



Working on Refugees Learning and Development

Patron: Juliet Stevenson CBE

Shared Futures



Shared Futures: Supporting the integration of refugee children and young people in school and the wider community

www.sharedfutures.org.uk

The Integration of Refugee Children: A review of research and current practice

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1. Executive summary

This report provides information for Salusbury WORLD's *Shared Futures* Project. It has been undertaken alongside consultations with refugee children and their peers, refugee parents and education practitioners (recorded in a separate document).¹ The project aims to assist schools in welcoming refugee children and young people, promoting their well-being, and helping them and their families to become part of the community. Through research into the experiences of refugee children and families, and strategies and interventions that have successfully supported refugee integration, *Shared Futures* can identify positive practice, develop guidance, and disseminate a range of innovative and creative approaches in schools and the community.

Significant numbers of refugee and asylum-seeker children, including those who are unaccompanied, attend schools across the UK. As a result of the Government's policy of dispersal, many of these children and young people live in areas unused to cultural diversity. They and their families face isolation, social exclusion, prejudice and racism. There is also increasing incidence of the secondary migration of refugees, both from other regions in the country and also from other European Union (EU) countries.

Understandings about what is meant by 'refugee integration' vary. Government policy has been influential, especially the Home Office *Integration Matters* strategy that was partially informed by research into how to measure integration. This identified: key areas for the participation of refugees in the life of communities; the different social relationships and networks that promote integration; key knowledge and circumstances that help people to be active, engaged and secure within communities; and the principles that define what people have a right to expect and what is expected of them.

Education was seen as a significant 'marker of integration' and also a powerful means to this end. The research proposed indicators for success for schools in supporting integration. Legislative and policy initiatives have, however, been heavily focused on immigration control and, more recently, have emphasised qualification for citizenship. Parallel to this has been the mushrooming debate about multiculturalism and community cohesion, with increasing practice emphasis on supporting social connections between communities. It is widely recognised that schools can play a vital role in this, and that fundamental to the development of this role is the recognition of refugee and asylum-seeker children's entitlement to education. This entitlement is irrespective of refugee or immigration status. It underlines the importance of recognising support for the 'settlement' of asylum-seekers and refugees, irrespective of how long they may be able to remain in the UK.

A literature search suggests that a range of interventions can tackle hostile public attitudes and discrimination. This includes responding to the concerns of local people with high quality information that reduces anxiety, and conflict resolution. To this end, the provision of information and training for front-line service providers, and consultation

¹ Available in a separate document: Shared Futures (2007) 'Consulting refugee and asylum-seeker focus groups and host young people for the Shared Futures project'

and dialogue with the receiving communities, can be crucial in supporting successful integration. Committed individuals, both inside and outside community groups, can make a huge difference. Other successful strategies have included: the appointment of specialist staff, particularly from newly arrived communities; schools acting as mediators between local communities and new arrivals; and communities working together towards a genuine common goal.

Young refugees have provided powerful testimony regarding the barriers to integration that they experience. These include:

- lack of English language skills and knowledge of systems
- lack of support
- the arduous asylum process
- hostile public attitudes and negative media reporting on asylum issues
- insufficient service responses
- poverty
- as asylum-seekers, being denied permission to work
- lack of recognition of professional qualifications
- having to move frequently
- stresses in their families.

Young refugees also report significant problems in school, due to:

- racist bullying
- isolation
- loss of identity
- barriers to educational attainment
- barriers to accessing further and higher education, especially for unaccompanied asylum-seekers
- concerns about the future.

Fear of racist abuse leads to social isolation: some young people are not permitted to go out alone after school and their parents may also be reluctant to go out in the evening. Isolation is exacerbated by frequent changes of housing and schools and also by poverty. At the same time, isolation is deemed most significant among the factors that make a person susceptible to bullying.

Young refugees cite making friends as their top priority, thereby reducing isolation and promoting acceptance and a feeling of hope. But friendships are often restricted to other refugees or to children from established communities with a similar cultural or religious background. Refugees have found peer support and mentoring, and organised group activities (such as after-school clubs, youth clubs and trips) to be useful.

Overall, young refugees speak positively about school providing a safe and supportive environment. Teachers are recognised as having an important role in helping young people to settle, and in providing a safe space within the school.

Schools play a vital role in promoting both the well-being of refugee children and young people, and positive integration outcomes:

- going to school can help restore normal daily routines and provide a sense of security, achievement and hope
- school can provide a bridge to building a new life
- schools can celebrate diversity and promote community cohesion.

However, accessing a school place can be difficult, teachers may have low expectations, and there may be very few opportunities for refugee young people to learn about their own culture and identity. Some teachers have poor understanding of their emotional needs, sometimes wrongly assuming that refugees' experiences of war and political violence mean they are unable to thrive in mainstream settings.

Successful and sustainable approaches taken by schools to integrate and support their refugee pupils are embedded in mainstream provision through:

- inclusive admission and induction procedures
- support for access to schooling
- access to the curriculum, assured through high expectations, high quality assessment, flexibility in teaching and learning, learning activities that build on pupils' language and culture, and effective pastoral support
- peer support and buddying
- friendship building through a range of activities, including collaborative learning, leisure activities and community partnerships
- tackling bullying and racism with robust procedures in place and support for children who may be suffering
- celebrating diversity, recognising the multicultural nature of Britain's society, and building on pupils' language and culture to support the access and engagement of new arrivals
- supporting and involving refugee parents and responding to the complex needs that they are often coping with
- developing positive community relationships. Schools can provide genuine opportunities for people to meet in shared activities, offer accurate information to dispel local misunderstandings, and campaign to ensure their refugee communities feel safe.

2. Introduction

Salisbury WORLD is a charity that supports refugee and asylum-seeker children and families, and provides them with educational, social and emotional support. Salisbury WORLD manages the *Shared Futures* project.

Shared Futures is a partnership project, funded by Comic Relief. Comic Relief's grant-making strategy identifies young refugees and asylum-seekers as a vulnerable group needing support. Comic Relief is developing initiatives that help schools to work with refugees to enable them to become part of the community and settle into their new lives.

The aim of *Shared Futures* is to assist schools in welcoming refugee children and young people, promoting their well-being and helping them and their families to become part of the community. The project will build on the successful body of practice developed by Salisbury WORLD and the best-selling publication *Home from Home*, published in conjunction with Save the Children.²

Shared Futures will develop a DVD and resource pack that showcase a range of innovative and creative approaches in schools and local communities for supporting refugee integration. The project will also support schools through opportunities for training and professional development. More information is given about the *Shared Futures* project on its website: www.sharedfutures.org.uk.

This report, undertaken alongside consultations with refugee children and their peers, refugee parents and education practitioners (recorded in a separate document), provides information for the project on:

- the experiences of refugee children and families
- recent research on refugee integration
- projects, strategies and interventions that have successfully supported refugee integration.

Through this research, *Shared Futures* can identify positive practice, develop guidance, and disseminate a range of innovative and creative approaches in schools and the community.

Methodology

The research involved the analysis of statistical information on refugee and asylum-seeker settlement, and a literature survey of relevant recent research related to:

- the inclusion of refugee children in school, the attitudes of non-refugee young people, the development of communities containing dispersed asylum-seekers and refugees, and the involvement of refugee parents
- projects across the UK that support refugee integration in schools
- the identification of successful strategies for integration in a range of education settings.

² Bolloten, 2004

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3. Refugee and asylum-seeker children and young people in the UK

“I couldn’t make the decision to come here. My uncle did because it was the only safe way to save my life.”³

Terminology

Key terms used in this report are: refugee, asylum-seeker, Humanitarian Protection, Discretionary Leave, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and refugee children.

Refugee

International law defines a refugee as a person who has fled from and/or cannot return to their country due to a well-founded fear of persecution, including war or civil conflict.

A refugee is a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...”⁴

In the UK, the Home Office grants refugee status when it considers that someone falls within this 1951 UN Convention definition of a refugee.

Asylum-seeker

An asylum-seeker is a person who has left his/her country of origin, has applied for recognition as a refugee in another country and is awaiting a decision on his/her application.

Humanitarian Protection

The Home Office Border and Immigration Agency grants Humanitarian Protection to anyone who is unable to demonstrate a claim for asylum but who would face a serious risk to life or person in their country, such as the death penalty, unlawful killing and torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Humanitarian Protection is normally granted for up to three years and is then reviewed.

Discretionary Leave

This may be granted for a limited number of specific reasons, including medical grounds and compelling humanitarian cases. Discretionary Leave is usually granted to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) whose claims for asylum fail and for

³ Glasgow Centre for the Child and Society and Scottish Refugee Council, 2006

⁴ Article 1, The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees website: www.unhcr.org.uk/info/briefings/basic_facts/definitions.html [accessed June 2007]

whom adequate reception arrangements in their country are not available. From 1 April 2007 a new Discretionary Leave policy applies to UASC whose claims for asylum fail. Such leave is only granted until the age of 17.5 years rather than 18, as was previously the case.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

“An unaccompanied asylum-seeking child is a person who, at the time of making the asylum application is, or (if there is no proof) appears to be, under eighteen, is applying for asylum in their own right and has no adult relative or guardian to turn to in this country.”⁵

UASC are also referred to as unaccompanied minors, separated children or unaccompanied children.

Refugee children

For brevity, this report will in general use the term 'refugee children' to mean any child coming to the UK in search of asylum, whether they or their household has had a positive decision (refugee status, Humanitarian Protection, Discretionary Leave), or is still awaiting a decision (asylum-seeker).

Refugee children in the UK

Refugee children and young people fall into two main groups:

- UASC, who are the responsibility of the local authority in whose geographical area they seek help
- refugee children in families, who are living with one or both parents or with adult relatives who are caring for them as guardians. Children in families are the responsibility of the Home Office for housing and financial support while waiting for an asylum decision.

Numbers

The Home Office does not distinguish between adult and child dependents of asylum applicants in its asylum statistics. There is no published data on the numbers of accompanied children (children in families) who apply for asylum as a dependent of a principal asylum applicant.⁶

The Border and Immigration Agency publishes statistics on the number of UASC arriving in the UK. In 2006 there were around 2,500 applications from unaccompanied children aged 17 or under. Their main countries of origin were Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia and Eritrea.

Almost all local authorities in the UK have resident refugee populations, small or large.⁷

⁵ Home Office information note cited by Children's Legal Centre. See: www.childrenslegalcentre.com/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=90189 [accessed June 2007]

⁶ Rutter, 2006

⁷ Ibid.

The 2001 Census data suggested that about 57,000 school-age (5–16-year-old) refugee children with likely experiences of forced migration were living in the UK.⁸ In 2003 it was estimated that there were 98,929 refugee children of compulsory school age, with 65 per cent resident in Greater London.⁹

At present, most UASC are housed in London and the south-east (68 per cent in September 2006).¹⁰ There are new proposals to change the care arrangements. This will involve transferring UASC from the places where they arrive and present as ‘in need’ to new ‘specialist authorities’, which are likely to be outside the south-east of England.¹¹

In 2003, the local authorities with the largest population of refugee children were the London boroughs of Newham (7,128 children) and Haringey, and the City of Manchester. Other local authorities with more than 2,000 refugee children in schools were Barnet, Brent, Camden, Ealing, Enfield, Hackney, Hounslow, Islington, Lewisham, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Westminster, Glasgow and Birmingham.¹²

In the same year, 39 local authorities were educating more than 500 refugee children. Those outside London were Cardiff, Coventry, Leicester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield.¹³

Dispersal of asylum-seekers

The Immigration and Asylum Act (1999) introduced a policy to disperse asylum-seekers away from London and the south-east. Since April 2000, newly arrived asylum-seekers have been allocated housing in dispersal areas around the UK, usually on a no-choice basis. The system was managed by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), who also provided financial support to destitute refugees.

Dispersal of asylum-seekers has been a major factor in the development of significant refugee communities outside Greater London. The proportion of refugee children resident in Greater London has fallen from 85 per cent in 1994 to 65 per cent in 2006.¹⁴

In June 2006, the five regions with the highest numbers of asylum-seekers in NASS-dispersed accommodation were Yorkshire and the Humber (22 per cent), Scotland (15 per cent), North West (15 per cent), West Midlands (13 per cent) and North East (10 per cent). Within the regions, NASS dispersed asylum-seekers to cluster areas in local authorities. The five local authorities with the highest numbers of asylum-seekers in NASS-dispersed accommodation were: Glasgow City, Leeds, Birmingham, Newcastle and Cardiff.¹⁵

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Multiverse, *Statistics on Asylum-Seeking and Refugee Children in Schools 2003*. See: www.multiverse.ac.uk/viewArticle.aspx?qts=false&resource=false&contentId=384 [accessed June 2007].

¹⁰ Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate, 2007

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Rutter, 2006

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Home Office, *Asylum Statistics: 2nd Quarter 2006*. See: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/asylumq206.pdf [accessed June 2007].

In many centres of dispersal the diversity of refugee communities has increased significantly. Particular national groups are represented in the settlement patterns of refugees in some cities:

- Leicester – Turkish, Somalis, Iraqis, Zimbabweans, Iranians and Afghans
- Sheffield – Iranians, Iraqis, Somalis, Yemenis, Congolese and Afghans
- Glasgow – Turkish, Iranians, Pakistanis, Iraqis and Somalis
- Cardiff – Somalis, Pakistanis, Iraqis and Iranians.¹⁶

Despite dispersal, a significant number of asylum-seekers, including Turkish Kurds and Sri Lankan Tamils, are choosing to remain in London, preferring to be nearer established networks and support agencies.¹⁷

Secondary migration

Secondary migration is the term used to describe the in-country movement of international migrants, from an initial residence to another area of settlement.¹⁸

Secondary migration of refugees is often caused by the short-term and temporary nature of their accommodation. Further factors may include migration for employment opportunities, and the desire to consolidate communities, with particular groups moving to specific areas to be near compatriots.¹⁹

Although there is strong evidence of secondary migration to London from the regions, there is also evidence that around 50 per cent of asylum-seekers are choosing to remain in the regions upon receipt of a positive decision on their asylum claim. In addition, there is a high incidence of secondary migration to the West Midlands – Birmingham in particular – both from other UK regions and from other EU countries. Notable is the case of Somalis coming from the Netherlands and Sweden.²⁰

The impact of dispersal on refugee and asylum-seeker children and families

A report by the Audit Commission in 2000 identified that the policy of dispersal has caused “severe problems”.²¹ The report was based on detailed fieldwork carried out in ten councils and five health authorities.

The report identified that “the needs of asylum seekers and refugees have not been addressed in a systematic way”, and that there were “operational pressures, scant information and inadequate joint working”. It warned that without effective support, asylum-seekers could be “locked in a cycle of exclusion and dependency”.²²

¹⁶ ICAR – The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, *Mapping the UK*. See: www.icar.org.uk/?lid=1320 [accessed June 2007].

¹⁷ Rutter, 2006

¹⁸ Ibid. http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/refugees/docs/refugee_children_report.pdf

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Zetter *et al*, 2005

²¹ Audit Commission, 2000

²² Ibid.

Unpublished Home Office research also concluded that asylum-seekers had been sent to “highly volatile environments” where they encountered hostility and prejudice, and where there was “a worrying level of spontaneous racial harassment and racial attacks”. “The procurement of housing in the poorest areas [had] entrenched views held by the host community against the incomers”. Asylum-seekers were isolated from their local community and lacked help and advice.²³

Many asylum-seekers have chosen to remain in London and the south-east on subsistence-only arrangements.²⁴

²³ School Of Planning, Oxford Brookes University, *Dispersal: Facilitating effectiveness and efficiency*. See also: Morris, N (2007) ‘Dispersal policy “put asylum-seekers at risk”’, *The Independent*, 16 March 2007. <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/politics/article2362749.ece> [accessed June 2007].

²⁴ Zetter *et al*, 2005

4. Refugee integration

“Feeling at home is where you feel safe, and recognised for who you are. It is a very powerful concept in explaining settlement. I was born in Liberia but now that I live in Newham, in a house, have friends and am going to school, then this is my home”. Victoria, 17 years old.²⁵

What is integration?

Government policy

Recent government policy emphasis on the settlement of refugees has been directed towards how they ‘integrate’ into British society. However, attitudes to what is meant by integration differ across the political spectrum. On the one hand is an interpretation that sees integration as a process of assimilation, where refugees are expected to learn and adopt the customs and values of their host country. On the other hand is an interpretation that, to differing degrees, sees integration as supported by a process of mutual adaptation between the host community and those who are newly arrived.

Current debate has been heavily influenced by *Integration Matters*, the Home Office’s 2005 strategy for refugee integration and framework for good practice.²⁶ The strategy proposed the following definition of integration:

“Integration takes place when refugees are empowered to:

- achieve their full potential as members of British society;
- contribute to the community; and
- access the services to which they are entitled.”²⁷

The *Integration Matters* strategy was partially informed by research into how to measure integration. The Home Office’s *Indicators of Integration: Final Report* provided a framework to assist with the planning and evaluation of services for refugees, based on a common understanding of the concept of integration.²⁸ It identified four themes:

- **means and markers:** key areas for the participation of refugees in the life of communities, which can give an indication of the level of integration, as well as helping achieve that goal
- **social connections:** the different social relationships and networks that promote integration. Included are *social bonds* within communities, i.e. with people with shared experiences and values; *social bridges*, or connections with other groups; and *social links*, to services and government
- **facilitators:** key knowledge and circumstances that help people to be active, engaged and secure within communities

²⁵ The Children’s Society, 2006

²⁶ Home Office, 2005a

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ager and Strang, 2004a

- **foundations:** the principles that define what you have a right to expect, and what is expected of you.

Education was seen as a significant marker of integration, and also a powerful means to this end, creating opportunities for employment, wider social connection and for language learning.

Indicators of success for schools would include: comparative numbers gaining qualifications, participating in pre-school education and participating in extra provision; reported satisfaction with and experience of school; and the extent to which school rolls reflect the ethnicity of the catchment area.

There is contention about how much government-commissioned and conducted research actually feeds into the policy process. Immigration and asylum is a highly-politicised area, and political considerations and pressures that may contradict research findings can play a role in shaping policy.

Recently there has been a particular emphasis by government on the need for refugees and other immigrants to qualify for citizenship, learn English and attend citizenship ceremonies.

In *A New Model for National Refugee Integration Services in England*, the Home Office set out its plans for developing the content and contractual arrangements for a standard set of services for the integration of refugees in England, managing cases to their conclusion in a quicker time frame.²⁹ The primary focus of the new model is to speed up the asylum process and increase removals. A New Asylum Model case owner manages each asylum-seeker's application and support. If a positive decision is made on the asylum claim, the Home Office Sunrise casework programmes provide a designated caseworker to work with each newly recognised refugee. The Sunrise caseworker supports integration, creating a Personal Integration Plan with each refugee, and liaising with their New Asylum Model case owner.

The importance of social connections

The *Indicators of Integration* research drew on the authors' previous research into the experience of integration.³⁰ This found that expectations vary as to what constitutes integration, ranging from 'being no trouble', through to 'mixing' of different people living in an area, to finally, a sense of 'belonging' within a particular area.

"Well you lose the feeling that you belong to any particular group or specific place or something. So you always looking for a place a group or something to feel that you are still belong to."³¹

Work that is currently being undertaken in schools to promote the integration of refugee children and young people tends to focus initially on developing social bonds. For example, it involves group activities aimed specifically at young refugees or same

²⁹ Home Office, 2006

³⁰ Ager and Strang, 2004b

³¹ Ibid.

language speaker peer-buddying initiatives. It also focuses on social links, by providing easy access to services and entitlements. Developing social bridges – consciously making links across different communities – is increasingly becoming part of the agenda. Fundamental to children’s achievement and sense of belonging in schools is the recognition of their entitlement to education, and providing a sense of safety and stability. Schools are also ideally placed to help both children and their parents develop their abilities in English and their cultural awareness. Equally, they can increase opportunities for understanding and engagement with the host community. For example, schools can help members of the host community to develop an awareness of the languages and cultures represented in the local community and in the UK as a whole.

Integration or settlement?

It is important to note that the Home Office strategy is founded on the belief that integration can only begin “in its fullest sense when an asylum seeker becomes a refugee”, based on the logic that “asylum seekers are not allowed to work; and some two-thirds of them will not in the end be given the right to remain”.³²

The Government's refugee integration strategy will therefore not benefit asylum-seekers, nor those with short-term leave. This is particularly relevant for UASC, most of whom have only been granted Discretionary Leave.

In this context it can be helpful to distinguish between the concepts of integration and settlement. The Children Society’s report, *Making a New Life in Newham*, defines settlement as “the process of trying to establish in a new country through the acquisition of basic needs such as language, education, security and stable accommodation. It involves the building of networks and planning for the future.”³³

Young refugees in Newham describe settlement as starting the day they arrived in the place of exile and continuing up to the time they feel safe and happy at school, at home and in everyday life. It involves being released from anxiety, fear and uncertainty; being able to achieve something in life through your own efforts; being empowered and able to participate in normal activities and decisions that affect you. It is seen as a gradual process of adapting to a new and welcoming environment; and as a two-way process. It is:

“Being welcomed in your newly found community and feeling part of that community,” Mei, 14 years old.³⁴

The young refugees believe that the way they are treated when they arrive has a long-term impact on future settlement. Integration follows on naturally from settlement.

“Integration must be viewed as a long-term complex process that begins from the point of arrival. Any evaluation of integration must be concerned with the aim that refugees should become active members of the host society. Integration is a multi-faceted process –

³² Home Office, 2005a

³³ The Children’s Society, 2006

³⁴ Ibid.

encompassing legal, social, cultural and economic aspects. Significantly, there is a subjective element to integration, hence refugees' perceptions of their integration is central".³⁵

Barriers to integration

Factors that adversely affect settlement – and therefore ultimately integration – include a lack of English language skills, lack of knowledge of systems, and lack of networks. Refugees often struggle with legal barriers associated with the immigration system, a hostile public attitude, and the fact that generic services are insufficient to meet their needs. Poverty, being denied permission to work when asylum-seeking, the lack of recognition of professional qualifications, and high mobility all add to their difficulties.³⁶

At the same time, local people have anxieties, fears and concerns about the arrival of asylum-seekers in their neighbourhood – often based on perceived competition for scarce resources – and express a desire for information and answers to their questions and concerns.³⁷ Concerns and understanding vary in different areas of the UK and across different social classes. Often they are about the effects of dispersal on the local community, asylum-seekers' access to services and their way of life.

Negative media reporting on asylum, and in particular the links that tabloid newspapers have made between asylum-seekers and the 'war on terror', have heightened anxiety and tensions between host and refugee communities.³⁸

The Institute for Public Policy Research's 2007 report for the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) states:

"Misperceptions and misinformation lie at the heart of how new migrants are received, with the media playing a key role in filling what is often a vacuum of accurate information on the dynamics of social change at the local level. These misperceptions are largely forged along the fault lines of race, ethnicity and religion, with white migrants in England reporting a broadly more positive reception than non-white migrants. The reception of new migrants is also influenced by local labour markets, local housing pressures, local and regional demographics, and political leadership on migration."³⁹

A report by the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) concluded that, "local people and asylum seekers are strangers to each other in many areas of England, and are anxious about each other to the point of concern for their personal safety".⁴⁰

Interventions that support integration

Listening and responding to the concerns of local people can help reduce anxiety, and also reduce tension in the community. One of the most powerful tools for promoting

³⁵ *Refugees' Experiences of Integration: A project summary*. A Refugee Council and University of Birmingham research project, 2005–07

³⁶ Spencer, 2006

³⁷ Commission for Racial Equality, 2005

³⁸ Lido, 2006

³⁹ Institute for Public Policy Research, 2007

⁴⁰ D'Onofrio and Munk, 2004

community cohesion is the provision of information: for new arrivals, host communities, service providers and also for the media.⁴¹

To this end, the provision of information and training for front line service providers, and consultation and dialogue with the receiving communities, can be crucial in supporting successful integration.

Successful strategies have included the appointment of specialist staff, in particular the appointment of staff from newly arrived communities.⁴² Schools can play an important role as mediators between local communities and new arrivals, as they know and have the trust of the local community.

Equally important is the need for strategies to assist local media to access accurate and balanced sources of information, and also to share lessons learned and good practice.⁴³

Research has identified key features of interventions that help people to live together, including:⁴⁴

- the importance of physical and social space in which to mix
- individual contact that relieves isolation by:
 - sharing problems and supporting well-being
 - giving people something to focus on and bring to relationships that provides a purpose for being together and something to talk about
- the formation of communities that they feel have something to offer in exchange with other communities
- the rebuilding of broken networks
- committed individuals, both inside and outside community groups, who can make a difference.

There is often a need for attitudinal change on the part of individuals. However, providing accurate information and listening to people's views may not always be able to change deeply held attitudes.⁴⁵ Conflict prevention and resolution is therefore also necessary, for example the CRE's Safe Communities Initiative.⁴⁶ Equally, research shows that people from different communities cannot come together if the terms are unequal and they have little control over their own lives.⁴⁷

It is important to remember that communities are diverse and constantly undergoing change. Communities are not only defined by ethnicity, but also by gender, religion and geography. At the same time, tensions may exist *within* ethnic communities.

Political leadership is vital for the positive reception of refugees. This includes its influence on public discussion and its filtering through to the media, and thereby into

⁴¹ Spencer, 2006

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ D'Onofrio and Munk, 2004

⁴⁴ Temple and Moran, 2005

⁴⁵ D'Onofrio and Munk, 2004

⁴⁶ See CRE Safe Communities Initiative website: www.cre.gov.uk/about/sci_index.html [accessed June 2007].

⁴⁷ Temple and Moran, 2005

local initiatives and the everyday experiences of refugees.

Another key feature that helps overcome misunderstanding and aids integration is communities working together towards a genuinely common goal. The motivation to interact typically springs from the things that people have in common: a shared history, community, enthusiasms or curiosity.⁴⁸ For instance, there are projects that have worked with groups of young refugees together with young people from the host community, using various creative media – such as ‘focUS: connecting futures’, a participatory video project.⁴⁹

“Whenever you see groups in college, a group that are, say, from here and a group that are asylum-seekers, somehow there’s a distinctive line – you’ll see it. They’ll separate from each other. But if there’s more work and there’s more groups and projects, I think you wouldn’t notice who’s from here and who’s from abroad.”⁵⁰

Taking part in activities together gives people a safe space in which to meet others like themselves, helping build resources within communities and trust across communities. Groups often need active intervention to help people move outside the networks in which they feel safe, and to cross cultural boundaries.⁵¹

Therefore to promote integration, arrangements need to be made for local residents and refugees to meet as neighbours. Schools, colleges, museums, arts and sports venues have an important role to play in this respect.⁵² For example:

- Some library services are active in this field, such as the ‘Welcome to your Library’ project.⁵³
- Meeting Point was a project set up by the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. The Park ran a successful Holiday Club in collaboration with artists, students, asylum-seeker volunteers and staff from the Wakefield Education Authority. The club was targeted at asylum-seeker children aged 7–12. They were invited to bring along siblings, parents and friends to join a group of children from the local village, and children of Park staff.⁵⁴
- There are mentoring, befriending and hosting schemes. For example, sponsoring refugees’ membership of social, cultural and sports clubs, and places of worship can offer a supportive means of social interaction. Many young refugees regard positive support from churches or mosques as being very helpful, and have been able to build strong relationships with young people of different nationalities, languages and gender. For some UASC, these schemes have offered a form of parental support.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Commission for Racial Equality, 2007a

⁴⁹ See: www.icar.org.uk/focus [accessed June 2007].

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Temple and Moran, 2005

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ See: www.welcometoyourlibrary.org.uk [accessed June 2007].

⁵⁴ Museums Libraries Archives Yorkshire, 2006

⁵⁵ The Children’s Society, 2006

- Refugees have become involved in the local community through volunteering in mainstream as well as refugee community organisations.⁵⁶ Well-managed volunteering placements can lead to increased employment opportunities, as well as contact across cultures.

Turning Corners

A three-week project for refugees, run by Leeds Library Service, combined sessions in library use, English and research with cycle repair, maintenance, passing the cycling proficiency test and getting to know the local area through map work and shared cycle rides. The participants were provided with second-hand bikes and the necessary safety equipment.⁵⁷

Development of a strategic and co-ordinated approach to supporting communities living together is crucial. For this to happen there needs to be an improved data and evidence base on new communities, to help with targeting resources more effectively. There also needs to be a good understanding of local context, effective consultation and good communication, strong local leadership and robust monitoring and evaluation.⁵⁸

It is vital that those who are working to support refugee integration understand the importance of the settlement process and provide support for individuals as long as is necessary, alongside capacity-building support at other levels.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Wilson and Lewis, 2006

⁵⁷ See: Turning Corners www.welcometoyourlibrary.org.uk/editorial.asp?page_id=43 [accessed June 2007].

⁵⁸ Commission for Racial Equality, 2007b

⁵⁹ Navarro, 2006

5. Key messages from young refugees and asylum-seekers

“What helps? ... Having people to talk to, and making new friends that understand you and don't judge you ... that makes you feel normal.”⁶⁰

There have been many recent initiatives to elicit the views of young refugees regarding their experiences of education and integration since arrival in the UK.

Overall, young refugees speak positively about school and their teachers. School is generally regarded as enjoyable, and teachers are seen as people who can be trusted to help if problems arise.⁶¹

It is widely accepted that schools can play a vital role in promoting the well-being of refugee children, supporting the integration of their families into local communities, and helping to develop friendships and social links with non-refugee peers and the wider host community.⁶²

“I speak from experience by saying that mainstream school is the most important part of me growing up, this being because school is the best way of me escaping my problems, building confidence and being able to know that there is something I am doing with my life even if it might be temporary.”⁶³

Evidence from a range of studies is consistent in identifying the very positive role schools have in the lives of asylum-seeker and refugee pupils. Schools are seen by these children, young people and their families largely as providing safe and supportive environments. They are also regarded as the most stable social institution, in what are often insecure and unstable lives.⁶⁴

However, schools vary greatly in their responses to the needs of refugee children. Barriers remain, and common areas of concern raised by the young people include:

- racist bullying
- isolation
- loss of identity
- barriers to educational attainment
- concerns about the future
- stresses in families.

⁶⁰ The Children's Society and Trinity Community Centre, 2000

⁶¹ Save the Children, 2004

⁶² Glasgow City Council Education Services and Save the Children, 2002

⁶³ The Children's Society, 2006

⁶⁴ Spencer, 2006

Racism in the school and the community

The possibility of racist verbal and physical abuse has been described as “an undercurrent in their daily life – not always overt, but bubbling below the surface, preventing [refugees] from fully engaging in community life”.⁶⁵

Research sponsored by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in mainly white schools in 2001/02 found that 25 per cent of the minority ethnic pupils in the sample had experienced racist name-calling within the previous seven days. Only a tiny proportion of the incidents had been reported to staff. The under-reporting seemed to be connected with a perception among many pupils and their parents that staff would be unable or unwilling to take appropriate action.⁶⁶

Young refugees have identified that schools should recognise that there is a problem with racist bullying, that teachers need to take responsive action, and that better mechanisms for dealing with it should be set up.⁶⁷

Many young refugees express concern about the influence of the media on people’s perceptions of refugees and asylum-seekers, and the effect this has on behaviour towards them. They may be reluctant to admit that they are a refugee, for fear of the reaction this will provoke.

“There is one thing that I’ve noticed here that people depend a lot on the media and whatever the media say, they accept it, they don’t question it.”⁶⁸

“As soon as they find out I’m a refugee I’m dead in class. You need to make friends – I’m just protecting myself”.⁶⁹

Refugees living in traditionally multi-ethnic areas may feel safer, as they are less visible.

“Where I live ... it’s a big estate ... I see it as a mixed place ... an international kind of place. I see people speaking different languages as I am coming downstairs or coming out of the lift ... it has a good feeling ... you are not alone here. It gives a good feeling ...”⁷⁰

Teachers, often specialists funded by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG), have been recognised as having an important role in helping young people settle in, and in providing a safe space within the school.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Save the Children, 2004

⁶⁶ Department for Education and Skills, 2004a

⁶⁷ Save the Children, 2006

⁶⁸ Save the Children, 2005

⁶⁹ Greater London Authority, 2007

⁷⁰ Ager and Strang, 2004b

⁷¹ Save the Children, 2001; Office for Standards in Education, 2003

Isolation and making friends

Fear of abuse leads to social isolation: some refugee children are not permitted to go out alone after school, and their parents may also be reluctant to go out in the evening. Isolation is exacerbated by frequent changes of housing and schools, and also by poverty. At the same time, isolation is deemed most significant among the factors that make a person susceptible to bullying.⁷²

“I’ve been in six schools in four years and lived in five different houses. Each time I changed schools I had to make new friends which was very hard ... I used to get really hurt when other children teased me and made me look stupid because I didn’t know English. When you’re new you get picked on a lot.”⁷³

Young refugees cite making friends as their top priority, thereby reducing their sense of isolation, making them feel accepted and giving them a feeling of hope. With friends they are able to share advice and experiences, build confidence and self-respect, extend language skills and build bridges with the local community.⁷⁴

For the most part, friendships appear to be restricted to other refugees or to children from established communities with a similar cultural or religious background.⁷⁵ Peer mentoring or buddying arrangements for new arrivals can be helpful, when they are effectively and imaginatively organised and supported. Young people can be matched, not just on the basis of shared language but also by address, for example, so that the newcomer can have someone to walk to school with.

Organised group activities, such as after-school clubs, youth clubs, trips and residential are highly valued by the young people, and provide valuable opportunities for schools to support the process of integration.⁷⁶ Schools can also ensure that refugees have access to school-based activities. They can signpost and link people with existing local groups, e.g. sports clubs, scouts, faith groups, etc.

“I would like to take part in physical activities such as gymnastics, karate, etc, but they are very expensive and not affordable. I can go to the swimming pool only once a week.”⁷⁷

Loss of identity and ‘fitting in’

Young refugees in Newham talked of the process of ‘settlement’ as opposed to integration. Equated with survival, settlement involves acquiring the strategies and capabilities to sustain themselves in their new environment. The process begins at the moment of arrival in the UK, and not just on receipt of refugee status. Essentially, they see this as adapting to a new way of life while retaining their culture.⁷⁸

⁷² Rutter, 2006

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Greater London Authority, 2007

⁷⁵ Save the Children, 2004

⁷⁶ The Children’s Society, 2006

⁷⁷ Macaskill and Petrie, 2000

⁷⁸ The Children’s Society, 2006

“I will like to make this clear – I will never forget my traditional background which makes me what I am. I will like to show people my culture and traditions and for it to be appreciated.”⁷⁹

Sustaining traditional cultures is difficult without the accustomed networks of extended families and wider communities. Youth groups are important, as they provide opportunities for young people to mix and share experiences. However, young refugees can find them intimidating and dominated by one ethnic group, focusing on ‘Western pop-youth culture’.⁸⁰

“East and West are completely different ... Another thing, they hardly understand our feelings ... the freedom is incredible here and they don’t listen to their parents. In our country we try to do as our parents say because they have experience and respect.”⁸¹

It can take skill and resilience to bridge both cultures.

“We often had to choose between being the odd one out or being forced to change in order to fit in.”⁸²

“... You have to act like them. But you can’t change the inside of yourself...”⁸³

In some refugee families there may be intergenerational conflicts, where parents are perceived as overly protective, holding on too strongly to tradition and not understanding British culture.

Finally, some young refugees may reject a refugee identity, not just because of the negative associations, but because they do not want to be defined continually by just one part of their life experience.

Barriers to educational attainment

Many young refugees achieve very highly in school, but at the same time there are considerable barriers to fulfilling their potential.⁸⁴

Accessing a school place without significant delay is still the most important desire of young refugees. Yet delays of several months are not unusual, particularly for young people aged 14–16, due in part to the shortage of places. The emphasis on examination results in schools may have a negative effect, as some schools may not want to accept pupils whom they believe could ‘drag down’ their overall results.⁸⁵ Placing siblings in several different schools over a wide geographical area can also create stress and considerable expense for larger families.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Greater London Authority, 2007

⁸¹ Temple and Moran, 2005

⁸² Refugee Youth, 2004

⁸³ The Prince’s Trust with The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, 2003

⁸⁴ Office for Standards in Education, 2003

⁸⁵ Rutter, 2006

⁸⁶ Ibid.

“Life is better than before; but I didn’t have a school from the time I came here. I want to go to school.”⁸⁷

Low teacher expectation, over-emphasis on the level of English in subject grouping and inadequate EAL (English as an additional language) support have all been cited by young people as potential barriers they face in education.⁸⁸

“I loved science. I wanted to do plastic surgery reconstruction. But the teacher said ‘no, you don’t speak the language, you’ll never do it, I don’t have time to explain this to you...’ ”⁸⁹

Young refugees wish to be placed according to their actual ability and previous experience. Being automatically placed in groups with lower achieving pupils can have a negative impact on motivation.

“They put me in foundation maths but it was too easy for me. I could have gone to a higher group and it would have been better for me to learn more maths.”⁹⁰

There are often differences in educational culture. Aspects of the English education system may need to be explained, and skills of independent research and questioning may need to be taught to refugee pupils who are used to different education systems.

“[Here] the teacher can start anywhere in the book, while in Somalia you start from the start to the end ... In Somalia everything you learn you learn from your teacher, you do not research things. You have a small blackboard and you learn by heart. You come back and you know everything.”⁹¹

“The education in my country is much better than the education here because the students don’t mess about like they do here.”⁹²

The role played by learning mentors, Connexions personal advisers, teachers and teaching assistants is often acknowledged by young people. They help them to fill in gaps in the curriculum, navigate choices, and generally offer important moral support.

“Actually I don’t live with my dad, my dad’s not here, my mum’s not here but actually I think Mr D (support teacher) is like my dad here in this country.”⁹³

“My mentor at school helps me so much – she was like an angel. My best support is my mentor. I don’t find it easy to talk about my problems. I try to keep it back and put on my smile but sometimes it gets so heavy in my heart and I have to lay it out.”⁹⁴

Most families have high expectations for their children’s education and are willing to be involved when they know what to do. Parent consultations have come up with relatively

⁸⁷ The Children’s Society and Trinity Community Centre, 2000

⁸⁸ Rutter, 2006; Greater London Authority, 2007

⁸⁹ Greater London Authority, 2007

⁹⁰ Appa, 2005

⁹¹ Franks, 2006

⁹² Hek, 2005

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ The Children’s Society and Trinity Community Centre, 2000

simple strategies for helping with homework, such as the provision of dictionaries and textbook examples of what is required. Young people themselves often request help with homework.⁹⁵

More recently it has been suggested that the discourse of 'trauma' and refugees is also serving as a barrier to their attainment.⁹⁶ Practitioners may believe that young refugees are 'traumatised' (actually a precise medical definition of an *unhealthy* reaction to extreme events) and may have lower expectations of achievement. Equally, the perception of 'trauma' acts as a barrier to meaningful communication for teachers, who may fear being out of their depth.

Many refugees have faced stressful and dangerous situations in their lives. However, in the many surveys and pieces of research there is no consistent desire expressed for a focus on past traumas, rather a desire to rebuild meaningful lives and look forwards to new opportunities.

Hopes for the future

The settlement process – trying to get established in a new country through the acquisition of basic needs such as language, education, security and stable accommodation – involves the building of networks and planning for the future.⁹⁷

"It's frustrating, not being able to plan. What's the point in going to college if I could be deported tomorrow? I've been here since 1999 without a decision."⁹⁸

Success in school offers refugee young people one avenue to realise their full potential, and many have aspirations to succeed in order to 'give something back'.⁹⁹

"...I'd like to be a teacher – anywhere I am needed – to help make other people's lives easier...I have been living a lot of the time hand to mouth – eat sometimes at friends, sometimes I go to centres that offer cheap food, and sometimes I use the free food places the homeless on the streets use. But today I'm here. And now I can feed myself for a couple of days..."¹⁰⁰

Comprehensive and realistic advice about exam and career options, as well as initial help in navigating the system, are vital if refugee young people and their families are to make informed choices for the future.

Even so, there are formidable and growing barriers to accessing further and higher education. Asylum-seekers are specifically excluded from the Education Maintenance Allowance that supports post-16 education, and may face restricted access to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. Other barriers include:

⁹⁵ Rutter, 2006

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ The Children's Society, 2006

⁹⁸ The Children's Society and Trinity Community Centre, 2000

⁹⁹ Glasgow City Council Education Services and Save the Children, 2002

¹⁰⁰ The Prince's Trust with The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, 2003

- asylum-seekers being charged international student fees rather than home student fees
- asylum-seekers having no access to student loans
- overseas qualifications not being taken into account.¹⁰¹

“...I did A levels in my own country, but I didn’t come to England with the certificate, so I had to redo them...”¹⁰²

In addition, those with restricted leave to remain may be refused courses on the assumption that they will have to return home before completion of the course.¹⁰³

For many UASC there may be a lack of equal and consistent treatment by social services, often leaving the young people to face their problems on their own and with inadequate resources.¹⁰⁴

Finally, the confusion and anxiety experienced by UASC with limited leave (63 per cent of applicants in 2005)¹⁰⁵ as they approach their eighteenth birthday, cannot be downplayed. The chances of a negative asylum decision are high, due to late applications, the difficulty of obtaining sound legal advice, and problems in obtaining evidence considered acceptable by the Home Office. Although there are no official statistics for the proportion of children’s appeals that are successful, one study found that only 12 per cent of cases were overturned.¹⁰⁶

“Turning 18 is my major worry because I will be taken from my foster carer; but not only that, I don’t know if they will send me back.”¹⁰⁷

“...I’ve seen many people go mad. When they reach 18, at that moment, they don’t get any help. Some of them died, they hanged themselves...”¹⁰⁸

Stresses in families

For many families the experience of exile may bring them closer together, as they share struggles and rely on each other to a greater extent than in their previous existence.¹⁰⁹

However, families may be coping with considerable stress. The immigration and asylum process is cited most regularly as the greatest barrier to integration. Protracted delays cause great anxiety and uncertainty, and young people are often keenly aware of the distress suffered by their parents in the process, as well as the direct effects on their own lives.¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ Save the Children, 2006

¹⁰² The Prince’s Trust with The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, 2003

¹⁰³ Greater London Authority, 2007

¹⁰⁴ Save the Children, 2006

¹⁰⁵ Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate, 2007

¹⁰⁶ Stringer and Lumley, 2007

¹⁰⁷ The Children’s Society, 2006

¹⁰⁸ The Prince’s Trust with The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, 2003

¹⁰⁹ Save the Children, 2004

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

“When you get status you feel like you belong. Before that you feel like you don’t belong, you are nothing, you are useless.”¹¹¹

Poverty, coupled with loss of social status, is also a factor. The Department for Work and Pension’s Refugee Employment Strategy, Working to Rebuild Lives, identified that unemployment among refugees is estimated to be about six times the national average. This is despite the fact that refugees have, on average, higher levels of qualifications.¹¹² Young refugees are aware of the financial constraints of their parents, and try to avoid making demands on them.¹¹³

“I have four boys. I don’t know if I buy shoes or clothes or food. If I buy food I can’t buy clothes. If I buy clothes I can’t buy food.”¹¹⁴

Refugees, regardless of status, typically live in poor quality housing in neighbourhoods characterised by deprivation and social exclusion.¹¹⁵ This adds to the stresses already experienced by many families.

“You send people to the bad area with the junkies, with the criminals, and in the end it ... it helps a bit that you don’t really understand where you are and what surrounds you, and what sort of people you meet around you. But eventually ... you begin to understand that the high flats are meant for people who don’t work.”¹¹⁶

Social facilities and leisure opportunities may be more restricted, or considered threatening. Problems may be compounded once families have been granted refugee status, as they are moved from Home Office accommodation, possibly into ‘short-term’ hostels, often far from children’s schools and any support networks they have built up.

Young refugees can be forced into early adulthood by the burden of responsibility they bear. They may have to undertake practical tasks such as interpreting for the family or negotiating with lawyers and service providers, for example, or caring for younger siblings or parents who are unable to function adequately.

“My role has changed so much, I had to grow up quickly, being an elder sister I’ve had to make decisions that my parents would usually have made ... take responsibility for not only my life but my sisters.”¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Greater London Authority, 2007

¹¹² Department for Work and Pensions, 2005

¹¹³ Save the Children, 2004

¹¹⁴ Save the Children, 2005

¹¹⁵ Robinson and Reeve, 2006

¹¹⁶ Ager and Strang, 2004b

¹¹⁷ Save the Children, 2004

6. Promoting positive integration outcomes: The role of school and other education settings

“Schools committed much time, effort and resources to integrating the asylum-seeker pupils in a positive and supportive manner.”¹¹⁸

There is a great deal of evidence to support the key role that schools play in promoting both the well-being of refugee children and young people, and positive integration outcomes.

Going to school can help restore normal daily routines and provide a sense of security, achievement and hope. School can help refugee children make sense of their past experiences and provide a bridge to building a new life.¹¹⁹

Through celebrating diversity and learning about the experiences of refugees, schools can also provide opportunities for all young people and local communities to examine critically their own attitudes, understand the global context of their local lives and develop important skills for life.

At the heart of the local community, schools can actively reach out to include all sections of the local population, and facilitate communication and social connections between them. Schools provide vital opportunities for refugee children and their families to develop friendships and social links with their non-refugee peers and the wider host community.

Extended Schools programmes, central to the delivery of the government’s Every Child Matters agenda, offer opportunities to develop holistic approaches that can benefit refugee children and their families. The Extended Schools Prospectus sets out a core offer of services that all children should be able to access through schools by 2010.¹²⁰ This includes:

- a varied menu of study support activities such as homework, sports and music clubs
- high quality childcare provided on primary school sites or through local providers
- parenting support, including information sessions for parents at key transition points, parenting programmes run with the support of other children’s services, and family learning sessions to allow children to learn with their parents
- identifying children with particular needs to ensure swift and easy referral to a wide range of specialist support services, such as speech therapy, child and adolescent mental health services, family support services, intensive behaviour support and sexual health services
- ICT, sports and arts facilities, and adult learning for the wider community.

¹¹⁸ Office for Standards in Education, 2003

¹¹⁹ The Children’s Society, 2006; Save the Children, 2004

¹²⁰ See: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/search/IG00046/ [accessed July 2007].

Schools will be expected to work closely with parents, children and others to shape these activities around the needs of their community, and may choose to provide extra services in response to demand.

Approaches and interventions that promote integration

Research into the characteristics of effective schools and of effective leadership in multi-ethnic schools has identified those factors that have enabled schools successfully to implement strategies to raise the achievement of children from minority ethnic groups.¹²¹

Key factors are:

- leadership and management that demonstrate:
 - a strong and determined lead on race equality
 - evaluation-led improvement
 - development of the school as a professional learning community which recognises the benefits of collaboration
 - a focus on data collected and analysed according to ethnicity, gender and first language
 - ambitious targets for attainment and achievement
 - data used to inform effective use of resources

- an approach to learning and teaching that demonstrates:
 - a curriculum that is broad and rich, inclusive and relevant
 - high reliability in teaching the core subjects
 - a clear focus for developing language across the curriculum
 - appropriately scaffolded and cognitively demanding learning opportunities
 - effective use of assessment for learning
 - effective use of specialist expertise within the classroom
 - use of children's linguistic, cultural and ethnic heritages to enhance learning

- a culture and ethos within which the following are demonstrable:
 - everyone feels safe and valued
 - a commitment to tackling underachievement and achieving high standards for all
 - linguistic, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity are valued and celebrated
 - diversity is seen as an opportunity, not as a reason for underachievement
 - practitioners have high expectations of children and encourage them to have high expectations of themselves
 - children are encouraged to believe in themselves and take responsibility for their learning
 - parents, carers and families are seen as partners and actively involved in their children's learning.

Successful and sustainable approaches taken by schools to integrate and support refugee pupils are embedded in mainstream provision, strongly led, adequately resourced and supported by all staff. They are part of the school's inclusion agenda.

¹²¹ Blair and Bourne, 1998; Office for Standards in Education, 2004; Walker *et al*, 2005

The following approaches stand out as being particularly effective at promoting integration.

Welcome, admission and induction

Effective admission and induction procedures can help relieve the anxieties that many refugee families face when arriving at a new school. Providing parents with comprehensive and accessible information and resolving issues of immediate concern are at the heart of establishing good relationships which can then be built on.

The DfES has identified employing induction mentors as one helpful approach. In some schools this role is undertaken by EMAG teachers, teaching assistants or home-school liaison workers.¹²²

“The people at school are always helpful and friendly. They’ve always got time for me.”¹²³

The DfES Standards and Islington Ethnic Minority Achievement Service websites both provide useful guidance and case studies demonstrating good practice in the induction of children who start school at non-standard times.¹²⁴

Supporting access to schooling

Refugees and asylum-seekers have the same entitlement to schooling as all other children. Local authorities have a legal duty to ensure that education is available for all children of compulsory school age in their area, and that it is appropriate to their age, ability and aptitudes, and any special educational needs.¹²⁵

Some schools refuse to provide school places for asylum-seekers, even though they are legally required to do so if they have places available.¹²⁶

Some local authorities have found it hard to keep track of refugee children as a result of their high mobility, and some parents are unaware of their rights and entitlements.

The most effective local authorities have formulated a clear, strategic response to the arrival of all mobile pupils and their families, and play a key role in brokering their admission to school.¹²⁷

¹²² Department for Education and Skills, 2003

¹²³ Bolloten, 2004

¹²⁴ See: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ts/guidance/pupilmobility/ and www.islingtonschoolsemas.net/mobility_home.htm [accessed June 2007].

¹²⁵ See: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/atoz/r/refugeeandasylumseekerschildren/> [accessed June 2007].

¹²⁶ Audit Commission, 2000

¹²⁷ Office for Standards in Education, 2003

The Routes Project

The Routes Project in Manchester provides support to refugee and asylum-seeker families by promoting access to mainstream services.

The Routes team gathers information from a refugee family to support children's admission to school. Where there is a shortage of school places the project works to respond to the wishes of parents and will advocate for their access to mainstream education. It works with schools to build their confidence in accepting new arrivals and supporting their needs effectively. Routes has a strong partnership with the Manchester City Council's Diversity and Inclusion Team whom they update every week with information on any new arrivals, any moves within the city, or any other change of circumstances.¹²⁸

"After three weeks I started going to school and from then onwards I started my ordinary life like all the normal children. I must say that the school is wonderful, the teachers are OK but the only thing that worries me is the education. I must say that it is a bit difficult but I like to learn and to do what they do at school."¹²⁹

Some schools have developed flexible and innovative approaches to learning in Key Stage 4, emphasising a more personalised curriculum. They work to ensure that new arrivals are informed of their curriculum options and routes of progression. They may offer concentrated periods of bilingual or mentoring support. By developing partnerships with other services, they may also offer access to EAL opportunities in post-16 settings, work-experience, or out-of-school-hours provision.¹³⁰

Supporting access to the curriculum

The National Curriculum statutory inclusion statement provides guidance on how schools can adapt programmes of study, devise their own schemes of work, and adapt their teaching to meet the needs of all pupils, including those who are newly arrived and who may need support in learning English.¹³¹

Strategies for effective support include:

- high expectations for all
- gathering full information about the pupil's prior learning and experience on admission
- setting targets that are effective in driving learning
- flexibility in teaching and learning
- developing activities and learning materials that build on pupils' language and culture
- monitoring progress across the curriculum

¹²⁸ The Routes Project: supporting access and enrolment in Manchester, National Refugee Integration Forum website: The Integration of Refugee Children: Good Practice in Educational Settings <http://www.nrif.org.uk/Education/SecondaryEducation/docs/04111TheRoutesProject.pdf> [accessed June 2007].

¹²⁹ Macaskill and Petrie, 2000

¹³⁰ The Routes Project: supporting access and enrolment in Manchester, National Refugee Integration Forum website: The Integration of Refugee Children: Good Practice in Educational Settings <http://www.nrif.org.uk/Education/SecondaryEducation/docs/04123Makingthekeystage4curriculumaccessible.pdf> [accessed June 2007].

¹³¹ See website of Qualification and Curriculum Authority: www.qca.org.uk/10008.html [accessed June 2007].

- providing effective pastoral support.

Flexible approaches to teaching and learning

A young unaccompanied asylum-seeking child joined his school in Cardiff in Year 10, speaking very little English. He received initial EAL support, learning basic 'survival' vocabulary and phrases. Subject teachers took responsibility for teaching specific vocabulary, and made good use of collaborative learning techniques to reinforce the development of curriculum concepts and English. He was able to attend a full range of GCSE classes, receiving some in-class support from EMAG staff, and some extra sessions to review the coursework and discuss aspects that he did not understand. He gained six GCSE grades C and above, including an 'A' in History.¹³²

Where there is a shortage of specialist EAL staff, some authorities and schools are developing innovative approaches to make the most effective use of resources.

Effective use of support staff

At a primary school in north-west London, the EMAG co-ordinator invested time in building up packs of work related to specific areas of the curriculum, particularly science, maths and history. These focused on introducing key vocabulary and concepts in a way that was supported by pictures and practical activities. Templates for easy recording were also provided and included writing frames, completing diagrams, cloze activities, etc. Two teaching assistants were trained in using these packs, and then timetabled to use them in supporting small groups of targeted children, usually during the last session of the day. Parents were also invited into these sessions to enable them to continue the support at home, in the home language.¹³³

Peer support and buddying

Many schools have well-developed buddy or peer mentoring systems to support new arrivals, helping them to settle in, make friends and adjust to new routines. Buddies can also help reduce racism and bullying and promote collaborative learning.

Recognising the rich learning potential involved in being a buddy, some schools incorporate it within the Personal, Social and Health Education (PHSE) curriculum, provide training and accord official recognition to this role. Where the systems are monitored and feedback elicited, possibly linking in with the School Council, schools are able to modify and develop the role and include innovative approaches.

Peer support across schools

At Hallfield Junior School in Westminster, a weekly after-school homework club for refugees was run by students from the nearby St. Marylebone C of E (Secondary) School. As well as helping the younger children with their school work, the students provided positive role models and many friendships developed.

¹³² The Routes Project: supporting access and enrolment in Manchester, National Refugee Integration Forum website: The Integration of Refugee Children: Good Practice in Educational Settings <http://www.nrif.org.uk/Education/SecondaryEducation/docs/04232Apersonalsuccessstory.pdf> [accessed June 2007].

¹³³ See Salisbury WORLD website: www.salisburyworld.org.uk/lvl3/l3_ftas_d26.php [accessed June 2007].

Building friendships

Making friends is the most important factor in the lives of young refugees, helping to develop a sense of safety, belonging and hope for the future. Schools play an important role in supporting the development of friendships with peers from their own and host communities, thereby promoting integration.

Friendship-building activities can take place in the classroom, at break-times and as part of after-school activities. Some schools monitor their existing recreational activities for refugee involvement and provide whatever support might be needed to overcome barriers to access.

For some young refugees who faced particular difficulty in settling in and making friends, mentoring schemes have proved useful, either school-based or in partnership with voluntary organisations.

There are projects that cater specifically for refugees, sometimes from across several schools. These allow refugee children and young people to relax with others who share common experiences, while at the same time the groups represent many different cultures and backgrounds.

Support in the community

Project DOST, based in a local community centre in east London, offers specialist support to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Provision includes an education support project, a weekly youth club, a creative arts programme, advocacy and support, and residential weekends.

"[The weekend made] me feel like I was with my brothers and sisters, I mean like a big family." Mohamed, 16, from Guinea.¹³⁴

Another approach is to help young refugees access local facilities, through addressing barriers to access. Salusbury WORLD After School Club for refugees, for example, has collaborated successfully with the St John's Wood Adventure Playground in the local community. They share facilities and funding for a full programme of holiday activities together, supported by volunteers and staff from refugee and the host communities.¹³⁵

Accessing local facilities

Starting Point is a programme set up by Bolton Council to provide for the welcome and induction of refugees arriving as part of the Gateway Protection Programme. As part of a range of integration activities, young refugees are given a year's membership at popular local youth facility, the Bolton Lads and Girls Club. Members of staff from the project take the young people for their first visit, to help with the journey and settling in. Once there, the children have access to a wide range of leisure activities, and the opportunity to mix with local people in a safe and stimulating environment.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ See Project DOST website: <http://trinity.dev.visionwt.com/trinity/projects/dost> [accessed June 2007].

¹³⁵ See Salusbury WORLD website: www.salusburyworld.org.uk/1v12/12_wwd_c3.php#1 [accessed June 2007].

¹³⁶ See Bolton Lads and Girls Club website: www.boltonladsandgirlsclub.co.uk/artman/publish/ [accessed June 2007].

There are also innovative projects specifically designed to enable young refugees and members of the host community to work together on projects in the school setting.

Refugee And Proud (RAP)

Portsmouth Ethnic Minority Achievement Service ran RAP after-school clubs in seven different schools, both secondary and primary, following a successful bid to the Home Office Challenge Fund. The clubs were open to all refugee pupils within the schools. Children from the host community and children of other migrant families who wanted to make new friends were also invited to take part. The clubs aimed to provide opportunities for pupils from diverse backgrounds to mix socially and form friendships, and to help them access activities promoting self-esteem. Equally, the clubs provided a safe space where the young people could discuss and resolve any difficulties that might have arisen at school. The children chose a variety of activities, including dance, drama, art work, pod casting, rock bands, samba and djembe, as well as trips out. At the end of the project, a performance allowed parents and friends to celebrate the achievements and socialise.

Supporting safety: Tackling bullying and racism

Schools should have robust procedures in place that recognise and deal with bullying and racist incidents, as well as provision to support children who may be suffering.

Counselling support

The 'Place2Be' is a charity that provides school-based emotional and therapeutic support to vulnerable children across the UK. Children can be referred by teachers and parents, and can be seen during the school day with minimum disruption to their education and in a place where they are comfortable. They can also refer themselves for a preliminary meeting through 'A Place 2 Talk', which offers short sessions during lunchtimes. Young refugees, who may have issues due to pre-flight experiences or due to bullying, can make the same use of these facilities.¹³⁷

The Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, gives public authorities, including schools, a statutory general duty to promote race equality. The general duty says that the body must have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups.

Many formal education initiatives undertaken as part of citizenship or PHSE education seek to impart a powerful core message: racist name calling and bullying is wrong and hurtful.¹³⁸ However, one piece of research into pupil perceptions of refugees and asylum-seekers concluded that, in schools, 20 per cent of the pupils may be sympathetic, 40 per cent uncommitted, and 40 per cent hostile.¹³⁹

Successful interventions to tackle racism tend to be educational, aimed at improving knowledge and communication. Measures go beyond 'myth-busting' and providing accurate information about refugees and the causes of flight. They confront prejudiced

¹³⁷ See the Place2Be website: www.theplace2be.org.uk/home.html [accessed June 2007].

¹³⁸ Lemos, 2005

¹³⁹ Rutter, 2006

attitudes directly, unpicking the assumptions behind them, and listening and responding to the concerns and views that people express.¹⁴⁰

Such interventions have well-defined objectives and a clear structure, with a range of activities and approaches that are sustained over time. They encourage reflection on personal experiences and enquiry into local circumstances. Importantly, they also explore the possibility of different attitudes and behaviours in the future, including how to respond in informal situations.¹⁴¹

Such approaches have been found to be less effective in classrooms where the teacher does not have consensual authority, or has an authoritarian teaching style and is unable to manage potentially difficult discussions. Children cannot simply be told to welcome refugees.¹⁴²

A powerful tool in changing opinions is the use of personal testimony. This may take the form of written accounts, films and DVDs, or the opportunity to meet a refugee and listen to their story.

Refugee Awareness Project

A project set up by Refugee Action aims to make communities better informed and more welcoming for refugees. It gives training to refugee and British volunteers from the local community to enable them to go out to local groups and explain what it is like to be a refugee and why people flee. Volunteers give presentations to schools, youth groups, business groups and faith groups. They aim to challenge myths, address concerns and give people a chance to meet a refugee and hear their story. Feedback indicates that hostility often changes as a result of these presentations.¹⁴³

Successful interventions in schools include circle time, work with persona dolls, drama activities that aim to develop empathy and the understanding of what it is like to be an outsider, and activities around personal and national identities.

A piece of forum theatre in Cumbria led to the following reactions among Year 6 pupils at Newbarnes School in Barrow:

“I am being very honest. I did used to sometimes say things but I didn't realise what I was saying until I thought about what I had done and then I would feel so guilty that I would go to my room for a bit. But after watching the play I really felt as if I was Black or Asian and I knew what it was to get picked on for my colour or religion so I think that the play really helps you to know what a Black person might feel like.”

“After watching the play, I feel a better person and I feel as if it has changed me completely into a new person and I will never say anything about other people that is racist again.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Lemos, 2005

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Rutter, 2006

¹⁴³ See Refugee Action Refugee Awareness Project website: www.refugee-action.org.uk/ourwork/projects/refugeeawareness.aspx [accessed June 2007].

¹⁴⁴ Department for Education and Skills, 2004a

The global citizenship curriculum offers a powerful framework for taking the exploration further, through exploring concepts such as global citizenship, conflict resolution, diversity, human rights, interdependence, social justice, sustainable development, and values and perceptions.¹⁴⁵

Refugee Week provides further opportunities to include the refugee experience into the curriculum and develop links with local communities.¹⁴⁶

Celebrating diversity

Activities that celebrate the linguistic diversity of modern Britain provide further opportunities for schools. Newbury Park Primary School in east London celebrates the many languages of its pupils by learning simple phrases as part of 'Language of the Month' activities. It has also provided resources on an award-winning website.¹⁴⁷

Recognising community languages

In one school a Somali bilingual assistant, herself a refugee, ran a weekly home language club for children from nursery to Year 6. The language club provided positive affirmation for the pupils and also for the worker, who had been recruited by the school to work in the Nursery and Reception classes.¹⁴⁸

Broadening the curriculum to celebrate diversity promotes opportunities to learn about migration and refugees, for example in the history curriculum. In some schools, the contribution of Muslim culture to science and of Ancient India to maths are recognised in assemblies and displays. With more groups using schools as part of the extended schools agenda, such displays can reach a much wider audience.

During Refugee Week, Salusbury Primary School collaborated with Salusbury WORLD and Kilburn library to celebrate many aspects of life and culture in Somalia.

These and similar activities help to promote race equality and build a cohesive school community.¹⁴⁹

Supporting and involving refugee parents

Many schools with experience of working with refugee families have recognised and responded to the complex needs that these families often have. They may provide support and information themselves via outreach projects, or may direct families to other appropriate sources of support in the community.

¹⁴⁵ See the Department for International Development (DfID) Global Dimension website: www.globaldimension.org.uk/default.aspx?id=65&nav=1 [accessed June 2007].

¹⁴⁶ See the Refugee Week website: www.refugeeweek.org.uk/ [accessed June 2007].

¹⁴⁷ See Newbury Park Primary School, Language of the Month website: www.newburypark.redbridge.sch.uk/langofmonth/index.html [accessed June 2007].

¹⁴⁸ Office for Standards in Education, 2003

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, the following websites: www.salusburyworld.org.uk/; www.refugeeweek.org.uk/YouthEducation/; www.savethechildren.org.uk/scuk/jsp/resources/details.jsp?id=4751; www.rednoseday.com/at-school/; www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/index.htm [accessed June 2007].

Partnership with an advice agency

Three primary schools in south London have collaborated in a partnership with the Multi-Lingual Community Rights Shop (MLCRS). MLCRS is an agency based in south London that provides free, independent and confidential advice and information services for people from Black and ethnic minority, asylum-seeker and refugee communities whose first language is not English. An advice worker comes to one of the schools for a whole day every three weeks and advises parents on issues such as welfare benefits and rights, housing, immigration and nationality, education, employment, and consumer rights. Parents from the other two schools can make appointments and interpreters are provided when needed.

By basing the sessions in the school, parents have been able to access the support they needed quickly and easily, and have felt more integrated within the local community.¹⁵⁰

Working in partnership with parents and their communities can be decisive in making a school more inclusive and can make a real difference to children who may be at risk of underachieving. Children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can help more effectively if they know what the school is trying to achieve and how they can help. Schools can also benefit from the talents and skills that parents bring.¹⁵¹

Parental initiatives

In one area, parents had set up a homework club in a community facility where supporting children with homework was a shared activity.¹⁵²

Swift and easy referral to specialist services such as health and social care is part of the Extended Schools core offer, and should ensure that the needs of refugees who may require access to specialist services are met. For any family, it can be easier to access services that are based in a location that is known and trusted.

Given the necessary support, refugees can become full and active members of their local community. This may be through family learning opportunities, or providing access to advice. It can also be done by offering opportunities for parents to meet together at coffee mornings and begin to build up informal networks of support with other refugees and members of the host community. As they become more comfortable within the community, refugee parents want to become more actively involved in the daily life of the school.

The Community Cohesion Standards for Schools offer guidance on how such activities may be set up and monitored.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ The Routes Project: supporting access and enrolment in Manchester, National Refugee Integration Forum website: The Integration of Refugee Children: Good Practice in Educational Settings <http://www.nrif.org.uk/Education/PrimaryEducation/docs/03121Partnerswithandadviceagency.pdf> [accessed June 2007].

¹⁵¹ See:

www.nrif.org.uk/education/primaryeducation/contributingtothecommunity/promotingparentsparticipation.asp [accessed June 2007].

¹⁵² Glasgow City Council Education Services and Save the Children, 2002

¹⁵³ Department for Education and Skills, 2004b

Setting up a parents' forum

One successful secondary school gradually set up separate coffee mornings for parents from each of the communities represented in the school. These groups were regularly consulted about aspects of school life on an informal basis. From there it was a relatively small but significant step to set up an official parents' forum, with representation from each community. With no more than 12 members and an external facilitator to allow for freedom of expression, the parents were asked to give their views on their aspirations for the school, what they saw as the successes, what was not working, and how they saw the way ahead. These views were then incorporated into the school's planning, with further dates set for review of progress.¹⁵⁴

A significant factor in the successful involvement of parents from refugee communities is the employment of members of staff from within those communities. Such practitioners can inform the schools about cultural issues and identify support available from within refugee community organisations or community schools.

Additionally, there are many refugees who have trained and worked as teachers in their own countries who might teach in the UK. In Scotland the General Teaching Council has set up a scheme allowing refugee teachers to shadow local teachers to gain experience of the Scottish system to help facilitate this process.¹⁵⁵ In England, the Refugee Council is leading a similar 'Refugees into Teaching' initiative.¹⁵⁶ The Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit has also developed a 'Routes into Employment in Schools for Refugees' project.¹⁵⁷

Developing positive community relationships

Schools can help build cohesive communities. They are well placed to help refugee parents to increase their understanding of the society in which they live and to deploy their talents and skills effectively, so they can participate fully in the life of the school and the wider community.

Schools can provide space and opportunities for people to meet through shared activities. They can provide accurate information to dispel local misunderstandings and also help feed positive stories of refugees into the local media. In some areas, schools have been actively engaged in organising popular local campaigns to prevent pupils and their families from being deported. At the heart of the local community they can take the temperature of local feeling and respond whole-heartedly, and have often done so to powerful effect.

¹⁵⁴ Described by the deputy head teacher of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School at the Islington conference on Raising Somali Achievement, 2007

¹⁵⁵ See BBC website article: *Plan to recruit refugee teachers*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/3415265.stm> [accessed June 2007].

¹⁵⁶ See: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/howwehelp/partners/partnership/refugees+into+teaching/ [accessed June 2007].

¹⁵⁷ See: [www.londonmet.ac.uk/ragu/\\$coeducators-in-schools-programme.cfm](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/ragu/$coeducators-in-schools-programme.cfm) [accessed June 2007].

Reaching out to the community

One school in the Midlands, on its own initiative, arranged for a local forum of residents, asylum-seekers, councillors, voluntary agencies, police and church representatives to meet in the school. The forum, which also had a school representative, tackled concerns and worries affecting all parties. It was instrumental in overcoming initial hostility and antagonism, particularly between local residents and asylum-seeker families.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Office for Standards in Education, 2003

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