

HOW TO SUPPORT ACCESS TO SCHOOLS FOR REFUGEE AND ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN

ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS

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

KEY FACTS: RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS TO EDUCATION IN ENGLAND¹

- All children have the right to education, as enshrined in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 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.
- It is the responsibility of the local authority to provide suitable full-time education for all children of compulsory school age resident in their area.
- Statutory guidance for England states that an education placement should be secured for all looked after children – including unaccompanied and asylum-seeking children – within 20 school days of coming into care.
- Being undocumented or having a 'no recourse to public funds' condition on a visa does not prevent a child from accessing education: education is not a 'public fund' as set out in the immigration rules.

For more detail on the rights and entitlements of refugee and asylum-seeking children to access education, see [Education for Refugee and Asylum-seeking Children: Access and Equality in England, Scotland and Wales](#) and Coram Children's Legal Centre's [guidance on access to compulsory education for migrant children](#).

ACCESSING SCHOOLS: HOW TO HELP

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



DEVELOP CLEAR ADMISSIONS POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Why this matters: Clear institutional policies and guidance on admitting refugee and asylum-seeking pupils, that recognise the challenges they and their families may face, can help to smooth the admissions process.



THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

If your institution does not have clear admissions policies and guidance around welcoming refugee and asylum-seeking pupils, ask them to consider developing them.



THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO

Develop clear admissions policies and guidance around welcoming refugee and asylum-seeking pupils.



SUPPORT REFUGEE CHILDREN TO ACCESS EDUCATION AT UPPER-SECONDARY LEVEL

Why this matters: Research shows that many schools are reluctant to admit refugee and asylum-seeking pupils at the upper-secondary level because of a fear that their results will reflect negatively on their published school results.² But there are measures designed to protect schools from this possible negative impact.



THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

Recognise that if a pupil arrives in the last two years and comes from a country where English is not the official language, their results can, if necessary, be omitted from a school's published results.³



THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO

Develop clear guidance for staff on admitting EAL pupils at upper-secondary level.

Whether or not they are included in results profiles, refugee and asylum-seeking pupils must be supported to reach their full academic potential.

Ensure all staff involved in enrolment and admissions are fully aware of this guidance.



APPOINT A FOCAL POINT FOR REFUGEE AND ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN'S ADMISSIONS

Why this matters: Having a named and trained staff member responsible for admissions of refugee and asylum-seeking children, who families are able to contact, can help refugee and asylum-seeking children get a place at school.



THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

Ask senior management whether your school has a designated focal point for refugee and asylum-seeking pupils. If they don't, and if you have the right skills and experience, consider putting yourself forward. And, ask for additional training and upskilling.



THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO

Appoint a focal point responsible for admissions of refugee and asylum-seeking children.

Ensure this focal point conducts robust needs assessments for refugee and asylum-seeking children to help ensure successful and appropriate placements.

Ensure the focal point liaises with staff who support a refugee or asylum-seeking child's education – such as EAL coordinators, class teachers and pastoral support staff.



DEVELOP A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE ATMOSPHERE

Why this matters: Refugee and asylum-seeking pupils will have faced upheaval, instability, and may have been through traumatic experiences. Schools can offer a space of stability, safety and welcome that can make a huge difference to their lives.



THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

Reach out to a [School of Sanctuary](#) in your area for advice on things you can do to enhance access for and welcome refugee and asylum-seeking children.

Recognise that creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere isn't expensive - small actions can make a big difference! You could, for example, create displays in the school that celebrate diversity and refugees, take the time to learn how to properly pronounce a student's name, and learn about their first language and cultural background.

Build a positive relationship with refugee and asylum-seeking children's parents and families from the outset. Making families feel welcomed from the point of enquiring about a place is important.



THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO

Consider becoming a [School of Sanctuary](#) or a [Refugees Welcome School](#). And, when you do, advertise this clearly on the school website.

Establish an induction programme for new arrivals. This should cover: positive welcome, personalised and flexible responses, initial academic and language assessments, peer support, monitoring progress, and involving teachers for inclusion. Look at the Bell Foundation's [helpful guidance](#) on developing an induction programme for EAL pupils, for some tips.

Create a welcome pack. Translate this wherever possible – this will make a big difference to refugee and asylum-seeking families and students.



ENSURE SCHOOL-WIDE TRAINING OF STAFF

Why this matters: The more staff understand the challenges facing refugee and asylum-seeking children and how to support them, the more likely they are to provide places for them.



THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

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



THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO

Work with [RSN](#) to train school staff involved with admissions and enrolment, on an appropriately regular basis.

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- ¹ Please note these facts cover provision in England, and do not cover provision in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
 - ² 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.
 - ³ Nye, P (2017) Who's left: How do pupils count in league tables and how does our reweighting approach work. Education Data Analysis. Accessed 30/11/20 at <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2017/01/whos-left-how-do-pupils-count-in-league-tables-and-how-does-our-reweighting-approach-work/>
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