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ISLINGTON

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SCHOOLS AND REFUGEE COMMUNITIES IN
ISLINGTON

RESEARCH BY THE REFUGEE ASSESSMENT AND GUIDANCE UNIT
LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

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COMMISSIONED BY CEA @ ISLINGTON ETHNIC MINORITY
ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of qualitative research into the needs of refugee children in schools in Islington. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) of CEA @ Islington commissioned the research from the Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (RAGU) of London Metropolitan University (London Met) and Wayne Farah undertook the field work during April and May 2003.

Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of representatives of local refugee community organisations (RCOs), and teachers from Islington schools identified by the EMAS Advisory Teacher for Refugees and Community (EAT). The research aims were:

- To investigate the specific needs of refugee children in Islington Schools
- To identify strategies to enable schools to better meet the needs of refugee children
- To assess the potential of the Refugee Co-educators programme to develop an appropriate refugee work force for Islington's schools

The teachers expressed a high degree of awareness and empathy with refugee children and they were keen to emphasise that it was necessary to avoid “problematism” refugee pupils. They were also able and willing to share success stories of children who they felt had succeeded against all expectations. However, the RCOs were not necessarily convinced that schools ‘walk the walk as well as they talk the talk.’ However, there is a broad consensus across both groups as to what the needs of refugee children are and how schools should respond to those needs, which are broadly consistent with other research findings.

The specific needs of refugee children identified in the research are for support in language acquisition, coping with the problems of living as a refugee, and overcoming racism. The refugee children considered most vulnerable are those, who are not mother tongue literate, have no prior schooling, or have experienced trauma.

To promote language acquisition, schools need to provide effective assessment of language and literacy skills, more bilingual teaching assistants in the classrooms and more community based mother tongue/supplementary classes. To help children cope with the problems of being a refugee, schools need strong pastoral care structures and robust education social work support. They also need to respond to the needs of the whole family and to increase refugee community involvement in schools. Refugees have become the *bête noire* of popular racism and schools need therefore to ensure they implement effective anti-racist policies and to include specific strategies and targets for refugees in their race equality schemes. Whether compensating for the absence of schooling or past trauma, or helping children acquire English, dealing with problems of being a refugee, or combating racism, parental involvement was consistently identified as a key element of any effective strategy for meeting the needs of refugee pupils. Schools failure to meet the language needs of parents is a major obstacle to parental involvement, but the most important mechanisms for promoting parental involvement identified is home – school liaison workers and existing parents.

The data support the assumptions that London is home to many professional refugees that Islington could recruit, and that greater involvement of refugees in schools as bilingual classroom

assistants, home liaison workers, and interpreters/education advocates would benefit schools and pupils. Moreover, there is also support for greater parental involvement, and more partnership working between schools and RCOs. Although the idea of the Refugee Co-educators was generally welcomed there were expressions of concern that amalgamating so many roles into one post would probably make it impossible to do the job effectively, and the skills mix a successful co-educator would need would mean they would have to be better qualified than a teacher. These concerns suggest that, rather than seeking to produce co-educators, the need is to equip refugees to compete effectively for jobs as classroom assistants, home liaison workers, etc. However, the challenge for CEA, EMAS, Islington schools, RAGU, and the RCOS is to put in place a programme that will enable more refugees to become teachers within the context of creating successful multi-ethnic schools.

BACKGROUND

We need more teachers, we need more teaching assistants and other support staff in our schools, and we need to be finding more of those we are looking for among those who have come to Britain for asylum... As so often in our history, so today, it is the case that those who have come to Britain seeking asylum have brought with them skills and energies that are immensely valuable in our wider society. It is in the interests of all of us, of our economy and of our society, that refugees should be able to realise their full potential in Britain...Employment is key...many refugees arrive in Britain with good professional qualifications and are highly skilled and motivated - Stephen Timms MP Minister for Schools (in Farah, 2002 p7).

In response to the employment needs of refugee professionals and the educational needs of refugee children, RAGU began developing the Refugee Co-educators programme in 2001. The course was piloted between September and December 2001 and during this time links were made with the Islington EMAS team who were keen to encourage training in this area. The course provides a 12 week overview of the English education system, school organisation, curriculum delivery, and some classroom experience for refugees¹ who were teachers in their home country and who wish to re-enter the profession. The course is designed to equip participants with the skills to find employment in a range of support roles in schools (bilingual learning assistants, home-school liaison, etc) and to access further training opportunities in the field of education. Successful students receive a University Certificate in Educational Partnership from London Met.

Islington EMAS identified the Refugee Co-educators course as a possible way to develop a skilled local workforce in the refugee communities, from which Islington EMAS and schools might recruit. The rationale for this approach arose from two observations: 1) Some refugee children in Islington schools have specific educational and support needs that if not met could lead to underachievement; 2) London's refugee communities contain many unemployed teachers and other educational professionals who could provide the support the children need. If Islington could find a way to mobilise this under-utilised resource it could perhaps enjoy a "double-whammy" that would improve refugee children's achievement and ease its own recruitment and retention problems. To do so it has to find a way to help refugee education professionals bring their skills and experience into schools in order to support the achievement of refugee pupils and to encourage participation of refugee parents in school life. EMAS therefore funded additional course recruitment literature targeting the Turkish/Kurdish, Albanian and Somali speaking communities. However, EMAS recognized that if the co-educators programme is to promote the role of refugees in schools, it is necessary to ensure that it meets the specific needs and aspirations of schools and refugee communities in the Borough. RAGU was therefore commissioned by EMAS to undertake qualitative research with schools and refugee community organisations (RCOs) in Islington in order to identify ways to achieve the "double whammy."

AIMS

The EMAS Advisory Teacher for Refugees and Community (EAT) identified the research aims as follows:

¹ Throughout this report the term 'refugee' is used in a generic way to cover all those who seek safety in this country irrespective of their legal status whether as an asylum seeker, recognised refugee, or in receipt of exceptional leave to remain or temporary residence on humanitarian grounds.

- To investigate the specific needs of refugee children in Islington Schools
- To identify strategies to enable schools to better meet the needs of refugee children
- To assess the potential of the Refugee Co-educators programme to develop an appropriate refugee work force for Islington's schools

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Under international law, refugees are privileged migrants seeking protection because of a well-founded fear of persecution². They are involuntary migrants who are reluctant to uproot themselves and generally do so only under extreme duress and without original motive or significant planning (Kunz 1973). Consequently, refugees have a stronger legal, and some argue moral, basis for claiming the right to enter another country than other migrants (Dummett 2001).

Refugees in Britain come primarily from countries where war, civil war, or human rights abuses are well documented (Harris 2002). Research by the UK Home Office³ shows that refugees who were able to choose to claim asylum in the UK did so because they spoke English, because of historical ties between Britain and their home country, or because they perceived the UK to be a fair country and not because of their entitlement to benefits.

Since the mid 1980s, the UK in common with other EU Member States, has introduced increasingly restrictive policies towards refugee access and reception (Cholewinski 2002). They have introduced tighter border controls, "white lists" of safe countries, carrier's liability, and increased visa requirements, to limit the opportunities to claim asylum in Britain. They have used accelerated asylum procedures, increasingly restrictive interpretations of the Geneva Convention, administrative procedures, as well as detention and deportation to exclude many of those who do make it. They have also used stricter internal controls, dispersal, employer liability, and the intensification of the nexus between immigration control and the welfare state, to impose poverty on most refugees who do make it (Fekete 2001, Hayter 2000).

The Governments exclusionary policies, like those of our EU partners, have been largely counter-productive (Zetter, Griffiths et al. 2003). However, in conjunction with media scare stories, which portray refugees primarily as terrorists, welfare scroungers, purveyors of disease, or a source of cultural contamination (van Dijk 2002), they have served to recast the refugee in public discourses as the new threat to Britain's stability, security and homogeneity. In the process they have, by criminalising latter segments of migration chains, undermined the position of established Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities (Castles 1993), and created the conditions for the predictable increase in racist violence and electoral support for the extreme right, we are now witnessing (Koopmans 1996).

Recent estimates suggest that London's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities make up one third of London's population; one in five Londoners were born outside of the UK; and Londoners speak over 300 different languages. One in twenty residents of London have arrived in the UK and sought asylum within the last 15 years, and over two thirds of refugees in the UK live in London (Stanton 2001). Although the dispersal system has attempted to reduce the numbers of

² See the Geneva Convention on the Rights of Refugees (1951) and New York Protocols (1967)

³ Understanding the decision-making of asylum seekers, Home Office Research Study 243, July 2002

asylum seekers in London and the South East, many refugees remain in London without support from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) or return to London as soon as possible.

In Islington, BME children make up 66% of the school population. Children in Islington schools speak over 120 languages and over 9000 pupils have English as an Additional Language. Islington is home to a large number of refugees from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe. An estimated 20% of Islington school children have a refugee background and there is growing anxiety concerning the low educational attainment of refugee pupils especially Somali and Turkish/Kurdish speaking pupils (Rutter 2001).

REFUGEE UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment and under-employment are major issues for all refugee communities. Refugees tend to be highly qualified in their home countries. The UK Government's own research estimates that one third of refugees have been to university, a quarter have degrees, some of them at postgraduate level, and 8% have a professional qualification. Yet, there is substantial evidence of excessive unemployment rates of between 35 % and 64% in the refugee communities, far in excess of national and regional rates of unemployment among white and established BME communities (McKeever, Peters et al. 2001). The current London Regional Development Plan estimates that there are 169,000 economically active refugees in London and that 86,000 of them are unemployed. This high level of unemployment in the refugee communities is usually explained in terms of barriers to employment including language, lack of work experience, discrimination⁴, lack of childcare/family responsibilities, non-recognition of skills, qualifications and experience and legal restrictions arising from employer liability under immigration control legislation (Stanton 2001). However, such high levels of unemployment are the norm even for those refugees with full refugee status and have been in the UK for many years, regardless of their skills, qualifications, age, or gender. Furthermore, refugees who do have jobs are usually concentrated in low paid low skills sectors of the economy regardless of their qualifications. Therefore, the barriers to employment theory may account for the obstacles to employment that individuals face, but it can not account for the excessive long-term unemployment and under-employment in the refugee communities. Such an explanation is perhaps more likely to be found within the labour segmentation theories that have developed to explain the structural causes of long-term unemployment among the settled BME communities (McKeever, Peters et al. 2001).

REFUGEE CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

It was not until the early 1990s that researchers began to investigate the specific needs of refugee children, as distinct from the wider settled BME communities. In recent years an extensive body of information concerning the educational needs and experiences of refugee children has developed. In her book "Supporting Refugee Children In 21st Century Britain" Rutter (2001), distils much of the evidence into a practical guidebook for schools which summarises the current knowledge and outlines the broad consensus as to the policy, practice, and provision that schools and Local Education Authorities should adopt in order to enable refugee children to succeed.

The thrust of the evidence is that refugee children face particular problems in succeeding in school because of the insecurity arising from their immigration status; past traumatic experiences; the psychosocial challenges of settling into a new and often hostile environment; and disruption of education or absence of prior schooling. These problems are compounded by: low expectations of

⁴ Including racial discrimination and discrimination on the basis of immigration status as a refugee

refugee children in schools; difficulties of language acquisition and the over identification of refugee and other bilingual students as having special educational needs; plus racial harassment and bullying at school (Rutter 2001). However, Bolton and Spafford (1998) argue that where schools provide a sensitive and supportive environment with good practice embedded in whole school approaches, refugee children can thrive. They highlight the need for information on students' backgrounds and educational experiences to be available to staff and for an effective buddying system. They also emphasise the importance of parental involvement and the need to provide parents with information in community languages, access to professional interpreters, and effective structures of communication with parents and carers in order to facilitate their involvement in progress reviews.

The experience of many schools that have taken a positive approach to refugee children is that they are not a problem for schools, but they can expose weaknesses:

Almost no problem that we face with refugee children is particular to their needs. Rather each of their needs challenges one of our continuing weaknesses and often challenges it in an acute way (Marland 1998 p 17).

The schools in which refugee pupils do thrive tend to be successful multi-ethnic schools, characterised by strong leadership, equal opportunities in practice, strong home school partnership and a listening ethos where pupils' views were taken into account and do influence school practices and curriculum development (Blair and Bourne 1998). These successful multi-ethnic schools are exactly the schools the Government is seeking to promote in order to address the under achievements in the wider BME communities (DfES 2003). Enabling refugee children to participate in schools allows them to share their knowledge and experiences and so contribute to the learning of their peers and teachers. Moreover, the process of developing policies and practices that enable a school to meet the needs of refugee children will also assist them to address their weaknesses to the benefit of all their pupils.

When refugee children have had the opportunity to speak about their own experience of school, dissatisfaction is a common refrain⁵.

I had problems fitting in, you feel isolated, you try to be someone you're not. I used to tell people I was half-caste because I didn't want them to know I was Somali. I got lost in the lies. I kept on bunking school because I was getting bullied. Then I fought back and I got kicked out of school. I felt like I had no future until I went to another school. Now I feel inspired by it. They set up a Somalian girls' group – Imana aged 15

I want to feel the same as other people. I don't always want it so when books are given out the teacher comes and sits next to you. I want to be normal – TyTy 13

Message to the Government – please give me a place in school and don't treat another person as I was treated - Susana 15

In an important peer research study by refugee children (HAYS 1998), it was reported that of the 34 young refugees interviewed almost two thirds (65%) were dissatisfied with their experience of starting school. For most, the main problems in school were associated with not being able to speak English and difficulties getting used to a different educational system and culture. When asked about differences between educational systems the most frequently mentioned differences were that in their

⁵ From the pamphlet "dreams struggles and survivors" 2002, Children's Society Refugee and Homelessness Team, Newham

countries of origin there were bigger classes, stricter teachers, and high teacher expectations. Just over half the children (53%) said they had had a “buddy” when they started school and over 90% of them said they found it a positive experience. Most (70%) were positive about the support given to them by teachers and very few reported that teachers had treated them unequally. Half of the sample said they thought it was important for teachers to know about their experiences as refugees and for their teachers to have some knowledge of their language and culture, as this would help promote the understanding and respect they felt to be lacking. Although only 14% said they had experienced bullying, 39% said they experienced name-calling, and a majority said anti-bullying and anti-racism policies were not adequately enforced. Most (60%) said that they had found it difficult to make friends, with language barriers and prejudices on the part of other students cited as the main obstacles. One fifth of the respondents said their parents or carers had little contact with school, usually because of language barriers and lack of adequate interpreting.

OBSERVATIONS

The political controversy that surrounds the issue of refugee resettlement in the UK can make efforts to address the needs of refugee children appear contentious or controversial. However, the available evidence supports the basic assumptions made by Islington EMAS concerning the needs of refugee children and the under-utilisation of the skills of the refugee communities. Enabling refugee professionals to assist schools to help their children could make a major contribution to the development of successful multi-ethnic schools that benefits all pupils.

METHOD

The aims of this study were to investigate the specific educational needs of refugee children in Islington, identify strategies to meet those needs, and consider the ways in which graduates of the Refugee Co-educators course could best assist in their implementation. Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews. The interview context can lead the interviewee to provide the interviewer with the ‘official account’ that reifies norms, values, and ideals (Bourdieu 1977). However, the semi-structured interview does not hold a rigid adherence to set questions and therefore allow for the exploration of the positions taken, perceptions given, and experiences recalled, by an informant. They allow informants to introduce and develop themes that are important to them, thus giving them a degree of control over the interview process (Neal 1995). Semi-structured interviews are therefore particularly suitable for exploring complex, personal, or controversial issues (Smith 1995).

SAMPLE

The EAT purposively selected both the teacher and RCO samples:

Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling where cases are judged as typical of some category of cases or population of interest to the researcher. They are not selected randomly. Thus a study of leaders of a conservation movement might, in the absence of a clearly defined sampling frame or population, select some typical leaders from a number of typical conservation groups. While not ensuring representativeness, such methods can provide useful information (Vaus 2002 p 90).

The selection of the teacher sample involved targeting teachers from schools with many refugee pupils or where innovative approaches to meeting the needs of refugee children was in evidence. The RCO was drawn from organisations with a specific education remit which represented the largest and longest established refugee communities in the Borough.

The EAT sent letters to ten schools and twelve community organizations, explaining the research aims and inviting them to participate. The researcher followed up the letters by telephone to negotiate the details of the interview. Eight interviews took place in six different schools, three primary schools, and three secondary, in the Highbury, Kings Cross, Holloway, Finsbury Park, and Archway areas. All the head teachers interviewed were in primary schools, and four of the EMAS staff worked in secondary schools. Table 1 summarises the composition of the school based sample.

Table 1

TEACHING SAMPLE

Primary	Secondary	EMAS Teacher	Head Teacher	Female	Male	Ethnic Minority
4	4	5	3	5	2	1

There were also interviews with representatives from 5 RCOs, two catering primarily for Somali speakers, two for Turkish/Kurdish speakers, and one for Farsi speakers. The sample is not representative of the diverse refugee communities living in Islington. The biases in the sample arose from particular concern around the underachievement of Somali, Turkish, and Kurdish students, and because of the groups self-selecting to participate. Two of the groups had a specific education brief and three provided education projects within a more generic community support and development framework. All the groups were well established and had been in existence for between seven and

twenty years. The participants included four men and one woman and all of them were reasonably fluent in English.

The interview schedules were developed in consultation with the EAT (See Appendices A & B). Both schedules covered the specific educational needs of refugee children and the problems they faced in school; the obstacles to meeting those needs; the roles refugees with an education background could play in supporting those children; and the skills and capacities those people would need to be able to perform those roles effectively. The schedules did evolve during the interview process as the researcher identified issues, comments, or observations from participants, which needed to be further explored in subsequent interviews.

Interviews took place in participants' place of work (school or community organisation office) and lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. All interviews were tape recorded, except with one community worker where at their request only detailed contemporaneous notes were made. The interviews began with a general introduction to the research aims and to the themes to be covered. The participants then received an explanation of the informal structure and confidential nature of the interviews and guarantees that the final report would only contain anonymised quotes. All participants appeared at ease with the interview process, and some said that they found the process stimulating. As one EMAS teacher put it, "it actually made me think a lot more about things and it's given me ideas."

DATA ANALYSIS

An "interpretative phenomenological analysis" (Smith 1995) of the qualitative data was developed by the researcher engaging with the interview recordings. It was not possible to produce verbatim transcripts because of time constraints. Consequently, the researcher worked directly with the tapes and reviewed each at least three times.

After each interview, the researcher undertook a review of the tape and made notes to ensure the identification of any issues needing further exploration in subsequent interviews. Following the completion of interviews with the teaching sample, the researcher made detailed notes of each tape that recorded interesting or significant points and possible quotes. Having repeated the process with the RCO sample, the researcher could review the tapes in their totality and begin to identify connections in the data that suggested common themes, ideas or concerns, that when ordered coherently would reflect the participants' concerns.

The quotes cited in this report illustrate the ideas and observations of the participants. Some editing of the quotes was necessary to ensure anonymity but the annotation of the quotes conforms to the normal conventions (Bloor, Frankland et al. 2001).

Once the data was analysed a draft report was presented to the EAT and a meeting took place with four other members of the central EMAS team in order for the researcher to explore their reactions to some of the initial analysis and check some issues for accuracy before re-drafting. Following this meeting, the Advisory Teacher for Refugees and Community agreed to prepare a commentary on the research findings, which would highlight how central EMAS proposed to progress the issues identified in the research, for inclusion in the final report.

FINDINGS

The small scale and purposive nature of the sample means that a conservative approach to the data is necessary. However, there is a broad consensus in the data as to the needs and problems of refugee children in Islington that is broadly consistent with the existing research data. Although the consensus may be a function of the purposive nature and small size of the sample, the data do at least suggest that there is a sense of a common vision and some small foundations on which Islington can build.

SUMMARY

The data suggest that, both within and between samples, there is a broad agreement as to what needs to happen if schools are to meet the needs of refugee pupils. Moreover, there is a consensus as to the validity of the basic assumptions that education professionals from refugee communities should be a vital resource for schools, the roles they could best play in schools, and skills they would need to perform them. However, there is a long way to go if schools and refugee communities are to become real partners in promoting the achievement of refugee children. The challenges Islington faces in developing its response to the needs of refugee children centre on addressing the structural problems arising from the lack of resources, capacity, and possibly the willingness of schools to meet the needs of refugee children. What schools need to meet those challenges is, as one EMAS teacher put it:

Practical suggestion...I think coming up with practical suggestions as to what to do and what will work in a real practical cope-able way in schools is what will get a response.

SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

The teachers expressed a high degree of awareness and empathy with refugee children and they were keen to emphasise that it was necessary to avoid “problematising” refugee pupils:

They don't spoil things for anybody else, they don't have an impact on everyone in the way a challenging disaffected violent child does. The myth that they bring down standards isn't true, they are usually hardworking and pleasant, and their homework is always done.

In our experience the refugees enrich the culture of the school and they are often the hardest working and most conscientious students we have. And the other students learn a lot from having them around because some of these students have faced issues which ordinary kids in this country just couldn't even imagine and have yet retained a fantastic degree of their humanity. They handle themselves very well and they are very mature and I think I would have universal agreement from the staff. For instance two of these children were facing deportation last year and we got every member of staff to write a letter on their behalf which we took to our MP and he has managed to get them a stay of execution.

They were also able and willing to share success stories of children who they felt had succeeded against all expectations:

One of our pupils hadn't been to school for four and a half years, we thought he would have real problems but he loves coming to school and has formed good relationships with the students. We've had students who have done very well who are from refugee backgrounds, there is one outstanding student I can think of in year 11 who came to us at the end of year eight and is now expected to get 7 or 8 good passes at GCSE.

The only significant problem identified as arising from having refugee children in schools was the high levels of mobility of families under NASS supervision. Mobility causes problems in respect of budgets because the student census is not sufficiently sensitive to the levels of mobility among refugee pupils. Mobility can also de-motivate teachers and schools:

We do a lot of work supporting them in their early weeks, and then suddenly we hear that families will be moved to the other end of London where rents may be cheaper.

The RCOs also shared this view of the problems caused by mobility:

You give help to a child and the next thing you hear the child has been moved, and you feel hang on a minute I spent days, weeks, a month to set up something good...

Perceptions of INSET⁶ support and the role of the EAT were generally positive. Most teachers recognised the commitment of the EAT, although one teacher observed that they could be more directly involved in supporting teachers in the classroom. Teachers and head teachers in particular, generally considered CEA distant from the schools, and there was a perception that the practical support schools needed was not always available. As one head teacher observed:

CEA are aware of the issues and they do what they can at whatever level, but at a practical level do they help us when we have 10 children who don't speak English to admit? Not at all.

Although the schools had a reasonable sense of which children came from refugee backgrounds, they said they did not usually ask about immigration status:

We tend to be very careful when we interview the children not to go into too much detail about their exact immigration status because we don't want to ask intrusive questions and make the families insecure.

The teachers also stressed the need for a whole school approach to refugee issues and the importance of an effective induction programme:

We have a refugee policy, casual admissions procedure...We observe Refugee Week...[And] cultural assemblies and conferences targeting year groups have been very successful.

We managed something good [earlier in the year] we had ten new EAL learners joining in year 10 so we were able to suspend our normal time-table for a week and give them an induction programme for the week. That worked really well, the students actually felt quite well integrated into the school, but normally they come into school and go straight into lessons and it can be difficult ...When you have children filtering in one or two a week it is difficult to have the staff available.

⁶ In-Service Education and Training

An effective and well run buddying system was widely seen as vital to assisting children in language acquisition especially in the early stages. Such schemes were widely considered to bring substantial benefits to both children. Although some teachers expressed a preference for same home language buddies, they recognised that any buddy is better than no buddy.

The teacher sample identifies three issues they considered crucial in influencing refugee children's ability to perform in the school environment:

- Mother tongue literacy
- Absence of prior schooling
- Experience of trauma

[Many of our students]...are not literate in their first language and developing literacy in their first language is always beneficial... many of them are academically really disadvantaged, struggling to get literacy in their second language it's really tough... Kids who come in with good literacy skills in their first language...you are not worried about them, you may be worried on another level, but you don't tend to really worry about how they are going to develop whether they are going to be able to latch on to English and develop literacy skills. They have an ability to use a bilingual dictionary you can give them a grammar book and they use it, the difference is huge in terms of academic attainment.

Every child has a right to education, and every child has an individual need and our job is to match that need as best we can... we have refugee kids who have never been to school before and it's our job to help them... understand what learning is about. There are other refugee children that have been to school and know what it's all about, but their English is not up to scratch so we have to put that support in place. Then you have the traumatized and we have counselling for them... you have to have everything on offer.

Although the teachers recognised that most refugee children are so traumatised they need specific support, some did express concern that where there are behavioural problems past traumatic experiences need investigation to prevent the labelling of a child as disruptive or problematic. However, in doing so it is vital that schools respond to the needs of the child and do not impose their assumptions as to the nature of the refugee experience on to them. For those children who did need help dealing with trauma, teachers identified two main issues. First, the availability of home language counselling and second, the need for training to help teachers identify and respond effectively to behaviours associated with trauma. This perceived training need may be something that INSET should prioritise:

One child I can think of was caught up in the conflict [in their home country] and the soldiers came and she was frightened and a gun was held to her head, and [they] fell back and hit [their] head and this left [them] permanently damaged... We had quite a lot of problems with [them]... [they] couldn't cope in the classroom... but because I could speak [their language] I was able to call the father. He volunteered the information about [them]r having a gun to [their] head and how when [they] came over to this country [they] had seen a doctor and he said that there was real damage to [their] skull and because of what had happened to [them, they] didn't like what people shouting at [them] or crowds... When this came out, we could all understand.

A lot of the children have huge trauma issues because of what they have been through and seen and its scary knowing how to deal with it... There is one [child]... comes to me once a week and we do cooking or play and [they] disclosed to me something [they] had seen... When I mentioned it to [their] mum, she was amazed because [the child] had been going to art therapy at the foundation⁷ for over a year and had not said anything but then suddenly it comes out in the classroom... So we need someone in school to do that, someone qualified because it can take a long time for children to feel trust... those things are so important but its completely ignored, we have loads of children suffering trauma and there is no one to support them.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

The overall impression of Islington schools presented by the community respondents is mixed.

Community experience with schools is generally not very good, I haven't heard from a single parent that says my child is doing really good; the schools are really good.

When I talk to parents... in general, they are satisfied with school, I haven't had anybody say this is not a good school for my child but they don't have choice to go to the school that they like, it is very difficult to get the school they want to go to... But that is the same for everyone I think.

The community respondents did express sympathy for the problems teachers face:

Teachers have to include children in lesson but this can be very difficult for teachers because they have people at different levels.

What the schools can do is limited, they cannot offer one to one tutorial to the children who are not doing well.

Some respondents perceived Islington as doing less well than Hackney in employing BME teachers, and less well than Camden in developing a strategic response to the needs of refugee communities in general:

At a strategic level they don't address why is there a problem here... they don't bother with that so there is no unified strategy for dealing with the needs and the problems... and this is not just about schools its about all services refugee communities receive.

The community organisations did not consider there was a major issue with school admissions although some did express concern as to the length of time admissions can take. However, they did express concern that the one issue around school registration which needed addressing is reaching out to all groups. As one respondent said:

There are a number of people who don't realise they have to do it even... There are some people who are completely illiterate in [own language], we can't even reach them, they need people to go out to them...

The respondent agreed that there are groups within the community no one is reaching and their children have no contact with school system.

⁷ Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture

There is broad agreement from the community respondents that a lack of mother tongue literacy, absence of prior schooling and experience of trauma meant that some refugee children need intensive support:

I had a case of some young girls from [Country]. They haven't been studying in [country] at all... Even if you don't have any education background in this country they put you in class according to your age... they put these girls in Year ten, but they didn't even know how to read and write in [home language] and didn't have any background and then suddenly they have to sit down in year ten... They had already been here six months and their English was not bad but they didn't have any idea what was going on in the lessons. For example maths, they were trying to teach them division or subtraction but they didn't understand what it means.

Say a refugee child comes to school age 10 and doesn't speak English... doesn't have an education background at all then the child can't catch up with what is going on in the class and will lose interest... This child will close his mind and if that child tries to express himself and makes a mistake, they will laugh at him. So he will not try anymore or he becomes defensive he feels threatened and starts to fight. Then the teacher will say your are bad and label him that he is bad guy without understanding that the other child may provoke him always saying something about him.

I went to a school... the girl was crying and her mother was crying they had had terrible experiences so maybe counselling in their own language [is needed] because it is difficult to talk about their feelings in English, they can't express themselves.

The broad agreement across both the teaching and community samples is that those children who are not mother tongue literate, have no prior schooling, or have experienced trauma are least likely to thrive school. Therefore, the identification of these issues in a child's background should be central to the school's assessment of a refugee child's needs. However, beyond this area of consensus, there was also agreement across the samples as to the needs and problems of all refugee children.

NEEDS OF REFUGEE CHILDREN

There was a broad consensus between the schools and the communities on three specific needs of refugee children in schools:

- Language acquisition
- Living as a refugee
- Racism

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

The teachers identified the acquisition of the English language as the major need of refugee children:

The most important thing is getting their English up to proper level so that they have a depth of comprehension... Teachers don't have time to deal with children's English needs, best practice gets squeezed out because you don't have the time in the classroom to do all the things you should and you know you should but you don't have the time... so you could probably make an argument that these children should have more support in the classroom.

The strategies we go into the classroom with... around literacy, developing English, or ethnic minority achievement, the point is everyone... can succeed and is supported... so in that respect yes they are treated like everyone else and the strategies will work for them as well as everyone else. Where I think it falls down... is where there are emotional issues... but in the main the fact that they are refugees will not change how I approach the whole class teaching... EMA⁸ and EAL strategies in mainstream lessons classroom are well understood... and can be utilised.

Key issues in addressing the language needs of refugee children identified by teachers were the proper assessment of language and literacy skills and the provision of extra language support in the classrooms. Both head-teachers and EMAS teachers stressed the need to have professional interpreters and experienced EMAS staff at initial assessment. One teacher also identified the need for effective assessment of Information and Communication Technology skills as critical because they enable children to use language support software. Several teachers proposed making available and encouraging children to take GCSE language exams in their home language as one means to improve attainment. Several EMAS teachers also said that many of their colleagues were anxious about working with children who do not speak English. They were therefore concerned that all teachers receive training in how to work with children who do not speak English. Again, this identified training need may be one that INSET should prioritise.

The three things most frequently identified by the teachers as crucial for prompting language acquisition were parental involvement, bilingual teaching assistants and community based mother

⁸ Ethnic Minority Achievement

tongue/supplementary classes. Because both samples continuously identified parents as a vital element in helping refugee children deal with all the problems they confront, a separate discussion on parental involvement is set out below. Respondents generally considered bilingual classroom assistants as important because they made it possible for children to participate in group activities and meant they did not have to be withdrawn from mainstream classes:

It makes so much difference to them [the children] having someone who speaks their language in the classroom, so I have no doubt about their value.

We have very few bilingual support staff, and I would love to see bilingual support staff in the classroom for those children who are new arrivals... so they have the opportunity to speak in their first language with somebody who comes from a similar background.

Without additional support in the classroom, we don't really have a way of tapping into their first language to help them learn.

The bilingual classroom assistant role was seen as essential for children who are not first language literate. However, most EMAS teachers said it was important that bilingual assistants were only available for a limited period so that children did not become dependent on them. Moreover, there was general acknowledgement that language acquisition also requires that schools provide children with support to help them understand their new social context and assist them to retain a positive approach to their own cultural identities:

They need help getting accustomed to the procedures and the psyche of it, of school, what it's like for some of them it is such an alien experience... One girl wouldn't let her mum go; she was on site four days... because her daughter had such high level of anxiety.

Valuing their heritage when they are running from their home country can create problems and I think they need sensitive handling, but at the same time if you don't allow them to see it as a positive... that's a burden they have to bear. So you need to [help them see] that there are good things in what your past is and what your background is... All children have something positive in their background that can help them achieve.

EMAS teachers were generally of the view that current EMA strategies were suitable for helping refugee children retain and rebuild their cultural identities. Although as one of them observed:

We need to do a lot more work on ethnic minority achievement, at present it is too much result biased... What I need to know is what is in their cultural background that will help me to turn that [something from their culture] into something I can use to encourage them academically.

The schools mainly identified lack of money as the major obstacle to providing bilingual classroom assistants:

It's the money, they've put up the pay of teaching assistants and its broke the bank for me, so what I have to do is get rid of some because they cost more and its not reflected in the budget... so we have to lose people to pay for the ones we have.

We do get funded heavily for pupils with EAL, but 80% of our children have EAL and the grant only amounts to 1.5 teachers.

Recent Government proposals for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) and for the introduction of a specific funding stream for refugee support (DfES 2003), may go some way to helping resolve this problem. However, it is unlikely that the level of resources will be sufficient to meet all the language needs of Islington's pupils so there may still be a need for additional resources for bilingual classroom assistants.

There was also a broad consensus that community organised mother tongue and supplementary classes could play a significant role in supporting language acquisition and the child's overall development:

Home language clubs they can be involved with can provide personal touch and allow them to shine while supporting curriculum... we have worked with different first language groups, who have done things like home work clubs... they are very useful and supportive, that sort of thing should be encouraged because they are really useful.

A range of different things might be helpful, Saturday classes, community language classes... are a good way of getting support to teachers and students, but our primary role is as teachers and it's difficult to get the time to set all these intervention things up.

In respect of supplementary and mother tongue classes, teachers tended to identify capacity rather than resources as the major blockage. As one teacher observed, the solution to this lack of capacity would be:

Someone who can co-ordinate connectivity... someone who has dedicated time and objectives for dealing with community organizations very specifically, so it's their job to make sure that parents understand the culture of the school and the expectations... and feedback from communities about issues they have with schools and what they perceive to be the problems.

There may therefore, be a role for central EMAS as a connectivity resource, working to develop links between schools and community organisations as part of a more comprehensive and supportive policy approach to supplementary and mother tongue schools: As this respondent stated:

In this school, we would welcome more, but all those things do put an additional demand on the teachers

When asked if central EMAS could play a role to make organising those things, the respondent said:

"Yes, they would be best placed to do that."

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

There was agreement among the RCOs that learning English is the main need for newly arrived refugee children.

For the new arrivals, obviously it is the language... our language doesn't have anything in common with European languages especially English and everything is new and it takes at least a year to somehow find out what is going on... the first year is really difficult for them because they don't understand anything that the teachers say.

However, they expressed concern that schools were treating children's language needs as evidence of special educational needs, and that although children usually acquire spoken language quickly, schools were not recognising the long term problems they face:

People keep repeating language barrier, but the children when they come to this country immediately they grab English, you will see them in one years time and they are communicating, the problem is in writing and constructing sentences in a written form that is the weakness... if the schools don't have a strategy to address that...the children will fail.

We need to tell teachers... not to assume they are special educational needs children or something is wrong with them. Children have to be judged on their own merits, even if teachers are saying it I don't believe that ethnic minority children are judged on their merits.

The above respondent agreed emphatically when asked if they thought Islington schools equated the ability to speak English with intelligence.

The community respondents were also in broad agreement that the best way to meet the children's language needs was through bilingual classroom assistants and community based mother tongue/supplementary classes:

Children can learn quicker than us and they will learn the language, but they will fall behind in maths and other subjects because they are not there to learn the subject they are there to learn English once they learn English then they can learn the subject... [they need] full time one to one support but only for a while else, the children become very much dependent... but six months should be fine... ... Multi-lingual home work groups, where children with different languages are taught together, but they have someone with their own language working with them and supporting them.

We recognized that our children are not achieving at school, schools either do not have enough time to bring them up to the level of the others, or they do not care I don't know, but we realize our children are not doing well at school they are leaving with no qualifications. So we set up a supplementary school so they can get core subjects... We used [community] teachers, professionals, although they don't have a job here... Then some parents came to us and said their children could not travel to the classes we want you to organize in our area... but there are no premises... You will see sometimes community buildings that are under used... but they won't let you use them because you are different... We opened up another one when a school offered us two classrooms... We bring in [home county] teachers so we can make them stronger in maths and science... our teachers are much better and when we bring the children to supplementary school we completely change the concept of mathematics.

However, among the RCOs the suspicion was that it was a lack of will, rather than capacity, which explained schools' lack of support for their efforts to deliver mother tongue and supplementary classes. Moreover, they suggested that in the absence of a strategic approach to mother tongue and supplementary schools, everything is dependent on individual head teachers:

In one of the schools we run a Saturday school for about 70 students, they study language and maths... The head teacher is really lovely and she has tried her best to help us and we respect her... but not all schools provide space for us we have been forced to change our place a few times... not all schools in Islington want to help.

LIVING AS A REFUGEE

SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

The second major problem identified by teachers was the extent to which children need support to help them cope with the problems of being a refugee. As one teacher observed all the problems associated with poor housing and poverty known to undermine educational attainment are particularly acute for refugee children. Moreover, these children also face additional problems arising from their immigration status which can restrict their access to education, health, and social services, etc.

Any one who has got a deportation hanging over them – it does have an effect its that preoccupation that's really difficult... You can be very good academically but anyone in that situation is going to be hard pressed for it not to be in their minds whether its consciously or unconsciously and it goes for years and it's very difficult to know what to do because all they want to know is have they got that letter.

There is this one (pupil) they had ELR... (Living) with mum, the father is deceased there are 5 children... Their income support was stopped and at the moment their solicitor is making appeal against the Home office decision not to extend their stay... [They] are the eldest child so it has fallen on [them] to take role as main carer for the whole family... Having to organise emergency payments... [They were] in here said she was in tears [they] said [they] couldn't concentrate and had lost [their] appetite. I keep saying to [them] get a school meal that's the one chance of a proper meal if you haven't got money at home.

I have visited some of the hotels and though on appearance they can look ok, but if you spend a bit of time you discover... that there is such a tense sort of atmosphere... On top of that some of the mums here who are single mums suffer sexual harassment daily. One of them had her room broken into on a regular basis on the pretence of electrical repairs, in the middle of the night? You only have to look at the security guards in some of those hotels. Urgh! I felt uncomfortable the way they looked at me and I just thought if I was living here all this time I would have gone mad.

To help children deal with these problems, most teachers emphasised that schools need strong pastoral care structures and robust education social work support systems to deal with issues such as free school meals, travel costs, school uniforms, etc. Several of the respondents emphasised the specific need for case work support for unaccompanied refugee children living with reluctant carers and those in Local Authority care who at 16 will have to live independently. Several of the EMA teachers highlighted the value of the case work support provided by the Connexions service. Therefore, developing closer relationships with the Connexions service could be another important initiative for central EMAS.

Many of the teachers suggested that schools were not always good at recognising and maximising community resources or were sufficiently aware of the possibilities for additional funding that effective partnership with RCOs could bring.

I went to... Salisbury school, I thought Salisbury was out of this world...they had huge amounts of clothes people could help themselves too... the kids get packs when they arrive with a dictionary, text books...I came back to do that but I never pulled it off.

Most teachers were aware of RCOs providing support with immigration, benefits, housing problems etc, and thought it important for schools to be able to refer people to them. Several of the respondents stressed the importance of a comprehensive and up-to-date directory of community organisations and some suggested making this resource available on the internet. However, such a directory can not compensate for actual contacts and effective partnerships with community organisations. Therefore, the connectivity function for central EMAS, discussed on page 19 should perhaps embrace the building of relationships between schools, RCOs, and other voluntary sector organisations providing the full range of support services refugees need.

Many of the teachers stressed the importance of responding to the needs of the whole family when seeking to assist refugee children to deal with the problems they confront as refugees¹⁰. However, they expressed concern that not all schools were prepared to support children in dealing with these problems:

We have to do more to address the social aspects of integrating refugees and help to provide the emotional and practical support parents need and they need all sorts of support... Some head teachers will do nothing in terms of that support they won't even write letters to NASS, that type of support is at discretion of the school, which is unfair, there should be a policy on refugee support... I think it's about getting a strategy [based on best practice] that we know is successful and will work in all schools.

Islington needs a clear policy on what schools should be doing to promote refugee inclusion and attainment, which should also address the level of support refugee children should be able to expect from their school. Any such policies and procedures would need to recognise the limits on schools' capacity to assist in resolving many of the socio-economic problems these children face. However, the development of model policies and procedures should be a priority for central EMAS. Developing these policies in collaboration with schools will promote awareness of successful strategies and the dissemination of existing best practice in Islington schools. This could help demonstrate their utility to other schools (especially those that have had little experience of working with refugee pupils) and promote the efficient use of resources.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

The community sample also emphasised that the socio-economic problems their communities face have a major impact on refugee children's ability to achieve at school:

The main point is to solve the financial problems of these families... I will give you an example, I have organised through [national charity]... for an outdoor activity holiday... a four day holiday for £35 with transport, accommodation, food and activities and I can not find 6 children whose families can pay £35... They can't afford to buy uniforms for their children... they can not participate in any extra school activities.

⁹ Salisbury School is the home of Salisbury World, which is one of the most high profile and respected joint initiative to support refugee children. More information on Salisbury World can be obtained through refed@yahogroups.com

¹⁰ See also the section on parental involvement below

Because community organisations develop in response to the failure of statutory agencies to meet emerging needs within the communities, they are an important resource. The community respondents shared the need for partnership between schools and RCOs:

The schools have to recognise that there is something bigger than the school and that is the community... We serve the community and represent the community sometimes as well and of course other groups do it as well not just us, so I think the schools should begin to recognise that yes there is the school with their own ethos and staff... but they have children there from the community... What they need is help from groups like us who represent and support a particular segment of the community which is suffering and they know it they know the attainment levels. We can help them raise it we have the contacts, the expertise, and we have experience of dealing with the community and we have the language skills, all of that.

Community involvement can also help schools understand the cultures of the diverse communities they serve and promote inclusion:

I have seen great things happening in some schools where they have cultural events... that really encourage participation of the parents... Projects like that need to be set up by community groups because they know the community, they know what's out there and how to draw on the resources of the community.

Several of the community respondents also argued that by working in partnership with schools it would be possible for them to access additional resources, which would benefit both the school and the community organisation:

We know schools don't have the resources they need, but there are lots of pots of money out there, like New Deal for Communities.

However, schools need to recognise that RCOs are also usually under-resourced and increasingly finding it difficult to raise funds because refugees are an unpopular cause. Islington should therefore ensure its own grant making criteria prioritise joint school community initiatives designed to promote refugee inclusion and attainment. Moreover, given the potential benefits of effective school community partnerships, central EMAS may want to consider investing resources into fundraising support to assist school - community partnerships, in order to identify and access additional sources of funding.

RACISM

Although any category of “racism” will necessarily be vague and contentious, there is recognition across both samples that refugees were confronting institutionalised discrimination and have become the *bête noir* of popular racism. They are experiencing harassment and discrimination because of their immigration status, irrespective of their ethnic origin. Although there are strong objections to “race” as a conceptual category and no general accepted definition of racism (Gilroy 1998), the category of racism put forward to explain this research data is based on the idea of xeno-racism.

“Racism never stands still. It changes shape, size, contours, purpose, function, with changes in the economy, the social structure, and resistance... It is the racism of the state - in legislation, in government, and in the criminal justice system - that put the imprimatur on institutional racism and gave a fillip to popular racism. The fight against that institutional racism, which maims and kills and blights the lives of young African-Caribbean and Asian peoples and other minority groups, continues. But there is a new racism abroad in the land, even more virulent and devastating than the ones we have seen before. And this is the racism that is meted out to refugees and asylum seekers irrespective of their

colour. This is the racism that is meted out to Romas and Sintis and poor whites from Eastern Europe. This is the racism that pretends to be based on the fear of strangers and gives it the respectable name of xenophobia. It may be xeno, in that it is directed at aliens, at strangers, but in the way it denigrates and reifies people before segregating or expelling them, it bears all the hallmarks of the old racism. It is racism in substance but xeno in form... It is xeno-racism" (Sivanandan 2002).

SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

Teachers identified racism directed at refugees by other pupils, the wider community, and the government and described its impact on refugee children and schools. Several teachers identified the attitudes of pupils as one reason for the isolating of some refugee pupils, leading to bullying and harassment, if there were no peers from the refugee pupil's community in the school:

There are issue about the attitudes of students; they have this term refugee as a term of abuse, so there is a lot to do with moving on the thinking of mainstream students.

Several of the teachers spoke about the ways in which resentment in the wider communities had spilled over into the school and the problems this had created:

We get criticized as a school, because some of our parents think we focus too much on these issues. We get comments like if you are white working class in this school no one cares about you... there is tension between these people you know are in difficulties and disadvantaged and you want to help them and the percentage of the parents who think you shouldn't... I think it is getting to the root, I don't think that it is that we celebrate Eid, its objecting to the notion of any provision for refugees.

When asked if this opposition to providing any provision to refugee communities was only a problem among the white working class parents, the respondent said "no." When asked if the resentments and problems were also prevalent among the established BME communities the response was:

Yes, and it's a really difficult one... I think we have to take a hard line and tell parents that it is the ethos of the school; this is what we stand for and what you signed up to.

Another head teacher spoke at great length about how tensions on a local estate around housing allocations led to refugees being victimised, and how those tensions had undermined their approach to welcoming refugee pupils to such an extent that the school had to call meetings with existing parents and children to reiterate its inclusive and anti-racist policies. Asked if the problems were only with the white community or were they also in evidence among the settled BME communities, this head teacher said the problems were evident in all communities.

Schools also have to grapple with government policies that undermine their inclusive and anti-racist ethos. As one head teacher observed some schools in Islington have been:

[Some schools are] battling with the Home Office, just to admit refugee children into schools. Some have received letters from HO telling them they were admitting too many asylum seeking children isn't that scary, how do they know that. They got letters telling them to stop admitting them because it is government policy that they will only be here seven days before moving on... We all know some of these children are here for months... but some did should stop admitting, I think that its disgraceful that we have got a government saying it ok not to educate children, whatever their nationality, saying that its ok for these children not to be in school, well its not. I don't care about the politics, I really don't, but we decided 50 years ago that every child has the right to go to school. Imagine imaging working in that context where you even have to go against Government policy just to educate these children. So in terms of getting additional resources to support them, forget it.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

The communities perspectives can perhaps be broadly characterised as a lack of confidence that schools are as committed to anti-racist education as they need to be, which is creating anxiety that as the racism towards refugees intensifies schools will become less concerned with meeting the needs of refugee children. Specific proposals and targets to address the needs of refugee children need therefore to be included within the race equality schemes of CEA and all schools.

Although there was agreement from the community sample that racism was a major problem and an appreciation of the social context in which racism flourished, as one participant observed “*I would sue the BBC definitely for provoking racism,*” community respondents were not generally convinced that schools were doing enough to address the problem:

Ethnic minorities are taking over, that's the kind of thing we hear from white parents that kind of racism and schools aren't doing anything to tackle it... I think they are terrified to touch something like that.

Schools' failure to implement effective anti-bullying and harassment policies were identified as major issues implicated in truancy and exclusions. Several RCO respondents viewed the underachievement of minority ethnic and refugee pupils as evidence of schools' failure to address institutionalised racism. They also identified low expectations of refugee and BME pupils - “*a subtle form of racism*” - as a major reason for underachievement. Some argued that underachievement is creating and reinforcing deprivation in the communities. Low expectations and poverty create a self perpetuating cycle of discrimination, underachievement, and deprivation that is undermining commitment to education and a lowering of expectations among children and parents in the communities:

The biggest problem as the kids get older... they start looking at what's in store for them and they walk around their own community and they see all the adults either unemployed or doing the worst jobs... Very few can imagine themselves getting into university and getting a profession because there aren't many examples of that around them. So they think what is school for, what is the point- because at the end of the day I know I am going to end up in my uncle's shop... So the younger people and even the parents will think why does my child need to learn history of physics when they are going to end up in my shop or my cousin's shop... They would prize education if they thought they had access to it, but they don't. They don't believe that even if they do well at school they will have the opportunity to go further because they think they are in a poverty trap and suffering all sorts of discrimination. So they don't think that going to school is going to help them very much and they have all the evidence around them when they see so many people from their community, who are people with degrees as well, who are driving minicabs, unemployed or on benefit.

This description of the community experience provides one response to those teachers who emphasised the need for greater knowledge of children's cultures. Cultures are inevitably diverse and fragmented, and children's experience of living in the UK will define their culture, as much as the traditions of the society they have left.

The RCOs also cited schools' failure to recruit from the refugee and BME communities as evidence of racism:

I don't believe EMAS teachers are trained to be EMAS teachers... I was a teacher in [home country] and I was working in [an area with a linguistic minority in their home country] and I wasn't able to help them because I wasn't trained and the children couldn't understand me. These teachers are the same... How many ethnic minorities do they have in central EMAS, how many in schools... and now since schools started brining in their own EMAS teachers it's getting worse.

Although recruitment of BME is not in itself seen as a panacea, most RCOs did regard it as central to any successful strategy to enhance community participation:

They create projects to address the needs of ethnic minority or refugees. That project even if it has a lot of resources, but if the community that is the target if they don't see their people in that project as staff... they don't involve they say it is not for us that project... so EMAS must be involving ethnic minority, they have to see their representation there because they can advise them. How can someone born in London, who never go out anywhere, tell why these people are underachieving. If you can find why then you can raise their achievement, but if you don't understand the reason what are you going to address, where are you going to put the money.

Moreover, they stressed that recruitment should not be limited to support and administrative roles. The need for more governors to be recruited from the refugee community was also identified, a need that might be addressed through a targeted recruitment campaign. However, their main demand was the recruitment of BME and bilingual teachers in general and those with refugee backgrounds in particular.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Whether compensating for the absence of schooling or past trauma, or helping children acquire English, deal with problems of being a refugee, or combat racism, the respondents consistently identified parental involvement as a key element of any effective strategy for meeting the needs of refugee pupils.

SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

The structure and ethos of the UK education system are not universal and therefore many refugee parents do not necessarily understand the English education system. Nor do they understand the child-centred philosophy or the emphasis on home-school partnerships. Consequently, unless schools can reach out to refugee parents, welcome them into the school, and explain the school culture and ethos, there can not be an effective home-school partnership:

We have to engage and support parents because the children will do better if we bring parents in... Parental involvement is very important to have in helping assess needs and provide on-going support...and because parents can reveal important information as they become more confident in school.

We have ESOL classes for parents, computer classes for parents and children and cookery classes, home work clubs, sports clubs loads of things and its really exciting and I'm beginning to see parents coming to us more often to say they want to join in or share ideas.

Several of the teachers emphasised the importance of parental involvement for children who had experienced trauma, were without prior schooling, or mother tongue literacy because they thought it likely that their parents would also have had similar experiences and therefore be less able to support their children in their learning:

We did a workshop for parents as part of the induction about what happens in the classroom and what children generally do all day... Some of the parents were amazed and were like "I'd love to be able to share a book with my child!" So near the end of the workshop got adapted into a section on literacy hour where we had them behave like teachers and showed them how to share books.

However, most teachers were keen to stress that parental involvement was not easy to secure and would require on-going commitment and resources.

A parent's first contact with the school is likely to be a key factor in determining their future involvement. The availability of professional interpreters during initial interview and welcome packs in home language were identified minimum requirements and some argued that professional interpreters/translators should be available during all contacts with parents who do not speak English. However, in their descriptions of the importance of interpreter role, some teachers seemed to be suggesting something more than just an interpreter. They seemed to be suggesting a role that may be more akin to the health advocate role that has developed in the NHS, where the advocate has a responsibility not just to interpret and translate but also to advise patients and provide the support they need to access all the health services they require.

Several of the teachers also identified the need for induction courses for parents to ensure they have a good understanding of the system and its expectations of them:

Maybe as well as having induction for children, there should be induction courses for parents... that could be done through community groups... If we had someone working with community groups... we could say to community groups set up a meeting with this group of parents and they could go through the information... this is what schools are about, how the grading system works... so we are utilizing other resources to achieve our aims... It doesn't have the threat of the school, schools can be very threatening... but community groups are probably more supportive and understanding.

Parental induction provided by community organisations could provide one way of opening up a dialogue between schools, parents, and RCOs. Several teachers also expressed the need for parental induction programmes to go beyond explaining the education system, and introduce parents to the wider context of the schools culture and ethos e.g. child-centred education, home-school partnerships, learning through play, and equal opportunities. Induction courses could also identify parents with language needs and refer them to ESOL classes and for making information on other support services available to them. The development and co-ordination of parental induction could be another function of the connectivity resource in central EMAS already discussed.

Another mechanism for promoting parental involvement identified by the sample is for the school to provide classes for refugee parents to promote their capacity to participate in their child's education and to address the myriad of problems they face in locating themselves within the local community.

Parents need all sorts of support... we have had workshops this term on access to schools, training, employment, dealing with the police, ICT, and parenting skills... because we know a lot of our families and refugee families in particular have problems in these areas... We try to teach everyone not target refugees although we do because we cover their specific issues.

Schools need to be aware that their best resource for promoting parental involvement will be existing parents and the best ambassadors for any school seeking to enhance parental involvement from the refugee communities will be the parents of existing refugee pupils:

Because we have a number of families in the same situation, we can pair people up so for example our parents' buddying system is fantastic because it means people who speak the same language can get support from each other. There is even a poster with pictures of a face and it says if you are new to this country and speak this language this is the person in this school you can come and talk to.

People are our best resources, we have to use parents, I have one mum, and she is great, speaks wonderful English, and is a leader among the mums from [her community] in the school. We had a new family from [same community] just start and I went to her and said, "By the way we have a new family just started and mums looking a bit lost." Straight away, she said "Where is she?" Now the mum has a connection and she knows if she needs interpreting or she needs any thing they can come to me so we can get them sorted out.

However, the single most important mechanism for promoting parental involvement identifiable in the data is home-school liaison. The value of home-school liaison and especially the need for bilingual home liaison workers was constantly emphasised by the sample:

There is a lot of scope for home-school liaison in a very broad non academic non school way that would be supportive of refugee children and ethnic minority students as a whole. Schools could do a lot more of that.

We have Turkish and Somali speaking community liaison workers they have only been with us a few weeks but the impact they have had in supporting the EMAS team, the parents, and the children in class has been massive. But, I will lose them at the end of the summer term because the funding central EMAS team has means that they we get short chunks of these people then they move on to a school that is more needy.

The need, therefore, is to increase the recruitment of bilingual and refugee workers into home-school liaison posts. However, some of the teachers identified a tension between the schools' need for flexible support that was responsive to the changing language needs of the children coming into schools, and the need for permanent staff fully integrated into the staff group. A community liaison worker the researcher spoke with informally on one of the school visits highlighted a further tension.. They emphasised that the insecurity of funding for home-school liaison workers was leading to a high turnover as workers sought to secure their own future.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

The community respondents also recognised that there are problems arising from lack of understanding of the education system within the communities.

The issue is that parents from many communities don't know what partnership means. The education system in [home country] is very different, we send our children to school and the school has to teach them everything... Teachers have a high status and parents defer to them... here they are talking about partnership how families have to do something as well as schools and I try to teach message about how partnership works.

Back home whatever your age when you start school you start from primary, even if you are fifteen and haven't been to school before that you sit with primary and you can not move from that class unless you pass exam. Here it's not that way, even if you are doing nothing, because of your age you move up... What schools do to protect their examinations, what they call it? [League Tables?] League tables to protect that when they see refugee children who because of their age join years eleven or ten or nine, because of their age even if they have no education background... This child will go on until the GCSE exam then they exclude them from the exam they organise separate exam... So the family see their child going up and up and they think their child is doing well, then it comes to GCSE. The Teachers say your child is not getting anything at all so they will be disappointed and say what's wrong my child was doing really well going up every year. So they say this is not correct and maybe they think there is a connotation of racism...

There was support among the community sample for the idea of community organisations providing parental induction, which they saw as one way of improving understanding of the education system in the communities:

There was a time we organised a meeting for the community to understand the education system but its not just about one time only... People in the communities keep moving so its not something you can do just once and it will reach all. It should be something that can be continuous so schools can tell parents when it is happening.

Although there was agreement from the community sample that the provision of translated information was necessary, they also highlighted the limitations of translated literature in communities with high levels of home language illiteracy, and communities from traditionally oral societies.

If a school sends a letters that letter will end up in the bin, no one reads them, so we said to the school why don't you organise a coffee morning every Thursday for parents so whatever message you want to tell you use translators to tell them, then they will act, people will take it.

However, they did identify schools' failure to meet the language needs of parents as a major obstacle to parental involvement:

Lots of parents are terrified of going into school, they can't speak English and sometimes they are dealing with teachers and other members of staff which neither have the experience or will to communicate with migrant communities adequately and there is a big need for interpreters people who are more sympathetic and understand the problems... [Otherwise] they can't really participate in their child's education.

The value of home-school liaison was also emphasised by the community sample:

Each school should have a link worker, a person who can understand the community and the system in the school so that person can link the school and the community. That's in the interest of the school and the interest of the community.

Again in the way the community sample described the role of the interpreter, there appears to be an expectation for interpreters who do more than just interpret that is suggestive perhaps of something more akin to the role of the Health Advocate in the NHS.

Community organisations also stressed that the schools needed to adopt a more holistic approach to the needs of the family:

When they get here they have all the problems that their parents are facing – housing, economic problems, a place to live and somehow the problems transfer to the children as well as the problems in the school like language barriers and those sort of things they have some how to carry the parents problems... Schools have to help parents as well; they need to help children and parents together, simultaneously. Parents get help to resettle and simultaneously the children in school, you can't separate them.

The expectation is not that schools should become social services offices, but that they are more proactive in making the school a focal point for parents by, for example, allowing a community organisation to run an advice session in a classroom one evening, or as the teachers suggested delivering ESOL or parenting classes etc, for refugee parents.

REFUGEE PROFESSIONALS IN SCHOOLS

This section of the report focuses on the ways in which education professionals from the refugee communities might best assist Islington's schools to meet the needs of refugee children. The data from the RCOs provide substantial anecdotal information to support the assumption that Islington could recruit the people it needs from within the refugee communities.

There are hundreds of people in London and dozens in Islington in our community who were teachers back home. I know three from our group, one was a college teacher for twenty five years, one a secondary teacher for twenty, and another was an associate dean at our top University.

I know a lot of teachers from my country, who are unemployed here...but you know to be a teacher in this country you have to be good at English... If you can solve this problem the level of the English of the professionals then you can do something. For example I know one lady whose English is o.k. she has done an advanced English course and is looking for somewhere she can go voluntary to a school to learn about the system and how to cope with children. She would love to be a teacher but she can't get an opportunity to go somewhere even voluntary. If Islington can provide opportunities for them there are plenty of people who can participate and get involved even find somewhere to go voluntary.

There was also support for the assumption among the teachers:

I know a lot of our parents were teachers in their own country. We have kids in every class who don't speak English... if they had ESOL classes and spoke English those parents could be supporting the teachers in classroom, but to help them to be able to do that I would have to take resources from the classroom.

The data indicate a wide range of support for greater involvement of refugees in support roles that already exist in schools. Bilingual classroom assistants, home-school liaison workers and interpreters are roles most frequently mentioned by teachers and the RCOs. Targeting current recruitment at the refugee communities, utilising the Genuine Occupational Qualifications provisions of the Race Relations Act (1976), prioritising community language skills and experience outside the

UK in job specifications, could provide ways of improving recruitment of refugees with education background into these roles in Islington's schools.

However, in the data from the community sample, there is a strong suggestion that although such posts will be attractive to many people in the communities, former education professionals would be less attracted to them:

They use professionals as bilingual classroom assistants, professionals who may have been teacher for 20 years acting as an assistant, and then they add insult to injury and they pay them £5 an hour. This person may not be qualified in English system but to be an assistant to very young teacher for £5 is an insult... Bilingual teaching assistants are exploited they get given all hard cases.

In the context of refugee unemployment, it is perhaps too easy to think opportunities for under-employment constitutes progress rather than exploitation. The RCOs did not share this view, and there is some sympathy with their perspective among the teachers:

If someone asked me to do a low level job I'd be offended, I know it wouldn't be my country but with [my skills].... I'd be offended if I just had to type letters.

REFUGEE CO-EDUCATORS

Two of the schools and two of the community organisations reported that they had direct experience of the Refugee Co-educators course and thought the programme valuable. The RCOs expressed some concern that Co-educators was just another short course that did not lead anywhere:

One of our students did the co-educators course; she was very positive about it and told lots of other people, so we have a lot of people now who would like to do it... You can't just send people into schools who have never been into schools that's no good but these are people who are already fluent in their own language, they are getting on very well in English, they've got IT skills and they are networking and obviously interested in education. They tend to be people with children in local schools so they have first hand knowledge, these are the sort of people you need and we have plenty of them... but of course people being encouraged to go into schools and get involved need to see that there is something in it for them at the end. That's why I'm pleased that there is this new job, teaching assistant, a paid job for somebody... they can start as a volunteers and end up in a paid job.

The teachers that had contact with the Co-educators programme were also complimentary. The teachers were also receptive to the idea of the Co-educator:

My absolute dream would be someone who is involved in the whole admissions process and then follows it up by reading or whatever with the children in the classroom and also visits the parents at home... So if there is something at home that is really not right they can help because sometimes people don't know they have a right to speak out. They feel that this is what they have got to accept.

However, they expressed many concerns about the practicality of the Co-educators role. The thrust of those concerns were that amalgamating so many roles into one post would probably make it impossible to do the job effectively:

They would have to translate the schools expectations to the parents and then parents' expectations to school, then feeding back to teachers and advise them about how to embrace this within their practice by working with teachers in classroom seeing strategies in action. It would not be an easy task dealing with such a variety of demanding audiences.

The RCOs expressed similar concerns:

You can't have one person doing all these things; classroom assistants are different from home-school liaison workers. Even if they have a classroom assistant, they still need home-school liaison if they want to use the assistant as liaison that means they can't do good work in the classroom... You can't just bring one person into school and expect them to do everything.

The skills mix a successful Co-educator would need, as identified by the teachers, suggests that they Co-educator would probably have to be better qualified than a teacher:

They would need to have a high standard of English, good numeracy and literacy skills... they have to be computer literate... as well as understanding the nature of schools in inner-cities, which may be totally different from what they are used to... They have to understand the mixture of the kids we have... and the ways we integrate learning by doing history through art work... because education systems across the world are so different they have to know what [our system] is all about.

They must have knowledge of how schools work an understanding of its ethos... a particular subject that they could contribute... I am a great believer in children being taught subjects like maths in their home language so we are trying to set up mother tongue classes in different languages, if you had someone who could teach maths in community languages... and we were sure they were competent... I'd bite your hand off.

It is really important that they understand... the way the English education system works... having someone come in without that understanding creates problems for teachers... they also have to understand constraints on teachers, curriculum constraints, the whole culture and ideology of the school... if you put someone with different expectations of children and behaviour... that would inevitably cause problems.

The RCOs expressed similarly high expectations of co-educators:

They would need an understanding of the community's very good communication skills so that they are able to respond to parents on their own level... understand the English system and the school's culture... they must have a high degree of education themselves, very good English... My background is as a teacher but I wouldn't dream to teach in school with my English and I don't want any teacher to teach my child with this type of English.

The teachers were largely positive in suggesting improvements to the Co-educators course. Their ideas included making schools more involved in recruiting students by encouraging head teachers to nominate parents to the course. This might help make them more amenable to provide placements for students who are also parents of children in their school. Teachers and head teachers could also be more involved in providing an input into the course and course induction should be school based so that students have early exposure to the realities of the school environment. Moreover, the course should not only tell students about the education system, it should also ensure that they understand and share a commitment to a child-centred ethos. Finally, the organisation and management of school placements needs to improve:

Be careful about the demands you make on schools we are already so stretched that I don't even take PGCE students now... What I couldn't deal with would be a refugee worker coming in, [even on placement] who needed us to support them on any problems they might have about being a refugee themselves... they would have to be at a level where the issues about themselves being refugees had been dealt with and they feel happy with that.

There is therefore a need for there to be clear benefits to the school of having the placement, which might arise from students performing specific roles while in school, e.g. lunch time supervision.

The teachers were particularly concerned about the practicalities of the Co-educator role. Their suspicion seemed to be that in reality schools do not have the resources to employ Co-educators and even if they did the high levels of mobility in the refugee communities would make schools reluctant to employ them on a permanent contract. They would therefore have to be a centrally provided and this could be a disincentive for schools because there would probably be rationing of the limited central resource using overly bureaucratic procedures. The data suggest that the Co-educators role is a compromise, which will not solve the problems it seeks to address. Therefore, rather than seeking to produce Co-educators, the University Certificate in Educational Partnership from London Met should focus primarily on equipping refugees to compete effectively for jobs as classroom assistants, home-school liaison workers, etc. Moreover, the course should aim to provide people with the skills to expand the role of interpreters into a wider advocacy role and to deliver the wider “connectivity” functions identified for central EMAS.

Ultimately, the challenge is to get more teachers in to the classroom that are bilingual and who have refugee backgrounds, because as one respondent said, what schools need is:

Someone who knows the school system and can give them support [but that person]... has to be part of the school system... It's important not to be an outsider. I think it is important to be seen around the school... trust takes time to build up in a relationship with some of these children and they might not want to speak to an outsider... they would also know about other issues not just refugees but school issues how the school works, how children learn best approaches... I am accepted here because I came from (country) and I can identify with the situation and the problems they are having, but on top of that, I am well established in the system and understand how it works and how they can achieve. So that gives me added experience that I can pull on to help the children and because I'm part of the system I can help them in many different ways.

The Government's strategy for the integration of refugees outlined in the report *Full and Equal Citizens* calls upon professional bodies to help qualified refugees return to their professions (Home Office 2002). The barriers to refugees with a teaching background achieving QTS are formidable, and they will require a national framework to address them. The recent work by the British Medical Association and Refugee Council to address the barriers faced by the 3000 qualified refugee doctors in the UK could provide a model for the Teacher Training Agency on a national level.

At the local level, there is also a need for a more coherent approach to enabling refugees to achieve qualified teacher status (QTS). As one head teacher observed:

We need a long term view and if there is some kind of programme it has to be a lead to QTS

The Department of Education at London Met is currently developing a major research project to investigate the under-recruitment of BME teachers in London. Central EMAS may therefore wish to

seek to become involved with this project to ensure it addresses the specific issues around the recruitment of refugee teachers in Islington.

CONCLUSIONS

The small and purposive nature of the research sample means that caution is necessary when interpreting the data. However, the findings set out in this report are broadly consistent with those of other research in this area.

The specific needs of refugee children identified by the sample are language acquisition, support to help them cope with living as a refugee, and overcoming racism. To address these needs in schools requires greater parental involvement, more refugees employed as bilingual classroom assistants, home liaison workers and interpreters/advocates. They also need greater community involvement, school community partnerships, mother tongue supplementary classes, comprehensive policies, and procedures on refugee education that reflect best practice.

If the Certificate in Education Partnership is to provide Islington with enough skilled refugees to become support workers and teachers in local schools, the Co-educators programme course should focus on helping students to compete for existing posts rather than preparing them for a Co-educator role that does not exist. This is especially true given the complexity of the role and the nature of the skills mix that would be required to discharge successfully the envisioned role.

The political controversy that surrounds the issue of refugee resettlement in the UK can make efforts to address the needs of refugee children appear contentious or controversial. However, enabling refugee professionals to assist schools to support refugee children will promote the development of successful multi-ethnic school that will benefit all pupils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research data suggest that refugee children in Islington schools have a wide range of support needs and that some schools are making enormous efforts to address those needs sympathetically and effectively. Schools need to make even greater efforts to ensure the skills and talents of refugee children and the refugee communities are utilised for the benefit of the wider community. The broad agreement between the refugee communities and schools as to the needs of refugee children, the necessity for greater community and parental involvement to address those needs, and the roles refugee professionals could best play in schools, suggest that EMAS should approach the task of promoting refugee inclusion and attainment with some optimism. However, given the limits of the research sample, it would be inappropriate to seek to impose detailed recommendations as to how they should approach this task. Consequently, the following recommendations aim to be a catalyst for further discussion and future innovation, rather than self contained “solutions” to the complex issues investigated. These recommendations are therefore designed to summarise the main issues arising from the research findings to which the EAT will respond.

The recommendations for further action are that CEA should consider:

1. Committing it self to making all schools in Islington successful multi-ethnic schools;
2. Developing a comprehensive refugee education policy to promote refugee inclusion and attainment, and clarify school responsibilities for supporting refugee children;
3. Increasing the availability of home language counselling, for refugee children and parents who have experienced trauma;
4. Investing additional resources in bilingual classroom assistants, home liaison workers, interpreters/education advocates, and supplementary schools and take positive action to target recruitment to these posts at the refugee communities;
5. Establishing a career escalator to enable refugees who are qualified teachers to return to the profession;
6. Requesting the LB Islington review its grant making procedures in order to prioritise funding for projects that promote refugee pupil inclusion and attainment through school-refugee community partnerships;
7. Including specific strategies and targets for refugee inclusion and attainment within its race equality scheme

EMAS should consider:

1. Developing comprehensive procedures and guidelines to promote whole school approaches to refugee inclusion and attainment based on existing best practise in Islington schools;
2. Working with INSET to prioritise training for teachers working with children who do not speak English, and courses to help teachers identify and respond effectively to behaviours associated with trauma;

3. Developing a connectivity resource to build closer relationships between schools, RCOs, and other voluntary sector organisations to ensure refugee children have access to the full range of support services they need;
4. Providing additional resources to make professional fundraisers available to school-RCO partnerships to help them access additional funding;
5. Developing a comprehensive strategy to promote home language supplementary schools in the Borough;
6. Undertaking further research to identify the extent to which refugee children are failing to register with schools;
7. Investigating ways to promote closer relationships between schools and the Connexions service;
8. Publishing the EMAS directory of community organisations on the internet with live links where possible;
9. Investigating the possibility and utility of developing an education advocacy service along the lines of health advocacy services available in the NHS;
10. Working with RCOs to develop school induction courses for refugee parents;
11. Developing a targeted recruitment campaign to increase the numbers of school governors from the refugee communities;
12. Working with the Department of Education at London Met to develop new strategies to improve the recruitment of BME teachers in general and those with a refugee background in particular

EMAS and schools should consider working together to:

1. Ensure they have comprehensive strategy for meeting the needs of refugee children including strong pastoral care structures and robust education social work support systems.
2. Challenge low expectations of refugee and BME pupils among teachers;
3. Monitor the numbers of children with EAL needs labelled as having SEN;
4. Implement positive action strategies to recruit more BME and bilingual staff as EMAS teachers;
5. Provide classes to assist refugee parents to participate in their child's education;
6. Provide school premises and facilities so that RCOs can provide advice to refugee parents in order to help them cope with the myriad problems they face;
7. Produce welcome packs in community languages;

RAGU should consider ways to:

1. Enhance school involvement in the University Certificate in Education Partnership by targeting recruitment to the course through head teachers as well as RCOs;
2. Make greater use of local head teachers and teachers in delivering the course;
3. Change the University Certificate in Educational Partnership course to equip refugees to compete effectively for available jobs as classroom assistants, home-liaison workers, etc;
4. Ensure that students completing the course have excellent English, ICT skills, plus a detailed understanding and commitment to the philosophy of the English education system;
5. Facilitate contacts between EMAS and the Department of Education at London Met to ensure that their current research project into BME teacher recruitment takes adequate account of the Islington's need to recruit teachers from the refugee communities;

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE - TEACHERS¹¹

Could you say a little about yourself and your experiences working with refugee and asylum seeking children?

In your experience what are the specific needs of refugee and asylum seeking children in the school environment?

- Casual Admissions
- Mobility

What initiatives are in place in your school to meet these needs?

- Support from community workers

What challenges does your school face in trying to implement these initiatives?

What initiatives would you wish to see implemented?

How successful would you say your school is in meeting the specific needs of refugee and asylum seeking children?

- Are children well integrated?
- Are their issues around bullying/racial harassment?

What support do you receive from CEA to assist you in meeting the needs of refugee children?

- How effective is this support
- What additional support would be most helpful?

The CEA are considering ways in which they might recruit people from the refugee communities who were education professionals in their countries of origin into support roles within schools.

What roles could you imagine these people could most usefully play in the school?

What skills, experience, knowledge, and aptitudes would they need to be effective?

What contributions do you think they could make to the school or the educational attainment of refugee and asylum seeking children?

➤ Indicates possible prompt

Is there anything else you would like to add about any of the things we have discussed? Thank you

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – REFUGEE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Could you say a little about yourself and the work of your organisation?

How would you describe your community's experience of schools in Islington?

What problems does your community experience when trying to enrol children in schools?

In your experience what are the specific needs of refugee and asylum seeking children in schools?

- Choice of schools
- Accessing information about schools
- EAL support
- Exclusions/Bullying

How effective do you consider Islington schools to be in meeting the needs of these children?

Could you give any examples of schools doing either very good or particularly bad things in relation to refugee children?

Does your organisation do any work with schools in Islington if so can you tell me a little about it?

What things would you like to see schools in Islington do to help refugee children?

The EMAS team in Islington are considering ways in which they might recruit people from the refugee communities who were education professionals in their countries of origin into support roles within schools.

Are you aware of people in you community who might have such skills who might be interested in restarting their careers?

Do you think this would be a good idea and if so what roles would you like to see such people playing in schools?

What skills, experience, knowledge, and aptitudes might they bring to school and how do you think they could assist in raising attainment of refugee and asylum seeking children?

Is there anything else you would like to add about any of the things we have discussed?

Thank you

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