

Integration: Building a Life in the UK

25 March 2009, London



Policy Recommendations

The following are the recommendations from the workshops held at the Refugee Council's conference on Integration in March 2009. Other suggestions were made by individuals during the course of the day, but the workshop recommendations summarised below will be the focus of the recommendations put to the Home Office to respond to. They should be read in conjunction with the Refugee Council's conference report, which contains wider points concerning how to ensure an effective refugee integration policy in the UK.

250 delegates from voluntary organisations, refugee community organisations, schools, faith groups and statutory organisations participated in the conference workshops, contributed their expertise, and helped to shape and agree these recommendations. Workshops focused on four critical areas: housing, volunteering, education and employment, and children and families, and were led by our conference partners: Timebank, Shelter, NIACE and Barnado's.

In his address to the conference, Phil Woolas MP, Minister for Borders and Immigration, reiterated UKBA's commitment to respond to the workshop recommendations.

Summary of recommendations

Housing

1. Ensure that there is a legislative entitlement to a minimum standard of support and provide the funding necessary to achieve this. (Central government)
2. Enable a smooth transition from UK Border Agency accommodation for those given a positive decision, in particular:
 - Establish effective communication channels between UKBA, accommodation providers and local authorities, to ensure that all relevant agencies are informed as soon as a positive decision is made. (UKBA)
 - Explore and develop innovative ways of enabling people to stay in existing accommodation once status is given. (UKBA)
 - Develop and implement a policy that will provide flexibility around the date at which people have to leave UKBA accommodation where other support/benefits have not yet been secured and develop methods of fast-tracking of mainstream assistance and benefits for asylum seekers given a positive decision. (UKBA)
3. Ensure relevant agencies are equipped with information and resources to work together on refugee integration, in particular:
 - Relevant government departments should consider how they encourage engagement by housing providers with refugee communities. (Department for Communities and Local Government and the Home Office)
 - The Homes and Communities Agency is in a position to restate the strategic imperative for this area of work which was set by the Housing Corporation, and

should do so. This should be on the agenda of the HCA Equalities and Diversity Advisory Group. (HCA)

- The Tenant Services Authority needs to consider how to consult and work inclusively with a diverse tenant base, and indeed with potential tenants who may currently make little use of social housing. (TSA)
- Housing providers should actively consider how to engage with diverse communities in the areas they serve. (Housing associations and other housing providers)

Education and Employment

1. Public bodies should recognise the distinct issues for refugees in their equality schemes and policies - shaping service provision around the needs of refugees and their communities and monitoring their impact. (Home Office leading action across government)
2. Fund and support ESOL provision for asylum seekers from day one (Home Office, DCLG and DIUS)
3. Research should be undertaken to compare and contrast the different policies on ESOL for asylum seekers in Scotland and England, with a cost benefit analysis. (Home Office with relevant voluntary organisations in Scotland and England)

Volunteering

1. Widen mentoring provision to currently excluded groups, including asylum seekers and those not eligible for the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) (UKBA)
2. Recognise the value of volunteering and allocate resources to allow formal accreditation for all groups, as well as opportunities for sharing best practice within the voluntary sector and particularly with RCOs (UKBA and Cabinet Office/Office of the Third Sector)
3. Create clear and accessible definition of volunteering eligibility, including clarifying the position for refused asylum-seekers and provide information regarding volunteering and mentoring in briefings provided to asylum applicants (UKBA and DWP with voluntary sector)

Children and families

1. Issue clear guidance that the Every Child Matters agenda is for all children, including asylum seeking children, backed-up by providing training on how ECM should impact on approach and services to asylum seeking children (UKBA and DCSF)
2. Ensure consistent and fair treatment of children regardless of geographical location – provide adequate funding to Social Services and issue good practice guidance, supported by training (UKBA and DCSF)

3. Ensure that children are provided with accessible information about asylum and integration, from a single point of contact. UKBA should commission information and a national training package, delivered in conjunction with young people who have experienced the asylum process (UKBA)

Workshop 1: Housing

Recommendations from the workshop on housing, led by Caroline Davey, Deputy Director of Communications, Policy and Campaigns, Shelter.

1. Ensure an adequate safety net

- People have a fundamental human right to basic shelter, as a minimum.
- There is a need for a basic level of support and emergency/short-term accommodation which provides a 'bottom line'.
- There are too many gaps in the system where people fall through what is meant to be the safety net.
- Destitution is a real concern, and without additional support will continue to grow as a problem.

Implementation

- Central government role: funding/direction as well as ensuring that there is a legislative entitlement to a minimum standard of support.
- Local authority role: assessment and emergency provision of accommodation.
- Homelessness agencies role: identification and support of those in need.

2. Enable a smooth transition from UK Border Agency accommodation for those given a positive decision

- There is a need for further practical solutions to overcome the current barriers to effective transition. This stems principally from the length of time it takes to transfer support provider (from UKBA to mainstream assistance) vs. the time it actually takes to access accommodation and benefits, which can take well over 4 weeks.
- Some workshop participants highlighted positive examples of local systems where asylum seekers given a positive decision are able to stay in their UKBA accommodation, which was transferred over to a private let.

Implementation

- Effective communication channels are required between UKBA, accommodation providers and local authorities, to ensure that all relevant agencies are informed as soon as a positive decision is made.
- Development of innovative ways of enabling people to stay in existing accommodation (e.g. example above).
- Flexibility is required around the date at which people have to leave UKBA accommodation where other support/benefits have not yet been secured.
- Greater efficiency/fast-tracking of mainstream assistance and benefits for asylum seekers given a positive decision.

3. Provide resources for training and development

- To facilitate effective integration in the long term, training is required in a range of different agencies in order to equip them with the information, knowledge and – crucially – skills to work with and alongside each other on refugee integration.
- There is a particular role here for housing associations and other housing organisations.
- There is also a need for firm commitment to support this work from both the Homes and Communities Agency and the Tenant Services Authority.

Implementation

- Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Home Office: Both departments should consider how they encourage engagement by housing providers with refugee communities, e.g. refugee housing needs should be included in strategic housing market assessments; policies about the integration of refugees and of other migrants need to be brought together to reflect the realities at neighbourhood level; and clear and accurate information is important both to ensure that groups in need of housing are helped to access it, and to provide clarity and dispel myths about entitlements.
- The Homes and Communities Agency: The HCA is in a position to restate the strategic imperative for this area of work which was set by the Housing Corporation, and should do so. This should be on the agenda of the HCA Equalities and Diversity Advisory Group.
- The Tenant Services Authority: The TSA needs to consider how to consult and work inclusively with a diverse tenant base, and indeed with potential tenants who may currently make little use of social housing.
- Housing associations and other housing providers: Housing providers should actively consider how to engage with diverse communities in the areas they serve, in particular: to meet equality and diversity requirements through knowledge of their local population, its housing needs, and whether they are being met; to understand how changes to their business – such as growth or mergers – impact on their ability to work effectively with marginalised communities such as refugees; and to ensure that the most appropriate part of their organisation or group initiates this work, so it is not marginalised.

Workshop 2: Employment and Education

Recommendations from the workshop on employment and education, led by Chris Taylor, Development Officer, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).

Recommendations

1. Refugees face particular challenges in adjusting to life in the UK which are not necessarily shared by established Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and are often in contrast to other migrants. For example, refugees are forced to come to the UK for protection and their fear of persecution prevents them from being able to return to their country of origin. Many will not have a detailed knowledge of how the UK works, of the English language or be able to translate easily their employment experience into UK terms. **We want public bodies to recognise these distinct issues in their equality schemes and policies - shaping service provision around the needs of refugees and their communities and monitoring their impact.**
2. **Government departments should work together to fund and support ESOL for asylum seekers from the day of their asylum claim until their case has been fully concluded.** Government should recognise the direct benefits (including increased chances of employment if granted status and decreased interpreting costs) and softer outcomes (including a greater sense of personal safety and wellbeing, stronger community cohesion). **Research could usefully be conducted looking at a cost benefit analysis and comparison between the Scottish experience of delivering ESOL to asylum seekers and the English system.**
3. As the Government introduces new plans for citizenship, refugees who are granted five years leave to remain will be expected to meet certain English levels in order to stay in the UK. We are concerned that requiring refugees to satisfy English language without ensuring that they are able to access English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses will mean many refugees struggle to meet this requirement. As a result, they will be faced with additional periods of temporary leave. **The Government should grant Indefinite Leave to Remain automatically and ensure that all refugees are eligible for ESOL funding up to a minimum of Entry level 3 so they are supported in their applications for citizenship.**
4. UKBA needs to address the impact of restricting employment opportunities to asylum seekers. The current policy of granting permission to work only in cases where an initial decision takes longer than twelve months confines a majority of asylum seekers to a life without work. This policy enforces dependency on benefits, restricts their ability to gain employment once granted status and deskills people so that they face periods of retraining, whether in the UK or if they return. **The government should grant entitlement to work for asylum seekers if their claims have not been fully concluded within six months to allow access to paid employment and work-based training.**

5. Given the reasons for coming to the UK, refugees may not have access to certificates of their qualifications, or be able to contact previous employers or awarding bodies. The State is often the cause of persecution faced by refugees. As a result, refugees are often unable and unwilling to make themselves known to the previous authorities. Without formal evidence of their skills and experience, refugees are faced with extended periods of retraining and requalification. **The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) should develop appropriate Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning (APEL) through work-based assessment and portfolio building. This could be piloted within an Integrated Employment and Skills (IES) area where DWP and DIUS are developing new ways of strengthening skill development and employability.**
6. Refugees can be discriminated against by employers as they do not have familiar documentation to demonstrate permission to work (e.g. a passport) or are assumed to be included within measures applying to the recruitment of foreign nationals (e.g. the Resident Labour Market test). The Department for Business Innovation & Skills (DBIS), DWP, UKBA and employers' bodies need to ensure that guidance to employers clearly presents the range of documents refugees will have, including when they have applied for further leave to remain and a clear commitment to refugees full employment and training rights in the UK. This guidance should also make clear the responsibility on employers not to discriminate against refugees, either directly or indirectly.
7. **Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), DWP and DIUS to ensure that local authorities capture data on refugees and their communities.** This is needed to embed refugees within employment and training initiatives at local and multi area levels. This will include City Strategy Pathfinders, Integrated Employment and Skills pilots, Working Neighbourhood Fund and future ESOL delivery. **Jobcentre Plus** also needs to promote greater flexibility of its own provision, including through working in partnership with refugee agencies to provide specialist activities, to develop personalised support around the individual needs of a refugee.
8. At present, there are still significant numbers of asylum seekers who are unable to access higher education, often after spending years waiting for a decision. Many asylum seekers have successfully completed qualifications up to Level 3 in the UK but cannot study further due to being classed as an overseas student for fee purpose. It is impossible for a vast majority of asylum seekers to find the funds to pay for overseas fees. **DIUS should consider funding for asylum seekers as home students if their claims have not been fully resolved after three years. UKBA should consider allowing asylum seekers to remain in the UK if they are refused asylum during a higher education course. The Department for International Development's (DFID) role should also be recognised in linking and strengthening the skills of refused asylum seekers with sustainable returns and contributing to the returnee's country's development.**

Workshop 3: Volunteering

Recommendations from the workshop on volunteering, led by Sian Greenhead, Project Manager, Timebank, and Chris Badman, Volunteer Development Manager, Refugee Council.

1. Widen mentoring provision to currently excluded groups, including asylum seekers and those not eligible for the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES)

The workshop reiterated the importance of mentoring as a tool, facilitating integration, and stressing the unique benefits to mentors and mentees of being involved in a mentoring relationship. Research carried out by Timebank in 2007 into their Time Together refugee mentoring programme, highlights some of the areas where mentoring can support integration:

- 81% of mentees said that they felt more integrated into UK society and therefore more confident to participate
- 99% of mentees felt that they had made progress in improving their English
- 88% of mentees felt that they had made progress toward their employment goals
- When asked whether they now had a better understanding of UK culture, 94% of mentees answered 'yes'

Additionally, mentors (who were predominantly UK nationals) reported the following benefits:

- A greater understanding of the refugee experience
- Greater confidence to challenge other peoples negative perceptions and myths about refugees
- A greater understanding of different cultures and how to relate to people from different cultures
- The opportunity to expand their social networks

Workshop participants welcomed the inclusion of mentoring (based on the Time Together programme) as a key strand of the refugee integration and employment service (RIES) and believed that alongside professional advice and support, it greatly enhances the possibility of successful integration.

The process of integration starts at day 1 and the integration benefits of mentoring should be available to asylum seekers. All of the integration benefits identified by TimeBank (with the possible exception of employment) are equally applicable to asylum seekers as to refugees. Unfortunately, there is no structure or central resources for mentoring asylum seekers. Providing mentoring for asylum seekers would both provide guidance and support during the crucial first weeks and months in the UK and speed up the integration process for those who receive leave to remain in the UK. Whilst there is no shortage of potential volunteers to mentor asylum seekers, there is a shortage of funding to run schemes that provide safe and supportive mentoring programmes.

Large numbers of refugees are not allowed to access RIES, including those whose asylum claims predate the New Asylum Model process. Before the introduction of RIES, anyone from a refugee background could apply to join Time Together and therefore refugees could access mentoring at a time that was most appropriate to their individual needs. With the focus (and funding) now being allocated to RIES, many refugees are left without a “trusted guide” to support them with their integration aims.

UKBA should consider how mentoring schemes could be extended to benefit and aid the integration of as many refugees as possible, as well as asylum seekers.

2. Recognise the value of volunteering and allocate resources to allow formal accreditation for all groups, as well as opportunities for sharing best practice within the voluntary sector and particularly with RCOs

There are numerous benefits that refugees and asylum seekers can gain through volunteering, amongst them an increase in confidence, improved communication skills, better understanding of the UK and improved employment prospects.

Research carried out by a number of different organisations including the Refugee Council provides clear evidence of the benefits of volunteering. When the Refugee Council conducted a self-assessment of refugee and asylum seeker volunteers, 80% - 90% rated their overall ability as good or very good, compared to 25% - 40% before volunteering. 76% attributed the improvement mainly, or wholly, to volunteering. Additionally, 33% of respondents cited an improvement in mental health as being a benefit of volunteering. Clearly, all of these factors are important in promoting social inclusion and integration and a good volunteering experience provides a purposeful and efficient means of gaining personal and practical skills whilst making community contacts and friendships.

Many organisations do not have the resources to plan and manage volunteer programmes and often struggle to recruit volunteers. This is common within the RCO sector, where money for advertising, training and basic good practice (such as reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses) may not be available and there may be a lack of knowledge of organisations such as volunteer centres that can provide assistance. As a result, small organisations often rely on “friends of friends” helping out and the opportunities for integration can be limited by the self-selecting nature of volunteers.

There is clearly a role for refugee-assisting NGOs to take a lead in sharing good practice amongst RCOs, but this can only be sustained if additional resources can be provided for smaller organisations, so that consistent work can be continued. We suggest that funding be made available for capacity building amongst RCOs to enable them to develop sustainable volunteer programmes that involve diverse local volunteers.

Offering accredited volunteering programmes that are “quality assured” is the best way of optimising the chances that a volunteering placement will be beneficial to both the organisation and the individual taking part. At present, many organisations are unable to afford to go through an assessment programme such as Investing in Volunteers (even if they are aware of

its existence), and we would hope that additional resources can be made available to enable smaller organisations to become accredited.

Volunteering should be linked to formal accreditation and qualifications, as outlined in the Final Report of the Commission on the Future of Volunteering, which has been endorsed by the Cabinet Office/Office of the Third Sector (OTS), and which is best summarised by recommendation 5.3: *“government actively promotes and supports a coherent approach to accreditation and training for volunteers”*. The additional funding that has been agreed by the OTS needs to be made accessible to RCOs and other small organisations to ensure that refugee volunteers are able to benefit from accredited training.

The extension of Train to Gain to include volunteers is welcome, but it is regrettable that it is not accessible to asylum seekers who are deemed not to qualify as being “normally resident” in the UK.

3. Create a clear and accessible definition of volunteering eligibility, including clarifying the position for refused asylum-seekers, and provide information regarding volunteering and mentoring in briefings provided to asylum applicants

There continues to be confusion and misunderstanding about the entitlement of asylum seekers to volunteer whilst they are waiting for a decision on their asylum application and, in particular, if they have been refused refugee status but are still legally in the country.

The 2008 UKBA publication *Prevention of Illegal Working* attempts to clarify the position by specifically addressing the question of asylum applicants' eligibility and has created a new definition of volunteering.

However, there is inconsistency between government definitions of volunteering. The UKBA guidance states that *‘Asylum seekers are allowed to volunteer, as long as they are carrying out the work on behalf of a registered charity, voluntary organisation or body that raises funds for either. Any voluntary activity should not amount to either employment, or job substitution.’*

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in its publication *Volunteering while receiving benefits* states *‘As a volunteer you could:*

- *volunteer with a charity or other voluntary organisation*
- *volunteer with a public-sector organisation or*
- *help your community’*

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) takes its definition from Section 2 of the 1997 Police Act (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002 and defines a volunteer as *‘a person who is engaged in any activity which involves spending time, unpaid (except for travelling and other approved out-of-pocket expenses), doing something which aims to benefit some third party other than or in addition to a close relative’*.

There is a fundamental difference in these definitions of volunteer(ing) and by specifying the type of organisation that can provide a volunteering opportunity, the UKBA guidance is restrictive in terms of opportunities, particularly within the public-sector.

It should be noted that the Illegal Working Unit of the UKBA has stated that the definition of volunteering as being for a registered charity, voluntary organisation or body that raises funds for either is

'a wide definition and encompasses establishments in the public sector, including many schools and hospitals, so we do not view this as unnecessarily restrictive'.

Participants at the workshop disagreed with this statement, as the majority of volunteering in the NHS is run directly by the NHS Trusts, and many state schools involve parents as volunteers directly (e.g. in accompanying children on class trips or in providing classroom assistance or after-school care). These volunteering opportunities are not on behalf of a registered charity, voluntary organisation or a body that raises funds for either. As such, an asylum seeker who wanted to volunteer within an NHS Trust (but not for a charitable organisation such as the Friends of a hospital) or become a Governor of a school would not, under the UKBA guidance, be able to take up such an opportunity.

The Local Government Association is working to try to increase volunteering opportunities within local authorities and again, asylum seekers would not be able to take up any opportunities within Local Authorities under the current guidance.

Workshop participants urged the UKBA to lead cross-departmental discussions involving volunteering infrastructure organisations such as Volunteering England, to produce a clear and unambiguous definition of volunteering that can be used consistently throughout government and in legislation. In addition to clarifying the situation with asylum seekers, this would have a wider benefit of allowing a clear understanding of the type of opportunities that would be considered appropriate in speeding up a citizenship application, should proposals related to the current Bill progress.

Additionally, the Preventing Illegal Working Guidance on the situation with refused asylum applicants volunteering is potentially misleading. The Guidance states that:

*'The Border and Immigration Agency encourages volunteering for those asylum seekers who are legally residing in the UK, as this can provide asylum seekers with a purposeful activity and an opportunity to participate in the community whilst awaiting the outcome of their asylum claim. **However, on the grounds that a failed asylum seeker should not be in the United Kingdom at all, he or she should not be volunteering following a final decision on their claim, or if they have exhausted all their appeal rights.** Although there is no specific legal power to prevent a failed asylum seeker from volunteering, the normal course of action should be for the Border and Immigration Agency to issue removal directions and to discourage further voluntary activity.'*

There are many refused asylum applicants who are legally allowed to be in the UK, such as those who are able to claim Section 4 support. This guidance requires amending to ensure that it is legally accurate and prevents misunderstanding.

A final recommendation from the workshop was that information about the principles and benefits of volunteering and mentoring should be made available to asylum applicants early in the asylum process, as formalised volunteering is predominantly a “Western” concept that may be unfamiliar to asylum applicants.

It would be beneficial for people to be provided with consistent and accurate information. This could be easily developed using the joint expertise of the Refugee Council, other Asylum Support Partnership Agencies, Timebank, Volunteering England and the UKBA and could be included in information provided to applicants during the One Day Induction Process or in induction centres.

Workshop 4: Children and Families

Recommendations from the workshop on children and families, led by young unaccompanied asylum seekers from Barnado's Waltham Forest Children's Rights Service.

Young unaccompanied asylum seekers from Barnado's Waltham Forest Children's Rights Service designed their own interactive drama exercise to explore with participants what integration means for children and young people coming unaccompanied into this country.

In the form of a game show the young people became television hosts and invited participants to undergo a series of trials and experiences, collecting information, documents, and 'money', in order to gain the ultimate prize of an Identity card. As the (very brave!) contestants quickly figured out, the contestant who did the best was completely arbitrary, with some rounds seeming unreasonable, unnecessarily embarrassing, and at points totally weighted against them.

The feelings that the gameshow participants experienced were supposed to replicate some of the experiences of a young unaccompanied asylum seeker:

- Lack of information and communication barriers: The contestants were abruptly herded round from task to task, not informed what they were doing or why they were doing it, visibly confused by the lack of attention they were receiving from their hosts, who nonetheless still expected them to carry out the tasks. In a couple of tasks one of the contestants was given instructions in two different unknown languages.
- Inconsistency across areas and individual social workers: One contestant was given easier tasks, more information and in a language they could understand, while the other was given demands but no engagement or eye-contact.
- Arbitrary cut-offs and strict age restrictions: Time-limits for a task were enforced without warning, and towards the end, the contestants were asked their age and on replying the more unfortunate player had what little progress he'd made taken away from him, apparently as a result of his age.

The audience very quickly understood the parallels that were being drawn and in the immediate feedback seemed enthusiastic and definitely recognised the experiences they were seeing. They were then split into smaller groups to discuss what they had seen and answer these questions:

- What could be the differences between the experiences of a minor and an adult asylum seeker?
- What does all this mean for integration?
- What three things would we like to see change about policy for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people?

Policy Recommendations

1. Children first – asylum seekers second

The workshop believed that the principles and obligations of 'Every Child Matters' were not being applied equally to asylum seeking children. Participants felt a renewed statutory emphasis on treating unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASCs) as children first and foremost would help to change the way various separate decisions are taken by services dealing with them.

The effect on unaccompanied children of immigration law taking precedence over their rights as children is felt in a variety of ways. Despite child protection and even human rights issues, children are in detention because they are treated by the system primarily as asylum seekers. Young asylum seekers face barriers in education, and particularly accessing higher education, that a British born child would not have, harming their life chances and fostering social exclusion. Despite the Hillingdon judgement stating that UASCs should come under the same legislation as any child leaving care, it has not always been applied. They still face obstacles to receiving support and with accommodation as a result of not being given the priority consideration that all children are entitled to.

An overarching desire that emerged was summed up as 'Tackling the culture of disbelief'. An attitude shift is required in the way that asylum seeker children are viewed with suspicion, often with a presumption of guilt rather than being given the benefit of doubt, for example on matters such as their status and particularly their age. If a person is deemed to be over 18 the Local Authority is not responsible for providing what can often be very expensive leaving care services, and so there was a concern that there is a potential financial interest in judging a young person to be over 18. However, that is not at all to imply that any Local Authorities will be led by financial matters. This decision happens in what was felt by the young people to be unnecessarily interrogative interviews in which visual assessments of age also take place by UKBA staff and possibly also social services staff.

Visual assessments are arbitrary and not an accurate way of determining a child's age. The workshop discussions noted that only with a change in working culture at ground level could better practice be achieved in implementing specific policy demands.

Implementation

There is a need for clear government guidance that Every Child Matters (ECM) is for all children, regardless of their circumstances. Particular institutions e.g. UKBA and private partners would benefit from particular training in how ECM should impact on their approach and services. This could be addressed in part by reminding providers that UASC and asylum seeking children generally are children who have extra care and support needs. 'Interrogative' interviews are not appropriate for these children, they need to be interviewed sensitively.

2a. Consistent support across the country

One of the key messages of the workshop was that unaccompanied asylum seeking children found that there was no consistency in the way they were treated. A positive, helpful approach was just as likely as no help at all. A lack of consistency has meant that a 'postcode lottery' exists with cases being treated differently depending on their geographical location and even on a case-to-case basis. In August 2003, the High Court ruled that unaccompanied asylum seeking children came under the same legislation as children leaving care, ruling that they should continue to receive support up until the age of 21, or 24 in the case that they enter higher education. Despite this, the implementation of the Hillingdon judgement is enforced inconsistently across the country.

This has created a system that is unjust and unfair. It is important that asylum seeking children are treated consistently, no matter where they are geographically. In order for a child to feel safe and secure, they need to know that they are receiving the same support as other children in their situation. Social Services need to be funded adequately to make sure support is given consistently across the country. There needs to be good practise guidelines for local authorities across the board which may require additional training.

2b. Accessible information for the child, from a single point of contact

Leading on from the point that asylum seeking children should be treated as children, our workshop group discussions concluded that communication needed to be improved towards UASCs. Having a single case worker has been an improvement, however, whoever this point of contact is, they need to provide the most crucial information in an understandable manner to the child. This would help young people and children to understand the asylum process and have a clear idea of what their rights and entitlements are, and explain the workings of the systems that affect their integration in addition to immigration, including education and social services. This should include easy-to-use information in their own language which should be presented in a child friendly way. Accessible information needs to be more than just available, it needs to be actively promoted and explained so that the child has a good understanding.

Implementation

For the above two points, implementation would have to include development of information for young people and a national training package, commissioned by the government and delivered across the country – particularly in light of the UKBA moving towards specialist authorities, many of which have never had to provide services for large numbers of asylum seekers or UASC. Training should be delivered in conjunction with young people who have experienced the various systems