

HOW TO SUPPORT EDUCATION PROGRESSION FOR REFUGEE AND ASYLUM-SEEKING PUPILS

ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

This advice sheet provides schools with key information about how to help refugee and asylum-seeking children and young people access schools.¹

KEY FACTS: RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS TO EDUCATION IN ENGLAND²

Compulsory education

Under UK law, refugee and asylum-seeking children of compulsory school age have the same entitlement to full-time education as other UK children. Schools should not ask about a child's immigration status. For more information, visit Coram Children's Legal Centre's [guidance on access to compulsory education for migrant children](#).

Further education

After compulsory education, immigration status and age may affect young people's eligibility for FE study. Young people between the ages of 16 and 18 are eligible for funding from the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Once young people turn 19, their access to FE may be restricted as a result of immigration status or ordinary residency requirements. For more information, visit Coram Children's Legal Centre's [guidance on access for further education](#).

'No study' conditions

While the 'no study' conditions that were introduced in 2018 have led to some restrictions to access to education, being Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE) does not automatically equate to being unable to study. For more information on the 'no study' condition, please see Coram Children's Legal Centre [guidance on no study conditions and immigration bail](#).

EDUCATION PROGRESSION: HOW TO HELP

Lots can be done to help young refugees and asylum seekers move forward in their education. There are actions that you as an individual can take now, and things your institution can do in the longer term.



Remember, each refugee or asylum-seeking pupil will have their own unique needs. To the extent possible, adopt a personalised approach, flexibly accommodating the needs of each child.



WORK WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND FAMILIES

Why this matters: Support from refugee and asylum-seeking children's families for their education is important for their progression. Making refugee families feel connected and part of a wider school community is key.



THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

Develop a positive relationship with parents/guardians and families of refugee and asylum-seeking pupils.

Consider connecting refugee and asylum-seeking families with other refugee and asylum-seeking or newly arrived families.

Enabling positive communication is crucial. If English language is a challenge, look into having interpretation during parents' evenings or other key meetings with parents/guardians. Consider collaborating with voluntary sector organisations or trusted interpretation services. If this isn't possible, be prepared to use Google Translate.

As emphasised by [NALDIC](#), make the effort to spell and pronounce names accurately: this will help develop a genuine partnership with parents.



THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO

Appoint a focal point at the school who can provide holistic support for refugee and asylum-seeking families. This could involve organising extra-curricular activities for families in the evenings or on the weekends.



STRONG PASTORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Why this matters: Research shows that poor mental health is one of the primary barriers that prevents refugee and asylum-seeking young people from progressing in their education.³ You can help to change this.



THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

Link young people to befriending or educational mentoring schemes run by voluntary sector organisations.

Look into RSN's [educational mentoring scheme](#) to see if the young person you are working with could be referred and have an educational mentor.

Look into any community organisations that support refugees and that may provide opportunities or activities for refugee and asylum-seeking pupils to take part in outside of school.



THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO

Ensure that strong pastoral and in-school mental health support is available. Make sure that refugee and asylum-seeking students know that there is someone they can turn to who will listen to them and who cares for them.

Draw on services that provide youth-focused counselling and well-being activities. Be particularly mindful of key pressure points, such as exams, onward application, and enrolment periods.



PEER SUPPORT SCHEMES

Why this matters: When children feel supported by and connected to their peers, their experience of education, including their motivation to progress, is transformed.



THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

Implement a 'buddy' scheme. Connect refugee and asylum-seeking pupils with other helpful pupils tasked with welcoming them: including by showing them around the school, helping them understand their timetable, and including them in activities.

It can be helpful if a refugee or asylum-seeking pupil's buddy speaks their first language, particularly if their English language is limited. However, it is also important that this buddy has the right attitude and will take the time to help the pupil feel welcomed.

Talk to the refugee or asylum-seeking pupil about the peer support programme – ask them how they would like to be supported by their peers.



THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO

Establish a school-wide 'buddy' scheme, or other peer support schemes, to match new arrivals with a child already in school, tasked with welcoming them and showing them around.

For schools with larger refugee or asylum-seeking populations, consider matching new arrivals with more established refugee and asylum-seeking students who speak their first language.

Conduct school-wide learning initiatives about forced displacement. See RSN's [webpage](#) highlighting a range of resources, categorised by age groups, that can be used to teach students about refugees and asylum seekers.



BURSARIES OR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Why this matters: The cost of transport to school, educational resources and extra-curricular activities can be a barrier to refugee and asylum-seeking pupils' education progression. There are ways that you can help pupils who are facing such challenges.



THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

If you know a pupil is struggling to pay for costs of educational resources, equipment or travel, point them towards any in-house financial support that is available.

If this is not possible, support them in applying to local education and hardship funding. Check out this tool from [Turn2Us](#) and RSN's [page on providers of education funding](#).



THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO

Incorporate in-house bursaries for refugee and asylum-seeking pupils as part of the range of support services offered to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Ensure these bursaries can help cover the costs of transport and education resources and equipment.



TRAINING OF AND EXPERTISE AMONGST SCHOOL OR COLLEGE STAFF

Why this matters: Whether you currently have refugee and asylum-seeking students in your school, or whether you are waiting to welcome them, it is important that staff understand the challenges they may face, their distinct support needs, and approaches to supporting them.



THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

Read about the challenges facing refugee and asylum-seeking students in their education progression. Read Unicef UK and RSN's [2018](#) and [2020](#) research reports on this issue.

Ask your institution to work with [RSN](#) to run training for school-wide staff.



THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO

Work with [RSN](#) or other specialist voluntary sector organisations to run training for school staff as part of ongoing continuous professional development.

Ensure that there are trained focal points at the school who can help refugee and asylum-seeking students navigate challenges that they may be facing, supporting their education progression.

If your school or college has a larger refugee and asylum-seeking student population, consider partnering with a specialist voluntary sector organisation to provide in-school/college advice or support for refugee and asylum-seeking learners.

Ensure that the availability of additional support for refugees and asylum seekers is advertised and that young people know who to approach.



TAILORED EDUCATIONAL CONTENT AND CURRICULUM

Why this matters: An adapted curriculum that is accessible to refugee and asylum-seeking pupils will help significantly help their education progression and academic achievement.



THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO

At all levels, plan to adapt and modify your curriculum to meet the pupil's needs. Consider establishing tailored or adapted curriculum for newly arrived students without sufficient levels of English to be mainstreamed.

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to this, but a model should involve integrating English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) with learning other subjects. Read RSN and Unicef UK's 2018 [report](#) (page 47) for examples of such provision, as well as the [case study](#) on Newman Catholic College for a particularly great example.



MONITOR AND REVIEW PUPILS' PROGRESS

Why this matters: The support needs of refugee and asylum-seeking pupils will change over time, and approaches to support should be updated to reflect these changes.



THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

It is important that young people's attendance and progress is carefully monitored by teachers.

A review of progress in the first few weeks of school, and at periodic intervals thereon, will help to ensure that students are in the right placement and that appropriate support is in place.



THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO

Develop clear guidance on the monitoring process for refugee and asylum-seeking pupils.

-
- 1 This advice sheet builds on the findings of the 2018 research report Education for Refugee and Asylum-seeking Children: Access and Equality in England, Scotland and Wales and the 2020 research report Education transitions for refugee and asylum-seeking young people in the UK: Exploring the journey to further and higher education.
 - 2 Please note these facts cover provision in England, and do not cover provision in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
 - 3 Ashlee, A and Gladwell, C (2020) Education transitions for refugee and asylum-seeking young people in the UK: Exploring the journey to further and higher education. Unicef UK.
-