



RSC Working Paper No. 10

**Experiences of Integration:
Accessing resources in a new society -
the case of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers in Milton
Keynes**

Aruni John, Channe Lindstrøm, Zuzanna Olszewska, Katharine
Williamson and Krista Zongolowicz

December 2002

This paper was originally submitted as a group research essay
which was part of the authors' Master of Studies in Forced Migration
degree course.

Working Paper Series

Queen Elizabeth House
International Development Centre
University of Oxford.

The **RSC Working Paper Series** is intended to aid the rapid distribution of work in progress, research findings and special lectures by researchers and associates of the RSC. Papers aim to stimulate discussion among the worldwide community of scholars, policymakers and practitioners. They are distributed free of charge in PDF format via the RSC website. Bound hard copies of the working papers may also be purchased from the RSC.

The opinions expressed in the papers are solely those of the author/s who retain the copyright. They should not be attributed to the project funders or the Refugee Studies Centre, Queen Elizabeth House or the University of Oxford. Comments on individual Working Papers are welcomed, and should be directed to the author/s.

Refugee Studies Centre
Queen Elizabeth House
University of Oxford
21 St. Giles
Oxford OX1 3LA
United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0)1865 270722
Fax +44 (0)1865 270721
E-mail: rsc@qeh.ox.ac.uk
Web: www.rsc.ox.ac.uk



Figure 1. Aziza's social map of the present

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Abstract	5	
1.	Introduction	5	
	Case Study: Nasim’s Arrival in the UK	7	
2.	Methodology	8	
	Participants	8	
	Methods	8	
	Ethical Issues	11	
	Methodological Problems	12	
3.	Data analysis: Living Arrangements	12	
	General Overview	12	
	Foster Care	14	
	Case Study: Foster care	14	
	Informal Care	15	
	Independent Living	16	
	Recommendations	16	
4.	Data analysis: Social Resources	17	
	Awareness and Use of Service Provision	17	
	Community Support	18	
	Recommendations	20	
5.	Data analysis: Education	21	
	Importance of Education	21	
	General Overview	21	
	UMAs’ Perspectives on Education	21	
	Educational Resources	23	
	Education Liaison	23	
	EMASS	24	
	Adult Education	24	
	Recommendations	25	
6.	Conclusion	26	
7.	Bibliography	29	
8.	Appendices	35	
	Appendix A	Best Practices	35
	Appendix B	Policy Recommendations Made to Milton Keynes City Council	36
	Appendix C	Relevant Legal Instruments	39
	Appendix D	The Role of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support Teacher	41
	Appendix E	Sample Structured Interview	42
	Appendix F	Workshop materials	44
	Appendix G	Acknowledgements	46

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	<i>Aziza’s social map of the present</i>	2
Figure 2.	<i>Profiles of UMAs</i>	8
Figure 3.	<i>Interview Log</i>	9
Figure 4.	<i>Living arrangements flowchart</i>	13
Figure 5.	<i>Fatima’s present social map</i>	19
Figure 6.	<i>Nasim’s present social map</i>	22
Figure 7.	<i>Education flowchart</i>	23

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CA	United Kingdom Children Act (1989), as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act (2000)
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
ELO	Education Liaison Office
ELR	Exceptional Leave to Remain
EMASS	Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service
EU	European Union
FPU	Family Placement Unit
ILR	Indefinite Leave to Remain
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
LEA	Local Educational Authority
MK	Milton Keynes
NASS	National Asylum Seeker Services
RCPA	The Refugee Council Panel of Advisors
SCF	Save the Children Fund (UK)
UMA	Unaccompanied Minor Asylum-Seeker/Refugee
YAST	Young Asylum Seekers Team
YPT	Young People’s Team
UK	United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a project which explored the integration of unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers and refugees (UMAs) in Milton Keynes (MK). Multiple research methods were used to analyse UMAs' integration, and their access to and support from Social Services and other institutional and informal actors. Initial interviews conducted with UMAs revealed themes integral to their own experience and perception of integration: living arrangements, social resources, and education. These themes were further explored during a one-day participatory workshop in Oxford. This proved that policy and practice concerning UMAs in MK are ill-defined and inconsistent. Institutional resources already in place are not being fully utilised as UMAs are often an after-thought in the service provision for citizen children. UMAs encounter difficulties in accessing education facilities, and living arrangements do not consistently meet protection requirements. As a result, UMAs frequently experience isolation and confusion about their present and future in the UK. Based on these findings, this report makes recommendations for policy changes at both the local and the national levels.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates what unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers and refugees (UMAs)¹ in Milton Keynes (MK)² perceive their integration needs to be, and the extent to which they are met. As MK is not a dispersal area under United Kingdom (UK) government policy of de-centralisation of asylum-seekers, it is therefore typical of any medium-sized town that is not well-equipped to deal with refugees, let alone UMAs – a particularly vulnerable group. The growing refugee population in MK is a relatively new phenomenon, which accounts for the lack of resources, training, and policy guidelines to deal with UMAs. Apart from a growing Somali community, MK is fairly ethnically homogenous, with limited social networks for refugees to tap into. There are currently around 25 UMAs in MK, predominantly male, and aged between 13–17.

This study was carried out in partnership with the Children's Services at the MK City Council, which involved extensive consultation with the Young Asylum Seekers Team (YAST), related institutions, and the UMAs themselves. YAST acts as a focal point for UMAs, being responsible for their initial screening as well as the distribution of welfare benefits, such as housing and weekly cash grants.

¹ For the sake of brevity throughout this report, unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers and refugees will hereafter be referred to as UMAs

However, it is an informal team with no independent budget, consisting of one social worker and several part-time sessional workers. While this report welcomes the recognition at the MK Council that UMA-specific policies need to be put in place, it hopes to highlight the integration priorities defined by UMAs themselves, and to offer viable policy solutions to address the acute needs of the UMAs as identified in this report.

What is integration? Many studies on refugee integration show that refugees have different understandings of integration than do the institutions which design integration programmes (Eastmond forthcoming, Valtonen 1998, Hjelde 1995). For this reason, the project sought to understand how UMAs themselves perceived their goals and needs when settling into MK. To UMAs, integration needs included **secure housing, full-time education, special language training, friends and community support, leave to remain, and a secure future**: “To learn English... To go to school... To marry an English girl... To learn about computers... To become a doctor... To be useful for the society.”³ For some social workers, it meant “learning how to use the system,”⁴ while for some foster carers, it meant cultural assimilation.⁵ As the theoretical components of integration evolved over the project duration, it was finally defined as **developing the awareness and capacity to access the resources needed to achieve future goals in a new society**. By using a youth-centred, participatory methodology, the project aimed to bring to light experiences of integration without intimidating or alienating the UMAs, whilst further ensuring that UMAs could understand, have a stake in, and potentially gain from the research. In addition, to gain an in-depth understanding of the complex issues affecting UMAs, research explored the MK institutional structures and actors and their interaction with the UMAs.

Drawing on the themes identified in initial semi-structured interviews, participatory research activities were devised for a one-day workshop in Oxford, including social mapping, photo essays, and a

² Similarly, Milton Keynes will hereafter be referred to as MK

³ Excerpts from hopes for the future expressed in the UMAs’ social maps

⁴ Interview with Baljinder Haer, Line Manager, Children’s Services, MK City Council, 13.02.02

⁵ Interview with Ann Maguire, foster carer, 13.02.02

session on hypothetical scenarios. From the interviews and the workshop it specifically emerged that UMAs in MK face serious problems accessing schools and learning English, have concerns about some of their living arrangements, may be isolated from community and friends, and receive social service support of inconsistent quality.

After an exploration of the methodology used, this report considers each of these themes—living arrangements, community support structures, and education—with detailed explorations of the ways in which they were perceived by UMAs, and how they affected the achievement of their integration goals. Finally, an extensive literature review, covering the legal and normative framework, comparative European practices, and guidelines for working with children, places the findings in the context of the UMAs’ entitlements, enabling the exploration of alternative practices and policy proposals (see Appendices A and C).

The following story of one UMA’s first days in MK epitomises the hurdles typically faced by UMAs upon arrival.

Case Study: Nasim’s Arrival in the UK

Sixteen-year-old Afghan Nasim ends a long journey late one night in MK. Using broken English he finds the police station where his details are taken and he is sent on to the YMCA. For four days he eats only bread and eggs and is unable to communicate until someone recognises that he is a refugee and alerts the MK Children’s Services. At the Council, new sessional worker Jonathan takes Nasim’s case. A Farsi interpreter is arranged and Nasim is able to communicate at this crucial meeting. Although he does not know it, the reasons he gives for fleeing Afghanistan will become the basis for his asylum claim filed by Jonathan. Without the interpreter, Nasim and Jonathan are able to communicate only by hand gestures.

Nasim’s priority is to find housing close to a college, but Jonathan needs to find him housing quickly as the YMCA is expensive. Jonathan locates a house, still being built, in an isolated location. Nasim has been through traumatic experiences to get to the UK where he wants to “lead a peaceful life and get an education.” He has no contact with his only remaining relative in Afghanistan and cannot communicate with anyone around him. There are no systems in place to access translators, help him find classes, see a doctor or manage his loneliness and isolation.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Participants

Research participants consisted of 17 UMAs (6 girls, 11 boys) from Somalia, Afghanistan, Albania and Kosovo, aged between 14-17. The majority had been in the UK for less than 12 months.

Name	Nationality	Gender	Age	Length of Stay	Status	Residence	Education	Interviewed	Attended workshop
Khalid	Afghan	Male	16	3-6 months	Pending	Independent living	P/t Training	Yes	Yes
Nasim	Afghan	Male	16	0-3 months	Pending	Independent living	Not in school	Yes	Yes
Ilir	Albanian	Male	14	3-6 months	ELR - 4 years	Foster care	Not in school	Yes	Yes
Besim	Albanian	Male	17	3-6 months	ELR - 4 years	Independent living	P/t Training	Yes	Yes
Boran	Gorani	Male	15	3-6 months	ELR - 2 years	Foster care	P/t Training	Yes	Yes
Gjergj	Gorani	Male	17	3-6 months	Pending	Independent living	P/t Training	Yes	Yes
Milan	Gorani	Male	15	3-6 months	ILR	Foster care	P/t Training	Yes	Yes
Rashidi	Somali	Male	17	3-6 months	Pending	Informal care	Not in school	Yes	Yes
Fatima	Somali	Female	17	3-6 months	Pending	Informal care	Not in school	Yes	Yes
Saleem	Somali	Male	16	3-6 months	Unknown	Independent living	Not in school	Yes	No
Aziza	Somali	Female	15	One year+	ILR	Foster care	School full time	Yes	Yes
Dalila	Somali	Female	17	3-6 months	Pending	Informal care	Not in school	Yes	Yes
Amina	Somali	Female	13	0-3 months	Unknown	Informal care	Not in school	Yes	No
Mohammed	Somali	Male	N/A	3-6 months	Unknown	Informal care	P/t Training	Yes	No
Zuleikha	Somali	Female	15	One year+	Unknown	Informal care	School full time	Yes	No
Hasan	Somali	Male	17	0-3 months	Pending	Informal care	Not in school	No	Yes
Jamila	Somali	Female	14	6-9 months	Unknown	Informal care	Not in school	Yes	No

Figure 2. Profile of UMA participants in the study(n.b. all names have been changed to ensure participant confidentiality)

2.2 Methods

As UMAs' files remained confidential and inaccessible to the researchers, the project began with *semi-structured interviews* with 16 UMAs, individually or in groups, for the purpose of gathering life data. A series of *structured interviews* was conducted with social/sessional workers, line managers, foster

carers, specialist teachers, and other resource persons. All interviews were conducted and recorded in pairs to ensure professionalism and to cross-check information. Field notes were written up within 24 hours of each interview and circulated among all five members of the research team for input/comments.

Interviewee	Position	Date
Dawn Gosling	Social Worker	06.02.02
Ben Hutchinson	Sessional Worker	06.02.02
Pat Callaar	Family Placement Officer	06.02.02
Judy Vipers	Education Liaison Officer	06.02.02
Boran, Milan & Gjergj	Gorani UMAs	13.02.02
Mohammed, Rashidi & Fatima	Somali UMAs	13.02.02
Zuleikha, Dalila, Amina & Jamila	Somali UMAs	13.02.02
Saleem	Somali UMA	13.02.02
Zainab Ali	Sessional Worker	13.02.02
Ann Maguire	Foster carer	13.02.02
Khalid	Afghan UMA	06.03.02
Iilir & Besim	Albanian UMAs	06.03.02
Aziza	Somali UMA	06.03.02
Val and Flood de Coteau	Foster carers	06.03.02
Rita Gist	EMASS Support Teacher	11.03.02
Baljinder Haer	Line Manager, Children's Services	11.03.02
Adam Giles	Sessional Worker	11.03.02
Farid Senszai & Eni	Independent interpreters	16.03.02
Nasim	Afghan UMA	16.03.02

Figure 3. Interview Log

Following advice on research with children found in Boyden and Ennew 1997, Gibbs and Boyden 1995, Robson 1993, Segerstrom 1995, Silverman 2000, and Uppard and Petty 1998, a *one-day participatory research workshop* was designed and used to encourage interactive discussion, and to ensure that varying levels of literacy and language comprehension did not disadvantage anyone. The workshop used three key activities, which enabled participants to become the experts and show what they felt was important, thereby allowing researchers to better understand UMAs' opinions on their integration needs:

- **Social mapping**

An individual exercise in which participants drew maps of their present lives, followed by maps of the way they imagined their lives ten years later. They worked mostly alone, with some ideas being exchanged. Participants were asked to place green stickers on things they liked, and red stickers on things that they did not.

- **Photo essays**

Participants were given cameras one week before the workshop in order to take photographs of places in MK where they felt comfortable and places where they did not (see Appendix F.2). They decided which photos to append to their social maps and discussed the reasons for their choice in small groups. Finally, all social maps and photos were presented and explained to the entire group.

- **Hypothetical scenarios**

Participants were divided into three discussion groups, and asked a range of questions about what they would do in situations ranging from classroom bullying to spending a day with a favourite person. Three groups were formed with corresponding translators: five Somalis (three female, two male), three Goranis (all male), and two Albanians/two Afghans (all male).

2.3 Ethical issues

The project posed issues of power balance as the researchers may have appeared as authority figures to the UMAs, and attempts were made to redress this throughout the research. Individual or group interviews were held prior to the workshop, ensuring, to the extent possible, that trust and familiarity were built. Specifically, the following issues were addressed:

- **Informed consent and choice to participate**

The project was conducted over a period of eight weeks in an attempt to enable UMAs to gain familiarity with research objectives as well as researchers. All UMAs attending preliminary interviews were asked in their own languages for their consent to participate, and it was clarified that the researchers would be unable to do anything personally for the participants, but that the report may potentially help UMAs in the future.

- **Communication**

All participants were provided with translators during interviews and the workshop, allowing their full and equal participation. During the initial interviews there were problems with a Serbo-Croatian translator who sought to speak for the Gorani UMAs; therefore, a different translator was used for the workshop. All participants received simple instructions for activities, and one member of the research group was designated as a point of contact for participants to turn to with concerns.

- **Confidentiality**

All names in this report have been changed to culturally appropriate equivalents. Researchers ensured that participants understood that their views would be kept confidential.

- **Giving something back**

Since it was considered important that UMAs be given the opportunity to build links with each other and to gain something from taking part in the study, the workshop included a day-trip to Oxford, including a bus tour and pizza lunch.

2.4 Methodological problems

Although great care was taken in the methodological design of the research, several shortcomings can be identified:

- **Young Person's Team (YPT)**

YPT was not analysed in comprehensive detail which meant that the project failed to recognise its significance, in particular the rearrangement of the supervision of UMAs in foster care.

- **Social maps**

Time constraints prevented researchers from fully engaging with the social maps drawn by UMAs.

A follow-up session to confirm interpretations with the participants would have been beneficial.

- **Gender representation**

Gender representation was maintained overall during the research in proportion to the UMA population in MK – with six female/eleven male participants – but not during the workshop, where there were three female/nine male participants.

3. DATA ANALYSIS: LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 General Overview

Upon arrival in MK, an UMA is initially screened by YAST (CA: section 17), which then refers UMAs under 16 to the joint management of the Family Placement Unit (FPU), which places and monitors them in **formal foster care** (CA: section 20), and the Young People's Team (YPT), which provides caseworkers to minors in formal foster care. These then assume responsibility for the welfare needs of UMAs. This referral policy, a recent innovation, reflects the Council's belief that UMAs' needs are best met within the well-established system for British children. However, this study repeatedly showed that

discusses the advantages and disadvantages associated with formal/informal foster care and independent living.

3.2 Foster care

3.2.1 Formal foster care

In MK, foster carers do not receive any special training to cater to the UMAs' unique backgrounds. Moreover, while the FPU aims to match racial/cultural similarities,⁸ they recognise that “shortfalls” are caused by a general shortage of foster carers, and a preponderance of British foster households.⁹ The placement is to be regularly monitored by a YPT and FPU caseworkers. YAST and YPT/FPU caseworkers however, are not necessarily qualified social workers, nor have they had any special training to understand and meet the needs of UMAs. Interviews with foster carers revealed inconsistent communication between carers and social workers, which in turn accounted for the inadequate evaluation and unsystematic monitoring of foster carers.¹⁰

Case Study: Foster Care

Boran and Milan, both 15, grew up in the mountains of southern Kosovo. They are Gorani, Slavic Muslims, and a minority among ethnic Albanians. When the KLA raided their village, their parents were killed. An uncle arranged for the boys' departure by lorry fearing the return of the KLA. Upon arrival in MK, Boran and Milan were placed with a foster carer. They are just beginning to speak English, so the local school will not enrol them. Since they are school-age, the Council will not pay for English lessons. However, their foster carer is determined that the boys learn English, and has arranged for them to receive necessary funding. Initially, she could obtain only two lessons per week, but recently, through contact with EMASS and ELO, she has arranged for a third. She and the boys agree that this is still inadequate, and she will persevere. Boran and Milan have their carer to guide them through the system, someone who knows how to work it on their behalf. In many respects, the foster carer has become the boys' only link to all their needs.

⁸ The CRC requires that “due consideration [in placement]” be given to “religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural/linguistic background” (CRC Art. 20)

⁹ Interview with Pat Callaer, Acting Team Manager, Family Placement Unit, Children's Services, MK City Council, 06.02.02

Whilst all UMAs showed basic knowledge of how to access social services in the workshop session on hypothetical scenarios, it was clear that foster carers provide an additional safety net by voicing and acting upon the concerns of the UMAs, as revealed in the case of Boran and Milan above.

3.2.2 Informal care

UMAs are sometimes informally cared for by community members, but remain under the case management of YAST. Most Somali UMAs interviewed were living with relatives or friends, which is the preference of YAST social and sessional workers, who believe that community members best understand UMAs' needs and experiences:¹¹

We prefer [it] that way, because that's their people and that's where they want and that's where they belong. (...) Unless there is a problem, foster care is not good for these people – it's not of the same culture. [Foster care is] only run by English people. And our children don't feel very comfortable, being with that [kind of] family.¹²

However, while formal foster carers are put through a rigorous selection process and receive extensive training, informal carers are simply police-checked and visited regularly. This process may fail to identify potential issues on the records of those who may have recently arrived in the UK themselves.

Informal care is not always the ideal solution also for cultural reasons. Somalis are usually highly protective of girls, and “children are expected to respect their elders, they don't have much say, everything is decided for them, and they cannot demand things.”¹³ One example of several was Aziza, a 13-year-old Somali girl, who first lived with an adult member of her clan, but was removed from his care a year later, when she complained to Social Services about his restrictiveness.¹⁴ This is a situation where some UMAs receive a lower level of protection than citizen minors and other UMAs in fully vetted foster

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Interview with Dawn Gosling 06.02.02

¹² Interview with Zainab Ali, Somali Sessional Worker, MK City Council, 13.02.02

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

care. Whilst recognising the advantages of living within the community, it is crucial to ensure that standards of security and protection are not compromised.

3.3 Independent living

Interviews with UMAs showed that those in independent living appropriate coping strategies and life skills faster than those in foster placements, e.g. learning how to cook and manage finances. However, the hypothetical scenario workshop session showed that they were vulnerable in another way. Although they were more reliant on social services for their care and protection, many expressed confusion about whom to contact in Social Services, despite stated practice that each UMA be given a specified caseworker to facilitate his/her needs.

Further, UMAs possess little decision-making power in selecting housing – which is allocated on a random basis – or housemates. For example, Nasim, a recently-arrived Afghan, will be housed with an African and an Eastern European.¹⁵ Another Afghan, Khalid, was accommodated in three different hotels for a month before being placed with UMAs from Serbia, Albania, and Algeria. Both Nasim and Khalid are unhappy, frustrated and bored with their present living situation because they cannot communicate with their housemates; nor is there an Afghan community in MK.¹⁶ In their social maps, drawings of their houses dominated, clearly marked with one or more red dots, signifying their dissatisfaction.

3.4 Recommendations

With informal foster care failing to meet protection standards, formal foster carers lacking training to meet the needs of UMAs, and independent living leaving UMAs isolated and unsupported, there is room for significant improvement in the policy and practice concerning living arrangements in MK. We

¹⁵ Interview with Adam Giles, Sessional Caseworker, YAST, Children's Services, MK City Council, 11.03.02

¹⁶ Interview with Khalid, 06.03.02 and Nasim, 16.03.02

recommend that links between YAST and YPT be formalised, and that a trained caseworker be allocated to each UMA to draw up an individual action plan and to act on the UMA's behalf. We further recommend that systematic monitoring of formal foster care be carried out and that all foster carers receive training to meet UMAs' integration needs. Recruitment of foster carers by the FPU should be proactively undertaken within local ethnic communities, but these informal arrangements need to be integrated into formal institutional structure. UMAs in independent living should receive regular supervision and support from YAST.

4. DATA ANALYSIS: SOCIAL RESOURCES

4.1 Awareness and use of service provision

Both semi-structured interviews and the workshop sessions revealed a detailed picture of the social resources available to UMAs through their access to service provision and ethnic communities.

With a lack of central co-ordination and a care system under strain, social workers must often work from their own repertoire of experience (Kohli 2002:33). Service provision, therefore, is often based on luck or improvisation rather than on firm policy guidelines. In MK, the Somali youth are particularly lucky to have a Somali sessional worker who can act as an advocate for them: "Because they're alone, they are children, they have no one to talk to. And if you can speak their language, the better, they feel closer to you," she explained.¹⁷ The Albanian, Gorani and Afghan UMAs, on the other hand, have experienced considerable difficulties accessing social service support. When one social worker went on maternity leave, the Albanians were left without money for weeks upon arrival,¹⁸ while the Goranis were simply forgotten for a couple of weeks after placement in foster care.¹⁹

Legal status is a major worry for UMAs awaiting decisions on asylum claims. If UMAs request

¹⁷ Interview with Zainab Ali, 13.02.02

¹⁸ Interview with Ilir and Besim, 06.03.02

¹⁹ Interview with Boran and Milan, 13.02.02

legal representation, Social Services direct them to the Citizens' Advice Bureau, which then allocates solicitors to their cases who are not necessarily immigration experts. UMAs interviewed expressed considerable confusion regarding the asylum process and their potentially inadequate representation. This was particularly evident with UMAs in independent living, e.g., Gjergj was unaware of the changes he will face when turning 18.²⁰ Khalid, painfully aware that “people with good solicitors get good answers,” had met his appointed solicitor once but was experiencing difficulty arranging a second meeting.²¹ The British Refugee Council runs a non-statutory Panel of Advisors (RCPA) with the aim of providing advocacy for separated children and an immigration lawyer to act on behalf of the child (Ayotte & Williamson 2001, British Refugee Council 2001). Social Services in MK do not make use of this service.

4.2 Community support

The hypothetical scenario session revealed greater self-reliance amongst the Albanian and Afghan UMAs, while the Somalis meet many of their social and welfare needs through their community. Berry (1997) identifies four acculturation strategies, three of which, “integration,” “assimilation,” and “marginalisation,” are useful for understanding the situations of different groups of UMAs in MK.

Integration, defined by Berry as cultural maintenance paired with contact with the host society, is an apt description of the growing Somali community in MK (*MK Observer on Sunday*: 17.01.02). Somali UMAs are able to maintain their own culture, while accessing a network of social support through contact with British society. Research revealed that Somali UMAs had a good sense of security within their environment, a quick grasp of the English language and confidence in integrating into British culture and institutions. Aziza, for example, found the transition to British education unproblematic, has a good network of friends and feels confident that teachers would be supportive should she have a problem.²²

²⁰ Informal discussion with Gjergj during workshop, 16.03.02

²¹ Interview with Khalid, 06.03.02

²² Interview with Aziza, 06.03.02

The Somali workshop participants, in noticeable contrast with other participants, asserted strong community and religious identities alongside hopes for success in British society. Fatima and Hasan drew scenes from life in Somalia (see Figure 5) while female participants Delila, Fatima and Aziza wrote a collective future social map, in collaboration with the Somali interpreter/sessional worker: “We are Muslims. The future is decided by God.”²³ Underneath this they wrote their professional ambitions: Bank manager, accountant, fashion designer.

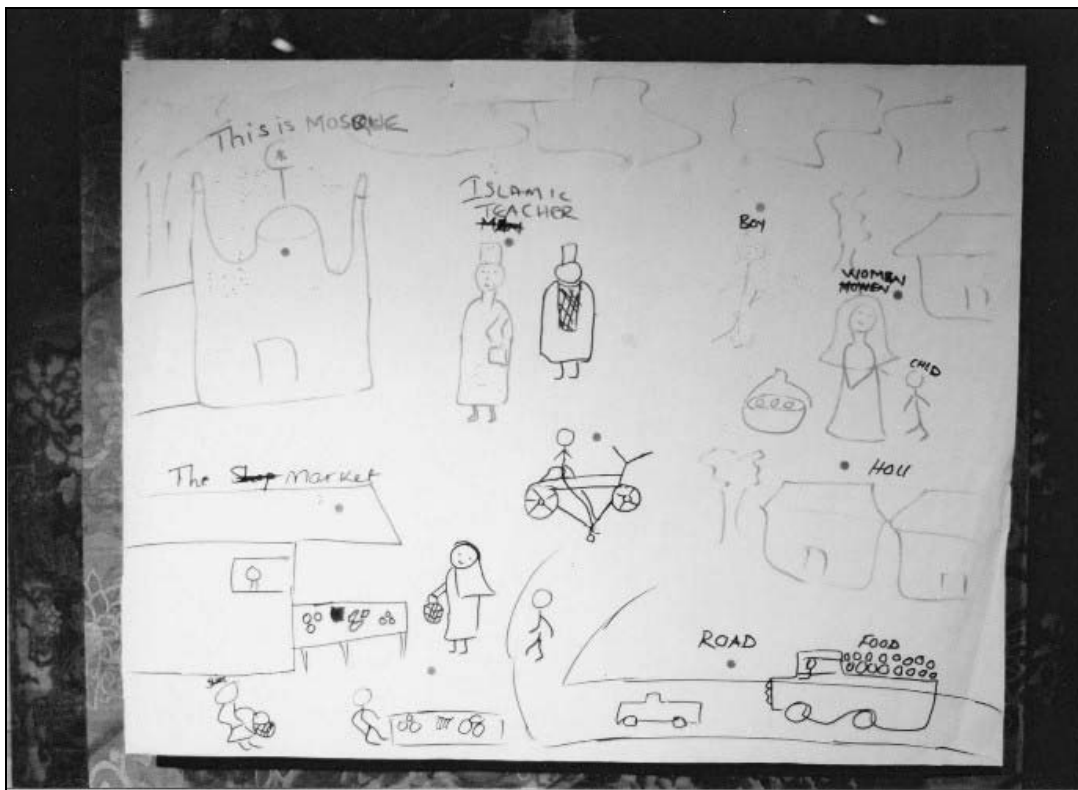


Figure 5. Fatima’s present social map

The Somali sessional worker’s attitude contrasts sharply with that of the Goranis’ foster carer who wanted them to integrate into British culture as soon as possible, and was doing all she could to achieve this. This is defined by Berry as “assimilation.” In his social map, Boran expressed a wish to “marry an English girl,” while Ilir hopes to “enter the English life as soon as [he] can.”²⁴

²³ Future social map by Aziza, Dalila, and Fatmia, as translated by Zaineb Ali, 16.03.02

²⁴ Boran and Ilir’s future and present social maps, respectively, in translation

In contrast, several UMAs in independent living, who have no access to their ethnic communities, said they experienced isolation and limited access to British community or services, fitting Berry's model of "marginalisation," defined as the least healthy outcome: "They're lonely and they don't have their friends and people who can speak their language, apart from the interpreters. We had one incident of [an Afghan] boy who just disappeared."²⁵ Lack of access to school and members of their own ethnicity were cited by both Afghan UMAs as factors leading to their sense of isolation.²⁶ These UMAs are particularly in need of someone to act as a resource for their welfare and advocate for their legal needs.

4.3 Recommendations

UMAs arriving in the UK generally have little knowledge of their rights, the procedures they must follow or the systems in place to help them. Without assistance they may become isolated or suffer from inadequate representation. YAST and YPT need clear guidelines on policy and implementation from central government on UMAs' rights and the obligations of Social Services, so that they can achieve consistent practice in relation to UMAs. From the UMAs' perspective, an individually allocated caseworker is vital as a focal point to turn to for advice and support.

For assistance in legal matters, all UMAs should automatically be referred to the RCPA by YAST, thus making better use of available services. Sessional workers conducting initial screenings must be trained in asylum legal matters. YAST's potential to develop welfare and social facilities for UMAs could be fulfilled by organising social occasions to bring UMAs together, while developing partnerships with local communities and youth groups.

²⁵ Interview with Zainab Ali, 13.02.02

²⁶ Interviews with Khalid, 06.03.02 and Nasim, 16.03.02

5. DATA ANALYSIS: EDUCATION

5.1 The importance of education

Education is a fundamental human right, enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In the case of refugees, it is the responsibility of the host state to fulfil this right as a basic element of international protection (Goodwin-Gill 1996:230-1). Education is also seen as a key to integration into the host society (Hjelde 1995, Rutter 2001).

5.2 General overview

All UMAs have the right to attend school (Rutter 2001). However, over-subscribed schools, like many in MK, have the right to refuse admission. Asylum-seekers under 16 have neither access nor funding for language classes, leaving many 14-15 year old UMAs in a double bind: schools will not accept them, claiming a lack of facilities to manage non-English speakers, while language courses cannot accept those under 16.

The legal implications of this are curious: under British law, schooling is compulsory for those under 16. Thus it is illegal for children not to attend school, but legal for schools to refuse them. Half of our participants are currently not enrolled in formal schooling (although several expect to enrol in September 2002). Those enrolled in part-time English and other courses expressed dissatisfaction with the insufficient hours of schooling.

5.3 UMAs' perspectives on education

Social mapping activities undertaken by the UMAs showed schooling to be of central importance in their lives: 11 out of 12, including those currently not attending school, drew/wrote about school in the context of their present and/or future lives. For many, it was a main preoccupation or an indispensable

path to their ideal job, which often required professional training. This was represented by clearly labelled drawings of schools, or words such as “will like to go to school or collage (sic),” or “would like to continue education.”

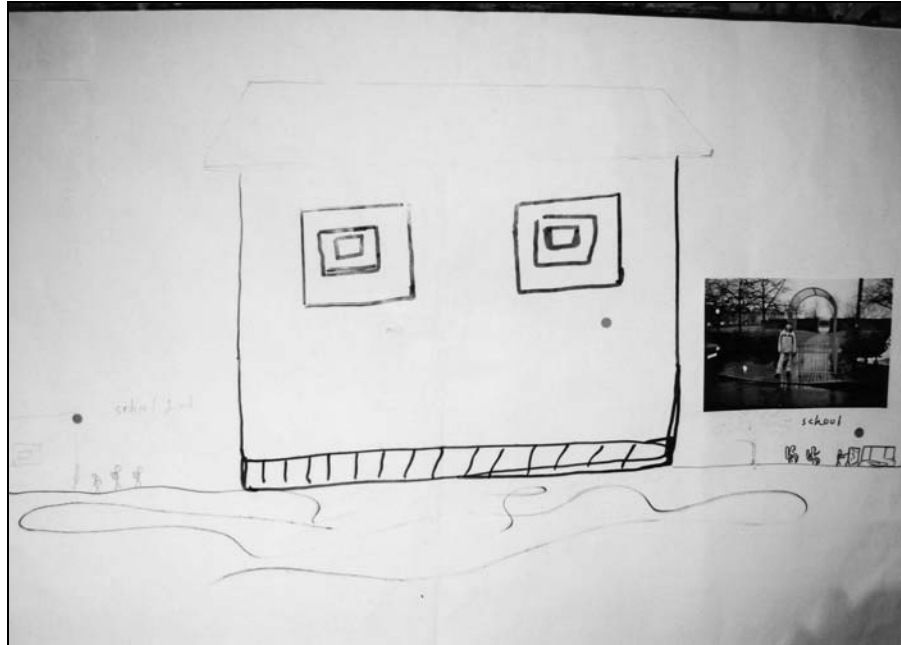


Figure 6. Nasim’s present social map

In the present social map drawn by Nasim (see figure 6), there are two schools both marked with green stickers, signifying that they are positive places. On the left is a building, pupils and the words “school good.” On the right is an open-air classroom, also labelled “school.” The latter represents an informal school that Nasim attended for one year in Afghanistan. He repeatedly emphasised that his greatest hope for his future in the UK was to obtain an education.

For the most part, UMAs’ preferred professions included engineering, medicine and teaching, all involving high levels of skill and training and commanding a high degree of respect both in the UK and at home. Several UMAs mentioned a desire to be “useful to the community,” perhaps reflecting a strong urge to belong, or to help others in need. According to Melzak, such desires are commonly observed among young refugees (Melzak 1993).

While there is strong desire for education, UMAs like the Goranis (see Case Study: Foster Care) who have struggled to attend lessons, seem confused and disappointed about access to education. If in the UMAs' minds, education is a tool towards achieving future goals and thereby a means of integration, the lack of it is a great source of stress. This key to a successful life in the UK has either not materialised or is incomprehensibly restricted.

5.4 Educational resources

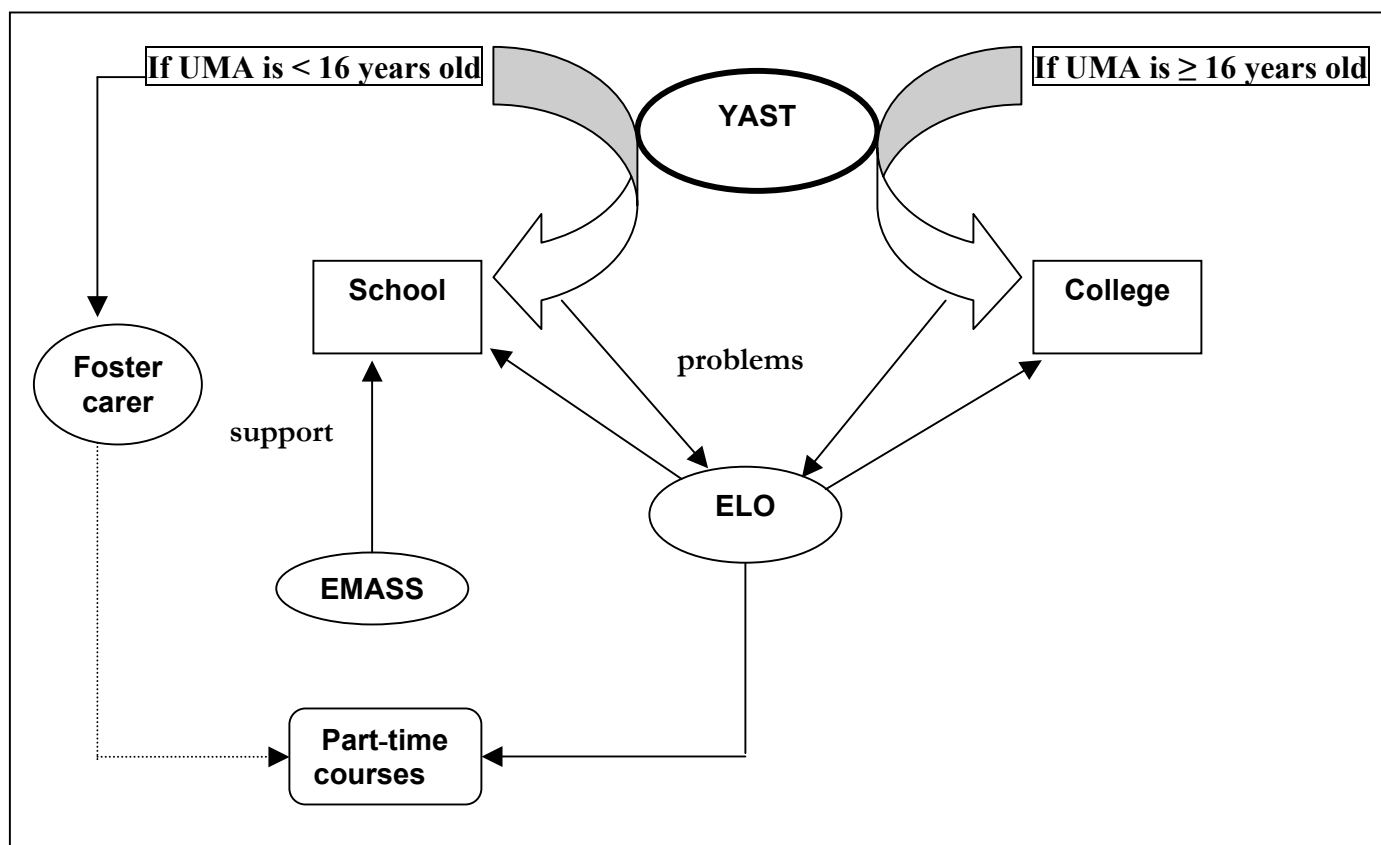


Figure 7. Flowchart of steps taken by social services and others for UMAs to access education

5.4.1 Education liaison

MK Children's Services links to the education system through a qualified teacher, the Education Liaison Officer (ELO), who works to improve children's access to education and raise the academic

achievement of children in public care. Thus, if sessional workers face problems in getting UMAs admitted to schools, YAST contacts the ELO, who liaises with local schools and the Local Education Authority (LEA).

In the case of a refusal of admission, the ELO contacts the closest school, a process described as largely “hit or miss.”²⁷ Beyond that, she must get “imaginative,” by convincing the Council to fund private language tutors for under-16s. She is aware that schools may not be able to provide the attention needed by non-English speaking teenagers who have often had little formal schooling, but thinks that private language tuition, on the other hand, would not help them “integrate into their local community.”²⁸ Hence, there is no set procedure – only improvisation.

5.4.2 Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service (EMASS)

Government-funded EMASS is administered by the LEA and employs a part-time peripatetic Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support Teacher. Her role is to give individualised advice to specific teachers or pupils, general curriculum support and models of good practice to schools (see Appendix D). She is supported by 13 volunteers who work closely with pupils requiring language support. EMASS coordinates other teachers/language assistants who visit schools upon request – including a Somali woman, described by some UMAs as extremely helpful during their first days of school. Unfortunately this support teacher is usually unable to help unless the UMAs referred to her are already enrolled in school. As far as she is aware, she has dealt with only two UMAs outside the school system, the Gorani boys, on their foster carer’s initiative. She wishes she had resources to give the schools the support they require to include UMAs who are excluded on the basis of a lack of English proficiency.²⁹

EMASS is an example of a resource with great potential that is stymied by a lack of co-ordination.

²⁷ Interview with Judy Vipers, Education Liaison Officer, Children’s Services, MK City Council, 06.02.02

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Interview with Rita Gist, Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support Teacher, EMASS, Queensway Centre, Bletchley, 11.03.02

5.4.3 Adult education

UMAs over 16 are entitled to funding for language training. Milton Keynes College offers courses like English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and computer training within an Adult Continuing Education programme. The Well, a spiritual community, also works with the Asylum and Refugee Partnership organisation to offer English lessons and computer and cooking courses, but information on this is not easily available, and enrolment is limited.³⁰

Another concern is that adult education might not be an ideal educational or social environment for UMAs. The Gorani boys expressed discontent with the fact that other students in their English lessons were “old.”³¹ The support teacher commented that she would not place beginners of different ages together because their needs vary “tremendously.”³²

5.5 Recommendations

The ability to speak English is crucial to integration. The research data demonstrate that UMAs see education as a high priority both for personal development and for finding a place in British society. However, most UMAs receive little education, reflecting the lack of facilities to meet their particular needs and the failure to translate national legislation into reality. It is vital that arriving UMAs receive English lessons as soon as possible. It is recommended that Children’s Services organise lessons, thus enabling interaction between UMAs. EMASS possesses a great untapped potential which could be fulfilled by working with schools to fill gaps in language facilities, enabling them to fulfil their legal requirement to provide education to under-16s. Children’s Services should implement a system to connect the EMASS Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support team and the relevant school when an UMA who needs

³⁰ Ibid .

³¹ Interview with Boran, Gjergj and Milan, 13.02.02

³² Interview with Rita Gist, Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support Teacher, EMASS, Queensway Centre, Bletchley, 11.03.02

language assistance is to be enrolled, equipping the school with the necessary resources to accept them. This team would require increased funding in order to realise its full potential. Full-time enrolment at institutes like Milton Keynes College, along with supplementary language classes and vocational training should be made available to all UMAs over 16.

6. CONCLUSION

UMAs in MK are a voiceless minority whose needs have been catered for, until recently, through Council services designed for citizen children. The formation of the YAST team has proved an invaluable step towards addressing the unique needs of UMAs. But it is in its infancy, and policy and practice concerning UMAs in MK remain ill-defined and inconsistent, while resources already in place are not fully utilised. UMAs encounter difficulties in accessing education facilities, living arrangements do not consistently meet protection requirements, and many experience isolation and confusion about their present and future in the UK.

This study provides a constructive set of recommendations to the MK City Council, the most important of which is that YAST be formalised and given its own budget, enabling team members to set long-term objectives and implement training and monitoring services in a more consistent manner (for selected best practice guidelines and detailed recommendations, see Appendices A and B).

At the national level, too, there is a clear need for the systematisation of procedures. Standard guidelines must be set in place to ensure that UMAs arriving anywhere in the UK receive the same assistance in terms of accommodation arrangements, access to education, and other essential services, particularly translation. Partnership between local authorities, government, voluntary agencies and refugee communities should be encouraged. Above all, however, more communication with UMAs themselves is essential to understanding their concerns and expectations and enabling them to participate in decision-making for their own futures.

The close contact with the UMAs that this study's methodology afforded showed compellingly that they are creative, ambitious, and opinionated young people. They have endured terrible events and long journeys, yet face their futures with hope and determination. At the same time, they are often under great pressure: concerned about their legal status, struggling to learn their way about confusing new surroundings, and frustrated by the difficulty of accessing services. It is hoped that the voices which emerged from this study will be heard by and engaged with by the MK Council and other policy-makers.



7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALSTON, P. and GILMOUR-WALSH, B. (1996) *The Best Interests of the Child, Towards a Synthesis of Children's Rights and Cultural Values*. Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre (Innocenti Centre)
- AHERN, F.L.Jr. and ATHEY, J. eds. (1991) *Refugee Children: Theory, Research and Services*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press
- AYOTTE, W. (1998) *Supporting Unaccompanied Children in the Asylum Process: The practice of legal representatives and other professionals*. London: Save the Children UK
- _____ (2000) *Separated Children Coming to Western Europe: Why they travel and how they arrive*. London: Save the Children UK
- AYOTTE, W. and WILLIAMSON, L (2001) *Separated Children in the UK*. London: Save the Children UK
- BAPAT, B., QUARTEL, J.P. and WESSELL, J. (2000) 'The Big Flow of UMAs: Comparison of Policies concerning Unaccompanied Minor Asylum Seekers in The Netherlands, Belgium, United Kingdom, Sweden and Switzerland.' The Hague: Immigration and Naturalisation Service
- BARNADOS (2000) 'Children first and foremost: Meeting the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children,' Recent survey findings from local authorities presented at a Barnados seminar, 4 July 2000
- BERNARD VAN LEER FOUNDATION (1994) *Why Children Matter: Investing in early childhood care and development*. The Hague: Bernard Van Leer Foundation
- BERRY, J.W. (1997) 'Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation' in *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46, pp. 5-34
- BETHLENFALVY, P.V. (1983) 'Migrants in an Irregular Situation in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Psycho-Social Situation of Unaccompanied Minors from Areas of Armed Conflict in Berlin, West' in *International Migration*, 11(2), pp. 238-259
- BHABHA, J. and YOUNG, W. (1999) 'Not Adults in Miniature: Unaccompanied Child Asylum Seekers and the New US Guidelines' in *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 11(1), pp 84-125
- _____ (2001) 'Support for unaccompanied refugee children turning 18,' briefing given at British Refugee Council, London
- BOYDEN, J. and ENNEW J. (1997) *Children in Focus: A Manual for Participatory Research with Children*. Stockholm: Rädda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children).
- BRITISH REFUGEE COUNCIL and BRITISH AGENCIES FOR ADOPTION AND FOSTERING (2001) 'Where are the children? A mapping exercise on numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the UK: September 2000 – March 2001.' London: British Refugee Council and British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering
- BRITISH REFUGEE COUNCIL and SAVE THE CHILDREN UK (2001) *In safe hands: a resource and training pack to support work with young refugee children*. London: British Refugee Council and Save the Children UK
- CHILDREN'S LEGAL CENTRE (1992) *Children or Refugees? A Survey of West European Policies on Unaccompanied Refugee Children*. London: Children's Legal Centre
- CHILDREN'S RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT UNIT (1994) *UK Agenda for Children*. London: Children's Rights Development Unit
- DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (1995) *The Treatment of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children: A Practical Guide*. London: The Stationery Office
- _____ (1999) *Convention on the Rights of the Child: Second Report to the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child by the United Kingdom*. London: The Stationery Office
- _____ (2000) 'Local Authority Circular LAC(2000)2'. London: The Stationery Office

- _____ (2000) 'Local Authority Social Services Letter LASSL (2000)6'. London: the Stationery Office
- DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH and DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (2000) *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*. London: The Stationery Office
- EASTMOND, M. (forthcoming) 'The Disorders of Displacement: Bosnian Refugees and the Reconstitution of Normality' in Jenkins, R. et al. (eds.) *Matters of Life and Death: The Control of Uncertainty and the Uncertainty of Control*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON REFUGEES AND EXILES (1996) *Position on Refugee Children*. London: ECRE
- EUROPEAN UNION (1995) *European Council Resolution of 20 June 1995 on Minimum Guarantees for Asylum Procedures*. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities
- _____ (1997) *EU Council Resolution of 26 June 1997 on Unaccompanied Minors who are Nationals of Third Countries*. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities
- GIBBS, S. and BOYDEN, J. for RADDA BARNEN (1995) 'Children Affected by Organised Violence: An Annotated Bibliography on Research Methods,' Oxford: Radda Barnen
- GOODWIN-GILL, G.S. (1996) *The Refugee in International Law*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- GOSLING, L. et al. (1995) *Toolkits, A Practical Guide to Assessment, Monitoring, Review and Evaluation*. London: Save the Children UK
- GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM (1989) *The Children Act 1989*
- _____ (1999) *Human Rights Act 1999*
- _____ (2000) *The Children (Leaving Care) (England) Act 2000*
- _____ (2000) *Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000*
- HATHAWAY, J. (1997) 'Is Refugee Status Really Elitist?' in Calier, Y-N et al. (eds.), *Europe and Refugees: A Challenge*. The Hague: Kluwer International Press
- HJELDE, K.H. (1995) 'Integrating Young Unaccompanied Refugees or Embodied Culture? Trekking in the Norwegian Mountains as a Case,' unpublished paper. Oslo: University of Oslo
- HORN OF AFRICA YOUTH SCHEME (1998) 'Let's Spell it Out: Peer research on the educational support needs of young refugees and asylum seekers living in Kensington & Chelsea,' London: Save the Children Fund
- HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (1997) *Slipping Through the Cracks: Unaccompanied Children Detained by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service*, Ehrreich, R. and Tucker, L. (eds.) Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Project, New York: HRW
- INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE GERMAN BRANCH (1990) *Unaccompanied Refugee Children in Europe: Experience with Protection, Placement and Education*, Based on the work of the European Standing Committee on Unaccompanied Refugee Children 1984-90, Jockenhovel-Schieke, H (ed.) Frankfurt: ISS German Branch
- JAREG, E. (1992) 'Basic Therapeutic Actions: helping children, young people & communities to cope through empowerment and participation' in McCallin, M. (ed.) *The Psychological Well-Being of Refugee Children: Research, Practise and Policy*, Geneva: International Catholic Child Bureau
- JOCHENHOVEL-SCHIEKE, H. (1984) 'Unaccompanied Refugee Minors from South East Asia and North East Africa in the Federal Republic of Germany' in Cox, D. (ed.) *Intercountry Casework: Some Reflections on Sixty Years Experience of International Social Service 1924-1984*. Melbourne: International Social Service
- KABIA, O. (2001) 'The Protection of Separated Refugee Children in Foster Families in Guinea,' Roundtable on "Protection of Forced Migrants," January 2001, Johannesburg: 7th IRAP Conference of the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration
- KJAERUM, M. (1989) 'A Humanitarian Refugee Policy for Europe – the Position and Actions by Voluntary Agencies,' paper presented at the European Seminar on Protection of Refugee Children, Stockholm, 4 September 1989
- LUMMERT, N. (2000) *Children on the Move: The Plight of Immigrant and Refugee Children*. Washington D.C.: United States Catholic Conference

- MELZAK, S. (1998) *'Supporting Refugee Children: Education, Welfare and Rights,' Conference report from workshop on meeting the psychological needs of refugee children, April 1998.* London: British Refugee Council
- _____ (1993) *'Thinking about the Internal and External Experience of Refugee Children in Europe, conflict and treatment: the challenge of supporting refugees in their task of both finding and making a real home in exile without being assimilated or marginalized'* London: Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture
- MELZAK, S. and WARNER, R. (1992) *'Integrating Refugee Children into Schools,'* London: Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture
- MK OBSERVER ON SUNDAY (2002) *'City cannot stem flow of Somalis'* in MK Observer on Sunday, 17 January 2002
- PANEL OF ADVISERS FOR UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE CHILDREN (2001) *Referrals to the Panel, Home Office Report for the Financial Quarter July-September 2001.* London: British Refugee Council
- PENA, C.S. (no date) *'Cead Mile Failte? A Study of Unaccompanied Minors in Ireland,'* unpublished paper
- PINK, G. (2000) *'Social Integration, Well-Being and Specific Stress of Adolescent Migrants in Graz'* in *European Guidelines on Empowerment and Integration Programs for Refugee Children and Adolescents.* Seiner, C. I. (ed.) Graz, Austria: Omega Health Care Centre
- PLANT, R. (1988) *A New Life: An Historical Evaluation of Burnside's Khmer Unaccompanied Minors Resettlement Programme.* Sydney: Burnside
- RADDA BARNEN (1996) *Restoring playfulness: different approaches to assisting children who are psychologically affected by war or displacement.* Stockholm, Save the Children Sweden
- RESSLER, M. et al. (eds.) (1988) *Unaccompanied Children: Care and Protection in Wars, Natural Disasters, and Refugee Movements.* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- RICHMAN, N. (1996) *'Principles of help for children involved in organised violence,'* Working paper 13. London: Save the Children UK
- ROBSON, C. (1993) *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers
- RUSSELL, S. (1990) *'Unaccompanied Refugee Children in the United Kingdom'* in *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 11(1), pp. 126-154
- _____ (1999) *Most Vulnerable of All: Unaccompanied child asylum seekers in the UK.* London: Amnesty International
- RUTTER, J. (1991) *We left because we had to.* London: British Refugee Council
- _____ (2001) *Supporting refugee children in 21st century Britain: a compendium of essential information,* Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books
- RUXTON, S. (2000) *Separated Children in Europe: A Programme for Action.* London and Geneva: Save the Children UK and UNHCR
- SAVE THE CHILDREN UK (2001a) *'Refugee children arriving alone are being left unsupported and unprotected, reveals UK report,'* press release, 22 August 2001. London: Save the Children UK
- _____ (2001b) *Cold Comfort: Young Separated Refugees in England.* London: Save the Children UK
- SAVE THE CHILDREN SCOTLAND and SCOTTISH REFUGEE COUNCIL (2000) *I Didn't Come Here for Fun.* Edinburgh: Scottish Refugee Council
- SAVE THE CHILDREN and THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (1999) *Separated Children in Europe Programme Statement of Good Practice.* Geneva and London: UNHCR and Save the Children
- SEGERSTROM, E. (1995) *Focus on Refugee Children: A Handbook for Training Field Refugee Workers in Social and Community Work.* Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden
- SILVERMAN, D. (1997) *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction.* London: Sage Publications

- _____ (2000) *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage Publications
- SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE (1995) *Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children: Practice Guide and Training Pack*. London: the Stationery Office
- STANLEY, K. (2001) *Young Separated Refugees in Oxford*. London: Save the Children UK
- STEINBOCK, D.J. (1996) 'Unaccompanied Children in Host Country Foster Families,' in *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 8(1/2), pp. 6-48
- SWEDISH REFUGEE COUNCIL (1989) 'Child Refugees in Europe,' Report from the European Seminar on Protection of Refugee Children in Stockholm, September 1989. Stockholm: Swedish Refugee Council
- UNITED NATIONS (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, UNGA res. 44/25, 1 UN GAOR Supp. (no. 49), UN doc A/44/49 1989
- _____ (1986) *Declaration on Social and Legal Principles Relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children, with Special Reference to Foster Placement and Adoption Nationally and Internationally*, UNGA res. 41/85, 26 ILM 1096, 3 Dec. 1986
- UNHCR (1994) *Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care*. Geneva: UNHCR
- _____ (1997) *Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum*. Geneva: UNHCR
- _____ (2001) 'Trends in unaccompanied and separated children seeking asylum in Europe 2000,' Division of Operational Support. Geneva: UNHCR
- UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE (1983) *Voyagers in the Land: A Report on Unaccompanied Southeast Asian Refugee Children*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference
- UPPARD, C. and PETTY, C. (1998) *Working with Separated Children – A Field Guide*. London: Save the Children UK
- VALTONEN, K. (1998) 'Resettlement of Middle Eastern Refugees in Finland: The Elusiveness of Integration' in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(1), pp. 38-59
- WOMEN'S COMMISSION FOR REFUGEE WOMEN AND CHILDREN (1998) *Protecting the Rights of Children: The Need for U.S. Children's Asylum Guidelines*. New York: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Best Practices

Best Practices: *Living Arrangements*

Sweden: UMAs receive contact persons who communicate with health services, schools, etc., and are responsible for preparing individual action plans. A Special Unit with responsibility for asylum-seekers in independent housing ensures co-operation with the Social Welfare Services. An UMA living with a family other than their own needs consent of the Social Welfare Board (Bapat, Quartel and Wessel 2000:51).

Best Practices: *Social Resources*

- **Netherlands:** mentors are appointed to each group of UMAs living in independent accommodation to meet general welfare needs.
- **Sweden:** guardians are quickly found to “protect the interests of the child from a holistic perspective and with its best interests at heart.”
- **Switzerland:** minors not under parental authority are appointed a trustee or guardian without delay. Guardians take care of children, administer their property and represent them in civil acts. Trustees are more limited and tend to represent the child (Bapat, Quartel & Wessel 2000).
- **Oxford, UK:** a local NGO Asylum Welcome organises youth groups and leisure activities for UMAs.

Best Practices: *Education*

- **Switzerland:** UMAs have language classes before joining mainstream education. For over-16s, the Confederation subsidises educational programmes, particularly to prepare UMAs for return, focusing on professional perspectives to increase the aptitude of those who do not satisfy the refugee criteria (Bapat et al. 2000).
- **Netherlands:** UMAs receive education at reception centers, going to regular schools when they move. Some schools have international classes for UMAs (ibid.).
- **Norway:** the resettlement programme for UMAs defines integration as “teaching, training, and other schooling” for “cultural competence” in their new society (Hjelde 1995:6). A Centre for Teaching and Training of Abilities in Oslo aims to help them succeed in school and beyond and offers the option for social activities

Appendix B – Policy Recommendations made for Milton Keynes City Council

Theme-Specific Recommendations

<i>Living Arrangements</i>	
General	Professionals working with separated children should understand their cultural, linguistic and religious needs.
	There should be a point person at the Council available to deal with housing-related emergencies faced by UMAs in independent living.
Foster care	Regular reviews of foster care arrangements should be carried out.
	If appropriate, UMAs should be placed with carers of the same ethnic and linguistic background who are trained and monitored according to the standards of the FPU. Recruitment into formal foster care should be proactively promoted within local ethnic communities so that UMAs can take advantage of community support without compromising protection standards.
	Informal foster care should be phased out gradually as more ethnic communities become involved with formal foster care.
Independent living	UMAs aged 16 and 17 should not be treated as <i>de facto</i> adults placed on their own without adult support. They should receive more support in their accommodation.
	Accommodation should preferably be located as close as possible to educational and medical facilities
	Sensitivity and care should be exercised in choosing housemates for UMAs in independent living.

<i>Social Resources</i>	
General	Better dissemination of policy information from central government on duties of social workers and the rights of UMAs, as well as the means to implement them.
	Consistent allocation of individual caseworkers and replacement caseworkers for each UMA within social services.
	After initial screening by YAST, automatic referral of UMAs to the RCPA for advice on asylum procedures and suitable legal representation.
	The RCPA to be turned in to a statutory body to ensure fulfilment of its mandate and to further assume legal guardianship of UMAs.
	Build upon and improve co-ordination between social services and the ethnic communities to meet the welfare needs of UMAs. This may include the organisation of leisure activities for the UMAs.

<i>Education</i>	
General	Children’s Services could organise English lessons for the refugee and asylum seeking children in its care. This would not only promote relations between the young people who have so much in common, but would further improve their linguistic skills.
Under 16-year-olds	Enforcement of the right to attend school for those under 16.
	EMASS must work to fill in the gap of language facilities, so that no school can claim an inability to provide adequate attention to young people who are just beginning to learn English as a justification for refusal.
	Implementation of a referral system whereby Children’s Services would connect the EMASS Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support team and the school in question each time an UMA who needed language aid was to be enrolled, thereby equipping the school with the necessary resources to accept UMAs. This team would require significantly increased funding and staffing—in short, a full realisation of its potential.
16 years and over	Recognising the desire for professional education. Monetary resources and authorities must encourage 16 and over UMAs to enrol full time at such institutes as MK College, and supplement language with courses that will teach skills for a trade in the long term.
	Addressing the concerns of the profiles of adult education classes and the issue of insufficient hours of instruction.
	As at The Well, social time could be scheduled to follow lessons.

Local-Level Recommendations: Milton Keynes

Formalisation of YAST	YAST needs to be fully formalised, to develop a clear mandate and receive its own budget, so that it can work towards a clearly planned, comprehensive and co-ordinated response to the needs of UMAs in Milton Keynes
Recruitment of additional social worker	There needs to be a minimum of two full-time social workers dealing with the UMAs as sessional workers are not trained in social work provision and are not mandated to screen UMAs.
Improving institutional links	YAST should retain a formal link with UMAs in formal foster care. Although it is positive that UMAs are treated in the same way as other children in care, their unique needs must also be recognised.
	The link between YAST and EMASS should be formalised so that UMAs are immediately brought to the attention of EMASS who can then assist with their educational needs.
Improved community support structures	YAST should explore opportunities to strengthen links with relevant local NGO organisations, e.g. the Asylum and Refugee Partnership.
	YAST should organise leisure activities for the UMAs
Training in legal issues	Social Workers dealing with asylum claims need to be trained in the relevant asylum processes and procedures.

Use of RCPA	There should be routine referral of UMAs to the RCPA for legal advice and support after initial screening.
Increased and monitored foster care and placement	We recommend the establishment of increased support within independent lodgings, and advocate the placement of UMAs being effectively monitored through an individually assigned link worker.
Formalisation of all care	All carers should be formally recruited into foster care system. This policy may need to be introduced gradually, but in the mean time it is especially important to increase the monitoring of informal foster placements.

National-Level Recommendations

Systematisation of procedures	Standard guidelines must be set in place to ensure that UMAs arriving anywhere in the UK receive the same assistance in terms of accommodation arrangements, access to education, and other essential services. Access to translation services must be simplified.
Building partnerships	To improve standards of care nationwide, there is an acute need for partnership between local authorities, government, voluntary agencies and refugee communities. At present, bridging the gap between the different agency responsibilities requires immense effort.
Living with adult supervision	We recommend that UMAs aged between 16-18 should not be treated as <i>de facto</i> adults and required to live entirely alone with little choice of housemates, but instead should be housed with some adult supervision

Appendix C – Relevant Legal Instruments

(a) Rights of UMAs under Domestic and International Legislation

British legislation grants UMAs, regardless of immigration status, the same legal entitlements as citizen children (Stanley 2001:5). This includes the right to education and health care and the rights enshrined in the 1989 Children Act, as amended by The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 (CA) and the 1999 Human Rights Act. The applicability of the CA was strengthened by the introduction of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, which outlaws race discrimination in all public functions and places a positive duty on public authorities to promote race equality. However, it is both notable and regrettable that the immigration service is exempt from the terms of the Act (Stanley 2001:18).

In 1991, the UK government signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), but it has reserved the right not to apply the Convention to asylum-seeking and other non-citizen children. However, the UK is duty-bound not to do anything which is incompatible with the rights set out in article 22 of the Convention:

“States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection under humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties” (CRC 1989 art. 22).

(b) Living arrangements

The importance of continuity of care in foster placement is recognised in international law in the CRC and the UN Declaration on Social and Legal Principles Relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children with Special Reference to Foster Placement and Adoption Nationally and Internationally (SLP). For example, the SLP states: “In all matters relating to the placement of a child outside the care of the child’s own parents, the best interests of the child, particularly his or her need for affection and right to security and continuing care, should be the paramount consideration” (SLP art. 5). Applying these principles to unaccompanied refugee children, the UNHCR stresses the need to ensure “that each unaccompanied child has a continuous caregiver who is loving and nurturing, and who meets the developmental needs of the child” (UNHCR 1994:126). Continuity of care is important for all children, but especially for those who have experienced family separation, flight, or other traumatic events (Ressler 1988). The CRC stipulates that:

- “A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interest cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State” (CRC: art. 20.1).
- “States Parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such a child” (CRC art. 20.2).
- “Such care could include, inter alia, foster placement, kafalah of Islamic law, adoption or if necessary placement in suitable institutions for the care of children. When considering solutions, due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child’s upbringing and to the child’s ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background” (CRC: art. 20.3).

Moreover, “A child in care, protection or treatment is entitled to regular evaluation of the placement” (CRC: art. 25)

Section 17 of the CA states that “a child is considered to be ‘in need’ if s/he is unlikely to achieve or maintain or to have the opportunity of achieving and maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a Local Authority” (CA: section 17).

Section 20 identifies when children ‘in need’ should be accommodated by the local authority:

- “Every Local Authority shall provide accommodation for any child in need who appears to them to require accommodation as a result of there being no person with parental responsibility for him, his being lost or abandoned, the person who has been caring for him being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing him with suitable accommodation or care” (CA: Section 20.1)

- “Every Local Authority shall provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who has reached the age of 16 and whose welfare the authority considers to be seriously prejudiced if they do not provide him with accommodation” (CA: section 20.3).
- “A local authority may provide accommodation for any child within their area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for him is able to provide him with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child’s welfare” (CA: section 20.4).

(c) Guardianship

The EU has twice passed Resolutions calling for the appointment of guardians to UMA in order to safeguard their interests as a minimum guarantee of the protection of the child’s interests:

“For the purposes of applying this resolution, Member States should provide as soon as possible for the necessary representation of the minor: (a) legal guardianship, or (b) representation by a (national) organisation which is responsible for the care and well-being of the minor, or (c) other appropriate representation. (5) Where a guardian is appointed for an unaccompanied minor, the guardian should ensure, in accordance with national law, that the minor’s needs (for example, legal, social, medical or psychological) are duly met” (EU 1997 art. 3).

However, the fact that the UK has opted out of co-operation in the fields of Justice and Home Affairs of the European Union (EU) when ratifying the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam means that EU resolutions are neither legally binding nor to be transposed into domestic law.

Under the CA, there is provision for the appointment of a guardian *ad litem* in public law proceedings for all children *except* refugee and asylum-seeking children. The Guardian *ad litem* ensures that the court is fully aware of issues relating to the child’s welfare, that the child’s wishes and feelings are known and also instructs the child’s lawyer. As a result, no guardians are available to assist UMAs through asylum hearings. Further, civil legal aid is available for all proceedings under the Children Act but is *not* available for asylum hearings (Russell 1990:149-50).

(d) Welfare

- “It shall be the general duty of every local authority...to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need” (CA: section 17.1).
- “A child has a right to social security including social assistance” (CRC: art. 26).
- “The State has an obligation to ensure that child victims of armed conflict, torture, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation receive appropriate treatment for their recovery and social integration” (CRC: art. 39).

(e) Education

The CRC devotes several articles to the educational rights of all children:

- “The child has a right to education, and it is the State’s duty to ensure that primary education is free and compulsory, to encourage different types of secondary education accessible to all children, and to make higher education available to all on the basis of capacity. School discipline shall be consistent with the child’s rights and dignity. States shall engage in international cooperation to implement this right” (CRC: art 28).
- “Education should aim at developing the child’s personality, talents, and mental and physical ability to the fullest extent. It shall prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society and foster respect for the child’s parents, their cultural identity, language and values, and for the cultural background and values of others” (CRC: art 29).
- “Children of minority communities and indigenous populations have the right to enjoy their own culture and to practise their own religion and language” (CRC: art. 30).

Appendix D – The Role of the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support Teacher

Example of Good Guidelines from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service (EMASS),
Learning & Development Directorate

- To give ‘dispersed needs’ support to new pupils as and when schools contact EMASS.
- To make ‘one-off’ visits to schools asking for advice for a specific teacher/pupil.
- To give block support to schools with the greatest needs.
- To meet with heads of prospective support schools identified from data collection – to explain support role and to set up meetings with staff, individually and within staff meeting time.
- To make input with whole staff to explain my role and to explore issues affecting achievement.
- To assess individual pupil needs.
- To support pupils within mainstream classes.
- To model good practice to mainstream teachers.
- To give indirect support to pupils, offering advice and resources to staff.
- To raise staff awareness of organisations and services available both nationally and locally.
- To make contact with parents as appropriate to help them to become confident users of the education system, and to advise them of ways to support their children at home.
- To recruit, train and place volunteers in schools, and to monitor their effectiveness.
- To provide Continuing Professional Development as required to raise the expertise of school staff working with Asylum Seeker and Refugee pupils.

Appendix E – Sample Structured Interview
Questions for a Social Worker

Organisation of Unit

1. How is your department set up?
2. What are your aims and objectives?
3. Who are you responsible to?
4. Who are you accountable to?
5. Do you have a mandate?
6. Do you formulate your own policy or is this centrally designated?
7. Who develops policy: does it take account of expert advice?
8. How do you coordinate funding and accountability locally and nationally?
9. Do you have cross-regional interchange of ideas and best practise?
10. Do you have a database of information on the children? Can we have access to it?
11. How many people work there?
12. What is the budget? Is this per child or a set budget?
13. Roughly how many children do you deal with per year? And unaccompanied refugee minors?
14. Where are these children from?
15. What age are they?
16. What gender are they?
17. What is the division of labour in regards to unaccompanied refugee / asylum-seeking minors?
18. Are there people specifically designated to this area?
19. How many hours are devoted to this?
20. What are their training and background?
21. Do you offer specific training?
22. What other departments do you work with?

Process

23. What contact do you have with the children? How often does this take place and in what circumstances?
24. What are your legal requirements towards the children?
25. How do you distribute money to the children and how much do they receive?
26. Are you responsible for identifying trauma in a child? If so, how do you do this?

27. Do you have any specific responsibilities for the care of female children?
28. If not, are there any extra services that female children can access?
29. Are there any organised leisure activities that the children participate in?
30. How do you screen for abuse in the foster home, bullying at school, racism, gender abuse, or other problems?
31. What do you do if you see that the child is unhappy?
32. What other departments do you liaise with in caring for the children?
33. Do you talk to the children separately when checking on them?
34. What reporting responsibilities do the foster parents have to social services, and how regularly?
35. Do you negotiate if there are problems between the child and the foster family or school?
36. How do you foster communication between services and a non-English speaking child?
37. What happens when the child turns 18?
38. How do you select Bed and Breakfast accommodation?
39. How do you select private accommodation?
40. Are there any screening procedures for the adults in private accommodation with the children?
41. If this is done by social services do you maintain any responsibility to that child?

Perceptions and Opinions

42. What would you ideally want to achieve for a child?
43. What are the main constraints that you face in achieving this?
44. When do you feel that you have done a good job?
45. How do you define the integration of an unaccompanied refugee child?
46. Do you think you receive enough resources?
47. What are your ideas for improving the situation?

Appendix F – Workshop Materials

1. Invitation

On
Saturday 16 March

**You are invited to a day of activities, sightseeing,
food and drink**

at the
REFUGEE CHILDREN’S WORKSHOP, OXFORD

including
**Free Transport from MK to Oxford and back again
Free Bus Tour of Oxford**

We are holding a workshop in order to find out more about your experience of arriving in the UK and your life in MK. We would like to bring a group of you together to meet each other, take part in workshop activities, see Oxford and have fun!

On the morning of Saturday 16 March, we will transport you from MK to Oxford, and bring you back again in the early evening. We will send further details of when and where to meet.

We are really looking forward to meeting you all again, and hope that you will want to come.

2. Photo Essay Instructions

PHOTO ESSAY

If you would like to come to the workshop, please let Dawn or Zainab know. They will give you a disposable camera, and it would be a great help for us if you could use this to make a 'photo-diary'.

We would like you to use the cameras to show us your life in MK.

You can work on your own, with a friend, or in a group – whatever you feel comfortable with.

In particular, we would like you to use some of the pictures to take us through a normal day:

- where you go – home, school, town, etc
- what you do – lessons, sports, leisure activities etc
- who you meet – friends, carers, teachers etc

We would also like to see what you enjoy in your life, and what you don't enjoy so much.

Feel free to take pictures of anything else you think is interesting, however, unusual or 'different' it may be. Have fun with the cameras – it will help us to know more about you.

Please bring the cameras to the workshop on Saturday 16 March. We will collect them and get them developed during the day, and at the end of the day we will take a look at them and ask you to tell us about the pictures.

We would like to keep some of the pictures, and you may keep the rest, so make sure that you take plenty so that there are enough for both of us!

3. Schedule

Unaccompanied Refugee Children's Workshop 16 March 2002

8am	Depart from Saxon Court
10am	Arrive at George Street
10.15am	Pizza Hut, High Street <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction, explanation of workshop and research• Ice breaker (name game)
11am	Lunch (pizza, salad, and coke courtesy of Pizza Hut)
11.45am	Walk from High St. to QEH
Noon	QEH: social mapping exercise/hypothetical scenarios Group breakdown <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Somalis- Goranis- Albanians, Afghans
1.45pm	Walk from QEH to Oxford Bus Tour for 2 pm. (Snacks)
3pm	End of Bus Tour, walk back to QEH
3.15pm	Photo Session
4pm	Presentation of Social Map + Photos
5pm	Question and Answer Session
5.30pm	Leave for George St.
7.20pm	Arrive in MK

4. Hypothetical Scenario Questions

Awareness and Use of Service Provision

1. Who would you call if you wanted to go to the cinema?
2. Who would you turn to if you felt sad?
3. Who would you most like to spend the day with?
4. What would you do if someone was making you feel uncomfortable?
5. If you could choose three people who would you most like to live with?
6. Who would you like to have lunch with?

Understanding of Social World

7. What would you do if you were locked out of your house and no one was in?
8. Who would you call if the house was on fire?
9. Who would you tell if you were having difficulty with your lessons?
10. Who would you tell if you were feeling unwell?
11. If you were out with a friend and they got hurt, what would you do?

Appendix G- Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people for all of their kind assistance in helping us organise the workshop day and make it such a success for all concerned:

- The Emoluments Fund, Lady Margaret Hall, and The Carr and Stahl Funds, St Antony's College, for their generous grants
- Pizza Hut for proving that there is such a thing as a free lunch!
- The Oxford Bus Tour for their discounted fares
- Boots the Chemists for their discounted photo development
- Oxford University Student Union Stationery shop for discounts on stationery and other gifts
- Jo Boyden and Maryanne Loughry for their methodological advice, feedback and encouragement
- Corinne Owen of the Refugee Studies Centre for her scanning assistance
- Dawn Gosling and everyone on the Young Asylum Seekers Team for their support throughout the research
- Baljinder Haer for arranging interpretation for the workshop
- Eni, Farid, Sanela and Zainab for interpretation
- Andi Rada and Ritjana Cevoli for additional translations
- Most of all, all the unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers for their invaluable participation, patience and good humour. This report is dedicated to them.