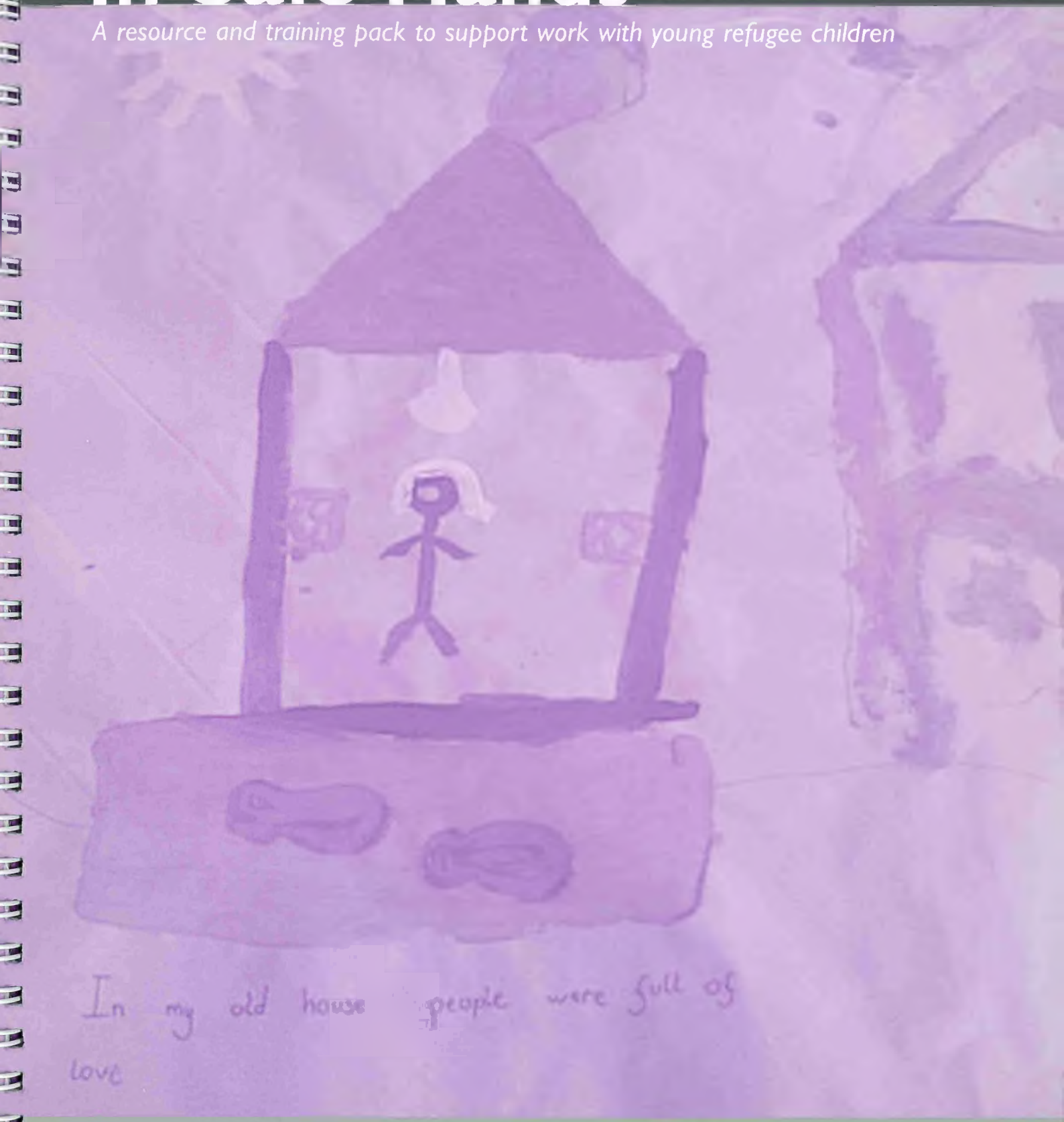
In Safe Hands

A resource and training pack to support work with young refugee children



REFUGEE COUNCIL

Save the Children

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Save the Children
Save the Children is the UK's leading international children's charity. Working in more than 70 countries, we run emergency relief alongside long-term development and prevention work to help children, their families and communities to be self-sufficient.

Drawing on this practical experience, Save the Children also seeks to influence policy and practice to achieve lasting benefits for children within their communities. In all its work, Save the Children endeavours to make children's rights a reality.

The Refugee Council
The Refugee Council was founded in 1950. It employs nearly 400 staff, of whom many are refugees themselves. The Refugee Council provides practical help to asylum-seekers and refugees in the UK. It lobbies on behalf of refugees throughout the world.

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Contents


In my old home people were full of
love

Foreword

Save the Children and the Refugee Council

Save the Children came into being to help refugee and displaced children in Europe in the aftermath of the First World War. The Refugee Council started its work in 1950, supporting eastern European refugees. The work of both organisations is underpinned by a commitment to making a reality of children's rights, as embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. All children deserve the best start in life. Save the Children actively works towards a world that respects and values each child, listens to children and learns, and one where all children have hope and opportunity.

The current public and political debates around "fortress Europe", the impact of globalisation and the mass movements of people displaced by war, and the negative impact of nationalism and poverty, critically affect how we view and therefore respond to refugees and asylum-seekers. Even more so with how we treat refugee children. We know that children often remain the silent and ignored victims in decisions that affect their future and those of their family. This is happening throughout Europe.

In the UK, the recently enacted Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 has created a group of children whose basic rights are not being recognised. The Act has deprived all new asylum-seekers, apart from unaccompanied children, of access to the benefit system. Asylum-seeking families now receive vouchers, with a small amount of cash. This adds up to less than the minimum Income Support levels. Save the Children and the Refugee Council believe that vouchers should be abolished and cash welfare benefits restored to the same level as other families in the UK. Asylum-seeking families who also need accommodation are being provided with housing away from Greater London and the South East, denying them access to well developed support structures.

However, over the years a number of local authorities have developed some excellent practice in providing support to young refugee children in early years and school settings. *In Safe Hands* has drawn both on this good practice, and the knowledge and experience of dedicated staff who support this particularly vulnerable group of children, in order to offer information and help to others without this direct experience.

Evidence has shown that refugee and asylum-seeking children are surprisingly resilient, despite the trauma, loss and danger they have suffered. However, in the UK they may face poverty, poor housing and racism. A supportive, welcoming and inclusive environment in the school or early years setting can make a significant difference to these children's lives. We hope that the resources in this pack will help you provide this for them.

Nicky Road
Assistant Programme Director, Save the Children

Introduction

Tina Hyder and Jill Rutter

Why produce a pack?

This resource pack has been developed and produced by Save the Children and the Refugee Council in the light of increasing requests to both organisations for information on how best to support asylum-seeking and refugee children in early years settings and schools.

Who is this pack for?

The pack aims to provide a framework for working with refugee children in early years settings and primary schools. It contains a video and written materials that can be used independently or together.

The pack is a useful source of general information but also provides a structure for schools, early years settings, Early Years Development and Child Care Partnerships and Sure Start Partnerships to plan a coherent strategy to support young asylum-seeking and refugee children and their families.

The content of the pack

The video

The video illustrates good practice developed in two London schools. It graphically highlights the lives and experiences of refugee children, and their families and carers. Children explain what it is they have been through and how sensitive educational support has made a difference. Teaching staff and others talk about what to do when faced with newly arrived asylum seekers, and how hard-pressed teaching staff can ensure that this particular group of children get the best possible start by building on their existing good practice.

The video plays for 33 minutes. It can be shown in full, or sections can be identified that link to specific issues.

The written materials

The written materials, by a number of notable contributing authors with considerable practical experience, provide essential background information on the lives of asylum-seekers and refugees in the UK and beyond. The materials are a useful resource for dipping into, rather than reading from cover to cover. At the end of each section, there are questions for discussion, and a list of references and suggested further reading.

Throughout the written materials, suggestions are given as to how refugee children can be supported in early years settings and schools, at both policy and practice level. It is not expected that settings will have the resources or capacity to adopt all of these approaches, but should consider those suggestions that are appropriate for their setting.

The material is split into four parts:

Part one: Background

Part two: Practice Issues

Part three: Further Information

Part four: Training Materials

Part one – Background

The following sections provide background information on the lives of young asylum-seeking and refugee children. They describe how early years settings and schools can offer invaluable support to refugee children and families.

Section 1: Refugee Children in the UK
Jill Rutter, Education Adviser at the Refugee Council, explains the educational entitlements and legal context facing asylum-seeking and refugee children in the UK.

Section 2: Supporting Refugee Children Affected by Conflict
Naomi Richman, child psychiatrist, discusses how refugee children and their families are affected by their experiences, and suggests ways in which they can be supported. This section emphasises children's resilience, but also stresses the important role that early years practitioners and teachers can play in providing a safe and supportive environment within which refugee children will flourish.

Part two – Practice Issues

Part two considers practice issues when supporting young refugee children in early years settings and schools.

Section 3: Welcoming New Arrivals
Miranda Kaunang, a Save the Children Development Officer, considers how early years settings and schools can support asylum-seeking and refugee families and children.

Section 4: The Role of Early Years Services
Tina Hyder, Development Officer with Save the Children, describes how recent early years initiatives – Sure Start, and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships – offer opportunities for refugee children and families to access a range of essential services.

Section 5: Language and Identity
Jill Rutter and Tina Hyder highlight the importance of maintaining and supporting refugee children's knowledge of their home language(s) in the early years and in school. Good practice when teaching English as an additional language is also discussed, building on the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy. This section extends the various language activities shown in the video where refugee children rapidly learn English within the classroom.

Section 6: Play and Refugee Children
Ann Cattanach, Professor in Playtherapy at Roehampton Institute, describes how children use play to express themselves and make sense of the world. She describes how children can respond to and create stories that enable them to come to terms with past experiences.

Section 7: Art Therapy with Refugee Children
Diana Brandenburger, art therapist, develops the art activities shown in the video, giving practical guidance on how to use art to enable children to acknowledge their feelings and experiences.

Section 8: Racism and Refugee Children
Tina Hyder and Jane Lane, Co-ordinator of the Early Years Trainers Anti Racist Network (EYTARN), describe how negative and misleading media images have contributed to much of the hostility recently directed towards asylum-seekers and refugees. Activities to promote positive self-identity among refugee children, and to increase all children's awareness of the lives of asylum-seekers, are also described.

Part three – Further Information

Part three contains contact details for relevant organisations and publishers, a further reading list of children's books, and information about relevant websites.

Part four – Training Materials

Bill Bolloten and Tim Spafford, from Newham Refugee Education Team, have written a comprehensive set of exercises based on their experiences of working in early years settings and schools in Newham.

Part four contains training exercises, notes for the trainer and OHTs to enable trainers to run their own in-service training, using the video, on working with refugee children. There are options for a one-hour session, a one-and-a-half hour session or a three-hour session.

How the pack was put together

Save the Children and the Refugee Council met with early years practitioners and teachers from schools in Manchester, and early years practitioners from Islington Education Authority, to find out their views about what could be usefully included in a pack about working with asylum-seekers for the first time, based on their own experience.

We selected two schools in London that we felt demonstrated particularly good practice in their work with young refugees and asylum-seekers, and their families, but also schools that had started their work in a small way.

We were delighted when children, parents and carers, and practitioners from Salusbury World Refugee Centre, Salusbury Primary School, Brent and Deptford Park Primary School, Lewisham agreed to be filmed for the video that is part of this pack. All of the photographs in the pack are taken from the video, and feature children and their families from Salusbury World and Deptford Park Primary School.

An advisory group met regularly throughout the production of this pack, with members taking time out from busy schedules to ensure that the materials are relevant and useful.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following members of the advisory group:

Ann Ballard, Refugee Co-ordinator, Lewisham
Bill Bolloten and Tim Spafford of Newham Refugee Education Team
Nina Chohda of Salusbury World
Dave Davies, Fran Paffard and Birgit Voss of Islington LEA
Jane Lane of the Early Years Trainers Anti Racist Network
Suzanne Martin of Enfield Home–School Liaison service
Naomi Richman, Child Psychiatrist
Lam Tran, formerly of Save the Children
Kaleb Wubneh of HAYS (Horn of Africa Youth Scheme)

For the video, film-maker Jenny Morgan did an excellent job in conveying a complex and sensitive subject so effectively, while Simon Gallimore and colleagues at the Media Trust offered invaluable technical support. We would also like to thank Fergal Keane for narrating the video.

We are grateful to the following Save the Children staff for their various contributions: Sue Emerson, Lina Fajerman, Judy Gough, Miranda Kaunang, Bharti Mepani and Nicky Road.

Finally, Save the Children and the Refugee Council would like to thank Salusbury World, Salusbury Primary School and Deptford Park Primary School in London, Webster Primary School in Manchester and all the children, families and staff who spent time working with us.

Living a life of a refugee

Living a life of a refugee
Moving on and on, trying to be free
Living with all those hopes and dreams
A new life in a new country

Everything is gone, there is nothing left
Lost family, friends, home and belongings
Security and safety, all gone... all gone
Everything familiar, everything known
Left behind
All those things in life that makes us what we are

Living a life of a refugee
Moving on and on, trying to be free
Living with all those hopes and dreams
A new life in a new country

New beginnings, new horizons
New friends, new opportunities
New language, new everything
New way of life, new people to trust
Gotta find a helping hand
So you can find a way

Living a life of a refugee
Moving on and on, trying to be free
Living with all those hopes and dreams
A new life in a new country

Written by Paul Hinman and Ann Ballard
("Living a life of a refugee" is performed on the *In Safe Hands* video by Deptford Park Primary Music Club.)

Part one

Background

Refugee Children in the UK

Jill Rutter

Who are refugees?

In December 2000, there were an estimated 69,000 school-aged refugee children in the UK. Although the majority were living in Greater London and the South East, the dispersal of asylum-seekers throughout the UK now means that nurseries and schools across the country are working with refugee children. It is therefore vital that good-quality early years provision and educational support are available for these children.

Throughout this pack, the term "refugee" is used, which as a legal term has a specific meaning. To be recognised as having refugee status, a person must have left his or her own country or be unable to return to it "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (from the *1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*).

An asylum-seeker is someone who has crossed an international border in search of safety, and refugee status, in another country.

In 2000, some 76,040 asylum applications were received in the UK. The main countries of origin of asylum-seekers and refugee children are:

Afghanistan
Albania
Algeria
Angola
Burundi
China
Colombia
Congo-Brazzaville
The Democratic Republic of Congo
Czech Republic (Roma)
Eritrea
Ethiopia
India
Iran
Iraq
Ivory Coast
Kenya
Kosova
Nigeria
Pakistan
Poland (Roma)
Romania (Roma)
Russia
Serbia
Sierra Leone
Somalia
Sri Lanka (Tamils)
Sudan
Turkey (Kurds)
Uganda

In the UK, an individual can ask for asylum, or one application can be made for a whole family. Asylum-seekers have to recount details of past persecution to the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), which is part of the Home Office. On the basis of information given to the IND, a decision is made on the asylum-seeker's case. After full consideration of a case, there may be one of three outcomes:

- full refugee status – 10 per cent of initial decisions in 2000
- exceptional leave to remain (ELR) – 12 per cent of initial decisions in 2000
- refusal – 78 per cent of decisions in 2000.

(Source: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.htm)

Refugee status protects a person from being returned to his or her country of origin. It gives other rights, such as the right to bring immediate family into the UK. ELR (exceptional leave to remain) does not afford the same rights as refugee status and has to be renewed at intervals. In particular, those with ELR cannot be granted family reunion.

Rights and entitlements to support and education

Refugees are people who have survived persecution in their home countries. For those who flee, their recent experiences may have been horrific. Aspects of the UK's asylum and settlement policy may also cause stress for families. In particular, the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 has deprived all new asylum-seekers, apart from unaccompanied children, of access to the benefit system. This legislation means that new asylum-seekers who need financial assistance and/or accommodation have to apply to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) for help. NASS is part of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate of the Home Office.

Single adults and families who only need financial support will be given a cash allowance of £10 per person, per week, and vouchers, which are redeemable in key retail outlets. The total value of the support package for adults is equivalent to 70 per cent of income support, and change isn't given for vouchers so in effect families get even less. For children, the vouchers are equal to 100 per cent of income support. Vouchers are

posted to asylum-seekers in their homes by Sodexho, a private company that currently administers the voucher system.

Sodexho's logo

Asylum-seekers who also need accommodation will be provided with housing away from Greater London and the South East. NASS places these families in private and public sector accommodation in the following areas: Scotland, the North West and North East, Yorkshire and Humberside, the East of England, the East and West Midlands, Wales, South Central and the South West.

The impact of the NASS support scheme on asylum-seekers, including children, is huge and may result in the following:

- poverty – asylum-seekers who depend on vouchers cannot buy many things that everyone else regards as essential. These include second-hand goods, goods from market stores and small shops, and bus fares
- stigmatisation – children will have no pocket money, access to toys, or smart clothes
- isolation in the new areas of dispersal
- vulnerability to racial attacks
- overcrowding in Greater London
- families at risk of not knowing about other services, because of the increased use of private landlords.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are not part of the NASS support system. In 2000, some 4,000 unaccompanied refugee children arrived in the UK. Although the majority are aged between 13 and 18, younger children do sometimes arrive by themselves.

Some unaccompanied refugee children have seen members of their family arrested or killed; others are sent abroad when life becomes too dangerous at home or they are faced with military conscription. The families of many unaccompanied children are alive, but contact with them is usually limited, and the pain of separation is great. Other children arrive in the UK in the care of an older brother or sister, or other relatives.

Fatma had been living with her aunt in a refugee camp; her mother had escaped to the UK but had been unable to take Fatma, then four years old, with her. After three years, Fatma was able to join her mother and extended family. Now aged seven, Fatma had forgotten her mother, and was missing her aunt, who had been unable to leave the camp. Fatma felt left out of her new family who all now spoke English.

It is therefore essential to know if a child has had a change of carer, and to understand the grief that this can cause.

Rights to education

All children, whether they are asylum-seekers, have refugee status or ELR, have full entitlement to early years provision and have the right to receive an education. *School places cannot be refused on the basis of immigration status.*

In **England**, this entitlement to a school place is outlined in Annex B of the DfEE Code of Practice on School Admissions.

In **Scotland**, the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 gives the right to a school place.

In **Wales**, the National Assembly's Education Department has issued a Code of Practice on Admissions, which came into effect in April 1999. This outlines the right of all children to appropriate education. The Race Relations Act 1976 requirements also apply to England, Wales and Scotland.

In **Northern Ireland**, schools and education boards have greater freedom in determining school admission, but the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 extends much of the same protection against discrimination afforded to minority ethnic groups in England, Scotland and Wales. Its requirements are monitored by the Commission for Racial Equality (Northern Ireland). This new legal instrument can also be used to ensure that asylum-seeking and refugee children gain access to mainstream education.

Despite clear rights, many refugee children find it difficult to secure school places.

Refugee children's experiences

Young refugees are a diverse group, who have a wide range of educational and social needs. Significant proportions of refugee children experience or have experienced the following circumstances:

- an interrupted education in their countries of origin
- horrific experiences in their home countries and flight to the UK; for a small number this may affect their ability to learn and rebuild their lives
- a drop in their standard of living and other major changes in their lives

- not being cared for by their parents or usual carers
- parents or carers who are emotionally absent
- living with families who do not know their educational and social rights
- speaking little or no English on arrival in the UK
- bullying or isolation in school
- school confusion about entitlements, for example, school meals
- difficulty in studying in the further or higher education sector because of their immigration status or lack of access to benefits
- racism and racist attacks.

Despite difficulties in securing school places, and the above experiences, quality early years and school provision is essential.

Question for discussion

Walk around your local shopping centre and look for shops that display the Sodexho logo. Now imagine that you were supporting two children aged two and six. What items would you be able to buy and what items couldn't you buy? What impact might the voucher system have on the development of your children?

References

DoH and DfEE, *Guidance on the Education of Young People in Public Care*, 2000.

Home Office, *Asylum Statistics 2000*, 2001.

Rutter, J., *Supporting Refugee Children in 21st Century Britain*, Trentham Books, 2001.

Salusbury World

Salusbury World in Kilburn, London, was established in 1999 with funding from the National Lottery to support refugee and asylum-seeking children and families. It is the first refugee centre within a primary school and provides:

- induction for new arrivals at the school
- English language support and curriculum access
- advice and support for parents and the local community
- a meeting place and social centre with special family workshops
- a clothes/baby equipment bank
- English language classes for parents
- an after-school and holiday club.

Currently, the project employs one full-time project co-ordinator and a part time EAL (English as an additional language) teacher. Volunteers help run the after-school activities.

The project was set up in response to the need for support services in the area. It is attached to Salusbury Primary School in the London borough of Brent, which has the fourth highest refugee population in the UK. Latest figures show that there are 3,200 refugee children in Brent schools. At any one time, a high percentage (12–15 per cent) of the children at Salusbury Primary are asylum-seekers and refugees.

As shown in the video accompanying this pack, parents often have little knowledge of the UK education system or of complicated asylum procedures. Families often need advice on housing, medical or welfare issues.

Before Salusbury World was set up, many families looked to the primary school for advice and support, which often put high demands on staff.

One of the forthcoming plans of Salusbury World is to disseminate lessons learned form the project. The aim is to provide other schools with information about practical ways to support refugee families without a dramatic increase in resources.

Section 2

Supporting Refugee Children Affected by Conflict

Naomi Richman

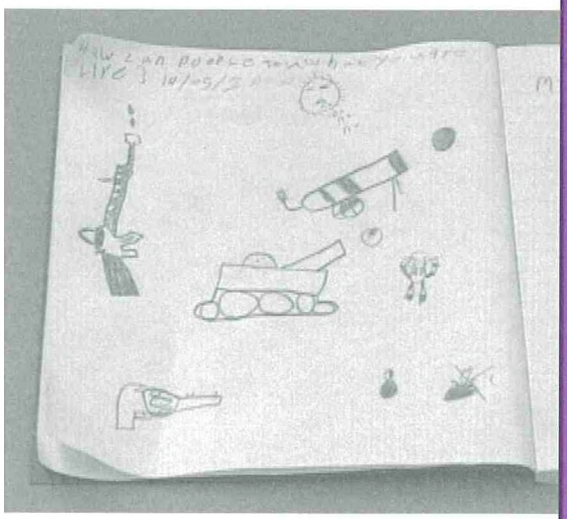
Providing a supportive environment

This section discusses how refugee children and families are affected by their experiences, and ways in which they can be supported. A preventive approach that supports both them and their adult carers gives them the maximum chance of developing well. If they are in a nurturing environment, the majority of children and parents are able to deal with their experiences without the need for specialist help.

The adaptation of young refugees to their new environment can be either helped or hindered by their everyday circumstances. Stability, loving care and a peaceful environment will promote their wellbeing, and help them come to terms with adverse experiences. An environment of hostility, deprivation, failure or serious family tension will increase the ill effects of past adversity. It is important to remember that all those who come into contact with refugee children contribute to the social climate in which they live.

Young children are very dependent on the emotional resources of their carers, and their demands can be exhausting for those who are coping with change and loss. Because children can't, or don't, always express their feelings verbally, it may be thought that they are untouched by their experiences. Instead, they may show their upset through their behaviour or play, and so they need to have adults who can understand this and help them to deal with their distress.

As children get older, they are able to express their feelings and memories in a variety of ways. They need opportunities to do this, and sympathetic people who will listen and help them to reflect on their feelings and experiences.



In one family, the mother had become used to taking responsibility for her two daughters. When they fled into exile, they were joined by the father who had had to leave his country some years previously. The whole family now had to adjust and learn to relate to each other again.

How conflict affects families

Adult refugees may have been exposed to a range of adversities while in their own country, during flight, and in the host country. Studies have shown that often, once in exile, it is refugees' current situation that preoccupies them, especially when faced with uncertainty about asylum and difficult life conditions (Richman, 1996). Whatever they have gone through in the past, initially many try to put distress about previous experiences "on hold" while they try to deal with pressing current problems, such as asylum issues, making a home, and learning English. Initially, practical help, such as finding school places for their children, and finding an asylum lawyer, will help them most.

Family changes

Families are frequently disrupted, perhaps with some children or relatives remaining behind in dangerous or adverse circumstances. Painful decisions may have been made about who to leave if it is impossible to bring all the family.

Many families are newly reconstructed, for example, when spouses are reunited after years of separation, or when a child who had been living with other relatives comes to join them. The process of creating a new family unit, while at the same time adjusting to a new environment, poses many challenges.

Changes in status

Most adult refugees have to cope with huge changes in status. They have little money, no work to keep them occupied, and their skills and capacities are not recognised. The inability to speak the host language makes people feel inadequate, and it can be especially difficult if their children learn English more quickly than they, and have to act as interpreters for their elders.

How women are affected

Frequently, refugee households with children are headed by women; this means that women are faced with heavy responsibilities at a time when their network of support from female relatives, especially from the grandmother, is usually no longer available. Women with young children

feel especially isolated: they find it difficult to go out (and often cannot afford to) and, because they are not learning English, are cut off from neighbours.

The effects of organised violence on carers

Distrust of those in authority and an unwillingness to talk freely about their past are the legacy of living in an oppressive and unjust society, where state officials are autocratic and where there is little freedom of expression. Adults who have suffered violence, especially torture or rape, find it hard to trust others. They may also feel extremely angry because of the violence and injustice inflicted on them, be anxious about absent relatives, and sad about their losses and other bad experiences.

Distrust, depression, anxiety and anger can affect family life, the parents' relationship with each other, and sometimes their capacity to respond to their children. These strong emotions may also interfere with getting help.

Community support and cultural bereavement

The loss of refugees' customary life, habits, daily routines and rituals has been likened to cultural bereavement. Most refugees come from a society where life is more communal – embedded in the relationships of the extended family and the local community – and so are disconcerted by the more individualistic life they encounter in the UK.

If there is a strong refugee community already present where they live, this can offer support and advice, and help in the initial settling in. However, such community groups don't always exist, and, in any case, may not always be acceptable to the newly arrived. Because of their experiences in their own countries of injustice, betrayal or violence, many refugees are often suspicious of their compatriots: they are wary about what they say, in case this may damage relatives left behind.

Also, refugees from a particular country are never homogenous: they may differ from each other in a variety of characteristics such as political or religious group, clan, geographical or ethnic origins, language, education or other social aspects. These diverse affiliations can lead to tensions within communities, and it is important to be aware of them, for example, when working with interpreters.

How conflict affects children

Experience of violence

Children's experiences vary, from those who have fled from a threatening situation but had no direct encounters with violence, to those who have witnessed violence directed towards neighbours or family, or who were themselves the victims of violence. Seeing parents humiliated, attacked or killed is extremely frightening, especially for children, who look upon parents as their source of security.

Children who have seen or experienced violence, or other frightening events, react in various ways: some may become timid and withdrawn; others copy the violent behaviour they have seen and are themselves aggressive.

When they have witnessed violence, very young children usually have confused memories about what has happened: they are more likely to have a jumble of images and sounds of the experience, and be unable to express in words what they felt. However, this does not mean that they will not be affected by what happened. They need opportunities to sort out their confusion, for example, through play and other means of self-expression that are accepted within the community.

Loss and bereavement

The turmoil of conflict often leads to the loss of a child's familiar carer. This can be by death, separation or due to the circumstances of flight. Children can end up with a carer they don't know well or, in some cases, have never even met before. It is often assumed that a child with its mother or father has not had a change of carer, but this is not always the case.

Losing their familiar carer is a very serious blow for young children. It is customary in many cultures not to tell children about deaths or long-term separations, but this can leave them in a state of insecurity and prevent them from coming to terms with their loss.

Inadequate care

Some carers are not able to respond to a child's needs. This could be because they are too young or inexperienced to have the responsibility of care; for example, a young woman of nineteen who was looking after four younger brothers and sisters. In other cases, carers can be emotionally "unavailable", because they are too distressed to pay full attention to the children.

In these situations, young children may take on a "parenting" role, being aware of the carers' emotional needs and trying to look after them and the other children in the family. Such "parental children" may be over-burdened with home responsibilities and school work. Even very young children try to support distressed parents, for example, young boys who feel they should take on the role of an absent father.

Secrets

Families living in a repressive society bring their children up to be very careful about trusting others. They may tell the children never to tell others anything about themselves or their family. There may be secrets in the family about where certain people are, or whether someone is alive or dead. It is also important to bear in mind that some families you are working with may have been perpetrators of violence, not just victims of it. In these kinds of situation, it is difficult for children to know who to trust, or to talk freely. They may keep their worries about missing family or other concerns to themselves.

In most cultures, parents try to protect their children from upsetting news, and it is important for them to decide when it is appropriate to break bad news to children. The family may prefer not to discuss their losses because it helps them if they can keep hoping that, one day, a loved one will return. However, they may not realise that sometimes it is harder for children to go on hoping that a loved one will appear one day, than to begin to deal with the loss. Often adults do not realise that children already know the "secrets" of the family, and would not be as upset as they imagine talking about them.

Abdi, aged 8, arrived in the UK with his mother and three younger siblings. He had been brought up by his father and paternal grandmother, but was sent out of the country for reasons of safety with his mother, who he hardly knew. When he arrived in the UK, Abdi's behaviour was very difficult: he was demanding, very destructive, and insisted on sleeping with his mother. She told him that his father and grandmother would come soon, which wasn't true, and every time the doorbell rang, Abdi ran to see if it was them. In school, he was very quiet and didn't play with other children, and did not seem to be learning English.

see Section 5

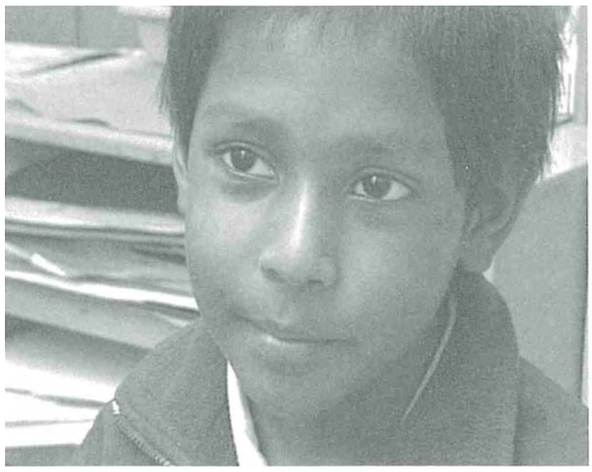
Language

Many refugees have an impressive array of languages, and their children may already speak two or three languages. Language is an important aspect of culture and identity, and children have complicated attitudes to their first language. It may be that a child does not want to use their first language because it is linked to the repressive society they had to flee, or because they want to be like their peers.

However, studies show that when children do keep up their first language, this is helpful for their general education, because access to their more sophisticated first language skills helps their thinking and learning. Some schools have found that if they provide some teaching in a child's own language in the school setting, this facilitates progress. Supplementary schools, run by the community and using the children's first language, may also be useful in helping learning.

A few children may be reluctant to learn any English, because they hope their time in exile will be short, and they do not want to think that perhaps they can never return home.

The speech and language of very young children is extremely sensitive to their environment and emotional state. Those who have been through distressing situations may lose their speech entirely or may only speak within the family. Others may be confused about English if they have not had time to consolidate the languages they were already exposed to.



Identity

Coming into exile confronts children with issues about their identity: who they are, where they belong in society, who they should have as role models, and what their values and behaviour should be. These issues particularly affect older children but, at any age, a child may be faced with a variety of conflicting choices between home and school values. Many find ways of integrating these differing models, but some children find the choices problematic.

This may be especially difficult for children from traditional backgrounds whose parents are uncomfortable with the more individualistic ways of the West, compared to the communal life of their own society. Conflict may arise between parents and children over such things as freedom outside the home, or style of dress. Also, the role of women may be different in the UK, creating tension with community expectations of how women should behave. These differences between the generations can be distressing if a child feels misunderstood, while parents worry that they are losing their child to a world with alien values.

Education

Children report that bullying and racism, and needing more help with English, are their biggest problems in school (Horn of Africa Youth Scheme, 1998; Rutter and Jones, 1998). Parents worry about not knowing the school system, their children's progress, and bullying. Some children change schools because of bullying or drop out completely.

A problem for many refugee children in the UK has been finding a school place. Most refugee families and children give a high priority to education and are extremely upset when they meet this obstacle.

Once children are speaking English, they find it much easier to make friends. Not speaking English is very frustrating because the children can't explain what has happened to them. They may get blamed for something they didn't do, or become so frustrated by teasing that they start fighting and then get blamed for being a troublemaker.

Vulnerability and resilience

It is useful to summarise some of the factors that protect children in adversity, and those that make them more vulnerable.

Protective factors include:

- previous experiences of good parenting
- adequate carers who can respond to the children's current emotional needs
- being able to express feelings and anxieties to someone who listens and reflects back in a way appropriate to the child's stage of development
- opportunities for self-expression through games, imaginative play and artistic expression
- a good school environment that provides appropriate learning opportunities, friendly peers, and experiences of pleasure and success
- opportunities to maintain and value their own language and culture.

Adverse factors include:

- experiences of separation or loss
- family secrets about disappearances or deaths
- frightening experiences of violence to self or others
- unfamiliar carers, or carers who are unable to create a supportive environment
- family tensions related to parents' experiences of violence, anxieties (eg, about asylum, absent family), or due to other factors
- racism and hostility
- no one to confide in
- failure in school.

How schools can help

see Section 8

A preventive approach

Good support aims to help children and their families feel secure and at home in the host society. Settling in is a very gradual process, which is helped both by practical information and advice, a good school induction process, and through befriending and language schemes.

Refugees may have multiple social needs. A helpful response from schools would be to compile contact details of helping agencies, such as the local Citizens Advice Bureau, counselling services, benefits advice centres, and translation and interpreting services, as well as local doctors, immigration lawyers, etc.

Education policy

Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have found that having a clear policy for supporting refugees, usually linked with a refugee support team, enables them to use their resources effectively.

Policies include:

- implementing an effective anti-racist and anti-bullying strategy*
- making effective links with parents/carers
- developing appropriate English language support
- encouraging home language development
- setting up a refugee resource team
- organising training on issues such as working with interpreters, learning about resources for refugees, developing English language teaching, linking with parents, and learning about the history and culture of different refugee communities.

The refugee support team may consist of teachers and a home–school link worker. The team will have some experience or sensitivity towards refugee issues, and will be able to provide access to educational material, promote links with parents, and help initiate extra help for children who need it.

*Since September 1999, all schools are required to have effective anti-bullying policies in place, including racist bullying. This is referred to in the *School Inclusion: Pupil support* guidance which was issued to all LEAs and schools in July 1999.

CASE STUDY

The Refugee Education Team – London Borough of Newham

Refugees in Newham

Newham is home to the largest community of asylum-seekers and refugees in London. According to the London Research Centre, since 1983, Newham has received between 16,700 and 19,500 refugees and asylum-seekers. This is an estimated 7 per cent of the total refugee population of London.

The 5,040 refugee and asylum-seeking children enrolled in Newham schools in 2000 make up almost 12 per cent of the total school population. Refugee children comprise almost 20 per cent of all children for whom English is an additional language. There are more than 1,000 children of Somali origin, including many from the Banaadir and Bravanese minority communities.

Developing provision

In 1995, Newham Education Department established a Refugee Education Team of two teachers with funding from the Single Regeneration Budget. Since then, the team has expanded and is now made up of eight teachers – four secondary and four primary. More recent funding from the Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG) has enabled the team to recruit a Refugee Home School Support worker from the Somali community. A further Home School Support Worker has also been recruited to work with the new Manor Park Education Achievement Zone and is funded by the Standards Fund. The Refugee Education Team is part of the Newham Language and Literacy Development Service.

How the team works

The Refugee Education Team is committed to working for refugee children's right to education and to ensuring their full access to the school curriculum and school life. The team believes that for children coping with dislocation, loss and change, school can provide stability and an environment where they can make progress. Refugee children and their families may have many complex wider needs that can impact on their wellbeing. These needs must be addressed in a co-ordinated way – therefore all members of the team are provided with training so that they can support and advocate for families who are particularly vulnerable.

Welcoming refugee children and families

The Refugee Education Team works with schools to ensure that refugee children can find a secure and welcoming environment. Schools are supported in developing effective whole-school procedures to enrol and induct children who arrive mid phase. The team develops peer-support initiatives such as "buddying" and "class friends" so that all children can learn skills to support new arrivals.

Partnership teaching

The team works with teachers in mainstream classes to support children's access to the curriculum and their learning of English. Jointly planned learning activities aim to build on the skills and knowledge that refugee children bring with them to school. The team provides and develops resources for whole-class

activities that provide opportunities for children to have their experiences recognised and validated. Autobiographical writing can be a particularly useful strategy.

Responding to emotional and social needs

Mainstream classes are very successful in supporting the emotional and social needs of children coming to terms with separation and loss. Normality, structure and daily routines can support children's resilience, as can a variety of creative and group activities, including music, play, drama, role-play, art and storytelling.

The team also works to give children access to other supplementary and after-school learning and leisure opportunities, which give them the chance to have fun and make friends.

Home liaison

An important aspect of the Refugee Education Team's work is meeting parents and carers. If parents receive the support they need, they may further enhance their children's resilience and ability to cope. Building trusting communication and partnerships with parents can also help schools to develop a better understanding of children's backgrounds and experiences, and plan more effectively for their needs.

Working with other services and agencies

The team liaises closely with other local service providers to ensure that the wider needs of refugee families are addressed. Over time good links have been built up with health providers, housing and benefits advisers, social services, solicitors and refugee community organisations. The team often takes a lead in co-ordinating support for a family. In Newham, there are now a number of established networks between service providers, and several joint projects and initiatives.

In-service training

A range of training activities for schools and other local services have been developed. These aim to raise awareness of the needs of refugee children and also to share and disseminate the good practice that has been developed locally and across London. The Refugee Education Team also manages an internet mailing list "refed" – refugee education – that provides an opportunity for teachers and others to discuss practice issues and share resources. You can join by visiting www.refed.listbot.com

See Further Information for contact details.

Home–school links

Parents or carers may be reluctant to make contact with their children's school because they do not speak English, because of their own limited educational experiences and opportunities, and because they do not think they have a role in their children's education. They need to have the name of a person they can contact if they have queries or worries. They are most likely to establish a link if there is a school link person, such as a nominated teacher with responsibility for work with refugees, or a refugee support worker, or a teacher who speaks their own language.

Parents or carers may not wish to talk about their experiences or the details of their lives, but it is helpful to have some basic information about a child and their family without being intrusive. This could include the following:

- who a child's main carer is, and if there has been a change of carer
- family members (names, number of siblings)
- a child's previous education
- language(s) spoken at home
- any health problems
- any other issues parents/carers want to discuss.

Parents or carers may be encouraged to make contact with the school by taking part in activities such as English language classes, group activities where they meet other parents/carers, or projects such as being involved with producing books with the children, singing songs, bringing in or displaying artefacts, or telling and writing stories for the class.

Schools have developed a number of strategies for helping refugee children settle. These include:

- an induction policy which makes contact with parents or carers and explains to them how the school functions
- a befriending scheme for the new pupil in which other pupils are assigned to look after them

- setting up a homework or other club where a variety of activities occur – where possible, these activities need to be inclusive of all children attending the school.

Schools also have a role in linking families to outside agencies and resources.

The importance of play and recreation

see Section 6

Many refugee children may have had little chance in their lives to play or have fun.

Their concentration span may be short, and they therefore need time to settle into learning. For younger children, imaginative play enables them to relax and explore their experiences in a safe, controlled way. Games with older children can be used to help them adjust to the school routine.

A wide range of activities can be used in schools to involve children in play. These provide enjoyment and success for children in a sociable environment, raise self-esteem and confidence, and can be non-verbal. They also provide an informal method of assessing a child's skills and learning capacities.

Activities could include:

- sport, dance, drama, music, poetry, writing books, art, circus skills
- oral history projects
- gardening.

Assessment and help for children with difficulties

Further help

Children who need further help often have a complex set of problems related both to the past and the present. Frequently, they have gone through years of difficulty, privation and loss. They may be mourning their main carer whom they have lost through death or separation, have suffered many moves before they finally arrived in exile, and experienced violence and fear.

Currently, life may be difficult at home because they feel neglected, or are upset by their carers' sadness or anger. The family may be living in a hostile environment, worried about their asylum claim or about their family back home. There may be no one to confide in, and worrying family secrets.

School may be upsetting because of bullying and teasing, and/or difficulties in learning English or other subjects.

Emotional upset such as insecurity, anxiety or sadness can lead to a variety of different types of behaviour: some children become demanding, excitable, angry; others withdraw, stop playing, and may even stop speaking. Language and speech often regress in young children who are distressed or confused. Some young children become so confused that their wildness and bizarre behaviour can cause great concern.

Ahmed, aged four, was living with his aunt and uncle. During their flight into exile, they had suffered greatly and Ahmed had seen his aunt attacked. In school, he was very aggressive, continually in trouble, and not learning. He had been referred for help when in nursery school, but delays meant that he moved on to school before he was seen, and the process was delayed for a year. This was followed by further delays because an interpreter couldn't be found. Assessment indicated that Ahmed had normal learning potential but possibly had a mild hearing loss.

Assessment

Why assessment may be delayed

Children who show behaviour that causes concern, who are not learning in any area, who do not speak, or do not attend school regularly, need to be assessed. But assessment is often delayed for a number of reasons.

It may be thought that a child needs more time to settle in, that perhaps they are "traumatised" by their experiences and cannot be expected to be learning. Some professionals believe that assessment is stigmatising and not useful, and some parents also agree. To many refugee families, the suggestion that their child needs assessment is very worrying, and their view of psychology may be that it is a service only for "mad" people.

Lack of resources and delays in accessing a speech therapist or psychologist can cause delays. So too can the mobility of a family, as happened with Ahmed – this prevents continuity and an appropriate follow-up. Difficulty in finding an interpreter is an added obstacle, in that the child's difficulties cannot be properly explored, especially their skills in their own language. The interpreter may not be from the same culture as the child, which makes it difficult to assess the child appropriately. In addition, when there has been a change of carer, the child's early history may not be known.

Learning is affected by emotional states, and it can be difficult to assess the degree to which emotion is affecting a child's learning, especially in young children. However, if a child is not progressing in language or learning, or is showing behavioural difficulties, it would seem appropriate to offer them extra support early on, rather than assuming that they just need more time to settle.

Referring on

Often school or an early years setting provide the best place to help a child: it is familiar and does not carry the stigma of specialist referral, so is acceptable to both children and their family. The routine of school, the access to experiences of play and other activities, and the social support of other children, can all be positive experiences.

Extra support can be provided by speech therapists as well as by individual teachers. If, in spite of extra support, a child continues to have learning or behavioural problems, and is not showing improvement, it is advisable to seek further help by referring to psychological services, or child and family consultation services.

see Further Information

Building on strengths

It would be a mistake to view all refugee children as victims, "traumatised" by their experiences. Many children are resilient and, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the increased responsibilities and stresses of their lives, can show remarkable strength and maturity. It is as important to acknowledge and build on these strengths as it is to be aware of the distress they feel.

Save the Children supported a group of young refugees from the Horn of Africa Youth Scheme who produced a report about their experiences of education (1998). The findings of *Let's Spell It Out* have been presented to local and national policy-makers and planners and have influenced the development of educational services.

It is also important to remember that adult refugees are usually people with skills, experience and the strength to survive terrible events. Unfortunately, they are often not involved in planning services for themselves and the skills that could serve their community are not used. Yet involving them in education, interpreting and other services could benefit both the individual and the wider community.

If a child is not progressing in language or learning, or is showing behavioural difficulties, it would seem appropriate to offer them extra support early on, rather than assuming that they need more time to settle.

Questions for discussion

1. What do you think you need to discuss with parents/guardians at their first visit to your school/pre-school?
2. How can your school/early years setting help refugee children to settle?
3. How can your school/early years setting help refugee parents/guardians learn about how you work and be involved in their children's education?
4. How would you extend existing policies and implement an anti-bullying/anti-racist policy?
5. In what ways could you give moral and emotional support to refugee children?

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Welcoming New Arrivals

Compiled by Miranda Kaunang

In early years settings and schools, asylum-seekers and refugees may join a class mid term. The following suggestions will help towards supporting asylum-seeking and refugee families and children.

In the setting

- Staff training on working with asylum-seeking and refugee children and families, including details of the impact of current legislation, the financial circumstances of asylum-seekers, etc, how to support the emotional wellbeing of refugee children.
- Action planning, including creating and updating information on details of local refugee communities and contacts with other relevant national/local agencies/individuals within and outside the local authority, such as the local consortia and asylum team, housing officers and the National Asylum Support Service (NASS).
- Mapping of local community organisations, interpreting and translation services, sources of legal and immigration advice.
- Awareness of financial restrictions facing refugee children, and contingency plans such as a central fund to pay for school trips, clothing exchanges, etc.
- Policies on induction, pastoral wellbeing, home-setting liaison, dealing with racist incidents, with specific reference to the wellbeing of refugees.
- Nomination of a member of staff to co-ordinate information about refugees and good practice.

For asylum-seeking and refugee parents

- Induction packs (in relevant languages, written or taped, with pictures and maps) for parents, including information about local services such as legal and immigration services, welfare advice, GPs and health clinics, local racial equality council, community and faith groups, language classes.
- Within the setting, space/resources allocated for some or all of the following: language support classes for parents; family literacy classes; drop-ins/play sessions/toy library/home visits for younger children.
- Details in appropriate languages about the importance of play and other early years curriculum issues.

For children

Settling down

- Provide a welcome pack, containing pens and paper, and books (dual language, if possible).
- Assign a class carer or friend.
- Give time, space and opportunity for children to know new surroundings.
- Offer a warm and welcoming environment.
- Promote stability and routine to build confidence.
- Use bilingual and picture dictionaries.
- Allow time to become familiar with the timetable and routines.
- Set up an individual work programme.
- Encourage themed project work, for example, "My family", "My home" or "My country" with pictures, photos, descriptions and tapes of stories and songs from a child's country of origin.

Nila, aged four, caused concern at nursery because she was so quiet, didn't make friends, and didn't speak. She and her mother had fled their home country, but the father had been unable to get away. The mother was very depressed and isolated, and hardly spoke to Nila or played with her. When the father finally joined the family, both mother and daughter became much more cheerful. Both parents spoke to Nila and played with her, and her English and sociability both improved quite quickly.

Belonging and identity

- Provide notices and other resources in the home language, for example, bilingual stories.
- Celebrate birthdays, festivals, etc.
- Provide information for all children about leaving home and being a refugee.
- Encourage activities that promote refugee children's home languages, cultures and their self-esteem.
- Encourage opportunities for self-expression.

Always allow time to observe, monitor and evaluate children's progress. Recognise their learning stage and be aware of their sense of readiness to move on.

(Adapted from guidance by Mei May Thong from the Manchester Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, 2000)

Welcoming new arrivals

Have you done the following:

- Read the admission form?
- Labelled a tray (and coat hook) with the pupil's preferred name, ensuring it is correctly spelled?
- Prepared and labelled exercise books?
- Considered where the child will sit and in which groups he/she will work in?
- Talked to your class about welcoming new pupils to the class? Have you told them that children are due to arrive?
- Placed the child with a friendly and helpful "buddy" who can help them during play and lunchtimes? (Buddies can also help children become familiar with classroom routines.)
- Familiarised yourself with the child's first language and cultural background? Are there any other children in the class who share this?
- Considered how well the child functions in English? Have you discussed any concerns with the EAL teacher?
- Looked at the child's record from previous schooling (if available) and considered how to build on previous achievement? Is the child new to schooling?
- Made contact with the child's parents or carers? Are there any concerns that you need to discuss with them at an early opportunity? Have parents or carers had an opportunity to share their own concerns?
- Referred any health concerns to the appropriate person within the school?

The Role of Early Years Services

Tina Hyder

Accessing early years services

Refugee and asylum-seeking families are more likely to have young children under the age of five than other families (Rutter, 2001). Good early years provision is extremely important in helping refugee children and their carers rebuild their lives. However, the uptake of early years services by asylum-seeking and refugee families continues to be low. The reasons for this are complex and include:

- lack of information about early years services
- frequent moves
- an unwillingness to place young children with carers who do not speak the home language
- carers who do not speak the child's home language
- unwelcoming services
- lack of familiarity with early years services.

(Rutter and Hyder, 1998)

Some of these reasons are being exacerbated under current arrangements for the dispersal of asylum-seekers. As families are moved away from areas where refugee community networks have been established, families will lack knowledge about how to access early years services. Also, early years groups may themselves feel uncertain about how best to support young refugee children.

Current initiatives in the early years

National childcare initiatives, including Sure Start and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) offer the opportunity to improve services for refugees and asylum-seekers.

Sure Start

Sure Start is a government initiative aimed at supporting the poorest children and families. It is locality based, and so does not target individual families. The aim is to deliver and co-ordinate a range of services such as childcare, healthcare, early years education and family support. Sure Start is aimed at the poorest families and offers integrated services and support for families and children in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the country. It has been introduced as one of a number of government programmes aimed at tackling social exclusion.

> "Sure Start, because it is an area based initiative concerned with children living in poverty, is likely to have significant numbers of families from minority ethnic groups within its catchment areas."
>
> (Sure Start: *Guidance on Involving Minority Ethnic Children and Communities*, p2)

As asylum-seeking families are dispersed, and as established refugee communities emerge in some urban areas, it is vital that initiatives such as Sure Start are inclusive of the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee families and children. Current government policy means that asylum-seekers are a socially excluded group.

In areas of dispersal, Sure Start partnership members should be aware of contacts on the regional consortia of local authorities, which have been established to co-ordinate services and work with the National Asylum Support Service. The consortia have a responsibility to alert LEAs about newly arrived asylum-seekers. As asylum-seeking families are likely to experience hardship because of the lack of cash and the need to use vouchers, Sure Start schemes will have an important role in supporting these families and children.

Sure Start guidance sets out the steps to ensure that all families from minority ethnic groups, including refugee families, have access to the service from the beginning.

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) have been established to "ensure that the (EYDC) Plan enhances the care, play and educational experiences of children up to age 14" by bringing together providers of services from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Section 3.23 of the DfEE *Planning Guidance for Plans 2000/2001* sets out the need for an implementation plan on equal opportunities, including the need to undertake "an analysis of which children and young people face significant obstacles in accessing early years and childcare services and how they will be reached... This should include children with disabilities or learning difficulties, refugee children, those in DSS accommodation and looked-after children."

The partnership also needs to provide evidence of how it has consulted with families from minority ethnic groups.

More detailed guidance from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) on LEA support for children of asylum-seeking and refugee families from July 2000 states that:

> "Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships should consider how early years and childcare services reach refugee children, consulting refugee families and representative groups and involving them in the local planning and implementation process."

The DfEE guidance goes on to state that arrangements need to be made to undertake the following:

> "a) provide asylum-seeking and refugee families with accessible information on local schools and admissions procedures and early years provision;
>
> b) ensure that the children of asylum-seeking and refugee families receive proper induction upon taking up a school place: Chief Education officers should, where appropriate, develop the above policies in collaboration with other agencies using the Regional Consortia network. Within LEAs, cross departmental planning, involving EAL [English as an additional language] staff, the school psychological service, early years team, educational welfare teams and others is encouraged."

In Islington, members of the early years team attached to the SPEAL (speakers of English as a foreign language) project decided to hold information days around the borough for specific refugee communities. The meetings aimed to give information about the benefits of early years services, the role of play, etc. Meetings were advertised, and held in English and the relevant community language.

Gathering information

EYDCPs are also required to collect demographic and socio-economic information, with a particular focus on those experiencing relative disadvantage or particular need, including refugees.

It is important to collect up-to-date and relevant data about the asylum-seeking and refugee communities in the area. Using census classifications (as devised by the Office of Population and Census Statistics for the 1991 census) is unhelpful, as, for instance, it is hard to assess if someone is a refugee if described by the category "Black African". It would be more useful to know their country of origin such as Somalia or Eritrea (see page 15). It is also important to collect information about languages spoken by local families. Knowing that there are a large number of Kurdish speakers in the local area identifies a potential asylum-seeking and refugee community. Using census classifications of ethnicity only would mean that this information might be lost.

Consulting with children

The guidance for EYDCPs also makes particular reference to the need to consult children and young people on their views of the childcare and education services that they use. Particular reference is made to the importance of consulting with refugees and asylum-seekers.

Save the Children has worked with groups of young asylum-seekers and refugees to enable them to speak about their experiences. In the video accompanying this pack, children give very clear feedback about their experiences in school and what has enabled them to feel part of the school community.

A range of methods can be used to enable the very youngest children to express a view on various aspects of the care they receive (Fajerman *et al*, 2000).

CASE STUDY

Enfield under 5's home–school liaison service

This service works with pre-school children and their families from black and minority ethnic communities who do not have access to nursery education in the maintained sector.

The service has a team of the equivalent of three full-time teachers (four teachers) and the equivalent of 2.6 bilingual support workers (eight bilingual support workers) who, between them, speak ten languages: Bengali, Greek, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi, Swahili, Sylheti, Turkish, Urdu and British Sign Language.

The team provides a pre-school programme for children in the year before they start school. Members of the team make regular home visits, taking in books, toys and games, and they also run a mobile toy and book library. They answer parents' or carers' questions about the school system and give information about the local early years services available. They also facilitate play sessions in 13 schools which the children who are visited at home attend.

An important aspect of the work is to respond to referrals from agencies regarding isolated asylum-seeking families with children under five years old. These referrals are followed up by a home visit and, in some cases, a considerable amount of casework. At the initial visit, the team member informs parents or carers of pre-schools that have free places if the children are eligible, and also gives general information about pre-schools, parent/carer toddler groups and library story sessions. The workers support parents and carers in accessing local classes in English for speakers of other languages which provide crèche facilities. The service has access to an educational psychologist who will provide advice and joint home visits where necessary. The expertise built up over several years enables a considerable amount of inter-agency work to take place.

Questions for discussion

1. What are the benefits of time spent in an early years setting for a refugee child and their family?
2. What are the barriers that may stop a refugee family from using early years services?
3. How do you overcome those barriers?
4. You are the manager of a large early years setting. Through conversations with parents, you find out that a number of asylum-seeking families have settled in your catchment area. None of these families have approached your centre. You are keen to make contact with the families concerned.
   a) How do you make contact with the families – what do you need to know?
   b) Which departments in the local authority and other local agencies do you need to involve and how?
   c) What are your staff training needs?
   d) How do you prepare adequate induction procedures and what do they cover?
   e) How do you involve other local parents and carers?
   f) What is the role of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership?
   g) How do you develop a befriending network of volunteers?

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Section 5

Language and Identity

Jill Rutter and Tina Hyder

Supporting language acquisition

Asylum-seeking and refugee children may have experienced a considerable amount of change in their lives. The impact of arriving at school or nursery in the UK unable to speak English, and perhaps not being understood by anybody, should not be underestimated.

> *"When I first came here, I didn't really like the school, I really, really hated it. I had no friends... I didn't know English so I couldn't speak to anyone."*
>
> Holta – a ten-year-old girl from Kosovo

see Video

Holta felt isolated and lonely. She hated school because no one understood her and she didn't understand them. Yet, a year later, she is happy and secure. Her English is fluent and, most importantly, she feels that she belongs.

This section aims to highlight the importance of supporting refugee children as they acquire English, at the same time as maintaining fluency in the language(s) of the family. The connections between language, identity and wellbeing will also be explored. Arrangements for English as an additional language (EAL) will be considered, alongside ideas for classroom practice to support refugee children's ability to acquire English.

Refugee children arrive in the UK speaking – and sometimes reading and writing – a wide variety of different languages. It is important for teachers to remember that refugee children are competent speakers of another language. Their skills in their first language should be valued and encouraged, and bilingualism should be viewed as an asset rather than a problem. Research has shown that children who can continue to develop their home language usually achieve well in the academic language of the classroom (see, for example, Cummins, 1981).

Some refugee children, for example, those from Sierra Leone or Nigeria, may have attended English medium schools in their home countries. Other children will have learned English as a foreign language. Some refugee children will have had little or no contact with the English language or the Roman alphabet; also, a proportion of refugee children will have received little or no prior education, and will lack literacy in their home language. It is clear that the linguistic needs of newly arrived refugee children will be very different – however, the majority will require help in developing their speaking, reading and writing skills in English.

Identity and refugee communities

Identity may be of particular significance for refugee communities who have fled from conflict or political persecution and have plans to return if possible. It is essential for refugee children to form an identity that reflects the origin of their family, even if many years are spent in exile. Language is a means of holding onto group identity and solidarity, and passing on cultural heritage: cultural beliefs, values and knowledge. Maintenance of the home language is also a way of staying in contact with the home country and family members living abroad, as well as promoting a positive self image and self-esteem.

Some refugee communities may be in a position to organise additional language classes and cultural activities for children, which should be supported by a school or early years setting in whatever way possible – for instance, by providing space or basic materials.

The way the languages we speak are perceived also influences the way we feel about ourselves. The relative status of some languages is apparent from the way that, in the UK, the ability to speak other European languages is valued, whereas ability in non-European languages is not always seen as positive. Children are very sensitive to the value placed on the family language(s) by the outside world.

Maintenance of the home language

Whenever possible, children need to be able to use their home language at nursery or school, with friends and at home.

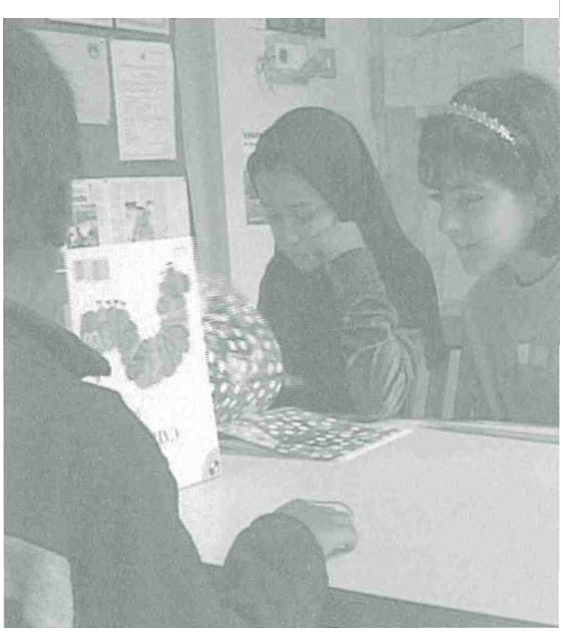
Parents may need to be reassured that their children will learn English if a setting appears to be encouraging children to communicate in the home language. It may be necessary to explain to parents how important it is that children have opportunities to use their home languages in the educational setting. Parents may also need to know that research suggests that languages will develop together, and that English will not simply replace the first language. Also, speaking their first or mother-tongue language will not be a barrier to the child's acquisition of English.

Language support in the early years

It is helpful if an interpreter is available to help with the initial induction visits by the new child and family to the early years group. This will give you the opportunity to find out about children's existing language competence. More importantly, you will have a chance to discuss the ethos of the setting with parents and to explain your approach to language support.

Miller (1992) suggests some useful guidelines to encourage language development:

- Build trust through eye contact.
- Learn a few words in the child's first language, particularly greetings and forms of address. Find out from parents how children will tell you when they need to go to the toilet, when they are hungry and so on.
- Be a good language model yourself, speaking slowly but in a normal voice.
- Remember that children can understand what is said long before they can express themselves in the new language.
- It is important that the children's environment is language rich.
- Encourage interaction between children. Let children teach you and the other children some words in their home language. Others in the group can be guides for children who are less proficient in English.
- Encourage families to have contact with you, perhaps coming in to tell a story or to cook.
- Be positive about children's efforts to communicate.



CASE STUDY

Family Literacy in Deptford Park Primary School, London

Identifying a need

Family literacy classes started in Deptford Park School in London in September 1998, with money available through the Standards Fund. It was the school's first experience of welcoming newly arrived and refugee families into the school specifically to work and learn together. Most of the children were from the early years and Key Stage 1.

The school's population is fluid, and reflects the temporary and poor housing conditions on many local estates. There are a number of children with special educational needs in the school, and a high proportion of bilingual and multilingual children from around the world – many of them newly arrived and refugees, and between them speaking more than 47 languages. The Vietnamese community has been well established on the local estates for a number of years.

The school was concerned that many ethnic minority parents found it very difficult to communicate with the school and understand the English education system, which left them isolated and less able to support their children at school. Parents who were particularly isolated were approached by the two family literacy teachers and invited to come and learn English with their children in school.

The family literacy class evolved naturally as an all-women's group and proved very nurturing for the women, many of whom were Muslim. Mothers with very little English soon began to gain confidence within the safe and supportive structure of the group. Gradually, some parents felt able to express their feelings of grief and loss, and to share worries and concerns about their health and housing conditions. In a surprisingly short time, through expressive body language and dual-language dictionaries, the women communicated with the teachers and each other, and trusting friendships were established.

In September 1998, the first Kosovar family registered with the school. The new family literacy classes proved to be extremely supportive for both the mother and her two sons.

How the sessions were run

The classes met weekly and were modelled on the Basic Skills Agency Guidelines. Parents received three hours English tuition a week with an ESOL teacher from the school, and their children worked simultaneously with the family literacy teacher. A creche was set up to look after babies and younger children. During the first hour of the class, parents and children worked separately in adjoining rooms. Both groups worked independently on the same theme, for example, "food", through carefully planned and differentiated activities. Then the two groups would come together to share in the joint session.

The children's sessions were always practical, visual, fun and stimulating. Opportunities for role-play, movement and drama using visual props would often be linked to traditional stories and storytelling. Songs and rhymes also encouraged joining in, with older siblings often supporting and encouraging their younger siblings.

Parents would work on similar topics to their children. On a food theme, they might classify different foods, grouping them together pictorially, talking about their favourite dishes or looking at photographs from a recent trip to the market or supermarket.

In the joint session, children would perform their activity to their parents, using drama and props.

They also proudly showed their parents their drawings and writing about the activities. Parents and children would then share the food prepared by the children and play a shopping or food game together. The following week, the activity might include bookmaking, using the children's pictures and writing, with photographs taken from the previous week.

These shared sessions were stimulating, enjoyable and confidence-building for both children and parents. They enabled parents to develop their speaking and listening skills and to increase their English fluency. The activities also encouraged adults to be involved in their children's learning and gave them the confidence to try out similar activities at home together.

Empowerment, friendship and support

During the borough's OFSTED inspection in 1999, Deptford Park parents had an opportunity to explain why they had chosen to attend English classes in their children's school, and to talk about their experiences and understanding of the English education system. Interpreters were arranged for the parents, who at that time came from Kosova, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, China and Bangladesh. Without exception, parents said they felt empowered by the opportunity to learn English with their children in school. They valued the friendship with the family literacy teachers and with other parents, both from their own and other cultures. They also appreciated the help they received from teachers and interpreters regarding their child's progress in school, as well as the support and advice offered in dealing with letters from school and other agencies, including housing, benefits and social services. The OFSTED report, published in January 2000, described the family literacy project as "a lifeline for refugee families".

By the end of the first year of family literacy, several parents had become sufficiently confident and empowered to progress to English classes outside of school. With new arrivals and rehousing, the group remained fluid and diverse. The Standards Funding was no longer available, but the school chose to continue the classes, even though there was no longer money available for a creche or creche worker. Several of the mothers became pregnant, and so the original children's group evolved into a baby and toddlers' group.

At the new group, parents shared information about their cultures and talked about religion, food, fasting, customs, celebrations and childrearing practices, and other topics of mutual interest. Parents and children borrowed dual language books to read at home and an assortment of language, literacy and numeracy games to play. During family literacy time, parents were introduced to and joined local facilities such as the toy library, public library and the local swimming baths. They also went on family trips to the Millennium Dome and the Mosque at Regent's Park. Newly arrived families who joined the group were given extra support with home visits, to bridge the link between home and school.

Every new, positive experience empowered and increased parents' confidence, enjoyment, knowledge and awareness, which, in turn, benefited their children's potential successes and achievement in school and the wider community. The family literacy classes offered a way of socially and emotionally supporting mothers and their children, and empowering them with access to English, while maintaining and valuing their mother tongue and culture.

Resources and activities

"Young bilingual children tune in more easily to the language of their peer group than they do to that of adults. It is no coincidence that the phrases first spoken in English are most often those used by other children in their play rather than those spoken by the adults."

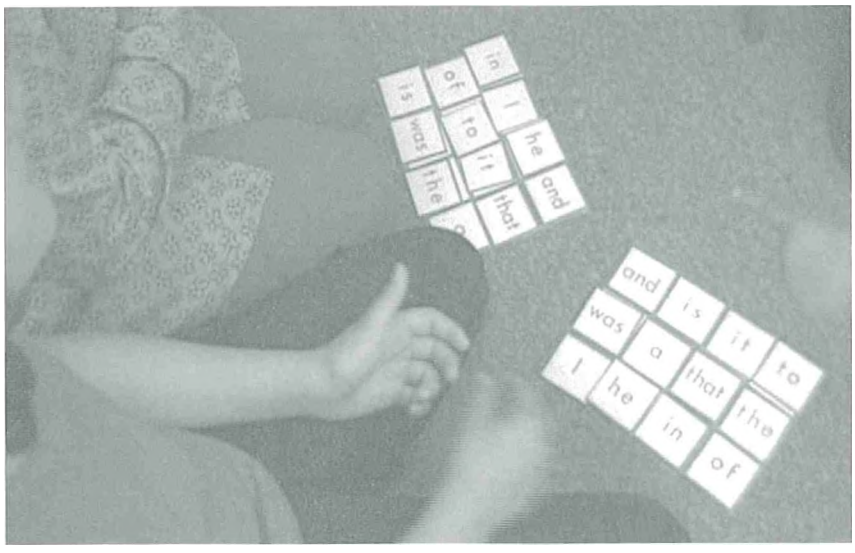
(MacGregor, 1999)

We know that children learn through play. Through play and interaction with other children in the classroom, refugee children can develop the skills and abilities they need for everyday life, and through listening and joining in with fluent models of English, they can learn the language in a natural context. Also, through play and activities, children can link the meaning of words to their experiences – things that can be tasted, smelt, seen, heard or manipulated.

see Video

As seen in the video accompanying this pack, there are a range of resources and activities available in most classrooms and early years settings to support children's additional language acquisition while maintaining the family languages. Where possible, ensure that materials and resources are bilingual.

see Further Information



Resources that are made in the setting, perhaps by children themselves – with support from parents – such as photogames, photobooks, story boards and story packs, give children wonderful opportunities to develop their narrative skills and to explore story.

The gap between home and school needs to be bridged for all children, but especially for children whose first language isn't English. This can be encouraged by a two-way flow of ideas from home to school, so that children can draw on the full range of their literacy resources at home and at school. Any literacy materials brought from home into school should be given a prominent place in the classroom: community newspapers can be put in the home corner; and writing by parents/carers and children in their home languages can be displayed in the writing area. Videos from home in home languages can also support literacy.

Stages of language development

Supporting children's home languages both enhances their ability to learn English and increases their self-esteem and confidence in their own ethnicity. Research has shown that children with a solid foundation in their first language are able to transfer skills when learning a second language, and there are well-documented stages of additional language acquisition (Edwards, 1995). It is therefore important that early years practitioners and teachers are familiar with these stages and don't confuse them with developmental delay or signs of trauma or distress.

In brief, in the early stages, children may say nothing in the new language, but they will be observing and gaining the confidence they need to start communicating. There will be considerable variation between learners, and before learning can take place, children need to feel secure. As learning progresses, children will begin to use words socially, while still relying heavily on non-verbal gestures and visual cues.

According to Edwards, "Most children acquire conversational skills in under two years. In contrast, it takes between five and seven years for second language learners to reach the same levels of proficiency in academic English as their native speaking peers".

Stage one: Beginner bilingual

Students may remain silent in the classroom, or use a little English if encouraged to do so. They have minimal or no literacy in English. If involved in learning activities in groups they need considerable support, or they need to be able to use their mother tongue.

Stage two: Developing bilingual

These students can participate in all learning activities, but it will be very evident in speaking and in writing that the students' first language is not English. Students will be able to express themselves orally in English quite successfully, but they will need considerable support in writing and reading English if they are to make progress.

Stage three: Functional bilingual

These students have sufficient English language skills to enable them to be successfully involved in all activities. Their oral and written English is developing well, but their written English will tend to lack complexity, and will show evidence of structures and errors associated with the students' level of language acquisition.

Stage four: Fluently bilingual

These students are totally fluent in English. They write as native speakers.

Helping a beginner

Suggestions to help a beginner feel welcome in a class, and start learning English

- Make sure you know how to pronounce a child's name properly, and try to greet him or her every lesson.
- Make sure children know your name: introduce yourself and write down your name.
- Ensure the child sits next to a sympathetic member of the class, preferably one who speaks the same language and can translate.

- Try to encourage the child to contribute to the lesson by using his or her mother tongue/first language.
- Don't worry if the beginner says very little at first, as plenty of listening time is important when starting to learn a new language. It helps the child to "tune in" to the sounds and intonation of the new language. However, just listening all the time is frustrating for the student.
- Encourage children to help give out equipment, and collect books, so they have to make contact with other students – but don't treat them as the class dogsbody! Doing these tasks is usually seen as a class privilege.
- Encourage pupils to learn the names of equipment, symbols or terms essential for your subject. Use pictures and labels. Students can make their own "dictionaries" for key words for your subject. There are also some commercially published dual language lists of key words for different subject areas, and these can be used in the classroom.

see Further Information

- Ask students for the mother tongue equivalents of words.
- Short vocabulary lists can be provided for each lesson.
- If students are literate in their first language, try to obtain bilingual dictionaries, and encourage students to use them. Students may have their own dictionaries at home.
- It may be appropriate for students to write in their mother tongue at first.

If students are literate in their mother tongue, books, tapes, labelling, signs and props in the mother tongue can be used, which will not hinder the children's learning of English. Students are far more likely to feel confident about using English and not worrying about making mistakes if they feel that their mother tongue is valued.

Collaborative learning activities are very helpful for learning English. However, working in groups with other students will be a new experience for many refugee children, as most have come from countries where the educational system is more formal than the UK. Therefore other students in a group also need to be supportive.

Visual cues are extremely helpful, for example, videos, slides, pictures, diagrams, flash cards and illustrated glossaries.

Reading material can be made easier by oral discussion, relating it to a student's own experiences. If reading material is recorded on cassette, a student can listen and read simultaneously.

It is important to maintain students' confidence in learning a new language, and to help them feel they can complete written work, however simple. Beginners should always be given homework if other members receive it, even though it needs to be very simple.

Helping second stage learners

Second stage learners can engage in all the learning activities in a classroom, and their understanding of conversation and oral instruction is generally good. However, they need considerable support with written work and reading.

Their understanding of text will be helped by visual clues, for example, watching the video of a novel before studying it as a class reader. Class or group discussions of texts would also be helpful, as would role-play and listening to audio cassettes before the lesson. Teachers can prepare simple summaries of the main points of books, texts or lessons.

Written tasks for second stage learners need to be structured. The following type of tasks may be helpful:

- Sequencing – where students have to put statements in the right order before writing them out. This can be done as a pair or group activity.
- Ticking charts, and filling in tables, which can then be used as a basis for writing sentences.
- Deciding on true/false statements.
- Providing structured questions. If questions are designed carefully, the answers can give a piece of continuous writing when put together. This helps students who otherwise find continuous writing difficult.

Helping third stage learners

This group of students can cope with the demands of the curriculum, and will be able to produce extended pieces of writing, albeit with some errors. Unfortunately the language needs of third stage learners are neglected in many schools, and as a consequence their skills are not extended beyond this stage.

The English language skills of a third stage learner are still developing. They still need help with reading and writing, and in extending their vocabulary. Written work will benefit from the provision of models and plans. Also, it would be helpful to explain grammatical mistakes to students when marking written work. Students should be encouraged to extend their range of tenses and vocabulary, and should be taught how to use reported speech and the passive voice.

Classroom organisation can make a difference

> *"When children are expected to work on an individual basis their opportunities to hear and use language are very limited. In classrooms organised around group activities, however their exposure to language is much greater."*
>
> (Edwards, 1995)

Educators who are monolingual can use a range of strategies to ensure that bilingual/multilingual children feel secure and become competent in English while retaining their home language. It is also important to realise that all language skills are interrelated, and that reading, writing, speaking and listening influence each other.

Educators also need to be sensitive to cross-cultural issues in communication. Within and between different communities there are different conventions about when to listen and when to question, especially as a child. In some societies, it is customary to get straight to the point in conversation; in others, the convention is to adopt a more discursive and elaborate style. Educators need to be aware that children may adopt a style that appears not to fit with usual classroom practice, as they are operating with the rules that are used within their families.

Funding for EAL (English as an Additional Language) Support

In England, most EAL support in schools is currently funded by the DfEE's Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG), part of the School Standards Fund. This pays for specialist EAL teachers and bilingual classroom assistants. The DfEE provides 53 per cent of EMAG funding, while the LEA is expected to match fund the rest of the project's money.

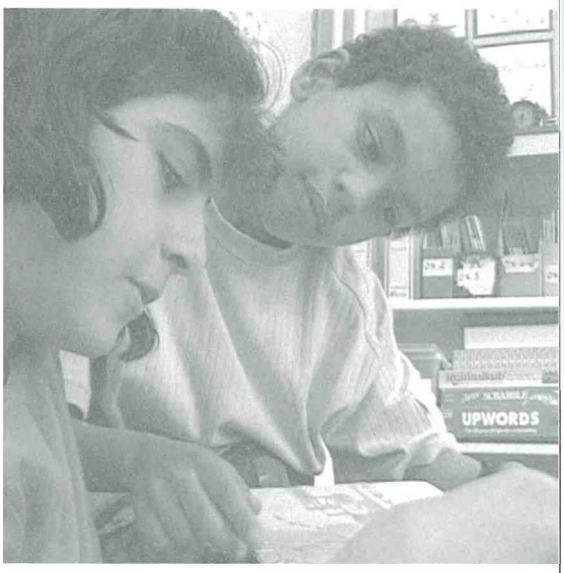
In the past, LEAs ran EAL teams centrally. Although there is still some provision for funding peripatetic EAL teams in rural local authorities, DfEE guidelines now dictate that at least 85 per cent of funding for EAL support has to be delegated to schools. This can work in two different ways, namely:

- schools employ EAL specialist teachers and bilingual classroom assistants, and have them on the staff role
- the LEA continues to organise a central EAL support service and schools choose to purchase the service from the LEA.

This requirement for delegating EAL funding to schools was introduced in 1998. The advantage of this policy shift is that EAL staff are now on a school payroll, and so the subject is less marginalised. The disadvantage is that some schools may opt not to provide EAL support or to cut it and then refuse to admit bilingual children.

EAL support in Wales and Scotland is administered differently. The Welsh Assembly funds the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, part of the Grant for Education Support and Training. Unlike its English counterpart, funding is provided to the LEA and not the school. The grant is paid at a rate of 70 per cent of project costs, with 30 per cent LEA match funding.

The Scottish Executive provides grants for EAL support for school-aged children, with Scottish education authorities bidding for financial support as part of mainstream educational funding. As in Wales, EAL support is managed centrally managed by an LEA.



How language support is given

Schools and LEAs organise their EAL language support for bilingual students, including refugees, in a variety of ways. EAL support can be given by: withdrawing the child to special classes within the school for some lessons every week; giving the bilingual child EAL support within the classroom by an EAL specialist; or giving EAL support within the classroom by a bilingual classroom assistant.

Developing the English of bilingual pupils should be seen as the responsibility of all teachers, not the sole responsibility of a specialist teacher. Clearly, establishing EAL support within the mainstream classroom is the most satisfactory way of providing language support to bilingual students, and, at the same time, encourages the mainstream teacher to learn new skills in English language support.

Sara was ten years old, and had come to the UK with her aunt and brother who cared for her well, but didn't know much about her early history. At home, she didn't show difficult behaviour, but at school was excitable and unpredictable, often getting into fights. She suffered from epilepsy and her fits were difficult to control. She wasn't learning well at school. There had been difficulties in finding an interpreter who spoke her language, so an adequate assessment had been delayed.

Eventually an interpreter was found. He observed that even when speaking in her first language, her ability was poor for her age and her communication limited. She reported that she was teased a lot at school and that she felt that "everyone hated" her.

It was felt that Sara's problems in school were related to learning difficulties, to the number of changes she had experienced, and also to teasing at school. Eventually she was placed in a special class where she settled well.

Special classes

There may be occasions when it is appropriate for bilingual students, particularly in secondary schools, to be withdrawn for a few lessons a week for a limited period of time. This should always be discussed with the students and appropriate subject teachers. Older bilingual students may be withdrawn from mainstream classes:

- if the child has had little or no previous schooling, and lacks literacy in the home language
- if they are total beginners, and particularly if they need help with very basic literacy in English
- to enable a student who is or appears to be traumatised, and may be withdrawn or aggressive, to develop a trusting relationship with an adult or other peers
- and possibly to discuss and write about some of the events that have led to the student becoming a refugee.

Schools need to retain sufficient flexibility in teacher allocation to allow for special classes, where they are appropriate.

In-class EAL support

In an ideal situation, an EAL teacher works in partnership with the class teacher, helping to plan lessons and develop materials with the class teacher, and introducing topics to the whole class. It has been found to be effective, but can be costly in terms of staff time. Alternatively, an EAL teacher or bilingual classroom assistant can go into lessons and work solely with bilingual students on particular tasks. However, the EAL teacher may seem to be marginalised, and by association, the bilingual students might also seem to be marginalised. It can also fuel resentment if native speakers feel that bilingual students are getting more help with work than they are. Mainstream teachers should always introduce EAL support teachers to the whole class, and explain why the new teacher is present in the lesson.

Bilingual classroom assistants

Among some EAL teams and in some schools the proportion of bilingual classroom assistants to EAL teachers is growing. The reason is simple: a bilingual classroom assistant can be employed on a sessional or full-time basis at approximately £6 an hour, while an EAL teacher has to be salaried. Bilingual classroom assistants come from a wide of backgrounds, with differing experience. However, very few bilingual assistants have prior experience of teaching English through the mainstream curriculum.

The advantages of employing bilingual assistants is that they can help a newly arrived child who has no English. They can also act as interpreters when parents visit a school, and can serve as a bridge between the school, home and community, providing useful information about particular refugee groups. Local authorities that keep a sessional pool of bilingual classroom assistants providing support in a wide range of languages have the capacity to react quickly to the unplanned arrival of new groups of refugee children.

But there can be problems in employing large numbers of bilingual classroom assistants. If only skilled to provide bilingual support in one language, the assistant will not be able to meet the needs of children who speak other languages. The retention of good assistants is another issue, as many of the best bilingual classroom assistants leave education to earn better money, for example, by interpreting. To avoid this, bilingual classroom assistants should be given sufficient training to be able to provide quality language support. There should be a clear career structure to enable some bilingual classroom assistants to progress on to become qualified teachers. Some LEAs already do this, organising training courses for bilingual classroom assistants in partnership with universities.

The Literacy Hour and literacy initiatives

The Literacy Hour in England and literacy initiatives in Scotland and Wales may not be accessible to many newly arrived bilingual pupils. The Literacy Hour demands a set amount of whole-class teaching, as well as increased emphasis on phonics, both of which may present problems for newly-arrived bilingual children.

In recognition of this issue, the DfEE has published National Literacy Strategy guidance and training materials for children with English as an additional language. The National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum, as well as some local authority EAL support teams, have also produced their own good practice guidance. A number of EAL teams, such as Manchester City Council and Lancashire County Council, also have dedicated Literacy Hour specialists working within the team.

In making the Literacy Hour accessible to newly-arrived bilingual pupils, teachers can, for example:

- involve EAL staff in the planning of Literacy Hours, ideally planning the lessons together
- choose texts with clear print and clear illustrations
- choose texts that are representative of all children's backgrounds and experiences
- use the home language when introducing new words and texts. Dictionaries and glossaries can be obtained in many different languages
- use bilingual classroom assistants/teachers to introduce a new text to target pupils, for example, by using bilingual staff to tell the story or explain the text in the home language. Alternatively, additional staff can introduce new texts in a short "warm-up" session
- support the introduction of new texts with visual aids and artefacts
- provide lots of guided support by getting children to produce story boards for a particular text, or use writing frames. Writing frames provide a skeleton outline for a piece of writing around which children structure their own ideas in a wide range of curriculum areas
- encourage parents to listen to their children read new books
- revisit texts in paired reading sessions, pairing bilingual learners with fluent speakers of English
- spend additional time discussing the meanings of words, especially examples of idiomatic language
- use sentence level work to develop children's understanding of grammar, such as tense and the use of prepositions

- utilise guided reading sessions to allow teachers to work with small groups of children. Different texts can be used and matched to the abilities of reading groups, so teachers can select books that are accessible to children with English as an additional language.

Valuing refugee children's literacy needs

Refugee children are a diverse group, with differing abilities in both their home language and in English. Because they will have very different linguistic needs, it is crucial that early years' practitioners and teachers are sensitive to the needs of individual children. It is also important that practitioners have a clear understanding of the different stages of language development so that they can allow the children's understanding of English to develop alongside that of their home language. This will ensure that the practitioner allows the child to develop at their own pace, and that the child's home language is valued, which helps to maintain their sense of identity. Consideration should also be given to the best ways of utilising EAL language support, and making the literacy hour accessible to refugee children, as well as ensuring that classroom activities and resources support them in their learning. If these issues are carefully thought through, practitioners can help to ensure that the literacy and support needs of refugee children are fully met in the classroom.

Questions for discussion

You are a newly qualified teacher with little experience of working with bilingual and multilingual pupils. In your new Year 3 class you find that two Roma asylum-seeking children have arrived mid term. They appear to speak little English but do seem to understand simple instructions.

1. How do you adapt your lesson plans to support the asylum-seeking children's home language?
2. How do you plan to support the children's acquisition of English?
3. What role could the other children in the class play?
4. What is the role of other staff, including support staff, in the school?

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See the website www.rdg.ac.uk.AcaDepts/eh/ReadLang/home.html

Section 6

Play and Refugee Children

Ann Cattanach

All's done,
All's said.
Tonight
In a strange bed
Alone
I lie.
So slight
So hid
As in a chrysalid
A butterfly.

Self-expression through play

This section explains how important imaginative play is in allowing children to make sense of their experiences, by giving them the freedom and safety to express themselves. Three different aspects of imaginative play will be considered, and practical suggestions given for all those working with refugee children on how to encourage, support and empower children through play.

Children's rhymes are part of their "armour" to cope with the world and perhaps to tell us, the adults, what they really think and feel. Iona Opie (1992) calls this "a declaration of a child's brave defiance in the face of daunting odds." This "armour" is especially needed by those children who come to the UK as refugees, because they have to try to make sense of so many changes and losses. They may be angry, frightened or depressed, and the attitude of some people they meet here can only add to their distress.

Play, and especially imaginative play, is the place where children can express their defiance, confusion, sadness, joy and excitement – and try to make sense of their own particular world and what it feels like to live there. They can play out aspects of their lives and their experiences of the world, through making other imagined worlds and, in making sense of these created worlds, they can come to terms with their own particular reality.

Trevor, an eight-year-old Romanian refugee, now adopted in the UK, couldn't talk about his world directly, but was able to explain how he felt through his imaginary stories. He told this story with small toys in a sand tray, and the story was written down for him:

The Beach Scene

Now the dogs are back on the beach.
They meet the other dogs.
The mermaid was hidden away.
Her hair was hidden until she was buried.
Then the RSPCA man came back and checked up on all the dogs.
He also brought the operating table.
He must check up on all the dogs.
But one day a bad thing happened.
As the man was inspecting the dogs, a big dump of sand came and buried him.
He was buried.
Nobody could save him.

Another man came and took the dogs away back to the centre.
Now all the family are back at home.
Grandad came to stay with grandma.
They want to see the children.
Grandma is playing games with the children.
One evening there is a big storm.
Grandfather is really scared.
All the babies are really scared.
They have lots and lots and lots of kids.
A big family.
They are English, Indian, Jamaican.
No Romanian children.
They didn't want them.
Now it is night time.
All the children are in bed.
They had to have a big, big bed to sleep in.
There are so many children.
And the mum.
They all had their little toys.
Then they fell fast asleep.

It was only through play and his story that Trevor could explore memories of an orphanage, of children being sorted like dogs, and be able to state his feeling that to be Romanian was somehow shameful. "Nobody wants Romanians," he says. Sadly, he told his story at a time when newspapers and television were full of negative stories, which reinforced these feelings for him.

Play as healing

When adults play with children and listen to their stories, it is important that the comments the adults make are connected to the story, rather than to the child's reality. Many story themes express the terrible pain of loss and rejection, and it is only within the safety of the story that the child is able to express how he or she feels.

For the child, to play in the presence of someone who listens, and who can share the meaning of the story, is a healing process (Tolfree, 1996). The child and adult establish a relationship together and they mediate this relationship through play. The purpose of the play and the relationship is to help the child make sense of their world through the narratives and stories, which emerge as the relationship and the play develop.

Toys and play materials can be used to make stories about the past and present. Between the storyteller and the listener is the story, which acts as a way to negotiate a shared meaning between the adult and child. Children tell stories as containers for their experiences, which they build into the fictional narrative of a story.

Framing the play

Bateson (1995) states that before engaging in imaginative play, children must establish a play "frame" or context to let others know that what is happening is play – and isn't real. This is often done by gestures such as smiling and laughing. When children play, they are operating simultaneously at two levels: at one level, they are involved in their pretend roles and stories, and focus on the make-believe meaning of objects and actions; at the same time, they are aware of their own identities, the other players' real identities, and the real-life meanings of the objects and actions used in the play.

Children at play can flow very easily from pretend roles back to their own identities, then back again to their play roles, with an ease that many adults lose. Adults tend to distinguish "reality" from "fantasy" in a way that ignores the two levels of awareness of roles, which can operate in very sophisticated ways.

Play materials for imaginative play

There are three aspects of imaginative play, which are defined as the developmental play paradigm (Cattanach, 1995). These three play processes are: embodied/ sensory play; projective play; and enactment or role-play. These processes are progressively learned and, by two-and-a-half years old, most children use all three in imaginitive play.

Embodied play

Embodied play starts when small infants begin to expand their environment through sensory exploration. It is the way that children discover where their bodies end and the rest of the world begins. This kind of exploring, touching, smelling, sniffing and tearing things apart can infuriate adults, but is one of the great thrills of childhood.

Refugee children may have witnessed or experienced acts of violence that have led to a shutdown of this kind of sensory exploration, as a way of coping with their terror and fear. This means that these children will have a limited body awareness of touch and taste. However, they may have needed to be hyper-vigilant: watching what those around them were doing, and listening for their approach, could have been a matter of life or death – therefore sight and hearing can be very sharp.

A child in a safe relationship with an adult will take great pleasure in exploring their environment through the senses, and discovering the relationship of their embodied self to the rest of the space around them. This kind of sensory play can take place in complete silence, which can be restful and soothing.

Treasure basket

Sometimes a treasure basket can help establish trust between a child and adult because no talking is required to enjoy the experience. Playing in the presence of a caring adult who puts the child's interests first is the beginning of trust and a way of bonding. The basket can be used once a baby can sit up but can also be enjoyed at any age. It should be about 35 cm wide and approximately 12 cm high, with a flat bottom and no handle, and needs to be solid enough to be leant on without spilling. Fill it with a collection of objects that encourage the senses, and consider the following qualities:

Touch	texture, shape, weight
Smell	a variety of scents
Taste	sweet, sour
Sound	ringing, banging, scrunching, tinkling
Sight	colour, form, length, shininess.

Items could include:

Natural objects: fir cones, feathers, walnuts, a pumice stone, shells, dried gourds, lemons, apples.

Objects of natural material: woollen balls, a wooden nailbrush, a shaving brush, a bone shoe horn, a wooden comb.

Wooden objects: small boxes, rattles, coloured beads on string.

Metal objects: spoons, a toy trumpet, a harmonica, a bottlebrush, a bicycle bell, a bunch of bells.

Leather, textile or rubber objects: a rubber ball, a beanbag, lavender bags, a leather purse.

Paper/cardboard: boxes, toilet roll insides, small notebooks, corrugated cardboard.

It is important to find special objects that remind children of their country of origin.

The role of the adult is to be attentive and available to the child: they should make sure that the child is comfortable and that they feel safe in the space, but they don't need to stimulate the child to explore.

Jacob, aged 8, was playing with slime and a monster toy, and told the story of how Gaudi, his monster, ate slime, because he had an appetite for it. Jacob explained that Gaudi ate so much purple slime that it came out of his tongue, his mouth and his brain. Jacob showed this dripping slime in the mouth of the monster as he told his story. He explained how Gaudi was sent away to a country where people were hit and burnt, and the monster was very scared, so he ran away back to the slime country where he felt safe.

Through his imaginative story, Jacob was able to describe his own personal journeys from country to country.

Sensory materials

Materials for sensory play are usually determined by availability and location. Sand and water, bubbles, Play-Doh, noise putty and megaslime, which is colourful, runny and messy, are good choices.

This kind of embodied play gives the child a chance of sensory exploration of the materials – without any other purpose. This could be a relief for children who might think that adults want something in return for their interest in them.

Projective play

Projective play develops as a child begins to explore the world of objects and toys. Play with objects develops from simple action patterns when an infant grasps an attractive object, through the exploration and investigation of objects, on to sequences of more complex play. In these explorations, the child learns that toys and objects can replicate things in the real world. The infant learns to invent things that aren't present, and then transforms an object to represent their invention. In this way, a chair becomes a car, or a saucepan a crown. The child then plays in the "as if" mode.

In a play session with a child, there is often a move from sensory play to projective play, and the child often uses megaslime to represent the "mess" of life.

Toys and objects

Toys and small objects can facilitate storytelling. They can be used to form heroes, villains, family groups, magical people, wild and domestic animals, mythical and prehistoric creatures, and earth-bound and sea creatures, including mermaids. Toy trees, fences, bridges and other objects can be used to make environments. It is important to keep abreast of current toy crazes and to have some of the more popular toys.

The toys that children enjoy playing with are not necessarily those that adults like. Pretty, wooden, well-dressed family dolls may delight adults, but not children, who often prefer cheap and cheerful representations that they can buy with their pocket money. Perhaps the most popular toys and objects are those disliked by adults, or which shock and offend them, like noise putty, which makes rude noises when squeezed!

A sand tray is a helpful way to create a suitable environment for small toys. A blue, cat litter tray, half filled up with sand, is a good size for this kind of play. Blue is an important colour as it can represent the sea when the sand is moved on the bottom.

Cultural awareness

Some of these small toys and objects are not culturally appropriate for all children so it is important to talk with parents about what can be used. Some cultures use sand or mud drawings to tell stories. For example, Yup'ik Eskimo children in Alaska draw symbols in the mud of the riverbank with their story knives. This is an activity exclusively for girls, and the stories are the means by which young girls come to know their culture and themselves. These activities still continue as a cultural tradition alongside more modern interests like television. This kind of marking-out play could be done in school or nursery using cornflour and spatulas to make pictures, which could tell a story.

It is important to involve parents, grandparents and others from refugee communities in play and storytelling. They can supply the extra support that may be needed for special play sessions or activities with groups of children, while placing the children's experiences within the context of their own culture. In this environment, traditional games or play can be encouraged and, in this kind of cultural routine, children can learn their social identity and take pride in their history.

Games of hide and seek, mime and singing, have similar structures in all cultures, but with specific references to particular environments. For example, there is a Japanese song called the Lotus Flower:

A flower opens
A flower opens
What flower opens?
The lotus flower.
As soon as it opens, it closes,
So swiftly that we are not aware.

This is repeated with:
A flower closes
A flower closes...

The rhyme or song is spoken, and the mime is done with the two hands cupped to represent the lotus, opening and closing as described in the verse.

There are many similar children's rhymes in different cultures. These rhymes and games can be used at school or by parents and children to re-establish bonding between adults and children.

Describing a life event using toys

Sometimes toys and objects can be used to help a child express a difficult experience and share it with their family. This would be a private story between a child and their parent or carer, or between a child and a trusted adult, such as a teacher.

For some children, playing the past is a theme they wish to explore when they first begin to play. Other children feel the opposite, and are frightened of their memories – playing the past could create more fear. An adult needs to stand with the child and offer herself as a safe companion for the child's journey -- whatever that might be. If the past was chaotic, with no logic for what happened, no sense can be made of it other than to acknowledge the chaos and confusion.

Role-play

Children begin "let's pretend" play with activities in which the role taken is to play themselves, then through experiments with toys and other children, they eventually learn to pretend to be somebody else.

As children learn to play other people, they can begin to involve themselves in role-play with other children and adults. By four years old, children can adapt and combine their role-play with the make-believe play of other children. A box full of dressing-up clothes is a good way to stimulate role-play about imaginary characters.

To role-play everyday life events can be very helpful for refugee children to make sense of a new environment and to adapt to new situations. For example, a trip to the supermarket can be played out with other children to understand what happens in a big store.

CASE STUDY
Dhalin

Dhalin was a Somali refugee who lived with her mother, sister and two young male cousins. One of these cousins was traumatised by events he had witnessed in Somalia. He became severely mentally ill and, in this state, went into Dhalin's bedroom and tried to sexually abuse her.

Dhalin's sister, who shared her bedroom, called out for help and their mother intervened. Dhalin's cousins subsequently went to live elsewhere and so Dhalin was safe. However, she was very frightened by the experience. In discussion with her social worker, Dhalin's mother thought it would be helpful if her daughter could describe what happened with the use of toys.

Dhalin, her mother, an interpreter who knew Dhalin, and a play therapist met together. They all sat on the floor together and talked about playing this frightening event. Nurtured by her mother and the interpreter, Dhalin began to choose some play figures to tell her story. She chose a small female figure to represent herself, and a gorilla figure on all fours to represent her cousin. With the help of these figures, Dhalin enacted the event. The female gorilla figure was able to express very clearly what it felt like to be woken by this seeming monster on her bed.

Dhalin told this story three times to get the details clear for herself. They all reinforced how brave she had been, how her family had kept her safe, and how her future safety with her mother was assured. Dhalin and her mother hugged each other.

It was important that Dhalin could tell her story in a way that kept her safe. She was supported by her mother who was the one person Dhalin wanted to tell, and her relief at telling her story was clear. It also meant that Dhalin and her mother could talk again at home about the incident.

Unstructured play

Alongside imaginative play, children also need regular opportunities for unstructured play and running around: this can be especially important for children living in cramped conditions or who find it difficult to concentrate. However, some children may find such free activity disturbing and so may prefer quiet occupations.

Setting up an environment for play and stories

Children like to play in special places set up for that purpose, so a play room with toys, a sand tray and water is an excellent space for story-making. It doesn't have to be a big space, but somewhere away from the classroom where privacy can be assured. If children have had very frightening experiences, it is important to offer them a time to play, either

individually or in a small group. Sitting together on the floor, or perhaps using a mat to sit on together, and defining that area as the special playing space, can help children feel safe and comfortable. It also delineates the space for play as separate from their reality world.

It is important to help children through imaginative play, and not expect them to talk about past events that are too painful to express. It is much safer for children to tell of their fears through imaginary stories, which is why folk tales and fairy stories are still so vibrant for children. It is very important for teachers and nursery workers to keep the boundaries of play in the special place, and not try to use children's play as a way to get them to talk about their past. The imaginary stories and play are healing processes in themselves.

If children are telling stories in play, it is important for the teacher or nursery workers to write them down, if the children want that. If children have to write their own stories, it becomes school work, rather than play, and can be especially difficult for some refugee children who are struggling with the language.

If a child does tell a story of a past experience to a teacher or nursery worker, it is very important to listen and respond in a genuine way to the narrative. If the child is distressed, then the listener should give reassurance about the safety of their present environment. Adults often find children's pain difficult to bear, and want to make it better, rather than genuinely listening to what the child is saying.

Children who are experiencing specific distressing symptoms, such as constant nightmares, excessive fears, bed-wetting or poor concentration, might need specialist help from a therapist, and could be referred through their GP or other agencies who might be involved with the family.

An interesting research project in nurseries in Greenwich found that it was possible to organise therapeutic play sessions of 20 minutes, three times a week, for groups of children, some of whom were refugees. The structured activities involved artwork, music and movement, and the children were very enthusiastic about their "special playtime". The groups had positive effects on children's sociability, language and concentration. Although this was a more structured programme than some centres would prefer, it does provide ideas that could be adapted to other settings. (Milavic and Fenton, 1995)

Follow normal child protection procedures if a child discloses anything which gives you cause for concern.

Supporting imaginative play

Imaginative play is the way that children make sense of their experiences. It is important to support refugee children as they play and find meanings for complex life events in different environments. Children need to be heard, to play in the presence of someone who will keep the playing safe and who will respect the children's narratives.

It is also important for adults to be able to play and tell stories to children that will place their experiences in a broad cultural frame. We need to empower children by listening to what they say, and allowing them to express themselves in their own way. Adults can also share stories from a range of cultures, which confirm the children's experiences and enhance their self-esteem.

Questions for discussion

1. How can you involve parents in sharing stories from their own cultures?
2. Question about how to support child to write their own story, or scribing it for them.
3. How can you set up an environment for embodied play – (eg, quiet one-to-one time)

Reference

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Section 7

Art Therapy with Refugee Children

Diana Brandenburger

Visual images as a way of communicating

The making of visual images as an alternative to the spoken word has been part of every culture. Historically, it has been a way of understanding the lives of our ancestors, from cave drawings to present day images. Spiritually, it has been the expression of religious beliefs in many societies. In today's world of the mass media, the need for this form of expression has become just one of the many ways we have evolved for communicating our ideas.

Give a pencil to a child of four and they seem instinctively to know how to use it. They will draw a circle with two dots for eyes and call it "Mum". It is their perfectly recognisable drawing of a face and their way of communicating. As children grow older, they can become more inhibited by trying to "get things right" and sometimes need encouragement to draw and paint. However, once they get started and forget their inhibitions, they can enjoy the sensuality of paint and the power of the drawn line as a way of expressing their thoughts. With painting or drawing, there are no formal expectations or outcomes, rights or wrongs – it is essentially a very personal form of expression.

For a child who is troubled, suffering loneliness, nightmares or powerful memories of loss, the making of art, in any form, can be very therapeutic. To be able to express their thoughts without words is especially helpful to refugee children and their families who may have limited understanding of their new language.

The "diagrammatic" and "embodied" image

In her book, *The Revealing Image* (p86), Joy Schaverien, writing about her clients' paintings, describes these two distinctly different ways of making art images. The "diagrammatic image" is a visual approximation of a remembered factual event. The "embodied" image expresses the emotional reaction to the pain and horror of the same event. These images are often less accurately defined. There can be a confusion of colours, simple lines or just dark, solid colours expressing loss or anger.

An example of these two types of images can be seen in the adjacent case study.

Expressing the unconscious

Art is a powerful medium and what is sometimes expressed comes from the deep unconcious. This is an important point to be aware of when inviting children of all ages to make art. Their images can sometimes reveal things that they had not acknowledged to themselves consciously.

A child will sometimes ask what they should draw, being used to school lessons. In a therapeutic situation, it is better never to suggest a subject: it is what is uppermost in the child's mind that you want him to express. By setting a subject, you are suppressing their own ideas and the child will want to paint something to please you. Try not to interrupt them while painting or make any suggestion of how they should depict their images. When the painting is finished, it is better to react slowly when the images are presented. It is good practice never to interpret a child's image back to them. What you see can help you to understand the child better. It can be an adult presumption to think that one might understand more than the child has seen in his image. It is far better to ask the child if they would like to tell you something about it.

Aminata, a 16-year-old girl from Sierra Leone, had been captured by the rebels and forced to live with them for six months, enduring great hardship and multiple rape. Her first series of drawings showed the events in a diagrammatic form: how the house had looked, who was in each room when the rebels came. They had killed her grandmother and took her with them. These were explicit drawings of the event.

In a later session, she drew a very simple outline of a figure with a striped cap, pulled down so that there was no face visible. The face had a body and legs, but no arms. This image was made slowly and intently. The true horror of what she had witnessed – of the mutilation and degradation of this boy – she was reliving while making the drawing. This was a truly embodied image.

The first picture she drew, called "The journey to Macedonia", was of a train with faces at the window. The second, called "The camp", was of a man and girl sheltering under an umbrella, standing next to three people encased in a square shape. In both pictures, it was snowing and bleak. These images, the girl explained, were their journey to a refugee camp in a cattle train in mid winter. When they arrived, all they had when they were turned out of the train was an umbrella and a square of plastic sheet to keep them dry. These images were still clear in the girl's mind and it was obvious that she wanted to share them with the adult. Without the explanation given in the title of the picture, it would have been difficult to empathise with the child and her father and understand the true hardship they had experienced.

Telling stories through pictures

It will sometimes be the case that the painting of a picture, in itself, has been enough, and the child may have no wish to share his experiences with you at that time. This wish should always be respected. Alternatively, the child may be greatly relieved to talk more about the image and elaborate on the details. It is often the case that what the child says about their painting is more revealing than the image itself, so don't be afraid to ask questions – but don't push too hard. Sometimes it can be a good idea just to ask the child for a name for the picture. This can lead to a fuller account of what was happening at the time, as can be seen in the five-year-old Kosovan girl's work in the adjacent case study.

For refugee families and their children, the telling of the story is of the utmost importance. It can be seen as the first step to acknowledging what has happened to bring them to the UK. In the telling of the story, whether in images or words, the nursery worker or teacher can be faced with a situation where the child becomes distressed, cries, or becomes silent. The recall of the events can be too painful and the child's defence and survival strategies fail them.

In these events, it is sometimes necessary just to sit quietly with the child and share their sadness with them, rather than distracting them with other things. With older children, it is possible to empathise with them in their losses of home and family. An example of this can be seen in the adjacent case study.

In these difficult circumstances, the adult sitting with the child or young person can be tempted to distract them and focus on another aspect of their story. This can be appropriate in some circumstances, but it is often wiser to stay with them in their silence, acknowledging what you have understood of the events and then sharing the memories with them. The fact that the child is now in a safe place with an adult they can trust will gradually help them to resurface and be able to continue the work. If this time is hurried and not respected, the child may feel they are unable to stay with their memories fully, their understanding being that it has been too painful for the adult to bear, and the child has destroyed the relationship. When these painful memories have eased, it is then the time to finish the session on a more positive note with forward-looking ideas of better times ahead.

Coming to terms with the past

To build a trusting relationship with children is an extremely slow process, especially when they are refugees and their world has been blown apart. For them, adults are not necessarily trustworthy people: the worker will initially be regarded with either suspicion or indifference, depending on how a child has suffered. It requires patience and understanding of the child's emotional state before a meaningful relationship can be established.

Working with the visual arts, it is possible to offer the child a safe and containing place in which they are able to reflect on their past lives, remembering the good and the bad times. Art therapy is not about painting good pictures: it is a process of self-expression that can relieve tensions and, through this, help in the acknowledgement of past traumas. Through this acknowledgement, the child is helped to gradually come to terms with the traumas and go on to make a good life for himself in his new country.

A 19-year-old Iraqi boy was alone in the UK, having witnessed the murder of his much-loved elder brother in his own country. His drawings had been slowly and deliberately made in charcoal without any use of colour. The image he presented was of a series of graves; half of them were decorated and the names inscribed on the stones. The other half were unmarked, just rectangular stones. Among these, he told, was the grave of his brother. Political suspects were not allowed marked graves. The teacher sat silently with him for a long time in front of this image and joined with him in mourning his dead brother. After some while, the boy was able to paint a flower in a pot above this grave and write an inscription, in honour of his brother's memory.

Reference

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Some practical activities for teachers

Nursery workers

- **Hand puppets** Children can be encouraged to tell each other stories through the characters of their puppets. Small children will speak more freely if it is through a fantasty figure.
- **Sand tray** An simple and immediate medium through which children who are unable to draw their ideas can create whole scenarios using miniature figures, animals, buildings, etc, to re-enact their experiences.
- **Clay** A good tactile material for play, where emotions of anger and frustration can be expressed without the need to make recognisable forms.

Infants and juniors

- **Mask-making** As with nursery children, older children will find it easier to express difficult thoughts from behind a mask, rather than face to face. For example, the children can be asked what sort of animal they would choose to be. They can then paint simple card masks either on a stick or with elastic, and act out how the animal would behave. This activity can lead to further dramas being created around their characters.
- **Plasticene** Each child can contribute to a fantasy environment on a big table. As they create their own world in this medium, the children can interact and co-operate with each other.
- **Claywork** Most children enjoy making pots and decorating them. This medium can also be conducive to recalling past objects in the child's life and the wish to re-create them. Sometimes the tactile quality of the material will be sufficient to calm a child or alternatively enable them to vent angry feelings.

Secondary school

- **Guided fantasy** This can be a painting activity in groups of six or eight. The children create a story of a shipwreck and a fantasy island, where each child has a piece of coastline to create their ideal place. They can choose to have anything or anybody on this island. This activity can be developed to talking of what has been important in the children's lives and what they can plan for the future.
- **Claywork** as with juniors
- **Use of junk material** Children can construct fantasy structures and people them with clay or plasticine figures, creating their own private spaces.

Section 8

Racism and Refugee Children

Tina Hyder and Jane Lane

The reality of racism

Racism is a reality for black and minority ethnic communities in the UK and is certainly a reality in the lives of many asylum-seekers and refugees. Refugee children and adults report racial harassment as an everyday experience in some parts of the country (Rutter and Hyder, 1998). This trend is increasing across Europe according to a recent report from the Institute of Race Relations (IRR, 2000), which describes rising levels of violence against asylum-seekers. In the UK, the Refugee Council reports that they are "seeing large numbers of asylum-seekers returning from NASS (the National Asylum Support Service) accommodation due to racial attacks". As the IRR report continues: "IRR's research shows that a deep-rooted xenophobia has risen to the surface in rural, coastal and port areas of Europe as a result of dispersal."

Media messages

see Video

In the UK, it would seem that there is a connection between the sorts of recent headlines that have appeared in the local and national press (see the video accompanying this pack), where words and phrases such as "scroungers" and "bogus" are used, and the reports of physical attacks on refugees and asylum-seekers documented by the police, Refugee Council, the Commission for Racial Equality and others.

The Audit Commission (2000) analysed 161 local newspaper articles collated by the Refugee Council in October and November 1999 and found that "in only six per cent of stories did journalists cite any positive contribution made by asylum-seekers or refugees; 28 per cent focused on the housing and/or employment difficulties attributed to this group; and 15 per cent concerned crimes and offences committed by asylum-seekers". It is therefore vital that agencies and organisations, including schools and early years settings that work with asylum-seekers and refugees, are seen to be active in challenging misconceptions, combating stereotypes and presenting the reality of the lives of asylum-seekers and refugees.

Current legislation

The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 has resulted in the dispersal of asylum applicants to some areas of the UK that may have little experience of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-faith communities. Added to negative media images and the blaming of refugees by many politicians, racial tension seems inevitable.

Racial hostility is also provoked if asylum-seekers appear to be getting "a better deal" than local disadvantaged communities. Lessons can be learned from the additional pressures caused by the apparent preferential treatment in some authorities of refugees and asylum-seekers compared with the local population. For instance, the recent Audit Commission report describes the following situations: one authority routinely provided taxis to transport asylum-seekers to newly allocated accommodation – other homeless families had to rely on public transport. In another authority, asylum-seekers housed under social services legislation were provided with funds for furniture and household equipment, whereas those housed under homelessness legislation were not. A further example is of an authority that had a rent deposit scheme to help asylum-seekers to secure private rented accommodation; no similar scheme existed for other homeless people

The report also states that examples such as those quoted above have: "generated community tensions and reinforced hostility towards new arrivals. There may well be a need for differential services, but the reasons for this should be explained by [council] members and officers."

It is clear that the implementation of some aspects of recent asylum legislation may well worsen the situation for many asylum-seeking and refugee families, and increase the possibility of hostility, often leading to racial tension. This must be addressed.

The apparent aim of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 is not to support the wellbeing of refugees and asylum-seekers but to provide a deterrent to the "flood" of "bogus" and "illegal claimants". The terms used by politicians cannot help but fuel undercurrents of racism and hostility, potentially leading to resentment, harassment and attack. The language of debate is about reducing numbers, reducing crime, and making entry into the country as hard as possible for as many as possible. Once in the country, racial hostility may be the only "welcome".

In the UK, legislation through the Race Relations Act 1976 underpins the prevention of racism and the promotion of racial equality. Increasingly, legislation requires that action is taken by education authorities, schools and early years settings to ensure that policies, procedures and practice promote equality of access and opportunity so providing a platform from which to tackle racism. But what does this mean in practice for refugees?

Definitions of racism

Racism takes many forms and can be said to include all those practices and procedures that, both historically and in the present, disadvantage and discriminate against people because of their ethnicity, colour, culture, religion or language.

Robin Richardson (1999) describes four elements of racism: exclusion, violence, prejudice and discrimination. He draws a distinction between "colour racism" and "cultural racism" – meaning that the "markers of difference are cultural as well as physical". He conceptualises racism in terms of inclusion and exclusion.

Refugees are clearly affected by all aspects of racism. We have seen the operation of "cultural racism" in the recent reactions in the UK to asylum-seekers and refugees from areas of Europe, such as Kosova. But one of the most important aspects of racism emerging as a consequence of recent asylum and immigration legislation is that of exclusion. Social and economic exclusion is provoked by the use of vouchers where the level of support is below benefit levels considered to be the minimum for survival. Asylum-seekers are not allowed to work, even in a voluntary capacity, for the first six months. Added to having no choice about where to settle, all of this contributes to the creation of a second class group of "citizens" who, through no fault of their own, are denied access to basic resources and services.

Refugee children, education and racism

"A child cannot learn what racial group he belongs to without being involved in a larger pattern of emotions, conflicts and desires which are part of a growing knowledge of what society thinks about his race."

(Clark, in Milner, 1983)

"Racial prejudice and racism permeate the fabric of our lives and discriminatory practices are affecting Somali children in Britain. The educational system is essentially monocultural and assimiliationist-oriented as is evident in curriculum content, assessment methods, school ethos and teacher attitudes in many schools."

(Kahin, 1997)

"In school they call us 'refs', and it hurts because it sounded like they were disgusted with you and made you look like a really horrible person, like an outcast."

(Susu, a refugee from Somalia)

"Refugee" has recently been reported as a term of abuse in some school playgrounds. So what can be done by early years settings, schools, local education authorities, and refugee communities themselves, to tackle the potential and actual racism directed at asylum-seekers and refugees?

Activities with children

One of the most effective tools when tackling racism is to promote positive self and group identity among those children who are potential targets.

According to research, cultural identity is typically established by the age of five. For people operating, as refugees are, in more than one culture, there are three important aspects of "cross-cultural competence":

- self-awareness
- knowledge or information specific to each culture
- skills that enable the individual to engage in each culture.

(Hanson and Lynch, 1992)

Carlos, aged nine, had been a successful pupil in his own country and was eager to start school and make friends. He had to wait six months before his parents could find him a place and by then was less enthusiastic and optimistic. He made surprisingly slow progress in English and was upset by the teasing he experienced, and his lack of friends.

There is a range of activities that can enable children to develop positive group identity (Dadzie, 2000). Resources that reflect a range of family groups are important. Refugee children need to hear stories and songs from their country of origin; seeing other children enjoy translated folk tales, or music that is a family favourite, will help children feel that they are part of the early years or school setting.

see Section 5

Valuing and supporting children's home language(s) is another vital strategy.

The most important factor is the willingness of teachers, carers and other practitioners to welcome and show an interest in the lives and circumstances of asylum-seeking and refugee children in their care. This is not about close questioning of children but about the demonstration to all children and parents that refugee children are assets to the setting. This can be demonstrated by knowing a little about the political background, language, and everyday life of some of the refugee communities that you may have contact with.

Introducing the refugee experience into the curriculum

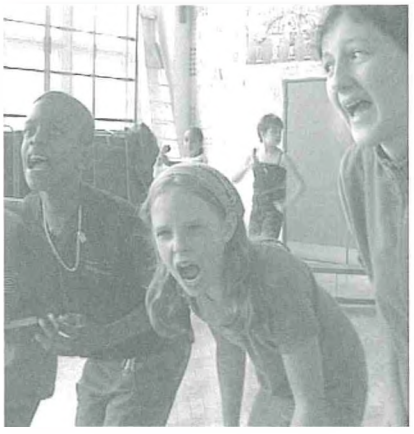
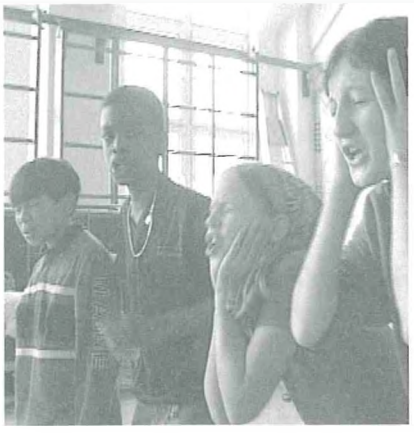
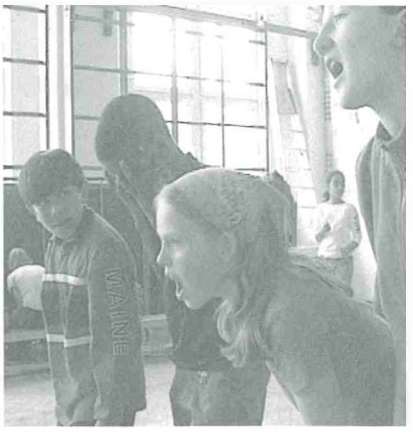
"Children's ideas about themselves and the world around them are formed at an early age. They take note of what is going on in their own place, their own family and in places further away. As they grow up, children's ideas often become more fixed and stereotypes develop. By introducing young children to the wealth of traditions, ways of doing things, ranges of lifestyles in our world, we can play an active part in influencing how young children see the world."

(Education Development Centre, 1996)

"Although most children can sympathise with the plight of refugees, very few can empathise. Some children may also display resentment if they feel that refugee children are gaining special attention. They may fear or despise them because they are different... The attitudes of their peers will have a profound effect on a young refugee, so it is important that the entire school population is briefed on refugee issues. This can be done as part of the school curriculum – through PHSE lessons, for example – or through one off presentations at assemblies, etc. The main aim should be to give children an understanding of why there are refugees, what they may have gone through and why they claim asylum in the UK. It is important to instil in peers the message that they can be of help to refugee and their actions can be a very powerful force in improving their refugee friends' lives."

(*Raising the Profile of Invisible Students*, Hampstead School, 1998)

It is possible to work with all children to broaden their knowledge of the world, and so bring a global perspective to early years and school work. It is important to increase children's awareness of the ways people live their lives all over the world. It is also important to consider diversity within the UK. All children, especially those in more culturally homogenous areas of the country, need to be reminded that people within the UK have very different customs, practices and attitudes to everyday things such as eating, clothing, etc. Intolerance of these differences within other ethnic groups can lead to prejudice and racism. It is therefore very important to ensure that any curriculum and other activities about global issues, difference and diversity also emphasise the importance of anti-racism.

see Video

At Salusbury World and Deptford Park, the two projects featured in the video accompanying this pack, a number of strategies have been used to introduce the refugee experience to all children and their families. These include

- poetry (on themes such as exile or flight)
- drama and performance (in the video accompanying this pack, children from Salusbury school performed the play *One Day We had to Run* – adapted from a Save the Children book – describing refugee children's experiences)
- music and dance (as a means of self-expression, using music and instruments from different regions around the world)
- art (on themes such as home, belonging).

see Further Information

In a school or early years settings

The curriculum should reflect a commitment to anti-racist practice explicitly related to refugees. Policies for racial equality need to cover a policy statement, an implementation programme and monitoring mechanism, and, as suggested in EYTARN's recent publication, *Equality in Action: Developing a policy for equality in early years settings*, should address the following areas:

- admissions
- staff recruitment and promotion
- resources
- the curriculum
- behaviour, including harassment and bullying
- teaching/caring styles
- "ethos"

- playground/outside play
- languages/body language
- positive action
- beliefs/faiths.

Policies must be reviewed regularly and assessed by staff teams, parents and children. It is also vital that strategies are in place to deal with racist incidents, including name-calling (Lane, 1996), in early years settings and schools, and that children, parents and staff are aware that action will be taken in response to racism. The following checklist is taken from guidelines for schools in Northamptonshire.

Dealing with racist incidents

- Racist incident occurs.
- Record the incident.
- Discuss the implications with pupil(s) and colleagues.
- Agree on immediate action within school's guidelines to support victims and deal with perpetrators.
- Unless the incident is minor or isolated, inform parents, governors and LEA.
- Where appropriate, consult with other agencies, ie, social services, police, racial equality council.
- Arrange case conference if necessary.
- Agree upon longer-term action to deal with perpetrator and to try to prevent future incidents.
- Monitor.

National guidance about working with refugee pupils

Recent guidance from the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) on *Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils: Guidance and resource materials for the providers of initial teacher education* (see below) specifically addresses the need for initial teacher training courses to consider issues arising when working with refugees and asylum-seekers.

Raising the attainment of minority ethnic pupils

To help trainees develop their understanding of the issues which impact upon the achievement of refugee pupils, training could address the following issues:

i. The needs of refugee pupils can differ from those of other minority pupils in that there may be extra dimensions to be addressed and barriers to overcome before their educational needs can be met. For example, pupils might need to be provided with the language and learning skills they need to benefit from the education system in this country, their education in their home country might have been interrupted, or they may be severely disturbed or distressed.

ii. Partnership between the school and other agencies is important in meeting the needs of refugee pupils.

iii. The teacher's job is primarily to educate pupils. Teachers cannot take on responsibilities more appropriate to the role of social worker or other professional counsellor. In certain cases it will be necessary to refer refugee pupils promptly to other professional services, through the school's referral systems and procedures.

iv. Inclusive schools have a policy on refugee admissions and induction.

v. Successful schools offer an inclusive curriculum that includes positive images of migration and builds upon the strengths which refugee pupils bring and have brought in the past. They have strategies for giving all pupils an informed understanding about why people become refugees and about the long history of people seeking asylum in many parts of the world.

vi. Successful schools work to establish an ethos that has high expectation for refugee pupils. This recognises pupils' past experiences of education, exhibits discretion and understanding in relation to behavioural and emotional difficulties which may arise because of past trauma, and recognises and addresses the racism which such pupils may face.

vii. Refugee pupils need opportunities to maintain their mother tongue and links with their home community, both for emotional support and for cognitive growth.

In relation to the lives of refugees, racism needs to be tackled on a number of different levels.

Nationally

Policies need to be in place to ensure that local education authorities and early years development and childcare partnerships (EYDCPs) address and inspect for racial equality in the delivery of services, including education. Initial teacher training and the early learning goals must be reviewed. The Government and specific departments need to provide guidance on how services for particular minority ethnic groups, including refugees, can best be co-ordinated.

Early years development plans will need to include targets for refugee children.

Locally

The needs of local minority ethnic groups must be addressed in all aspects of education. Teachers, carers and support staff should be offered training to meet the needs of children from refugee communities. In a climate where *all* children, parents and communities are valued and diversity is seen as an asset, there is less likely to be hostility and racism towards those who are perceived as different.

Children's views

"People just say go back to your own country... they don't know how ruined my life is."

17-year-old Kosovar boy

"... people throw stones at us, swear at us and harass us."

13-year-old Pakistani girl

These are the words of young refugees recently interviewed by Save the Children. Those working with young refugees must be aware that racism and hostility must be addressed if children are to truly find a place of safety.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, ratified by the UK Government in 1991, is a useful starting point when addressing racism.

> *"In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origins exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess his or her own religion, to use his or her own language."*
>
> (article 30)

Questions for discussion

1. Look at a selection of national newspapers over a one-week period. How are the lives are asylum-seekers and refugees in the UK reported? In your opinion, does the language and tone of newspaper reporting aim to provoke or reduce hostility that could provoke racial tension? What can be done to address this?
2. What do the children you work with know about the lives of asylum-seekers and refugees?

References

Audit Commission, *Another Country: Implementing dispersal under the immigration and asylum act 1999*, 2000.

Clark, K. in Milner, D., *Children and Race: Ten years on*, Ward Lock Educational, 1983.

Dadzie, T., *Toolkit for Tackling Racism in Schools*, Trentham Books, 2000.

Education Development Centre, *Making it Real: Introducing a global dimension in the early years*, Save the Children, 1996.

Hampstead School, "Raising the profile of invisible students: practical and peer-led approaches to enhancing educational and emotional support for refugee and asylum-seeking children in schools", *Children of the Storm*, 1998.

Hanson, M. and Lynch, E., *Developing Cross-cultural Competence: A guide for working with young children and their families*, Paul Brookes, 1992.

Institute of Race Relations, *The Dispersal of Xenophobia*, 2000.

Kahin, M., *Educating Somali Children in Britain*, Trentham books, 1997.

Lane, J., *Planning for Excellence: Implementing the DfEE guidance for the Equal Opportunity Strategy in Early Years Development Plans, and introducing a framework for equality*, Early Years Trainers Anti-Racist Network (EYTARN), 1996.

Northamptonshire County Council, *Dealing with Harassment and Racist Incidents in Schools*, Professional Development Materials, 1992.

Richardson R., *Inclusive Schools, Inclusive Society: Race and identity on the agenda*, Trentham Books, 1999.

Rutter, J. and Hyder, T., *Refugee Children in the Early Years: Issues for policy-makers and providers*, Save the Children and the Refugee Council, 1998.

Teacher Training Agency, *Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils: Guidance and resource materials for providers of initial teacher training*, 2000.

Further reading

Barter, C., *Protecting Children from Racism and Racial Abuse: A research review*, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 1999.

Brown, C., Barnfield, J. and Stone, M., *Spanner in the Works: Education for racial equality and social justice in white schools*, Trentham Books, 1990.

Lane, J., *Action for Racial Equality in the Early Years: Understanding the past, thinking about the present, planning for the future: A practical handbook for early years workers*, National Early Years Network, 1999.

Further Information

Organisations

Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)

Elliot House
10–12 Allington Street
London SW1E 5EH

Tel: 020 7278 8222 Fax: 020 7630 7605
Email: info@cre.gov.uk

Tackles racial discrimination and promotes racial equality. Has a schools educational department, which publishes information for schools.

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

115 Old Street
London EC1V 9JR

Tel: 020 7251 8706 Fax: 020 7251 5110

Training, legal advice, campaigning on UK immigration and nationality law.

The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

96–98 Grafton Road
London NW5 3EJ

Tel: 020 7813 7777 Fax: 020 7813 0011

Medical care, counselling, advice and therapy to victims of torture. Also offers an information service.

National Asylum Support Service

Voyager House
30–32 Wellesley Road
Croydon CR0 2AD

Helpline: 0845 602 1739

Government agency responsible for providing accommodation and support for asylum-seekers.

Refugee Action

The Old Fire Station
3rd Floor
Waterloo Road
London SE1 8SB

Tel: 020 7654 7700 Fax: 020 7401 3699

A national independent charity that works in partnership with refugee organisations by assisting them in providing services for their communities, and works with asylum-seekers by offering impartial and confidential advice and support. It has offices in the North-West, east Midlands and southern England.

The Refugee Council

Bondway House
3–9 Bondway
London SW8 1SJ

Tel: 020 7820 3000 Fax: 020 7582 9929
Email: info@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Education adviser: jill.rutter@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Direct services for refugees. Training, advice, counselling, information, publications on refugee issues and bilingual teaching materials. Can provide up-to-date lists of community groups.

Refugee Education Team

INSET
Kirton Road
London E13 9DR

Tel: 020 8548 5023/5094
Fax: 020 8548 5025
Email: Bill.Bolloten@newham.gov.uk or
Tim.Spafford@newham.gov.uk

(see page 30)

Save the Children

17 Grove Lane
London SE5 8RD

Tel: 020 7703 5400 Fax: 020 7703 2278

The UK's leading international children's charity, working in more than 70 countries, including the UK. Its activities include work with children caught up in wars and conflicts, and work with refugee children in the UK.

Save the Children: Centre for Young Children's Rights

356 Holloway Road
London N7 6PA

Tel: 020 7700 8127 Fax: 020 7697 0982
Email: cycr@scfuk.org.uk

Information and small reference library on children's participation and equality issues in early years education. Includes books and resources on working with refugee children.

Scottish Refugee Council

1st floor, Wellgate House
200 Cowgate
Edinburgh EH1 1NQ

Tel: 0131 225 9994 Fax: 0131 225 9997

Provides assistance, advice and information to refugees and asylum-seekers in Scotland

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Millbank Tower
21–24 Millbank
London SW1P 4PQ

Tel: 020 7828 9191
Email: gbrlo@unhcr.ch
Website: www.unhcr.ch/

UNHCR, the United Nations refugee organisation, is mandated by the United Nations to lead and co-ordinate international action for the worldwide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems.

United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Africa House
64–78 Kingsway
London WC2B 6NB

Tel: 020 7405 5592 Fax: 020 7405 2332
Email: info@unicef.org.uk

International children's charity that raises funds for emergency appeals and ongoing programmes. Source of educational materials for schools on global issues, citizenship issues and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Welsh Refugee Council

Unit 8, Williams Court
Trade Street
Cardiff CF10 5DQ

Tel: 02920 666250 Fax: 02920 343731
Email: wrc@globalnet.co.uk

Provides assistance, advice and information to refugees and asylum-seekers in Wales.

Publishers

Amnesty International

99 Rosebery Avenue
London EC1 4RE

Tel: 020 7814 6200

Human rights reports and briefings.

Grant and Cutler

Publishers and Foreign Booksellers
55-57 Great Marlborough Street
London W1V 2AY

Tel: 020 7734 2012
Website: www.grant-c.demon.co.uk/home.htm

Supplier of books and dictionaries in most languages. Extensive on-line catalogue.

Learning By Design

The Professional Development Centre
English Street
London E3 4TA

Tel: 020 8983 1944 Fax: 020 8983 1932
Email: info@learning design.org
Website: www.learningdesign.org

Produces a number of dual-language books in refugee languages and other useful materials for schools.

Letterbox Library

5 Bradbury Street
London N16 8SN

Tel: 020 7251 2551

Distributes a range of children's books with a strong focus on anti-discriminatory practice.

Magi Publications

22 Manchester Street
London W1M 5PG

Tel: 020 7486 0925

Produces dual-language books.

Mantra Publishing

5 Alexander Grove
London N12 8NU

Tel: 020 8445 5123
Email: orders@mantrapublishing.com
Website: www.mantrapublishing.com

Has an extensive catalogue of dual-language books and other materials. Mantra aim to update their materials to include languages of communities that have recently arrived in the UK, eg, Albanian and Czech.

Milet Publishing

PO Box 9916
London W14 0GS

Tel: 020 7603 5477
Email: info@milet.com
Website: www.milet.com

Dual-language stories. Many in Turkish but also other languages.

The Refugee Council

Bondway House
3-9 Bondway
London SW8 1SJ

Tel: 020 7820 3000

As well as information materials, the Refugee Council publishes a range of bilingual children's books in refugee languages.

Roy Yates Books

Smallfields Cottage
Cox Green
Rudgwick
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 3DE

Tel: 01403 822299 Fax: 01403 82301

Publish comprehensive and detailed catalogues of children's books and dictionaries in many languages.

Save the Children

17 Grove Lane
London SE5 8RD

Tel: 020 7703 5400 Fax: 020 7703 2278

Publishes a wide range of titles for professionals, including those who work with refugee children and young people.

Trentham Books Ltd
Westview House
734 London Road
Oakhill
Stoke on Trent
ST4 5NP

Tel: 01782 745567 Fax: 01782 745553
Website: www.trentham-books.co.uk

Publisher of books on many educational themes.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Millbank Tower
21-24 Millbank
London SW1P 4QP

Tel: 020 7828 9191
Website: www.unhcr.ch

Produces a range of materials on refugee issues, including a quarterly magazine, *Refugees*.

The Willesden Bookshop

Willesden Green Library Centre
95 The High Road
London NW10 4QU

Tel: 020 8451 7000 Fax: 020 8830 1233

Supplier of books and resources to schools and libraries. Produces detailed, annotated list of resources on many themes, including refugees.

Children's books that raise refugee issues

Faraway Home, Marilyn Taylor, O Brien, 2000, £4.99
A tale of Jewish children who came to safety on the Kindertransport after the rise of Hitler. Like the refugee children of today's conflicts, they had to make new friends who understood little or nothing of what they had been through. Based on a true story, it tells how Karl and Rosa adapt to life on a farm set up
by the local Jewish community just outside Belfast. Their survival depends on building new trust and keeping hope alive.

A Fight to Belong, Alan Gibbons, Save the Children, 1999, £4.99
An envelope drops through the letterbox of the Okolo family's house in Manchester. But it's not anybody's birthday. Instead, that letter turns the lives of Awele, 8, and Anwuli, 5, upside down. It's from the Government, telling the Okolo family they are going to be deported back to Nigeria. Through the eyes of Anwuli, *A Fight to Belong* tells the story of the family's four-year campaign to stay in England – with schoolfriends, teachers and parents joining in by writing letters, singing, marching and signing petitions of support.

The Girl in Red, Gaye Hicyilmaz, Orion, 2000, £4.99
The arrival of a group of Romanian gypsies is greeted with violent abuse by the residents of Poets' Rise. Strange alliances build up between previously warring neighbours as they unite against the newcomers. To Frankie's shock, his mother becomes leader of the bigots, forfeiting her new boyfriend in the process. Frankie sees the Romanians only through his obsession with Emilia, the beautiful girl with the long plaits in a red dress and sandals who arrives in his

class speaking no English. Comparing his love with the boundary-crossing of Romeo and Juliet, he takes sides against his mother and allies himself instead with other, more compassionate adults.

Little Soldier, Bernard Ashley, Orchard, 2000, £ 4.99
Kaninda has seen his family killed. He arrives in England alone, only holding himself together by his secret plans to get back home. Kaninda has been a gun-toting boy-soldier, fighting the rebels in East Africa – he has the scar to show for it. On the estates around his new school in east London, he finds tribal warfare of a different kind – less bloody, but every bit as pernicious. Taking sides with Laura, daughter of his adopting family, he is sucked into new friendships – ties that help him to begin a new life.

One Day We had to Run! Refugee children tell their story in words and paintings, Sybella Wilkes, Evans Brothers Ltd, 1994, ISBN:0 237 51489 3
Refugee children from Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia talk about their lives, with paintings by the children and photos of them.

The Other Side of Truth, Beverley Naidoo, Puffin, 2000, £4.99
This contemporary story tells how Sade and her younger brother, Femi, see their mother shot dead on the doorstep in Nigeria, the victim of their father's political enemies. With no time to mourn her death, the children are smuggled out of the country. Arriving in London, they are abandoned by their hired courier and left to fend for themselves in a country that is alien in every way.

Websites

Websites with information about refugees

Electronic Immigration Network
www.ein.org.uk

EU Networks on Integration of Refugees
www.refugeenet.org
Includes a database of European project to help refugees in their new country. Search this site for funding and partners for your own project.

The Guardian
www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/Refugees_in_Britain
Archive of articles and features on refugees in the UK.

Oxfam
www.oxfam.org.uk/campaign/cutconflict/asylum/ intro.htm
Gives background information on asylum seekers in the UK.

Refaid
www.refaid.org.uk
A charity that supports the United Nations High Commission on Refugees. Access to free teachers' materials for primary and secondary school refugees.

The Refugee Council
www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Save the Children
www.scfuk.org.uk

UN High Commissioner for Refugees
www.unhcr.ch

US Committee for Refugees
www.refugees.org

Websites with information and advice about seeking asylum in the UK

Asylum Aid
www.asylumaid.org.uk

The Home Office
www.homeoffice.gov.uk
Has a section on immigration.

The Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate
www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants Factsheet on Applying for Asylum
www.jcwi.org.uk/publications.html/fs6.html

Oxfam Campaign against Asylum Vouchers
www.oxfam.org.uk/campaign/cutconflict/asylum/action.htm

Refugee Legal Centre
www.refugee-legal-centre.org.uk

Resource Information Service
www.ris.org.uk

Websites with information about human rights

Amnesty International
www.amnesty.org

Amnesty International (UK)
www.amnesty.org.uk

Human Rights Watch
www.hrw.org

Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture
www.torturecare.org.uk

Minority Rights Group International
www.minorityrights.org

Websites with information about children's rights

Save the Children
www.scfuk.org.uk

UNICEF guide to the Convention on the Rights of the Child
www.unicef.org/crc

Websites with resources for children and teachers

Cool Planet
www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet

Institute of Race Relations
www.homebeats.co.uk

New Internationalist
www.newint.org

One World
www.oneworld.org/index.html

Peace Child International
www.oneworld.org/peacechild

UNHCR
www.unhcr.ch/teach/teach.htm

United Nations Cyber School Bus
www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus

Voices of refugee children
www.usaforunhcr.org/childrens_stories.html

Websites with information about refugee children in UK schools

DfEE for EMTAG
www.dfee.gov.uk
Includes information on EMTAG and Sure Start. The DfEE publishes Education Contacts for Travelling Families, which lists contact details for Traveller Education Services throughout the country. These can often provide advice and contacts for refugee education.

Haringey Refugee Education Project
www.refugeeproj.free-online.co.uk

Home Office Website
www.homeoffice.gov.uk
Includes information and statistics on immigration and nationality.

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns
www.ncadc.org.uk
List of websites with information on campaigns supporting refugees.

Schools Against Deportations
www.homebeats.co.uk/sad

Teacher Training Agency guidelines: Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils
www.canteach.gov.uk/info/itt/supporting/eval.htm

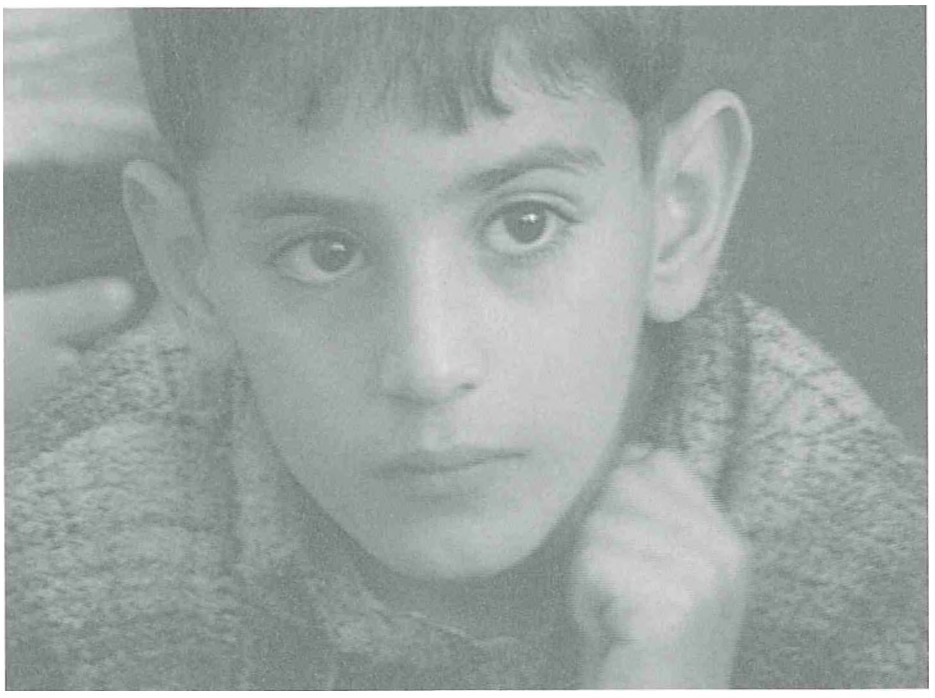
Anti-racism websites

Black Information Link
www.blink.org.uk
Site for UK ethnic minority issues.

Campaign against Racism and Fascism
www.carf.demon.co.uk

Part four

In-service Training



In-service Training

Introduction

This section contains training exercises, notes for the trainer and OHTs to enable trainers to run their own in-service training. It is divided into three sections:

These materials will enable trainers and others to run in-service training on working with refugee children. There are three options for training programmes, lasting one hour, one and a half hours or three hours (all using the video).

The overall aims of the training are:

- to raise awareness and provide information about refugee children in the UK
- to increase the confidence and skills of participants in supporting refugee children in schools and early years settings.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the training, participants will:

- understand the entitlement of refugee children to protection, care and appropriate educational provision
- have considered a range of strategies that educational and other settings can use in response to the needs of refugee children
- have identified action steps to further develop good practice.

Target group

This session is appropriate for:

- teachers, classroom assistants and other school staff
- nursery teachers, nursery nurses and other early years workers
- play and youth workers, and educational welfare officers.

Trainer preparation

- Before undertaking the training, watch the *In Safe Hands* video and make sure you are familiar with the training notes within this pack.
- Collect and duplicate materials and resources required for the session.
- Prepare presentations based on the training notes and OHTs.
- There are a variety of different timetables. If you choose the longer session, we recommend you plan a refreshment break after watching the video – this is approximately halfway through the session.

Three programme outlines

The one-hour programme

Aims

- To highlight the issues facing parents/carers and children in early years settings and schools.
- To illustrate good practice.

Actions

- Show the video. 35 minutes
- Ask the group to identify the good practice issues raised in the video and assess the relevance to their own settings – group discussion. 15 minutes
- Feedback 10 minutes

The one-and-a-half-hour programme

Aims

- To provide context to the lives of refugees and asylum-seekers in the UK.
- To highlight the issues facing parents/carers and children in early years settings and schools.
- To illustrate good practice.

Actions

- Session 1: Introductions and aims — 5 minutes
- Session 3: Who is a refugee? — 5 minutes
- Session 4: Background to refugees in the UK — 15 minutes
- Session 5: Creating a learning environment — 10 minutes
- Session 6: Video and discussion — 45 minutes
- Session 7: Identifying good practice — 10 minutes

The three-hour programme

Aims

- To provide context to the lives of refugees and asylum-seekers in the UK.
- To highlight the issues facing refugee parents/carers and children in early years settings and schools.
- To illustrate good practice.
- To enable participants to plan appropriate support for refugee children.

Actions

- Session 1: Introductions and aims — 5 minutes
- Session 2: Introductory exercise — 10 minutes
- Session 3: Who is a refugee? — 5 minutes
- Session 4: Background to refugees in the UK — 15 minutes
- Session 5: Creating a learning environment — 10 minutes
- Session 6: Video and discussion — 45 minutes
- Session 7: Identifying good practice — 10 minutes
- Session 8: Identifying risk and protective factors — 15 minutes
- Session 9: Case studies — 35 minutes
- Session 10: Planning for inclusion — 10 minutes
- Session 11: Action planning — 15 minutes
- Session 12: Summary and evaluation — 5 minutes

Running the session

Session 1 – Introductions and aims

Purpose To welcome participants, explain the context of the training, and introduce the aims and learning objectives.

Duration 5 minutes

What you need

- OHT 1 – Aims and Learning Outcomes

Description

- Welcome participants and distribute the session programme, which you need to create by using one of the programme outlines.
- Acknowledge that there may be refugees among the participants. Extend a further welcome to them and make a point of valuing their contributions to the session.
- Explain to participants that literacy is the main curriculum focus in the training, because of the importance of English language acquisition for refugee children.
- Introduce OHT 1 – Aims and Learning Outcomes and the programme outline to the group.

Session 2 – Introductory exercise

Duration 10 minutes

Purpose To enable participants to clarify their training needs and expectations for the session.

What you need

- Exercise Sheet 1 – Introductory exercise

Description

- Distribute Exercise Sheet 1. Ask the participants to complete the questions individually. They will need about five minutes for individual reflection and to record their responses, which they can then share with a partner.
- Ask for some feedback. If time, you may wish to ask participants to briefly introduce their partner to the group, highlighting one or two of their responses.
- Highlight any key points and comment on any expectations that can't be met by the current training session.

Session 3 – Who is a refugee?

Purpose To enable participants to propose a definition of a refugee in one or two sentences, and discuss their definition.

Duration 5 minutes

Description

- Ask participants to work in pairs or threes.
- Explain that their task is to propose a definition of a refugee in one or two sentences. Tell participants that they can draw on information and knowledge that they already have. Their definition does not need to be expressed in precise "legal" language.
- Ask for feedback – encourage a range of responses and ideas.
  The following key elements of the refugee definition, which will be presented next, can be commended should they arise:
  - fear of persecution
  - being outside a country of origin
  - needing protection.

Session 4 – Background to refugees in the UK

Purpose To give participants some background information on refugees: the legal definition of a refugee, statistics about refugees in the UK and around the world, some of the possible experiences of refugee children, as well as their legal entitlements, and right to education in the UK.

Duration 15 minutes

What you need

- OHT 2 – Who is a refugee?
- OHT 3 – Refugees in the world
- OHT 4 – Refugees in the UK
- OHT 5 – The possible experiences of refugee children
- OHT 6 – Refugee children and education

Description

- Thank participants for their contributions. Display and read the first part of OHT 2 – Who is a refugee? Explain that refugees are protected in law by the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The Convention was drawn up in the aftermath of the Second World War when there were millions of refugees and displaced people in Europe. It is a legally binding treaty, which the UK has signed.
- Then read the second part of OHT 2, which defines the term "asylum-seeker".
- Explain that in the course of this session, the word "refugee" will be used as a generic term covering both people recognised as refugees under the terms of the 1951 UN Convention, and those who are asylum-seekers.

- Using OHT 3 – Refugees in the world, give an overview of the world refugee situation. It is important to keep this overhead updated. Useful sources of information are the UNHCR website (www.unhcr.ch/statist/main.htm) and the US Committee for Refugees website (www.refugees.org/worldmain.htm).
- Using OHT 4 – Refugees in the UK, give a brief picture of refugees in the UK.
- Emphasise to participants that refugee children and families are not a homogeneous group. To speak the same language, or come from the same village, city or country, does not mean that people always feel that they belong to the same ethnic or cultural group, or that they share the same beliefs and allegiances.
- Stress to participants that it is important not to make the assumption that all children who have been refugees will have been affected by it or will react to it in the same way.

  OHT 5 – The possible experiences of refugee children shows some of the diverse experiences of children who have become refugees.
- Close the presentation by asserting the rights of all children to protection, support and care under international law.

  The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights on the Rights of Child affirms that refugee children have an entitlement to special care, protection and assistance.

  OHT 6 – Refugee children and education can also be displayed to inform and remind participants that school-age chilldren of asylum-seeking and refugee families are entitled to full-time education in the UK.

  Local education authorities should make arrangements for ensuring that refugee children can access school places.

Session 5 – Creating a learning environment

Purpose To encourage participants to think about the settings that they work in.

Duration 10 minutes

What you need

- Exercise Sheet 2 – Creating a learning environment

Description

- Distribute Exercise Sheet 2 – Creating a learning environment, which has 10 statements about the educational setting that participants work in. Ask participants to assemble in groups with colleagues and discuss the statements. Their task is to identify six of the statements that they consider to be ones that best reflect good practice in their setting(s).

Session 6 – *In Safe Hands* – video and discussion

Purpose To identify and reflect on good practice in settings and schools with experience of working with refugee children and families.

Duration 45 minutes

What you need

- *In Safe Hands* video
- Video recorder

Description

- The *In Safe Hands* video has been produced by Save the Children. The video shows the work of two London primary schools. Both schools have enrolled significant numbers of refugee children and have developed a range of responses to their needs.
- While watching the video, ask participants not to take extensive notes. They may, however, find it useful to look for ways in which the two schools featured have worked to create their learning environments.
- After watching the video, give participants a few minutes to feedback their initial reactions, feelings and observations. Be prepared to allow participants the space to share any difficult feelings they have in small groups, if necessary.
- You may also wish to remind participants that the experience of becoming a refugee involves massive loss and change. Children may have lost what is tangible – home, parents, relatives, friends, familiar surroundings, etc. They may also have experienced loss on other levels – loss of confidence, of trust and self-esteem.

Session 7 – Identifying good practice

Purpose To encourage participants to consider some of the good practice they have identified in the two schools in the video, and to give feedback.

Duration 10 minutes

What you need

- Exercise Sheet 2 – Creating a learning environment

Description

- Ask participants to refer back to Exercise Sheet 2. Ask them to recall some of the ways in which the schools in the video had thought about their learning environment.
- Can participants identify any of the statements on Exercise Sheet 2 that reflect what the schools are doing to support refugee children and families? Ask them to give examples, which you can record on a flipchart.

Session 8 – Identifying risk and protective factors

Purpose To give participants the opportunity to consider some of the ways in which refugee children may cope with adversity and the enormous changes many of them will have experienced.

Duration 15 minutes

What you need

- OHT 7 – The impact of war and persecution
- OHT 8 – Risk factors
- OHT 9 – Protecting and mediating factors

Description

- You will be describing some of the factors that affect the wellbeing and progress of refugee children. The participants will also become familiar with some of the factors that can protect children from long-term distress and may help them to be resilient.
- Display OHT 7 – The impact of war and persecution. Re-emphasise that refugee children are not a homogeneous group and that it is important to consider each child as a unique individual. Children vary in how they cope with adverse circumstances – this can be seen from the range and variety of their coping behaviours and strategies.
- Emphasise to participants that forms of violence and repression differ from country to country. It may help for them to have some understanding and knowledge of what has happened in the countries that children have come from.
- Explain that refugee children have had widely differing experiences of persecution and that their lives in exile in the UK also differ. This will challenge participants to develop a closer appreciation and understanding of these children's backgrounds and their current circumstances. Explain that they will need to identify what factors may be helping such children to cope with these enormous and stressful changes.

- It is clearly unhelpful to draw simplistic conclusions about how children are coping. Point out to participants that they must therefore be careful in using terms such as "trauma".
- Research into the situations of children in war and political violence has shown that children may have been exposed to a range of risks, but may also benefit from the presence of other mediating factors, which may offer them protection against distress.
- Display OHT 8 – Risk factors. Emphasise that as well as coping with past adversities, refugee children and their families are also faced with trying to make sense of their new situation. Explain to participants that they should avoid the assumption that events in the past are always more upsetting than present experiences – it may lead them to ignore current factors that may be causing stress and undermining a child's wellbeing. (See also page 28.)
- Display OHT 9 – Protecting and mediating factors. Explain that it is important to understand how risk factors and protective and mediating factors interrelate. If participants can gain some understanding of what a child has experienced, what their present situation may be and what protective influences there are, they will be better placed to make effective assessments and plan interventions.
- Emphasise the crucial protective factor of whether a child has a parent or carer who is coping well, and is able to provide consistent care and support. The key practice implication is that support also needs to be focused on the needs of parents. The headteacher of Salusbury Primary makes this point clearly in the video when she says, "If adults are supported, children learn better."

Session 9 – Case studies

Purpose To enable participants to draw on the model of identifying risk and protective factors, to begin to assess some of the needs of a refugee child.

Duration 35 minutes

What you need

- Case studies 1, 2 and 3
- Exercise Sheet 3 – Risk and protective factors
- OHT 9 – Protective and mediating factors

Description

- Explain to participants that they will be working in small groups of four or five. They will be asked to choose one of the case studies provided, which they can then discuss with their colleagues.

  There are three case studies to choose from: Sumira, Carlos and Flakron. The information in each is based on actual cases of refugee children in UK schools, although the children's identities have been changed.

- Ask the participants to read through their case study and then, after discussion, to respond to the prompts on Exercise Sheet 3. As well as identifying what risk and protective factors may be present in the child's situation, ask them to refer back to the video and recall any strategies they saw the two schools using that may also be useful and appropriate. Finally, give groups an opportunity to draw on their own individual or good practice in their educational settings to suggest any further support strategies.

- Provide some time for feedback and discussion to draw out some key practice issues. You may wish to emphasise and highlight those strategies suggested that build on resilience. Referring back to OHT 9 – Protective and mediating factors can reinforce awareness of those protective factors that schools may be well placed to enhance and resource.

Session 10 – Planning for inclusion

Purpose To inform participants what guidelines and statutory requirements the DfEE and National Curriculum give to LEAs regarding refugees. Participants will also learn about recent research on refugee children in the early years, and suggested good practice.

Duration 10 minutes

What you need

- OHT 10 – The National Curriculum
- OHT 11 – Key points from the DfEE
- OHT 12 – Recent research on early years provision for refugee children
- OHT 13 – Good practice in early years provision for refugee children

Description

- A great deal of experience has been gained by those local education authorities in the UK who have already welcomed and enrolled substantial numbers of refugee and asylum-seeking pupils over many years. Some of that experience and good practice has been highlighted in the *In Safe Hands* video.
- The most successful and durable practice has taken place when schools and LEAs have ensured refugees and asylum-seekers have been fully included in the life of the school, and have worked alongside peers in mainstream learning activities.
- The DfEE, the QCA and OFSTED all recognise and affirm the entitlement of refugee children to education. They have all recently issued guidelines that emphasise the importance of planning for the inclusion of refugee children, alongside planning for the needs of other diverse groups of pupils.
- Display and read through OHT 10 – The new National Curriculum. The new National Curriculum contains a statutory statement on inclusion. Schools are required to plan and deliver a curriculum that meets the specific needs of individuals and groups of pupils.

- The DfEE has also issued advice to LEAs in a recent letter to Directors of Education. In this, the DfEE reminds schools and LEAs of their legal obligations to provide full-time education to school age refugee and asylum-seeking pupils.
- Display OHT 11 – Key points from the DfEE, which highlights DfEE advice to local education authorities.
- The DfEE recognises that refugee pupils may need special support and understanding in order to settle into school life. LEAs and schools are encouraged to plan the provision, which enables refugee children to access schooling and receive appropriate support. The DfEE guidelines are helpful in outlining some of the areas where practice can be developed.
- At this point, you may wish to provide a particular focus on recent policy developments in early years education and childcare. The key points are outlined on OHTs 12 and 13.

  OHT 12 provides further background information on recent research on refugee children in the early years. OHT 13 outlines some of the recognised good practice in this phase.
- Draw special attention to the advice from the DfEE that support should be co-ordinated with other agencies and service providers.
- Reiterate that the needs of refugee children may be multiple and complex. Good assessments of need can't be successfully undertaken if only one area of the child's experience and current situation is focused on. This all suggests that good links with other professionals need to be built. Explain that many schools in London and other LEAs have identified a member of staff who has the responsibility of co-ordinating support for refugee children in school and who also develops links with other agencies.
- This is one of the aspects of work that participants will now go on to consider in the next part of the training session – Action Planning.

Session 11 – Action Planning

Purpose To give participants an opportunity to review their learning and consider any action that they now wish or need to take.

Duration 15 minutes

What you need

- Exercise Sheet 4a – Action planning, 4b – Action plan – supporting refugee and asylum-seeking children, or 4c – Welcoming refugee children

Description

- Although three action planning formats are provided: Exercise Sheets 4a, 4b and 4c, you may wish to adapt this session to the particular needs of the participants. You will need to decide which action planning format is the most appropriate for the participants. Exercise Sheet 4b can facilitate more focused and in-depth action planning. Alternatively, you may feel that the participants would benefit from an opportunity to self-evaluate and review their setting's existing welcome, inclusion and support for refugee children. Exercise Sheet 4c is a format that may be helpful for this.
- You may also wish to consider how to group the participants for this exercise. It may be appropriate for participants to undertake the action planning individually or with colleagues from the same setting. Alternatively, you may feel that participants should work together in small groups to enable some shared prioritisation of future work. Groups/colleagues should aim to reach a consensus as to the ways forward.
- You may also wish to hold a short plenary session. Groups/individuals could be asked to share a key action point or way forward with the whole group.

Session 12 – Summary and evaluation

Purpose To enable participants to reflect on their experience of the training programme and to identify further action.

Duration 5 minutes

What you need

- Exercise Sheet 5 – Evaluation

Description

- You will need to bring the session to a close in a way that is appropriate for participants and your own style.
- Exercise Sheet 5 allows participants to personally reflect on the session. Comments made may also give useful feedback on your delivery and be helpful for future planning.

INTRODUCTORY EXERCISE

Please consider the following statements and complete individually.
Then share your responses with a partner.

I am attending this training session because...	The experience I have that may help me respond to the needs of refugee children is...
My main concerns about working with refugee and asylum-seeking children are...	The key things I want to gain from this session are...

CREATING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

	Yes	No
We welcome parents and try to involve them in the life of the school.		
We value the cultural and language backgrounds of our pupils.		
We believe all children need good-quality play experiences.		
We make sure all children feel safe.		
We provide information to newly arriving parents about our educational setting and the local community.		
There are clear policies and guidelines about racism and bullying.		
There are opportunities in the curriculum for children to share their difficult feelings and experiences.		
We have good links with other agencies that support families and children.		
We help children develop the skills to support and welcome each other, including new arrivals.		
Children of different abilities work collaboratively.		

SUMIRA

A four-year-old girl from Somalia

CIRCUMSTANCES OF EXILE

Sumira arrived in the UK with her mother and two older siblings. Her family had previously fled from the city of Brava, in southern Somalia.

In 1991, Brava was occupied by a succession of clan militias who systematically terrorised the population. They destroyed and looted property, and committed atrocities against the civilian population. Many girls and women were raped. Sumira's mother and siblings escaped in a *dhow*, a single-masted boat, which took five days to reach Mombasa in Kenya. There was a shortage of food and water on the boat.

In Kenya, the family lived in a refugee camp where Sumira was born. Life was not secure in the camp – banditry was common, and local farmers beat up camp residents and, on one occasion, set fire to the camp, because they were angry about their presence. Sumira's mother was dependent on aid organisations for food and milk for the children, and healthcare was, at best, minimal.

Sumira's father stayed behind in Kenya to look after his elderly parents.

EXPERIENCES SINCE ARRIVAL IN UK

Sumira joined a nursery class. She, like the rest of her family, doesn't speak any English. She is a small, frail girl and looks very young for a reception-age child.

After several weeks Sumira has not settled very well or made any real friends. She can follow some instructions but speaks only a few English words. She behaves like a much younger child, and finds it difficult to concentrate. She often falls asleep on the carpet during the day. The teacher has noticed that Sumira does seem to enjoy painting, and working with clay and plasticine.

Sumira and her family are living in temporary accommodation. The house is very overcrowded and cramped. Her mother suffers from hypertension and diabetes. They have applied for asylum but have not yet had a decision. Sumira's mother receives Income Support but regularly sends some of her money to her husband.

Recently, Sumira's mother has made contact with a organisation formed by other Somali Bravanese women. She has started to attend their regular get-togethers.

FLAKRON

A ten-year-old boy from Kosova

CIRCUMSTANCES OF EXILE

Flakron, his mother and older sister came to the UK to seek asylum. Flakron went to school in Pristina for three years but did not start his fourth year, because of the political situation there. He can read and write in Albanian and took a short course in English during his third year at school.

The family's father did not want to leave Kosova and they have had no contact with him since arriving in the UK. There is a 25-year-old male cousin who arrived in the UK 18 months before Flakron.

Flakron's mother has a degenerative condition of the coccyx and walks with a stick.

Flakron was born with kidney problems and had two operations on his kidneys in Kosova as a young child.

EXPERIENCES SINCE ARRIVAL IN UK

Flakron and his sister were enrolled in a local primary and secondary school after waiting two months.

The family has been housed in a two-bedroom, first floor flat. There is quite a steep staircase up to the flat, which is on two levels: the living room and bedroom, where Flakron and his mother sleep, are on one level, and the bathroom, kitchen and sister's bedroom are on another level. Flakron wets the bed every night and his mother has to wash his bedding by hand every day along with the family washing. The only radiator she can use for drying clothes is in the living room.

The family has been unable to register with a doctor as yet and the mother is in severe pain. She has been buying pain killers and backache rub at the chemists.

Flakron loves football and is admired by his classmates for his skill. He wants to join the after-school programme but it costs money, which his mother says she doesn't have. There is another boy from Kosova in Flakron's class.

Flakron's teacher says that he is settling well into class activities.

CARLOS

A seven-year-old boy from Angola

CIRCUMSTANCES OF EXILE

Carlos arrived in the UK on his own from Angola. He was met at the airport by an "aunt" with whom he is now living.

Carlos' parents had sold many of their possessions to raise the money for his trip to the UK. He and his family lived in an area where the conflict between the Angolan government and UNITA was at its most violent. Some of his relatives had already been killed and other family members had disappeared.

Houses, schools and nearby villages were bombed and destroyed. Carlos's school had also been destroyed, killing a number of children and teachers. Other children had been killed and maimed by landmines.

Fearing for his safety, Carlos's parents arranged for him to go to the UK.

EXPERIENCES SINCE ARRIVAL IN UK

Carlos's "aunt" has been in the UK for two years. She is also an asylum seeker from Angola.

Carlos has started school and one of his teachers, whom he has begun to trust, is concerned about him. Carlos is usually quiet and well-behaved, but can seem tired and withdrawn. On a few occasions, he has been aggressive and lashed out against other children. When this happens, Carlos likes to have time to calm down. When asked, he can't explain why he has become angry.

Carlos enjoys drawing and painting. Recently, he has started to draw detailed pictures of his memories in Angola. Many of these pictures feature scenes of war and violence.

Carlos's "aunt" has visited the school and has been very supportive. She is very loving and caring towards Carlos. She has also found Carlos to be angry and sullen at home from time to time. Sometimes he doesn't sleep well, and wets his bed. On Sundays, Carlos goes with his "aunt" to church, which has many families from Angola.

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- What losses has the child experienced?

- What stress indicators are present?

- What protective factors and coping mechanisms may be helping the child to be resilient?

- Can you recall any strategies used by the two schools in the video that may be helpful?

- Can you propose any further useful strategies from your own work in your setting?

ACTION PLANNING

1. What are your key concerns about the needs and wellbeing of refugee and asylum-seeking children in your setting?

2. What does your setting need to do to improve provision and support for them?

3. What ways can your setting improve co-ordination and communication with families and other service providers?

ACTION PLAN – SUPPORTING REFUGEE AND ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN

AIM
ACTION
KEY TASKS
KEY PEOPLE
RESOURCES
START/END
SUCCESS CRITERIA
REVIEW DATE

WELCOMING REFUGEE CHILDREN

A self-evaluation and review activity

INTERVIEW AND WELCOME

- Are all newly arriving children and their families interviewed and welcomed?
- Are interpreters provided?
- Does the school record children's previous education, achievements, country of origin, first language and interests?
- Does the school provide translated information to parents about school routines and the curriculum?
- Are families helped with applications for school meals and uniform grants?

INDUCTION

- Are children initially assessed so that information on their literacy and learning skills is given to their teachers?
- Are teachers given time to prepare a welcome, and appropriate learning activities?
- Has the school developed peer support initiatives that can welcome children who arrive mid term?
- Are children provided with extra opportunities to play, develop social skills and make friends?
- Are there opportunities for children to access supplementary support, such as homework clubs and leisure activities?
- Do all children have opportunities in the curriculum to explore difficult feelings and develop ways of coping with loss and change?

RESPONDING TO WIDER NEEDS

- Has the school made links with other local services that can support refugee families such as Sure Start centres, health advocates, advice agencies, English classes for parents, and voluntary agencies?
- Is the progress and wellbeing of refugee children monitored and reviewed to ensure early intervention, should there be concerns?

THE CURRICULUM

- Does the curriculum provide opportunities for all children to learn about refugees?
- Does the school organise assemblies and events that increase children's awareness of human rights issues?
- Has the school acquired learning resources that support refugee children's access to the curriculum, including dictionaries, and mother-tongue and dual-language books?

TRAINING

- Has the school organised INSET for all staff on refugee issues?
- Does the school have ways of supporting staff who are responding to complex social and emotional needs?
- Has the school identified ways of co-ordinating support for refugees throughout the school?

EVALUATION

1. Title of session _____

2. Course provider _____

3. Date _____

4. Were the objectives of the session made clear?

   Very clear Quite clear Less clear Not clear

5. How useful was the session in meeting your needs?

   Very useful Quite useful Less useful Not useful

6. What action do you propose to take as a result of the session?

   _____

   _____

7. Any other comments about how future sessions could be improved?

   _____

   _____

8. Overall satisfaction level with the course:

   Very good Quite good Average Poor

9. What future training needs do you have in this area?

   _____

AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Aims

The aims of the session are:

- to raise awareness and provide information about refugee children in the UK
- to increase the confidence and skills of participants in meeting the needs of refugee children.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the session, participants will:

- understand the entitlement of refugee children to protection, care and appropriate educational provision
- have considered a range of strategies that educational and other settings can use in response to the needs of refugee children
- have identified action steps to further develop good practice.

WHO IS A REFUGEE?

Refugee

A refugee is someone who has had to leave his or her country and who is afraid to return there.

> **"owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."**
>
> (1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees)

Asylum-seeker

An asylum-seeker is a person who has crossed an international border and is seeking safety or protection in another country.

In the UK, asylum-seekers are refugees who have claimed asylum and are awaiting a Home Office decision as to whether they can stay here.

REFUGEES IN THE WORLD

- There are more than 11.5 million refugees worldwide.

- 21 million people worldwide are refugees, seeking asylum or are displaced within their own country – or one in every 269 people.

- The majority of the world's refugees live in the developing world.
  - 4.5 million refugees are in Asia
  - 3.5 million refugees are in Africa
  - 2.5 million refugees are in Europe

Source: www.unhcr.ch (2001)

REFUGEES IN THE UK

- 76,040 applications for asylum were received in 2000.
- The main countries of origin of asylum-seekers in 2000 were:

  Iraq
  Iran
  Afghanistan
  Sri Lanka
  Somalia
  Turkey

- In 2000, 22 per cent of initial asylum decisions were positive.
- There are an estimated 69,000 refugee children attending UK schools. Some 78 per cent attend schools in Greater London.
- The 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act has:
  - ended the payment of welfare benefits to asylum seekers. Asylum-seekers are provided with vouchers.
  - resulted in many asylum-seekers being dispersed to accommodation across the UK.

Sources: www.homeoffice.gov.uk; Refugee Council (2001)

THE POSSIBLE EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEE CHILDREN

A refugee child may:

- have lived in a country affected by war and political violence
- have experienced fear and anxiety during their journey to safety
- be coping with bereavement and family separation
- have been to school already, had a disrupted education or no previous schooling
- speak and write one or more languages.

REFUGEE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

- All asylum-seeking children have full entitlement to education and early years provision, as do children granted refugee status or exceptional leave to remain.

- In England and Wales, entitlement to education is outlined in Annex B of the DfEE Code of Practice on School Admissions.

- An LEA is also obliged to provide schooling for a child, as outlined in Section 14 of the 1996 Education Act.

THE IMPACT OF WAR AND PERSECUTION

- Refugee children are not a homogeneous group.
- Children, like adults, vary in how they cope with adversity.
- Forms of violence, repression and persecution differ.
- It is unhelpful to formulate simplistic conclusions about the emotional and psychological consequences of exposure to war, violence and persecution.
- It is important to avoid simplistic assumptions that all refugee children are "traumatised" by their experiences.
- There are a range of "risk factors" that interrelate with other "protective" factors, which may shield children from distress.

RISK FACTORS

- Loss of close family, especially the main carer.
- Loss of other family members.
- Separation from family.
- Bereavement and interruption of mourning rituals.
- Suffering violence.
- Witnessing killing and other atrocities.
- Experiencing fear and uncertainty during flight.
- Parents may be anxious, depressed and unable to respond to their children's emotional needs.
- Current stressors:
  - unresolved asylum claims
  - separation from close relatives
  - poor social relations in the educational setting
  - health issues
  - temporary housing/poverty
  - isolation
  - domestic violence
  - finding work
  - learning English.

PROTECTIVE AND MEDIATING FACTORS

- Supportive parents or other carers who are coping well with their situation.
- Belief systems (moral, religious, political), which can guide and support.
- Social supports within and beyond family – friends, neighbours, teachers, peers, etc.
- Access to the wider community.
- Sense of structure and meaning, and being able to make sense of their situation.
- Educational environment that provides structure, normality and positive experiences.
- Positive self-esteem.

THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

"Schools have a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils. The National Curriculum is the starting point for planning a school curriculum that meets the specific needs of individuals and groups of pupils."

Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs

"When planning, teachers should set high expectations and provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve, including boys and girls, pupils with special educational needs, pupils with disabilities, pupils from all social and cultural backgrounds, pupils of different ethnic groups including travellers, refugees and asylum-seekers, and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

"Teachers should plan their approaches to teaching and learning so that all pupils can take part in lessons fully and effectively."

DfEE ADVICE TO LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

Arrangements need to be made to:

- provide asylum-seeking and refugee families with accessible information on local schools and admissions procedures, and early years provision
- ensure that children of asylum-seeking and refugee families receive a proper induction upon taking up a school place
- provide adequate support for mid-term admissions
- enable asylum-seeking and refugee children to access the full range of pastoral services.

Co-ordinated support

- Directors of Education should... develop the above policies in collaboration with other agencies using the Regional Consortia network. Within LEAs, cross departmental planning, involving EAL staff, the school psychological service, early years teams, educational welfare teams and others, is encouraged.

RECENT RESEARCH ON EARLY YEARS PROVISION FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

- Refugee families have multiple and complex needs – poverty, temporary accommodation and health.
- With more under fives than in the general population, refugees may have a greater need for early years provision.
- Parents/carers don't know how to access the full range of early years provision. They may lack information about early years services.
- Refugee children are often under represented in nurseries and daycare.
- There is a lack of interpreting services available.
- The quality of consultation with refugee communities is varied.
- Few refugee community groups organise provision for young children.
- More vocational training schemes in childcare need to be targeted at refugee women.

Source: Rutter, J. and Hyder, T., *Refugee Children in the Early Years: Issues for policy-makers and providers*, Save the Children and the Refugee Council, 2001

GOOD PRACTICE IN EARLY YEARS PROVISION FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

- The DfEE expects local authority Early Years Development Plans to account for support for refugee children.
- Offer a welcoming, safe and reassuring atmosphere.
- Build a profile of a child, including information on their siblings, extended family, languages, medical and developmental history, risk and protective factors.
- Supply information for parents and carers in different languages.
- Provide opportunities for play.
- Provide resources that reflect children's backgrounds – posters, puzzles, games, toys and books.
- Address health and wider needs – help families to access services.
- Encourage links with community groups.