-litigation research. Sharing and learning opportunities have enabled participants to “*stand back from the daily grind and...put things into a broader frame*”, and to identify common problems and issues and work out how best to resolve them. The Initiative has also exposed participants to new ideas and brokered new relationships of lasting benefit to their organisations (e.g. through exchange visits to the US): “*One of the brilliant things is that you are exposed to things you wouldn’t normally have known about*”.

Collaboration: facilitating factors

The expertise of the joint PHF and Unbound team seems to have made it easier to spot issues, encourage meaningful collaboration, broker new relationships, and offer the right support at the right time. With wide experience in law, policy research, the voluntary sector, philanthropy and politics the team have been able to add value to participants' work as well as to lead thinking and develop new avenues of work, where required. Unbound's input has been particularly vital in relation to wider influencing and change work, where their deep expertise in the issues and networking abilities have proved invaluable.

Style and approach has been also been important. Participants praised Unbound's senior staff for their energy and support. There was also particular praise for the Initiative Coordinator who has combined expertise in the subject matter with strong relationship-building skills in a highly effective manner: *"She's been really good at asking great questions and helping us approach things from a different perspective". "I think the way that she has managed the grant-making has been tremendous."*

She's done what we hoped for and more – she's really built new relationships with people from different professional backgrounds." The collaborative style of the Senior Grants Manager for Integration and Migration has also helped to ensure that learning from SOI is shaping PHF's wider work in this area.

Funding different types of work targeted at different groups of young people has also allowed for effective cross-fertilisation of ideas and practice, both within and between participating organisations. Participants describe how working in this way has allowed them *"different entry points into the same set of issues"*, helping them better understand the wider context in which they are all operating.

Collaboration: examples of joint working

There were multiple examples of joint working, including:

- **Signposting and cross referrals**, including for legal advice, group support and specialist legal support
- **Sharing expertise** including second tier legal advice, and development support to youth led work
- **Tackling shared problems** sharing information, identifying & finding solutions to common problems (for example on the issue of young people who have been abused/ exploited by advice workers)
- **Joint research** including on VCS support for destitute migrant families and the impact of legal aid cuts on separated children
- **Joint training**, including on citizenship registration and on training for Independent Reviewing Officers in local authorities
- **Cooperation on litigation**, including providing evidence in a case to challenge to citizenship fees for families supported under S.17, and a challenge about legal aid for separated migrant children with immigration cases.
- **Shared campaigns**, including for a deputy mayor for citizenship and integration in London
- **Organisational support**, including staff members acting as trustees on the Board of a new project
- **New ventures**, for example developing new infrastructure to try to meet need (Kids in Need of Defense UK)

Collaboration: challenges

Funders and participants have also experienced some of the common challenges often associated with “*high engagement funding*”. Managing relationships and keeping everyone up to date with developments has required on-going, extensive effort. Arguably this has been particularly challenging on SOI given the complex range of work undertaken and the fairly large group of (time-pressed) participants involved.

Aligning the goals and interests of a range of different organisations has also required careful negotiation. While for most participants having broad Initiative-level objectives was a strength (since it meant participants could “*work towards similar objectives in a complementary way*”, a few felt it might have been helpful to have set some more clearly defined or specific Initiative-wide objectives. This difference of opinion seems to reflect varying levels of interest in and appetite for wider systems change. While some participants were clearly motivated by this, for others the chance to secure funding to continue much-needed direct support may have felt more pressing in a complementary way.

Developing ways of working and a support offer that works for all participants is a common challenge with high-engagement funding. Some participants that lack their own policy function would have appreciated even more sharing of developments in the wider environment to help them situate their work in context. We understand the Coordinator has plans for regular horizon-scanning sessions in the next phase of work, which seems like a very positive development.

Finally, while participants have been overwhelmingly positive about their experience of working with and alongside the funders on SOI, a few people told us that they found the team quite tough and directive at various points on the programme. This may just illustrate the engrained power-dynamics at play in funder/grantee relationships (however sensitively handled). The funders have learnt from a great deal about these dynamics during SOI and more recently, e.g. on the US exchange trips, have focused on brokering relationships and “*planting ideas*” that participants can pursue as they see fit. This approach seems to have been very successful.



SUPPORTED OPTIONS INITIATIVE - PHASE TWO

SECTION 3 summarises initiative achievements against objectives and sets out some suggestions for the future development of work in this area.

Summary: achievements against objectives

As Initiative objectives were broadly defined and leaders did not set numerical targets, the basis on which to make overall assessments about achievements is perhaps less clear than for some other programmes. However, the evidence we have gathered suggests that in phase two a great deal has been achieved that contributes to the overall objectives to *“support and encourage migrant, youth and advice organisations to better understand, respond and reach out to young and child migrants with irregular immigration status, and capture and share learning to improve practice and policy”*.

As Initiative leaders anticipated, not all activity will be sustained once funding ends. However, the decision to invest in learning and sharing activities on a significant scale should help to ensure the work continues to influence policy and practice after the end of this phase of work. Investment in capacity building also means there is a cohort of organisations whose members are well-positioned to continue to act as sector experts and ambassadors for these issues.

Some participants, such as Coram Children’s Legal Centre, have now benefitted from ten years’ investment through SOI, firmly establishing work on undocumented children and young people as a part of their core activities.

The development of Kids in Need of Defense UK is evidence of how Initiative leaders have spotted a gap in provision, and worked alongside participants to create an entirely new institution that will help ensure a continuing focus on these issues into the future.

It is important to emphasise that this is not the end of a journey. As highlighted earlier, Supported Options is now integrated into PHF’s Migration and Integration stream of work. In the next phase of activity there are opportunities to take account of learning from phase two and to continue to influence aligned and related work funded by both PHF and Unbound.



OBJECTIVE 1: Increase the registration of UK-born children

In phase two, 82 children and young people have been registered as British Citizens (71 born in the UK and 11 born outside). In addition, 117 young people and family members have been helped to regularise their status in other ways (including 23 young people who have received indefinite leave to remain, and 17 who have been granted refugee status or had this status extended).

In total, we estimate that 1815 young people have received some kind of tailored legal or social support (individually or as part of a group). Four hundred and fourteen young people have been helped to access a lawyer, 758 have received legal advice and 237 have received legal representation. In total, approximately 7545 young people and families have received some kind of general awareness-raising support on their rights and entitlements. It seems quite likely that some of these people will have gone on to register as British Citizens, or regularise their status in some other way, with the help of a lawyer operating outside of SOI (where it will not have been possible to capture outcomes).

Participants have also continued to develop their understanding of the cohort of British-born (and other) young people who may be eligible for registration and their expertise in using a route that was little understood before SOI began. They have shared this expertise widely with migrant communities and professionals. The evaluation suggests that British-born children and young people may be even harder to locate and engage than newer migrants with irregular status, however the collaborations formed in phase one and, in particular, phase two should help facilitate future work in this area. The pro bono advice service being developed through Kids in Need of Defense UK offers an exciting opportunity to significantly increase the numbers of young people registered as British Citizens in future.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Improve support to young people through capacity building of leading organisations

Although some participants already had considerable expertise in this area prior to the Initiative, both those with previous experience and those newer to the topic have continued to develop their understanding of the issues and their approach through phases one and two.

Participation in the Initiative has helped to build organisational capacity in a number of ways. Funding has been critically important in enabling participants to pursue work in this area, in particular to provide advice, take on cases and undertake pre-litigation research. Given cuts to legal aid, and the limited number of other funders interested in this work, it seems likely that much of this activity would not have happened without Supported Options. In addition, the Initiative has provided opportunities for participants to share experiences and insights, identify common problems, and work together to develop solutions. Drawing on their convening power, the funders have also introduced participants to other experts, both in the UK and the US, who have provided fresh ideas and inspiration that have shaped the work in interesting ways.

After a “*broad start*”, some particularly promising strands of work have emerged during phase two. In addition to the development of Kids in Need of Defense UK, the Initiative has helped to support a growing pool of youth leaders who are equipped to tell their own story, contribute to training, research and communications efforts, and to advocate for change.

Although not all activity will be sustained once funding ends, it seems to us that there is now greater consensus about the main blocks and barriers young people face and some emerging good practice about how best to support them.



OBJECTIVE 3: Understand young people’s experiences and share this with practitioners and policy makers

In phase two, participants have conducted a wide range of work to share their experience and expertise with other professionals and to influence the law and policy environment. We estimate that around 1000 people have received formal training funded by SOI and a further 1300 training influenced by learning from it. Participants have also contributed to around 30 strategic litigation cases.

Although it has not been possible to track the impact of all of this work, feedback from the training courses we have seen is extremely positive. Together, sharing activities have greatly increased the pool of people with some understanding of the issues facing children and young people with irregular status. They have also raised the profile of participating organisations as an expert resource that professionals can continue to draw on in future. The numerous, very thorough and useful, reports and pieces of guidance produced in phase two should also help ensure the work continues to have a wide influence.

In an increasingly hostile environment, achieving policy change has been harder. However, participants have begun to develop a clearer set of policy “asks”, centred around the notion of “*permanence*”. If participants have the appetite, these could form the basis of a shared campaigning platform in future. The investment in youth leadership means there is a pool of talented young leaders with the capacity to front these initiatives. The current focus on exploring possibilities for change at local level is an interesting and promising development, which illustrates the Initiative’s flexible and pragmatic approach to achieving change.



Suggestions for the future: objectives and impact

SOI has funded and supported a large and diverse range of work. Although some clearer areas of focus are starting to emerge, it seems likely that breadth and diversity will continue to be a feature of the work, given the multi-faceted nature of the challenges facing children and young people with irregular status.

In order to help communicate this work, and to monitor its on-going impact, it might be helpful for the funders to develop a Theory of Change document. This would set out the outcomes they hope to achieve, and how they anticipate the different strands of work they might fund (direct support, influencing activities etc) and collaborative ways of working will lead to this change. While we appreciate progress will always require negotiation with participants, and flexibility in the face of changes in the external environment, we feel this would be a helpful “*anchor*” for the work.

For each major strand of work, it may also help to develop some clearer learning and change objectives and to begin to set some indicative targets to guide future funded work and reflection activities.

For example, in relation to information-sharing, funders may now wish to set some objectives and targets to reach a certain number of primary school teachers and social workers through training activity (given their critical role in signposting young people to support).

We also suggest the funders develop a set of core indicators that each funded organisation is expected to collect data against (where these are relevant to their work). Data can then be aggregated to form an overarching “dashboard” to help steer this work. The indicators we have used in the evaluation should form a good basis for this.

These suggestions should help provide greater focus to any future external evaluation. They might also remove the need for a comprehensive study, allowing the funders, for example, to invite in external people to provide challenge around more specific strands of work. We welcome the fact that funders have begun to explore these issues.

Suggestions for the future: understanding lives

Experience in phase two has highlighted the important ways in which irregular status can affect partner relationships and dynamics within the family. Irregular status can fracture relationships and divide family units. The decisions taken by parents can have unintended intergenerational impacts on children and grandchildren. It might be instructive to explore these issues in more depth in the next phase of this work, to better understand how families experience them, and how best to support them to make choices.

Experience in phase two suggests that there may be some differences in the profile of UK-born children and young people with irregular status (who may be eligible to register under the “*ten year*” route) and others, and that different approaches may be required to reach and support this first group. The new Kids in Need of Defense UK programme provides an opportunity to explore this issue further and to share learning with others.

It might be interesting to follow up some of the children and young people who have been registered through SOI, or helped to regularise their status in other ways, to explore the impact this has had on their lives. There may also be potential to investigate the financial benefits of timely regularisation (which might include, for example, reduced use of costly emergency services as people have access to mainstream support, and increased contributions to the public purse as people can work legally or progress to higher paid employment following access to further and higher education).

Suggestions for the future: direct support

Participants have highlighted that there may be an on-going support need for some, more vulnerable, young people who are successful in achieving settled status. After years of effort to change their situation, some young people experience a dip in their mental health and wellbeing post-settlement, perhaps because a central focus in their life has now gone, and they are left dealing with a host of other issues that had previously been on hold. Peer support and movement-building work, where this continues, may offer a way of providing such support in a cost-effective way. However, the funders may wish to explore if other activity would be beneficial as well. Some participants, including Central England Law Centre and Grapevine, have explored how young people can be connected to informal sources of community support as a way of helping them integrate (both pre and post settlement). More work of this kind might be needed in future, drawing on support from both migrant and “host” communities.

Although collaboration between different types of professionals and across organisational boundaries has been a successful feature of phase two, some participants have told us that joint working has been complicated by different confidentiality standards for lawyers and other support workers. It might be worth exploring this issue in more depth and perhaps developing some common protocols people can sign up to.

Participants have also highlighted that while lawyers are usually very good at technical supervision, they sometimes give less attention to psychological support for their teams. As this is clearly demanding and, at times, emotionally draining work, this may be an area where youth and children’s charities, who can be good at supporting staff in these ways, could share their expertise.

Suggestions for the future: sharing and influencing

It is clear that funders and participants face a significant challenge in boosting awareness and understanding of the cohort of children and young people with irregular status and the issues they face. A further push to raise awareness among mainstream children's and youth charities and with social services would seem to be important priorities for future work. In raising awareness of the cohort, it will clearly be important to avoid "reducing" young people to their immigration status or playing into unhelpful notions about who is "*deserving*" or "*undeserving*". It might be helpful to develop a communications strategy, underpinned by some shared principles, as voluntary sector experts on these issues.

We appreciate the challenges involved in progressing strategic change work, not least that participants have different appetites for this, the external environment is constantly changing, and there are tough choices to be made about pursuing a more "*covert*" or "*overt*" strategy given the perceived "*toxicity*" of the issue. However, there seems to be merit in continuing to explore areas of mutual interest, as well as the structures and resources required to take this forward in a coordinated fashion.

While funders can be slow to act, it seems likely that this work will require nimble action at times, as illustrated by PHF and Unbound's recent Calais relocation work.

Given the critically important role of local authorities in supporting destitute migrant families and young people with irregular status who are in care, a more concerted attempt to influence their policy and practice, though litigation but also through a range of less adversarial approaches, should perhaps also be a priority for future work.

In future, it may be worth considering if a group of interested social workers and teachers, or relevant professional groupings or bodies, should be more actively involved in the work, given the importance of these professional groups. It also seems important to explore how young people can be more centrally involved in this work at every level including, potentially, in research, communications, and evaluation.

Suggestions for the future: funding and collaboration

For future funding efforts focused on this issue, there seems to be great merit in continuing to invest in supporting funded organisations to share learning and engage in joint reflection. If the funders want to continue to promote this work as a shared endeavour between a collectivity of like-minded organisations, it might be worth reflecting further on the role and positioning of funded organisations (as “grantees”, “participants”, or “co-leaders”). It might also be worth thinking more about the kind of branding and identity this work requires (even if it is now integrated into the wider Shared Ground Fund). If the emphasis is on genuine co-production with participants, it might be helpful to make this explicit in grant agreements and perhaps to provide four or five paid days a year to ensure time for information-sharing, learning and collaboration is safeguarded.

Several participants highlighted the difficulties they experienced in closing down direct support work with vulnerable young people when funding ended. We understand tapers were built into some grant agreements in this phase, and in future it would seem to be sensible to explore this further so work can be wound down in a gradual manner.

Given that participants have further developed their expertise in phase two, and are increasingly seen as an expert resource that other professionals can draw on, it would seem to make sense to consider how all phase two participants, not just those receiving funding in the next phase, can be supported to continue to act as ambassadors for this work in future.

As part of phase two, Initiative leaders have taken steps to try to widen the pool of potential funders interested in this topic. Although this work has yet to yield significant results, it would seem sensible to continue to explore possibilities in this area. In addition to financial support, it might be worth exploring the potential for other funders to provide access to their networks of funded organisations as potentially receptive audiences for future awareness-raising activity.



SUPPORTED OPTIONS INITIATIVE - PHASE TWO

Appendix

The APPENDIX provides a summary of each participant's work, information about the types of young people supported by the programme, a description of the evaluation aims and activities and references for literature cited in this report

Phase two projects



Continuation from phase 1 of legal advice (immigration & nationality), casework, advocacy & group-based support for young people. Training for Independent Reviewing Officers & social workers (with CCLC). Film on challenges faced by young migrants. Research on impact of legal aid cuts on separated children in immigration cases (with ILC).



Continuation from phase 1 of outreach legal advice (immigration & nationality) for young people & families & help to access legal representation & other services through Migrant Children's Project. New pro bono advice project to help children register as British citizens, in Legal Practice Unit. Wide range of training & influencing work.



Continuation from phase 1 of legal advice & representation (immigration, nationality) for young people to register as British citizens, via project at Ealing Law Centre (then Asylum Aid). Advice & training for professionals. Litigation & wide range of influencing activities.



Continuation from phase 1 of legal advice (immigration & nationality) & casework to young people & families access support services. Group-based peer support & leadership training for young people, via Brighter Futures group. Guidance and awareness-raising for practitioners. Film on good solicitor practice. Support for young people to have their voices heard in policy debates.



Continuation from phase 1 of holistic legal advice, representation & advocacy (immigration, nationality, community care, housing, education etc) for separated young people, via PROTECT project at Migrant and Refugee Children's Legal Unit. Awareness-raising & training for wide range of professionals. Litigation & wide range of influencing & campaigning work.

	<p>Development & testing of Path to Papers website, including assessment tool for people who may be eligible for regularisation & signposting to specialist support. Awareness-raising with range of professionals. Collaboration with Coventry (now Central England) to signpost clients to advice.</p>
	<p>Continuation from phase 1 of holistic legal advice (immigration, nationality, health, education) for young people & families, including failed asylum-seekers. Help to access services and assistance with destitution & basic needs. Range of influencing activities with local policy-makers & support organisations.</p>
	<p>Continuation from phase 1 of outreach legal advice & representation (immigration, nationality, community care etc) for young people & support to “connect” to community support, via Young Migrants’ Rights project. New project to register young people as British citizens (Coventry, now Central England Law Centre only). Awareness-raising, litigation & influencing work.</p>
	<p>Continuation of support & access to legal advice & other services for Appeal Rights Exhausted former asylum-seeking children from Afghanistan facing forced removal to Kabul. New piece of research monitoring outcomes for young people post-return. Dissemination & influencing activities.</p>

Phase two activity: new participants



Research, influencing & strategic litigation on local authority policy & practice in relation to supporting destitute migrant families with No Recourse to Public Funds. Awareness-raising & training for other professionals.



Leadership training & support to become campaigners for change on the issue of student fees & finance through Let Us Learn group. Involvement in training & awareness activities aimed at schools, higher education institutions and the wider world. Discussions with universities to create new scholarships & fee waivers for young people without settled status. Advice and casework for a wider network of young people.



Research on voluntary & community sector support for destitute migrant families with No Recourse to Public Funds. Wide range of dissemination & influencing activities.



A “bridging grant” to cover the work of Citizens UK’s Stand Up Stand Out youth-led movement from January-July 2016, before a new PHF grant for core organising and youth activism work was negotiated. The group supports young migrants’ campaigning activities, including many young people without settled status in the UK. Included community organising training for young leaders and support for various campaigns.

Types of young people supported

SOI participants who have provided direct support to children and young people have **collected data on beneficiaries in slightly different ways**, making it harder to aggregate across projects. However, the data below gives an indication of the types of young people who have been supported in both phases.

In phase one, the Institute of Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) found that projects had worked with 874 young people. (An additional 550 family members were supported by Praxis and Coram).

Nigeria, Afghanistan and India were the top countries of origin. Large numbers of young people also came from Iraq, Ghana, Iran, Jamaica. (This excludes RSN's project, which worked just with Afghan boys and young men).

- Girls and young women made up 53% of the cohort.
- Age data suggested:
 - 15% were under 16
 - 14% were aged 16-18
 - 68% were aged 19-30.

(This data relates to 596 people. In a few cases ages were not known/ disputed, or people were aged 30+).

- Family status varied greatly.
- On presenting to the projects, 83% were in UK without legal permission, 11% had some (often temporary) permission, 3% were EEA nationals. The status of 3% was unknown.

In phase two, we found that projects had worked with 1815 young people. (An additional set of family members were supported by Coram, Praxis and RMC). Afghanistan, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Jamaica, China, India and Pakistan were the top countries of origin mentioned by participants in phase two.

- Girls and young women made up 57% of the cohort
- Age data suggests:
 - 47% were under 16
 - 14% were aged 16-18
 - 32% were aged 19-25

4% were aged 26-30. (2% were aged over 30, 1% age was disputed/ not known).

- Family status varied but data suggests 18% were unaccompanied/separated.
- On presenting to the projects: 56% were in the UK without legal permission, 44% had some form of legal permission.

Evaluation of phase two: aims and activities

The evaluation team began work on the evaluation in late 2015. The aims of the phase two evaluation were to:

- Describe/summarise the situations of undocumented children, young people and families and the barriers they experience to leading full lives, and how the Initiative has worked and evolved and the challenges involved in the work
- Assess the Initiative's success in meeting its objectives in this phase, and
- Draw out the learning for funders, participants and other interested parties.

Although phase two was originally designed to finish in the Summer of 2016, several of the grants that have been awarded ran to later in 2016, and some into 2017. In order to capture the learning from some of this on-going work, the evaluation explores activities and outcomes to end of January 31st 2017.

The evaluation involved discussions with the Coordinator and senior staff at PHF and Unbound at the start to explore SOI's aims and evolution, and throughout to explore progress and learning. It also involved initial and follow up visits to all participating organisations and collection of some common quantitative data on activity and outcomes from all projects. We also: conducted discussions with two groups of young people; attended training days and launch events run by individual participants; facilitated a learning day for all SOI participants to explore shared learning; and developed a series of case studies to explore particular young people's experience and the impact of SOI-funded support in more detail.

As we began work on the evaluation midway through phase two, and data collection was already well underway and was being carried out in different ways by different projects, we had to take a pragmatic approach to collecting and analysing quantitative data.

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Phase two activity: an overview

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS/ACTIVITIES/DECISIONS





