
Educational needs and experiences of refugee children in Scotland

Dr Maureen McBride, Kevin Lowden,
Professor Chris Chapman and
Professor Nicholas Watson



What Works Scotland (WWS) aims to improve the way local areas in Scotland use evidence to make decisions about public service development and reform.

We are working with Community Planning Partnerships involved in the design and delivery of public services (Aberdeenshire, Fife, Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire) to:

- learn what is and what isn't working in their local area
- encourage collaborative learning with a range of local authority, business, public sector and community partners
- better understand what effective policy interventions and effective services look like
- promote the use of evidence in planning and service delivery
- help organisations get the skills and knowledge they need to use and interpret evidence
- create case studies for wider sharing and sustainability

A further nine areas are working with us to enhance learning, comparison and sharing. We will also link with international partners to effectively compare how public services are delivered here in Scotland and elsewhere. During the programme, we will scale up and share more widely with all local authority areas across Scotland.

WWS brings together the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, other academics across Scotland, with partners from a range of local authorities and:

- Glasgow Centre for Population Health
- Improvement Service
- Inspiring Scotland
- IRISS (Institution for Research and Innovation in Social Services)
- NHS Education for Scotland
- NHS Health Scotland
- NHS Health Improvement for Scotland
- Scottish Community Development Centre
- SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)

This is one of a series of papers published by What Works Scotland to share evidence, learning and ideas about public service reform. This paper relates to the What Works Scotland educational improvement work stream.

Dr Maureen McBride is a research associate for What Works Scotland, based at the University of Glasgow. **Kevin Lowden** is a research associate for What Works Scotland, based at the University of Glasgow. **Professor Chris Chapman** is a Co-director of What Works Scotland, based at the University of Glasgow. **Professor Nicholas Watson** is Co-director of What Works Scotland, based at the University of Glasgow.

What Works Scotland is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Scottish Government: www.whatworksscotland.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

We would to express our thanks to everyone who enabled and participated in the research, in particular:

- the refugee children and parents who shared their experiences of education and other aspects of resettlement in Scotland
- the schools and community organisations who facilitated our research with refugee families and provided their own valuable insights
- the staff in other public services who support refugee families and took part in interviews
- Save the Children for their advice and support throughout the research.

Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Executive Summary.....	1
Findings	1
Recommendations	2
Introduction	4
Context of the study	4
Methodology.....	6
Findings	7
1. Refugee children’s experiences of education in Scotland.....	7
Value of education.....	7
Adapting to the curriculum	8
Experiences of inclusion and integration in schools	9
2. Educational needs of refugee children.....	12
Language development	12
Curriculum support.....	14
Wellbeing.....	15
3. What provision and support is in place across the local authorities?	17
ESOL provision	17
Inclusion and integration.....	19
Enabling parental engagement and supporting the families’ wider needs	20
4. How well are different sources of provision and support working together?.....	23
Conclusion and recommendations	26

Executive Summary

The recent arrival of Syrian refugee families has brought the provision of education for refugee children back into the public gaze. In this report we examine how public services, primarily schools but also others services such as health and social care, are meeting their needs.

We do this through documenting the views of the children themselves and their families. The views of this group on the integration process are often absent. The report unpacks what is working best in supporting refugee children, as well as what is not working in order to help inform and improve service provision. It focuses not only on the 'formal' aspects of education, but also the school as a site for integration for refugee children and their families.

The report is based on qualitative research carried out in four local authorities with refugee children, their parents, and representatives from education and other public services. In carrying out this research we talked to 25 children, 21 parents, and 18 stakeholders from a range of organisations.

Findings

- Overall, education appears to be the service that is working best for refugee children and their families. Most of the children we met appeared to be happy and settled in their schools and the families spoke positively about their local school.
- Many schools have made great efforts to welcome refugee children, including those in areas with little or no experience of resettling refugees. Successful initiatives included buddying schemes, induction sessions, and displays designed by other pupils to welcome refugee children.
- There was however some variation between the approaches taken by the schools, even within the same local authorities, and many of these initiatives are not in place in all schools. Disparities were also evident in the amount and types of extracurricular activities designed to support ongoing integration.
- Some children felt relatively isolated initially and in some cases were reluctant to attend school. School demographics appeared to be influential, as the presence of other children from different nationalities (either other refugees or international pupils) with a shared language could help children's communication with their peers.
- There was a strong sense of aspiration amongst refugee children and their parents, who place a great deal of value on schooling and appreciate the opportunities to advance their education. This was particularly the case for older refugee children who may not have expected to have these opportunities in Scotland.
- Language development was the issue most frequently raised by refugee families. There was a clear desire to learn English as quickly as possible because not being

able to communicate with pupils and teachers in class or at break time was a source of frustration. A child's grasp of English strongly shapes their experiences of the curriculum more broadly.

- There was a strong sense that better English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision would be beneficial, though discussions with English as an Additional Language (EAL) teachers highlighted the complexity surrounding language acquisition, as too much focus on learning English can detract from other curriculum and non-curriculum activities that help language development.
- Many schools have successfully facilitated and encouraged parents' engagement and involvement in their children's education through the use of interpreters and other means of 'everyday' communication. The school may also be a site of integration for parents of refugee children through the provision of services to support their needs.
- Where schools are working best to support refugee children's integration, effective partnership working is in place with community organisations and other public services. Conversely, where this is not in place, a lack of coordination can hamper the integration process.
- Relatedly, there is little evidence of a coordinated approach in terms of mentoring and supporting schools who are less experienced in resettling refugees; this appears to be on an ad hoc basis.
- The research found emerging evidence of gender differences in the ways that refugee children experience inclusion. Gender appears to shape participation in particular extracurricular activities, for example, and the girls in our research were more likely to feel a sense of isolation than boys.

Recommendations

- Schools must be effectively resourced if they are to act as a 'hub' for integration, as at present much of this is resourced through the 'goodwill' of individual schools' teaching and non-teaching staff.
- More bilingual support would not only facilitate refugee children's English language development but support their ability to keep up with the broader curriculum. This is especially important for older refugee children who arrive in Scotland close to examination time.
- Education services should explore how refugee children could be supported to achieve qualifications while in the earlier stages of language development, perhaps through the use of interpreters, translated examination papers, or allowing children to take qualifications in their first language.
- Local authorities should consider what happens to refugee children when schools are closed for weekends and holidays, and could support schools to be open during these times to allow activities to take place so that children's language development and integration is not impeded during these times.

- Parental engagement in children’s education could be improved further through better provision of interpreters and a formal induction / information sessions to explain the fundamentals of the education system on arrival.
- The issue of gender differences should be taken into account to ensure that all refugee children have equal access to the types of activities known to positively shape integration, language learning, and wellbeing.

Schools should be encouraged to share learning and learn from best practice in other areas, perhaps through mentoring or support schemes led by more experienced schools.

Introduction

Scotland has seen an increase in the number of refugees and people seeking asylum including children and young people in recent years. The most recent arrival of refugees to Scotland have arrived as a result of the United Kingdom Government's resettlement programme first announced in 2014 (see <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/uk-syria-refugee-resettlement-conflict>).

Scotland agreed to take its 'fair share' of refugees resettled through this scheme, and in December 2017 it was announced that the target of resettling 2,000 refugees had been met three years early (Office of the First Minister of Scotland, 18 December 2017). Refugees arriving under the scheme have been resettled across Scotland, with all local authority areas committing to supporting refugee integration.

Schools have an essential role to play in the settlement both of the children and their families. They act as a facilitator to inclusion, helping young people and their families through the process of transition and help to develop a sense of community and belonging (Peterson et al 2017). For this to be successful, however, a holistic approach to integration is required bringing together housing, welfare, and health with education.

Whilst there has been some research on the role of schools in the resettlement of refugees in the UK (Rutter 2006, Hek and Sales 2002) there has been little in Scotland to date (c.f. Candappa et al 2007, Mulvey 2013)¹. This report seeks to fill that gap and outlines the findings from research that took place from July 2017-February 2018. The aim of this project was to explore how refugee children have experienced education since their arrival in Scotland. What Works Scotland, in collaboration with Save the Children, carried out the research and it was conducted in four local authorities across Scotland: Aberdeenshire Council, Glasgow City Council, Edinburgh City Council, and North Lanarkshire Council.

Context of the study

The Scottish Government was at the forefront of those committing to help Syrian refugees fleeing conflict and of the first 1,000 arrivals to the UK, 40% were resettled in Scotland. Glasgow has a longstanding experience of asylum dispersal, having received approximately 10% of all UK asylum applications since 2000 (Mulvey 2013), with the vast majority remaining in Glasgow once recognised as refugees (Stewart 2014).

Yet with some exceptions – for example, North Lanarkshire resettling 77 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2007 (Sim and Laughlin 2014), and Edinburgh having experience supporting families with no resource to public funds – most local authorities in Scotland had little or no experience of refugee resettlement before 2015.

¹ A literature review was conducted prior to commencing this research project – see McBride (2018) <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/educational-needs-and-experiences-of-refugee-children-in-scotland/>

Little is known about how well schools and partner services are meeting the needs of refugee children forcibly displaced from more recent conflict areas. There is, for example, no longitudinal research on refugee children's education and attainment in Scotland. What research exists is limited to information gathered by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education (HMIE 2009, Mulvey 2009). The voice of the children and their families/carers regarding this issue is absent.

Given that refugees from conflict areas, particularly Syria, will continue to arrive and a wider range of local authorities are likely to become asylum dispersal sites, there is a pressing need for such knowledge. Learning from children's own experiences and perceptions is crucial.

This paper aims to examine how refugee children are being supported across Scotland, identify what is working and what is not, and to help inform service provision and improve outcomes. Refugee children's educational needs and experiences are among the numerous challenges and issues facing refugees settling in Scotland. Refugees face particular challenges of access to and participation in education (Education Scotland 2015).

A child or young person's educational experiences before arrival may be uncertain and they may have had significant breaks in education, particularly if they spent time in a refugee camp in a country of transition. Many refugees and asylum seekers will need language support; some may have trauma issues with members of family left behind, missing or deceased. Refugees are a heterogeneous group in terms of nationalities, language, culture, religion and a range of other social locations. This creates particular challenges for local authorities and partner agencies trying to provide education services for refugees as a 'one size fits all' strategy is unlikely to work.

The policy landscape regarding this issue is developing and during the time this research was carried out, the Scottish Government's published its *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* (2018-2022). Among other things, this sets out a commitment to the education of refugee children (and adults).

The aim of this research was to help to fill the gaps in current knowledge about the experiences of refugee children in Scotland, particularly by contributing a deeper understanding of the perspective of refugee children and the families regarding their educational needs and experiences. The report also draws on stakeholder perspectives to establish what we know about what is working in terms of meeting the transversal nature of refugee needs, with the objective of identifying examples of good, innovative provision.

The initial research questions were:

1. How are refugees, particularly from areas of conflict, experiencing education?
2. What are the educational needs of refugee children, as perceived by children, their families/carers and relevant service representatives?
3. What provision and support is in place in selected local authorities across Scotland?

4. How well are different sources and levels of provision and support working together?
5. Are some refugees' needs being better met than others and, if so, why?
6. How do the findings compare with what we already know about addressing the needs of refugees?
7. What lessons can be drawn for-Save the Children, local authorities, relevant services and the Scottish Government?

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach to explore the perspectives and experiences of refugee children, their parents, and relevant stakeholders involved in refugee children's education. We carried out interviews, group interviews and focus groups across four local authorities in Scotland. As previously noted, these local authorities – Glasgow, Edinburgh, North Lanarkshire, and Aberdeenshire – had varying degrees of experience in resettling refugees.

In total, 64 people participated in the research: 25 refugee children, 21 parents, and 18 stakeholders (e.g. head teachers, class teachers, EAL workers, refugee resettlement officers, Social Work, and community workers). The University of Glasgow Research Ethics Committee gave ethical consent for the research. All participants were given information sheets explaining the research and these, together with the consent forms, were translated into the relevant languages and given to families in advance of their participation.

We used a variety of methods to capture views and experiences relating to refugee children's education. Stakeholders participated in one-to-one interviews and group discussions. Parents of refugee children took part in group discussions with an interpreter² present to help facilitate discussion. Interpreters were also used in our research with children, and the methods used varied depended on the children's age. Children between the ages of 5-18 took part in the research through a range of activities, such as group discussions, 'walkarounds' of schools to take photographs, and arts and crafts with younger children. This was supplemented by observations and informal discussions in schools and community settings as we carried out the research. Finally, a desk-based literature review was conducted before we started the qualitative research, and revisited as key themes emerged.

The data were analysed using standard qualitative research methods.³ Two members of the research team read the transcripts and coded for themes.

² Upon advice from other researchers and organisations who support refugees, we organised interpreters externally to avoid having a local interpreter (e.g. known to the family and/or used by schools) influencing how comfortable parents would feel about disclosing potential issues.

³ Bryman A (2012) *Social research Methods* OUP

Findings

This section is structured broadly in line with research questions 1-5. The report:

1. presents findings on refugee children's experiences of education; their specific educational needs
2. explores whether some refugees' needs are being better met than others
3. outlines the provision and support that is in place in the four local authorities
4. looks at how well these different sources of support work together.

1. Refugee children's experiences of education in Scotland

Value of education

Our research showed clearly that refugee children and their parents generally place a great deal of value on education, in line with findings from the literature (see, for example, Peterson et al, 2017). There was a strong sense of the families' aspirations, a theme we pick up below. One stakeholder noted that children are keen to start their education as soon as possible on arrival, as are their parents. They do, however, *'have anxieties about the gaps in education and language'* (interview with EAL service).

The issue of gaps in education is clearly age-specific. One parent noted that her children left Syria at such a young age that the Scottish school system is all they know. Some did suggest that there was a lack of understanding about the particular culture of schooling in Scotland, as the education system differs greatly from families' countries of origin. The longer children had been out of education the greater the concern, with some suggesting that they *'forget how to behave and talk to teachers'*. Overall, the education system was considered to be the service operating best for refugee children. All of the children we met seemed to be settled and happy in their school and felt part of the school, as one of the boys told us, *'I feel very proud to be part of this school'*.

Stakeholders echoed this view, with one who works closely with refugee families commenting, *'I've never had any families complain about school'*. When asked if the school experience in Scotland was what they expected, two older boys explained that they never thought that they would get the chance to go to school again given their age. They had left school years beforehand and worked in various jobs even before moving to the refugee camp in Lebanon (interview with refugee child). They were particularly enthusiastic about their school and wanted to make the most of the opportunities they have been given. Our participants' experiences here seemed to support Kohli and Mather's (2003) theory that enduring forcible displacement can foster an enhanced enthusiasm and appreciation for

education, as a way of making sense of their move to the destination setting by embracing the opportunity to change their future life trajectory.

Adapting to the curriculum

Teachers and other stakeholders across the local authorities spoke of how well most refugee children were doing academically. This is despite the fact that many were learning in a second language, had experienced significant gaps in their education and the traumatic experiences either prior to or during their journey to Scotland. As a refugee resettlement officer explained:

'The general report is that everybody is thriving in the schools. One young lad came when he was 16 and within six months had got Standard Grade English in his back pocket'.

He went on to explain that this achievement was despite the child having missed four or five years of school, whilst he was in the transition country where he was employed in a variety of different jobs. His progress since arrival had been so positive that the stakeholder confidently predicted that the child would be *'heading for university'*.

The students in another local authority also told us of their aspirations about going to university to study subjects such as medicine and science. One parent of a refugee child (who has been in Scotland for some time) told us her daughter is applying to study dentistry. That said, this parent (who is highly educated and works as a translator) also pointed out that changing to a different education system is sometimes *'confusing'* to parents of refugee children.

Of course, these positive stories do not detract from the fact that some refugee children experience difficulties achieving academically. It was evident that some refugee children struggled with parts of the curriculum, mainly due to language barriers. This meant that they were not able to *'keep up'*. One stakeholder commented that some of the young people had to adjust from being *'high achievers'* in education in their country of origin to struggling to understand the language on arrival here (interview with social work).

Moreover, while it is common for schoolchildren to enjoy some subjects and dislike others, it is clear that in the case of refugee children this was very much shaped by language. One female secondary school student spoke about her preference for science, stating *'with chemistry you can make chemicals with your hands, but this [modern studies] you need words'* (interview with refugee children). Other students spoke of struggling to understand the content of lessons, and often expressed a preference for practical subjects such as P.E. and woodwork because of this.

The next section of the report will further explore language acquisition, but it is important to emphasise here that this played a significant role in shaping educational experiences for refugee children.

Experiences of inclusion and integration in schools

The school played a central role in promoting integration for the children, their families and their communities, and educational experiences cannot be separated from inclusion more generally. As will be explored further later in the report, this is crucial because the school may be the only source of activity and interaction for some of the families.

One community worker stated that when the children are out of school they are '*stuck at home*', often due to financial constraints. For the most part, children embraced school and were perceived to have settled in well. This was often a result of the schools' efforts to create a welcoming atmosphere and to promote inclusion. One primary school age child said her favourite thing about school was '*nice friends*'.

Some schools had put in place great effort to welcome the pupils when they arrived. In one secondary school, a group of refugee students took us on a tour of their school and pointed out displays of Arabic drawings which had been produced by other pupils before their arrival to welcome them to the school. In another school, one of the students told us that the other pupils had also been taught basic Arabic phrases. These ice-breaking exercises had made the children feel very welcome and are an example of what Candappa et al (2007) would call moving '*beyond integration*' to help foster an inclusive environment which values the child with his or her own culture and values.

There was, however, a great deal of variety between schools, even within the same authority. A group of parents whose children attend schools in the same local authority noted the differences in how schools managed the children starting school. One school brought the children in to meet the other pupils and for a tour of the school before starting, whereas in other cases the children were '*straight into school*'.

Despite these efforts, some of the children reported that they felt relatively isolated from other students. One head teacher of a primary school emphasised that settling in to a new environment is a flexible process and that things can go backwards as well as forwards. He argued that there are '*waves of integration*'. Some of the children spoke of hostility from other pupils, though often they thought this was unrelated to their status as a refugee.

Our discussions with children did not give us the impression that bullying was common, in contrast to Rutter's (2001) finding that bullying was '*an almost universal experience*' (p. 81), though it is vital to recognise that children are often reluctant to report bullying, and our engagement with refugee children was relatively brief. In one case, however, a parent spoke of her daughter experiencing racial bullying in primary school from another student who told her '*you are from Africa so you must be homeless, you have no money*'. Refugee children, as McBrien's (2005: 335) argues, experience a varied reception, from '*welcoming*' to '*rejecting*', which schools must be alert to. They also experience subtle forms of exclusion.

In a group discussion with parents of refugee children in a different local authority, some parents explained that the initial isolation felt by the children had made them reluctant to

attend school. This was only temporary and got better as they got to know the other children. One parent pointed out that even when their child struggled during lessons, break time was beneficial socially and educationally because the other children *'would point things out and help them to learn the words'*.

In this local authority, refugee children are relatively thinly spread across different schools, and due to the small population of refugees (and EAL speakers more broadly) in the area, isolation within schools is more likely – at least initially – if individuals do not have a peer with the same first language or from the same country of origin (see also Hek 2005). Although the refugee population is very small in a different school in another local authority, there is a high EAL population, and one parent explained that the older Arabic-speaking children helped her children to settle in at first.

In one of the other local authorities we researched, all secondary school age refugee children were in the same school. In our research with this group of students (a group of 10), it was clear that they had developed a strong friendship group with each other. When asked about their favourite part of school, one of the younger boys said it is *'when we are all together, playing football or at the community centre or swimming pool'*. One of the boys noted that his experience of school had improved since starting secondary school because in primary school *'the only other Arab children were much younger'*. Now, he had several Syrian peers.

While these strong friendships are important for the children's wellbeing, this could influence the extent to which they participated with other children. One of the teachers acknowledged that the Syrian students mostly spent recreational time amongst themselves but suggested:

'I can understand, if you're translating, and trying to understand your second language all the time, you're shattered. So some relief, just blether away in Arabic, I can understand'.

There are important gendered differences in terms of participation. When we talked with the girls there was more of a sense of isolation. They did not perceive the other students to be friendly enough, explaining that *'nobody comes to talk to us'*, which they felt was down to the language barrier. One of the girls compared her experience to that of her younger brother in the primary school, suggesting that he has found it easier to make friends because the other children are not old enough to think they are *'strangers'*. One group of parents who have both primary and secondary school age children suggested that in primary school it is easier because *'when they're so young it is easier to build relationships'*. However, the school still takes an active role in encouraging integration, for example, enrolling the refugee children in separate activities to encourage them to make other friends.

It is clear that inclusion varied by age, gender, and was shaped by presence of other refugee/first language speaking children in the school. The role of the head teacher and

teaching staff in providing strong leadership with regards to integration is explored in subsequent sections.

2. Educational needs of refugee children

We found that the key educational needs of refugee children included:

- language provision
- a flexible curriculum with time for extracurricular activities
- tailored support to obtain qualifications (particularly for older children)
- support from/developing relationships with other children.

These are discussed in turn below.

Language development

Unsurprisingly, the children, their parents and all other stakeholders considered acquiring a good grasp of the English language a key educational need. Some children had arrived at their new school with absolutely no grasp of the English language, and had to rely on non-verbal communication and peer translation in the very early stages to help them settle into school. One stakeholder in a local authority which handles various different types of resettlement explained that this was more likely to be the case for those children settled under the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement scheme.

In contrast, most of the asylum-seeking children or those of refugee families who have been granted leave to remain and who are mostly in Glasgow and Edinburgh, had at least a basic grasp of English before entering school. She suggested that this was because other families will have experienced a very different route to Scotland: having to navigate the asylum process without the kind of intensive support that is available under the Syrian Resettlement scheme, for example. As a result of this, the early language learning of asylum seeking families will have been more intense, and they may therefore have more developed English language skills (interview with Social Work).

Refugee children who took part in the research expressed a clear desire to learn English as quickly as possible, *'not understanding what was going on'* had been one of their biggest frustrations when they first arrived in school. When asked what improvements could be made to their experience, the older students at one of the secondary schools said that they wanted more English language learning, including more *'everyday'* conversational learning to help them integrate and to take an active part in their new communities. Without a good grasp of English, children felt that they were held back. One of the girls commented that lesson instructions and exams are always in English and questioned *'so how can we manage?'*

The group of parents that we spoke to in a different local authority also suggested that language difficulties were the key issue for their children. Educational experiences improve significantly as language skills develop. One parent explained that her son is *'always so*

proud of himself when he learns a new word'. Another parent told us that her daughter is doing very well at speaking English but finds writing more difficult. This was echoed by several stakeholders.

Learning a language is hard and can be frustrating and there is a danger that after a period of time what one stakeholder referred to as '*language frustration sets in*', as the initial relief and enthusiasm of being in the new school becomes outweighed by frustration at not being able to fully articulate thoughts and ideas to classmates and teachers (interview with resettlement officer). The head teacher of a primary school spoke of an example in which one student initially showed a lot of enthusiasm and potential, which 'just waned' after a few months.

However, the complexity surrounding language acquisition was stressed in discussions with EAL specialists. One noted that their recommended approach to English language learning is sometimes at odds with what is desired/expected by families. This is partly down to the availability of ESOL teachers and resources. They emphasised, though, that that '*it is not about just cramming in as much English language teaching as possible*' (interview with EAL/ASL specialist).

Some EAL workers believed that too much focus on learning English can detract from other curriculum activities and non-curriculum activities that help language acquisition develop more naturally. This is particularly the case in the early stages of language activities. They cited research (see, for example, Anderson et al 2016) on EAL learning that highlight the importance of looking beyond classroom instruction.

These EAL workers emphasised the importance of children's involvement in extracurricular activities, as much language development occurs out of the classroom, through playing games, sports, music, and other activities. In one case, a refugee child was enrolled in out-of-school ESOL classes on top of her in-school provision, at the family's request. As a result, she frequently missed extracurricular activities and this significantly impacted upon her integration into school and wider community life (interview with EAL worker).

In contrast, a community worker suggested that the development and settlement of two relatively recently-arrived siblings is strongly linked to their participation in various sports, facilitated by the school's close links to a local sports centre. Similarly, a refugee child told us that most of his English learning came from playing outside the flats that the family live in, though he noted that he would like more of this in school too.

Finally, it was made clear that it is important for children to continue to develop their first language, and English language learning should not detract from this. Social work and EAL encouraged families to continue to speak their home language as promoting bilingualism is important both culturally and educationally. This was considered to be especially important for families in the asylum process. If they are not granted leave to remain and have to return to their country of origin, children will face additional challenges if they cannot speak the language (interview with Social Work).

Curriculum support

A flexible curriculum, adaptable to the varying needs and capabilities of refugee children, was vital in positively shaping their educational experiences. The children had come into the schools with very different educational experiences and attainment. They varied according to age, gender, time spent in refugee camps, time spent in the UK before achieving refugee status, country of origin, and whether they came from a city or rural areas.

A tailored approach to each individual child was therefore invaluable. A group of secondary school age refugee children who had been in Scotland for around 18 months stated that they benefitted from a 'less busy' timetable in their first year. This gave them more time for playing sport and other activities, though now their timetables have progressed and they have more academic subjects.

It was also clear from observing the children who took part in the research (such as doing arts and crafts in a primary school or when attending a community event with dancing and other exhibitions) that taking part in 'fun' activities is an important aspect of children settling into education. A balance has to be struck between these 'softer' forms of learning and the more formal aspects of the curriculum which are geared towards achieving qualifications.

Refugee children are not a homogenous group, and their needs vary greatly. Those who arrived close to examination times needed support to obtain qualifications. This is more likely to be an issue for children arriving at 14-15, who are too young to opt to go to college (where they could access more intensive ESOL courses which focus on improving English), but perhaps not early enough to settle in school and develop their language skills before sitting exams. The older children who took part in the research expressed worries about being able to pass the examinations required to pursue certain post school pathways.

This was echoed by stakeholders, with one commenting that the older children are most likely to find that part of their resettlement the most challenging because they arrive:

'at a time which is particularly pressured and significant in a pupil's school career, having had highly disrupted educational experiences and quite possibly no formal education in the preceding two or three years [pause] having to get to grips with a new language [pause] different cultural norms, at a time when a lot of us are of an age when we're questioning those anyway' (interview with refugee resettlement officer).

A social worker in the same local authority pointed out that one of the children in her caseload is allowed just 10 additional minutes during an exam because he does not speak English. It was strongly felt by this stakeholder that this was not sufficient, and that this should be a priority area for improving provision and support for refugee children to achieve academically. There are examples of good practice from elsewhere which could be drawn on: for example, Hek and Sales' (2002) research noted that one school had a policy of taking children 'to a particular exam centre to ensure they were able to take a GCSE in their first

language' (cited in Hek 2005: 160). The question of what reasonable adjustments could be made to ensure that refugee children have equality of opportunity at examination time is clearly a priority for the examinations board and related stakeholders.

Ensuring that there are good quality information sources and guidance for children who are considering applying to further or higher education is essential, and the research findings suggested that this is in some cases variable. One parent spoke of her friend's child's experience, who discovered at the end of a UCAS application that there was a test he should have taken to be eligible to apply for his chosen degree. Given that parents are less likely to be familiar with the Scottish education system and therefore less likely to pick up on these issues, it is important that schools fulfil this role.

Wellbeing

Mental health concerns did not arise in discussions with refugee families, but it was clear from discussions with stakeholders that refugee children's educational needs cannot be separated from their broader wellbeing requirements. One stakeholder emphasised that it was important to avoid 'pathologising' the children, and that non-refugee children might also have experience of trauma or mental health issues (particularly in areas of high deprivation), so there should be a focus on the unique experiences of each individual child.

An EAL worker said that *'first and foremost, school must be a safe and secure place for refugee children'*. Unless this was achieved, activities such as English language learning, progressing through the curriculum or gaining qualifications, were impossible. Most stakeholders emphasised that it should not be assumed refugee children have or will experience trauma. Some commented they had expectations that the children would be more vulnerable and 'fragile' on arrival but this was not the case.

Stakeholders highlighted the resilience of the children – and their families – and spoke of trying to counter assumptions of 'lack' or weakness. It was clear that most head teachers and other stakeholders were working from an ethos that recognises the contribution refugee children can make to the respective schools as opposed to adopting a 'deficit model' identified in parts of Block et al's (2014) research.

This notwithstanding, stakeholders considered it vital to monitor potential signs of trauma or mental health on an ongoing basis. Teachers described how some pupils had arrived exhibiting little or no mental health issues, but over a period of time these sometimes began to emerge, perhaps as refugee families begin to settle and reflect on their experiences. We were told how a six-year-old refugee child was playing in the primary school playground when a helicopter flew over, and the child became distressed and *'herded all the young children into a corner by the school, obviously the reasons why are obvious'*.

There were other more subtle examples of refugee children's behaviours showing signs of potential trauma. One young child in our research drew a picture of her family home in her country of origin and her home in Scotland, and pointed out the separation of her family. All of those working with the children had to be aware of such signals.

There is evidence that, with the right approach, children can be supported effectively to deal with instances of trauma. One primary school age child had experienced significant behavioural issues, linked to trauma. On our first visit to the school in September 2017 we were told that they had put in place extensive support from staff, often on a one to one basis, over the course of a year. When we visited the school some months later, the child was significantly more settled, had lots of friends and was doing well at school. Parents should also be helped to identify and support any mental health issues their children may experience.

It is impossible to separate the children's educational needs from the wider families' wellbeing. This included parents' capacity to be involved in their children's education. Many parents wanted to be actively involved in their children's schooling but this could be made difficult for a number of reasons. Language was of course a chief problem, and this is discussed in more detail in the next section. Children generally pick up a new language quicker than adults, and one refugee resettlement officer expressed concern that for older children, this communication barrier between parents and children may also have a detrimental impact on parenting, particularly in relation to monitoring their children's activities and behaviours.

Other issues emerged, particularly that of isolation. In some cases parents had themselves been exposed to significant trauma and they now had difficulties in relation to mental health. They may also have problems with housing, employment, or welfare, and these could become barriers to their active involvement.

There was a suggestion that younger parents were less likely to be actively involved in children's education than older parents. However, one deputy head teacher pointed out that this varied very much across different families, and was not an issue confined to refugee families. She noted that a cross-section of non-refugee children families would also reveal varying attitudes both to the value of education or their willingness and ability to get involved in a child's education. Finally, one community worker from a refugee background suggested that there is a need to educate parents about the school system because most of them have '*no idea what Highers are*'.

In sum, the specific educational needs of refugee children include:

- a flexible curriculum which provides a balance between promoting integration through extracurricular activities and supporting children to achieve academically
- support to develop the English language
- a holistic approach to children's education which considers their wider wellbeing and that of their families.

The next section of the report explores the provision and support that is in place across the local authorities to help meet these needs.

3. What provision and support is in place across the local authorities?

Overall, the research found that the provision and support for refugee children's education varied across (and within) the four local authorities. Stakeholders were generally candid about the challenges that they experienced resettling refugee families, and that even those local authorities with lots of experience in this area faced difficulties. It was generally felt that education was the service working best for families when it came to resettlement of refugees.

Support varied from school to school, and this was often down to whether a particular school had previous experience receiving refugees, or a multicultural school population more generally.

One stakeholder suggested that:

'I think to be fair there's been a very mixed picture and it would depend...it's depended a great deal on where the school is and, because of that, its familiarity with dealing with children from different backgrounds' (interview with refugee resettlement officer).

Similarly, an EAL worker commented that a particular school based near an army barracks was more confident in accepting refugee children because *'they have ongoing experience in dealing with "transitions", in terms of children of military families'*.

Local authorities constructed different models of provision at a more strategic level, often based on previous experience. North Lanarkshire explained that they based their model on previous experience of settling Congolese refugees in 2007. However, the overall message is that individual schools are largely autonomous, and refugee education is generally not centrally managed. Indeed, one primary school head teacher in Glasgow explained that they may not necessarily know if a child is from a refugee family unless this is explicitly flagged up, as they have an extremely high EAL population with dozens of languages spoken.

ESOL provision

As the previous section emphasised the importance of language learning as the key educational need of refugee children (particularly in the early stages of arrival), it is unsurprising that ESOL/EAL provision was a central topic of discussion.

In all local authorities, there is a focus on 'mainstreaming' – i.e. children attending their local school from the outset as opposed to being transported to schools with specialist language units or higher proportions of bilingual students. This policy is commonly assumed to allow children to make friends more quickly.

In some cases – such as in Glasgow – this represents a shift from their previous arrangements. Originally, children would first attend their local school, then move to a

school with a bilingual unit when a space became available, then move back to the original school when their English reached a certain level. Teachers found this negatively impacted upon their ability to make friends, and Glasgow now enrolls children in their local school and EAL teachers are diverted to the school when needed. Older children (16-17) have the choice of attending school or college, and many prefer the latter because they can focus on ESOL and are surrounded by people at a similar level to them. However, it was noted that they often concentrate on English (i.e. moving onto the next 'level' of English language learning) as opposed to branching out into other subjects.

Given the rapidly changing context, particularly in local authorities with no previous experience in resettling refugees and/or few EAL students, mainstreaming knowledge on bilingualism is crucial. One EAL worker noted that they have worked to ensure that every teacher has at least a basic level of understanding of how bilingualism works, how you learn another language, the kind of skills, and the kind of activities that would be helpful for children – as opposed to an over reliance on specialist teachers.

One head teacher commented that *'we're all EAL teachers here'*. Yet, specialist EAL teachers were considered a crucial resource, by students, parents and schools. A group of secondary school children commented on the availability and quality/consistency of English language learning. One student suggested that there should be more focus on grammar from the beginning. Another felt that ESOL is not always planned, can be boring and repetitive or random: *'one minute it's verbs, next minute it's the human body'*.

In one secondary school in an area experiencing a shortage in EAL teachers, an Arabic-speaking teacher who works at a nearby school visited the refugee children after school once a week to help the refugee children with one particular subject. However valuable this is, it is clearly limited and reliant on goodwill.

There is a shortage of suitably qualified bilingual teachers across the country. This is the case in all areas and in relation to all languages but particularly in rural areas where this is a small EAL population. One stakeholder pointed out that there is provision for Arabic speakers in their local authority but no bilingual Kurdish speaker, despite Kurdish being the first language of approximately a quarter of Syrian refugees in the area.

A primary school head teacher said that although there are 30 different languages spoken in the school, the EAL provision is restricted to one teacher four days per week. Another primary school, in a large city with a much bigger EAL population, explained that the loss of their bilingual teaching assistant who was sent to other schools impacted upon the settlement of their refugee families.

The teaching assistant's role went beyond classroom support and played a crucial role in integration by being able to act as a translator to enable communication between the school and parents – reminding them in the school playground that they should pack the children's PE kit for the next day, for example. This loss was felt by families and staff, so it is vital that this structural context is considered when analysing refugee children's educational experiences.

Inclusion and integration

The schools involved in the research have various strategies to promote refugee children's integration. School staff frequently emphasised the importance of a 'nurturing ethos'. One primary school head teacher said that providing a safe, calming space, with friendly and approachable teachers, a routine, and access to practical support, was the school's main priority for all children.

The research demonstrated that schools are developing an ethos which is rooted in a commitment to human rights and social justice (Hamilton 2004). The concept draws heavily on the concept of inclusive education, recognising that no two children are alike and that they all learn differently and that teachers should adopt a wide variety of teaching methods.

In most cases, parents and children emphasised the warmth and enthusiasm of school staff. There were a small number of exceptions. One parent commented that although her child's teachers have been friendly and welcoming, she found the school's reception staff to be less friendly. Given that this is the first point of contact for families, it is important to ensure that training and guidance on how to welcome and support refugee children is available for all school staff. Relatedly, another parent explained that her children's school experience was initially good but declined when there was a change in head teacher, as she felt that the new head teacher was less committed to inclusion (tackling racist bullying, for example).

In another example, the parent of a child experiencing bullying suggested that schools have to do more to support teachers who are struggling to control children's behaviour. Effective leadership and available resources – for example, teaching assistants to help in the classroom – are vital for refugee children's integration.

Drop-in facilities, ESOL cafes, music therapy, art classes, were among the types of activities developed to meet the wider integration needs of refugee children and their families. Some of this was built into the curriculum. In one local authority, some refugee children were involved in a community project as part of their adapted school timetable, and the children and the stakeholders felt that these types of activities helped with their language development and overall integration.

Another school had taken the decision to reduce the amount of academic subjects that the older secondary school children took, especially in the initial months. This reduced the focus on examination attainment and allowed them to concentrate more on language and settling in to their new community. The children seemed to find this a positive move. In the same local authority, a play therapist went into the local primary school to support younger refugee children, often on a one-to-one basis. One support worker of a young child with autism emphasised how valuable this type of activity can be, in line with literature on the importance of learning through play (see Lester and Russell 2008).

Various types of extracurricular activities designed to support integration were in place across different schools but provision was variable. Some schools have after school clubs and activities on the school campus. Others lack these or they are available but held in

different places, meaning families have to travel further to these. One deputy head teacher spoke of encouraging refugee children's participation in schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh award, because of the impact it would have on their socialisation. This also allowed their language development to continue over the summer break.

There is again a gendered divide here and there is some suggestion that the girls were less willing to take part in extra-curricular activities than the boys. Schools and community groups try to manage this sensitively; encouraging and emphasising the options open to girls, or adapting them accordingly. For example, in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, activities were adapted to allow the girls' fathers to accompany them on the trip.

Support for integration was also geared towards parents, dependent on both the demand and the resources. One primary school set up an international café, particularly aimed at the fathers of refugee children, to encourage them to come in, socialise, improve their language, and be part of the school community. Another school offered ESOL classes in the school, as well as cooking and beauty courses for parents.

'Buddy systems' seem to be commonplace in schools across Scotland. These are now part of the mainstream and are not only for refugee children. One secondary school spoke about developing this beyond the initial welcome period to help encourage more 'mixing' with other students without forcing relationships upon the children. Schools have also taken the question of cultural sensitivity seriously.

Another secondary school with a group of practicing Muslim students assigned the group a prayer room, and developed cards that they could carry to give to class teachers indicating when they should be excused from class to attend prayers. This was clearly important to the students who gave us a tour of the school, taking pictures of what parts of the school were important to them. The three groups separately took us to prayer room, taking photos of this. They suggested that they would like the room to be warmer, and perhaps have some mats and books, but they felt grateful that this space had been provided for them.

The question of Halal food was mentioned by parents and children in schools across Scotland: in some cases this is available but in most schools children with this dietary requirement are restricted to vegetarian food (or fish which is normally available once a week), so they normally bring a packed lunch. Given that the majority of refugee children should be entitled to free school meals, this is something that requires urgent attention.

Enabling parental engagement and supporting the families' wider needs

Parental engagement in children's education is often impeded due to language barriers, depending on the families' country of origin. The African parents who took part in the research were English speakers and felt very comfortable speaking to teachers about issues relating to their child's education and helping the children with homework.

In contrast, interviews with parents of Syrian children (in a local authority where the children are spread over lots of schools) illustrated the diversity of experiences. Some schools were doing very well, but the parents felt that others were less responsive regarding

supporting parental communication. They spoke of feeling less able to discuss concerns with teaching staff, and in one case there was a reluctance to send children to school. One parent commented: *'If I'm worried about something with my child, I can't just go and speak to the teacher about it'*.

Schools have various initiatives to facilitate and encourage parents' engagement and involvement in the children's education where there is a language barrier. In Glasgow, there are numerous resources available and shared across schools, including a Glow site [Scotland's digital learning platform] where school-developed approaches, advice and resources are made available. For example, one nursery generated communication resources using simple phrases to assist initial communication with parents and children, which have been translated into numerous relevant languages.

Interpreters are often brought into schools on parents' evenings and other meetings that parents are asked to attend, so that they can fully participate in conversations regarding their child's progress in education and any issues needing attention. Most of the parents who took part in the research were very positive about this. However, one student commented that this is not always available, and in some cases students themselves have to translate between their parents and teachers.

Of course, communication goes beyond planned meetings and parents' evenings, and schools have developed ways to engage with parents, sometimes through relatively simple schemes. A primary school head teacher explained that other Arabic-speaking parents, or older children, sometimes act as a liaison between the school and the families if there are important messages to be relayed, although she stressed that this is not always appropriate if there are sensitive issues.

One secondary school set up a WhatsApp group to help with more 'everyday' communication between the school, the Syrian students and their parents. This has been effective in keeping parents in the loop regarding school activities. Previously, when information had to be relayed to parents this would be via letters put into school bags but it is not always possible to get these translated, especially if the messages are time sensitive. The teacher now sends a message on the Syrian group chat and this can then be translated using a free app. The depute head spoke of one example:

'There was an issue last year where the boys said that this was a traditional day in Syria, where everybody was off school because, I think it was Mohammed's birthday, or something, and they said, it's Prophet Mohammed's birthday. And [teacher] said, that's great, I'll just check that out. Put it on WhatsApp, and of course, the parents started to come back saying, that's true, it is the Prophet Mohammed's birthday, but it's not a public holiday, so everybody goes to the school, and this is [town], so get to school [laughing].'

The head teacher of a primary school in another local authority told us that two of the primary one pupils seemed to be struggling with the transition from nursery to the more structured primary school, so the school have organised for the parents to come into the

classroom to observe the children and communicate with the teachers (supported by a translator).

This section has demonstrated that provision and support varies across and within local authorities, but schools are clearly doing their best to adjust their practice and provision to meet the needs of refugee families. That said, the success in the key areas discussed in this section – language development, inclusion and integration, and enabling parental engagement – was largely down to the innovation and goodwill shown by individual teaching staff in schools, who are operating in a context of squeezed resources. One teacher expressed frustration that the school aren't able to put in place all the measures they would like to support refugee families because *'things are tight'*.

A clear message from our research was that schools can only do so much to support refugee children's integration and educational achievement if they are not supported with resources and wider reforms to education and other relevant services.

4. How well are different sources of provision and support working together?

This final section outlines how well different sources of provision and support are working together, and reflects on whether there are differences in support for refugee families arriving via the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Relocation scheme compared to other refugee and asylum seeking families.

The focus of the research was on education but clearly these issues cannot be viewed in isolation, and issues with other services sometimes emerged from conversations with families and stakeholders.

Mental health support is one example. Our research sought to explore the provision and support available across the local authorities in relation to children's mental health and wellbeing. In many ways, schools support this through the activities already discussed in the previous section.

But refugee children, especially from conflict zones, may well experience mental health and trauma that requires specialist support. This was not raised as an issue by parents or children who took part in the research, but several stakeholders emphasised that Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are in short supply across all the local authorities, and this impacts on provision for refugee children experiencing trauma. One head teacher suggested that it is not as easy to access specialist services compared to previous years. In addition, most schools no longer have a school counsellor, often because of reduced resources, though one deputy head said this would be a fundamentally valuable post.

Furthermore, some parents suggested that there were problems with the health service, particularly around interpreters. GP surgeries sometimes have interpreters available for appointments, but more often rely on a telephone translation service, which is considered to be of questionable quality. One parent suggested that education and health could work together better, particularly around the question of vaccinations for children. Another parent who has a primary school child with autism praised the school for the work it does to support her son, but said that outside of school she struggles to access any support and this impacted greatly on her ability to integrate into the community.

A focus group with parents in a different local authority raised the issue of a lack of support outside of school, and if parents have health issues or are carers (which is relatively likely under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme), it is hard for them to entertain the children during weekends and holidays.

Within education, communication between different schools and with centralised EAL/ASL services seem to be operating well, and they raised no issues about this. One set of parents spoke of their children having to move schools as they (voluntarily) moved flats within a local authority to be closer to their family. One of the girls had begun to make friends and

indicated that she did not want to move schools, and the parents described how the head teachers of the two schools liaised with each other to ensure a smooth transition for the pupil.

Partnership working between schools and third sector organisations was also considered to be vital. A head teacher at a primary school in one local authority explained that the school relies heavily on a locally based organisation to help facilitate communication between families and the school, and provide support for the children and parents that is beyond the school's capacity. However, she alluded to the insecure nature of the third sector due to its reliance on short term funding cycles, and stated that, *'it would be a devastating loss for us if we lost this partnership service'*.

The value of community organisations was emphasised by stakeholders and families alike. One parent said that a local community group has volunteers to keep the younger children occupied while the parents learn English, and a stakeholder noted that a community organisation does extremely valuable work with parents to help them support the children to learn play-based skills.

For the purposes of this research, it is important to emphasise that there doesn't appear to be a difference between families who have arrived in Scotland via routes other than the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme, in terms of the education children are receiving *when in school*. Of all services, education is what is working best for all families. However, there is evidence of what some stakeholders referred to as a 'two-tier' system, where refugee/asylum-seeking children who have *not* come through the Syrian scheme are more likely to experience disruption of schooling. Discussions with stakeholders in one local authority emphasised the inability to plan for those families arriving out with the Syrian scheme:

The planning thing, first of all, we can only plan for those being resettled under the Syrian programme, because they're the only ones that we actually know in advance are coming. Both of the other groups only become apparent to us at that point at which they either access one or other of the services that the council offers, or because through generally word of mouth I'd have to say they somehow find their way to the team. The No Recourse to Public Funds situation I would say is particularly the one that comes to our attention when people are trying to access a service, typically homelessness services. Colleagues check to see what their entitlement is and then discover there is no entitlement, so that's when they come our way (interview with refugee resettlement officer).

The same officer reflected, however, on the fact that these families tend to have better language capacity and develop a resilience as a result of lacking such intensive support, and commented that *'we've got a real kind of moral hazard that we're debating at the moment about the extent to which what we do for families is actually inhibiting their development and self-reliance'*.

That said, it was made clear that structural support must be in place for families as soon as they arrive at a local authority. Further, when services do not work together this can negatively impact on outcomes of refugee families, and the children's education can suffer.

This is particularly pertinent in Glasgow. One officer explained that when asylum seekers are initially housed in Glasgow this is the responsibility of SERCO, which has the Home Office contract. Children are immediately enrolled in the local school, and stakeholders explained that they work together to ensure that families are housed in appropriate areas with access to school placements. This is positive in comparison to local authorities identified in Pinson and Arnot's (2010) research in England, in which they found *'the educational needs of asylum-seeker children and youth appear to have been repeatedly marginalised or ignored in the context of dispersal'* (p. 252).

Indeed, the multi-agency approach operated in Glasgow appears to work productively for families in this respect, as the city is able to draw on existing networks from its long experience of dispersal. However, when (if) asylum-seeking parents are granted leave to remain, they enter Glasgow's homelessness service and are then moved to temporary accommodation.

Often this involves moving to a different part of the city, so the children are forced to move schools, in some cases after settling into their initial school and making friends. Then, when a permanent home is found for the family, this may involve a third school. This impacts on children's ability to settle in schools (making friends and building relationships with teachers, etc.). This not only affects asylum seekers, as a refugee parent explained that she has to send her child to a school that is 'quite far' because there were no available spaces in primary one in the local school.

There needs to be attention to how the structural decisions – by the Home Office, or local authority housing, or Scottish Government funding for third sector organisations – impacts upon refugee children to minimise disruption to their schooling and maximise their educational experiences.

Conclusion and recommendations

This final section offers tentative conclusions and recommendations for relevant services and the Scottish Government, based on the research findings and evidence from the existing literature. Eight key discussion points were identified from the data in terms of what has been a success and what improvements should be considered:

1. Schools are a central site for refugee children and their families in respect of integration into the school and the community, including through the provision of extracurricular activities. This research demonstrates that schools deployed a range of activities to support this, and overall it is clear that schools can act as a 'hub' for integration. However, in many cases this is resourced largely through the 'goodwill' of individual schools' teaching (and non-teaching) staff. Local authorities need to identify how schools across the country can be sufficiently resourced and supported to play this role. Knowledge and resources are required to strengthen this provision, and where they are not yet in place it is important to encourage schools to share learning and learn from best practice in other areas, perhaps through mentoring or support schemes led by more experienced schools. At present, cooperation or collaboration across different education authorities appears to be relatively ad hoc.
2. Schools are doing the best that they can to support refugee children's language learning, but more bilingual support would be beneficial. Schools are following an evidence base that language development does not simply come with intensive language learning, and that being in class or in play with other children will support the learning of a new language. The amount of bilingual support is a problem, and the shortage is impacting negatively on refugee children's integration. One possibility is to consider how bilingual pupils or parents might be trained and supported to become translators or teaching assistants. Schools should also ensure that they provide enough support to those children whose parents are unable to help them with homework, by facilitating homework clubs for example.
3. The role played by schools to integrate refugee children (and their families) calls into question what happens when the schools are closed for weekends and holidays. Our evidence suggests that when this happens they are often 'stuck at home', so provision needs to be put in place to counter this. This could involve supporting schools to be open during these times to allow activities to take place, which would require additional janitorial support, or strengthening partnerships with local organisations to ensure there are activities available for refugee children and their families when schools are closed. Consideration of families' financial and travelling restrictions is important in this respect.
4. The initial stages of a family's arrival and the child's introduction to the school are clearly crucial, and we document many excellent examples of the ways in which schools have worked hard (often in partnership with other services and third sector organisations) to offer children and families a warm welcome. This is generally more

feasible when schools know about the children's impending arrival in advance. Whilst this is easier to manage through the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement programme in comparison to other families, lessons could be learned which could benefit all refugee children. Even if there is a short timescale between the child registering for school (either directly by the parents, or via a support service) and their first official day, an initial visit to tour the school and to meet the other pupils (and perhaps be assigned a 'buddy') would be an important step in facilitating the child's integration. In a similar vein, if children have to move between schools (either voluntarily or because of a change in the family's status prompting a forced change in housing) the existing and future schools should liaise to ensure a smooth transition for the child.

5. Although there are excellent examples of schools supporting parental engagement in children's education, adapting to a new education system which is often very different from systems in their countries of origin can be confusing for parents to navigate. A formal induction/information session for parents to help explain the fundamentals of the education system would be beneficial upon arrival. Additional sessions about examinations and an online source for parents to consult could supplement the initial session. This provision would have to be supported by interpreters and translation.
6. Examinations are a pressing concern for refugee children in education, and a priority should be to explore options to support those children arriving in Scotland close to examination age to achieve qualifications. 'Reasonable adjustment' options may include having interpreters present in examinations; having papers translated (printed in both English and the child's first language); or (as is the case in some schools in England), allowing children to sit an available qualification in their first language. We recommend that relevant stakeholders meet to discuss this issue to provide some solutions to ensure refugee children have equality of opportunity in educational attainment.
7. Although it should not be assumed that refugee children will need mental health support, current provision of child and adolescent mental health services remains a concern for those children who do experience trauma. Schools should be trusted to make this judgement, communicating with families, but educational psychology and related services should explore options to ensure that this resource is available if needed. Relatedly, health services and schools should work together to ensure there is support for parents to identify and address any mental health issues they feel their children may be experiencing.
8. The research found emerging evidence of gender differences in the ways that refugee children experience inclusion. Schools and other relevant organisations supporting refugee families should be alive to these differences, which are often subtle, to ensure that all children have equal access to the types of activities which are known to positively shape integration, language learning and wellbeing. Schools

might respond by making small adjustments to the types of activities offered or the times and places that these take place.

There are, of course, important areas that this research project was unable to explore primarily due to time constraints, and these would greatly benefit from further research. For example, a longitudinal study would offer a deeper insight into how refugee children settle into and achieve in educational environments over time. Moreover, for ethical reasons the project was unable to engage with unaccompanied children, or to explore refugee children's experiences of trauma. The research touched on the latter but from the perspective of stakeholders; future research may wish to prioritise a more in depth study to gain insight into how experiences of trauma shape educational experiences and outcomes.

Further research is also required to uncover the ways in which gender differences shape experiences of inclusion for refugee children. Finally, research on how refugee and asylum seeking young people experience further and higher education in Scotland would offer a broader picture of the educational journey available to them.

References

Amnesty International UK (2014), 'UK will take vulnerable refugees from the Syrian conflict', 16 June 2014, available at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/uk-syria-refugee-resettlement-conflict> [accessed 3 March 2018]

Candappa, M. et al. (2007), 'Education and schooling for asylum seeking and refugee students in Scotland: an exploratory study', *Scottish Government Social Research*.

Education Scotland (2015). 'Supporting learners: the education of learners newly arrived in Scotland: review of resources, advice and guidance from Education Scotland', available at <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/24842/> [accessed 1 Feb 2018].

Hek, R. and Sales, R. (2002). 'Supporting refugee and asylum seeking children: An examination of support structures in schools and the community', London: Middlesex University, Haringey and Islington Education Departments.

HMIe. (2009) Count Us In: Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People Newly Arrived in Scotland. Livingston: HM Inspectorate of Education.

Mulvey, G. (2009) Refugee and Asylum Seeker Research in Scotland: A Literature Review. Other. Scottish Refugee Council, Glasgow, UK.

Mulvey, G. (2013) In Search of Normality: Refugee Integration in Scotland. Project Report. Scottish Refugee Council, Glasgow, UK.

Office of the First Minister of Scotland (2017), '2,000th Syrian refugee in Scotland', 18 December 2017, available at <https://firstminister.gov.scot/2000th-syrian-refugee-in-scotland/> [accessed 12 June 2018].

Peterson, A., Meehan, C., Ali, Z. and Durrant, I., (2017). What are the educational needs and experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee children, including those who are unaccompanied, with a particular focus on inclusion? A literature review. <http://create.canterbury.ac.uk/15787/>

Rutter, J. (2006) *Refugee Children in the UK*, Open University Press.

Scottish Government (2018) 'New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022', 10 January 2018, available at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/01/7281> [accessed 20 June 2018].

Sim, D. and Laughlin, K. (2014), 'The Long Term Integration of Gateway Protection Programme Refugees in Motherwell, North Lanarkshire', Research Report, University of the West of Scotland.

Stewart, E. and Mulvey, G. (2014), 'Seeking Safety beyond Refuge: The Impact of Immigration and Citizenship Policy upon Refugees in the UK', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 40:7, 1023-1039.