Refugee Children's Education

A Review of the Literature

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Literature Review

Introduction and context

This literature review draws on the available evidence regarding effective support for refugee and asylum-seeking children in the educational sphere, exploring examples of good practice and identifying areas requiring improvement.

All children in Scotland, including refugee and asylum-seeking children, have a legal entitlement to education under Section 14 of the UK Education Act 1996 and the Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000. Research and practice identified specific support needs of refugee and asylum-seeking children, which have been addressed by various educational initiatives, such as the Additional Support for Learning Act (2004), and important partnership work between schools and other agencies. However, the 'New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities' 2014-2017 final report (Scottish Government 2017) still identified key barriers which obstruct refugee children from accessing and fully participating in education.

The educational needs of refugee children are obviously only part of the broader support requirements of the children and their families. A holistic approach to refugee integration recognises and addresses the linkages between education and housing, welfare, and health, for example. Education, the institution that refugee children engage with on a frequent and ongoing basis, plays a central role in such a holistic approach. Hek (2005) notes *'schools are recognised and valued by most refugee communities'*, whereas agencies such as social services may be daunting and unfamiliar (Dutton et al 2000).

Although the specific interventions that are in place to support refugee children in education are difficult to evaluate (Block et al 2014), this review will discuss several key principles that underpin policies and approaches from the available evidence. This literature review focusses on examples of good practice, as well as areas identified as requiring strengthening. It draws on international literature but focusses on the UK context where possible. However, it is important to note that much of the evidence on the needs and experiences of refugee children discussed in the literature comes from the perspective of local education authorities, head teachers, teachers, and other 'stakeholders'.

Pinson and Arnot (2010: 248) note that the available research *'is mostly shaped by practitioner discourses which attempt to describe what does or should constitute 'good' educational practice'*. This is valuable, but there appears to be less research carried out directly with the parents or guardians of asylum-seeking and refugee children, or with the children themselves. This is undoubtedly a challenge for future research, and a gap that this proposed research intends to address, but where possible this literature review draws on the perspectives of refugee children and parents.

Topic 1: What are the key facilitators and barriers associated with meeting the educational needs of refugee children?

This section explores the key facilitators and barriers to providing a supportive educational environment for refugee and asylum-seeking children. There are various barriers which are outside the control of schools and educational authorities such as Home Office policies, the dispersal programme which often houses asylum-seekers *'away from their prospective communities'* (Pinson and Arnot 2010: 252), and the other socio-economic support requirements of refugee children and their families.

Moreover, Peterson et al (2017: 11) point out that there is a *'lack of dedicated funding'* for refugee pupils (an exception here is the funding for the resettlement of Syrian families in the UK, though not specifically in education). Rutter (2006) suggests that schools and educational authorities are often forced to fill the void left by central government in this respect. The research identifies facilitators and barriers to meeting refugee children's educational needs and the below table summarises these:

Barriers	Facilitators
Lack of specific funding for refugee education, meaning there is often a shortage of resources for students' support needs.	Ring-fenced funding for supporting refugee children in education. Support from central and local government.
In some cases, the time of the school year in which asylum-seeking and refugee children enter education in the destination setting will vary and this poses additional challenges for schools or LEAs. They may not have adequate resources in place at the beginning of the school year but find that they require them during the school year, when dedicated funding is much more difficult to access (Peterson et al 2017: 11).	A strategy with flexibility for children arriving at different times of the school year. For example, a participant in Candappa et al's (2007) study on refugee education in Scotland explained that: *'We have admissions day every Monday afternoon'*.

Lack of understanding of the issues affecting refugee children and their families (both pre and post migration). As well as practical issues facing families on arrival in destination settings, there is often a lack of understanding of the trauma potentially experienced by the children.	Appropriate training (on an ongoing basis) for teachers and teaching staff on refugee issues, and how best to support children and their families. Access to appropriate counselling services for children, often in partnership with other support services.
Head teacher, teacher and teaching assistant workloads and time constraints, impeding their ability to put into practice an inclusive ethos and teaching approach.	Adequate time allocated for teachers and teaching staff to attend relevant training. Active leadership needed to embed this in the school ethos and curriculum.
Language barriers present challenges in meeting the educational needs of refugee children, both in terms of the children's language fluency levels and those of their parents. Relatedly, refugee children may require additional support to help them get to grips with the curriculum and adjust to a new educational culture.	Responding to language barriers requires: adequate ESOL provision (for parents and children); the availability of interpreters to facilitate parental involvement in their child's education; and properly staffed bilingual units to support children's learning. Services such as homework clubs can also help children adapt to a new curriculum.
Educational needs cannot be separated from other social and emotional needs, as schools are a key site for inclusion and integration. Policy tends to frame the educational needs of asylum seeking and refugee children in a way that focusses attention on the children and their families, as opposed to the school more widely.	An inclusive ethos, which takes a 'whole school' approach to integration, and involves non-refugee background children (such as 'buddy' systems). An effective induction/welcoming process for children and their parents. Extracurricular activities to encourage relationship building between children in the school.

Topic 2: What does the evidence tell us about how refugee children experience education in their destination settings?

This section explores evidence relating to how refugee children experience education in their destination settings. It focusses on how refugee children perceive education, the issue of language barriers, the experience of bullying, and the specific challenges faced by older and/or unaccompanied children. It also examines some of the evidence on access to post-school education.

Value of schooling for refugee children

It is vital at the outset to emphasise the heterogeneity of asylum-seeking and refugee children and that their needs and experiences vary greatly both within groups and between groups. This is true not only in relation to education, but across all aspects of their lives. This is often overlooked by educational policy-makers and researchers and the vast differences in backgrounds and experiences are often neglected (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012).

Some may come to their destination country unable to speak the majority language of their destination country. They may have experienced very high levels of education within in their own country. Some may have little or no prior contact with the English language or Roman alphabet and others have experienced little or no formal education and have very poor literacy skills in their home language (Rutter (2001: 97). On the other hand, some refugee children will arrive with university-level qualifications and will have developed multilingual skills (Gateley 2015: 29). Their experiences of education in destination settings are very much shaped by these previous experiences.

Nonetheless, a key commonality in the needs and expectations of refugee children is a shared enthusiasm for education and the opportunities that having a good education can offer. As Peterson et al write:

> *'a range of studies suggest that asylum-seeking and refugee children hold very positive views regarding the importance of education, and are aspirational with regards to attainment and progression'.* (2017: 10)

There is evidence to suggest that enduring forcible displacement from their homes can engender an enhanced appreciation of education primarily because it can help them make sense of and justify their move to the destination setting (Kohli and Mather 2003). Moreover, education plays a key role in the overall wellbeing of refugee children. In their literature review, Peterson et al (2017) note that positive experiences within education and schooling are central to the sense of inclusion in destination settings for asylum-seeking and refugee children. The authors make an important distinction between children simply *'being in school and the community and actually being part of the school and the community'* (2017: 9), a theme explored further in section 4.

Relations with peers

Evidence suggests that overall, refugee children's experiences of education are a mix of the positive and negative. Much of this depends on their relationships with other students and the community as much as how they experience the curriculum and other formal aspects of education. Refugee children experience a range of responses, from 'welcoming' to 'rejecting' (McBrien 2005: 335). Bullying from other students is common – *'an almost universal experience'* (Rutter 2001: 81) – and this can profoundly shape their educational experiences. This is, of course, part of a wider social and political context in which refugees and asylum seekers and routinely denigrated and stereotyped in media, public and some political discourse (Philo et al 2014).

The establishment of effective anti-racism and anti-bullying policies is an essential prerequisite for schools to support the integration of refugee children (Hamilton 2004). Even where these are in place racism and bullying can still be prevalent. A recent study in Scotland suggests that children are reluctant to report racist abuse and bullying, and *'action taken against bullies was not always effective'* (Candappa et al 2007: 4). Simply having policies in place is not enough. To be effective anti-bullying policies have to be proactive, involve a whole school strategy including classrooms and playgrounds with well-developed peer support mechanisms and where appropriate be reactive to tackle bullying at source (Thompson and Smith 2011).

Language and cultural barriers

As well as experiencing overt bullying (often with racist undertones), asylum seeking and refugee children often experience exclusion from fellow classmates because of difficulties communicating. They neither understand their classmates who in turn are unable to understand them (Hek 2005). This can lead to feelings of loneliness, particularly in the early stages of arrival. One participant in Hek and Sales' (2002) study stated:

> *'It's like, I didn't have any friends for two years, you know, and it was, my life wasn't good.'*

The way that language is taught can in itself lead to stigmatisation. Loewen (2004: 39) argues that, *'too often a deficit perspective is taken towards second language learners, with the primary focus on the fact that learners do not possess fluency in the second language'*. But it is important to note that many refugee children have positive experiences, when other students, in some cases by children who speak their first language, support and look after them (Rutter 2001: 97). Good, effective peer support may help to counter feelings of isolation and help them to pick up the new language quickly.

In addition to language barriers, the sense of isolation and lack of confidence experienced by some refugee children can come from a range of cultural barriers (McBrien 2005). Refugee and asylum-seeking children may experience difficulty adjusting to a new educational culture, which can be very different from what they experienced in their home countries. They may be unfamiliar with certain rules and norms that children who have

always been educated in the destination setting take for granted. For example, Hamilton (2004: 91) suggests that some refugee children lack experience with group work approaches and are unfamiliar with the emphasis on punctuality. This can affect the relationship between the child and the teacher (which as subsequent sections will demonstrate is crucial to the child's inclusion/integration). If schools fail to recognise and respond to such cultural differences, it may unintentionally reinforce barriers to learning, and impede refugee children's progress in school.

Further, a child's previous experiences significantly shape their adjustment to a new educational environment, and they are likely to have experienced some level of pre-migration trauma (Peterson et al 2017: 10). Peterson et al (2017) further note that post-migration experiences such as the possible disruption of family units, and their experiences of care in destination settings, profoundly influence how refugee children experience education. According to Hart (2009: 359), this can manifest itself in children's memory, their ability to concentrate, levels of anxiety, and a range of behavioural issues.

Additional complexities faced by older refugee children

Finally, there are significant differences in how older refugee children experience education compared to younger children. In relation to their research on unaccompanied minors (who are much more likely to be older children), Hopkins and Hill (2010) note there are particular challenges for those children who arrive at exam time.

Although (as with all refugee children and their families) it is important to recognise their strengths and not to present them as victims, such children are likely to have experienced 'a range of traumatic pre-flight experiences' and lack the support of their families in the destination setting (Hopkins and Hill 2010: 400). They might lack the direct encouragement from parents to pursue qualifications or to enter further or higher education. Despite the previously mentioned high aspirations regarding education, such aspirations are *'often unsupported by the expectations of the schools and other support providers'* (Peterson et al 2017: 14). Schools' expectations of their pupils are key: expectations set agendas, so if these are low there is less likely to be investment in supporting refugee children towards qualifications.

There are particular barriers associated with meeting the educational needs of older refugee children who are looking to access further or higher education. When transitioning to post-school education, asylum-seeking and refugee children often struggle to access suitable information and advice on further and higher education (including their eligibility and funding regulations). Cuts to ESOL funding in the UK will particularly affect those children who arrive at the end of compulsory schooling.

As well as most likely experiencing some level of interruption of studies, refugee children may struggle to provide evidence of their previous qualifications or supporting documentation such as passports that are often required for entry into colleges or universities (Gateley 2015). Asylum-seeking children do not have the same access to higher

education due to their immigration status because of limits on what funding is available to them, and the impact of the sense of uncertainty surrounding whether their asylum claim will be successful. Many experience confusion about their eligibility for tuition fees or financial support to allow them to continue their studies (Gateley 2015), and may receive conflicting advice from education professionals who are not fully versed on the meaning of immigration status (Scottish Government 2017: 57).

The evidence on how refugee children experience education in their destination settings is summarised as follows:

1. Overall, positive perceptions of education.
2. In some cases, a welcoming environment, but experiences of bullying and racial/religious harassment.
3. Difficultly adjusting to a new educational culture and overcoming language barriers.
4. Additional pressures for older children in relation to examinations and confusion over post-school educational options.

Topic 3: What does the evidence tell us about effective support for refugee children in education and what does it look like?

This section discusses what the literature identifies as effective support for refugee children in education as it seeks to document what works, and what does not. It concentrates on 'formal' education, and section four reflects specifically on integration and inclusion into the wider community. The section is broadly categorised as follows:

- school ethos

- teaching approach

- language provision

- encouraging parental involvement

- further and higher education.

School ethos

An important finding from the literature is that effective support for refugee children in education resists framing them as a 'problem' that requires a 'solution'. Instead, schools and educational bodies should focus on developing an inclusive ethos grounded in a commitment to social justice and human rights (Hamilton 2004). There is, Block et al (2014: 1340) argue:

> *'a tendency to adopt a deficit model that treats people from refugee backgrounds as victims rather than recognises their potential and builds on their strengths and resilience'.*

It is important to avoid making assumptions about the children (Hopkins and Hill 2010). Effective support should also avoid victimising and pathologising refugee children, instead recognising the contribution they can make to the school. As a head teacher in Pinson and Arnot's (2010) study commented: *'their courage in the face of almost unimaginable hardship and trauma is an inspiration to us all'* (2010: 258). In a similar vein, research carried out by Gateley (2015) with young people aged 18-29 from refugee backgrounds found that the term 'survivor' helped to move beyond associations of refugees as 'victims.

There is clearly a need to find a balance between valuing the resilience of and meeting the support needs of refugee children. Schools can achieve this partly through a 'whole-school' approach that seeks to transform the school culture and values as opposed to a focus on the refugee children. The role of the head teacher *'is vital in creating the conditions under which such a climate can be fostered and sustained'* (Peterson et al 2017: 12).

A whole school approach means that the curriculum also has to be adaptable. Cultural diversity has to be embraced and recognised as an asset and embedded into both school life and the curriculum. Hek (2005) notes that one of the effective strategies adopted by one of the schools in her study integrated issues affecting refugees into the school curriculum, *'making this part of school life and learning for all students'* (2005: 165).

There is also value in one-off events that celebrate particular cultures pertaining to refugee children, and allow children to learn about and celebrate the cultural heritage of their peers. One example cited in Candappa et al's (2007) study was a drama production on refugee experiences, which involved refugee and non-refugee children (2007: 44). Other examples include reading and developing books and stories, art projects, or music-making workshops. These are effective only if they are part of an overall approach that sees cultural diversity as a positive thing. Block et al (2014: 1340) note that schools can demonstrate they value diversity by *'actively recruiting staff from culturally diverse backgrounds'.* Similarly, Hek (2005: 160) argues that *'the importance of teachers from the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds as new refugee students coming into school is enormous'.*

Teaching approach

Related to schools developing an inclusive ethos, a compassionate approach to teaching in the classroom is central to effectively support refugee children in education. Pinson and Arnot (2010) explain that in the three LEAs that formed the basis of their qualitative case studies, an *'ethic of care'* was adopted in order to provide a safe environment for children to *'grow and rebuild their future'* (2010: 260). The 'ethic of care' aims to foster a caring, welcoming environment in which children can be assured they are being looked after. The authors argue that such schools recognise their role as stretching far beyond the 'legal obligation to provide an education and even beyond the duty to welcome them and give

them additional teaching and classroom support' (ibid). Educational needs cannot easily be addressed separately to children's other practical, social and emotional needs.

The literature suggests that how refugee children perceive their teachers is critical: teachers must be friendly, approachable and knowledgeable (Peterson et al 2017). A participant in Hek's (2005) study emphasised the value of the emotional support that teachers were able to provide him (2005: 164). In contrast, when specific teachers were unhelpful or even hostile towards refugee children (the literature included some accusations of racism) this understandably had a detrimental effect on the children's wellbeing and integration into school life (ibid: 166). Hamilton (2004: 93) argues that it is important for teachers to develop 'cross-cultural competence' – an awareness and understanding of different cultures, backgrounds and experiences. As is discussed further in this section, teachers must be prepared and able to access appropriate training for this.

Teachers should be aware that what may appear to be behavioural issues might derive from experiences of trauma, bullying from other children, or not understanding the work due to language or other barriers (McBrien 2005). Similarly, a participant in Candappa et al's (2007) study spoke of being criticised by her teacher because she was unable to understand her homework, or ask her parents for help because they did not speak English (2007: 21).

Such examples appear to be rare but emphasise the need for teachers to take a sensitive approach to teaching especially for vulnerable groups such as refugee children, as well as for adequate extra-curricular support for pupils. The literature suggests that in some cases, teachers' low expectations of refugee children is a barrier to their educational progress. As such, a teaching approach that manages the differences between past and present educational experiences is crucial (Peterson et al 2017: 9), recognising the potential of refugee children as opposed to focusing on their negative experiences.

However, it is important to consider what additional resources schools would require in order to support children who may experience very complex needs in this manner. Teachers and LEAs may have a compassionate outlook towards asylum-seeking and refugee children but effective support must be in place to help them deliver this level of care. Best practice is possible only when professional development is available for teachers to help develop their understanding of the diversity of refugee issues, cultural sensitivity, and how they can best support refugee children and their families (Barnes and Ntung 2016, Peterson et al 2017).

Some schools and LEAs have developed resources to support this: for example, *'Making the curriculum accessible'* is a teaching resource created by the National Union of Teachers to help teachers in *'welcoming refugee children to your school'.* However, such practical guidance has to be underpinned by a supportive strategy and training which is continuous (as opposed to one-off), involving workshops for example.

Language provision

Learning the language of the destination setting is crucial for refugee children, and schools must provide structured support to help children achieve this. The literature demonstrates

that there is divided opinion on the question of 'mainstreaming' versus 'withdrawal' – essentially, whether it is better to at times educate refugee children separately from the rest of the class (normally for language instruction). Most schools appear to try to find a balance. A participant in Candappa et al's (2007) research in Scotland said that attending a bilingual unit for a week before going into a mainstream class was beneficial because she was among children from different countries which made her feel at ease. In another school, children requiring support to learn English attended a separate class for an hour or two each day (ibid: 21) but spent the majority of their time in the mainstream classroom. One participant summed up the difficulties associated with withdrawal versus mainstreaming by stating that, *'mainstream is better for making friends, but it is difficult to make friends if you don't know English'* (ibid: 31).

Schools can also support refugee children to progress in their studies by providing access to 'homework clubs'. Some of the case study schools in Candappa et al's (2007) study operated these, and participants appreciated this resource. Participants pointed out that in one school the homework club operated from a local library, and because of negative experiences with bullying and violence, or street safety concerns, some refugee children did not feel it was safe to attend (2007: 22). This further reinforces the importance of not treating educational needs in silo: accessing some educational services depends on feeling safe and included in the wider community.

As important as learning the majority language of the destination setting is, Rutter (2001: 83) cites evidence that children should also maintain and develop their 'home language'. It is not necessarily better to have their formal education solely in the language of their destination setting. Continuing to study in their first language is beneficial not only in educational terms but also in terms of the child developing a positive sense of self (Ibid*)*. Moreover, studying in their first language, for some part of the curriculum, may help to build the confidence of refugee children as it allows them to build up their confidence and understand a subject more quickly than if it was studied in English, particularly with newer arrivals (Hek 2005: 160). There is no uniform approach. Hek cites an example of previous research in England in which a school illustrated an example of best practice:

> *'Hek & Sales (2002) carried out research in a school whose policy was to take pupils to a particular exam centre to ensure that they were able to take a GCSE in their first language, even if this meant taking just one pupil. This was to ensure that no matter how new the pupil was to the UK and the education system they were at least able to gain a qualification' (Hek 2005).*

There are particular challenges for schools and teachers receiving refugee children for the first time, especially where there has not previously been a multicultural student body or the need to support bilingual pupils. However, there are examples of effective support in relation to language issues. As part of the 'New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities' 2014-2017 initiative (Scottish Government 2017), events such as 'Bilingualism Does Matter' and 'Scotland, People, Languages Forum' were organised which brought together education practitioners, refugees, and refugee-support organisations. The

'Bilingualism does matter' seminars – organised by the University of Edinburgh, SCILT Scotland's Centre for Languages and Glasgow City Council's English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service – aimed to develop the abilities of schoolteachers and other practitioners working with bilingual people to support their students effectively.

Encouraging parental engagement

Parental engagement in the schooling of refugee children is important, both for the integration of the children and their parents. This is a two way process and 'creating clear communication channels with parents is reciprocally related to increasing parental engagement in schools' (Hamilton 2004: 92). However, language can be a barrier to this. Schools can facilitate parental engagement by having teachers who are welcoming and approachable, and providing access to interpreters when needed. This allows parents to attend and meaningfully take part in parents' evenings and other relevant school activities.

Research which looked at the perspectives of refugee children themselves highlighted that this made them feel more included at school (Hek 2005: 166). One participant in Hek's study commented that having access to the specific language support teacher (assuming that one is in place at the school) facilitated parental engagement. Instead of having parents' evening with the class teacher, parents would meet with the specialist language teacher who, from the child's perspective, *'can tell us what comments our teacher has said about us, so that she can help us and our parents understand what they expect us to do at the school'*. (Hek 2005: 167). At the same time, it is important to make sure that the children and the parents feel part of the mainstream and are not treated as different.

In some cases even where schools make provision for interpreters to facilitate parental engagement, letters even about important school issues are frequently sent out in English only rather than translated into the relevant language (Candappa et al 2007). If parents do not speak English, or are able to communicate verbally but their reading skills are less developed, they have to rely on their children or perhaps friends for translation.

In much the same way that peer support for children can help foster their inclusion, so too can it help parents. Schools can support and facilitate parental engagement through a mediator (or a group of mediators) with an *'in-depth understanding of both the culture of the school and that of the refugee family and child'* (Hamilton (2004). Further outreach by the school where they go and meet the parents in their own home can help to further foster relationships (Pinson and Arnot's 2010: 257) Indeed, as Lopez et al (2001) stress, encouraging the active engagement of parents in their children's should not come at the expense of supporting families who may have experienced significant trauma by putting too much pressure on them to become involved when they may have other immediate support needs (Lopez et al 2001). Similarly, Hamilton (2004: 92) argues that *'it is important that schools do not adopt the same expectations for involvement for all parents within the school, irrespective of their needs'*.

Further and higher education

As noted in the previous section, older refugee children have specific educational needs and barriers in relation to attaining qualifications shortly after arrival, and access to post-school education. There are some examples of effective provision in this area. In 2017, the University of East London launched a short course offering refugees and asylum seekers educational experience, with a view to developing them academically and preparing them to apply for full degrees.

The Scottish Government (2017) note that colleges in Scotland waive fees for asylum seekers attending certain college courses[1] and refugees have the same entitlement to further and higher education as any other young person legally resident in Scotland. Many may not be aware of this and face exclusion and disadvantage due to a lack of available guidance. Having identified this barrier, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council developed a guide for refugee and asylum-seeking children which details the financial support that they are entitled to, and how to access it. The 'New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities' 2014-2017 initiative (Scottish Government 2017) states:

> *'Scotland's colleges play a key role in providing education and skills for those over the age of 16. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) waives fees for asylum seekers attending college and studying a full or part-time English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course or other part-time advanced or non-advanced course.'*

Moreover, Universities Scotland (2016) has encouraged institutions to 'take a flexible approach' to support refugee and asylum seeking young people who want to access higher education, such as not penalising young people who are unable to provide necessary documentation, or the question of tuition fees. One example of a positive response is Edinburgh University, who for funding purposes classify students seeking asylum as 'Scottish domiciled' to ease their access to higher education.

Topic 4: What are the characteristics of effective and supportive provision?

Pinson and Arnot (2010: 257) sum up three 'common characteristics' of effective and supportive provision for refugee children in education as follows:

> *'Firstly, valuing cultural diversity and the active promotion of cultural diversity as an educational goal; secondly, constructing new indicators of integration; and lastly,*

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[1] These include full or part-time English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, or other part-time advanced or non-advanced courses.

adopting a caring/compassionate ethos and a maximal approach to the role proscribed for the school or local authority'.

From the evidence discussed in the previous section, the key characteristics emerging from the literature are:

1. A holistic approach, which looks at the whole child, and works in partnership with other relevant agencies to address the multiple complex needs. This includes social work; health organisations; community organisations; and other support services.
2. An approach that counters the often-negative representation of asylum-seeking and refugee children in wider society.
3. Engaging parental support and links between the school and parents (while recognising that parents might well be experiencing significant levels of trauma and related issues). As well as providing interpreters to facilitate parent-teacher engagement in relation to the child's learning, schools can encourage parental engagement through, for example, encouraging parents of refugee and asylum seeking children to involve themselves in PTAs and school boards.
4. Programmes that allow refugee children to express themselves, given the potential existence of language barriers. Gateley (2015) says that this is important for refugees more broadly, and cites arts-based programmes as a particularly useful strategy (2015: 37).
5. Overcoming barriers to learning through: adequate language provision; services such as homework clubs to support children's learning; and access to information on post-school education (further and higher) for older refugee children.
6. Guidance and access to counselling services available, although schools/LEAs should not assume that all refugee children need or will benefit from this. In addition, the timing has to be right, perhaps allowing children a settling in period first before assessing their needs.

Topic 5: What does the evidence tell us about promoting the integration of refugee children in schools?

The previous sections have predominately discussed the 'formal' learning needs and experiences of refugee children's education. This section focusses specifically on the question of integration into the wider community. This is key if good educational outcomes are to be achieved as learning needs cannot be separated from social and emotional needs. In their study of unaccompanied children, the service providers interviewed by Hopkins and Hill (2010: 401) explained that schools and colleges performed not only important educational functions *'but also provided a safe place for the children to be and learn'*. If policies are in place to promote the integration of refugee children in schools then the

school has a symbolic function as well as an intrinsic one. Candappa et al (2007) argue that schools demonstrate best practice when they go beyond integration, and aim to foster an inclusive environment for all children. They distinguish between 'integration' and 'inclusion':

> *'Integration refers to a process that seeks to equip the child to meet the demands of mainstream education and culture, whereas 'inclusion' refers to efforts to include the child with his/her own culture and values into the school, within a culture that celebrates diversity'* (2007: 33).

Again here a 'whole school' approach is essential, where appropriate support is given to all children in the school to foster *'an environment of inclusiveness and acceptance'* (Block et al 2014: 1348). This is consistent with broader arguments that integration of refugees and other migrants should be a two-way process. In Block et al's (2014) evaluation of a school support programme in Victoria, Australia, participants (teachers and other stakeholders) reported that non-refugee background students also benefited from engagement in the programme designed to support integration of refugee children, in line with the principles of inclusive education. However, in her study on the UK context, Rutter (2001) found that policy tends to frame the educational needs of asylum seeking and refugee children in a way that focusses attention on the children and their families, as opposed to the school more widely.

There are, though, some exceptions to the standard approach to integration and examples of best practice. Some of the participants (teachers and officials) in Pinson and Arnot's study emphasised the importance of the 'social' aspect of asylum seeking and refugee children's education. They counter the Home Office's (2004) indicators of successful integration that prioritise exams and qualifications, and instead stress the importance of extracurricular activities and being '*settled well within a group of friends'* (2010: 259). They add that, *'criteria such as educational attainment were referred to as a means of integrating the children rather than as a tool for measuring their integration'* (2010: 260). Unsurprisingly, all of the literature stressed the importance of making friends when integrating refugee and asylum-seeking children in their new schools. Hek (2005) found that most of the students she interviewed felt more at ease if there were other students from their home country around at the beginning, but longer-term it was equally important for children to make friends from a variety of backgrounds.

The role of peers is central in creating supportive environments for refugee children (Hamilton 2004: 96). Schools can encourage and facilitate this by prioritising extracurricular (lunch and after school activities) as well as 'formal' learning. One case study school in Candappa et al 2007's research offered a range of extracurricular activities and clubs to encourage socialising, with sport as an example of an activity that children can participate in *'even with limited language'* (2007: 43). The ways in which schools approach the initial welcoming of students arriving is critical (Rutter 2001). Having an effective welcome and induction system in place in Scotland's schools for new arrivals is in line with the 'New Scots' ethos of *'integration from day one'* (New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities 2017), and there are examples of best practice discussed in the literature.

Some primary and secondary schools have 'buddy' systems, where the school will pair new arrivals with children who are already settled into the school to help them feel at ease and start to make friends (Candappa et al 2007).

Moreover, in a discussion of examples of best practice in the admissions procedures, Candappa et al (2007: 36) argue that *'displays and labels in community languages'* and *'clear, consistent classroom routines'* help asylum-seeking and refugee children to settle into school life. Some examples include a welcome wall in the entrance lobby of a school that showed a map of the world marking out where new arrivals to the school come from, along with other sources of learning, pictures and stories. Other practical examples include: inviting children to a free breakfast club; giving parents admissions forms in their home language; and giving uniforms to children as soon as they arrive (ibid: 40).

Finally, the evidence demonstrates that promoting the integration of refugee children has positive effects beyond the child's individual wellbeing, extending to the wider family and the community. School is the institution that families engage with most frequently, and they are, at least initially, likely to have higher levels of trust towards schools and teachers. It is important for the school to build on this and to encourage parental involvement in their child's education. The role of the school as a socialising agent both for the child and the parent is crucial. The literature suggested some examples of good practice in this respect. For example, in Candappa et al's (2007) research, one primary school organised a sewing group for mothers and established a cookery class programme with children and parents (p. 43). After school homework clubs are also helpful here.

Conclusion

This literature review has summarised the available evidence on the education of refugee and asylum seeking children. It explored how refugee children experience education, what effective and supportive provision looks like, how best to support the integration of refugee children in schools, and finally what the key barriers and facilitators associated with meeting the educational needs of refugee children are.

When appropriate support is *not* in place, refugee children are likely to feel disengaged from learning. They experience higher levels of absenteeism and are less likely to form healthy relationships with their peers (Block et al 2014). As such, it is vital to draw on best practice, and identify and address areas where provision could be strengthened.

The review established three important gaps in the research:

- As much of the evidence comes from research conducted with teachers and other stakeholders, the voices/perspectives of refugee children and their parents appear to be marginalised.
- There is a lack of research on Scotland-specific (and beyond that, local authority-specific) issues relating to refugee children's education.

- More 'technical' detail is required in terms of 'what works'. For example, there is a need to drill down beyond characteristics such as 'inclusive ethos' to establish exactly what that means and how it is put into practice (and monitored).

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