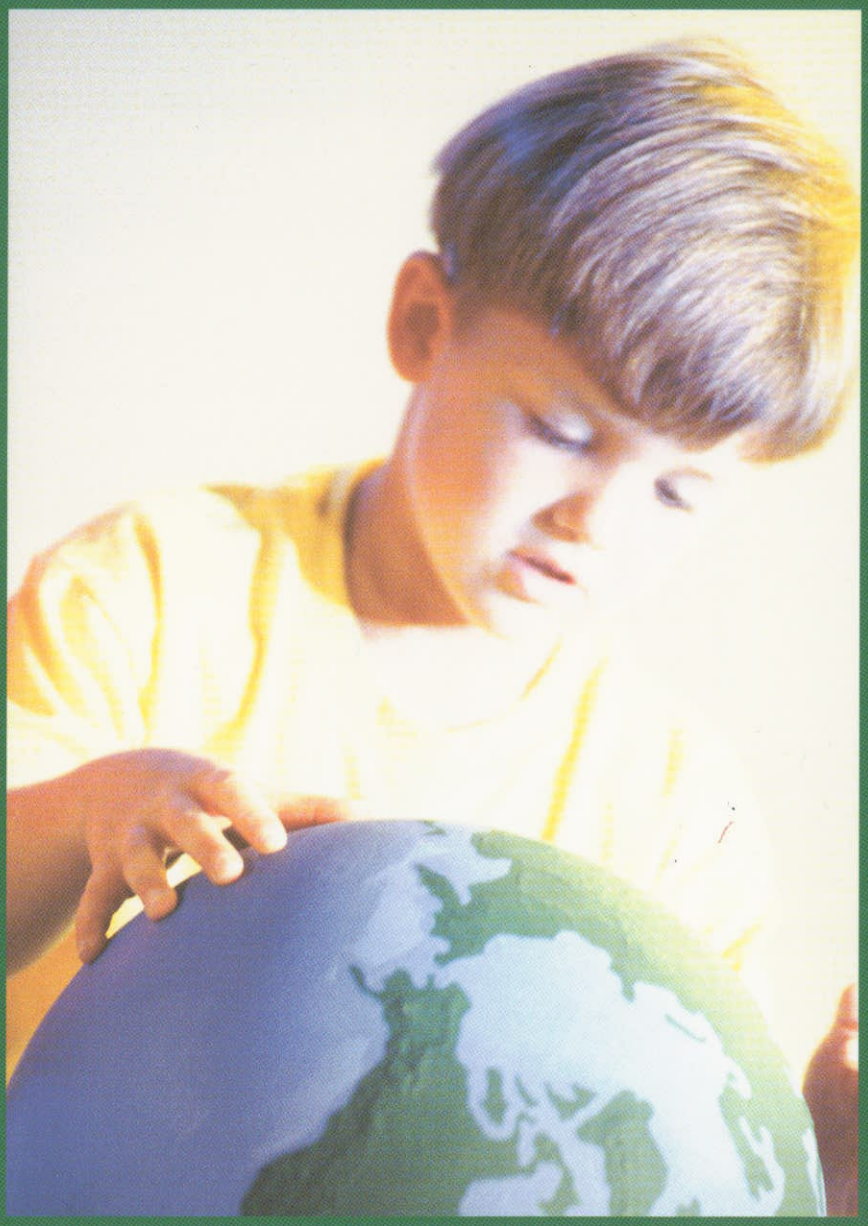
the education of asylum seekers in Wales

implications for LEAs and schools



Angharad Reakes
Robat Powell

nfer

the education of asylum seekers in Wales: implications for LEAs and schools

Angharad Reakes
Robat Powell

nfer

Published in December 2004
by the National Foundation for Educational Research,
The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2DQ

Registered Charity No. 313392
ISBN 1 903880 85 8

Contents

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express gratitude to the headteachers and staff in schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) who participated in the research and those who offered support and guidance throughout the study, notably Marilyn Burge.

The encouragement and advice offered by David Sims and Robat Powell the administrative support provided by Lowri Randell and Linda Gimblett are greatly appreciated. Thanks are also due to colleagues from the NFER's Professional and Curriculum Studies Department for reading and providing useful comments on the report. Thanks and appreciation to the NFER library staff, particularly Hilary Grayson, for their support and the NFER's Communications, Marketing and Information Services department for taking the report through to publication.

Finally, thanks to Jenny Reakes for providing valuable advice on many aspects of the project.

Executive summary

Introduction

Although the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK is not a new phenomenon, the recent (particularly in the last two to three years) increase in numbers has had significant implications for Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) and schools.

The proportion of asylum seekers arriving in Wales is smaller than its share of the UK population, but the challenge for LEAs and schools in Wales is no less varied and immediate.

The aims of the research

The specific aims of the research were to:

- examine the strategies and range of educational provision made by LEAs and schools for asylum-seeker children
- identify the implications for LEAs and schools arising from the requirements of this provision
- contribute to the understanding and dissemination of good practice in meeting the needs of asylum-seeker children.

The research project

The research project was conducted between October 2003 and February 2004.

The research used a qualitative methodology comprising of two strands:

- a literature review
- semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with LEA and school staff.

The field research was based on case studies of five LEAs; three in Wales and one each in England and Scotland.

Fourteen members of LEA staff were interviewed. These included:

- Asylum Seeker Education Coordinators
- members of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service and English as an Additional Language (EAL) teams
- educational psychologists
- other support staff.

A sample of seven schools across the five LEAs was visited – a secondary school from each and two special schools. In total, thirteen members of school staff were interviewed. These included:

- headteachers
- staff with responsibility for asylum seekers and EAL.

This research does not claim to be a comprehensive study of the area since it was limited to five case-studies. However, most of the issues identified were generic to all five LEAs and the extensive qualitative data obtained through the research interviews permitted a rigorous and in-depth analysis of these issues.

Main findings

Arrangements in the Welsh LEAs.

- The LEAs considered that meeting the new challenge of asylum-seeker children had been largely a new venture for which existing procedures were not always appropriate.
- All LEAs facilitated schools' preparation for the arrival of asylum-seeker children through meetings, information leaflets, training, provision of resources and guidance for the staff.
- Some LEAs had developed additional support mechanisms for supporting schools, for example, creative and theatrical initiatives.

Positive aspects of the education of asylum-seeker children

- Despite the concerns and challenges, LEAs and schools were very positive about receiving asylum-seeker children.
- The benefits of receiving asylum-seeker children included increased cultural richness and diversity, their contributions to the school as a whole and their potential as role models for other pupils.

The placement of asylum-seeker children in schools

- All LEAs stressed the importance of placing asylum-seeker children in schools as soon as possible.
- The three Welsh LEAs had a common approach to school admissions and followed their established admissions procedures. In contrast the Scottish and English LEAs placed their asylum-seeker children in the schools best equipped to receive them.
- In practice, the placement of asylum-seeker children to schools in the five LEAs was often influenced by the availability of housing for the families. This created a range of challenges.
- In the Welsh LEAs, if local catchment school classes or year groups were full, a place in the next school in the local catchment area was sought. In the other LEAs, the next nearest suitable school was found. For each of the five LEAs, this sometimes led to transport difficulties.
- All LEAs had implemented support processes for school placement, specifically for asylum-seeker families.
- Post-16 placements were sometimes a concern. Often school places were considered inappropriate and therefore college places were considered. However, colleges sometimes had inadequate language provision for asylum-seeker children.

Challenges for the LEAs

- Difficulties arose from the limited and often inaccurate background information available on the children, particularly for one LEA because of its status as a non-dispersal area.
- In the Welsh LEAs, staff highlighted a lack of training in educating asylum-seeker children.
- Staffing difficulties were identified in terms of limited additional/specialist and language support. To some degree this had been resolved by one LEA through the provision of a central interpreter service.

Multi-agency approaches

- All LEAs were involved in various forms of multi-agency working with other local authority departments and non-statutory agencies.
- All LEAs noted that a multi-agency approach was essential in order to gather information about the children and ensure support.
- However, multi-agency links were not always as developed and effective as they could be, although improvements were continually sought. One obstacle was poor communication between partners.
- The Asylum Seeker Support Project, which organised provision for asylum-seeker children in one LEA, was a multi-agency team, all of whom were housed together, facilitating vital informal contact.
- One LEA had developed a coordinator post within the central service with the specific role of forging and maintaining links with other departments and organisations.

The school experience

- All the schools had been apprehensive about the arrival of asylum-seeker pupils because 'it was a step into the unknown'. It was acknowledged that their arrival had required new procedures and practices.
- The majority of schools maintained a positive attitude towards accepting asylum-seeker pupils and felt that they made a valuable contribution to the life and achievements of the whole school.

- Like the LEAs, schools had faced a number of challenges including limited and/or factually inaccurate background information and the wide range of needs exhibited by the children.

- The inclusion of children was perceived as more successful in schools that already enjoyed some cultural diversity.

- A common dilemma was whether asylum-seeker pupils should be identified within the schools because of the possibility of discrimination. However, one school felt it necessary to open the discussion on asylum seekers in order to counteract negative media attention.

- Schools were generally well supported internally by specialist staff and by members of LEA asylum-seeker teams, but received little information or support from outside agencies. As a result some school staff found it difficult to cope with asylum-seeker children alongside the normal demands of their jobs.

- Schools often modified their educational arrangements specifically for asylum-seeker pupils. This included children being placed in lower sets, all asylum seekers being placed in one class, out-of-age placements and newcomers classes.

- A number of improvements were suggested, including withdrawing the children from some classes to provide intensive language support and reducing class sizes.

Special educational needs (SEN)

- Only one of the five LEAs had a higher proportion of asylum-seeker children with SEN, which required a formal statement, than that existing in the indigenous population.

- The four remaining LEAs had expected a higher proportion of asylum-seeker pupils with SEN.

- It was not clear why the distribution of asylum seekers with SEN was uneven, although some possibilities were suggested including under-developed identification and assessment procedures.

- All LEAs and schools applied existing SEN policy and procedures to asylum-seeker children.

- Placement in mainstream schools was perceived as appropriate for the majority of asylum seekers with SEN. It was felt that assumptions of SEN should not be made too hastily because of other factors affecting the behaviour of asylum-seeker children.

- Although there was a general LEA commitment to mainstream placements, in some cases it remained the only option due to the shortage of special school places.

- Different cultural attitudes towards SEN in some asylum-seeker families made it difficult at times to implement normal SEN procedures.

- A number of problems had arisen in the implementation of existing SEN policy and procedures. These included a lack of baseline information and language difficulties that raised concerns about misdiagnosis, the mobility and uncertain status of asylum seekers, lengthy statementing processes and interpreter shortages.

- All staff appreciated the training they received in relation to asylum seekers and special needs, but there were some concerns including the relevance of some training and staff take-up rates.

Funding

- The three Welsh LEAs received funding for asylum-seeker children through the same mechanism. Another authority had a different funding mechanism because it was a non-dispersal area and the fifth had taken an alternative approach to funding its provision.

- The different funding mechanisms contained several drawbacks, such as their inflexibility, difficulties in employing additional/specialist staff, inadequate consideration of the particular needs of individual authorities, and the linking of funding to new arrivals.

- The needs of settled asylum seekers could often only be met by diverting existing funding for particular needs, which left those areas short of resources.

- One LEA was disadvantaged because of its status as a non-dispersal area, which reduced entitlement to funding compared with designated dispersal areas.

- The tendency to integrate asylum seekers and associated issues into mainstream provision meant a loss of specific funding and support.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The numbers of asylum seekers and children dispersing across the UK has significant implications for local education authorities (LEAs) and schools in terms of the sufficiency of procedures and practices to educate the children and cater for their wide-ranging needs. This is also true for Wales, although the number of asylum seekers arriving in Wales is proportionately smaller than its share of the UK population. According to the first Home Office Quarterly Statistics of 2003 for Wales, 185 asylum seekers were receiving subsistence support through the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and 1870 were supported in NASS accommodation (Remsbery, 2003). NASS provides support, accommodation and financial assitance while asylum seekers wait for a decision to be made as to whether they can remain in the UK.

The body of research literature in the UK which examines the educational needs of asylum-seeker children is limited. Taylor (2002) suggests that these needs stem from language barriers and a lack of previous schooling, while their emotional and psychological needs may result from possible trauma because of events witnessed. These factors are likely to present LEAs and schools with considerable challenges.

By the summer of 2003 three LEAs in Wales had received asylum-seeker children. Further LEAs were likely to accept asylum seekers in the future, and would require guidance and robust evidence on which to base their policies.

1.2 Purpose and aims of the research

The principal purpose of this research project, which was funded through the Research Development Fund of the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), was to inform the development of policy in LEAs and schools to meet the needs of asylum-seeker children. The specific aims of the research were to:

- examine the strategies and range of educational provision made by LEAs and schools for asylum-seeker children
- identify the implications for LEAs and schools arising from the requirements of this provision
- contribute to the understanding and dissemination of good practice in meeting the needs of asylum-seeker children.

Asylum-seeker and refugee communities had been present in the UK for many years prior to the implementation of the dispersal policy. This research focused on the implications for LEAs and schools as a result of the recent and significant increase in numbers of asylum seekers in particular LEAs as mentioned above.

The participant LEAs contained groups of pupils with differing experiences of forced migration from a range of backgrounds. Background data regarding such children and young people was notably lacking in LEAs; they have also entered the education system in small numbers over time. Only recently has data been collated within a standardised framework across Welsh LEAs. Due to the limited scope of the research and because of the areas of need highlighted by LEAs the project focused on asylum-seeker children as identified by LEAs and schools.

Those interviewed recognised that their asylum-seeker pupils were not a homogenous group and had diverse needs, but did not refer to them by individual ethnic or national origin. This report follows that practice.

The findings and conclusions of this research are of necessity based on the views of respondents in a small sample of LEAs and the report cannot therefore claim to address all issues relating to the education of asylum-seeker children.

1.3 Research design and methods

The research used a qualitative methodology comprising two strands:

- a consideration of the literature
- case studies involving semi-structured face-to-face interviews.

A search for recent and relevant literature, with a primary focus on the UK, was undertaken using BEI and IBSS and documentation and policies were collected from LEAs. An analytic review was conducted of all literature obtained.

Some internet searches were also carried out to locate relevant documentation; these included education-related sites such as the Department for Education and Skills (www.dfes.gov.uk) and the websites of bodies concerned with asylum issues, such as the Refugee Council (www.refugeecouncil.org.uk).

Case studies

Case studies of five LEAs were undertaken: three in Wales, and one each in England and Scotland where there is greater experience of providing for this group of pupils. Semi-structured interview schedules were used in each study to conduct interviews with key personnel in LEAs and schools. The LEA staff interviewed included asylum-seeker education coordinators, members of Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) and English as an Additional Language (EAL) teams, educational psychologists and other support staff. Table 1.1 shows the numbers of LEA staff interviewed.

Table 1.1: Numbers of LEA staff interviewed

LEA	Number of staff interviewed
A	2
B	2
C	3
D	5
E	2

Source: NFER Research into Education of Asylum-Seeker Children (2003)

A sample of seven schools across the five LEAs were visited to interview headteachers and specialist staff, that is, staff with responsibility for EAL or asylum-seeker children. These included one secondary in each LEA and one special school in each of two authorities. Not all of the LEAs had placed asylum-seeker children in special schools. Table 1.2 shows the numbers of school staff interviewed.

Table 1.2: Numbers of school staff interviewed

LEA	School Type	Number of staff interviewed
A	Secondary	2
	Special	2
B	Secondary	1
C	Secondary	3
D	Secondary	3
	Special	1
E	Secondary	1

Source: NFER Research into Education of Asylum-Seeker Children (2003)

Although the research was not a comprehensive study of the area since it was limited to five case studies, it scopes and documents policy and practice in Wales and draws comparisons with the two other LEAs in Scotland and England. Additional LEAs in Wales have also received asylum seekers since the start of this project. Many common approaches to the education of asylum-seeker children were found between the five case-study LEAs, but the comparative English and Scottish LEAs have been used only to highlight alternative approaches and practices. The case studies undertaken in England and Scotland cannot be representative of all approaches by LEAs in those countries.

1.4 The case-study LEAs

LEA A An urban area in South Wales with substantial numbers of asylum seekers and both established and developing practice.

LEA B An urban area in South Wales with a smaller, but expanding asylum-seeker population.

LEA C An urban area in South Wales with a recent intake of asylum seekers that was rapidly increasing.

LEA D An urban area in Scotland with a substantial asylum-seeker population and with established and developing practice.

LEA E A non-dispersal urban area in England with a stabilising proportion of asylum seekers. However, an accurate picture of numbers was difficult to obtain because of its status as a non-dispersal area (areas that are not designated by

the Government as dispersal areas where asylum seekers arrive of their own accord).

1.5 Report structure

The chapters of this report present background information on the five case study LEAs and a discussion of policy, practice and the issues examined there. Chapter 2 presents highlights of the literature reviewed. Chapter 3 discusses the experience of LEAs and chapter 4 describes the experience of schools. Chapters 5 and 6 highlight two issues that have an impact on both LEAs and schools – special educational needs and funding. Chapter 7 describes the positive outcomes that have been identified from educating asylum-seeker children in UK schools.

2 Literature review

2.1 Background

The arrival of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK is not a new phenomenon. Mott (2000) argues that the country has had a long history of receiving people who, for reasons of persecution, intimidation, harassment and fears for their own or their families' safety have left their own countries to settle elsewhere.

In order to clarify the terminology, UN (1951, p.4) states that:

> *A person with refugee status is defined as someone who has fled from his/her own country or is unable to return because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or particular political opinion. An asylum seeker is a person who has crossed international borders in search of safety, and refugee status, in another country. In the UK, asylum seekers are people who are awaiting a Home Office decision as to whether they can remain.*

The marked increase in the numbers of asylum seekers arriving in the UK at the turn of the 21st Century has led to a new debate on the reception of these groups and the provisions made for them. Batty (2001, p.1) contends that 'a record number of people seeking asylum in the UK has become one of the most contentious social issues for the government and local authorities'.

In comparison to other countries, the number of asylum seekers received in the UK is relatively small. For example, both the Netherlands and Sweden have received relatively around three times as many asylum seekers as the UK (Remsbery, 2003), but from the mid-1980s onwards European and British asylum policy has converged and created greater hurdles for the 'would be asylum seeker' (Rutter, 2001).

Rutter (2001) states that the number of refugees and asylum seekers has increased substantially since the late 1980s. Between 1996 and 2000 the total number of applications for asylum rose from 29,640 to 80,315 (Remsbery, 2003). The arrival of these numbers of asylum seekers has impacted on all social services, but particularly on the education system.

The children of asylum seekers have the same entitlements to a free school education as all other children aged five to 16 in the UK. Rutter (2001) argues that the government's policy for the dispersal of asylum seekers to towns and cities throughout the UK and the settlement of school-aged refugees and asylum seekers has placed substantial demands on local authorities and schools, especially where numbers of asylum seekers have been concentrated in certain areas. The dispersal scheme aimed to lessen the increasing pressure London authorities were under by spreading asylum seekers more evenly across other LEAs, but some of the dispersal areas were ill-prepared to support them.

The importance of education for asylum seekers and refugees is also well recognised, as this statement indicates: 'The education system is pivotal in terms of providing entry to employment... and for participation in social, political and cultural affairs' (Parekh report, 2000, p.148).

Asylum-seeker and refugee children have a range of needs which pose challenges for both LEAs and schools. The following literature review summarises present research on these issues. It includes literature on both asylum seekers and refugees because the literature dealing solely with asylum seekers is limited and because of the generic issues that exist between the two groups.

2.2 Review of research

2.2.1 Asylum-seeker and refugee children

Refugee and asylum-seeker children come from a range of backgrounds with diverse cultural values and religious and ideological beliefs. Iszatt and Price (1995) suggest that although each child is an individual, it is possible to make some general statements about their experiences and needs. Mott (2000) notes that it would be impossible to identify a discrete set of issues and needs unique to refugees and asylum seekers, but the manner

of and the reasons for their arrival in the UK make it likely that a set of issues will be held in common.

A variety of needs and issues have been highlighted by the literature. These include:

- emotional needs and trauma resulting from direct experience of conflict and violence (Rutter, 2001)
- the dislocation and difficulties associated with the cultural transition necessary when arriving in the UK (Iszatt and Price, 1995; Mott, 2000) and new social and economic challenges (Rutter, 2001)
- unsettled home lives because of uncertainties about legal status and entitlements (Iszatt and Price, 1995)
- isolation because of language difficulties (Rutter, 2001)
- absence of schooling because of the breakdown of systems or the exclusion of certain groups from educational provision where it existed (Mott, 2000).

These factors will affect individual children in many different ways, but all may impact on the children's behaviour and attitude after admission to school in the UK.

Rutter and Jones (1998) explain that the inadequate supply of information and advice to refugee and asylum seekers, the uncertainty of temporary accommodation because of legal status, frequent changes in school and subsequent limited continuity, can all create obstacles to obtaining a school place and the effective integration of the children into a school environment.

Blair and Bourne (1998, p.126) state:

> *The experience of trauma, together with the harsh living conditions of many refugees appeared from our interviews to be an overriding factor in the ability of refugee students to access the education system and school curriculum.*
>
> *The top-down decisions relating to asylum seekers and the resultant provision available, as well as the individual circumstances of the children influence their ability to access education.*

However, attending school is considered to be an important aspect of the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers and the Refugee Council (2003) suggests that with appropriate support, the children can perform well in school.

Bolloten and Spafford (1998, p.111) maintain that:

> *The experience of many children suggests that while some children do indeed show acute distress and appear unable to manage their experiences and move on, many other refugee children cope and function well in the classroom, make stable friendships and progress in their learning.*

The factors described above have implications for both LEA and school provision for asylum-seeker and refugee children.

2.3 LEA provision

Local government is responsible for providing services for all refugees and asylum seekers in their communities (Annett, 1991). The Education Act of 1996 required LEAs to make the same provision available for asylum-seeker children as for other children resident in the UK (Rutter, 2001).

LEAs have made a number of varied responses to the arrival of asylum seekers. Mott (2000) found in a national survey that a significant number of LEAs had developed and/or were reviewing documents in preparation for the arrival of asylum seekers or had established working groups to coordinate the efforts of different agencies.

There are also published examples of individual LEA efforts to develop effective educational provision for asylum seekers. For example, Newcastle LEA have written refugee and asylum-seeker booklets for schools containing information such as an explanation of the terms refugee and asylum seeker, their experiences, needs and entitlements and issues for schools such as staff training and what to teach (Remsbery, 2003).

An Ofsted report (2003) proposed the development of an effective framework of support and help for schools which included:

- giving priority of access to education for newly arrived pupils

- providing training for staff in schools on cultural backgrounds of local communities and services to which parents and children are entitled

- having a clearly designated post that oversees support for the pupils and promotes effective inter-agency links, with, for example, social services and housing, for collecting and coordinating information about families that have arrived in the community.

2.3.1 Challenges for LEAs

However, some LEAs are concerned with the standard of educational provision for asylum seekers. For example, Rutter and Jones (1998) found that many London LEAs had reservations about the level of provision they were providing to refugee and asylum-seeker families. Similarly Mott (2000, p.6) reported that in a study of LEAs many were anxious about their readiness to cope with a 'rapidly developing situation'.

A number of issues have been identified as being responsible for limiting the provision that LEAs offer.

2.3.2 LEA experiences of refugees and asylum seekers

Mott (2000), while looking at the role of LEAs, found that tensions had arisen where refugees and asylum seekers had been dispersed to areas with no previous experience of these particular groups. The dispersal system was put in place in order to reduce the pressure on services in particular areas where large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers were arriving, particularly close to ports and airports. Although this process did alleviate some problems, it also created new challenges for areas with no or limited history of providing for refugees and asylum seekers (Remsbery, 2003).

Ofsted (2003) observed that LEAs with little experience of refugees and asylum seekers usually had few procedures and structures in place to support schools and basic systems of information and guidance had to be set up quickly. A research programme in Scotland, for example, indicated that service providers considered their experiences with dispersed asylum seekers as a 'steep learning curve' (Barclay *et al.*, 2003, p. 2), although both Ofsted (2003) and Barclay *et al.* (2003) found a marked improvement in provision with time.

2.3.3 Confusion over the development of policy

There is a great deal of variation between LEAs in terms of policy development.

Research undertaken by Mott (2000) highlighted that few LEAs had developed policies on provision for asylum seekers and refugees, in part because they had not faced the need to do so. An Audit Commission report (2000) of LEAs in London reported that fewer than one-third had a refugee policy in place.

A study of LEAs in Scotland found that local authorities throughout the country had many different interpretations of what kind of support should be on offer. Few authorities had specific education policies for refugee children and instead argued that existing education policies such as support for bilingual pupils and anti-racist education were adequate (Clarke and McGregor, 2002). Similar findings were presented by Mott (2000) who suggested that many LEAs dealt with refugees and asylum seekers in the context of existing policies such as admissions, free school meals and special educational needs (Mott, 2000). One possible explanation for the use of existing policies was given by Closs *et al.* (2001) who stated that some authorities did not perceive the needs of refugees to be different from the needs of children in general.

However, Clarke and McGregor (2002) argued that the Government provided no coherent national guidance to aid local authorities so that provision for refugee and asylum-seeker children is left to local authorities and individual schools, which then network with each other to develop practice.

2.3.4 Lack of information

The lack of information available regarding refugees and asylum seekers was also considered to hinder the development of provision (Mott, 2000). An Ofsted report (2003) highlighted that LEAs did not always receive sufficiently detailed information about the families and their backgrounds. Rutter and Jones (1998) emphasised the need to collect good, accurate and relevant information so that all local services can be more effective.

2.3.5 Uncoordinated approaches

Uncoordinated approaches by local authority departments and other organisations involved with

asylum seekers and refugees have been highlighted as a concern by a number of LEAs in several pieces of research. Limited coordination often hindered the flow of information between agencies and effected provision by limiting support and partnership working.

The need for a more effective, integrated, multi-agency approach to refugee issues was raised by many London LEAs as a concern regarding their level of service (Rutter and Jones, 1998). However, an Ofsted report (2003) suggested that a strength in a number of authorities was the coordination of work and support of various agencies including health, social services and voluntary agencies.

2.3.6 Interpreters

Inadequate interpreter services have often hampered educational provision for refugees and asylum seekers. Barclay *et al.* (2003), in a study on asylum seekers in Scotland, found that this was a key factor. Lack of interpreters or poor quality interpreters made access to services, gaining the correct information and getting help particularly difficult. In London, too, interpreter services were highlighted as being extremely over-stretched and variable from area to area (Audit Commission, 2000). Rutter and Jones (1998) found that the expansion of such services was considered vital by a number of LEAs.

2.4 School provision

2.4.1 Positive aspects of educating asylum-seeker and refugee children

Research indicates that initially teachers often feel apprehensive and overwhelmed by the arrival of asylum-seeker children in their classroom (Remsbery, 2003), although Rutter and Jones (1998) argue that this reaction seldom lasts for long. Many teachers who have asylum-seeker or refugee children in their classroom for a period of time do not perceive them as being 'different from other students'.

Nevertheless, schools have associated certain difficulties with educating asylum-seeker and refugee children, such as language barriers, a range of educational needs and, more generally, a shortage of resources and guidance in schools. However, research also indicates that their presence has been rewarding and positive.

Rutter and Jones (1998, p. 3) suggest that many teachers believe that asylum-seeker and refugee children bring into the classroom, '...a range of opportunities and perspectives that can enrich the learning and understandings of everyone working there'. These findings were echoed by a recent Ofsted report (2003, p. 9), which stated that for many schools, particularly in dispersal authorities, the arrival of asylum-seeker children proved to be the beginning of a positive experience and relationship between staff, pupils and asylum-seeker families. There was also evidence that schools were using the experience as a way of evaluating school practice. For example, for many schools

> *...the admission and integration of the newly arrived pupils proved to be a very good litmus test of how well the principles of inclusion and race equality were applied in practice.*

Clarke and McGregor (2002) maintain that for the most part, refugee children are actually easier to teach than the indigenous pupils because they often come from cultures where education is not readily available and is therefore highly valued.

Many educationalists argue that the notion that the education of asylum seekers and refugees is problematic stems from inherent weaknesses in the education system itself rather than the individual needs of this group of pupils. Rutter and Jones (1998) contend that the education of refugees is both extensive and well established and that there has been a refugee presence in some areas of Britain since the 16th century. A headteacher with experience of refugee pupils wrote:

> *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).

Research indicates that schools often believe that improving their practice with regards to integrating and educating asylum seekers and refugee pupils is linked to more general issues of school improvement (Rutter and Jones, 1998).

However, a number of challenges and concerns for schools and their staff have also been identified.

2.4.2 Pressure on teachers

Mott (2000) states that even though schools are responsible for making the majority of day-to-day decisions about the education of refugees and asylum seekers, there has been little research about school practice, schools' interpretation of policy, and good practice guidelines.

Research indicates that teachers can feel pressured by the presence of asylum-seeker and refugee pupils because, in some cases, they have little experience or knowledge of their particular needs. Iszatt and Price (1995, p. 52) suggest that teachers can feel 'overwhelmed' and 'de-skilled' when they are confronted with children from refugee communities showing signs of distress or displaying difficult behaviour. Teachers often feel ill-equipped to deal with the emotional and behavioural problems associated with this particular group of pupils, as well as finding it difficult to deal with their educational needs adequately (Rutter and Jones, 1998). In a recent Ofsted report (2003) a number of schools provided accounts of cases where pupils exhibited symptoms of trauma and distress in their behaviour for which teachers felt they had insufficient training and guidance.

The range of needs which teachers confront raise additional concerns. Rutter (2001) argues that some children exhibit similar needs because a significant number of refugees and asylum seekers have had interrupted learning in their countries of origin and have witnessed stressful and upsetting situations. However, within any refugee community there is a great deal of heterogeneity. Refugee and asylum-seeker children have no single set of educational needs. Clarke (2003) suggests that although it can be unhelpful and misleading to generalise about the needs of individual asylum seekers it can be useful to summarise some of the difficulties they share. These include arriving at any point in the school term, which is particularly difficult if they arrive in years 10 or 11, having a low or non-existent knowledge of English, experiences of persecution and/or interrupted learning and the fear of deportation.

In addition to practical needs such as language support and special educational needs, teachers also have to tackle pupils' psychological and emotional needs (Rutter and Jones, 1998). Annett (1991, p. 5) states that the children may require practical help with, for example, language barriers, but,

> *...asylum-seeker children also come to class separated from their family and communities, without equivalent early education, estranged from the culture they find in the playground.*

Additionally, many will have witnessed horrific acts and would have had '...little psychological preparation for their change in circumstance'. For example, in a project of primary and secondary schools, a headteacher stated:

> *We get children* [who] *when they first come in are totally traumatised, and they're wild, I mean wild. They don't know how school works, they've never been inside a school and I could be excluding all day from the way they behave*
>
> (Blair and Bourne, 1998, p. 127).

Although not all refugee students have experienced loss and suffering in their own countries and may cope well with the change, teachers are not trained for the complex range of needs associated with trauma and often do not feel competent enough to deal with them (Rutter and Jones, 1998).

Concerns regarding the limited training teachers received on the needs of asylum seekers were accentuated by a distinct lack of background information on the children and written guidelines to support teachers with their practice. Rutter and Jones (1998) found that teachers viewed background information as very important to their teaching of asylum-seeker and refugee children. Additionally, because of the issues involved in educating these groups of pupils, particularly hostile public attitudes, it is suggested that schools need clearer guidelines on dealing with any relevant issues such as racist bullying (Refugee Council, 2002). As Marland (1998, p. 18) argues,

> *despite the immense and varied experience of schooling migrant children in so many parts of the country, it could hardly be said that there had been a body of research or literature, still less government leadership, to help schools understand the particularity of schooling refugee children.*

It has been suggested that these concerns of teaching staff can affect the way that they deal with asylum-seeker and refugee pupils. For example, Bolloten and Spafford (1998, p. 109) argue that,

> *Teachers may sometimes show a reluctance to develop an understanding of the experiences of refugees. Fear*

of being overwhelmed by the complexity of their situation, their needs and their anxieties, may cause some professionals to withdraw or distance themselves

Ofsted (2003) found that in the minority of schools where the range and quality of provision had been limited, a contributory factor was teachers' lack of confidence in their own abilities to respond effectively to the needs of asylum seekers.

Where support and information was provided for teachers and they had gained practical, relevant experience, they often felt more confident in their practice. A study based on English LEAs (Remsbery, 2003) found that senior staff in schools had sensed apprehension among staff before the pupils' arrival because some had not worked with any children with, for example, EAL needs, and were unsure they could manage. However, after beginning to work with the pupils, teachers gained confidence in their ability. Ofsted (2003) highlighted that the most effective teaching practice was characterised by teachers who had a good knowledge and understanding of language needs, clear guidance, help and support from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) staff and effective policies, induction and training for staff.

Teachers suffered additional pressures because of limited time and resources. In terms of time, Rutter (2001) argues that educational opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees have been undermined by changes in government policy such as the literacy hour, which has made huge demands on teachers' time. Refugee and asylum-seeker children often attend under-subscribed schools because there are vacant places. These schools already tend to have a greater population of children with, for example EAL, whose needs place heavy demands on teachers' time and skills (Rutter and Jones, 1998).

Teachers in inner-city areas where asylum seekers and refugees are frequently placed are already over-stretched because of the particular challenges there and can therefore often see refugee children as 'yet another task' (Jones, 1998, p. 179).

Teachers' lack of time to focus on the specific needs of this group of pupils is compounded by inadequate resources. For example, as Clarke and McGregor (2002, p. 2) state, 'refugee children often arrive at school without notice and in large numbers, yet no additional language support is provided'. The effect of limited resources on teachers is highlighted by Rutter and Jones (1998, p. 3) who argue that

resources to meet these multifarious needs are never sufficient... put an unheralded, non-English speaking refugee child into that teacher's classroom on a wet, cold February morning and a camel's-last-straw reaction may seem understandable.

2.4.3 Pressure on schools

The effect of limited resources has also been a major challenge for schools as a whole. Much research has described a situation in which asylum seekers and refugees are entering an under-resourced and over-stretched educational system (Rutter and Jones, 1998). Mott (2000, p. 8) identified a number of issues already affecting schools, which are accentuated by the presence of asylum seekers and refugees stating that,

...of these issues, the ones that are clearly of the greatest concern are the inadequacy of overall resourcing, the cumbersome nature of its generation and allocation and the acute need for support for the acquisition of English.

Some of the schools involved in Mott's research were already facing significant difficulties and in dire need of additional resources and support.

Language support for asylum seekers and refugees has been identified as a particular problem for schools because of already strained EAL services. As a result, teachers, class groups already deemed too big, and the EAL services are placed under pressure. Limited resources have to be extended even further.

2.4.4 Actions taken by schools

Schools have taken a number of different actions to overcome the challenges associated with educating asylum-seeker and refugee children. Research undertaken by Rutter and Jones (1998) found that the following were effective:

- whole-school policies such as equal opportunities, anti-racism, home-school liaison, pastoral care and guidance
- training staff so they can begin to understand the experience of asylum-seeker and refugee children

- raising awareness of the indigenous pupil population to the plight of these particular groups by providing them with information encourage sympathetic perceptions and tolerance

- inductions and buddy systems for asylum-seeker and refugee children

- access to the curriculum through the inclusion of refugee-related issues.

There are also examples of how individual teachers have responded to the educational needs of asylum-seeker children. Crabb (1996) discusses a variety of responses to the educational needs of a 10-year old refugee from Somalia who was the only Somali-speaking child in the school. These included bringing in Somali-speaking children from a secondary school to enable him to interact with his classmates and for them to learn about him and incorporating Somali-based traditions of oral poetry into the curriculum as a means of collaborative work for the whole class.

An inner-city comprehensive developed a support network which changed the way that the school dealt with asylum-seeker and refugee children. An induction programme for all new students was devised, awareness- raising sessions for staff and training days involving the LEA and outside agencies (such as the Refugee Council and mental health organisations) were developed, which led to the formulation of guidelines and strategies for supporting refugee children. One result of this network was a programme of training for sixth form students in the areas of language acquisition, experiences of refugees and befriending. Peer partnerships were set up between sixth formers and refugee pupils and students set up a charity to raise needed funds (Blair and Bourne, 1998). A school in Hull developed a policy of gradual integration where for the first three weeks new arrivals attended school in the afternoons with English language being their only subject. The next few weeks they attended school for most of the day and joined other pupils in some of the lessons. After six weeks they attended all day with most of their time spent in mainstream classes (Remsbery, 2003).

A number of issues have affected both LEA and school provision. These have been highlighted as:

- SEN

- multi-agency approaches

- funding.

2.5 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Although the number of asylum seekers with SEN varies across LEAs, the processes necessary to identify such needs and the support available to provide for the children have been highlighted as concerns. Although little appears to have been written on asylum seekers and special educational needs (SEN), educational psychologists and SEN services are identified as important aspects of support for such pupils. School psychology services primarily work with children who have SEN because of learning difficulties, emotional or behavioural problems, physical difficulties or an illness that requires additional support. The Refugee Council (2003) suggests that these needs may be particularly prevalent among refugee and asylum-seeker children who could be suffering trauma as a result of the experiences in their home countries or the impact of loss and disruption associated with exile. As Senior (2002) maintains, refugees are likely to benefit from psychological intervention.

There are, however, a number of challenges relating to the SEN of asylum-seeker pupils including the statutory assessment and statementing process and the role of educational psychologists. The statutory assessment and statementing process has recently been criticised in a review by the Audit Commission (2002) for being costly, bureaucratic and slow as a process. The report also suggested that many parents and teachers felt that it added little value in helping to meet a child's needs. Furthermore, a growing proportion of children are being identified as having SEN. The number of children with statement needs has risen by 35 per cent since 1992 and the variation in the incidence of needs identified has widened (Audit Commission, 2002). This has resulted in an over-stretched system of support.

As Foster (2002, p. 2) argues:

> *Our system of education has changed enormously since statements were first introduced nearly 20 years ago. Much progress has been made in that time. However key parts of the statutory framework are inconsistent with the roles now played by local authorities, schools and other agencies in meeting children's needs.*

It appears that the inadequacies of the system may be intensified when the SEN of asylum seekers need to be assessed. The shortcomings of statutory statementing coupled with the specific needs of asylum-seeker children such as their legal status, insecure accommodation issues or language may hinder evaluations being undertaken by psychologists (Iszatt and Price, 1995). Despite these difficulties, Mott (2000) found that most of the LEAs involved in the study were depending on their existing policies to deal with asylum seekers, including SEN issues. Rutter and Jones (1998) suggest that some refugee students with learning needs are unsupported by statements of SEN.

In addition to weaknesses in the system as a whole, research has indicated that educational psychologists often felt that they were not equipped to deal with the wide range of needs presented by asylum-seeker children. For example, Jennings and Kerslake (1994) found that some educational psychologists had misgivings that they were not adequately addressing the experiences that some children bring into school with them. Iszatt and Price (1995) have noted strong concerns raised about whether or not educational psychologists were equipped to work with traumatised children.

2.6 Multi-agency working

Multi-agency working is considered important by LEAs and schools in meeting the needs of asylum-seeker children. It is considered a key factor in the provision of effective services and is often described as good practice (Remsbery, 2003). Links have been developed between a number of different departments within LEAs and outside agencies and organisations in order to improve the services available to refugee and asylum-seeker families. Power *et al.* (1998) suggest that strategies designed to improve the educational opportunities of these groups are unlikely to succeed unless they take account of the broader policy context. For example, it was suggested that educators should be aware of the inadequate and uncertain housing situations that hinder access to appropriate educational provision. As they state, 'difficulties securing accommodation translate into difficulties securing education' (Power *et al.*, p. 37).
Multi-agency working helps support asylum seekers on a number of levels. It can help schools and LEAs support refugee and asylum-seeker children by meeting their needs. Through communication, liaison and coordination with other services, schools can ensure that their support is focused and systematic. Rutter and Jones (1998) found that several LEAs involved in the study had expanded their refugee support projects to include educational psychology and emotional social worker services, because they were perceived as an efficient way of supporting children who may have complex educational and psychological needs.

Multi-agency working can also help to support schools and LEAs in their own delivery. Rutter and Jones (1998) argue that schools with refugees and asylum seekers are often isolated, particularly if they have only received a small number of these children. This led to LEAs in London setting up networks to support schools and teachers which included departments such as housing, social services and equal opportunities. Better networks between departments, schools and other agencies also facilitates the flow of information relating to asylum-seeker and refugee families so that all are better prepared to provide adequate services.

An example of how statutory and voluntary agencies have responded to the needs of refugee and asylum-seeker pupils in their schools has been provided by the London Borough of Merton (Cable, 1997). The borough made a bid to the Home Office in order set up a project employing three teachers from bilingual services. As well as improving staff understanding of the issues and home/school liaison, other initiatives have also been developed. For example, a regular bulletin containing varied information about asylum seekers and refugees was sent to all schools, council departments, voluntary organisations and community representatives. The borough also set up a Corporate Steering Group known as the Merton Multi-Agency Refugee Alliance. This group includes representatives from refugee groups, local churches, the health authority, citizen advice bureau and local authority departments and it encourages cooperation and collaboration between agencies providing relevant services.

Difficulties with multi-agency working have, however, been noted, particularly in regard to the lack of coordination. Marland (1998) found that schools often felt that it was not worth developing a liaison between different departments such as housing and social services, because local authorities did not always have inter-departmental planning and coordination of services for refugees and asylum-seeker children themselves. An Ofsted report (2003) highlighted that, although the role

played by LEAs in the coordination of the work and support of various agencies such as health, social services and voluntary agencies was important, the coordination and dissemination of information about the role, responsibilities and contributions of the different agencies were not always very well communicated to the schools. As a result, schools were frustrated with the lack of information and the amount of time spent finding the appropriate agency or person to contact.

2.7 Funding

The funding of educational provision for asylum seekers and refugees has been identified as a contentious issue for both LEAs and schools.

Although funding mechanisms differ slightly between countries within the UK, mainstream education of asylum-seeker children in England and Wales is funded through annual allocation of money from the Department of Education and Science and the National Assembly of Wales (Rutter, 2001). Local authorities and schools receive an allocation of funds based on pupil numbers taken on an annual census day. LEAs and schools can also access funding for specific projects to support refugee children, for example, in their learning of English. These include funds directly from the local authority, EMAG, and other sources of funding such as Education Action Zone (EAZ) and Surestart.

There are small differences in procedure between the countries within the UK. In England, funding for the educational support of refugees comes from local authorities and the DfES-administered EMAG grant. In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government Assembly makes grants available to local authorities for the support of children from ethnic minority communities. In Scotland, the Scottish Executive argues that the needs of ethnic minorities can be best provided by the appropriate delivery of mainstream local authority services. There is no dedicated fund for the children's educational support and funding is met directly by the local authorities (Rutter, 2001).

A number of problems have been associated with the funding mechanisms. These focus primarily on the amount of funding provided and the inflexibility of the mechanism. A number of sources argue that the amount of funding for the educational support of asylum seekers and refugees is inadequate. Rutter (2001, p. 71) suggests that throughout the late 1990s the funding of refugee support work became a political issue because central government funding was not sufficient to meet the needs of newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers. She states that:

> *...successive cuts in public expenditure and the greater delegation of LEA budgets to schools have reduced the power of local government to generate progressive policies or to plan strategically for the arrivals of refugees.*

The limited availability of funds for educating asylum seekers is highlighted by a number of other sources. A survey of LEAs revealed a major tension between the need for immediate provision and the lack of funding support to do so (Mott, 2000). In a conference on meeting the educational needs of refugees in England and Wales (ACE, 1992, p. 3) it was found that local authority budgets were already tight with little contingency money for newly arrived refugees, and that schools with delegated budgets could face sudden influxes of refugee children without extra funding.

> *The lack of special funding hung like a cloud over all discussions of provision of language teaching, and the support and counselling required, particularly for new arrivals.*

In addition to limited funding, the inflexibility of the funding mechanism also makes it difficult for schools to cope. For example, on the day of the census from which the funding is calculated, a school may have no refugee or asylum-seeker pupils. However, within days of the census, children may be admitted too late for inclusion in the funding formula (Rutter, 2001). Clarke and McGregor (2002) agree that funding does not take into account mobile populations. Mott (2000, p. 15) states that:

> *The funding and staffing of schools lack the flexibility required to respond to major and substantial change and their funding arrangements are essentially predicted upon stability rather than volatility.*

3 The LEA experience

3.1 Arrangements in the Welsh LEAs

The Welsh LEAs began supporting schools in the reception of asylum-seeker children prior to their arrival. Two LEAs arranged meetings with and training for headteachers and staff members in order to make preparations. One LEA officer reported:

> *We had a long lead up. We attended conferences, met with people in other LEAs who were already confronting this because they had started dispersal to other areas before us. We organised several conferences for headteachers. We did all of this before the first asylum seekers arrived, so we were getting ready and preparing our schools and heads long before.*

It appeared that the most important role for LEAs before the children arrived was to provide the schools with as much information as possible in order to meet any concerns. An officer noted: 'It's about allaying those initial fears because it can cause some staff to be quite negative before the children arrive'.

LEAs continued to support schools by passing on information regarding new arrivals and providing training and resources. The information provided by the LEAs was in diverse forms including welcoming packs, advice sheets and language aids. According to one officer:

> *I put out a couple of advice sheets about welcoming and settling children in their first few days. There was an asylum-seeker pack put together about different organisations that could help schools and a bit of advice such as use of interpreters and we took some of the asylum-seeker special grant and invested in dictionaries in lots of different languages. When the children arrived we sent a dictionary out to the school and we developed an asylum-seeker pack for schools with loads of things such as multilingual environment signs to put around the school such as dressing up area, writing area, geography room, history room and toilets.*

LEAs had also developed numerous training opportunities, which were organised so that staff members could attend. In one LEA a team had been built up and schools could access the INSET either in twilight sessions after school or through the regular county INSET programme. This was reported by another officer: 'We've done lots of training around schools. We have our own programme. Schools can book it anytime, free of charge.' In addition, one LEA placed an emphasis on responding to schools' concerns and queries within one or two days, which they thought was appreciated by schools. As a result the LEA found the schools to be very positive and committed to the needs of the children. According to one LEA officer: 'The heads have been truly committed. They have a 'what can we do to help' attitude towards the children.'

A similar approach was used by the comparative LEAs to ensure continued support for schools, but both also had other strategies to provide this ongoing support. One LEA developed a number of initiatives in order to assist and advise schools. One of their officers explained:

> *We've instigated and co-worked on a number of initiatives working with other external agencies like the Refugee Council, Save the Children and the Red Cross. We work very closely with an arts project who have developed a play on asylum seekers. We utilise central funds from the budget to support things like tours of schools by the drama group.*

> *We worked directly with the area's film theatre on some materials. It was a film-making project where we went into three receiving schools and put a mixture of asylum-seeker pupils and existing pupils together with professional film makers and said to them 'you've got five days to make a film'. The end project was so good we commissioned staff to write support materials. The films and support materials are now out being used by schools to raise awareness of the issues of asylum seekers... What we've tended to find is that often creative initiatives work very well.*

One LEA assisted their teaching staff by carrying out assessments on the children to establish their attainment baseline. An officer stated: 'We have carried out

cognitive and conceptual assessments so that teachers have some idea of where the children are starting from. It's very useful for teachers.'

One LEA also had a music therapy programme that had successfully worked with asylum-seeker children in schools.

The LEAs made a number of suggestions about the support they would like to provide in the future, which included additional staff, emotional support for staff and compulsory training. For example:

If we had the money I'd like to appoint a link worker. A link between the school, home and community. A link worker could work in the schools, visit the homes and exchange information.

(LEA officer)

I'd like to develop support for teachers as well because sometimes they get traumatised listening to the children's stories. Sometimes children just disappear somewhere else or are just sent back and then the teachers are left without the opportunity to say goodbye. They're often left with guilt.

(Educational psychologist)

I think there should be vehicles in place for staff to discuss stress and trauma and share what has happened to them.

(LEA officer)

The training we provide is very good, but it's optional. Staff can choose to take it up. I'd almost like to see it being compulsory.

(LEA officer)

Both the comparative LEAs suggested additional provision they would like to make available to schools, which focused on additional language support. For example:

In an ideal world, which is totally impractical because of the diversity, we would like to have a permanent bilingual support staff located in receiving schools – staff who could speak to the children in their first language.

We would like to increase our linguistic and cultural mediator base, but it's very time consuming to find appropriate people.

3.2 The placement of asylum-seeker children in schools

In all five LEAs, the first step in the actual education of asylum-seeker children was considered to be providing them with a school place.

The three Welsh LEAs stressed the fundamental importance of placing asylum-seeker children in schools as soon as possible. An educational psychologist noted that:

There is research to say that children who've been through all sorts of the experiences that these children have been through, the most important thing is to get them into schools. It makes a difference to their psychological wellbeing and their adjustment to what's happened to them.

The three Welsh LEAs had adopted a common approach to admissions to schools. Once informed by the private housing accommodators or the Home Office that new asylum-seeker families had arrived, they generally followed the established, pre-existing LEA admissions procedures that were applicable to all children. The children were sent to their local catchment school and additional support was provided by the LEA.

Admissions policies were therefore based on pupils attending local catchment schools, and not being clustered in particular resourced schools. An LEA officer noted that:

We had a policy from the beginning that children would go to their local catchment area school. We were not going to cluster children in any particular schools. I don't think it's a good policy and the children have gone to many, many different schools. In that way we haven't loaded the pressure on any two schools.

The admissions policies in the comparative LEAs in England and Scotland differed slightly.

Although one LEA maintained there was a county admissions policy, attention was also given to matching the needs of the asylum-seeker children to the strengths of particular schools. An officer explained:

We try to work within county guidelines and we look to match up, as far as possible, the needs of the pupils with the resources and experience of the school.

In the other LEA, particular schools had been identified as being better equipped to receive asylum seekers and the children were, in the main, sent there, as illustrated by an officer:

> *We have particular identified schools that have additional bilingual support and EAL staff and we will allocate them* [asylum seekers] *to the nearest school with this additional support and space.'*

This different approach to admission policies was based on the perceived effectiveness of allocating children to schools that were already prepared and resourced. An LEA officer argued that:

> *We are now starting to see the benefits because the alternative would be a free for all. If people were going to schools all over the city looking for places we would not be able to provide the additional resources so the quality of educational experience would be diminished. The staff are prepared in receiving schools and the resources are there, which leads to a positive experience for both the young people and the schools.*

In practice the children's allocation to schools in Wales was often influenced by available housing. As an LEA officer explained:

> *Our policy was that when children arrive they should be distributed across the city rather than just going to one particular area, but it depends where the housing becomes available.*

This caused a range of problems for the Welsh LEAs. Two LEAs identified schools that were receiving higher numbers of asylum-seeker children. An LEA officer stated that: 'That's something that's happening now. Two of our schools are taking in greater numbers and that's because of the housing available.'

A contrasting consequence was that schools with minimal experience of ethnic minorities and/or EAL would receive asylum-seeker children. This experience was described by another LEA officer:

> *There were other schools, particularly schools in the area of local authority housing that had not previously worked with children from ethnic minority backgrounds or children learning English as an additional language...so it was a very new experience for some of those schools.*

Many of the schools in the three Welsh LEAs documented their previous experience of similar groups of children as being important in the successful inclusion of asylum seekers. A teacher from a secondary school, when asked whether receiving asylum-seeker children had affected practice, answered:

> *No. We are a multi-cultural school. We are already highly aware of the need to recognise cultural and religious difficulties and the situation fitted into our policies and procedures.*

Although LEA personnel felt that the schools had coped remarkably well with the reception of asylum-seeker children, two LEAs mentioned the need for reassuring the schools and speedy provision of training and resources. According to one officer:

> *The problem initially was being able to put additional support in, not just to support the children, but also to support the school. Especially if there hadn't been any prior experience.*

Two of the Welsh LEAs also found that in a few cases, particular year groups or classes in some schools were full. As a result, the next school in the locality of the catchment area was sought, but this often raised transport issues. One LEA emphasised school transport issues and the difficulties for children who were new to the area negotiating their own way to school. Some instances were quoted of children who had not attended school at all. Consequently, one LEA provided free bus passes to encourage regular attendance. Schools had also shown a great deal of commitment to asylum-seeker children with regards to their transport. In one school, the staff transported a child by car to and from secondary school because of the distance.

In the comparative LEAs, despite the differing emphasis of the admissions policies, housing remained an influential factor in the placement of children and similar challenges to the Welsh LEAs were met. A school staff member suggested that:

> *It depends a lot on the housing. A few of us have been arguing for a strategic plan with the housing agencies so there are certain pockets of housing that can be used so it's always the same schools that are serving that population, so they are use to handling them. We're told this can't be the case because of the housing stock.*

One LEA also felt that because they liaised with the housing associations, it gave them some influence over the schools in which the children could be placed and this was considered beneficial for the children. An officer noted that:

> *On one or two occasions, where we know families are in emergency accommodation* [accommodation in which asylum seekers are first placed until more permanent housing can be found] *and are likely to be placed in more permanent accommodation in the not too distant future, we refrain from getting them into school until we know where they will end up and put in support from the centre here. Basically we try to minimise the disruption for the children which might be limiting mobility itself or limiting the impact of the mobility.*

Both the English and Scottish LEAs tried to allocate the children to the next nearest appropriate school if a place could not be found in the closest suitable school. This again sometimes caused transport problems. A specialist teacher reported: 'It's a strange situation that the children have ended up here because they're not in our catchment area. Some have to catch two buses to get here.'

In order to meet this challenge, the LEAs either developed specific transport policies or relied on the good will of schools. For example:

> *There are some areas where there's not enough space in the local schools and we've had to use other schools. We look for the nearest school and for some that would mean providing transport depending upon the distance. We have established a transport programme where there isn't the capacity to accommodate the numbers of children in local schools.*
>
> (LEA officer)

> *In one case we got the school to pick the children up so they didn't have to move schools.*
>
> (LEA officer)

All the Welsh LEAs had implemented other support processes specifically for asylum-seeker families. For example, one LEA sent a team to visit the family during the first week after arrival and another LEA sent an Education Welfare Officer and an interpreter to the families on a home visit. These meetings were arranged in order to collate as much information about the children as possible and provide the families with the information they required.

In a slightly different approach to the Welsh LEAs, one comparative LEA provided each new asylum-seeker family with a welcome pack that gave details about the school placement process. Staff in the LEA thought that this was important because information about finding a school for the children was the first thing many of the families requested.

3.2.1 Post-16 placements

Two Welsh LEAs highlighted the placement of young people over 16 years old in a suitable educational institution as a concern. One LEA felt that school was not always an appropriate place for the older children, but colleges lacked sufficient language provision to support asylum seekers. An officer argued that:

> *Not all children want to come to school. Sometimes college is the place, but there is no sound provision because English support is two hours a day and it's usually full.*

Post-16 provision was also a concern for schools because free transport was not provided for those aged 16 or over.

However, one LEA suggested that college was a more appropriate setting for post-16 because of the examination focus of those year groups. It was suggested that in college the asylum seekers could access necessary qualifications at a suitable level and pace with the appropriate support. According to one officer:

> *If we have young people arriving who are 17 or 18 we are setting them up to fail in school because there is no way they could achieve any significant success in an exam system where they're starting from a point of zero. So what we tend to do is direct them through the college route where they can access ESOL* [English for Speakers of Other Languages] *classes to improve their English, where they can also access higher examinations through the college, but can access them at their own pace.*

3.3 Challenges in the LEAs

Apart from the demands of meeting the needs of the schools and making sure that they were supported adequately, LEAs faced a number of other challenges.

3.3.1 New role and limited information

The Welsh LEAs had experience of working with ethnic minorities and EAL. As one officer maintained:

> *Remember that in the service here there is a lot of expertise and in particular with working with children from an ethnic minority background, working with children who have EAL and we had that base to build on.'*

Nonetheless, providing educational support for asylum-seeker children was a relatively new role for all. This was compounded by the lack of information and support LEAs received. An officer argued:

> *It's very time consuming because it's a new role for all of us. Most of us were new to dealing with asylum seekers. We already had a big case load and then we were having to find things out. I think more information and help at the time would have been useful... We don't receive anything really.*

Another officer reported:

> *We've had to get the information ourselves. We've been trawling through and thinking, 'Where can we get this from?'*

The comparative LEAs also had experienced personnel and this was considered important and initially there were issues because of the new roles required. This was particularly the case for one LEA whose inexperience with asylum seekers was compounded by the fact that they were a non-dispersal area, where such groups arrive of their own accord and are not sent by the Government. They felt that they had not received the information and funding that designated dispersal areas had enjoyed. An officer there suggested:

> *In terms of personnel we have been fortunate with the people we have here, but we are in a very different situation from dispersal areas. We have different issues and had no support from the Government. We were disadvantaged initially as well because NASS-funded asylum seekers in the dispersal areas and gave them some information, but we didn't get any of that because we're a non-dispersal area.*

3.3.2 Limited training

In the Welsh LEAs there was also concern regarding the limited amount of training LEA officers had been given. An officer maintained:

> *We've had nothing at all. We got together last week to discuss how we could access certain services like interpreters, but we've had no formal training. My staff would like some training so they can understand the process, how they get here, what happens in between and what happens after they are given leave to remain.*

This was confirmed by another officer: 'As a team we support each other. We've had to go out and get information and bring it back and train our own staff internally.'

The comparative LEAs did not highlight training as a concern.

3.3.4 Proposed changes

LEA staff in Wales suggested the type of information they would like to receive, which focused on a national guide to educating asylum seekers. An officer explained:

> *It would be useful to have information on changes in policy for asylum seekers. We usually have to look it up, go on the web and watch the news. It's changing so rapidly and it's important to know. An Assembly web-site would be good. I know the Assembly would like to devise their own policy on asylum seekers, but they don't have the power to do that. It would be nice to have a good practice policy across Wales. Maybe something coming from the Assembly.*

The availability of national information was proposed by another officer: 'People would like an overview of the Assembly's view and what support mechanisms are available locally and nationally'.

3.3.5 Staffing difficulties

Initially, Welsh LEAs were receiving asylum seekers without any additional staffing support. As an officer explained: 'As the numbers were building, the stress levels were really going up... I was really concerned about the stress levels on my additional staff'. More recently the situation had improved as LEAs accessed

funding for additional staff, but there was still a shortage of well-trained personnel, especially for language support. An officer suggested:

> *I wish we had more staff. More flexible staff, because when new asylum seekers go to school in the first few days it would be very beneficial to always have bilingual support for these pupils to iron out any small difficulties that arise and stop them getting blown out of proportion. We just don't have the flexibility to be able to do that all of the time. It's not just about throwing money at it, it's about the availability of well-trained staff out there who speak the languages we're looking for, who have worked with children before in terms of bilingual support workers who are literate in that language and can read and write so they can take on interpreter and translating tasks.*

Particular languages made it more difficult to find appropriate interpreter staff. As an officer explained:

> *Sometimes the range of interpreters can be difficult. Sometimes there are no qualified interpreters for particular languages. I've canvassed the local community and found some people who speak particular languages, but they're not qualified interpreters. It's not an ideal situation. You can't just take anyone off the street. The problem is when you do get a specialised language.*

The comparative LEAs highlighted language support as a necessary provision. As mentioned previously, both LEAs wanted to increase their base of language-support staff and one LEA had found it difficult and time consuming to find and train the appropriate people. An officer argued:

> *Schools have found them* [linguistic and cultural mediators] *very effective, but haven't been able to access them to the extent that they'd like because of funding and the fact that there aren't enough.*

However, one LEA had come some way towards overcoming this shortage by establishing a central interpreter service. One of their officers explained:

> *Our schools have free access to interpreters. Both the asylum-seeker project and the education department are stakeholders in the interpreting service, which is managed under the auspices of the city council. Schools can automatically book an interpreter for an enrolment, which allows them to get much more information than they would normally get if there was a language barrier.*

In Wales more specialised staff were also required in schools. According to an officer:

> *We need more specialist teachers and support staff. Having someone with experience of SEN is very useful. At the moment we are depending on the voluntary sector.*

One reason provided for the limited bank of appropriate staff was the kind of employment contracts offered. In the majority of cases, only temporary contracts were advertised, which deterred people from applying. An officer maintained:

> *We're funded here for two and a half staff to work with asylum-seeker children. The quality of staff is extremely high. We run year after year on temporary contracts, but all staff have families and commitments so to give people temporary contracts can not be a sensible way of ensuring quality to the service.*

This view was reinforced by another officer:

> *We're taking on additional staff now, but as the numbers of asylum seekers go down those staff aren't going to be needed and the difficulty there when you're advertising for staff is that you're advertising for them on a temporary contract. So it's difficult to attract people, especially experienced staff.*

3.3.6 Background information on the children

Welsh LEAs received limited background information on the asylum-seeker children, which hindered their services and the provision offered by the schools. According to an officer:

> *We get very limited information about the children... These youngsters arrive with little known about them. There's no information we can get from their country of origin.*

This was further explained by another officer:

> *We get nothing. All we have from the Home Office is a letter saying that a child will be arriving and it's literally name, date of birth, language and where they're going to*

live. That's why the initial meeting is so important, so we can provide the schools with information like, have they been to school before, whether there are any developmental delays and we can usually find that out from the family.

This drawback could be exacerbated by the status of the LEA. One of the comparative LEAs suggested that they received even less information about the families because they were a non-dispersal area. On occasions, they were not informed about new arrivals at all. One officer stated:

Some find their own way here or are unofficially dispersed by other authorities. I suspect there are a number of children roaming the streets that we don't know about.

The Welsh LEAs also stated that there were often inconsistencies and mistakes in the information the LEAs did receive. An officer stated:

I would say that you can't rely on that 100 per cent of the time. Names are often spelt wrong and dates of birth are incorrect.

As well as inaccurate data, information about new arrivals was often delayed. According to an officer:

We were taken a bit by surprise because we had anticipated that the first arrivals would have been placed in local authority housing, but when they actually arrived they were with private accommodators and at the beginning, the systems were not there nor links with private accommodators. The children were turning up and we knew nothing about them, or we were being told that families had moved to an address, we'd go to the address and they wouldn't be there. We've made better links and the information flow has improved, but we also have particular problems with the Welsh Refugee Council. They are not good at letting the LEA know when they are placing families here. They have placed several families and we were finding out several months later.

Limited background information regarding the children made it difficult for Welsh LEAs to identify the children's needs and assess them adequately.

There were cases where the LEAs were not made aware of particular health issues, which could have had serious consequences for the children. An educational psychologist reported:

We were never informed that any of these children had special needs prior to their arrival, which is quite serious really because one of the children had severe epilepsy and didn't have any medicine on arrival.

The absence of information regarding the children's background made it difficult to assess children properly. It was often difficult to ascertain whether behaviours were attributed to medical problems or psychological difficulties. An educational psychologist stated:

We came across a little lad who had difficulty settling into school – emotional and behavioural difficulties. I think it's due to the trauma he's suffered before he came to the area, but he also received a head injury and I don't know the impact of that on him or his behaviour or his learning because we have no documented evidence.

As a result of limited information, the LEAs also found it difficult to prepare for the children's arrival, particularly in terms of central services. An officer argued:

I think it's a major difficulty on an organisational level. You can't anticipate how many children were coming, they just kept appearing. It was very difficult to anticipate services. The support services began to get very anxious because they didn't know how many more would come and how they would come.

An educational psychologist in one LEA suggested that more information would aid the children's inclusion into school:

It's definitely difficult not having any background details. My view would be that often asylum seekers have been through quite a lot, so when they hit the schools, we want to make that experience as positive as possible. So, the more information we have to make that experience positive can only be a good thing.

It is important to note that due to the circumstances surrounding asylum seekers arriving in the UK, background information on the families is very unlikely.

3.4 Multi-agency approaches

For the Welsh LEAs, multi-agency work was an important aspect of successful provision for asylum-seeker children. All three LEAs were involved in multi-agency partnerships.

One LEA held regular multi-agency meetings with other local authority departments, such as health and social services. All personnel involved met together and reported back every month. Another LEA had established a multi-agency team with other local authority departments and non-statutory agencies. An officer explained:

> *We've built up a very good team. We work with the health team, school nurses, paediatric services, disability services social services, and health visitors. We also work with a lot of non-statutory organisations such as SNAP, ABCD and Barnados.*

This LEA also mentioned external links with an all-Wales focus, which offered them further support. According to one officer:

> *I understand that there had been quite a lot of planning between London, the consortium and the Home Office and we established a stakeholders group which reports to the all-Wales stakeholders' group, so our voice is heard in London. They've* [the consortium] *done quite a lot to help us, especially with regards to the SEN issue. They've written lots of papers and documents supporting us saying that at the moment we can't take any more with significant special needs.*

Multi-agency working groups had also developed in the third Welsh LEA.

In the comparative LEAs there were some differences in the way that these two LEAs organised their links. One LEA had a post within the asylum-seeker service specifically to forge and maintain links with other departments and organisations. It was thought to be a very effective way of developing a multi-agency focus. Within the other LEA, The Asylum Seeker Support Project, which organised provision for this group of children, was a multi-agency team. The employees were from a range of different backgrounds and expertise. They were also housed together which facilitated vital informal contact. According to an officer:

> *Our Asylum Seeker Support Project is very much a multi-agency team. It was originally housing led, but they come from a variety of backgrounds like social work and deal with all accommodation and support issues. We are all in the same building so a lot of informal contact goes on as well. If something comes up about health issues, we can immediately access the health trust person who can then contact a health visitor to clarify any information. Some of the best communication is the informal communication – just being in the same place.*

In Wales multi-agency working was perceived as being vital to effective provision for asylum seekers in terms of both information and support. For example, as a result of the multi-agency work in the LEA, a local authority project team had begun to map services in order to produce a local directory of services for asylum seekers. An officer noted:

> *They're looking to improve services and plug any gaps in provision and the first step was to map everything that was going on because it was obvious that not everybody knew what services were out there.*

There were, however, some concerns that multi-agency approaches were not as developed and were often less formal than required. This meant that some LEAs did not receive the necessary information. An officer stated:

> *We have links with the local authority housing project team. Where there have been social services involvement, I'm not sure the links are always made with us, but I have attended some case conferences and have spoken to social workers about some families, but they're not formal links. I think they could be better.*

One of the comparative LEAs suggested that good links could be forged with other departments or organisations where there was a contact person who dealt specifically with asylum-seeker children. One officer explained:

> *The links with health are not very strong because they don't have one specific person to deal with it. They use to have an outreach worker that worked well, but they don't have that any more.*

Officers from one LEA also felt that multi-agency approaches were hindered by an existing reluctance to share information between departments. An officer argued:

> *It's still the case that people aren't willing to share information. People protect the information they've got. It's about data protection. Historically, social services and health don't share information. We waste time finding information that's already out there.*

3.5 Key findings

- The LEAs felt that meeting the challenge of provision for asylum-seeker children had been largely a step into the unknown for which existing procedures were not always appropriate.

- All LEAs supported their schools by preparing them for the children's arrival through briefings, documentation, training, resources and guidance.

- Some LEAs followed additional practices for supporting schools, such as creative and theatrical initiatives and baseline assessments of all asylum-seeker children.

- Limited and often inaccurate background information on the children was a stumbling block. The LEAs had to find much of the information out for themselves.

- The Welsh LEAs highlighted a lack of training for their own staff.

- A lack of additional specialist and language support staff had proved a handicap, which had been resolved by one LEA to some degree through providing a central interpreter service.

- All LEAs laid fundamental importance on placing asylum-seeker children in schools as soon as possible.

- The three Welsh LEAs had a common approach to school admissions and sent asylum-seeker children to local catchment area schools. The Scottish and English LEAs stressed the placement of children in schools that were already resourced rather than allocating them to catchment schools.

- In practice, the allocating of asylum-seeker children to schools in the five LEAs was influenced by the availability of housing. This had a range of consequences, such as schools with minimal experience of ethnic minorities and/or EAL receiving asylum-seeker children and some schools with more experience receiving a greater number of children than others.

- A school's previous experience of ethnic minorities and/or EAL was considered to be an important factor in the children's successful integration in school.

- If local catchment school classes or year groups were full, the Welsh LEAs sought places in the next nearest school. In the comparative LEAs the closest suitable resourced school was found. For all LEAs, this sometimes led to transport difficulties.

- All LEAs had implemented support processes for school placement specifically for asylum-seeker families. These included meetings, visits to schools and welcome/information packs.

- Post-16 placements were sometimes a concern. Often school places were not considered appropriate and college places were considered. However, colleges sometimes had inadequate language provision for asylum-seeker children.

- All LEAs were involved in various forms of multi-agency working with other local authority departments and non-statutory agencies.

- The Asylum Seeker Support Project that organised provision for asylum-seeker children in one LEA was a multi-agency team, all of which were housed together, which facilitated vital informal contact.

- All LEAs noted that a multi-agency approach was an essential means of gathering information about the children and support. This was particularly the case for a non-dispersal LEA, which did not always receive information about new arrivals. Forging links with the housing associations helped the service to keep up to date with information on where asylum seekers where housed.

- Multi-agency links were not always as developed and effective as they could be. For example, multi-agency approaches were sometimes hindered by the reluctance of departments and organisations to share information.

- Good links between departments and organisations were facilitated by a contact person who dealt specifically with asylum seekers.

4 The school experience

4.1 Initial attitudes

The Welsh LEAs noted that their schools had generally shown a positive attitude towards the reception of asylum-seeker children, despite some anxiety that it was a step into the unknown, requiring new procedures and practices. According to an officer in one LEA:

> *Schools were very positive about it. I think there was an initial level of concern when we were anticipating the arrival of the children because no one knew what the future held. I think it would be fair to say at the beginning that there was anxiety because people didn't understand the system and didn't know if they'd be able to cope.*

In one school it was suggested that the effect on them of the arrival of the children had not been taken into consideration. One member of the staff argued: 'I don't think the LEAs or Government who accept responsibility for asylum seekers think about the impact on local schools'.

4.2 Background information on asylum-seeker children

Background information on the children was frequently scarce and/or factually incorrect and this caused some difficulties for the schools. Although many of the schools wanted to take an individual approach to each child and not place a significant emphasis on the fact that they were asylum seekers, it was felt that a certain amount of background information would have been useful. As a headteacher explained:

> *If we get another child we get some form of background, we don't get that with asylum-seeker children. We get hardly any information, so the assessment has to start right at the beginning. It would help us to have background knowledge, but we don't want to get wrapped up in the asylum-seeker issue. We want to provide for every child as individuals.*

The schools in both comparative LEAs had also received limited background information on the children, but were able to make adequate arrangements. An LEA officer suggested: 'Because we've got high pupil to staff ratio and we expect all these needs we just cope with the information we get'.

In the Welsh LEAs the information received on the children such as name and age was provided by the Home Office. However, the inaccuracies and gaps in the information caused both practical and administration problems for the schools. This was particularly the case with age. According to a specialist teacher: 'We have a real problem with ages. We have a boy who says he's thirteen and he's seventeen if he's a day.' Inaccuracies in data related to age had the potential of causing a number of difficulties, including child protection issues. The schools attempted to get as much information about the children themselves in the child's initial visit. The amount of information collected was often limited because the families were afraid to talk openly.

4.3 The range of needs

The lack of background information was compounded by the range of needs presented by the asylum seekers in all Welsh LEAs. School staff felt that it was assumed that all asylum seekers were perceived collectively as a homogenous group of children whose needs were the same. This was not the case, as detailed by a specialist teacher:

> *People think asylum seekers are a homogenous group, but they come from different backgrounds, different countries...We've got so many different nationalities and therefore different cultures and religions, different experiences and different educational experiences.*

The differing educational experiences of the children were regarded as a clear example of the diversity of needs faced by many of the schools. This view was expressed by a specialist teacher:

> *Every child is so distinct and it is a problem that most people brand them as asylum seekers and assume they have the same needs because they don't. Some have no education at all while others are exceptionally educated, better than the indigenous population. Sometimes children have big gaps in their education.*

Interestingly, it was suggested that certain types of schools were able to cope better with the range of needs than others. A specialist teacher thought that primary schools were better equipped to cope with asylum-seeker children because of their greater capacity for pastoral care. One comment was:

I think primary schools accepted them better because in the primary school it's more like a family and it is easier to slot asylum seekers into classes. I think there's probably more concern in secondary schools, especially older pupils who haven't had much education or pupils who have been educated in another language. Schools were worried about how the teachers were going to cope with these pupils in the classroom on a day-to-day basis.

Additionally, a special school in one LEA appeared much less concerned about receiving asylum-seeker children than other schools because they already provided for a wide range of needs. Their intake of children included those with all types of disabilities and difficulties and asylum seekers would simply be an extension of their diverse needs base. A headteacher stated: 'It's a case of constantly adapting, using different practices. It's the same for all our children.'

4.4 The inclusion of asylum seekers

All schools visited in Wales believed that the inclusion of asylum-seeker children was important. However, successful inclusion was considered, in part, to be associated with the cultural make-up of the school. It was suggested that the children settled into schools with an existing diverse population with greater ease. This view was expressed by a headteacher:

We are a multicultural school. It's a great strength that there's likely to be someone from the community or national group here. The very mix of youngsters gives immediate security. You don't stand out as the odd one out.

There was less concern for children from ethnic groups that already attended the school, because of existing knowledge of languages and cultures.

When discussing the inclusion of asylum seekers, all schools from the Welsh LEAs highlighted a dilemma between disclosing to staff and other children the fact that some children were asylum seekers, or concealing it. On one hand it was thought useful for the school to understand something about the background of asylum seekers in order to create a supportive environment, but on the other there was a concern that this information could also cause a negative effect. This opinion was highlighted by a number of school staff:

There's a really narrow line between making them stand out as being different and getting people to accept that they aren't really different. Some people in the school, once they've got that title are treated differently. People begin to ask 'Why are they here?' That's not what we want to concentrate on. We want them to feel welcome and comfortable – pointing out that there may be problems because they are asylum seekers, but not treating them as a homogenous group that are different from the rest of the school.

(Specialist teacher)

It's a tricky subject. Young people are very self-conscious. In a way you don't want other children to know that they are asylum seekers because making them different could have a negative effect.

(EAL teacher)

The dilemma of whether to identify asylum-seeker children also existed for the schools in one of the comparative LEAs. A specialist teacher suggested:

There is a huge dichotomy between the real need to know about the background experiences of asylum seekers, but also there is a need for asylum seekers to remain anonymous because of racism and stigmatisation.

However, in the other comparative LEA external factors had created a different situation. The arrival of asylum seekers had caused some negative media attention and it was felt necessary to counter this through the provision of accurate information, to ensure balanced discussion of the issue. According to a specialist teacher:

Some of the books and literature tell you that you shouldn't identify asylum seekers and refugees and you should leave it up to individuals to choose to identify themselves, but the fact was that there was no way they couldn't be identified. It was politically very high profile, particularly at the beginning, especially through the media and a lot of coverage was very negative, so

we had to react to that and go the opposite way and be really positive.

4.5 Support for staff and children

Staff from schools across the three Welsh LEAs highlighted the internal support and information provided to them by specialist school staff. For example, one school supplied staff with information about new arrivals, background information, handling strategies, expected behaviour and advice about welcoming the children. Another school provided information about new arrivals in a weekly bulletin and specialised EAL staff liaised with all the class teachers and a third school ran a detailed training programme for teachers.

Staff found the information and support provided by specialist teams in the LEAs useful and the presence of these team members in the schools was considered valuable. Nevertheless, many staff still felt largely unsupported on a wider scale. Limited information and support were provided by outside agencies such as the housing accommodators, the Refugee Council and some LEA departments. A coordinator argued:

I don't think we did receive a lot of support. Asylum seekers were new for everybody. You could argue that it's been done on the cheap and it's certainly been done on the good will of central and school staff.'

It was felt that schools had a responsibility to overcome some of the obstacles themselves with little support. This view was highlighted by a specialist teacher:'Staff weren't told much at all. For example, we knew they would have free school meals but we didn't know what forms to use. It was just another hurdle to climb.'

A particular issue was the length of time for which support was provided. In one case, where there was limited experience of asylum seekers, funding only enabled staff support to work specifically with asylum-seeker children on a short-term basis. It was suggested that an underlying assumption was that asylum seekers could be integrated relatively quickly, but that this was not the case in practice. As identified by an EAL teacher: 'We need long-term support so they can be integrated gradually into the curriculum. At the moment we just don't have the support to do this.' Limited language support was also a concern. Bilingual staff were considered to be very important, but were not always available in all the necessary languages.

As a result of the challenges mentioned, some members of school staff from one LEA felt that some teachers found it difficult to cope with asylum seekers alongside the demands of their existing class. An interviewee stated that:

I think it's difficult for staff because they [the children] *come into a classroom with almost no notice. So it's left up to individual members of staff to identify needs and help support them as best they can with limited experience. We have a large ethnic population and four of our five wards are socially deprived. Teaching in this school is difficult because there is very challenging behaviour and adding to it are the asylum seekers. I suspect that most staff see them as an additional problem and like everything else, schools are expected to cope.*

Unlike the Welsh LEAs, there was no mention of schools in the comparative LEAs finding it difficult to cope with asylum seekers in addition to normal teaching demands, but there was recognition in one school that asylum seekers added to the workload of staff, as detailed by a specialist teacher:

I think there's more work involved because staff have to take time out from the rest, if for example, they're filling something in and I can't explain it verbally, I have to write it for them. They seem to follow what you do on a practical level, but the writing down is difficult. Staff have taken time out of lunch to try and help the kids keep up.

The staff in schools in the Welsh LEAs were also concerned that the existing support was being increasingly stretched with the arrival of asylum-seeker children and this was having a knock-on effect for the indigenous school population and staff. An EAL teacher noted that:

I have an induction period with the new children. The first week they arrive they don't go to lessons, they spend some time with us. This means there are children I'm not spending time with, which also has repercussions for other members of staff. Sometimes staff find it difficult that we've taken support away from them.

These feeling were amplified by the unstable nature of asylum seekers' placement and status. Often the school provided the children with a great deal of support and then they were either sent back to their own countries or dispersed to another area. The difficulty was acknowledged by an EAL teacher:

It has an impact. The EAL department actually disadvantage our existing children because they spend so much time with asylum seekers, only for the vast majority of those asylum seekers to leave.

Staff in the comparative LEAs found that the children's status as asylum seekers influenced the amount and type of support they received. One school highlighted the fact that once a child received permission to remain in the UK their support became the responsibility of the EAL department where the staff to pupil ratio was much higher, and the amount of support was judged to be inadequate. For example:

If the children transfer here, after they are given leave to remain they are no longer asylum seekers and become the responsibility of EAL staff. It becomes a ratio of 1:130 for EAL learning and there's not enough learning support for them.

Many of the asylum-seeker children arrived mid-term. For the schools in two Welsh LEAs this was not a significant concern. This was noted by a headteacher:

We have a normal school year turnover. Like a normal school it's not unusual to have children arriving during term time. You can't defend keeping a child out of school for half a term. What about the kid who moves from London because the dad has a job with the BBC. It wouldn't be fair to keep him out, would it?

Staff in one school in a comparative LEA suggested that arrivals mid-way through term did not create much disruption, but disadvantaged the children. A specialist teacher noted:

Sometimes pupils come in at a third year level where they can pick subjects if they want to, but they often come in after the initial choice so they can't always pick the subject they'd want to because the classes are full. A lot of kids are coming in mid-session and it's difficult for senior management to place the children at the right level in the right class.

With regards to the children leaving during term time, a school in one Welsh LEA indicated that their concern for the children's welfare was greater than any inconvenience for the school. A coordinator stated:

I think it's horrendous how they chuck people around the country. The children are settled in schools and then they are given 24 hours notice before they are moved to another city. They have to go through the whole process again. Why do they herd them around like cattle?

Many of the school staff interviewed expressed considerable care and empathy regarding the circumstances of the children, the experiences they had been through and continued to go through.

4.6 Teaching arrangements

As a result of the needs and challenges posed by the inclusion of asylum-seeker children, schools often made specific arrangements to make it easier to cope and/or in the best interest of the children. These include the placement of children in lower sets, all asylum seekers being placed in one class and some being put back a year.

Although it was not always considered ideal, schools from two LEAs said that because of the specific needs of asylum-seeker children, such as language, they were often placed in academically lower sets. An EAL teacher commented:

First of all they get put into lower-ability classes even when we assess them and say that they have potential and they just haven't got the language skills at the moment. They shouldn't be put in lower-ability classes unless they are low ability. We do have to fight to get them out. It's not a learning thing, it's a language thing.

This was corroborated by a specialist teacher in another school:

I think the children often ended up in lower sets because the work was differentiated to a level for indigenous children that were struggling with work and at least the children could access some of the work. We assess their academic abilities as much as we can and try and assure that they are in an appropriate setting rather than just deemed as not being able to speak English and put in the lower sets.

One school in an LEA placed all the asylum-seeker children in a year in one class because they did not have the staffing to support the children properly if they were spread out over a number of classes. A specialist teacher explained:

For teaching purposes, and because we haven't got the staff, it's better that they are in the same class. For the most part they are doing well. There's a negative side to having them all together, but there are a lot of positives in terms of support. They feel more secure because they're not in a class on their own... Putting them in one class is polarising the support.

Schools in two LEAs also considered year placements inconsistent with pupils' chronological ages. This occurred when children arrived at an age where they would be placed in years 10 and 11. A specialist teacher suggested:

The problem arises when the pupils arrive in years 10 and 11 because it's GCSE year and you're basically saying that they're going to leave with no qualifications unless you can persuade the school to put them back a year if the academic ability is there. It has happened in a few cases.

This was supported by a headteacher of another school:

...we have some pupils in the school who are taught out of age. If you're going to help the children achieve success, you want what's best for them... If the children come here in year 11 with no English, we discuss it with the parents, but usually we put them back a year to allow them to gain English.

In order to support some asylum-seeker children, a school in one LEA also had a newcomers' class where extra English support was provided. The emphasis was on individual ability and it was stressed that not all the children required this extra support. A headteacher noted that:

We have two starter classes for those arriving with no English and we immerse them in the use of English across the curriculum and then, when they are ready, they are mainstreamed. Some would say that you should mainstream everybody, but this is a nonsense. There's no one system, you need to look at the individual. If you have the resources to mainstream everyone with adequate support then that would be the answer, but you're never going to be in that position...You have to look at the individual need whether they are an asylum seeker or not. Many go straight into mainstream.

Similarly, one school advocated the development of a central assessment centre in the school, in order to integrate the children slowly so that appropriate support could be provided. As explained by a department head:

When the children arrive and we know nothing about them it's very unfair on the child, the family and the school to take in a youngster they know nothing about and support them adequately. I wonder whether there should be an assessment centre where as soon as children arrive they go into for a period of six weeks...you can get to know a bit more about them to see if mainstream is appropriate or a placement in a unit.

The schools in both comparative LEAs sometimes adopted special procedures to ensure progression for asylum seekers, although practice differed. There was no mention of the children being placed in lower sets or all in one class, but there were occurrences of children being allocated to base classes and out-of-age placements in one LEA. A specialist teacher explained:

We have a base classroom for new arrivals where we take pupils and then assess them for English whilst introducing them to the curriculum. We feed them into mainstream gradually. Sometimes the children are in classes out of their chronological ages because there's very little point putting the children in exam years if they have little English or have come half way through term, but it doesn't normally happen.

One LEA had an exceptional situation, which required modifications to existing practice. The school system there was organised into three phases. The intake for the upper school ranged from nine to 13 year-olds and was considered to be 'very curriculum and exam focused' and school staff were concerned about introducing asylum seekers into that setting. A headteacher commented:

Trying to introduce a 14 or 15 year-old, with possibly very little English and schooling into a very tight schedule creates enormous difficulties for the school and the students.

As a result, the LEA was attempting to place the children in a college. There were associated difficulties as the

college did not accept children under 16 because they were not funded. However, the LEA was attempting to enrol the children in schools and use their per capita pupil funding to fund college places with pupil's status being 'educated off site'. An officer suggested:

> *That's the route several authorities have gone down. Quite often they've come from war-torn countries, they are far more mature, and school is not the best place for them.*

4.7 Strategies for improvements

Respondents in all five LEAs suggested a number of strategies for modifications in practice which they considered would improve school arrangements for asylum-seeker children. These included:

- reorganising time-tabling for asylum seekers so that intensive English support could be provided (but this was considered difficult because the majority of schools had insufficient staff to put this into practice)
- smaller classes were thought to be useful, but were also considered beneficial for the student population as a whole
- the modification of practice to meet the particular needs of asylum-seeker children and their families was felt to be effective. For example, one school made additions to their reporting system to allow for more frequent accounts of children's progress because their parents had requested more information. The use of more oral discussion in the classroom and less emphasis on written work was also said to be successful
- organising activities that included mixed groups of asylum-seeker children and the indigenous school population was thought to help inclusion.

4.8 Key findings

- All the schools had been anxious about the arrival of asylum-seeker pupils as a situation requiring new procedures and practices, but after experience felt that they made a valuable contribution to the life and achievements of the whole school.
- Limited and/or factually inaccurate background information on the children had caused difficulties for some schools.
- The children had a wide range of needs. They were not a homogenous group.
- The successful inclusion of children was easier in schools which were already cultural diverse and had EAL pupils.
- A common dilemma was whether asylum-seeker pupils should be identified within the schools to staff and other pupils. Non-identification could limit the risk of discrimination. However, the identification of asylum seekers would raise other pupils' awareness of their problems and counteract negative media images.
- Schools were generally well supported internally by specialist staff and by members of LEA asylum-seeker teams, but received little information or support from agencies outside the LEA. As a result, some school staff found it difficult to cope with asylum-seeker children alongside the normal demands of their jobs, especially those with little previous experience of similar pupils.
- Existing support for pupils with particular needs sometimes had to be allocated to the asylum-seeker children, which stretched resources considerably. Minimal additional support was provided.
- Schools often modified their arrangements specifically for asylum-seeker pupils. This included placing children in lower-ability sets, locating all asylum seekers in the same class, out-of-age placements and new-comers classes. The LEAs outside Wales also used base classes and off-site placements.
- A number of useful strategies were suggested for the education of asylum-seeker pupils. These included:
  - withdrawing the children from some classes to provide intensive language support
  - reducing class size
  - altering school practices to accommodate the

needs of asylum-seeker children and their families

- organising activities with mixed groups of asylum-seeker children and the existing pupil population.

Two areas of provision for asylum seekers with a considerable impact on both LEAs and schools were special educational needs and funding. These issues are examined in detail in the following two chapters.

5 SEN

5.1 Proportion of children with SEN

Of the three LEAs in Wales, one had a higher proportion of asylum-seeker children assessed as having SEN that required a formal statement than the LEA's indigenous population. At the time of interview this LEA had received 18 children with SEN, which was higher than had been expected, while both other LEAs had received lower proportions of children with SEN. Both these LEAs stated that the proportion of asylum-seeker children with SEN was not higher than 'normal' percentage in their indigenous population.

One LEA was surprised that their numbers of asylum seekers with severe/complex SEN had been so low because they were aware that another LEA had received a much higher proportion and did not know the reasons for the difference. When asked if the number of asylum seekers needing a statement was at a significantly higher level than the normal percentage, an LEA officer remarked:

> *It's probably the same or could be slightly less, but as I understand it our experience might be a bit unusual in that respect. Colleagues in another LEA have had higher numbers of children with SEN. We're not sure whether that's any part of the dispersal contract (in that the LEA had specifically requested no asylum seekers with special needs) or an arrangement in operation in the LEA, but we have slightly less than you'd expect. We were anticipating more.*

Another LEA reported that they had also expected a greater proportion of asylum seekers to have SEN.

It was suggested that this may have been in part due to the fact that the reception of asylum seekers was a new phenomenon for the authority and that their identification and assessment procedures for asylum seekers with SEN were not yet in place. An educational psychologist stated:

> *Generally there haven't been any significant numbers above the indigenous population, but that could be because of two reasons. Firstly we don't have a significant number of asylum seekers here yet and, secondly, perhaps the screening procedure when they arrive is not picking up all the things we need to know. It could be because the identification process is not in place properly.*

The LEA which had received a disproportionate number of asylum-seeker children with SEN had reached the limit of their capacity to provide for further asylum-seeker children with severe/complex SEN. An officer of the LEA explained:

> *Normally the number of children* [with severe/complex SEN warranting statutory assessment] *is two per cent. You get the feeling that we've been quite busy with special needs because the 18 don't include those from school action and school action plus (the phases leading up to statutory assessment). So it would mean that the 18 are undergoing statutory assessment, but some of the problems occurring in school are not on the list. We feel that it's running at about ten per cent.*

The LEA did not know why they were receiving a disproportionate number of asylum seekers with SEN when compared with the other Welsh LEAs.

As in the two Welsh LEAs, both comparative LEAs had few asylum seekers with SEN. One considered the fact that they were not a dispersal area as one possible explanation for their disproportionately low numbers of asylum seekers with SEN. According to one officer:

> *Families that have come here have chosen to come here. They are those in the main that have been able to motivate themselves to come here. In dispersal areas they have been placed there. I wonder if this has something to do with the proportion of SEN we have.*

5.2 Policy and procedures

Schools in Welsh LEAs followed the same SEN policy and procedures, as per the Welsh Code of Practice for Special Needs for asylum-seeker children as for other pupils. LEA services, including educational psychologists also adhered to existing policies. An educational psychologist reported:

It would be the same for any other child under their [psychologists'] *care in the sense of supporting the school, providing for the child along with the other services that are available, making sure that the school is providing their Individual Education Plans* [IEP] *and reviewing progress on a regular basis through annual reviews and so on. It's no different from any other child who had been statemented within any school here.*

When the children were given leave to remain in the UK, processes were identical to those as for other children. An LEA officer explained: 'If they're given leave to remain they become a resident and have access to the same entitlements as any other child with SEN'.

However, the Welsh LEAs and schools highlighted a number of problems with existing SEN policy and processes. These included the lack of baseline information, language barriers and difficulties distinguishing between SEN *per se* and behaviours relating to trauma, cultural differences and transition as a direct result of experiences related to being an asylum seeker.

The first obstacle to adequately assessing an asylum-seeker child was the frequent lack of any background or baseline data. All LEAs considered this to be a problem:

What we do find difficult is gathering enough information on the youngster in order to make a decision because there is no school information we can rely heavily on.

It's really difficult to get any baseline data on them to really know what their skills are. You can find out what their current skills are academically, but then you don't really know what their potential is. So it's quite difficult when you're talking about a school because you don't know which school they should go to.

Language was also found to hinder the identification of SEN. As a result, often LEAs and schools were unsure of the child's needs. A specialist teacher stated: 'At the beginning we weren't sure exactly what difficulties he had because of the language difficulties'. Assessment procedures were also impeded by language barriers. An officer noted:

It's very difficult doing an assessment on any child that doesn't understand English, so we have to buy in interpreters. We follow the same process, but it can be difficult and time consuming organising these additional supports.

Language support workers were found to be vital for assessments to be undertaken. A member of school staff stated: 'Without additional language support we would have struggled because we wouldn't have been able to assess him properly'.

Departments were often unsure as to whose responsibility the children were because of language difficulties. For one school, this was particularly the case between their EAL and SEN departments. An EAL teacher explained:

We're working with the SEN department but they're very busy and they tend to feel that, if the children can't speak English, then it's our job...They might have SEN support, but SEN don't see asylum seekers within their remit.'

Language barriers created some discrepancies between identifying SEN and recognising that the children had other needs that were not learning-related.

The majority of those interviewed did not assume children had special needs because they had little or no English. As a member of school staff stated:

We don't refer them to educational psychologists immediately because if they're new to a country and have limited language we wouldn't assume they have special needs. We'd have to be sure.

However, language difficulties caused some confusion. According to an LEA officer:

I think what we have is some discrepancies between their poor language skills and not being able to analyse in the first instance whether they've actually got special needs.

Language barriers were thought to further hinder the statementing process. Finding a qualified interpreter was not always an easy task and the need for the process to be interpreted often made it a lengthier task. This was reported by an LEA officer and educational psychologist:

There was one case where we couldn't find an interpreter for a particular language and I guess that held the statementing process up.

(LEA Officer)

The interpreters are used for the assessment and parental advice, which can take quite a while. The

assessment is usually about two hours and sometimes it's two visits.

(Educational psychologist)

In order to overcome the confusion, one comparative LEA suggested to schools that they should develop another register, separate from SEN, so that the children's needs could be formally recorded. An educational psychologist explained:

We are recommending that looked after children are put on a register called 'special needs' not 'special educational needs' because of the definition of SEN. The next step will be to place asylum seekers on that register.

Other factors highlighted by Welsh LEAs also made the identification of special needs of asylum seekers difficult. These included lack of opportunity and trauma. One LEA suggested that limited educational skills, which had resulted from the children's lack of opportunity to attend school because of a range of factors, clouded judgements about the existence of SEN. An LEA officer explained:

At one point we had a lot of children arrive from a particular country and the children it seemed did not have age appropriate skills when entering schools in the area. They were not, for example, able to read and write to an age equivalent level as you would expect from a child of the same age attending school in the UK. These children were quite a concern for placement reasons in that we felt it wasn't an issue of special educational needs in terms of learning difficulties, it was perhaps an issues of lack of opportunity or access. They didn't have special educational needs as understood in our code of practice. It wasn't so much a learning difficulty, it was that the children were so far behind.

The majority of the LEAs received some external assistance, for example, from the Haven Project that specialised in trauma and psychological behaviours. This was considered fundamental to the support of staff and the well-being of the pupils. A school in one LEA suggested that a clear distinction could not always be made between trauma and SEN. A headteacher maintained:

There have been a lot with trauma. We haven't got them statemented or put on the special needs register because it's a special case with the circumstances they've been through, but we will refer them to educational psychologists if we need to.

As a result of the difficulties associated with identifying SEN as a separate issue from other needs resulting from language, lack of opportunity or access to education and trauma, there appeared to be discrepancies between the perspectives of LEAs and schools. This was particularly the case for two LEAs, which had less routine experience of working with pupils from ethnic minorities.

Staff from one LEA stated that they had spent time informing schools that language barriers and trauma were separate issues from learning difficulties and could not be dealt with by the same mechanisms as for a pupil with SEN. According to one LEA officer:

We also had situations, where again, clearly they are not special needs, but that children entering the British school system at say age seven had never been to school before and were joining pupils who had not had schooling since the age of three... It was educating teachers and schools that this wasn't about special needs, it was about putting the right sort of programme in place to help the children close the gap.

They were comparing what the asylum-seeker children were bringing with what other indigenous pupils in the classroom had at that age.

The school staff interviewed were well aware that issues such as poor educational skills and trauma were separate issues from learning difficulties, but often found that their links with the educational psychologist and the procedures for SEN children were a means of obtaining information and support. A specialist teacher argued:

I wouldn't put, for example, trauma down as special needs. Within schools, dealing with people from ethnic minorities is still considered under special needs and we know it's not, but that is the person [educational psychologist] *that has the links.*

The confusion between SEN and other needs that was repeatedly mentioned make it a possibility that children could be inappropriately identified as having SEN.

In order to combat the confusion, one comparative LEA, operating under a recent Scottish Bill, had removed the term 'special educational needs' and replaced it with 'additional support needs', which was a wider definition

that included emotional and behavioural issues, EAL and being an asylum seeker or refugee, and opened different avenues of support. An officer explained:

There is a sense that if there is someone in the school causing you difficulty your source of support is first and foremost the educational psychologist, but the educational psychologist will say that 'I don't think this is something I can deal with'. I think a lot of the schools that we deal with are aware of the differences because we have tried to set up alternative pathways of getting support. There's also practical reasons, if there are a lot of people who are waiting to see an educational psychologist and a pupil can be seen by someone else, we will try and do that.

Additionally, this LEA employed psychologists trained in both SEN and trauma.

5.3 School placement for children with SEN

All three Welsh LEAs considered mainstream placements for asylum-seeker children with SEN to be appropriate in the majority of cases. An officer noted that children were also placed in mainstream while assessment for SEN was conducted:

As soon as SEN is identified we put them straight into mainstream with high levels of support while the assessment is being done so that they are not disadvantaged.

In all LEAs, some children who had been assessed and/or forwarded for a statutory assessment, with their SEN identified, were also placed in a mainstream setting and included successfully. Examples were provided by two of the LEAs:

We have one child with significant needs and that went to SEN review panel where they decided he should be placed in mainstream with full-time support.

We had one boy at secondary school with a very severe visual impairment, but one of our core schools accepted him after a risk assessment was done to show that a mainstream school could cope with someone with his needs.

An officer from one LEA suggested that is was beneficial in terms of inclusion for an asylum-seeker child to attend an appropriate mainstream school:

Placement in a mainstream school for one child was a very good base because the school already had a high proportion of ethnic minority children...I think it's important that these youngsters have an appropriate peer group.

While the LEAs demonstrated commitment to mainstream education, in the case of the few pupils requiring special school provision, mainstream remained the only option due to the lack of special school places. Two officers from the different LEAs reported:

There's not usually a problem with mainstream, but unit places [SEN] *would be an issue because we have so few available that are not taken up at the beginning of the year. If they arrive half way through the year it's difficult to find them a place, so then we would support them at a high level in mainstream provision.*

We, at the moment, don't have any vacant special school places. This is a problem we're obviously going to encounter with some of our children. We have two asylum seekers in special school at the moment. Those who are statemented, who we can't find a place for, come under 'Education Otherwise', which will involve home tuition.

However, it was also contended that Education Otherwise was not regarded as appropriate provision for asylum-seeker children because it prevented them being included in the school system. An educational psychologist argued:

I don't think Education Otherwise is appropriate for these children. They need to be in school around children speaking English, sharing, being socialised, but they're not getting that.

With regards to placement in special schools for the comparative LEAs, one had not yet had to meet that particular challenge. The other LEA, however, already had experience of this issue. It was said there that a special school place may take a little longer to organise than a mainstream place. An officer of this LEA noted:

It depends on the nature of the special need as to what the provision is. Sometimes it can be quite difficult to find a placement, sometimes it's not difficult at all. It

depends on the nature of the special need and the age of the child.

In the majority of cases, a placement was found in comparative LEAs for each asylum seeker with SEN. Special schools within these LEAs were generally more flexible when admitting children into the school. However, if a placement could not be found for a child with SEN, they were bought from private providers. An officer explained:

We have been able, in almost every case, to identify an appropriate place within our own special needs provision. In a couple of cases we have bought places from a private provider, a private special school, because we couldn't identify an appropriate placement.

This contrasted with one of the Welsh LEAs, which did not have sufficient spare capacity.

An issue was raised by one comparative LEA that involved difficulties associated with SEN and cultural attitudes. There had been cases in which the parents had refused to accept that their child had special needs and had declined placements in special schools. An officer maintained:

I suspect that the attitudes towards learning difficulties and SEN within many of the cultures from which some of our refugees come are distinctly different from our own attitudes. So I suspect that the situation wouldn't necessarily be accepted among the families. They could equate that with discrimination.

This was further supported by another officer: 'It's a complete difference in cultural attitudes and views. Some parents have refused to allow their children to be placed on the SEN register.' Unlike the Welsh LEAs, these two authorities made no mention of limited experience in implementing SEN policies and processes in the face of the mobility of the asylum-seeker population.

5.4 School and LEA experience of SEN policy processes and procedures

LEAs and schools in Wales had limited experience of implementing their SEN procedures for asylum seekers due to the unstable nature of their status and language difficulties. They were a very mobile population and asylum-seeker children would often move out of the area before the process had been completed. A number of LEA officers provided examples:

There was a boy who was particularly traumatised and couldn't settle in the classroom, disrupting other children. There was an educational psychologist there trying to assess him but sometimes you don't see all the efforts to fruition because again that was another family that moved out of the area.

We had one child with significant special needs and it went to the SEN review panel and they decided he should be placed in mainstream...with full-time support. He was due to start, got leave to remain and moved out of the area.

We had a boy with visual impairment, we had everything in place. The school had bought the equipment, he'd settled down really well and then his family were deported really suddenly overnight. We went to the school in the morning and he wasn't there.

It was explained that statementing asylum seekers followed the same process as for the indigenous pupil population with SEN and had the same weaknesses, such as the length of time the process takes.

However, this lengthy process was not always considered appropriate for this group of pupils. The length of the process was a concern for those involved. An officer stated:

The whole thing of assessment and statementing takes so long that sometimes even when there are cases you don't actually see them through to the conclusion because the families are not there long enough.

This was further supported by a specialist teacher who maintained:

I think there's one child being identified at the moment, but it involves so many issues because the asylum seekers are not necessarily going to stay with us long-term. That's what we've found. We've actually lost a lot of the asylum seekers who came to us last term. They've either gone back or gone somewhere else and what you find is that a statement of educational needs takes so much paperwork, we're constantly waiting for them to be accepted. My assumption is that we need some kind of fast-tracking system for them to be identified, to be assessed and to be able to go directly to statement.

5.5 Training for schools on SEN

All schools in the Welsh LEAs appreciated the training they received regarding asylum seekers with SEN. For schools without experience of children from asylum-seeker or EAL backgrounds, training was perceived as being very important. An officer argued:

> *The special school staff had never had a child from an asylum-seeker background before and asked for an INSET day so they could understand more about where the child had come from and what had happened to them.*

The value of training was also noted by a headteacher: *'The training has had an impact. It's very important for staff to understand the background of asylum-seeker children. It has a very positive impact.'*

However, issues were raised regarding the practicalities and efficacy of the training provided. Time was a significant issue for staff. Training either had to be undertaken in non-contact time or supply staff had to be organised, which was not an easy task. As reported by an officer:

> *Again, it's difficult because if you look at providing training for schools, to get any mainstream staff out of the class is difficult because of finding supply. So any training I've done has been through staff meetings.*

Not all training was perceived as being relevant to all schools. This was particularly the case for special schools. A special school teacher stated: 'It's difficult to get on appropriate courses for our school because our children's needs are often excluded from training'. The lack of specific training was also sometimes found to be unhelpful. A specialist teacher reported: 'We have in-service training, but it's quite general and not always relevant'. Additionally, as the training was not necessarily compulsory, not all staff took it up. A specialist teacher explained:

> *There should be, for all schools, compulsory training in asylum-seeker issues. People see the paper and the news and think they know and therefore don't take up the training.*

The schools in one LEA, because they had only recently started receiving asylum seekers, regarded the training as having been inadequately planned. According to a member of school staff:

> *We've had one member of staff who went on a course three years ago on the impact of refugees and asylum seekers on school, but as a school and LEA we've had no training. I think we've become lethargic because up until now we've had few asylum seekers. We need training. I think at the moment it's very* ad hoc.

5.6 Key findings

- Only one of the five LEAs had a higher proportion of asylum-seeker children with SEN which required a formal statement than would be predicted from the current indigenous population. The four remaining LEAs were surprised that they had not received a higher proportion of asylum-seeker pupils with SEN.
- It was not clear why the distribution of asylum seekers with SEN was uneven.
- All LEAs and schools applied existing SEN policy and procedures to asylum-seeker children.
- Placement in mainstream schools was appropriate for the majority of asylum seekers with SEN. It was important not to assume SEN too hastily in diagnosing asylum seekers because of other issues related to being an asylum seeker.
- Although there was a general LEA commitment to mainstream placements, in some cases it remained the only option due to the shortage of special school places.
- In one case, when special school places were not available, the children were educated out of school under Education Otherwise. However, this was not generally thought to be appropriate for asylum-seeker children because of their need to socialise with local children.
- Different cultural attitudes towards SEN in some families made it difficult at times to implement normal SEN procedures.
- A lack of baseline/background information and language difficulties made assessment of asylum-seeker pupils challenging. It also created a concern regarding misdiagnosis of needs because other issues relating to being an asylum seeker, such as lack of

opportunity and trauma, had to be taken into consideration.

- The mobility and uncertain status of asylum seekers meant that they would sometimes be removed from the school before SEN procedures were completed. Therefore, lengthy statementing processes were not always considered appropriate for asylum-seeker children.
- The lack of interpreters for certain languages made it difficult to conduct valid assessments of the needs of some pupils.
- All staff appreciated the training they received on asylum seekers and special needs, but there were some concerns including limited spare time available to staff, relevance of training and take-up of training.

6 Funding

6.1 Current provision procedures for asylum-seeker children

The schools in Wales were funded through the LEAs, who received that money from the Welsh Assembly Government. The funding formula took into account each pupil registered on the school roll at a specific time. Additional funding was made available for each asylum seeker that arrived during term time, and this money supported central LEA services.

Additional funding for asylum-seeker children was provided from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG), part of the Grant for the Education Support and Training programme (GEST) in Wales. The purpose of the EMAG was to raise the attainment of ethnic minority groups and improve their educational opportunities.

The funding mechanism in the English LEA differed because it was a non-dispersal area. Initially, schools in areas designated as dispersal areas by NASS received funding for asylum-seeker pupils as a one-off payment. Pupils in non-dispersal areas received no additional funding. EMAG was a government, match-funded grant paid to LEAs to support educational access and raise the levels of achievement of ethnic minority pupils, who included refugee and asylum-seeker pupils. LEAs were entitled to keep 15 per cent (or £150 000, whichever was the greater sum) to fund central LEA support and the remainder was allocated to schools.

The funding situation had, however, recently changed. Dedicated funding to support refugee and asylum seekers had been created, entitled the Vulnerable Children's Grant. This was paid through the mechanism of the Standards Fund. EMAG funding was still available for particular ethnic minorities that were underachieving and local formulas were used to distribute the funds to schools. The allocation of EMAG funding was due to change in 2005/06 with the development of a national funding formula which is based on three components:

- number of pupils for whom English is an additional language
- number of pupils from minority ethnic groups that are underachieving at a national level i.e. pupils of Black African, Black Caribbean, Black Other, Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage and those mixed-heritage pupils of White and Black African and White and Black Caribbean background
- number of pupils eligible for free school meals in the authority.

It has been suggested that the proposed national formula will 'result in a number of authorities receiving considerably more EMAG allocation whilst others will be hard hit' (Herrick, 2004, p.1).

The Scottish LEA had an alternative approach to funding provision for asylum-seeker children. The council had taken a decision to fund educational provision for asylum seekers from the money received from the Home Office contract for accommodation and support. All council services that provided for asylum seekers were funded from this pot of money, including housing, social work support and educational support. However the money was only available for the five to16 year-olds in statutory education.

6.2 Difficulties with current funding

The Welsh LEAs reported a number of difficulties with the funding mechanism developed to support the education of asylum seekers.

6.2.1 Employing additional/specialist staff

All the Welsh LEAs felt that the amount of funding received was inadequate. Primarily, it was difficult to employ additional and specialist staff to support pupils, schools and LEAs because the budgets were restricted. For example, schools were not able to employ additional staff to provide in-class English support and as a result, the existing EAL support in the school was over-extended. According to a head of year:

I would like funding available for intensive English everyday while they are still attending most of their classes. I mean, they're timetabled for Welsh but we haven't got the staff to take them out of Welsh to give them extra English classes. We don't want the negative effect of taking support out of other classes because that leads to bad feeling.

Interpreter services were restricted, which inhibited the collection of information about the children and families. A headteacher argued:

There should be a much bigger factor measured in the funding because these youngsters have got to operate in English or Welsh medium when their families often have no background. Very often, in this school, you have to have a translator or a member of the community with many of the parents.

It was also suggested that additional funding was needed to employ coordinating staff who could work with and between schools and the LEA in order to achieve better provision. A school coordinator noted:

For those schools offering a service we need additional resources. You need a central coordinating person who works with the schools and the authority for the benefit of the child and that makes a difference because you can ensure that within the bounds of the service, everything is covered.

The comparative LEAs did not highlight this as a concern.

6.2.2 Tailoring to individual needs of asylum seekers and authorities

It was reported that the funding failed to take into consideration issues that were specific to supporting asylum-seeker children that arose in different Welsh authorities. For example, it was said that the funding did not cover out-of-age placements that are sometimes necessary if the asylum-seeker children arrived in years 10 and 11 without an adequate grasp of English. A headteacher stated:

ELWa [Education and Learning Wales] *have now said that it's not their job to fund asylum seekers because the authorities are getting money from the Assembly. The second issue is that we have some pupils in the school that are taught out of age. If you're going to help children achieve success you want what's best for them. ELWa have said that they will not fund a post-16 child if they're receiving key stage 3 or 4 education. But if the children come here in year 11 with no English, we discuss it with the parents, but usually we put them back down a year to allow them to gain English.*

The same LEA had experienced additional difficulties with the funding because of the disproportionate number of children with SEN they had received. The funding mechanism had not taken this into consideration. An officer explained:

My budget was overspent last year because I spent so much on additional support for special needs, as in interpreter costs, because inducting a special needs pupil into school takes much longer than a mainstream pupil because of form filling and medical records. We incurred a lot of expenses such as taxis to special schools and various things like that...and the actual admin. for it, psychologist statements, liaising with GPs and other things.

One comparative LEA stated that the funding did not take into consideration special needs placements and the possibility that an additional budget may be required to provide for the children. It was reported that an additional cost for asylum-seeker pupils with SEN when an internal placement could not be found. As a result, an external place had to be bought which was often expensive.

6.2.3 Leave to remain

The funding did not appear to cover the needs of those children who were given leave to remain in the UK.

Once asylum seekers are given leave to remain, the children can no longer be supported by asylum-seeker funding provided by the Welsh Assembly, that is, flexible funds aiming to cater for the fluctuations in numbers. They are instead supported under the EMAG as part of GEST, an annual sum of money that aimed at improving the equality of educational opportunities for ethnic minority groups. EMAG/GEST was a much smaller pot of money and as the number of asylum seekers being given leave to remain increased, the grant had to stretch further to cater for all needs.

In one comparative LEA, when the children were granted leave to remain or moved to an area after being given this status, no additional funding was allocated to the

authority. A specialist teacher, who worked for a school-based, government-run project supporting asylum seekers, stated:

> *We only get money for the kids who are new here and we haven't had any at all this year. Another thing that happens is that if children get leave to remain and then transferred here, we get no money.*

6.2.4 Short-term funding and decreasing numbers of asylum seekers

More generally, because of the organisation of the funding, LEAs and schools found it difficult to plan their support. Funding, because of its annual allocation and being based on new arrivals, prevented longer-term planning. An officer stated:

> *I am very aware of financial years because we have to spend the money before the end of the financial year rather than thinking I've got enough to support the children for the next year/18 months. We need to put in place a structure that isn't going to fall apart at the end of March because of the lack of funding, because the children are still going to be here.*

Another officer highlighted the difficulty with funding for central LEA services being linked to new arrivals:

> *For funding, the mechanism was great for the dispersal process, it was very much linked to new arrivals, but we need to look at funding in a different way because the number of arrivals are slowing down and we need to be able to think beyond next month. We need more longer-term funding so we can stabilise the support that is being put in place for a while because the children are going to be around for a while.*

The decreasing number of new arrivals was a concern for all the LEAs because it threatened the existence of their central services. An officer maintained:

> *I'm worried at the moment. We never know what the level of funding will be. Because we've had high numbers, we've been doing quite well and have had quite a high budget. What's happened since September is that the number of new arrivals has started to slow down. We're not getting the numbers we had prior to September but the way the formula works means that none of us will be entitled to funding, so how can we provide a central service?*

An additional concern highlighted by one comparative LEA was that EAL and EMAG issues were being integrated into the mainstream. Consequently, the funds available to support asylum seekers once granted leave to remain, alongside other EAL needs, were no longer being ring-fenced. It was feared that a similar shortfall in funding would occur if asylum-seeker issues were also integrated into the mainstream. The suggested result was that specialist funds and/or expertise would be lost.

6.3 Key findings

- The three Welsh LEAs were funded for asylum-seeker children through the same mechanism. One comparative authority had a different funding mechanism because it was a non-dispersal area and the fifth had taken an alternative approach to funding its provision.
- In Wales the limits on funding made it difficult to employ additional/specialist staff.
- The funding procedure failed to consider issues that were specific to individual authorities.
- There was general concern about the absence of funding for asylum seekers once they had been given leave to remain.
- The short-term nature of the funding hindered long-term planning.
- Funding was linked to new arrivals and the recent decline in new arrivals, in some areas, had meant a reduction in specific asylum-seeker funding.
- One LEA received less funding because of its status as a non-dispersal area, which reduced entitlement to funding compared with designated dispersal areas.

7 Positive aspects of the education of asylum-seeker children

7.1 Benefits for reception schools

Despite the challenges raised for LEAs and schools by the arrival of asylum-seeker children, there was an overwhelmingly positive approach towards this group. Both LEAs and schools reported a number of benefits arising from their integration in UK schools.

An LEA officer noted:

> *Since the children have been coming into the schools the majority have settled really well and schools have had nothing other than something positive to say about the children being there.*

A number of benefits of having asylum-seeker children to the existing school population and the school as a whole were cited. In each LEA, the schools commented on the cultural richness and diversity they had gained from the arrival of asylum seekers. A headteacher reported:

> *They have bought a greater depth of understanding of the world. They've bought different cultures, individual skills and the opportunity for the indigenous population to see that things can be done in a different way.*

It was suggested that, as a result, the presence of asylum-seeker children aided the education of the indigenous pupil population. According to an officer:

> *There has been a very positive reception for the children. One school that I did the training in were really quite excited because they saw the arrival of the children as a real opportunity as a learning resource for other children in the school. It was a school that was entirely all white and the school was looking forward to having a more diverse pupil population.*

Some schools also felt that because of their value of education and motivation, they provided excellent role models for their existing pupils. A specialist teacher maintained:

> *A lot of the children have a great work ethic. They're really grabbing the opportunity for education while they're here and have been great role models in terms of learning for other children in the school. They're motivated and often their families really value education.*

Asylum-seeker children were also felt to make a valuable contribution to the school as a whole. An officer stated: 'I think schools have come to see that pupils can make amazing strides forward'. A headteacher added:

> *This year we had our first set of GCSE asylum-seeker students going through and some of them had very good results. This contributes to the schools feeling happier about having the pupils in.*

The comparative LEAs in England and Scotland also reported benefits that were not identified by the Welsh LEAs. Staff in one school felt that educating asylum seekers had made them more culturally aware and improved their practice. A headteacher suggested:

> *Well, I hope it's improved our practice because you're looking out for social things and identifying things that are bought by other cultures.*

Officers from an LEA stressed the wider positive implications of receiving asylum seekers for the whole community, particularly increasing the population and broadening its skill base. According to one officer:

> *There are long-term benefits for our area because we have a falling population and we need people. We're now starting to have an increased skill and knowledge base which will be a real asset.*

7.2 Key findings

- Despite the challenges, LEAs and schools were very positive about receiving asylum-seeker children.
- The benefits of receiving asylum-seeker children included:

- increased cultural richness and diversity
- their positions as role models for the rest of the school because of the high value asylum seekers attached to education
- their contribution to the school as a whole in terms of their academic achievements.

- The presence of asylum seekers had made some staff more culturally aware and improved their practice.
- In some areas asylum seekers boosted the falling school population, and helped broaden the skill base for the whole area.

8 Concluding comments

This project identified examples of good practice as well as a variety of challenges and shortcomings in the present provision for asylum-seeker children. Overall, schools found the arrival of asylum-seeker children to be a positive experience for other pupils and the schools as institutions, and this report highlights a number of successful strategies which have helped their inclusion.

However, the children brought with them a range of needs and experiences for which existing procedures were not always adequate. The most frequent deficiencies in provision were incomplete or inconsistent transfer of information on asylum-seeker families between central and local government and between local government departments, shortages of interpreters to assist in screening procedures, problems in the funding mechanisms and gaps in the support received by LEAs and schools. The definition of local authorities as dispersal or non-dispersal areas often effected funding and other arrangements, while the mobility of the families often frustrated the procedures for accommodating the children. In general, the reception of asylum-seeker children meant a rapid learning process among school and LEA staff for which preparations were not always adequate.

The implications for action by central government, schools and LEAs are therefore considerable if the needs of asylum-seeker children are to be met more fully in the future. The main implications are listed below.

- **Clearer national guidelines and policies regarding asylum seekers**

  LEAs and schools often referred to the absence of national and local policies and guidelines on educating asylum-seeker children, and, consequently, many had to search for much-needed information themselves. This could be time-consuming and lead to inconsistencies in the procedures followed in different LEAs and schools. The preparation of national guidelines and policies would ensure clear guidance for practitioners and help develop a consistent approach to the education of asylum-seeker children.

- **More effective collation and dissemination of information**

  As a result of many asylum seekers' history and the nature of their arrival in the UK, background information and school data on the children from their country of origin was often not available. Little can be done about this, although many of the challenges faced by LEAs and schools arose from this deficiency. However, where some background information was available, this was not always passed on to the LEAs to which the families were sent. Mechanisms should be developed to improve the collation of any information which asylum seekers bring with them, and such information should be taken into account when placing asylum-seeker families in LEAs, such as whether a particular LEA has adequate special needs provision or interpreter capacity.

  The dissemination of data gathered on the children after their arrival in the UK should also be improved. This includes the sharing of information on families between local government departments, and the passing on of information between LEAs as many children arrive in an area after already receiving some assessment and schooling under another LEA.

- **Training and sharing good practice**

  Staff of LEAs and schools were concerned about limited training opportunities regarding both general needs of asylum-seeker children and more specific issues such as special educational needs. Consideration should therefore be given to the development of a national training programme, relevant to all staff involved in the education of asylum-seeker children and covering all aspects of their needs. This would also create a platform where LEA and school staff could share concerns and good practice.

- **Closer multi-agency working**

  Multi-agency or partnership working has been emphasised as an important strategy for addressing

many kinds of educational issues and was also highlighted in this research as beneficial in the education of asylum-seeker children. Some advantages of this mode of working were improved communication and sharing of information and more effective coordination of school placements with housing policy. However, in some local authority areas multi-agency working was still under-developed. Central and local government should therefore take steps to encourage closer multi-agency working, both between government and local authority departments and with outside agencies.

- **A flexible funding system**

  A significant concern in the research was the inflexibility of the funding system and the dependence of funding on new arrivals. A consequence of this was the frequent need to divert money intended for central services and existing funding for indigenous pupils from sources such as special needs and EAL to include asylum-seeker children. The development of mechanisms to ensure more sustainable funding for asylum-seeker and refugee children would provide a more secure basis for longer-term planning in this area.

References

ADVISORY CENTRE FOR EDUCATION (1992). 'Refugee education', *ACE Bulletin*, **45**, 3.

ANNETT, D. (1991). 'Refugees', *ACE Bulletin*, **43**, 5–6.

AUDIT COMMISSION (2000). *Another Country: Implementing Dispersal Under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.* London: Audit Commission.

AUDIT COMISSION (2002). *Call for High-Level Independent Review on SEN* (Press Release 21/06/2002) [online]. Available: http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/PRESS-RELEASE.asp?CategoryID=PRESS-CENTRE&ProdID=69940DDA-93ED-4EF0-B307-AE7272722A34 [29 April, 2004].

BARCLAY, A., BOWES, A., FERGUSON, I., SIM, D. and VALENTI, M. with FARD, S. and MacINTOSH, S. (2003). *Asylum Seekers in Scotland* (Social Justice Research Programme: Research Findings No. 2) [online]. Available: www.scotland.gov.uk/cru/resfinds/sjf2-00.asp [29 April, 2004].

BATTY, D. (2001). 'Asylum and immigration: the issue explained', *Guardian Unlimited*, 12 March [online]. Available: http://society.guardian.co.uk/asylumseekers/story/0,7991,450704,00.html [29 April, 2004].

BLAIR, M. and BOURNE, J. (1998). *Making the Difference: Teaching and Learning Strategies in Successful Multi-Ethnic Schools.* London: DfEE.

BOLLOTEN, B. and SPAFFORD, T. (1998). 'Supporting refugee children in East London primary schools.' In: JONES, C. and RUTTER, J. (Eds) *Refugee Education: Mapping the Field.* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

CABLE, C. (1997). 'Supporting refugee children: working across departments', *Multicultural Teaching*, **16**, 1, 31–2.

CLARKE, C. and McGREGOR, L. (2002). 'Learning together', *Guardian Unlimited*, 7 May [online]. Available: http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,5500,710980,00.html [29 April, 2004].

CLARKE, L. (2003). 'Supporting asylum seekers in schools', *Support for Learning*, **18**, 4, 177–83.

CLOSS, A., STEAD, J. and ARSHAD, R. (2001). 'The education of asylum-seeker and refugee children', *Multicultural Teaching*, **20**, 1, 29–33.

CRABB, R. (1996). 'Working with Hassan', *Multicultural Teaching*, **14**, 2, 22–5.

FOSTER, A. (2002). 'Controller of the Audit Commission.' In: AUDIT COMISSION *Call for High-Level Independent Review on SEN* (Press Release 21/06/2002) [online]. Available: http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/PRESS-RELEASE.asp?CategoryID=PRESS-CENTRE&ProdID=69940DDA-93ED-4EF0-B307-AE7272722A34 [29 April, 2004].

HERRICK, C. (2004). The Future of EMAG: Funding Paper for ConfEd Equalities Committee 29 January 2004. Unpublished Report.

HOME OFFICE (2003). Asylum Statistics: *1st Quarter 2003, United Kingdom* [online]. Available: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs3/asylumq103.pdf [29 May, 2003].

ISZATT, J. and PRICE, R. (1995). 'Working with children from refugee communities', *Educational and Child Psychology*, **12**, 3, 52–6.

JENNINGS, C. and KERSLAKE, H. (1994). 'Children in transition: work with bilingual learners many of whom are refugees – shaping the learning environment', *Educational Psychology in Practice*, **10**, 3, 164–73.

JONES, C. (1998). 'The educational needs of refugee children.' In: JONES, C. and RUTTER, J. (Eds) *Refugee Education: Mapping the Field.* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

MARLAND, M. (1998). 'Refugee pupils: a headteacher's perspective', *Multicultural Teaching*, 17, 1, 17–22.

MOTT, G. (2000). *Refugees and Asylum Seekers: the Role of the LEAs* (EMIE Report 59). Slough: NFER, EMIE.

OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION (2003). *The Education of Asylum-Seeker Pupils* (HMI 453) [online]. Available: http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.displayfile&id=3418&type=doc [29 April, 2004].

PAREKH REPORT (2000). *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain.* London: The Runnymede Trust.

POWER, S., WHITTY, G. and YOUDELL, D. (1998). 'Refugees, asylum seekers and the housing crisis: no place to learn.' In: JONES, C. and RUTTER, J. (Eds) *Refugee Education: Mapping the Field.* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

REFUGEE COUNCIL INFORMATION SERVICE (2003). *Education to Age 16* (February). London: Refugee Council.

REMSBERY, N. (2003). *The Education of Refugee Children: Policy and Practice in the Education of Refugee and Asylum Seeker Children in England.* London: National Children's Bureau.

RUTTER, J. (2001). *Supporting Refugee Children in the Twenty First Century Britain: a Compendium of Essential Information.* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

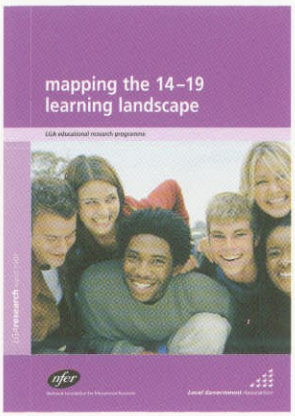
RUTTER, J. and JONES, C. (Eds) (1998). *Refugee Education: Mapping the Field.* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

SENIOR, J. (2002). 'Asylum seekers – who cares?' *The Psychologist*, **15**, 8, 392–3.

TAYLOR, M.J. (2002). 'A good education for all: meeting the educational needs of refugees and asylum seekers in multiethnic England.' In: LE METAIS, J. (Ed) *A Europe of Differences: Educational Responses for Interculturalism.* Enschede, The Netherlands: CIDREE.

UNITED NATIONS (1951). *The Convention of the Rights of the Child* (Article 1). New York and Geneva: United Nations.

more publications from the NFER



Mapping the 14–19 learning landscape

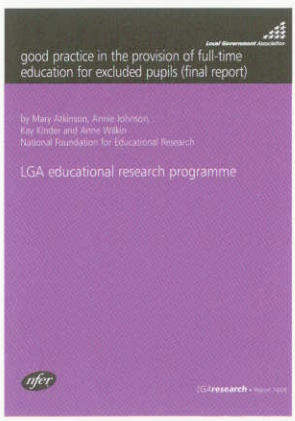
This report, based on an extensive literature search, maps the learning landscape for the 14–19 age group. The research details the policies and strategies that will require collaboration between key players at national, regional and local levels. The current provision of education and training for this age group are described in detail. This report is essential reading for all local authorities keen to see the reform of 14–19 learning work in practice.

Price £8.00
ISBN 1 903880 74 2

School Art: what's in it?

There is no prescribed canon of art that should be studied in secondary schools; the choice rests with art departments and individual teachers. So who gets in? Hirst or Holbein? Gormley or Gaugin? O'Keefe or Ofili? Emin or Escher? Or is there room for them all? How and why do teachers choose what is in and what is out? And what are the pupils doing? Drawing or downloading? Copying or conceiving?

Price £10.00
ISBN 1 903880 87 4



Good practice in the provision of full-time education for excluded pupils

The LGA commissioned the NFER to undertake a study of the full-time provision available for all pupils excluded from school for more than 15 days. This research has highlighted a variety of interventions and strategies that might be incorporated into LEA practice in order to help fulfil the responsibility for full-time provision for excluded pupils.

Price £20.00
ISBN 1 903880 77 7

For further information on any of the above projects or the publications, please contact
Publications Unit, National Foundation for Educational Research, The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berks SL1 2DQ
Tel: +44 (0)1753 637002 Fax: +44 (0)1753 637280 Email: book.sales@nfer.ac.uk

The education of asylum seekers in Wales: implications for LEAs and schools

Angharad Reakes and Robat Powell

The numbers of refugees and asylum seekers dispersing across the UK has had significant implications for local education authorities and schools in terms of their policies, procedures and practice.

This book reports on the results of research conducted with three Welsh LEAs with considerable numbers of asylum-seeker and refugee children. Two comparative case studies from England and Scotland are also presented. Although Wales has received a smaller proportion of these groups in comparison with other parts of the UK, the implications are similar.

The research examines the kinds of educational provision made by LEAs and schools for asylum-seeker children and identifies implications arising from these requirements. One general finding across the five LEAs was that despite the demands on resources of providing for asylum-seeker children, LEAs and schools were very positive about receiving them and emphasised the many valuable contributions the children made to the whole school.

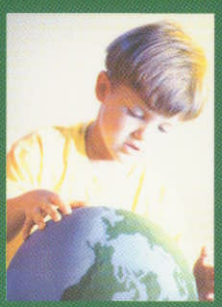
The report focuses on several important areas:

- the LEA experience
- multi-agency working
- the school experience
- special educational needs
- funding.

This book is important reading for local authority and school staff, together with educational support services.

The report provides a useful background about how Welsh schools and LEAs are responding to asylum-seeking children. Its publication will greatly aid the work of teachers and other educationalists working with this group of migrants.

Jill Rutter, Department of Education, London Metropolitan University



Price: £10.00 (including postage)
ISBN: 1 903880 85 8
NFER Ref: WAR

National Foundation for
Educational Research
The Mere, Upton Park
Slough, Berks SL1 2DQ
www.nfer.ac.uk