



Refugee Council

Beyond the school gates: supporting refugees and asylum seekers in secondary school

Lisa Doyle
Megan McCorriston

May 2008



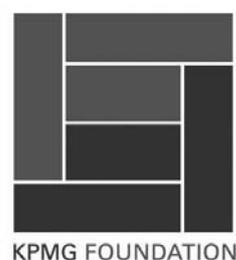
Refugee Council

Beyond the school gates: supporting refugees and asylum seekers in secondary school

Lisa Doyle

Megan McCorriston

May 2008



About the Research Unit

The Refugee Council's Research Unit was set up to encourage and undertake research that is informed by the experiences of refugee agencies and refugee community organisations and that engages refugees as partners in research. We work in partnership with universities, voluntary and statutory bodies and refugee community organisations to investigate policy options, collect and communicate data, identify good practice and assess policy impact.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the following people for their contributions to this report: Nora McKenna was instrumental in getting the project off the ground, and we wish to acknowledge her, and Calvin Armstrong, for their work in delivering all aspects of the project; Dritan Dema, Cyril Matuwidi, Ernest Rukangira and Marija Vidovic for their help, particularly during the fieldwork; STAR, particularly Zuhra Bahman, Katherine Blaker, Natasha King, Sarah Williams, the peer researchers and the young people who provided a steer to the project; Deborah Gold, Alison Newbery, Colette Ozanne, Anna Page and Clare Roche for secondary research, data analysis, summarising and transcription; the External Advisory Group and the Project Board for their input and guidance.

We would like to thank our colleagues within the Refugee Council for their support during all stages of the project. Thanks particularly to Anja Rudiger and Nancy Kelley for their guidance in the early stages, and Sarah Cutler for her invaluable help with the production of the report. Kavita Brahmabhatt, Judith Dennis, Jonathan Ellis, Andrew Lawton and James Lee have also provided support and assistance, as well as members of the Regional Development Team.

We would like to thank our funders, the KPMG Foundation, for their support and keen interest in the project. Neil Sherlock has been a great source of encouragement and enthusiasm.

Finally, we would like to thank all of the respondents who participated in this research, as well as those who assisted us in accessing interviewees. In order to maintain your anonymity, we cannot provide a list of you all, but we are incredibly grateful that you gave up the time to tell us about your experiences.

Contents

Executive summary	4
Chapter One – Introduction	7
Chapter Two – Inclusive education for young refugees and asylum seekers	9
Chapter Three – Research design	13
Chapter Four – Experiences and engagement	18
Chapter Five – Barriers to inclusion	27
Chapter Six – Meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers	44
Conclusion and recommendations	53
References	55

Executive summary

This report presents the findings from research undertaken as part of the *Inclusive Secondary Schools Project*. This is a three-year project, which began in 2005, being delivered by the Refugee Council and funded by the KPMG Foundation. The overall aim of the project is to research and pilot new ways of working that link schools with refugee and asylum seeking young people, their parents and carers and Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs). This report discusses the findings of the research phase which explored the needs and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in relation to secondary schooling in England. The *Inclusive Secondary Schools Project* has also set up pilot partnerships between schools and refugee community/supporting organisations, with a view to addressing factors that impact on parental/carer involvement and developing good practice. The findings from both the research and development phases will form the basis of the toolkit for schools and refugee community/supporting organisations for increasing involvement in the education of refugee and asylum seeking young people, to be published later in 2008.

The research discussed in this report consisted of 70 in-depth interviews, and questionnaire surveys with RCOs, secondary schools and local authorities, to:

- examine the experiences and needs of these groups
- identify key barriers to inclusion, and
- identify examples of practice aimed at overcoming these barriers.

The policy and legislative context, as well as the research design, are discussed in detail in chapters two and three. Chapter four explores young peoples' and parents'/carers' experiences of education at the secondary level. Chapter five examines the barriers to access and achievement in education, while chapter six highlights practice that helps refugee communities overcome these barriers. The report ends with recommendations that have been developed to assist stakeholders in better meeting the needs of refugee communities.

Experience and engagement

Young people in this research identified high levels of parent/carer involvement, however to considerably variable extents, from one-off meetings to frequent encounters. Although proficiency in English could be a barrier, parents continued to try to engage despite this hurdle, and young people generally felt very positively about the support that they received from parents/carers.

Parents/carers had general levels of satisfaction with schools. Levels of involvement were high, particularly where supported by good communication with the school and supportive and approachable staff. Some parents/carers suggested ways in which engagement could be improved, such as through better communication and feedback.

Schools identified effective engagement as an important factor in overall well-being and achievement of young people, as well as empowering parents/carers to participate in their education. However some schools identified difficulties in engaging with some parents/carers, and noted the importance of a welcoming environment and inductions.

RCOs in the study provided a range of education-related services, developed as a response to needs which were presented to them, including concerns about pupil underachievement, and the need for support with schoolwork and behavioural problems. RCOs also identified the importance of raising achievement levels, initiatives to promote young people's heritage and language, and assisting parents/carers to integrate through teaching English. RCOs particularly emphasised the need to support parents/carers since in some cases it appeared to be harder for them to integrate than their children.

Barriers to inclusion

The research identified a number of key barriers which can prevent effective inclusion of refugee and asylum seeking young people and parents/carers in secondary education.

- Respondents had a range of **significant difficulties in accessing school places**, including excessive delays (of up to seven months) in waiting for places. Support provided from a wide range of sources did not prevent these delays for many respondents.
- **Bullying and racism** were raised as key concerns by young people, and RCOs. Young people reported being reluctant to reveal that they were refugees or asylum seekers, or to talk about their past for fear of further stigmatisation. RCOs identified this as an issue that they had to deal with frequently.
- **Families reported financial barriers to inclusion** such as a lack of financial support for extra-curricular activities, and difficulties providing school books, uniforms and additional school related materials. This had a negative impact on the abilities of the young people to integrate in their schools.
- **RCOs also reported a lack of resources** leading to difficulties in securing funding for education related services, and in finding free or cheap premises to deliver services. Funding to aid inclusion was often short term, and therefore where activities existed, this limited their impact.
- RCOs and schools both experienced **resource barriers to providing effective training** to staff and teachers, limiting their abilities to provide tailored advice or to raise awareness with teachers.
- A lack of English language skills was a major barrier to effective engagement with parents/carers in the education process. Schools

reported **difficulties in communicating students' progress**, particularly when relying on the **young people as interpreters**.

- **The UK asylum system** itself creates a number of barriers, including the uncertainty experienced by asylum seekers who are already in schools, but fear being removed. The reliance on dispersal and temporary accommodation means that **children are forced to relocate repeatedly to new schools** which can have a profoundly negative impact on their ability to socialise, keep friendships and receive support from communities.
- **Experiences of trauma and flight** can have a profound impact on the behaviour of children, particularly in their relations with teachers and peers.
- Young people and parents/carers can experience **a lack of familiarity with the schooling system**, and often find schools intimidating and confusing.
- Despite the fact that RCOs can be well placed to help improve schools' performance, their lack of access to schools, as well as schools' inability to identify and contact RCOs, can create a **lack of partnership working** to tackle these problems.

Meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers

The project identified a range of practices to respond to the barriers described above. These practices included:

- Obtaining extended school status to provide activities beyond the school day in order to help refugee parents/carers to play a bigger role in the school and wider community, as well as engaging young people.
- Some RCOs successfully generated funds to deliver education related activities.
- Some schools employed home-school and community link workers who provided important links between communities and schools. Some schools used informal community advocates for this role.
- Both schools and RCOs reported using peer mentors to assist with learning, inductions and general support.
- A small number of schools had developed good relations with specialist services and organisations to provide psycho-social support to young people who had been traumatised.

- Language support was seen as crucial, and was usually provided through mainstream provision, however a number of other methods were identified such as Saturday schools run by schools and RCOs.
- Some schools reported translating materials for parents/carers and providing interpreters.
- Many schools provided tailored inductions for both young people and parents/carers, which usually consisted of information on the admissions process, the curriculum and opportunities to engage with the school. Some schools created translated booklets tailored to the needs of young refugees.
- RCOs also provided information to parents/carers on the English schooling system, including one-to-one advice and courses on how to help their children in schooling.
- Some schools created on-going engagement methods such as coffee mornings and outreach sessions for refugee community groups.
- Examples were given of partnership work that secondary schools and RCOs engaged in to improve the educational experiences of refugee and asylum seeking young people, and their parents and carers.

Conclusions and recommendations

The report concludes with recommendations to assist stakeholders in better meeting the needs of refugee communities. These stakeholders include secondary schools, local authorities, RCOs, refugee supporting organisations and government departments.

Chapter One – Introduction

This report presents the findings from research undertaken as part of the *Inclusive Secondary Schools Project*. This is a three-year project, which began in 2005, being delivered by the Refugee Council and funded by the KPMG Foundation. The overall aim of the project is to research and pilot new ways of working that link schools with refugee and asylum seeking young people, their parents and carers and Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs). This report discusses the findings of research phase which explored the needs and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in relation to secondary schooling in England.

The *Inclusive Secondary Schools Project* has also set up pilot partnerships between schools and refugee community/supporting organisations, with a view to addressing factors that impact on parental/carer involvement and developing good practice. The findings from both the research and development phases will form the basis of the toolkit for schools and refugee community/supporting organisations for increasing involvement in the education of refugee and asylum seeking young people, to be published later in 2008.

The *Inclusive Secondary Schools Project* builds on research that was previously carried out by the Refugee Council which focused upon the educational achievement of 14-16 year old refugees and asylum seekers (Refugee Council, 2005). This research indicated that despite there being guidance at a national level provided by Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and OfSTED (DfES, 2003 and 2004a; OfSTED, 2003) secondary schools often did not meet the needs of refugee and asylum seeking pupils. The research highlighted the confusion among providers about entitlements, the effects of mobility on achievement and the fact that refugee parents felt ill-equipped to support their children (Refugee Council, 2005:4). It is this last point that led to the development of this project which works towards both the integration of pupils and their parents and carers in education and the wider community.

Refugee integration is an issue that has received substantial attention over recent years from Government, academics and those working with refugees and asylum seekers in Britain (see for example Ager and Strang 2004a and 2004b; Atfield,

Brahmbhatt and O’Toole, 2007; Home Office, 2005b; Refugee Council, 2004; Zetter *et al.*, 2002). A considerable amount of literature, policy and legislation on integration focuses on access to services or what some call ‘functional integration’ (Zetter *et al.*, 2002). Fundamental to this is the important role of education in integration by allowing refugees to obtain self-reliance (Crisp, 2004). Access to schooling for young people can be a stabilising influence and academic achievement gives them a good chance of engaging well in other spheres of life, such as work.

Much of the writing on integration and education focuses upon the importance of inclusion for refugee pupils. This project not only looks at the inclusion of young people, but is also concerned with the involvement of refugee parents/carers and communities in schooling. This research therefore focuses on inclusion at an institutional rather than classroom level. Encouraging parents/carers to become involved in the work of secondary schools has the potential to connect them to the wider community. This participation may also have benefits to young people as research indicates that parental and community involvement in education is positively linked to educational outcomes (see for example Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003).

This research is concerned with the experiences of both refugees and asylum seekers. The term ‘refugee’ is sometimes used to refer to both those who are still in the application process, as well as those who have been granted asylum. It should also be noted that RCOs tend to deliver services to both asylum seekers and refugees. The needs of refugees and asylum seekers are also considered

distinct to those of other types of migrants, as experiences of forced migration have an impact on people's emotional well-being, and the asylum determination process itself can also place particular demands on those seeking asylum.

The findings in this report come from 70 qualitative interviews conducted in 2006 with refugee and asylum seeking young people, parents and carers, secondary schools and RCOs. Reference is also made to data collected in three questionnaire surveys with RCOs, secondary schools and local authorities. The data was collected in four English Regions (East of England, London, West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber) which all have different profiles of refugee populations and varied histories of refugee settlement.

1.1 Structure of report

The following chapter discusses the research and policy concepts with which the project is concerned. Chapter three outlines the way in which the research was carried out, by providing details of the methodological and sampling approaches taken. Chapter four examines the experiences of respondents in terms of secondary education for refugee and asylum seeking young people, and explores respondents' concepts of involvement. Chapter five highlights the barriers that refugee communities and secondary schools may face when trying to engage with each other. Chapter six offers examples of the practice that has been developed to overcome the barriers in order to achieve greater inclusion. Conclusions and recommendations are presented at the end of the report.

Chapter Two – Inclusive education for young refugees and asylum seekers

This research examines inclusive education for young refugees and asylum seekers with a view to better engaging their parents and carers in their learning. This chapter explores the concept of ‘inclusive education’ within a human rights and social justice framework. The term ‘inclusive’ in this report applies to all children, regardless of their special educational needs. In practice, inclusive education should enable children to enjoy equal access to quality, mainstream education.

The universal and fundamental right to education is embedded in international legal frameworks promoting social and educational justice. The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) upholds the right of ‘every child’ to education regardless of their nation, race, gender or social class (United Nations, 1989). This includes the rights of individuals whose immigration status is still being determined. Furthermore, the *Every Child Matters* agenda sets out a national framework to protect the right of all children in the UK, including refugees and asylum seekers, to equal educational opportunities in England (HM Government, 2004). However, the UK’s current asylum policies can make it difficult for asylum seeking young people to enter the school system and enjoy their rights and entitlements.

There are many factors which can preclude equal access to education and educational achievement, particularly among vulnerable pupils including refugees and asylum seekers. Barriers to educational inclusion can stem from immigration status, economic situation, family background, and of course language. Newly arrived individuals from countries of conflict might also be suffering severe psychological trauma.

Previous research (see for example Jones and Rutter, 1998; Refugee Council, 2005) has shown that refugee and asylum seeker pupils face significant challenges at the secondary school level in England, prompting further research in this area including the present study. An inclusive secondary education strives to meet the educational needs of the most vulnerable in education, and places a duty on secondary schools to build their capacity to

meet these needs (Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education, 2008). This involves a holistic view of education encompassing issues of access, engagement with the mainstream curriculum, after-school activities and Saturday school. In practical terms, this means that education should take into account the diverse cultural, linguistic and economic needs of its community to prevent the marginalisation or exclusion of young people in secondary education.

2.1 Legislation upholding the right to education for refugees and asylum seekers

Legislative frameworks such as the UNCRC and the *Education for All* (EFA)¹ initiative uphold the rights of every child to mainstream education and strive to improve quality at both primary and secondary school levels. England’s education system should reflect the EFA agenda in facilitating equal educational opportunities by meeting the educational needs of all its pupils.

National legislation such as the *Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000* requires schools and communities to promote inclusion and race equality, and ensures this is reflected in effective school practice such as staff support and general awareness about refugee issues. The *Education Act 2002* states that schools and communities have a responsibility to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers aged from 5 to 16 years receive the same quality and access to education as other pupils. Parents and carers are entitled to choose a school for their child however this is not always possible for refugees and asylum seekers. Therefore, local authorities are also obliged to find places for children in their communities.

This community-wide approach is also evident in the *Children Act 2004* which states that all children in the UK are entitled to a safe and healthy life whereby their basic needs are met. Education plays a key role in ensuring that young refugees and asylum seekers become active members in their communities. Local authorities and community organisations play a key role in helping refugees and asylum seekers engage with the school and integrate into their wider community. The approaches taken to achieve this vary greatly, as research focusing on the policies and practices of local authorities illustrates (Arnot and Pinson, 2005).

The Greater London Authority report *Offering More than They Borrow* (Greater London Authority, 2004) emphasises the pastoral role of schools in that they play:

“a vital role in helping [refugees and asylum seekers] adapt to their new life and for their parents it is often the only link to the local community and services. Unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children who lack parental support have high needs particularly in terms of pastoral support.”

In addition to recommending partnership working between schools and communities, the report urges the Government to give more funding to support schools in meeting the needs of these individuals.

2.2 Engaging parents and carers: why they matter

Research has shown that a young person’s family or carer(s) can make an important difference in terms of their self confidence and ability to achieve in education. This chapter gives specific examples of ways in which schools and their communities can meet the needs of refugees, asylum seekers and their parents and carers in mainstream education.

The report *Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement: Do They Know They Matter?* argues for parent and carer engagement and links this to positive educational outcomes (Harris and Goodall, 2007). The report emphasises that parents and carers can make a ‘significant difference’ in raising standards of achievement by engaging more with their children’s education, school staff and the wider community (*ibid*). It asserts that “schools are increasingly conscious of the role which can be played by parents in raising achievement, not least because of the emphasis placed on parental report in OfSTED inspections” (*ibid*).

The white paper also highlights the need for schools to engage with families who are ‘at risk’ of marginalisation or exclusion within British society.

“While parental engagement is widely understood to be vital for the achievement of students, it is also acknowledged, that we need to know much more about effective means of engaging parents who are ‘hard to reach’. The research evidence is consistent, in demonstrating that families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life. When schools, families, and community work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and like school more” (*ibid*).

Chapter five of this report examines the barriers to inclusion for refugee and asylum seeker families. While some refugee families are proficient in English, some have no previous knowledge of the language. Others may not be familiar with the education system, the National Curriculum, or school procedures. The above quote illustrates that communities can work together with schools to provide crucial information about the school system in community languages.

The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (2008) explains that schools need to provide students and families at risk of marginalisation with easy access to the school and its activities in a language they understand, this includes: the curriculum; teaching staff (support) and other resources; funding mechanisms and the school environment.

This approach can help parents and carers of refugees and asylum seekers overcome challenges they may face in terms of understanding the curriculum, liaising with school staff, and participating in extra-curricular activities. Other examples may include intensive English language courses to both students and parents to help them engage in education. Local authorities and community organisations can sometimes provide additional funding and material support to schools.

Schools with a welcoming ethos are also found to be more successful in engaging ‘hard-to-reach’ parents and carers:

“Clear evidence exists that the most successful schools encourage high levels of parental involvement. The principle of working to involve all parents and carers in their child’s learning is firmly

established within national policy but is particularly important for refugee and asylum seeker families whose experience of the English, Welsh and Northern Irish education system may be limited” (National Children’s Bureau, 2003: 1).

Schools that translate induction materials and parent newsletters in community languages, for example, do more to meet needs and foster engagement. School can also use peer mentors or former refugee students to help new arrivals settle in more easily.

The DCSF places an emphasis on parental attitudes towards education as having a strong bearing on their children’s educational outcomes:

“The importance of parents’ educational attitudes and behaviours on children’s educational attainment has also been well documented especially in the developmental psychology literature” (Harris and Goodall, 2007: 20).

The challenges for refugee and asylum seeker families can be greater in that they may have previous traumatic experiences in their home country and can face further social disruption and poverty upon arrival in Britain because of their legal status (Kelley and Meldgaard, 2005). Asylum seekers receive low levels of financial support and are not entitled to work which results in many parents and carers struggling to feed and clothe their families. These families are also subject to dispersal throughout the country which impacts on their ability to settle and become part of a community. These issues will be further discussed in later chapters drawing on specific examples from interviews.

Research also shows that parents are less likely to engage at the secondary school level (Williams *et al*, 2000, in Harris and Goodall, 2007: 25). Harris and Goodall state that practical ways of engaging parents and carers include good communication; academic support (and supporting parents in helping their children learn, such as homework); pastoral care; and interpreting and translating for newly arrived and English as an Additional Language (EAL) families.

All of the above points involve communicating with refugees and asylum seekers in languages they understand, as well as making them aware of community services already in place to support

them. The next section explores community involvement in inclusive education.

2.3 Community engagement

In addition to recent legislation on inclusive education, the Duty on Schools to Promote Community Cohesion, which came into effect in September 2007, also draws from the *Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2002* and tries to ensure that students at risk of marginalisation or exclusion do not get left behind.²

From September 2007, schools throughout England have a duty to promote and maintain ‘community cohesion’. The guidance for schools on promoting community cohesion states:

“For schools, the term ‘community’ has a number of dimensions including:

- the **school community** – the children and young people it serves, their parents, carers and families, the school’s staff and governing body, and community users of the school’s facilities and services;
- the **community within which the school is located** – the school in its geographical community and the people who live or work in that area. This applies not just to the immediate neighbourhood but also to the city or local authority area within which a school is located;
- the **UK community** – all schools are by definition a part of this community;
- the **global community** – formed by EU and international links” (DCSF, 2007a: 5).

Specifically, the ‘community cohesion education standards’ include:

- Close the attainment and achievement gap;
- Develop common values of citizenship based on dialogue, mutual respect and acceptance of diversity.
- Contribute to building good community relations and challenge all types of discrimination and inequality.
- Remove the barriers to access, participation, progression, attainment and achievement (Home Office, 2004).

Language and culture feature as main elements of the new duty on schools to promote community

cohesion. Teachers in mainstream secondary schools in Britain are increasingly receiving support from bilingual teaching assistants and/or learning mentors who provide extra support to students who speak community languages (CiLT, 2005).

“Community languages are defined as all languages in use in a society, other than the dominant or national language. In England, where the dominant national language is English, community languages include Urdu, Panjabi, Somali, Chinese, Polish, Italian and British sign language” (Ofsted, 2008: 23).

In addition to offering specialist language support, community organisations can work with schools to offer other types of support such as counselling services and student mentoring. Community organisations can also help with signposting refugees and asylum seeker families to local services.

2.4 Extended schools and supplementary schools

The ‘Extended Schools Initiative’, which began in 2001, was initially set up to support schools in engaging with the community. Under this scheme, both primary and secondary schools can apply for increased funding from their local authority to provide extended activities beyond the school day and at weekends.

The initiative is intended to bring about higher levels of pupil achievement, increased pupil motivation and self-esteem, enhanced partnership working with the community and better school security. There are also benefits to families and communities including improvements in child behaviour and social skills; greater parental involvement in children’s learning; more opportunities for local adult education and family learning; and greater availability of specialist support for families. Benefits for communities include:

- Better access to essential services;
- Improved local availability of sports, arts and other facilities;
- Better supervision of children outside school hours;
- Closer relationships with the school (Cummings and Todd, 2005).

Community groups and individuals can access services and participate in community activities, clubs and social events on the school premises.

Other activities can include English language lessons and family learning classes which foster parent/carer engagement with the school.

Supplementary schools provide additional ways for families and communities to participate in learning. Supplementary school activities build on mainstream activities and while they foster academic achievement, they run during out-of-school hours. Supplementary schools are often run on a voluntary basis, in a variety of venues including schools, community centres and temples or churches. Such schools can create opportunities for parents and carers to participate in their communities.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has highlighted the human rights and legislative framework which sets the context for inclusive education in England. An inclusive secondary education necessarily protects the fundamental human right to education for every child, irrespective of their background. Schools and communities therefore have the legal and ethical duty to uphold the right of young people to an inclusive, quality mainstream secondary education. This can only be achieved by sound educational practice that reflects inclusive education policies. This chapter has discussed national and local initiatives that can harness the engagement of parents and carers in their children’s education while also taking into account their social, cultural and linguistic needs.

- 1 The UNESCO Education for All (EFA) initiative was launched in 1990 and aims to meet the educational needs of all children, young people and adults regardless of their race, nationality or gender.
- 2 For more information on community cohesion visit: www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/communitycohesion

Chapter Three – Research design

This chapter explains the approach that was taken to collect research data. This section will outline the involvement of refugees and peer researchers in the research process. It also outlines the methods used, the way respondents were accessed and selected, the profile of the respondents and the way in which the data was analysed.

3.1 Aims and objectives

As outlined in the Introduction, the main aims of the project were to explore the experiences and needs of refugee and asylum seeking communities in relation to secondary schooling. In order to obtain a holistic picture, the research involved collecting data from refugee and asylum seeking young people and their parents/carers, representatives from secondary schools and RCOs and local authorities. By taking this approach, it was hoped that information on needs, experiences and barriers would be obtained from all perspectives, providing a more complete picture of action that is needed to make policies and practice more inclusive. The fieldwork was conducted in four English regions: East of England; London; West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber.

3.2 The role of refugees in the research

The Refugee Council's Research Unit was set up to encourage and undertake research that is informed by the experiences of refugee agencies and refugee community organisations and that engages refugees as partners in research, not merely subjects of research (see Atfield, Brahmabhatt and O'Toole, 2007). This principle was reflected in the design of this research project as refugees were involved in advising, steering and implementing the research.

The project's External Advisory Group was established to advise and steer the implementation of the project plan. The Group was a forum for linking perspectives from different groups of stakeholders, participants and beneficiaries. To this end, the Advisory Group contained a refugee parent, and representatives from an RCO and a Refugee Forum. Student Action for Refugees (STAR) also

discussed the research content and methods with refugee and asylum seeking young people in order to ensure it was meaningful and relevant to their needs and experiences. These individuals helped to shape the issues that were investigated by the project team, and they also provided feedback on the research instruments that were used to collect the data discussed in this report.

Four Community Researchers were recruited as members of the project team for the fieldwork phase of the research. These researchers received training in research methods from Middlesex University. This course offered the option for achieving accreditation (40 academic credits at a postgraduate level). The course involved a one-week intensive methods training component which was tailored to the needs of this group of researchers in terms of appropriate methodologies and issues that may occur when researching refugee communities. The course covered topics such as:

- Appropriate research methods
- Research ethics
- Accessing respondents
- Use of qualitative methods including interviews and focus groups
- Reflexivity and the role of the researcher.

The second part of the training programme involved the researchers reflecting upon the research process and what they were learning. This was supported by sessions with Middlesex University tutors hosted by the Refugee Council.

It is hoped that the Community Researchers' participation in both the training and the project itself will have helped towards building the research capacity of individual refugees and the communities in which they settle. This experience can then be used to communicate effectively with the statutory sector through the presentation of sound research evidence.

3.3 'Peer' researchers

In order to ensure that young people's perspectives were included in this research, the Refugee Council worked with Student Action for Refugees. STAR is a network of student volunteers who support refugees in local communities, raise awareness about refugee issues and campaign for refugee rights.³ STAR volunteers work in local projects working with refugee and asylum seeking young people across the UK.

The Youth Outreach Officer based at STAR's national office recruited eleven volunteers to undertake interviews with refugee and asylum seeking young people about their experiences of secondary school education. The interviewers were recruited through STAR network updates and their website. As a result, those who conducted the research were already involved in STAR and therefore had knowledge of issues relating to young refugees and asylum seekers. The researchers were trained in interview techniques. Seven individuals out of the eleven went on to carry out interviews with young people, as well as members of staff from STAR's national office who also provided ongoing support to the interviewers.

3.4 Methods

There were two methods of data collection adopted in the project. In order to obtain a picture of the types of activities taking place to engage refugee communities and schooling for secondary-aged young people, the research team undertook three surveys. To obtain a more detailed understanding of experiences, needs and barriers, a qualitative approach was selected using the method of semi-structured interviews.

3.4.1 Surveys

The surveys were undertaken to provide an overview of the types of activities that took place in the four project regions. The questionnaires asked about what was being delivered and how, as opposed to collecting opinion-based information. The first survey focused upon the types of

educational activities RCOs deliver, the second investigated how secondary schools engage with parents and carers (both in general and those from refugee and asylum seeking communities), and the third looked at how local authorities work with secondary schools and refugee communities to increase their engagement.⁴

3.4.2 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with refugee and asylum seeking young people and their parents/carers, representatives from secondary school and RCOs. The interviews took place in 2006. The project was concerned with experiences, needs and barriers which could be affected for example, by people's histories, the policy environment within a school, and the current funding landscape. Researchers are better equipped to collect information on such factors when they have one-to-one contact with respondents, and are able to ask questions that elicit more than tick-box or restricted responses. The researcher is also able to follow-up on issues that are raised by interviewees that are of relevance to the research, but may not have been included in the initial set of questions drawn up for the interview.

The research team, in conjunction with STAR, developed four different interview schedules specifically tailored to the groups being interviewed. These different schedules investigated similar themes, but the emphases and focus of the questions were specific to each group.⁵ When respondents had limited English language skills, or they felt more comfortable being interviewed in their first language, interviewers worked with interpreters.

3.5 Sampling and access strategy

As the project operated in four English regions, the project team engaged in awareness-raising activities in these locations from the start of the project, in order to recruit respondents during the interview phase. The process of undertaking surveys also raised the profile of the project. The Refugee Council has offices in the four project regions, and staff in those locations assisted the project team in identifying organisations that could be of assistance. The fieldwork was conducted in different regions because local circumstances can have an impact on the experiences of individuals and service providers. The four regions vary greatly in terms of their histories of receiving refugees, the numbers and types of refugee communities, and the infrastructure that is in place to support people who have newly

arrived in the country. For this reason, the research team sought to ensure that respondents came from all regions, although this was not always possible across all of the groups interviewed.

Refugees and asylum seekers are not a homogeneous group, and RCOs and schools also exhibit great diversity. For this reason the project team used multiple access strategies to engage respondents in the research so the findings reflect a variety of different identities and circumstances. The details of the sampling and access strategies for each group of interviewees are outlined below, and the sample achieved is detailed in the 'Profile of respondents' section that follows it.

3.5.1 Interviews with refugee and asylum seeking young people

The views of refugee and asylum seeking young people in secondary schools were vital to the project team, and the interviews were conducted by people who had experience in working with this group and were therefore sensitive to the issues that may be raised by interviewees.

The project team interviewed young people from a range of ages, countries of origin, length of time in the UK, previous and current experience of formal education and home circumstances (for example, whether they were cared for by parents, siblings or foster carers).

The young people who participated in interviews were accessed in a variety of ways. The interviewers recruited young people through the projects they worked on, in addition to using other strategies which were led by the staff at STAR's national office. These strategies included working with organisations that were familiar with the work of STAR and focused upon supporting refugee and asylum seeking young people, as well as following up recommendations made by the project's External Advisory Group including schools and other education and youth groups. This resulted in a good regional spread of respondents, who were engaged in many different educational and social settings.

3.5.2 Interviews with parents/carers of refugee and asylum seeking young people

The views of parents and carers were collected in order to investigate their engagement with their children's secondary education. The project team collected data from a sample that was varied in terms of: country of origin; length of time in UK;

ages and numbers of children; English language ability. The project team accessed respondents through a range of routes including secondary schools; RCOs; Refugee Council direct services; and contacts made through Community Researchers.

3.5.3 Interviews with Refugee Community Organisations

RCOs can be a key source of advice and support for parents/carers on educational issues. Many RCOs also run education activities for the communities they serve. The project team sampled RCOs that was varied in terms of: communities served; services offered; engagement with educational activities; size (in terms of staffing); age of organisation. The project team recruited RCOs through: following up with some respondents from the survey; calling for participation at meetings, forums and through e-mail networks; pursuing contacts suggested by staff in the Refugee Council's regional staff; contacts of the Community Researchers.

3.5.4 Interviews with secondary schools

Representatives from secondary schools were interviewed to obtain information about the ways they worked with refugee young people, parents/carers and refugee communities. The secondary schools in this sample varied in terms of: size; region; types of governance; profile of pupils (in terms of minority ethnic groups and refugees and asylum seekers). The schools were accessed through: following up respondents from the survey; forums and e-mail networks; pursuing contacts of Refugee Council staff and through the project's External Advisory Group.

3.6 Profile of participants

The following sections will provide a brief overview of some of the characteristics of those that took part in the interviews. This information will illustrate the variety of respondents data was collected from in order to gain different perspectives on the issues being explored.

3.6.1 Refugee and asylum seeking young people

The project conducted interviews with 18 refugee and asylum seeking young people. These young people ranged from 12 to 19 years of age⁶, and six were female and 12 were male. These young people either lived with their parents, with a foster family or with a carer who was not a parent. The young people

reported their countries of origin as being Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kosovo, Kurdistan, Pakistan, Turkey and Zimbabwe. Five interviewees lived in the East of England, a further five were from the West Midlands, and four were based in both London and Yorkshire and the Humber.

In this sample, four of the young people had not attended formal educational provision in their countries of origin. Other respondents described short periods of schooling (one or two years), and two respondents specifically reported having left school due to the circumstances that led to them being forced to migrate.

3.6.2 Parents/carers of refugee and asylum seeking young people

Interviews were conducted with fourteen parents/carers. The majority were refugees or asylum seekers, but there was one British carer. The sample consisted of 11 women (all of whom were the mothers of the young people who were in secondary school), two men (one father and one carer). The parents/carers reported their countries of origin as being Afghanistan, Bosnia, Britain, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran, Iraq, Polish/Roma, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Eight lived in London, three in the West Midlands and three in Yorkshire and the Humber. The length of time the respondents had been in the UK ranged from ten years and six months. In terms of English language skills, five had very limited knowledge (these were interviewed with interpreters) and the others were interviewed in English. Two respondents had English as their first language.

3.6.3 Refugee Community Organisations

The project team interviewed representatives from 24 RCOs. Sixteen were based in London, four in the West Midlands, two from the East of England and two located in Yorkshire and the Humber. The ages of the organisations ranged from 20 years to one year, with the vast majority of RCOs being established in the seven years prior to the interview.

In terms of paid staff, the highest number of staff reported was seven with volunteers reported as undertaking much of the work delivered by the organisations (only one organisation reported not using volunteers at all). The numbers of volunteers tended to be below ten, but there was one organisation that reported about approximately 200 people doing unpaid work for them.⁷

The services provided by these RCOs included support for families, general advice and advocacy, specialist support for people with HIV/AIDS, education services and activities, sport and cultural activities, counselling, mentoring. The range of countries of origins targeted by the RCOs included Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cameroon, Iraq, Somalia and Zimbabwe, although many RCOs offered services to much broader groups of refugees and asylum seekers that were not necessarily country-specific.

3.6.4 Secondary schools

Representatives from 14 secondary schools were interviewed. Six schools were located in Yorkshire and the Humber, four in London, three in the West Midlands and one in the East of England. Twelve schools were mixed comprehensive schools, and two were girls' schools. One school was a Foundation school and one other was voluntary-aided. Eight schools had specialist status (three specialising in maths and computing, and two each in arts, sports and technology).

The pupil profiles of the schools varied both in terms of numbers of refugee and asylum seeking young people, and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups in general. The highest number of refugee and asylum seeking pupils cited was 250 and the lowest was less than ten.⁸ All schools in survey were characterised by high levels of diversity in terms of ethnicities and languages. Three schools estimated their BME populations exceeded 65 per cent, and three also stated high numbers of languages spoken by their pupils (38, 39 and 64), with one school reporting that approximately 40 per cent of their students had English as an Additional Language (EAL) needs.

All schools in the research reported that they had increase numbers of newly arrived students than previous years and the profile of those refugees and asylum seekers had changed (for example, young people were coming from different countries than in previous years and spoke different languages).

3.7 Data analysis and presentation

The interviews were fully transcribed and then analysed by theme. The data collected is discussed in the following three chapters. The quotes from respondents are presented in italics and interviewers in bold and italics, and the type of respondent can be identified by the code at the end of the quotes which are 'YP' (young person), 'P/C'

(parent/carer), 'RCO' and 'schools'. Where '...' appears in a quotation, this indicates that part of the response to a question has been omitted, and '///' shows a larger section of the transcript has been removed, sometimes spanning several questions.

- 3 More information can be found about STAR at:
www.star-network.org.uk
- 4 The results of these surveys can be found at:
www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/inclusiveschools
- 5 Interview schedules can be made available upon request.
- 6 Three of the sample were above secondary school age, and they reflected back on the experiences they had when they were in secondary schools previously.
- 7 It should be noted that this organisation ran a network of activities across the UK.
- 8 It should be noted that some secondary schools did not give this information to the interviewers as they did not have it to hand or were unaware of how many pupils there were in this group.

Chapter Four – Experiences and engagement

This chapter provides an overview of the experiences of secondary education among the groups involved in this research. It also discusses points made by respondents about the importance of inclusion and involvement of refugee communities in learning.

4.1 Young people's perspectives on parent/carer involvement in education

4.1.1 Current parent/carer involvement

The young people were asked if their parent/carers were currently involved in their education. Thirteen respondents said their parents/carers were involved, but what constituted 'involvement' for these young people represented a wide range of activities. For example, the involvement that the young people described included attending parents' evenings periodically, helping with homework, asking how the school day went, paying for school activities and encouraging wider reading. Two stated that their parents/carers had no involvement at all, and one said that their social worker helped.

The circumstances young refugees and asylum seekers find themselves in when they arrive in the UK can have an effect on levels of engagement for those with responsibility for their well-being. Not all young people seek asylum with their parents or other family members. In 2006, 3245 children and young people applied for asylum unaccompanied, some of whom are cared for by their older siblings (Bennett *et al.*, 2007). The varied circumstances under which people arrive can raise issues at the secondary school level in terms of support and engagement. For example, those separated children who are cared for by British-born carers may benefit from the increased knowledge gained through previous experiences of the English education system. In contrast, those who are supported by older siblings may be at a relative disadvantage. One young woman whose brother was only three years older than her (he was 18 years old) when they arrived described her experiences as follows:

"For him it was harder than for me actually, I think.

Right. So it wasn't really very supportive.

Not at all. I had to figure out everything for myself.

OK. And was your guardian – was your brother involved in your education in any way?

No...He didn't know even how to get involved. He didn't speak English or anything.

Was he going to college or

He was doing, yeah. He went to college just for English." (YP 3)

It is perhaps not surprising that an 18 year old from a different country may have difficulties in knowing how to support his younger sister's education, particularly in the context of also having to apply for asylum and attending to essential needs such as housing and money. The resulting situation was a young person having to navigate a new education system and school environment relatively unsupported at the age of 15.

Recommendations

Where it is identified that a young person is being cared for by a sibling or other relative who is not their usual carer, schools should consider whether additional support can be offered by the school itself, or make referrals to local authority children's services or NGOs.

Local authorities, RCOs and refugee supporting organisations should consider setting up specialist mentoring and befriending services for separated children to help them with their educational needs.

The young person states that a lack of knowledge of the English language was a factor preventing her

brother from becoming involved, but it should be noted that this factor alone does not preclude parents/carers from supporting young people in their education.

“...are you your parents involved in your education?”

Well, yeah and no.

How yes?

My mum tells me to read all the time and then read newspapers but I kind of do and I kind of don't. It's like I have enough education at school and, I do my homeworks and everything but there's enough education at school.

///

And how no?

...Well they couldn't do anything? I'm at school.

They can't actually come when teachers said in that school. And out of school yeah, she tell me to read and everything

...Does your mum go along to things like parents evenings for example, or ever come along to your school?

When we have one she goes...she can't actually speak English very well but we did go to parents evening I explained to her.” (YP 18)

This parent has difficulties engaging with her child's teachers at parents' evenings due her limited knowledge of English, but she was still encouraging of learning and education beyond the formal interaction with school staff.

4.1.2 Young people's feelings about parent/carer involvement

Thirteen of the 18 young people interviewed in this research agreed that parental/carer involvement in their education was important.⁹ Involvement made the young people feel encouraged and supported, as well as helping them to achieve:

“And how do you feel about their involvement in your education

I feel good because I feel like somebody actually care about what I do and want me to be, to be good.” (YP 9)

“Do you think it's important for parents to be involved in their children's education?”

Yes I think it's a big part.

Why is that?

Because I mean we get lots of help, support, encouragement, they know what we're doing and they know what we like in future and all so they get to know more about us.” (YP 14)

These young people spoke in positive terms about the support they received. The benefits of such encouragement were also acknowledged by one young person who unfortunately had not experienced such help from her carer:

“Do you think in general it's important that parents and carers are involved in their children's education?”

I think it's very, very important 'cause if they are involved in that stuff, maybe... they can help you. Like I said if someone, if I'd had a social carer and they sort of knew, and if I had parents or something, they sort of could have pushed me with my attempts to go in high school if they know everything. I could have studied high school from like September time. I could have stayed like one year if someone was to say to me “do the homework” and helped me more I could have like achieved much much better grades...another friend who started like me, she started like in September like that was last year. She got like 15 GCSEs because she has a foster carer. When she was coming home probably, you do this, you are helping her to do homework and everything so, for me I had everything to do myself. No one was asking me at home “Are you doing homework or no?”. No one had a chance to help me how to do it anyway.” (YP 3)

Young people who lack parent or carer support at home are at risk of missing out on educational opportunities and not fulfilling their potential. This situation can be damaging for them when they leave education to find employment.

Recommendation

Local authorities need to ensure that all policies and guidance to support Looked After Children in schools are implemented appropriately, and the particular needs of unaccompanied children are considered by schools and children's services.

4.2 Parents' and carers' experiences of education

The parents/carers who participated in this research revealed interesting views in terms of their feelings their children's education and their roles within it. This section will outline the parents/carers satisfaction with their children's schooling.

4.2.1 Parents'/carers' satisfaction with schools

Almost all parents and carers in the research said they felt happy with their children's school (12 out of 14). This should be taken as an indication of their overall happiness with schooling, as many of those who were positive in response to this question raised issues of concern and dissatisfaction throughout the rest of their interview about specific aspects. These issues are discussed in chapter five. Respondents attributed their 'happiness' to: being kept informed about their child's academic performance; their child doing well (e.g. high achieving and popular); liking the way teachers and school staff manage behavioural issues; extra educational support offered by specialist teachers who speak community languages (e.g. Pashtu); warm welcome induction from school and good explanations of school policies and procedures; and finally the parents'/carers' ability to adapt to the British education system.

All parents/carers in this research reported that their children got on well at school. Five respondents reported that their children had won awards and certificates because they were performing so well, or were at the top of their classes or year. It is sometimes assumed that refugee and asylum seeking young people will not be academically able, but these examples highlight that this is not the case. While some young people do enter school in the UK having never been in formal education, many are well-educated and highly-motivated. Assumptions about one young person's ability was reported by one parent who said *"...sometimes they don't believe us when we come to this country we can do something, you know"* (P/C 9), as her son had been put into a maths class that was too easy for him.

In general, refugee and asylum seeker students learn English quite successfully when given proper tuition (Rutter, 2003) and many come from multilingual backgrounds. Only one parent in this study mentioned their child faced challenges with English, and therefore was doing as well as could be expected.

Parents and carers are often afraid that their children might be stigmatised because of their immigration status. One parent/carer commented on the fact that refugees in her child's school needed free school meals, which was a source of embarrassment for him:

"And when he started the secondary school, he got a free meal. All children were refugees and had to go and queue for 15 minutes, in front of school officer and other kids for a lunch. Children were embarrassed, my son was disappointed. The worst was the kids teased them...I've tried several time, and had a bad time, but nothing had changed." (P/C 12)

This parent felt that the school could have been doing more to diminish the embarrassment felt by her son when getting his school meals. She felt that the fact that these practices marked her son out as a refugee¹⁰, and this could have consequences on the way he was treated by others.

Recommendation

When schools have practices in place that provide additional support to refugees and asylum seeking young people, these should be delivered in a way that does not mark out these young people as different from their peers.

4.2.2 Parents'/carers' involvement with schools

The parents/carers in this sample were asked about their involvement in their children's schooling. Only two parents/carers said they did not feel involved. One of these parents reported having visited the school before their child started, and the other had no contact with the school whatsoever, but it should be noted that the children had only been at the school for a short period of time.

When analysing the responses to this question in more detail, it is apparent that what constitutes 'involvement' for these respondents is not the same across the board. Most respondents mentioned attending parents' evenings, parents' forums and other meetings with teachers and school staff. In addition, some reported providing study support for their children and one parent volunteered to help out with school trips at the school.

Although most parents/carers said that they were involved in schooling, it does not necessarily follow that this is easily achieved. On the positive side, respondents described engagement being facilitated by good information when children started school, the use of link workers and feeling encouraged by the provision of parents' evenings and helpful staff. Others felt that it was sometimes

difficult to make meaningful contact with the school, and this required a lot of effort on behalf of the parent/carer. Several parents and carers said that they would like more feedback from the school on their children's progress.

"I'd like more feedback, you know, besides the normal open evenings and coming to decide which courses your son will take when the finish at year 10 or whatever the case is. More interaction with the teachers. With secondary now that my one is actually beginning, maybe as I go along I'll pick up what I [should be doing]. But with my son, the sort of experience that I've had, not too forthcoming in my opinion." (P/C 2)

Other parents cited problems with the school's attempts to engage them. One explained that they were unsure about the way that record books were used, whilst another requested communications from the school to be written in their own language to aid their understanding:

"I have a problem with record books. I look around but there is no note about homework, it's not written in the book. They say it, but it's not done anything about their homework. I don't know if my child given any home work or not...and I never found out that." (P/C 13)

If parents/carers are unaware of the work that the school has assigned young people, it can be difficult to encourage them to do it, or provide support that they might need with the assignments. One parent felt that the interactions with school beyond core curriculum matters would help to bring parents into the school and assist them in meeting other parents/carers who might provide them with support and friendship:

"They don't make it easier at all, apart from some things. If they could encourage things such as concerts, performances where parents are coming to watch children's performance and meet other parents and children's friends. You may not know children's friends... I know my children's friends but not their parents. And, I miss it! I need to know them. Do you see what I mean?" (P/C 13)

This experience is in contrast to another parent/carer whose school does a lot to involve parents/carers in formal and informal events. He described an awards ceremony put on by the school to reward the achievements of pupils:

"I feel they are doing their utmost best. I don't think there is any branch or any ways they can involve us more. They're already doing so much but there is a limit school can do because they haven't got all the time for the public relations. This school especially, there's quite a lot of, I mean work it does to get the parents in. Organise the award meeting, things like this." (P/C 5)

The respondent acknowledges the limitations schools face in trying to reach out to the parents/carers of its students, and his comments illustrate that this type of activity is not necessarily part of what people should expect from schools. However, this school had achieved an environment where this respondent felt comfortable and confident in approaching the school.

When other parents/carers were asked whether they felt comfortable approaching the staff in the school for support with their children's education, ten respondents stated that they would be happy to do so. Respondents said they could speak with various people within the schools, including class tutors, subject teachers, Heads of Year and the Headteacher. All respondents except one (who was still new to the school) had met or talked to at least one of their children's teachers. This generally occurred during parents' evenings, but some parents/carers also mentioned speaking to them on the phone and receiving letters. Good communication from teachers was really appreciated by the parents in this research.

In addition to being involved with schools in ways that directly related to their children's education, parents/carers were also asked about their participation in extra curricular activities. Six respondents reported having no involvement beyond the immediate needs of their children. Others gave examples of their involvement by providing language support (e.g. Arabic translation for signs), cooking for the school's International Day/Evening, volunteering to help on school trips, attending school parties and taking part in fundraising events. Participating in these types of activities can help parents/carers feel more invested in the school and part of a wider community. This can also help to combat isolation that refugee and asylum seeking parent/carers might feel when they arrive in a new area. These examples also show how parents can be a valuable resource in the community by contributing to celebrations of diversity.

Recommendation

Schools should continue, and develop, efforts to get parents/carers involved in extra-curricular activities. Events such as International Days may be a good idea as they celebrate diversity and give refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers a chance to contribute to raising cultural understanding across the school community.

4.2.3 Sources of support for parents/carers

Given that refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers often arrive in the UK with no awareness of the English education system, the parents/carers in this sample were asked who they would turn to if they needed support with educational issues. Ten respondents stated that they would approach staff within the school (within various roles). Other statutory sector staff were mentioned, including those working for local authorities and social services. The responses also indicated that community and family support did a lot to enhance parents' and carers' experiences of their child's secondary education, and support them in times of need. The parents/carers named friends, family, support centre/organisation, an Afghani RCO, local Somali groups, a worker from a faith group and 'community member' as sources of support in their community.

When asked directly if they received support from community organisations on education issues, ten parents/carers said no, one respondent said they might turn to them in the future, and two reported a lack of community organisations that could help them on these issues.

“Do you receive any support from community organisations on education issues?”

No I don't...I've battled and given up. That's what I've done. Nothing. Nothing whatsoever. I've tried charities I've sourced from a website and the story is 'oh, we don't deal with asylum seekers'.

And what about the people from country of origin? Any organisations?

There, there's none... the [name of organisation], they're really trying to help women and it's a fairly small organisation. Very little funding. They haven't gone down that road.

Do you think it's something they might be interested in developing if they had support?

Maybe, you would have to speak to them, but at the moment is, they're trying to battle to see if they can

help all the mothers, you know. I know the one thing they were doing is trying to get charities to supply clothing and at some stage there was an organisation that managed to give ladies with children some one-off payment, I can't remember what it was for. I mean small, small things.” (P/C 2)

The fact that the majority of parents/carers in this sample did not receive support from RCOs on education issues should not be taken as an indication of a lack of need in general among refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers. These respondents tended to have broad levels of satisfaction with their children's school, and the way they were integrating, so they may have less need to approach RCOs than others might.¹¹ Pressure on resources in small RCOs can mean that they have limited capacity to respond to all the needs that are presented by the community.

The two parents/carers who did receive support from community organisations said their children enjoyed community-led activities after school or at weekends such as Arabic classes.

4.3 Schools' perspectives on parent/carer involvement

Before exploring the different ways secondary schools might approach involving parents/carers in general, and those from refugee communities specifically, school representatives were asked to describe what they understood by the term 'parent/carer involvement'. Five schools used the word 'partnership' and the majority alluded to practice in working with parents and carers, for example partnership working and outreach efforts to refugee parents/carers. Half the schools in the research described it as a 'two way process', where schools and parents/carers communicate with a view to educating the 'whole child' and promoting their overall well-being.

“Well, I suppose it's, to become involved and to be interested in their children's education, learning. But not just education, but their whole social development. For me it's important for a parent to make sure that they're a part of that that decision-making. To become involved with the school to make sure that they communicate their needs with the school, and obviously to make sure that that's a two-way process that's going on. And for me having worked in this environment and in education for the last twenty odd years, parents' involvement is paramount if you want to influence your young

people and influence changes. And it's important that they feel part of that process." (School 12)

"I would have thought being concerned to know that your child is progressing well academically, but also being stretched in other areas, creatively or whatever it is, and that they're settled and emotionally happy in the school. And that you're having good and open communication between you and the school." (School 10)

Some schools in this research argued that parents' and carers' involvement was an important factor in terms of a child's overall well-being in school, as well as their academic achievement. Additionally effective engagement can result in parents/carers feeling part of a community and empowered to make decision. For example:

"First of all research shows that where you can get parents actively involved in supporting their child's education then that's where children do best. In fact there's evidence to suggest that that's the most important thing so it's something that we need to take on board a lot more seriously... I think it means providing a child with you know a safe environment and a place to work. I think it involves knowing what a child is learning and providing them with such support that is helpful." (School 9)

"But then there's the individual student context where if the student knows that there's a really good strong communication between school and home then they are more likely to achieve higher, behave better. It just, it just means the students progress if we have a good communication with parents and that would mean in the context of refugees that we have key home-school link workers who speak the language and foster those relationships." (School 13)

"It's not just about the student, it's a community, it's an extended family and the difficulty is to always make sure that there is a sense of ownership." (School 3)

Even though the schools in this research acknowledged the importance of parent/carer involvement, it did not necessarily follow that their school was particularly successful in engaging them.

"I wouldn't say it was a big focus for the school. I wouldn't say it was a priority for the school and that's sort of born out by the fact that I wouldn't say we had particularly good parental involvement as a school in

general. I think for the children who come from overseas including refugees and asylum seekers if they have parents, then we have a better communication than perhaps with your average UK born child in the school, and that's because of things we've put into place to ensure that." (School 4)

"...I also think it's very important that the parents should be in contact [with the] school. And one of the things I think we need to do better as a school is to make it easy for parents to be involved." (School 9)

Schools were aware of their responsibility to ensure that they communicate effectively with parents/carers about activities to engage them, such as parent evenings:

"I think the school has a responsibility to make sure the parents know [about school activities]... in general most of our parents are very good at turning up to things like parents evenings. How much they access of that once they're here is perhaps another point. And we are not as good as we should be at helping them with that I don't think. And I think that's partly because we perceive that the girls manage to settle so well. From our point of view they fit in... I know every child matters, but when there are 850 of them, it's extremely difficult to actually keep everyone at the forefront of your mind all the time and in a secondary school to know that extra bit of detail about what's happening at home. Because you don't get parents coming to the school gates, well if they do you maybe wish they wouldn't..." (School 7)

Schools were also concerned about making it a welcoming environment for parents and carers. This includes making parents and carers aware of ways in which the school can help them, and their children, to learn. Caution was also voiced about parents/carers being excluded through attempts to empower young people:

"...that [parents and carers] play a full part... informed as to what the youngsters are doing, that they that have input at every level. That the school is a welcoming place, also a place where they also could come and learn, they are learners too... they have rights and responsibilities. I think too often things happen without parents knowing, I think youngsters are empowered, aren't they, far more than they used to be, and actually can make decisions which exclude parents. That's raised as an issue, increasingly. So I often find although I am in

loco parentis, as the phrase says, I should act for the child, I often find myself acting as a parent too and suggesting that we need to inform parents about issues, that the child doesn't want raised with them, how to do that sensitively.” (School 2)

4.4 RCO involvement in education

The RCOs interviewed for this research participated in a variety of education-related activities aimed at refugee and asylum seeking young people and their parents and carers. They also provided advice, support and advocacy for parents/carers on education issues which are detailed in chapter five. Seventeen RCOs said they delivered education programmes, two used to run activities and one was planning to start in the near future.

The table below lists the various activities which RCOs in this research engaged in:

Activity	Frequency
Mother tongue classes	7
Supplementary school/classes (or network of)	7
Homework classes/clubs	5
English language classes	5
IT classes	5
Saturday classes	4
Cultural activities	2
Mentoring for young people	2
Worker goes into schools to provide support and training	2
After-school club	1
GCSE classes	1
Design/technology classes	1
Lunch club for young people	1
Organise educational trips	1
Run seminars for young people	1

These activities are not mutually exclusive as some descriptions could encompass more than one type of activity (e.g. homework classes that take place after school). These activities reflect those reported by RCOs in the questionnaire survey.

Many RCOs were engaged in education activities, which would suggest that they were responding to the needs within their communities. Those who run RCOs usually come from refugee backgrounds and therefore might share similar experiences to their service users and be aware of the issues that refugees and asylum seekers face. In some

communities, many generations of refugee communities exist and longer-established community members can provide valuable support to newly-arrived members of the community:

“What prompted you to run this particular project?”

What encourage me...maybe too many reasons. One of them, because we are people who came to this country as refugees, because we have some sufferings in our country. So in this country we are settled down and so we have got new generation, we have to do something with our new generation. And what encouraged me also it is to reach an equal opportunity in which to provide more support for people who are not from our society, who need more support to bring them to the level of other people, who are English or being settled for very well in this country. So another one is, in order to encourage or support new generation to get involve in society to have achievements and to secure brighter future for which, this one upon our community and upon the host society. That is one and even for running the Mother Tongue classes, it is about teaching Kurdish with English culture, and, as I mentioned before it is about enhancing a healthy integration... And at the same time, yes parents are always approaching us and asking for more help. But sometimes when a group of Kurdish families facing a certain problem, it means the whole Kurdish community may need, if it is not tomorrow and future and that sorts of services, so we have to prepare ourselves from now. One of the aspect which when people are transferring or referring from primary school to secondary school, which school is better for the children, they don't know about either. So we have qualified body with professional body to give the support and open their eyes and their minds, what is going around them. So this circumstance will create a positive atmosphere for new generation, for parents to have a better future and better participation with the Kurdish or children's future and achievements.” (RCO 12)

“I think that the first think to tell you is when were setting up this organisation, I was one of the people to set up the group and our aim was, because we knew the problems that of all Somali people come across when they come here as new arrivals. Myself I came here as a refugee. So, when, I came here I had very little English. That's was my main barrier. So, I started to study English language and then I started to go to other courses and carry on my

education. I knew that every person like me, always has these kind of problem. So, we decided as a group of parents together to set up an organisation is led by parents where we can support our peers in order to get them help. This organisation was set up by parents who have children as well their need to the support for the children.” (RCO 3)

“This was done as a pilot project by two Albanian teachers and then the board of trustees responded to the need by setting up a project and asking for funding to support it. Many people in the community, especially those who have been here for a while are worried that their children are not learning their language.” (RCO 22)

The activities outlined above aim to support refugee and asylum seeking young people in educational achievement and integration, therefore helping them to get a good start in a new country. The programmes equip communities with practical things such as English language skills, but in these examples and others, there is also a desire to teach young people about their home language and culture to enable them to keep in touch with their identities.

The development of education activities by some of the RCOs in this research also occurred in response to a concern within communities that the children and young people were not achieving to their greatest potential. Programmes are delivered to support with schoolwork and deal with behavioural issues that may be a barrier to achievement:

“When I realise that children are having behaviour issues, large number of refugee children having behaviour issues, I wanted to see it and I also knew that they were having problem with homework support. So we set up the Saturday school to do that. So as you go one thing change and have kind of tweak your project to suit the change of the community.” (RCO 1)

As highlighted above, the incentive to develop activities was sometimes prompted by those who ran RCOs identifying needs from their own personal experiences. RCOs in this research also reported parents approaching them to ask for support with their children’s education.

“Well this particular project was prompted by the parents themselves. Because of difficulties they were having with their own children.” (RCO 20)

“...parents raised the matter during the meetings. Yeah, it was demand from the parents.” (RCO 24)

RCOs are often initially established to provide practical help and support to members of their communities on immigration and welfare support issues, as well as to provide emotional support and facilitate social activities. Over time the work of the RCO is often developed to deal with issues that arise beyond the initial need for immigration advice:

“When we started the organisation originally, our aim was to advise asylum seekers and refugees on their immigration issues. But over time, these issues were coming up – a kind of multiplier effect. It’s not just the status issues – which have been solved, but they now wanted to integrate within the community. Those were the other problems that were springing up – so we were kind of preparing a package which can either give all round information to the parents.” (RCO 21)

Many of the activities highlighted above are aimed at the educational needs of the refugee and asylum seeking young people themselves. Assistance with schoolwork and broader cultural learning can help with the young people’s integration. Some RCOs have also responded to the support needs of the parents/carers and rather than providing one-to-one advice, they have developed programmes of support for them:

“...members of community came together...to organise this organisation, to set up this organisation raise from this meeting, informal meetings...we decided to have this organisation and a number of issues were raised from those early meetings. One of them was education, their national identity, being here I think parent sometimes scared too much of losing their national identity. And quite often unfortunately they are not able to work with their children. Children are clever they have more information than we can receive. They are young, they have language and they received information; but parents are sometimes, unfortunately at some point sit back. ... Of course every parent wants the best for their children, be sure that the information they received is the right information, that the action they take for their children is safe for them, for their future. And to have a supplementary school or to have an organisation generally, I think, in kind made it more safer.” (RCO 5)

The RCO explains how it can sometimes be more difficult for parents/carers to adapt to a new country

than it is for their children. Young people who attend schools are often supported in language acquisition and make friends quickly, which can leave their parents/carers feeling more isolated, especially if they are relying on their children for interpreting.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has discussed the experiences of refugee and asylum seeking young people and parent/carers in relation to engagement and involvement in secondary schooling. The young people highlighted that parental/carer involvement was important as it helped them to feel supported and encouraged, and could help them in terms of educational achievement. Parents/carers expressed satisfaction with their levels of involvement with schools, and were generally happy with their children's schools. They felt their involvement was largely facilitated by good communication from the school.

Schools described parent/carer involvement in terms of partnership, outreach and a two-way process. Schools were aware of the importance of engaging with refugee parents/carers, but sometimes experienced problems in doing this effectively.

RCOs outlined the types of education-related projects they delivered, and the needs within refugee communities that prompted them to develop activities. Some RCOs emphasised that in some cases it is more difficult for parents/carers to integrate than their children, so they provide them with tailored assistance.

- 9 It should be noted that two young people were not asked the question.
- 10 It may not have necessarily been the case that all of the young people who had free school meals were refugee or asylum seekers, but it appears that this was the assumption made by her and others, therefore leaving him in a vulnerable position.
- 11 The perspectives of RCOs are discussed later in this report which indicates that education is high on the agenda for many parents and organisations.

Chapter Five – Barriers to inclusion

“I’d say there are huge issues with these youngsters because the few that we have, everyone has needs, huge needs. One young lady’s Mum cried on my shoulder at parents’ evening, consultation day, saying she didn’t see what was the point of getting up in the morning. Sometimes, you know, she’d got no job, her case wasn’t being resolved, she didn’t, she’d got solicitors on it...Has terrible depression according to the daughter. And I invited the Mum to come and take part in projects in school. She didn’t come. And that’s where that situation is now. I feel I haven’t catered for that Mum. She’s a young Mum, late twenties, in a new culture, new place, in need. And I ask myself, who is catering for her needs?”

The young man living with his older brothers, again, hasn’t got any shoelaces in his shoes at the moment... I’m about to go and follow this one up because we’ve had the welfare officer going ‘he’s not being properly looked after’. He’s another youngster.

[Another] young man... he’s just with his Mum... And short of asking directly, which is tricky, but I feel now quite clearly there are issues around him and his Mum. He’s having huge difficulties socialising, inappropriate social skills... Just not used to the rough and tumble of a British school...

Each child presents its own set of needs and concerns. I would say... information is the biggest issue because if I could have a better picture, I suppose the assumption is, it’s a need to know basis.

Who do I contact when that Mum has cried on my shoulder? Who do I ask? I’m worried about her. What’s she going to do? I know her daughter. She’s

mentioned it, I teach her English. She’s mentioned it in class. ‘I worry about my Mum’. I’m worrying about her Mum as well!” (School 2)

The previous chapters, and the quotation above, have hinted at some of the barriers that refugee communities and secondary schools may face when trying to engage with each other. This research uncovered many barriers during the course of the qualitative interviews and surveys. This chapter will discuss the issues raised by the participants and therefore provide a context for the practice that has been developed to address these barriers which follows in chapter six.

When RCOs were asked if parents/carers raise issues about their children’s education with them, every organisation said yes. Several RCOs identified education as the highest priority for their clients. For example, one RCO said 75–80 per cent of their clients raise issues about education and another stated “[t]hat’s the most important issue area which is raised by the parents in general, issue of the time, you see?” (RCO 9). Given the range of remits that the participating organisations had, as outlined in chapter three, this illustrates that education is both an important consideration for parents/carers and something they need assistance with.

When RCOs were asked what types of issues parents/carers raised with them, the following responses were recorded¹²:

Issue	Frequency
Bullying/racism/discrimination	14
Language support (e.g. help filling in forms or talking to teachers)	10
Getting school places	9
Concerns about achievement/attainment	6
Financial hardship	3
Understanding the school system	2
Advice on school choice	2
Exclusion	2
Parents want help supporting their children with their schooling	2
Concerns about attendance	1
Complaints about schooling	1
Teachers not understanding cultural/refugee issues	1

The table above is not the definitive list of issues (as will be illustrated in the discussion below), but it represents a useful overview of the problems and concerns parents/carers have in relation to their children's schooling. Many of these issues were raised by other types of respondents, and they are discussed in detail below.

5.1 Accessing education

School admissions are a concern for most parents/carers. Every year stories appear in the British press of parents going to extreme measures to try to secure their children places in the best performing schools.¹³ In an attempt to open up access to all families, and to tie in with the Government's position on 'parental choice', legislation has recently come into effect with the aim of making the admission process fairer for all.¹⁴ Research undertaken on admissions for 2008 suggests that one-fifth of parents are still not gaining their first choice secondary school place.¹⁵

The concerns regarding access to better schools have been raised in the context of poorer families being unable to have the opportunity to study in well-performing institutions. Refugees and asylum seekers very often fall into this category (the latter particularly) and their experiences are compounded by other factors that make accessing school places even more difficult. For example, many families arrive in the country in the middle of the school year resulting in places in schools having already been allocated. In addition, refugee and asylum seeking parents may be unaware of the requirements of the school applications (and appeals) processes, and

newly-arrived parents and carers are likely to be less aware of the most appropriate schools in their area.

5.1.1 Accessing school places

The parents and carers who participated in the research were questioned about the ease of accessing school places for their children. Of the fourteen parents/carers interviewed, eight stated that getting a school place was not easy. Of those who had fewer problems getting school places, two had been in the UK for a long time and had children who were born in the country and one was a British foster parent, who arguably had more familiarity with the system.

Those who got places relatively easily reported low or non-existent waiting times; one only took two weeks and two had secured places before the children arrived in the country. Those who had difficulties waited for varying periods of time. Some respondents were vague about the precise time period and just reported "months", while others were much clearer about the delays. One respondent waited three months for a place for their child, two waited for four months, one for four and a half months, one for six months and one for seven months. At the time of interviewing, one parent was also waiting for his son to get a school place and they had been in the country for 50 days. Some of the young people interviewed also reported long delays between arriving in the UK and starting school. One young person had waited for eight months, another for six months and several others experienced waited for four months.¹⁶

Applying for asylum in the UK is a complex process, and can result in enforced dispersal across the country, as well as long periods of waiting for decisions on applications and appeals.¹⁷ Parents/carers have to ensure their claims are submitted, make sure they have secured accommodation and financial support, as well as dealing with issues such as getting their children into schools. For them, going through the school admissions process can be yet another set of hoops to jump through and it is not necessarily a straight-forward process.

"What he's saying...is about the waiting you know the waiting time for example for pupils to get to school. They waste a lot of time waiting like his son is been waiting for a long time and just go in between the council and school and no, you know it's just letters. They give you like an interview in two

weeks and then they have to wait another two or three weeks to get another interview or another letter, which is a waste of, you know, waste a lot of time just on that, and the pupil just think, is forgetting everything and can't learn anything in like months and months.” (P/C 10 – interpreter replying in third party)

This parent was clearly concerned about the negative effects being out of school could have on his child's education. Refugee and asylum seeking young people will have experienced much disruption in their lives and on arrival in England. Delays in engaging with the education system can have a negative impact on their well-being, as well as on their learning, as the quote below illustrates:

“With my son we arrived in 2002 and it was very difficult to secure a place and we got to the stage where he was devastated. The reasons that they gave were neither here nor there and because my sister's been here for a long time she in turn went and saw her MP...That's how difficult things were and he eventually got a school...” (P/C 2)

Having a place in school can constitute some stability for young people and help them to make friends and begin to integrate. If young people are forced to stay at home for long periods, this can lead to boredom and isolation and have negative effects on their self-esteem.

5.1.2 Support with accessing places

The parent above describes how she turned to her sister, who in turn went to her Member of Parliament, in order to get her son into school. This is perhaps an extreme example, and this parent clearly benefited from the fact that her sister had lived in England for a while and had discovered that that taking such an approach might be effective.

Parents/carers in this research sought help and support with this process from a number of sources including relatives, people within social services or local authorities, advocates from faith groups and dedicated resettlement workers. When asked about how they got into their current school, young people reported that they had received assistance from parents and carers (both familial and British foster carers), social workers, an advisor from a refugee supporting agency and their local Ethnic Minority Achievement Team. RCOs stated that this was one of the main education issues they offered support with. Despite the help and support that was given through these sources, these findings show that

people still experienced considerable delays in getting into schools, as highlighted by the young people below.

“Well, actually you know before I started the school, I was always going to my social worker and asking him to get me admission in a school but he was not helping me fast. So it was four months until I got admission into my current school. I was always home during these four months. Because I didn't know how to get admission into a school, I didn't know what to do. I even went to [a refugee support organisation], but they didn't help me either. Finally my social worker said I should wait until September. Then when September came, he found me this school and arranged for my admission. I am still here and I am satisfied with my current school.” (YP 6)

“And how did you get into the school in [name of area]?”

Actually when I came here I was like, looked for school was quite hard, because they asked me – they said you can join college for English, just for English. But I was like 14 and a half, maybe 15 and I went to colleges and they said social services weren't very clear. So they said you're not supposed to come in college you supposed to go in high school. So I waited like eight months without school...

So who was it that was actually trying to help you find a school place?

Actually, when I came as like, I went to social care, to the social services and they sort of, they didn't help me that much because it's like they didn't know themselves what to do, it was like, it wasn't clear at all. And after they gave me number actually, to call a person but that was always engaged and call later and...

So a lot of it was left up to you to try and find places

Yeah just I remember I went to the social care the first part, I was 16 and I said I would sit there and I'm not gonna move 'til you find me school because I was like, I was learning a little bit from TV and everything but I was find news a waste of time like what it said for eight months with nothing. And was like getting boring as well, being bored.” (YP 3)

The second young person quoted above not only describes the nature of the delays and the inability to access help, but also highlights the educational disadvantage that can occur if people have to wait a long time for places. That missed eight months resulted in this young person being behind in exam

coursework. These situations put pressure on people who are also learning English and adjusting to a new environment.

Recommendation

Children's services and local authorities should provide advice and guidance to young people and their parents/carers when they first arrive on how to access education.

5.1.3 School choice

In addition to issues of accessing school places, consideration needs to be given to the type of school that refugee and asylum seeking young people attend that would best meet their needs.

When parents/carers were asked whether they were able to gain places in the schools that they wanted, five (out of the fourteen) said they did not get the school of their choice, whilst others questioned the notion of choice itself.

“Was there a particular school you wanted your children to go to?”

At the moment if I have to choose, I know which school to choose. But, at the time I didn't know anything about the schooling system, which one is the best. When I came here I thought doesn't matter, all are the best, but they are not.” (P/C 14)

Having just arrived in a new country and moved into a new area, it may not be clear to parents/carers which schools are the most appropriate and/or best performing. In these circumstances, it seems likely that parents/carers might draw upon the advice of others' in terms of school selection, but this also does not come without its problems.

“...was there a particular school or type of school that you wanted your children to go to?”

I can say no.

No.

As I said, I was seeing a person, I didn't see a school.

Would you liked to have seen the school?

Yes, it was better.

It would be better?

Yeah, to see the school, to know that schools and maybe to get access of my children to go to school.

So that you could see and you could choose?

Yeah choose.

I think you are going to a nice school though.

I believe it...I think it's true because as I'm saying,

the person who was dealing with that issue, she really took my place. It's like she chose for me. It's not that she forced me to do it but she chose it for me. She felt this would be helpful to me, for my children.” (P/C 11)

In this instance, the person who was advocating for this parent took full control of the decision which resulting in the child attending a school the parent had not even visited. Luckily in this instance the school was an appropriate one, but this approach is disempowering and may not have worked out so well in other circumstances.

Some who did secure places in their preferred schools talked about the reasons behind their decisions. Some selected schools on the basis of faith, but issues surrounding appropriate language support were also priorities for those who were made aware of the details about provision in their local areas.

“...it was my choice...Because this [name of school] some teachers speaking my language. My children in this country English know better yeah. This some teacher supporting this with English, Pashtu, English.” (P/C 8)

The parent above chose a particular school because he knew the teachers spoke Pashtu even though the school was a considerably distance away from their accommodation (“two/three miles away”).

Recommendations

Local authorities should provide parents/carers with an overview of the schools in the area so they can make informed choices about which ones they wish to apply to.

Advocates and supporting organisations should empower refugee and asylum seekers in their decision-making by informing them of what options are available, rather than select schools on behalf of clients.

5.2 Bullying/racism

It is widely accepted that bullying can have a damaging effect on young people (see for example, DCSF, 2007; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2006). Experiences of bullying and racism can be deeply traumatising for young people, and for refugee and asylum seeking young people, this can hinder their inclusion and integration in schools.¹⁸ In

this research, the subject of bullying and racism from other pupils was raised by young people, parents/carers and RCOs. Fourteen of the RCO representatives who were interviewed as part of this project identified bullying and racism as an issue that parents/carers raised with them.

5.2.1 Young people's experiences

During the interviews, many of the young people mentioned bullying, racism and fights in schools. The young people spoke about bullying as a general problem within the school, as well as outlining their own experiences of fellow pupils behaving badly towards them. The stories the young people told suggest that motivations for this bullying were because they had problems speaking English, were from a different country, had a particular religion and/or were refugees/asylum seekers.

"My impression of my school was, I liked...I think I had quite a lot of support. I was quite lucky with the teachers and everything. I found it a bit hard with the children and everything, you know the students, because it was like, people from different countries and it was like, when you sort of don't speak English very well it's a bit hard, 'cause you might think they're teasing you and sometimes they do actually; when you're new and everyone sort of look at you and sort of wants to – if they see you like struggling a bit and they see you don't speak English, they want to make fun of you which is very hard. That was a bit hard.

///

And what do you think was the worst feature of your school?

...I don't know. Don't think there was anything very worst. There worst thing I think was like, the pupils were like monster. They didn't treat me very nice when I started."

They did treat you nicely?

No.

They didn't?

Because they were like making fun of my name and stuff.

///

And it was like, another problem was, I was like, I was Muslim, cause sort of, I'm mixed religion but. I'm not religious myself, but it's sort of like a name, sort of I don't do anything I don't pray or anything sort of, I'm not into any religion so when it was like Ramadan or something, because we were going to have lunch because everyone was looking at you because like 'why are you eating?'

Really?

And 'why don't you pray?' and 'why don't you go to like mosque?'. Like people like, tell you what to do..."(YP 3)

"My friends are good... Actually they sometimes act like 'foreignists'. Not foreignism but racism. Some of them are racists.

///

As for friendship, I usually hang around with foreigners, I don't hang around with the English that much. Some are very racist. When they are being racist, I cannot stand it and I start a fight.

How? What do they do that you consider racism?

You're strolling around with your friend for example, or with my teacher in the hall, I'm not doing anything, I'm talking with my teacher, this girl is standing by the radiator, she swore to me. 'Go back to your country' like, she swore a lot. Then I turned around, 'What's your problem', 'Come again, tell it once more'. She repeated. I got angry, asked 'What's your problem'. Then we attacked each other, had a fight... That's why, yeah, because I'm a foreigner, I get involved with foreigners like me. I have many friends at school, blacks. I don't have many English friends. I mean according to skin colour, I don't have white friends. They act too racist.

///

Some think, for example, about those who receive support from the council, who cannot work due to language problems, for instance some students or people think that we are here only to spend their money. Not for studying or living but only for consuming their money. Some think that way "they live on our money, on our government's money", "why are they getting the support we are getting". (YP 16)

The young people above describe incidents of racism in their schools, even though they were attending learning environments that were located in multi-cultural areas. They describe assumptions that were made about them by other young people, which were then used to verbally and physically abuse them.

5.2.2 Country of origin

Given that some young people had been on the receiving end of racist and bullying behaviours, it is not surprising that they might be reluctant to talk to people about where they have come from. Some of the young people in this research said that they only tell people who they are friends with, and others no longer tell people because of the negative reactions they have experienced in the past.

“Do you tell people where you come from originally?”

No not really, once I did and they just made a joke out of it

Who did that?

I was in near here and I went with my brother to park and he asked me little kid asked me and I told him that and he just made joke... Osama Bin Laden... something like that so I never told anyone again.

So when you were at school you never told anyone?

No I never.

Do people ask you?

They do I just say I didn't answer them

What do you tell them then?

I never tell them, now they don't think that they are new to England but they used to ask me but I never told them I'm Afghani.” (YP 14)

“OK...do you and your friends who you meet in school today and here, do you tell them about where you come from before, you talk to them about the Congo?”

Yes because they ask me the question. Just talk, not everyone if they laugh or make fun, some just say only from the Congo, some, others want to know more others want to laugh

In a bad way?

Yes, like, where is the Congo? How did you come here, did you swim? Something like this.” (YP 1)

Although the first young person did not experience this incident in school, it had affected how much he discloses about himself to young people in all spheres of his life.

5.2.3 Immigration status

Over recent years, sections of the British media have increasingly misrepresented those seeking protection in the UK (see for example ICAR, 2004). Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that the majority of young people interviewed did not wish to reveal their immigration status. Eight young people said they do not tell anybody at all that they are a refugee or asylum seeker, two said they only tell friends, a further two said they tell if asked if asked directly and one disclosed sometimes. Only two respondents said that they tell people (without qualifying who and under what circumstances).¹⁹ Some of the reasons behind young people's decisions about disclosing their status are outlined in the responses below.

“Do you tell them that you're a refugee?”

Yeah why not.

What's their reaction normally?

They don't react strangely...they don't say anything specific. They often ask about Afghanistan and ask what kind of a place is it, nothing strange I would say. Sometimes they also ask how was Afghanistan (the situation in Afghanistan) and how I came to the UK”. (YP 6)

“I remember yeah I did speak. I remember I did speak to my teacher... but not to students. I didn't want to sort of. Because I knew they sort of they could make fun of me. Anyway I thought it was private.” (YP 3)

“So if somebody asks you, you don't mind that you tell them?”

No. I, every person that asks me 'Are you legal or illegal?' I say 'I'm legal.'” (YP 7)

“And do you ever talk about being a refugee with people at school?”

Not really. I don't like it in school when somebody asks me 'Where are you from?' and that...I don't like it

So if somebody asks you where you're from at school, what do you generally say?

I'm now, everybody knows me as Pakistani boy...in school. 'Cause I know all the language innit. They ask me 'Where are you from?'... because, you know my foster brother, I told him 'Tell everyone that I'm your cousin and, like, I'm from Pakistan as well'...I tell him 'I'm your cousin. I'm from Pakistan as well'. That's why everybody knows me as Pakistani boy.”²⁰(YP 8)

“And do you mention or talk about being a refugee or an asylum seeker in school?”

No

No?

No. 'Cause some of them kinda like, bad mouth asylum seekers and that, so I just stand there and listen to what they're saying and that. But I can't say anything really ...” (YP 10)

“...and do you talk about being a refugee or an asylum seeker at school?”

Not really 'cause it's kind of like they find it rude I mean they don't behave that well if they find out if you are asylum they are not going to treat you the same way as they used to do.” (YP 15)

Fear of a bad reaction from other pupils has made some people guarded about revealing their status. Given that the reasons for people seeking asylum

are not always understood, and asylum seekers are sometimes labelled as ‘illegal’ and coming to the UK under false pretences, it is understandable that young people display caution. The result is that young people feel that they cannot open up to their peers and this might cause them to feel negatively about their own identities.

Recommendation

Schools should raise awareness about refugee issues to challenge myths perpetuated by some sections of the media. Schools can discuss the reasons for forced migration in Personal and Social Education and citizenship classes, as well as tutorial sessions. Schools can also put on activities during Refugee Week to celebrate the contribution of refugees to the UK.

5.2.4 Parents’ experiences

Although most of the young people interviewed mentioned issues of bullying and racism, few of the parents/carers involved made reference to this being an issue (although RCOs often reported parents’/carers’ concerns about this). This could be because their children had been fortunate enough to not have experienced any difficulties, but it might also be due to young people not telling them if there are any problems. One parent did report a problem her son had in school:

“There was a time when other pupils laughed at my son calling him a Gypsy and teacher didn’t react on that. And he didn’t want to go to school and he was crying... I should speak with other teachers but they said they can’t do nothing about it. Then I asked the teacher if he can call the children’s mother to sort the problem out, but teacher didn’t like that idea.

///

But he is discriminated sometimes...My children are still afraid to say who they are and they speak fluent English because they are afraid of discrimination.”
(P/C 14)

This story describes the frustration this parent felt when she felt that teachers were not dealing with the problem her child was experiencing. Many schools have well-developed bullying policies and it would be expected that they would deal with such incidents. Unfortunately it appears that the pupils were not informed that this type of behaviour is not acceptable, therefore not providing an incentive to stop.

5.2.5 RCO perspectives

As mentioned previously, many RCOs in this sample reported their service users approached them to help with issues of bullying and racism. The type of support offered will vary, but some RCOs got very involved by advocating for parents/carers with schools to help get the problem addressed. One RCO described some of the situations they have been involved in as follows:

“Yes, bullying I think is very serious issue and it damage the education. Three cases we have regarding bullying. Two of them was very serious, very serious, which result in change of school and the last one, we raised the issue with the Headteacher and the Headteacher dealt with it and was successful. So it is, I think bullying is still, from my point of view, still an iceberg and many times children doesn’t have enough confidence to speak out about that for different reasons. Sometimes they blame themselves or think they are foreign so they shouldn’t complain. We try to raise the awareness about bullying, that it is not right and because they couldn’t speak English they shouldn’t be subject to bullying and they should defend themselves. So I think in terms of bullying we need to work harder on that issue with the community, with the parents if we have resource and time [laughs]. Unfortunately there is always, this is the dark side or sad side of our story.” (RCO 13)

This response highlights the need for those who are experiencing bullying to be supported and feel empowered to address the issue. Refugee and asylum seeking young people may not be aware of what is unacceptable behaviour or of the mechanisms that may be in place to help resolve the problem.

Recommendation

Schools need to make sure they have anti-bullying and anti-racism policies in place, and that these are rigorously enforced. Schools should ensure that refugee and asylum seeking young people, and their parents/carers, are made aware of these policies and are clear about what constitutes unacceptable behaviour. Schools need to ensure that young people and their families know what mechanisms are in place to report bullying.

5.3 Lack of resources

The interviews with all groups in this research raised issues concerning a lack of resources of one type or

another. This section will outline how not having access to resources can affect the ways in which refugee communities engage with education.

5.3.1 Financial resources

Lack of money both personally and within organisations was something that was an issue of concern for all groups interviewed. In order to fully participate in education and schooling, refugees and asylum seekers need to be able to support themselves, and to provide specific support for these groups, schools and RCOs need to have financial resources in order to deliver.

5.3.1.1 Refugee/asylum seeking families

Interviews with RCOs revealed that families approach them because they are facing financial hardship. Although education is free in the UK, people generally need money in order to support young people's participation in education. For example, extra-curricular activities (such as sports clubs) and school trips often incur additional costs. Levels of financial support for asylum seekers are low and asylum seekers do not have the right to work. This means that young people may not be able to participate in such activities as their families cannot afford to support them financially.

“Have you been to a school trip yet?”

No.

No? Is this because your school doesn't do school trips, or you just couldn't go?

Yeah they do 'em but...you have to pay for it by yourself. It's lot of money. You can't – they take you on...somewhere – somebody's gone. I aren't going. It's not good. Don't like it.” (YP 12)

Taking part in out-of-school activities can be an important way for young people to make friends and integrate in schools. For example, those with limited English language skills can participate in sporting activities they have played in their country of origin, which can help to build friendships and feelings of being part of a team. If these activities cost money, then this can prevent the participation of refugee and asylum seeking young people.

It is not only the participation in extra-curricular interests that can be affected by families not having adequate financial support, but also core school activities. Even if access to school is free, there are many things that do cost money which are necessary for pupils (e.g. books, school uniforms etc.), as the parent describes below:

“There doesn't seem to be much for the asylum seeker, but, at the end of the day, if I understand the rules I read, it's like a child, I mean it's a child you know. Be they British or asylum seeking, at the end of the day, I mean what is on offer for children should be basically the same irrespective of status but, it does not seem like that because for example... something that was made available – Education Maintenance Allowance.²¹ That was supposed to be, from my understanding if I'm not wrong, an initiative for all children. But that didn't turn out to be the case with EMA... I did a form and stated that I was an asylum seeker, this is what we earn, da da da da da, they never bothered with me... Because obviously I've needed to buy book, books for law are not all provided by the school. It's a very expensive subject and I've had to run around and get those books. This is why I am saying that I don't understand the, the rules really because EMA, when they advertised it, I mean there was no mention about, you know, asylum seekers, refugees don't... You contact them, at the end of the day, an asylum seeker's child is growing, uniforms do get small, and they're gonna need to replace them. You contact the relevant department 'oh no we only do that if somebody's moving school'... Sometimes I really and truly will not have the money to provide for his lunch. I had a major battle getting him onto a school meal. Eventually won the war. Then I had the battle of the Travelcard. They asked you this, they asked you that, they ask you this. This is all things I did myself because I sometimes believe social workers are not there either for you... If there's a school trip I want to make sure that my daughter does go obviously and since I've got family they do all chip in but, you know. They're quite educational these trips but I find that some parents they feel you know because, money. I mean if you're going to live on £107 a week with three children, for crying out loud, how does one, get around that? ... My daughter's school has just changed colour... they don't want white blouses they now want blue. They don't want black trousers they want grey. They don't want white PE shorts, they want black. That is all money and from that £107 I'm supposed to buy food, buy the uniforms, buy the stuff for packed lunch because my daughter couldn't cope with the school meals so I always every morning make a packed lunch for my daughter and I don't know how they expect £107 to cater for all that.” (P/C 3)

Whilst support may be available for some low income families, this parent illustrates that asylum seekers are unable to access this assistance. She also points out that much of the support she has

got had to be ‘battled’ for which relies on the individual being aware of the help available, confident and persistent.

Recommendations

Schools, local authorities, RCOs and refugee supporting organisations should ensure that refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers are aware of financial support that may be available to support them with their children’s schooling (for example, free school meals).

Schools and local authorities should provide financial support to help the poorest young people, such as asylum seekers, with their schooling. This should include money for extra-curricular activities as well as essentials such as school uniforms and trips.

The eligibility criteria for the Education Maintenance Allowance should be extended to asylum seekers between 16-19 years of age continuing their learning and study up to and including Level 3.

Asylum seekers should have permission to work in the UK from the date of their claim. This would allow parents/carers to better support their children’s schooling through increased financial resources and stronger ties outside of the home.

5.3.1.2 Schools/RCOs

From a service provision perspective, RCOs and schools also experience financial pressures. Most of the RCOs interviewed stated that they would like to receive additional financial support to help with educational activities. There was a frustration that many funding streams only offer short-term funding which means that successful initiatives often have to cease when the money runs out if the organisation has not been able to secure additional support.

“Funding first of all because we need funding because sometime we are very limited on our funding. We can’t make the same project twice time because there’s no funding for to make it. Sometime the parent they come so we have the project what is very successful, can you make it, they come so the last week, they said, ‘look it was very successful can you go again to [trip destination]?’ I said, ‘no I’m sorry we don’t have funding to go there’ because they was very happy there.” (RCO 7)

Other RCOs also reported having run education-related activities in the past, but they had to stop them due to funding running out. Schools also reported pressures on their general budget which means they seek alternative specialist funding streams to enable them extend their reach beyond what they might usually do. Unfortunately, as with many of the funding opportunities available to RCOs, these are also often short-term.

“And our mobility, you know children coming in during the middle of term and going out is very, very high and when the DfES ran the mobility project we were identified for that and in fact got a specific amount of money to do something over two years. Unfortunately you know, you do something wonderful and then you can’t sustain it because they pull the plug on the funding so, you know it’s very difficult. And that was hugely successful because we had a member of staff identified to work alongside the students and track them in lessons and that was very good, and we just haven’t got the resources to do it because we’ve got so many difficult children anyway.” (School 5)

The funding situation many service providers find themselves in can be frustrating to all concerned with running specialist services and initiatives. If funding stops after a short period of time, there is a risk that people engaged in the activities will become disengaged once more. It should also be considered that when new initiatives are developed in order to engage marginalised communities, it can often take a significant period of time for them to gain any momentum as these approaches often entail one-to-one working and word-of-mouth recommendations by people who have taken part. Running projects on a short-term basis risks cutting off projects in their prime, or even before they have become fully established.

Recommendation

Funding providers (including local and national government sources as well as other grant-giving organisations) should make longer-term and sustainable funding available to RCOs and schools to run activities to engage refugee communities. This will allow initiatives to run for a long enough period of time for them to get beyond the developmental stage which can assist in gaining continuation funding once the original grants come to an end.

5.3.2 Staffing

Many respondents identified staff, or training for staff, as something they could benefit from in their

work. When questioned about the types of support they felt they could benefit from in order to run their educational activities, RCOs mentioned training for their staff as the top priority. It was not only the needs of their organisation's staff that were highlighted, but also those of others who work with refugees:

"I think, just on the top of my head, training teacher on refugee issues would be help, a great help actually. Trying to explain how certain issues can be dealt with without, you know, having to involve other people to begin with and then you feel it a point, you know...concern, then to involve other people. So but yes, initially training people, teacher, in particular in school how to deal with refugee parent. And then maybe setting up a forum, afterward, where people can come in, you know, share ideas and exchange good practices." (RCO 1)

This respondent talked throughout the interview about how staff in mainstream schools often do not understand the experiences of refugee and asylum seekers before, during and after flight, and how a little knowledge of these circumstances could help to resolve issues early on before they get serious. Other RCOs stated that they would be better able to help their staff meet the needs of their clients, particularly in relation to specialist subjects such as child protection and legal issues relating to the asylum process. These are needs for particular types of knowledge and support that RCOs have identified as being relevant for their work. This is in contrast to the experience of one RCO representative who attended training seminars given by the local authority.

"No, they organise some, sometimes some seminars. And for that, the seminars are not useful at all. You know, they are so, so general and they try to just cover them you know so it's nothing really sensitive, nothing that applies to those communities that they are inviting to.

OK. So seminars about how the system

So they explain their system which is complicated anyway and it would take a year to explain that not a few hours. So then you go there for nothing. Then they provide you, you know like, sometimes at the end of school, school year, they provide you some materials for the schools and they go there and they give you box, whole boxes that maybe cost a few pounds and that's how much you pay for parking ticket to get there you know." (RCO 14)

For this organisation, the provision of such generic training from the local authority was of no use at all and represented a waste of time and resources. While it can be considered positive that a local authority offers training to community groups involved in educational activities in their areas, there first needs to be an assessment of the types of support the organisations need.

Recommendation

Training offered to RCOs by local authorities should be tailored to their needs, rather than providing generic overviews.

5.3.3 Premises

As detailed elsewhere in chapter four, many RCOs deliver their own educational programmes for children and families in the communities they serve. RCOs vary greatly in their size, composition and levels of income, and many deliver large and ambitious services with very few resources.²² It is very often the case that RCOs will not occupy premises large enough to be able to run educational activities, so they need to access alternative places to run their programmes. Hiring premises can be an expensive undertaking, as illustrated below.

"... when I came to [name of organisation]... unfortunately it was the last year [the Saturday school] was running. So everything was set down but I had information that we had applied for, I don't remember, just a £1000 to cover the rent of the classes on Saturday. Unfortunately we got lesser than what the class cost. Just for renting the place from [name of school], so it was very difficult really to make for the difference, £2000 in order to be able to pay for the rent." (RCO 11)

Some RCOs reported that local schools helped them by letting them use their premises either for free or at a discounted rate, but the latter sometimes still represents a significant financial outlay. One RCO found itself in a situation where the support they were receiving from a local authority to run a Saturday school was going straight back to that same authority for the use of their space.

"So the types of places, what kind of premises?"

It depends, you know. Things are not good. It's always dictated by money you know, how much money you have to pay. It's always trouble with funding. Our school here in [city name] we got small, small amount of support from city council, 1500 a

year. It can't cover the premises we're paying for. We're paying them out of it for their premises. So it goes back to them again.

Sounds ironic. So is that the only funding you receive for that?

Well, there, there are various, schools have various support from local authorities. In some areas they don't have any support from local authorities. In [this city] we got 1500, in [a different location] they got bigger support than here.²³ So it's not, it's not much support from local authorities. See they're not interested, their policies, they think it's nothing, there's nothing in place to support our schools. You know if they really wanted to support, they've got so many city council premises that are empty so they could have offered us space so that we don't have to pay that, you know. They give us 1500 pounds a year and they take 2000 a year just for, for room hire...if you have free premises and the grant that cover at least some of the teachers' expenses. We're not talking about paying them, just their expenses, travel expenses, things like that then it would be OK. As it is now, it's really difficult.” (RCO 14)

If the cost of venue hire had been lower, this RCO would be able to support those who give up their time to teach young people from their communities.

Recommendation

Schools and local authorities should make space available at affordable rates for community groups engaged in educational activities. Schools with Extended Schools status can use their funding to support community activities and should encourage local groups to use their premises.

5.4 English language

Both the schools and the RCOs interviewed identified difficulties with the English language as presenting a significant barrier that had to be overcome in order to facilitate meaningful engagement. It is important to not assume that all refugees and asylum seekers cannot speak English when they first arrive in the UK. The ability to speak English (either because it is spoken in their country of origin or it was acquired through schooling in another country) can be a factor in families choosing the UK as a destination to seek asylum. Although there are these exceptions, many of those who do seek asylum have little or no English and intend to learn it when they arrive. This can present some problems for parents and carers when trying

to access and engage with schools (or other public service) in the first few months after arrival, particularly in the context of changes in eligibility for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision for asylum seekers (Refugee Council, 2007).

Being unable to speak or understand English can also make going to secondary school for the first time a frightening prospect. Many schools have developed good language support for pupils with EAL needs, but school resources are often stretched, meaning that support services can have difficulties providing the types of services they would like to.

“So what we're doing is we're constantly taking new students, and unfortunately because of the way funding works, we're not constantly growing as a department. So we're not increasing the number of staff we've got to support those students so it's quite challenging” (School 4)

“With poor English, it would be inappropriate for him to come into this school and assume that he's gonna carry on and sort of settle into a normal sort of mainstream path. That's not gonna happen. And very often they're restricted by numbers, over in the language support unit. And that can also be an obstacle, you know, to sort, for entry for children into this school.” (School 12)

Young people who do not have English language skills may experience barriers to mainstream schooling as they are unable to access the learning provided. This means that language difficulties need to be treated as a priority for young people as they are unlikely to progress when they do not understand what is being taught. This need becomes even more urgent as the young person gets older and is required to produce coursework that counts towards examination grades.

Recommendation

English as an Additional Language provision in schools needs to be adequately resourced so it is able to react quickly to changes in the profile and numbers of new young people arriving. Refugees and asylum seekers should be entitled to Learning and Skills Council funded ESOL provision to Level 1 at a minimum. Schools can play a key role in providing ESOL classes in a known and convenient space, particularly at the lower levels.

5.4.1 Translations/Interpreters

For parents/carers being unable to read or speak English will clearly have an impact when trying to negotiate access to school places, but it will also affect a parent/carer's ability to monitor their children's progress at school.

"Well I suppose the biggest barriers are if the parents don't speak English. And sometimes that never seems to change so the children will become fluent in English, six months to a year we reckon it takes, and then the parents still have not been able to pick it up and therefore they are I think, it's very difficult for them as it would be for anyone in a foreign country." (School 1)

Often children are given language support in school, and they are placed in a situation where they are immersed in English and they need to understand in order to get on in school, leading to them being competent (and confident) in English much sooner than their parents. This can lead to some potentially compromising situations when schools are reporting progress to parents/carers.

"One relies quite a lot on the pupil translating and that obviously doesn't always work, particularly if the message that's being given isn't entirely a positive one. ...generally speaking I would say there's a comparison to be drawn between the students who are doing best in school and how easy it is to contact their parents." (School 9)

Using the young person to feedback to parents/carers could potentially lead to miscommunication, and the process itself creates a barrier between the school and the parent/carer. A more suitable situation would be the provision of interpreters at parents' evenings, but accessing this type of resource is not always easy.

"I can have an interpreter with one parent and one girl and that is marvellous, but that's going to be expensive if you do that for everybody. So it would be money and employing these people to do that but it's possibly also having, a list you know, a pool of people who you know would do it. Because our languages are so varied." (School 7)

Due to the issues with admissions discussed earlier in this chapter, it can be the case that a few schools in the local area receive most of the refugee and asylum seeking pupils. This means that schools populations can include pupils from a wide variety

of backgrounds who speak many different languages. To provide an interpreting service for all may present difficulties within the context of the schools budget.

Recommendation

Local authorities should ensure that schools can offer translation services for people from all communities. Local authorities and schools can work with local RCOs and refugee communities in order to source such services.

5.5 Impact of the asylum process

Alongside the barriers that have been identified here, there are some difficulties that arise as a result of the asylum process itself. Over recent years, the UK asylum system has changed which can make it more difficult for families to settle and integrate, until the point where they are granted refugee status.²⁴ *The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999* introduced a policy of dispersal which compelled asylum seekers to move to different parts of the country if they wished to receive support with accommodation. Many of these areas were not used to receiving diverse populations and therefore were less experienced in addressing the types of issues that might arise when receiving new arrivals. This means that asylum seekers' lives can be characterised by a lot of movement within the UK through policies rather than choice. This mobility, and individuals' uncertainty about the success of their applications for asylum, can affect their engagement with education. An example of the former is highlighted by the young person below:

"...when I pass entry one they told me about passport, they ask me Kurdish, they said do I have passport for remaining and I was scared...there was a little chance they took me back, I am scared, I think I can't carry on, one day they tell me you cannot remain." (YP 4)

5.5.1 Removals

Asylum seeking children and young people are entitled to attend schools in the UK whilst their claims are being processed. A significant number of asylum applications are not successful, so it follows that some children attending schools will be subject to removal from the country.²⁵ The actions taken to enforce removals can have a negative effect not only on the children in question, but also on the school community in general. Many schools have

expressed concern about the fairness of the Home Office decision to remove families who have been in the UK for long periods and are settled in schools.

“There have been a few deportation cases and I would write to MPs and done petitions. I’ve gone to court as a witness and given evidence. At one stage one of our Kosovan girls, we had a long battle and [the local MP] was involved but even then she got deported. And the way they do it is awful. She got deported at 6 o’clock in the morning. I’m told they do that ‘cause then the family can’t get in touch with the solicitor or the school or anyone who could help them. So we just got this phone call that they were at Gatwick Airport so I just got some of her friends together and we went to the deportation lounge at Gatwick Airport to say goodbye to her. It was really traumatic. But I mean it’s not just traumatic for the family leaving but all the friends who had no chance to say goodbye and they don’t understand why this is happening. I mean, it is part of my role to kind of, support the student. It’s kind of holistic role, to see the different effects of what the child is going through as a refugee and the refugee experience. So it’s not just academic and learning but all the other stuff they’re grappling with.” (School 13)

Recommendation

Government removal policy for families should take account of young people’s education, and the impact on school communities, when deciding when to enforce removals.

5.5.2 Pupil/family mobility and distance from school

Moving from place to place can cause great disruption in people’s education and social networks. Given that young people’s education will have been interrupted by the very process of forced migration, further movement within the UK makes it difficult for them to have any continuity in their learning. The quotes below outline the problems this can cause.

“I think housing [is a major barrier] because what happens in [this city] is that they are given temporary housing, they are sent to a school where there are places, and then if they are re-housed they’re expected to move school. So that disrupts education and our problem is that if local schools are full, and children are sent here if then younger ones want to come here, if there are places in the local ones, they don’t get free transport. So I’ve had to write quite a few appeals but they’re not upheld

whereby families want to keep their children all together, are happy with the older child being here, then younger ones join and they have to pay the bus fares, and the bus fares, I mean they’ll get 40p passes, but if they’ve got to get two buses that’s £1.60 a day, and if you’ve got more than one child, it proves very difficult.” (School 1)

“Often refugee children even if they have been in the UK for about three years, will get change about three schools or four different schools. The school record does not necessarily follow them all the way through. By the time they will get to school the teacher doesn’t have any background or anything.” (RCO 1)

Frequent movement causes further disruption to young people’s education, their ability to socialise, keep friendships and receive support from their communities and schools. The first quote illustrates the financial impact on families who choose to retain continuity in their children’s schooling, even if they move homes. The distance from school can create a barrier to parental engagement if travel to the premises is a considerable distance. Young people who have to travel a long way to school each day are likely to be tired as a result and will be forced to do their homework later in the evenings than those who live nearby. One young person in this sample talked of having to get two buses to reach school, and another described the impact on his involvement in extra-curricular activities as his journey takes an hour and a quarter each way, therefore precluding after-school activities as he would return home too late.²⁶ It can also have a negative effect on friendships young people form.

“And do you meet your friends outside of school as well?”

No

No? Just in school

Just in school, ‘cause I live like, very far away...” (YP 10)

An inability to socialise with school friends outside of the school environment inhibits the types of friendships young people can make as the routines within the school day dictate particular types of interaction. Spending time with peers outside of school results in relationships that can be key in developing into independent young people.

Recommendation

Local authority subsidies for travel to school should cover the whole cost of the journeys.

5.6 Experiences in countries of origin

Experiences of both forced migration and education in their countries of origin can affect how refugees and asylum seekers engage in educational settings. The experiences of persecution that lead to flight can have a psychological impact on refugees and therefore influence their interactions with people when they arrive in the UK.

It should also be remembered that experiences of schooling will vary greatly among refugee populations, with some coming from countries with educational practices similar to those in the UK through to young people (and their parents/carers) having no previous experiences of formal learning environments. Some schools reported working with young people who did not know how to hold a pen as they had not ever done so before. Working with these young people presented many challenges. Schools and RCOs also noted that the refugee and asylum seeking young people in their classes sometimes behaved in ways that were not typical of an English classroom. Particular types of behaviour may have been acceptable and the norm in the young people's country of origin and therefore should not necessarily be considered as defiance.

“Behaviour issue is another issues huge one for refugee children. Yeah! Some children depending on where they come from it's very difficult for them to sit down in the class because they don't come from that world. Ok some kid did have maybe religious class back home depending where they come from. They might not know the classroom or to sit in the classroom. Another issues is, especially African children, we like to be outside, you know, being told to sit in school all day might frustrating the children and are not heard, you know.” (RCO 1)

It is not just educational experiences that might affect how young people engage with others. Some young people have experienced serious trauma, such as losing family members, before arriving in the UK. This can impact on their ability to get on in education, as illustrated by the teacher below.

“Do you do anything to try to engage refugee/asylum seeker parents and carers?”
No, we don't. And that's a huge issue. We've tried. The Afghani family we've got, we have issues with children coming from war zones who are aggressive and I've not had to deal with this, in a career, 20 years, spanning 20 years of dealing with children arriving from abroad... found myself at a loss of how to deal

with some of the youngsters in the last five years coming in from war zones. It was new to me. I've been to plenty of conferences in London about asylum seekers and refugees, but the emotional trauma suffered and the psychological effects of that on youngsters and how it's displayed behaviourally, I, didn't know what to do. I knew there was an issue, I identified the issue, I contacted our local service. They weren't sure I was right... They come in, and say, 'well let me check that the issue's right'... Cut a long story short, the Head and I decided we'll just have to deal with this ourselves. Because we invite the parent into school, and we do discover he has spent all his life in battles and the children have seen this, they watched guns and fighting... Hugely aggressive, on the point of exclusion, permanent exclusion. Being excluded all the time. Until we had to do something... But now we've got another young man, I'm seriously, seriously worried about. I would say he's probably killed people... There's another young man from the same part of the world who says he's 11 and looks seven. Stands up at his desk, and has only spent one day in school. And dealing with these youngsters in the same group... This is what I'm dealing with and I'm sure lots of people are dealing with. And I don't know how to deal with it and I don't know who to turn to. And you know, we're all dealing our best. I'm sure we are. I'm sure there's thousands like me across the country but I'm not properly equipped to deal with this young man, thinking about his self-harming and, again, they're all under pressure of being returned to countries.” (School 2)

This teacher clearly needs help in supporting young people with histories of trauma. The teacher's experience is consistent with the call for teachers to be trained in refugee issues made by the RCO previously. However, the situation described here goes beyond explaining what circumstances young people will have come from, as this school could benefit from specialist psychological support for their students.

Recommendations

Training on the needs and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers should be included in Initial Teacher Training, Continuing Professional Development and INSET days. This training should include information about different cultural expectations, about behaviour in schools and identifying young people who have experienced trauma who may require extra support.

Consideration of the needs and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers can also be addressed through the recruitment process. Diversity in the school workforce can help to broaden the range of knowledge and expertise, strengthen personalised learning and develop stronger links with local communities. Refugees into Teaching, a Training and Development Agency for Schools funded partnership for refugee teachers wanting to qualify to teach in England, is an example of initiatives that can support schools in recruiting skilled and experienced staff from a range of backgrounds.

Local authorities should provide a central resource of specialist staff who are able to support mainstream secondary teachers and other school staff with issues relating to refugee and asylum seeking young people.

5.7 Awareness of the English education system and culture

For many refugees and asylum seekers, the English school system is confusing. References to things such as options and key stages, along with a whole proliferation of acronyms, can cause much confusion. Throughout this research respondents made reference to unfamiliarity with the education system as presenting a barrier for refugees and asylum seekers.

When recollecting their first impressions of their secondary schools, many of the young people used words such as ‘shocked’, ‘scared’ and ‘surprised’. The young people reported that the size of the school was unexpected (much larger than anticipated) and disliking the behaviour of other students, particularly in terms of fighting and bullying.

“And how was it when you first started school? How was your first day for example?”

It was like...I was surprised. It was like, different. Having to wear uniform and like, in a school where no one speaks your language.” (YP 3)

For these young people, particularly those who had little formal education in the past, entering a large secondary school was an unsettling experience. It is not just lessons and uniforms that can be unfamiliar to those entering secondary schools for the first time, but also more functional things that get taken for granted, as the teacher below describes.

“You realise actually that all the things that you sometimes forget as a secondary school teacher like, you know, concerns about things like when can they go to the toilet and you know, will they have lockers and where can they keep their stuff and what if, you know, what if it’s really cold where can they keep their coats...I mean those sort of logical, functional things that we sometimes forget about because we are all busy with kind of you know, achievement and actually teaching.” (School 9)

Recommendation

Schools should make sure that induction processes for newly-arrived pupils cover information beyond that which is curriculum-related. New refugee and asylum seeking pupils should be provided with a general ‘orientation’ within schools so they understand where things are and the ways things work. The use of mentors or buddies can provide this type of introduction to schools, and existing students can be involved in the development of introductory handbooks.

Secondary schools can also be intimidating for parents/carers. The sheer size of them and noise produced by pupils, can be daunting for visitors.

“I think that school, and particularly secondary schools can be fairly intimidating places sometimes and I think we as schools need to look quite carefully at how we, at how we address that.” (School 9)

Secondary schools are sometimes more intimidating than primary schools for parents/carers. Primary schools tend to be much smaller and the role of parents/carers tends to be larger as they often drop off and pick up their children, and are required to make decisions on children’s behalf.

“I think for the parents, they feel sometimes like it’s very easy in a primary school to just turn up but in a secondary school it’s already produced what the students will be learning in the secondary curriculum. So we give copies of that even though we haven’t got it translated usually the students know enough or other community members will know enough to help them with it so we do that as well.” (School 6)

“Well I suppose you know it’s like any secondary school, it doesn’t have the primary school ethos of

children being picked up so children make their own way to and from school. So the opportunities are rarer.” (School 1)

The schools here acknowledged that the very nature of secondary schools can create barriers, partly due to scale. Some parents/carers in this research, who had experiences of both primary and secondary schools, also noticed the difference in the way things work.

“Do you think the school makes it easy for you to be involved in your children’s schooling?”

Secondary they do but it looks like you have to make more of a concerted effort yourself. I believe they seem to leave parents out a lot in secondary. Primary school seems to be more forthcoming with the information whereas with secondary they treat them too, too much like adults and, they end up missing the point. You know we need to be kept informed. Yes, they are adults I mean when they are there at school but for us they are still children and we need to know what’s going on and we need to monitor and secondary doesn’t seem to offer too much info.” (P/C 2)

“I think in the primary school I come to ask to ask the reception and I get appointment very easy but secondary school difficult I think so. I didn’t do like that yet, I don’t know, later I can or not, I don’t know. But just I went to just one parent’s evening. If I need any problems, if she got problem I have to go but she is OK.” (P/C 6)

These parents note difficulties in being able to talk to teachers and also the lack of information. If parents/carers repeatedly have problems engaging with schools, then there is a danger that they will give up trying. Schools in this research reported experiencing difficulties in getting some parents involved in the work of the school, so if parents/carers are trying to get through and being unsuccessful, this can become a self-perpetuating problem.

Recommendation

Schools should provide inductions for newly-arrived parents/carers. The information provided during induction programmes needs to be in a form that is accessible, particularly with regard to language. Information about who is within the school and how and when to contact them should be provided.

5.8 Partnership working between schools and RCOs

Given that both RCOs and schools reported a lack of resources, it could be argued that pooling resources through partnership working could help to meet the needs of refugee communities more effectively for a lower cost.

Most of the RCOs interviewed for this research were involved in education in one way or another. For this reason, the researchers asked if they received any support from their local schools. In this sample, only seven RCOs reported being in receipt of support from schools, and this tended to be in the form of the provision of premises (either for free or at a discounted cost), supplying them with materials and information, and sometimes running activities in the schools. Most RCOs in this sample did not get any support from schools, and some reported frustration about a lack of access as well as a feeling that this was a wasted opportunity.

“Do you get any support from your local school?”

‘Til now their response is not okay, ‘til now but we are committed to trying hard and even the new initiatives from government is encouraging one. So still now it is not satisfied one but we hope during the coming months it will be okay and get started with.” (RCO 12)

“Do you get any support from your local school?”

No, I suppose because we refugee organisation, we are little known.” (RCO 23)

“That’s where I think it would be very important if the school recognises the work the community is doing and if they work together, the ethnic minority communities and schools, the achievement would be better.” (RCO 3)

RCOs felt that they had a lot to offer schools. It was their priority to improve the education of the young people in their communities, a goal that they share with schools. With more developed links and partnership working, these RCOs believe that they can contribute to improving schools’ performance and engagement with refugee communities, alongside increasing the educational achievement and integration of their service users. In addition, some of the schools interviewed as part of this research reported wanting to work with RCOs in their areas, but not knowing how to identify and contact them. One of the London-based schools described an alliance made with an RCO in a borough that was some distance away. This

school was in close proximity to a large number of RCOs but it became evident that it was not clear to them what services were available in the local area, or even where to start looking for them.

Recommendation

Schools and RCOs should work together to help improve the educational experiences of refugee and asylum seeking young people and their parents/carers. Partnership working can benefit schools and RCOs as both partners will be able to access a broader sphere of funding, and be better placed to meet the educational needs of refugee communities. Refugee supporting organisations can assist schools with locating appropriate RCOs on their areas.

5.9 Summary

This chapter has highlighted some of the barriers identified by respondents that refugee communities and secondary schools may face when trying to engage with each other. These barriers related to accessing school places, bullying/racism, a lack of resources, English language skills, the asylum determination process, previous experiences of education and problems with establishing effective partnership working all. In order to effectively engage and involve refugee communities with secondary schooling, these issues need to be addressed, and examples of how this can be done follow in the next chapter.

- 12 It should be noted that this was a snapshot answer and RCOs mentioned many other concerns during the course of the interviews. There is also some overlap as, for example, if people have problems understanding the system this may manifest itself in the need for help in getting school places.
- 13 Examples include parents buying properties at inflated prices to be in school catchment areas, renting additional properties in catchments areas during admissions times and converting to particular religions to access faith schools. See for example: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2003/jul/13/schools.immigrationpolicy>
- 14 <http://education.guardian.co.uk/admissions/story/0,,2261785,00.html>
- 15 <http://education.guardian.co.uk/admissions/story/0,,2261891,00.html>
- 16 Young people were not asked directly how long it took them to get into school, but some revealed this information during the course of the interview. For this reason it is not possible to provide an overview of the waiting times for this group.
- 17 The New Asylum Model (NAM), introduced in March 2007, is intended to reduce the time it takes for decisions to be made on people's claims. However, there are still a significant number of cases that are still to be resolved on claims submitted before March 2007, and recent research has suggested that the NAM introduces new requirements for reporting to immigration authorities that cause increased disruption for claimants' lives (Refugee Council, 2008).
- 18 Recent research has identified new migrants as being particularly vulnerable to incidents of bullying in secondary schools, see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7270880.stm>
- 19 One respondent was not asked the question and another did not know what a 'refugee' is so was unable to answer the question.
- 20 This young person was from Afghanistan.
- 21 The Education Maintenance Allowance provides financial support for people aged 16-19 years to continue their learning. Young people can claim up to £30 a week.
- 22 RCOs often deliver a lot of their activities through volunteers, which is illustrated in the questionnaire survey.
- 23 This organisation delivered activities in different areas across the UK.
- 24 It should be noted that the Government integration strategy 'Integration Matters' is focused on the integration of refugees (not asylum seekers), rather than integration from arrival. See Atfield et al., 2007.
- 25 There are well-documented concerns about the quality and fairness of asylum decisions and the length of time taken to process asylum claims. (Independent Asylum Commission, 2008)
- 26 There were perhaps other examples of this, but as the young people were not asked about travel directly then it is not possible to identify if this is the case.

Chapter Six – Meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers

The last chapter discussed many of the barriers to effective engagement between secondary schools and refugee communities. This chapter highlights some of the practice that has been developed to overcome these difficulties and achieve greater inclusion. This is not an exhaustive discussion of all of the activities respondents were engaged in, but rather provides an illustration some of the methods that can be adapted by others to suit their circumstances.

6.1 Resources

As discussed in chapter five, each type of respondent in this research cited a 'lack of resources' of one type or another as a main barrier to educational inclusion. This section will discuss the types of resources schools and RCOs have acquired in order to increase refugee community involvement in secondary education.

6.1.1 Funding for schools

Secondary schools receive funding from a variety of sources, depending on the type of school they are (for example, community or voluntary-aided). Schools can also apply for specialist funding such as the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) to support activities such as extra language provision (DfES, 2004b). To meet the needs of individuals, schools can be creative in the way they use their funding. Schools can also bolster their financial resources for specific projects by applying for funding from statutory and other sources.

The schools that responded to the questionnaire cited a variety of sources of funding for their work with parent/carers. The findings of the survey indicated that a lot of the 'mainstream' activities that involve parents/carers (such as parent/teacher consultations and information events) were mainly funded by the school budget. More specialist activities such as ESOL, parenting and ICT classes drew upon other funding such as EMAG. Some schools did access smaller sources of funding to run specific activities, such as Excellence in Cities and the Family Learning Fund. These schools have pursued additional funding in order to run activities aimed to engage parents/carers who are harder to reach.

The Extended Schools Initiative (ESI) was another source of revenue that schools referred to as supporting their activities with parent/carers and local communities. The ESI allows for "a range of activities and services, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community".²⁷ Extended school status also enables schools to host various informal educational activities to help refugee parents and carers play a bigger role in the school community. They also provide a physical space to include childcare centres, evening classes for parents and Saturday schools.

Seven of the fourteen secondary schools interviewed had successfully applied for extended schools status. Additionally two were in the process of applying at the time of the interview. One school said that the *Every Child Matters* agenda was a major driver in applying for status, as well as the notion that this is an effective means of engaging parents and carers. Another school said the ESI had been positive in building on their existing provision. This school used the money to establish a children's centre on the school site which aimed to provide extra support for the pupils in the school, thereby creating better links between the school, parents/carers and the wider community. ESI funding was also used to involve the young people in multi-media project with anti-racist messages, in which refugee and asylum seeking pupils participated.

Extended schools also offer valuable physical space for young people and the wider community to participate and engage in sport, drama and other activities. The school below describes the types of activities that have taken place as a result:

“What it means in practice is that we try to look quite hard about you know what we can offer to the community so for instance in the evenings here a lot of the facilities are used... they are used for football, you know organisations use the basketball courts. We try basically to do, you know, to make sure our facilities are used but there are other things as well. We’ve been looking at the sort of feasibility of running things like childcare facilities here. That’s something that extended schools are supposed to be about... We’re running a summer school here for local primary school children. So really we try to think about what we can offer the community. We have a, we had a Saturday school running earlier in the year where children were invited to come in. We did fun French and fun Spanish and various sports, and simultaneously we ran a computer class for their parents, sort of upstairs. So you know we try to run those sorts of things, I think again it’s something we could do a lot better than we do but it’s a, I guess, it’s a gradual process of building up.” (School 9)

The school offered a wide range of activities that may not have been possible without extended schools status and the associated funding. These activities also help to get local residents coming onto school grounds which can make schools more part of the community at large.

6.1.2 Funding for RCOs

As stated elsewhere in this report, many of the RCOs who participated in this research were engaged in educational activities. Funding for these programmes was often difficult to sustain, and RCOs drew upon many sources to keep activities up and running.

The RCOs interviewed listed a variety of funders including local authorities, Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, Foundations (such as the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Lloyds TSB Foundation), Children in Need, Big Lottery and Local Network Funds. Many of these funders are well-known supporters of activities delivered by RCOs.

The RCOs that responded to the questionnaire also drew on a variety of funds to carry out their work. Some activities were funded from more than one source and the sources mentioned most often were local authorities (including their education services) and fees and donations paid by participants. There was no real trend of one particular funder being used for specific types of activities. The survey

findings did include two unanticipated sources of funding for particular activities, which were a Primary Care Trust supporting a homework club and a housing association funding drama activities. This illustrates a degree of creativity on the part of RCOs who sought to obtain funding from sources that have remits beyond educational activities.

6.2 Staffing

The section will discuss the types of staff that have been employed by schools to support refugee and asylum seeking young people and their parents and carers with education issues. It will discuss both teaching and non-teaching staff, highlighting the ways in which roles can be developed to increase inclusion.

6.2.1 General staff support

All the schools in this study agreed that training mainstream staff on the specific educational needs of young refugees and asylum seekers is essential to the full inclusion and positive achievement of these individuals, a view that was echoed by some of the RCOs. Few schools, however, actually provided such training as this was often left to the English as an Additional Language (EAL) staff.

Some schools, however, did provide training on refugee and asylum seeker issues across the school:

“We’ve had an INSET session for the whole staff about different cultural, linguistic, ethnic considerations that certain groupings may have or present. And we did that in-house...It was, and for us I mean it meant that we had, it’s not someone coming in and talking statistics, we talk about that child that you see there...and giving you a bit more insight into where the kid’s come from and what baggage, if any, they are carrying with them.” (School 10)

“...we do INSETs as much as we can...not as much as we would like. There’s Refugee Week every year... which is informing and raising the profile of refugees across the board, so you know it’s parents, teachers, students. And it’s assemblies and INSETs and so I try and do a big push then and throughout the year. It’s going to department meetings and trying to talk to the teachers about any issues they’re having...And also when we’re working in the mainstream, all the EAL teachers are attached to departments in the mainstream so we go in and work with mainstream teachers...When new teachers arrive I run a new teachers INSET on working with refugees so for any [Newly Qualified

Teachers] or teachers teaching at the school, they can come to that.” (School 13)

This type of training allows staff to better understand the issues that refugee and asylum seeking young people might have as they can use real life examples from their own cohort.

6.2.2 Home-school and community link workers

Some schools in this sample employed home-school or community link workers who created a valuable link between the school and the community. Link workers are often employed from particular communities with the aim of engaging parents and carers from that group. Their knowledge of community languages and cultural issues can assist in building a bridge between home and school. The schools in this research who had this type of staff reported that parents and carers are encouraged to meet the home-school link worker at their school induction and express any concerns about their child’s education:

“... as soon as you’ve done one introductory session, that means that the parents and carers have met the key home-school link workers, they’ve met me, so they know who to ask for if they have any issues or problems. Whereas before they probably, they often are quite wary of getting in touch with the school. They may be a bit anxious about, you know, will there be someone to translate for them and would they be able to get their points across.” (School 13)

The presence of the link worker gives parents/carers a known point of contact who they might be more willing to approach as they come from similar backgrounds and speak the same language. Home-school link workers can also be effective in supporting young people, and their remit extends beyond classroom issues:

“One recently, a Somali student was kicked out of home and our Somali home-school link worker went, went shopping with him with some money that he got from social services so went and bought clothes with him. They do kind of support work like that, supporting in exams.” (School 13)

One school in this sample had used home-school link workers from a particular community, and their work with him encouraged then to link with others to extend the work:

“... we try to make contact with other people in the community and I mentioned some of the people we’ve worked with informally, and increasingly formally, because if you’ve only got one link worker, now he works four days a week with us, he does a, he actually does some specific training course on the other day which we allowed him to do and I think that’s important. We felt we needed to extend beyond that you know we needed other key people within the community to work with and that’s what we’ve really been actively trying to do in the last few months and we’ve worked with, particularly a couple of women in the community quite closely who are very good advocates for the school, but also as well, are probably located more within the heart of the community than our link worker who actually lives in a separate part of the city.” (School 11)

The new links being made are more informal than having a paid home-school link worker on the staff, but having an advocate for the school located within the local area can encourage parents/carers to approach them and the school with any issues or concerns. These types of informal links were reported by several schools that had made contact with local RCOs and these helped to support parents/carers in their interactions with schools.

6.2.3 Mentors

Some schools have a system of mentoring to help support new and/or vulnerable pupils better engage with their education and their peers. Schools in this research reported using different types of mentors which had remits for learning, induction and general help provided by peers. The excerpt below describes the type of support offered by learning mentors in one school:

“I mean we’ve got...something like 160 children have a Learning Mentor. And that’s to help support them in their lessons really, I mean the idea is to you know, let them achieve really. But, but any difficulty that we feel might get in the way of learning, will trigger a referral to a Mentor and they would get an hour, at least an hour a week depending upon their degree of difficulty, but at least an hour a week.” (School 5)

These mentors do not solely work with refugee and asylum seeking young people, but it is easy to see how this group of young people could benefit from such support. Peer mentors also serve as valuable staff support and foster links to local communities:

“... there’s quite an emphasis now on peer mentoring approaches. Quite a number of [the Somali pupils] have been involved in various peer mentoring projects. Some of which involve people outside of the school, and so in a sense we’re doing quite a lot of work with them.” (School 14)

Extending the reach of the mentoring work to include those who are not within the school itself, helped individual pupils and the wider Somali community in their engagement with education activities.

Providing mentoring opportunities for young people in relation to their schooling was an activity that was not restricted to schools in this research. RCOs also facilitated this type of activity as outlined below:

“We do one-to-one mentoring support. We do an after school session...we introduce the activities of the day and we also find from them; how was school? So they say school was boring, we say to them; what do you mean school was boring, what did you do? What didn’t you like? Did you ask questions? Because sometimes children feel intimidated to ask questions. Because they don’t have the confidence or they don’t understand the topic of the day. So if you listen you will be able to contribute and ask questions. So we help children with their one-to-one mentoring and after school activities.” (RCO 15)

The initiative above combines one-to-one mentoring and group activities. This way of working helps to increase young people’s confidence to make comments and ask questions.

6.2.4 Access to external specialist staff

Chapter five highlighted the concerns of some school staff who felt ill-equipped to offer appropriate support to refugee and asylum seeking young people who had experienced trauma. Other schools in this research had developed good working relationships with specialist services outside of the school in order to meet these needs.

“So not only is there community groups but there’s the [specialist mental health service] for more traumatised students and we also have [local authority mental health provision]... so there’s a refugee therapist there, Somali, a Somali guy. So we can refer students. And there’s also brief therapy onsite as well. So there’s counsellors onsite, there’s learning mentors and there’s, so there’s a lot at our disposal but they’re not all for refugee students. That’s why I would go one step further and find

community groups for the specific languages I’m looking for and cultures I’m looking for.” (School 13)

This school had made specific links with organisations in order to support young people who are traumatised, or who need emotional support, as a result of their refugee experience.

6.3 Language support

A lack of English support mechanisms in schools and the community was outlined in chapter five as a main barrier to the educational inclusion of newly-arrived refugee and asylum seeker families.

6.3.1 Support for refugee and asylum seeking young people

Young, newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers in secondary schools are often multilingual. Some have previous knowledge of English while others have no previous experience of English at all. The majority of respondents in this research said they received EAL tuition in mainstream school, which helped them access the mainstream curriculum and prepare for GCSEs. Other respondents, however, described alternative learning methods which helped them access targeted language support.

One young person had intensive English classes initially, outside of a school setting but run by the local authority. Classes comprised a mix of nationalities, ages and levels of English. Some respondents attended Saturday classes in English and maths which were run by schools, EMAS or RCOs. Other examples of additional support included accessing classes at a further education college or those run by a refugee supporting organisation, and using DVDs and private tutors.

Ten of the RCOs interviewed were involved in activities that supported young people with their language skills.²⁸ These activities included both helping young people to acquire the English language as well as teaching them their Mother Tongue. The learning of community languages should not be considered a distraction from studying English, as learning in one or more languages can build confidence in young people and boost their academic performance (CiLT, 2005; Ofsted, 2005). It is for this reason that some schools and RCOs support young people to take GCSEs in their own language. This activity can help to familiarise the young people with the examination system in the UK, as well as boosting self-confidence around learning if they are successful.

6.3.2 Interpretation and translation

The section above outlines the various sources of support that young people can draw upon to help them with their language needs. Options for parents/carers tend to be more limited, particularly in the context of changing eligibility criteria for free ESOL provision. This can result in it taking a much longer period of time for refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers to gain confidence with English than the young people they care for. Taking this into account means that schools may need to provide translated materials and interpreters in order to meaningfully engage with parents/carers.

In order to address the needs of parents/carers with limited English language skills, some schools make use of the link workers like the ones described previously and bilingual support staff. Some schools are also equipped with a multilingual teaching staff which means that communication can take place directly rather than being mediated through a third party.

“Sometimes it comes down to...having an interpreter. We use a lot of our sixth-formers too...We always feel like its always better to have somebody from within... [we have] a lot of staff who have two, three languages so we use that as a resource. And we tap into that so that also gives us a better connection with parents.” (School 3)

Those schools who do not have these resources tend to draw upon support from their local authorities (if it is available), through the provision of interpreters and translators.

6.4 Awareness of the UK education system

Many of the barriers discussed in chapter five can be addressed by providing refugees and asylum seekers with appropriate information when they first enter secondary schools and by making changes to the way schools work with parents and carers to better enable those from refugee backgrounds to participate. Some schools have developed induction programmes and specialist provision to engage refugee and asylum seeking communities, which are discussed below.

6.4.1 Inductions

Many respondents mentioned the importance of a thorough induction when first interacting with a new school. Inductions for young people can help familiarise them with the school and its surroundings, and the ways in which they will be expected to work.

“What was the first day like?”

...I came to school and went straight to my form room. And then a boy took me to the EAL department with a teacher that help you like with a language problem. So I went there [where] there’s a teacher that can speak my language and she told me about everything at school, what happens.” (YP 2)

“And when you first started at your school, did you or did your Mum and your family get any sort of support from the school or any help?...”

Yeah, because our school actually care about refugees and asylum seeker. They have provide some kind of tutors that are friends. That like to take care of people, a group of people within the school...And I was given helps every day. Show me everything and, lunch time what to eat and how to do everything so much...”. (YP 9)

“We have translated materials so we would have a new arrivals booklet that they get when they first arrive and that’s translated into different languages. We also have an Induction Mentor, again I think we’re very lucky in that we have somebody who just, you know, works one day a week and it’s her job to show the students around the school and give them materials in their home language and um, conduct an interview in their home language.” (School 13)

Having things explained in their own language and receiving personal support in the early days of school made these young people feel supported and looked after in all areas of education.

Parent/carer inductions can outline various aspects of education in England that may be unfamiliar, as well as clarifying what activities they and their children may be involved in. Parent inductions and induction materials can include essential information on school admissions procedures, the curriculum, and opportunities for parents to engage with the school. The majority of schools in this research said they provide parents with an induction at the start of the school year, which was critical in building good relationships:

“And when we have casual admissions starting in the school and we have a meeting with the parent with the child present looking at ... supporting the parent in understanding this, this school and starting to build a relationship with the parent or carer.” (School 9)

Schools may have a standard induction programme in place that will deal with all new pupils joining the roll. However, it should be noted that refugees and asylum seekers may need more tailored information than those who are familiar with the system.

Knowledge of the English language has to be considered as well, if resources such as written booklets are to be of any use.

“...when parents and carers come and look at the school first, if it’s a mid-phase admission, we have welcome booklets, we were involved with [a local photography organisation] in setting up and um, we give those out. I think we’ve got about 20/21 community languages so we give them out now in their first language with photographs of the school. And we try and make it a concerted effort to give them a tour of [the school] so they feel comfortable being in the building and so it’s not just that they bring their child here for that first interview and then they go away again. So we try and make them feel comfortable. We give out information in heritage languages as far as possible, and if that’s not possible on paper, we use other students to actually do that as well and we give those students certificates and put it in their record of achievement saying they’ve been part o, Community Leaders, so we try and do it that way as well.

OK. And how successful do you think all this is?

I think it’s made a big difference especially the welcome booklets because since we’ve been doing that, families have been more likely to contact us and to speak to us. And also because it tends to be either me or the other member of staff in the department who meets with these parents, they are, we have a relationship with them, and I think that’s key. Quite often they won’t phone a year manager or a teacher but they will phone us and um, that’s made a big difference as well because before we had the department, there wasn’t particularly a contact person. And I think people were more daunted. So now they can come to reception and they know who to ask for and that we will see them if we can and if not, we’ll arrange to.” (School 6)

By producing welcome booklets in a way that is accessible to most parents/carers, and by using this as part of a wider induction, this school has experienced improved relationships with refugees and asylum seekers. The use of young people as an additional resource provided benefits for both the young people and the school, and can help to foster a greater sense belonging for all those involved. Several other schools mentioned the importance of

a key contact for parents/carers, and having an induction programme or meeting can help to make school, and staff, seem much less intimidating. For example:

“... we have a, an admissions system whereby we insist on having a full and proper meeting with the parent/carer before the child starts with the child there as well. And we’ve found that to be really, really successful where there is somebody from [the EAL] department and the Head of Year there as well and we get to share information and get lots of information from the family about the child. And that seems to be a really good starting point for having ongoing communication with the family.

///

And I notice in particular that if you compare the relationships we have with families who have had that induction meeting with the communication we’ve got with for example, the Year Sevens who just arrive en masse and we kind of have to sift through them when we get there, there’s a, there’s a really big difference.” (School 4)

This response highlights the advantages of good induction policies and procedures. These meetings allow school staff to understand much more about the young person and therefore they may be able to anticipate issues that may arise and provide support to deal with them.

6.4.2 RCO activities

The section above illustrates the steps that some schools have taken to introduce refugee and asylum seeking young people and their parents/carers to the ways that the English education system works. In this research, participating RCOs also acknowledged that a lack of awareness of the system was a major barrier to meaningful engagement with young people’s learning. This prompted them to develop activities which provided parents/carers with information on education matters and support them in working with the young people they cared for.

“We run some classes like, for example, supporting parents in their education. For example we run families learning for the children and parents. We also give them advice how they can support their children. For example I run a project about how parents can support their children and how they can support their homework even they do not speak English. I did that project myself. It was really very successful. I teach parents they can support these

children even if they don't speak English by explaining to them in [community language], by asking them to sit down to read, to giving them time where children have the opportunity to read on their own. I mean how they can support. So that kind of project gives us an opportunity to explain to parents lot information about how they can support their children.

What is issues have you supported the parents to deal with?

As I said when they start school, when they are new arrivals, if the parents have come recently and they do not know how to apply for school or if they are already in the school system but they don't understand how it works, they come to us asking us how we can support them. So, for example we take them to the school or we go with them, I mean to the school and give them translation opportunities, interpreting for them and also we help them to fill an application form.” (RCO 3)

The RCO quoted above supports parents/carers in a variety of ways so they are better equipped to support their children with school work, as well as providing one-to-one assistance in applying for school places. Some RCOs also provide advice to parents/carers on useful sources of information, as well as providing general support on education issues.

“We organise strategic workshops where we bring in experts or specialists to give them a whole range of information. If for example it has to do with absence and attendance, someone from the absence and attendance team will tell them the importance of bringing the child to school on time and making them understand that going to school is not only about going to learn but also letting them understand that if you look at the league tables, you find that some schools are top. It is not just because of academic pursuits or because of the resources, attendance plays a great part. So we say that you have to be part of the part of your child's schools vision by ensuring that your child is there on time and then you participate in your own little way. I know they have like fundraising activities, they have open days, whereby they invite parents, so the more they get involved, the better, so we give them this information during the workshops.” (RCO 15)

RCOs are in a position to be able to communicate this information in parents'/carers' own language, and in a setting that is much less formal, and potentially less intimidating, than a secondary school. They can also provide this information before their initial interaction with schools, and

therefore may increase their confidence when they meet with school staff.

6.4.3 Specialist provision for refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers

In order to sustain engagement beyond an initial interaction between schools and refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers, some schools have introduced new ways of working to encourage an ongoing relationship.

Some schools in this sample had significant numbers of pupils from particular cultural groups. This led to several of the schools putting on activities specifically targeted at these groups, such as coffee mornings and forums for Somali or Congolese parents.

“We've also as well tried to tie [peer mentoring projects] in with a kind of specific parents forum for Somali families, which meets periodically, not as regularly perhaps as it should actually, but we tend to do that out in the community rather than in school because obviously there's physical and geographical barrier for a lot of the families who live within the inner city area, where the school is located, as you now know, some miles to the west of the city and what we've tended to do increasingly is locate the work we want to do with parents within the community. And actually we use a place called the [name of Centre] which is a community centre which also is a place where the students in that area go to the out-of-hours study facility, which we partly fund. And we've tended to try and make that the kind of hub of our community liaison really.” (School 11)

This school is not only hosting a specific forum for Somali families, it is also taking that forum to the area in which they live which is some distance from the school. This type of initiative can help to address the problems of transport and distance from school highlighted in chapter five. This school also provided transport to bring refugee parents/carers into the school from their residential area, as well as providing childcare facilities, to increase their participation in parents' evenings.

6.5 Partnership working

This report has discussed the types of work that schools and RCOs do to help to support refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers to engage with young people's education. Both types of organisations want refugee and asylum seeking young people to succeed in their learning, and to

integrate well into their schools and their wider community. As schools and RCOs share these goals, it would appear that this may encourage partnership working to achieve this end. The following sections will outline some of the joint working that had been developed by participants.

For some of the respondents, the development of partnership working came about by chance. The school below described such an instance:

"...through one of these admissions meetings, somehow one family produced gentleman who was to be there as an interpreter and it turns out that he runs something called the [name of RCO]... it's a Somali community organisation. So just through this lucky coincidence we have now got a direct line to the Somali community." (School 4)

From this initial meeting, the school and the RCO worked together and the school reported calling upon them to help to engage parents/carers who they had been unable to reach. In return the school was planning to provide the RCO with support to run their Saturday school.

One school in this sample explained how they used their participation in the Extended Schools Initiative specifically to make links with community organisations in order to become involved in supplementary schooling:

"I think for us its about offering learning opportunities as well in terms of extended schools partnerships so that we work more with the community organisations like we go to supplementary school conference every year and we try and build up relationships through that with community schools so that we've got that contact. We do other things like we do all the heritage language GCSE exams and the A' levels. And there we offer new parents, carers, community members, to come in and do the exams with them." (School 6)

Links were made between schools and RCOs to support young people in a pastoral as well as academic way. The school below describes the types of support this partnership working offered the pupil:

"...there's a [name of organisation] who works with Somali students and there's Afghan community groups and there's a Congolese community group, and I would try to make links with them. So I'm not

just making links with the parents directly, I'm making links with the community groups who obviously have established links and I try and work with them maybe on different programmes or invite them in. We have lunchtime clubs so sometimes we'll invite them in to speak to the students... So often when they come as unaccompanied refugees, I suppose this is quite different, if they're unaccompanied and they maybe have a lack of role models, male role models in particular for the Somali boys... and it's a similar thing for the Afghan boys actually which is a new development and I'm fostering links with an Afghan group to get them to come in and speak to some of our Afghan boys who are presenting some behavioural problems and challenges... So I felt they needed some kind of community direction and involvement just to support them really and to talk about issues in their Mother Tongue that none of the teachers really have time for or are very skilled in doing this." (School 13)

Another school reported an example of when they worked with an RCO women's project to support one young woman who was having problems within the school:

"We had a girl here who was very close to permanent exclusion... because of her behaviour, and had lots and lots of difficulties and she had mentor support and lots of support, everything that we could give her really because she was so close to being excluded. And the Somali young women's project came in. We asked them to come. And they did some work with her. Speaking Somali, speaking English, looking at things that had happened to her in her life, and because it was somebody who'd had similar experiences, that made a massive difference." (School 6)

An example of a successful initiative led by an RCO, but delivered with the assistance of local secondary schools, was the supplementary classes described below:

"We have 164 people coming to the supplementary classes. To the [name of school] where there is majority more than 70 person of them are between ages of 11-19. And some of them are even at the university they are doing but they are coming just for language classes. They need language classes. /// At [one school] we have nine different classes and at [another school] we have five classes." (RCO 5)

Working with the schools in this way meant that this organisation was able to access more resources and therefore deliver educational activities to young refugee and asylum seekers in their local areas.

This section has outlined some examples of the work that secondary schools and RCOs engage in together to improve the educational experiences of refugee and asylum seeking young people, and their parents and carers. By pooling resources to undertake such activities, schools and RCOs are able to provide more holistic support to the communities they serve.

6.6 Summary

This chapter has featured examples of practice that have been developed to better engage and involve refugees and asylum seekers in secondary education. The discussion has highlighted funding streams that can be used to support activities which increase involvement and illustrated how the use of specialist staff can break down barriers between families and schools, thereby fostering links to the wider community. It also suggested how mainstream school staff can be supported in terms of training and accessing expertise on refugee issues and experiences in education. Some schools and RCOs have developed ways to support refugees and asylum seekers with their acquisition of the English language, as well as providing translation and interpretation to better communicate with their parents/carers. Examples of induction programmes for both young people and parents/carers were evidenced as good practice, as well as overall joint working between schools and RCOs on education activities. By adopting these approaches, schools and RCOs reported better engagement and involvement of refugee communities in education.

27 www.charitycommission.gov.uk/supportingcharities/esi.asp

28 A high number of RCOs who responded to the questionnaire survey also reported delivering these types of programmes.

Conclusion and recommendations

This report has discussed the experiences of secondary education among refugees and asylum seekers. It has highlighted the importance of inclusion and involvement of refugee communities in learning and outlined barriers that may be faced when trying to foster meaningful engagement. The research identified some of the practice that has been developed to overcome these difficulties to achieve greater inclusion. In addition to improving inclusion, when schools and community groups work together, they can make an important contribution to community cohesion in general.

In order to address the barriers and improve policy and practice, the following recommendations have been developed to assist stakeholders in better meeting the needs of refugee communities.

Recommendations

These recommendations appear in the main text of the report alongside the discussion of the specific issues to which they relate. Below the recommendations are organised by the stakeholders who need to implement them. The research has emphasised the importance of partnership working in developing activities to engage refugees and asylum seekers in secondary education, therefore some of the recommendations require joint action by several stakeholders. A section number is included with each recommendation to illustrate where they appear in the main body of the report.

Home Office should:

- grant asylum seekers permission to work in the UK from the date of their claim. (5.3.1.1)
- take account of young people's education, and the impact on school communities, when deciding when to enforce removals. (5.5.1)

Learning and Skills Council should:

- extend the eligibility criteria for the Education Maintenance Allowance to asylum seekers between 16-19 years of age studying up to and including Level 3. (5.3.1.1)
- fund ESOL provision to Level 1 at a minimum for refugees and asylum seekers. (5.4)

Local authorities should:

- ensure all policies and guidance to support Looked After Children in schools are implemented appropriately. (4.1.1)
- provide advice and guidance to young people and their parents/carers when they first arrive in the UK on how to access education. (5.1.2)
- provide parents/carers with an overview of the schools in the area to help them make informed choices. (5.1.3)
- tailor training offered to RCOs to ensure it meet their needs. (5.3.2)
- subsidise the whole cost of travel to school. (5.5.2)
- provide a central resource of specialist staff to schools with issues relating to refugee and asylum seeking young people. (5.6)

Secondary schools should:

- consider whether additional support can be offered (either internally or through referrals) when a young person is being cared for by a sibling or other relative who is not their usual carer. (4.1.1)
- deliver support to refugees and asylum seeking young people in sensitive ways so as not to mark them out as different from their peers. (4.2.1)
- involve parents/carers in extra-curricular activities such as International Days, thereby raising cultural understanding across the school community. (4.2.2)
- raise awareness about refugee issues to challenge myths perpetuated by some sections of the media. (5.2.3)

- ensure they have anti-bullying and anti-racism policies in place, and that these are rigorously enforced. (5.2.5)
- recruit a diverse workforce to increase understanding of the needs and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers. (5.6)
- ensure induction processes for newly-arrived pupils cover provide general 'orientation' as well as curriculum-related information. This can be done through the use of mentors or buddies. (5.7)
- provide inductions for newly-arrived parents/carers in an appropriate language. (5.7)

NGOs, refugee supporting organisations and RCOs should:

- empower refugee and asylum seekers in their decision-making by informing them of what options are available, rather than select schools on behalf of clients. (5.1.3)

Funders should:

- make longer-term and sustainable funding available to RCOs and schools to run activities to engage refugee communities. (5.3.1.2)

Recommendations of relevance to more than one stakeholder

- Financial support to help the poorest young people, such as asylum seekers, with their schooling should include money for extra-curricular activities as well as essentials such as school uniforms and trips (**secondary schools and local authorities**). (5.3.1.1)
- Space should be made available at affordable rates for community groups engaged in educational activities (**secondary schools and local authorities**). (5.3.3)
- Specialist mentoring and befriending services should be developed for separated children to help them with their educational needs (**local authorities, RCOs and refugee supporting organisations**). (4.1.1)
- Partnerships to help improve the educational experiences of refugee and asylum seeking young people and their parents/carers should be established (**secondary schools and RCOs**). (5.9)
- Ensure refugee and asylum seeking parents/carers are aware of financial support that may be available to support them with their

children's schooling (**secondary schools, local authorities, RCOs and refugee supporting organisations**). (5.3.1.1)

- Translation services should be offered for people from all communities (**secondary schools, local authorities and RCOs and refugee supporting organisations**). (5.4.1)
- English as an Additional Language provision in schools needs to be adequately resourced so it is able to react quickly to changes in the profile and numbers of new young people arriving (**Local authorities, secondary schools and Department for Children, Schools and Families**). (5.4)
- Teachers should receive training on the needs and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers (**secondary schools, Department for Children, Schools and Families, Training and Development Agency for schools and General Teaching Council for England**). (5.6)

References

Ager, A. and Strang, A. (2004a) *Indicators of Integration: Final Report*. London: Home Office

Ager, A. and Strang, A. (2004b) *The Experiences of Integration: A Qualitative Study of Refugee Integration in the Local Communities of Pollockshaws and Islington*. Home Office Online Report 55/04

Arnot, M. and Pinson, H. (2005) *The Education of Asylum-Seeker & Refugee Children: A Study of LEA and School Values, Policies and Practices*. The Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge

Atfield, G., Brahmabhatt, K. and O'Toole, T. (2007) *Refugees' Experiences of Integration*. University of Birmingham and Refugee Council

Bennett, K., Heath, T. and Jeffries, R. (2007) *Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 2006*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin

Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education (2008) *Inclusive Education Index* www.csie.org.uk

CiLT (2005) *Language Trends 2005: Community language learning in England, Wales and Scotland*

Crisp, J. (2004) *New Issues in Refugee Research: The local integration and local settlement of refugees: a conceptual and historical analysis*. Geneva: Global Commission on International Migration

Cummings, C. and Todd, L. (2005) *Evaluation of the Full Service Extended Schools End of Project First Year Report*. London: DfES. Research Report RR680

DCSF (2007a) *Guidance to promote the duty on community cohesion*

DCSF (2007b) *Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools*

Desforges, C. and Abouchaar, A. (2003) *The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: a literature review*. Department for Education and Skills, RR443.

DfES (2003) *Educating asylum seeking and refugee children*. London: DfES

DfES (2004a) *Aiming High: Guidance on Supporting the Education of Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children. A Guide to Good Practice*. London: DfES

DfES (2004b) *Aiming High: Supporting Effective Use of the EMAG*. London: DfES

Greater London Authority (2004) *Offering more than they borrow: Refugee children in London*. London: GLA.

Harris, A. and Goodall, J. (2007) *Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement: Do Parents Know They Matter?* DCSF Research Report DCSF-RW004

HM Government (2004) *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*

Home Office (2002) *Secure Borders, Safe Havens*, UK Government white paper. London: Home Office

Home Office (2004) *Community Cohesion Education Standards for Schools*

- Home Office (2005a) *Higher Standards, better schools for all: More choice for parents and pupils*. London: HMSO
- Home Office (2005b) *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration*. IND Corporate Communications
- ICAR (2004) *Learning to Live Together*. London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Independent Asylum Commission (2008) *Fit for purpose yet? The Independent Asylum Commission's Interim Findings*
- Jones, C. and Rutter, J. (eds) (1998) *Refugee Education: Mapping the Field*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham
- Kelley, N. and Meldgaard, L. (2005) *The end of the road: the impact on families of Section 9 of the Asylum and Immigration (treatment of Claimants Act) 2004, Summary Report*. London: Barnardo's
- National Children's Bureau (2003) *The Education of Refugee Children – Policy and practice in the education of refugee and asylum-seeker children in England*. London: NCB Pupil Inclusion Unit.
- Office of the Children's Commissioner (2006) *Bullying Today: A report by the Office of the Children's Commissioner, with recommendations and links to practitioner tools*. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner
- OfSTED (2003) *The education of asylum-seeking children*
- OfSTED (2005) *Raising the achievement of bilingual learners*
- OfSTED (2008) *Every language matters*
- Refugee Council (2004) *Agenda for Integration*. London: Refugee Council
- Refugee Council (2005) *Daring to dream: raising the achievement of 14 to 16 year old asylum-seeking and refugee children and young people, Research Report*. London: Refugee Council
- Refugee Council (2007) *ESOL and Further Education Funding Changes 2007/08 announced by the Learning and Skills Council*. London: Refugee Council
- Refugee Council (2008) *Asylum seekers' experiences of the New Asylum Model*. London: Refugee Council
- Rutter, J. (2003) *Supporting Refugee Children in 21st Century Britain: A Compendium of Essential Information*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham
- UNESCO *Education for All*
http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=46881&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
- United Nations (1989) *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- Zetter, R., Griffiths, D., Sigona, N. and Hauser, M. (2002) *Survey on Policy and Practice Related to Refugee Integration*. Oxford, European Refugee Fund Community Actions 2001/2002; conducted by School of Planning, Oxford Brookes University

The Refugee Council is the largest charity working with asylum seekers and refugees across the UK. We campaign for their rights and help them to rebuild their lives in safety.

This report can be downloaded at
www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/inclusiveschools



240–250 Ferndale Road London SW9 8BB
T 020 7346 6700 F 020 7346 6701

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

British Refugee Council, (commonly called the Refugee Council) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales, [No 2727514] and a registered charity, [No 1014576]. Registered office: 240-250 Ferndale Road, London SW9 8BB, United Kingdom. Copyright British Refugee Council (known as Refugee Council).