



This is a good place to live and think about the future...

The needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland



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March 2006

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The Glasgow Centre for the Child and Society is based at the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde. It conducts research, offers teaching, consultancy and policy advice primarily in the areas of child welfare, children's rights, child protection and young people and crime.

An academic centre operating at Scottish, UK and European levels, it focuses on internationally recognised priorities for children and young people. The Glasgow Centre for the Child and Society works alongside governments, policy makers and NGOs to effect improvement in the lives of children and young people. It acts as a bridge between academic study and the worlds of policy and practice.

Scottish Refugee Council is an independent charity dedicated to providing advice, information and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees living in Scotland. It also provides specialist services in areas such as housing and welfare, education and employment, family reunion, women's issues, community development, the media and the arts.

Scottish Refugee Council plays a leading role in policy development and campaign on refugee issues to ensure that Scotland plays a full role in meeting the UK's legal and humanitarian obligations under the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees.

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Most importantly, we are very grateful to all of the children who participated in this study, who so willingly agreed to be interviewed, and whose accounts of their experiences, insights and circumstances are so valuable in helping improve the future of other young people in a similar situation to theirs.

Research project staff

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Anonymity

In the interests of confidentiality, individual young people and service providers mentioned in the report have been given pseudonyms.

Glossary of Acronyms

COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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executive summary

This research was funded by Scottish Refugee Council, with the support of The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, and was conducted by the Glasgow Centre for the Child and Society during 2005.

The aim of the research was to explore the experiences and needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland, and to assess how well current services were responding to the needs of these young people.

31 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and 74 service providers were interviewed as part of the research.

Main Findings

Children's experiences

- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children often experienced traumatic events in their countries of origin and many were brought to Scotland by an agent.
- The main reasons for seeking asylum included issues connected with war, political circumstances, and either the death or persecution of family members or the persecution of the child themselves.
- Many of the children had little knowledge of their journey to Scotland and around half did not know that Scotland was their final destination.
- None of the children interviewed divulged whether they were trafficked to Scotland.
- The largest group of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland came from Africa; predominantly East Africa.
- Most of the children felt safe upon arrival in Scotland and were enjoying their new lives. However, they faced many problems including; unsuitable accommodation, isolation, unfamiliarity with the English language, racism and the cold climate.
- The experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children upon arrival in Scotland were largely dependent upon particular place of arrival and the availability of the required services at that particular time.
- Service providers acknowledged the stress and anxiety that many children had to endure upon arrival in Scotland, as well as the emotional and psychological implications of being detached and dislocated from their families, friends and communities in their countries of origin.

Children's needs

- Understandably, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children possessed a wide range of needs including: appropriate accommodation, education, legal advice and health care.
- Service providers stated that the paramount need of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was for them to be recognised as children.
- The lack of understanding and knowledge about the asylum system, and a lack of explanation about how the system works, was a stressful and frustrating experience for many of the children.
- The provision of accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland was seen as very poor. Some children are housed in accommodation for homeless people, and find such places disruptive, abusive and dangerous. Others stay in bed and breakfast accommodation for considerable lengths of time.
- Knowledge of services available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was variable and confused.
- Service providers stressed that the most important health need of unaccompanied-asylum seeking children is the need to ensure that they have been immunised against the same diseases as other children in Scotland.
- One of the main challenges experienced by the children is coping with the stress, anxiety and trauma frequently associated with their pre-flight experiences.
- Service providers were concerned about the children's feelings of belonging, identity and social and emotional well-being. A small number suggested that the children needed support to cope with incidents of xenophobia and racism.

Service provision

- There were mixed views about overall service provision (legal, education, social service, interpreting & health), with most services usually receiving a combination of positive and negative feedback.
- Services vary dramatically across Scotland. Locations outside Glasgow tend to have less contact and less experience with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and thus have fewer services on offer and poorer practitioners' knowledge. However, many practitioners also noted that experience does not necessarily equate with expertise and that there needs to be a general overall investment in working with unaccompanied asylum seeking-children in Scotland.
- Service providers were generally positive about their work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, in particular because of the children's resilience and determination to succeed. However, there was evidence of racism amongst some staff working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Education services were received the most positively. A number of the interviewees were passionately committed to learning. However there was frustration at the barriers to accessing further and higher education. In particular, concern was raised over unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's ineligibility to receive Education Maintenance Allowances (EMA).
- A significant number of statutory service providers were unaware of existing advice regarding age assessment of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Many service providers were concerned about the difference in service provision available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are 16 and 17 compared to their younger counterparts.
- There is a significant gap in services for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children when they reach the age of 18.
- Service providers raised concern over the difficulty of determining the rights of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland making it difficult for them to advocate on the children's behalf. This is due to the unclear boundaries associated with separate Scottish and UK legislation and policy.

Recommendations

The interface between UK and Scottish legislation and policy

- The Home Office and the UK Government must take more account of the particularities of the Scottish context in developing policy which affects unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland.
- Clearer guidance is needed with regards to the remits and responsibilities of the Scottish and UK Parliaments. Service providers must be aware of the legislation, policies and procedures that apply to their work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland taking account of children's legislation and devolution.

Youth transitions

- Further youth work, advocacy and social activities for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children should be developed.
- The statutory duty of local authorities in Scotland to provide for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children over 16 years old as "looked after" children needs to be clarified.
- Additional statutory and voluntary services should be made available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children between the ages of 16-18, in order to offer social opportunities, personal support and confidence building.
- Services for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are 18 or over must be developed by statutory and voluntary organisations, as many young people at this stage still require additional support.

Age assessment

- Information, guidance and best practice regarding age assessment must be followed by all statutory service providers working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children should also be informed of such issues.

Legal and guardianship assistance

- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland should be given assistance from an independent guardian or advisor. This should be similar to the Panel of Advisors operated by the Refugee Council which unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in England may access. This Panel must have full understanding of the Scottish context.
- All unaccompanied asylum-seeking children must have early access to high quality legal representation to assist them in their asylum claim.
- It is vital that good quality legal representation is available throughout the duration of a young person's claim. This should ensure that the children understand the asylum process and the consequences of different outcomes to the decision of their asylum applications.

Accommodation and housing

- The standard of accommodation available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children must be improved. Children should not be housed in homeless hostels for even a short the period of time. Access to safe, stable, clean and good quality accommodation is vital and must include the provision of appropriate cooking facilities, social support and advocacy.
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children must be given the same opportunity as Scottish children to be engaged in decisions about their accommodation and welfare. A Children's Rights approach should underpin this.

Information and communication

- Detailed information should be given to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as soon as they arrive in Scotland. This should be in a format appropriate to their age and should contain information about their rights and the services available to them. This should also be distributed to organisations working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, to improve their knowledge.
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children must have access to appropriately trained interpreters.
- Service providers should not use unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to interpret for each other.

Educational needs

- It is vital that the high-quality education and support provided to most unaccompanied asylum-seeking children by schools and colleges should be available to everyone.
- Statutory and voluntary organisations need to develop out-of-school provision, after-school care services and extra curricular activities for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- The Scottish Executive should give unaccompanied asylum-seeking children the same rights and entitlements to access further and higher education as all children in Scotland. For example, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children should be eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) in Scotland as offered to all other children.

Health services

- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children must be offered access to a range of health services in a similar manner to that offered to all children in Scotland. Attention should be paid to the children's health needs as a result of pre-flight experiences; in particular their mental health.
- Outreach services need to be developed to ensure unaccompanied asylum-seeking children access health services.

Services in general

- Refugees and members of the black and minority ethnic communities should be encouraged to work in professions which have contact with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children; including work in both statutory and voluntary organisations.

Learning opportunities for professionals and partnership working

- Inter-agency co-operation, joint working and the sharing of good practice should be encouraged through the creation of collaborative and networking opportunities.
- Steps should be taken to encourage the establishment of international links between service providers, so that Scottish service providers can gather best practice from countries with similar experience.
- An annual audit of the services provided for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children should be conducted, in order that areas of deficiency and excess can be identified and addressed.

- Further training opportunities should be made available to all service providers working with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland. This training should be detailed in content, updated regularly and accessible to a range of service providers. Furthermore, this should include race awareness training, in order to ensure that practice is based on values of equality and respect.

01.introduction

There is currently little information available about the needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland. Previous research by the Scottish Executive (2003, 2004) has explored the issues facing asylum seekers in Scotland, and the Scottish Executive (2003: 120) has noted that 'attention will need to be given to specific service needs which refugees may have, distinct from other sectors of the population. These may include ... services for unaccompanied young people'. Advice for teachers of refugee and asylum-seeking children has also been provided by the EIS (2003), while GARA (2005) recently funded an independent evaluation of NCH's Young Refugee Project. Save the Children also provide a range of guides for working with young refugees and have published reports about the experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee families in Glasgow (2003, 2004), highlighting, in particular, the significance of the young people's experiences of racism. Much of this work provides useful background material and context for the current study and will be used to frame the findings of this research. Rather than offer a detailed literature review at this point, various publications and reports will be referred to at appropriate points during the report.

This report presents the findings of a research project about the services provided for and the needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland. This project was funded by Scottish Refugee Council and conducted by staff in the Glasgow Centre for the Child and Society. The research project was largely qualitative and exploratory in nature. It involved interviews with service providers who work with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, as well as interviews and group-work activities with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children themselves.

The rest of this introduction sets the scene by providing important contextual information. Initially, issues around terminology and definitions are explored before discussing briefly the relevant international context. A profile of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland is then provided, highlighting important factors about the demographic and social characteristics of this group. Then, the design and methods of this research project are briefly outlined. Following the introduction, the report is structured into four main sections. The experiences and needs of the children involved, especially as expressed by themselves are placed in the foreground (Chapters 2 and 3) as these should inform service provision. Chapter 4 then offers an analysis of service provision in the light of the children's needs and experiences. Finally the conclusion summarises the report and outlines important recommendations for future service provision.

Terminology and definitions

The aim of this research was to explore the experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland. It is therefore important to clarify the definitions of terms such as 'asylum seeker', 'children' and 'unaccompanied'. According to the 1951 UN Convention on the status of refugees, the term 'refugee' applies to any person who '...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it' (UNHCR, 1951).

An asylum seeker is a person who has left her/his country of origin because of persecution and who applies to be recognised formally as a refugee in a different country, in this instance the UK. Asylum seekers who identify themselves to the relevant authorities are exercising a universal right to apply to be recognised as refugees. As such, a refugee is a person 'whose asylum application has been successful and who is allowed to stay in another country having proved they would face persecution back home' (Refugee Council, 2005: 1).

All young refugees were therefore young asylum-seekers at some point, and were successful in their application to be given refugee status. The terms 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' should be distinguished from the term 'economic migrant', as the first two terms are associated with protection issues, while economic migrants are associated with moving in order to work. It is clear that some service providers may require further information and training in the use of appropriate terminology because there was suspicion amongst a number of service providers in this study that some of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were economic migrants. For example, Sally suggested that "they obviously may be economic migrants".

The phrase 'unaccompanied' asylum-seeking children is commonly used to describe those who arrive without a parent or other relative, but some organisations have promoted alternative terms to emphasise the specific characteristics, needs and circumstances of this group. Alternative terms include; 'unaccompanied minors'; 'separated children'; unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) along with the Separated Children in Europe Programme and the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA) prefer the term 'separated children' because:

... it better defines the essential problem that children face. Namely, that they are without the care and protection of their parents or legal guardian and as a consequence suffer socially and psychologically from this separation' (Save the Children, 2004: 2).

This also highlights that the children may not be 'unaccompanied' per se, and may come along with a trafficker, agent or sibling(s). ILPA has suggested that the phrase 'unaccompanied asylum-seeking children' (UASC) applies only to those children who have claimed asylum in their own right (ILPA, 2004:5), and therefore promote the use of the more inclusive term 'separated children', which may include, but are not limited to, those who:

- Are entirely on their own in the UK
- Are accompanied by a relative who is not their primary carer and who is unable or unwilling to take responsibility for them and abandons them shortly afterwards
- Are accompanied by a person who is or is not a relative who may be caring for them or may be exploiting them
- Are sent by their parents for safety, education, health or other reasons with or without their consent
- Are separated from their families who are in countries other than their country of origin
- Are trafficked against their will

The UNHCR (2004) encourages the use of the phrase 'separated' for similar reasons, as they are eager to draw attention to the particular protection needs of these people. However, on the other hand, it can be argued that the word 'separated' implies passivity and overlooks the children's agency, since some of the children have chosen themselves to flee. The phrase 'separated children' has also been used in the past to refer to any child not living with their family, and its application in this case may confuse the issue.

Although issues of terminology are important to consider, it is more important to focus on the specific experiences, needs and circumstances of this group of children, but this does involve defining the group. The UNHCR (2004: 2) note that 'identifying unaccompanied and separated children among those seeking asylum is of critical importance due to the special protection and assistance needs of this group'. The UNHCR (1994) states that, 'unaccompanied children are those who are separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible to do so'. Furthermore, the Convention on the Rights of the Child notes that 'a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier'. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are therefore children, aged under-18, who, according to the 1951 Convention, are applying for refugee status, and are without their parent(s), guardian(s) or other primary care-giver.

Although this is the official definition of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there is still considerable ambiguity with regards to who is and who is not included within the definitions of terms such as 'unaccompanied' and/or 'separated' asylum-seeking children. This is highlighted by Judith Dennis, a Policy Advisor with the (British) Refugee Council, who noted that:

'we would define an unaccompanied child, as being one without the usual carer, whether that be their parents or another person who has been customarily caring for them. The Home Office, that is the part of the government that makes decisions on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, in fact, all asylum seekers, defines them as being without an adult who is prepared to take responsibility for them, so in fact the definition is problematic in itself and we are in a constant battle to get the issue addressed because there are a lot of children that are, in fact, unaccompanied, but who are counted by the Home Office as being part of a family and they are some of the individuals who we think are in most danger' (Research in Practice, 2005)

According to Dennis's definition, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may arrive with siblings or other extended family members, and therefore the boundaries of definitions are unclear. As Dennis points out, it is important to include children who are without their usual carer in definitions, since the adult they arrive in the country with may be an unsuitable carer or may be unwilling to care for them long term.

Chester (2001: 163) notes how many children are excluded from counts of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children because they are officially considered as adults, and notes that 'this would also apply to a young person below the age of 18 arriving with a brother or sister of 18. The younger sibling would not be viewed as 'unaccompanied' because they have arrived with an 'adult' carer.

This research is about children who are seeking asylum alone in Scotland. The terms most frequently used by the service providers consulted were 'unaccompanied minors' and 'unaccompanied asylum-seeking children' (UASC). This report uses the term unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in order to emphasise the complexity of the children's circumstances.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children: the global, European and UK contexts

The UNHCR (2005) estimated that in 2004 there were 9.2 million refugees in the world, and that this was the fourth consecutive year in which the global refugee population had fallen. In 2004, Iran, Pakistan, Germany, Tanzania and the USA were the five main countries of destination for people claiming asylum, and Afghanistan, Sudan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia were the five most frequently mentioned countries of origin of refugees. Overall, 11% of the global refugee population live in Iran, and 23% of the global refugee population are from Afghanistan. Due to a lack of accurate data, and differences in recording procedures between and within different countries, international comparisons about the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are very difficult to establish (UNHCR, 2001, 2004, Save the Children, 2005).

There have been between 12,000 and 20,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in Europe each year since 1998. In 2000, the European countries with most unaccompanied asylum-seeking children included: the Netherlands (6,705 cases), the UK (2,730 cases) and Hungary (1,170 cases). The most recent figures available from the UNHCR highlight that in 2003, the countries with the most cases included the UK (2,800), Austria (2,049), Switzerland (1,324) and the Netherlands (1,126). Overall, the numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in Europe peaked in 2001, and the asylum applications of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children accounted for 4% of the total number of applications in Europe in 2003. The UNHCR (2004:7) observed that unaccompanied and separated children applying for asylum in Europe generally tend to be predominantly male, are likely to be 16 or 17 years old and mostly from Afghanistan and Iraq. They also highlighted that unaccompanied and separated children are almost twice as likely to come from Africa as compared to asylum seekers in general.

Between 2001 and 2003, around 12,400 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arrived in the United Kingdom (UNHCR, 2004). Due to recording procedures, these statistics are only available for the UK as a whole and cannot be broken down to show the levels arriving in Scotland or other areas. In 2000, most of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in Britain came from the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Somalia. Between 2001 and 2003, the most common countries of origin were Iraq, Afghanistan and Serbia and Montenegro (UNHCR, 2001, 2004). Of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in Britain from 2001-2003, around two-thirds were male and over sixty per-cent aged 16 -17 (UNHCR, 2004)..The most recent Home Office quarterly figures for immigration and asylum continue to highlight that the most frequently mentioned countries of origin of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people arriving in the UK are Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children: the Scottish context

Referring to the national background of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland, a number of service providers commented on how this has changed over time. Spencer works in social services and he stated:

It's changed quite markedly. Probably up until about January last year predominantly it was eastern European, with the break up of Bosnia, Slovenia ... we also had some from Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. Since probably the turn of last year ... we have had an increase in the number of Africans coming in and that is almost now what we would expect to arrive in terms of young unaccompanied asylum seekers. And also, the ratio between boys and girls has changed as well. There's now more girls appearing than previously – before it was almost exclusively males.

Data collected by COSLA Refugee and Asylum Seeker Consortium (CRASC) early in 2005 found that there were 109 unaccompanied asylum-seeking It's changed quite markedly. Probably up until about January last year predominantly it was eastern European, with the break up of Bosnia, Slovenia ... we also had some from Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. Since probably the turn of last year ... we have had an increase in the number of Africans coming in and that is almost now what we would expect to arrive in terms of young unaccompanied asylum seekers. And also, the ratio between boys and girls has changed as well. There's now more girls appearing than previously – before it was almost exclusively males.

Children in Scotland

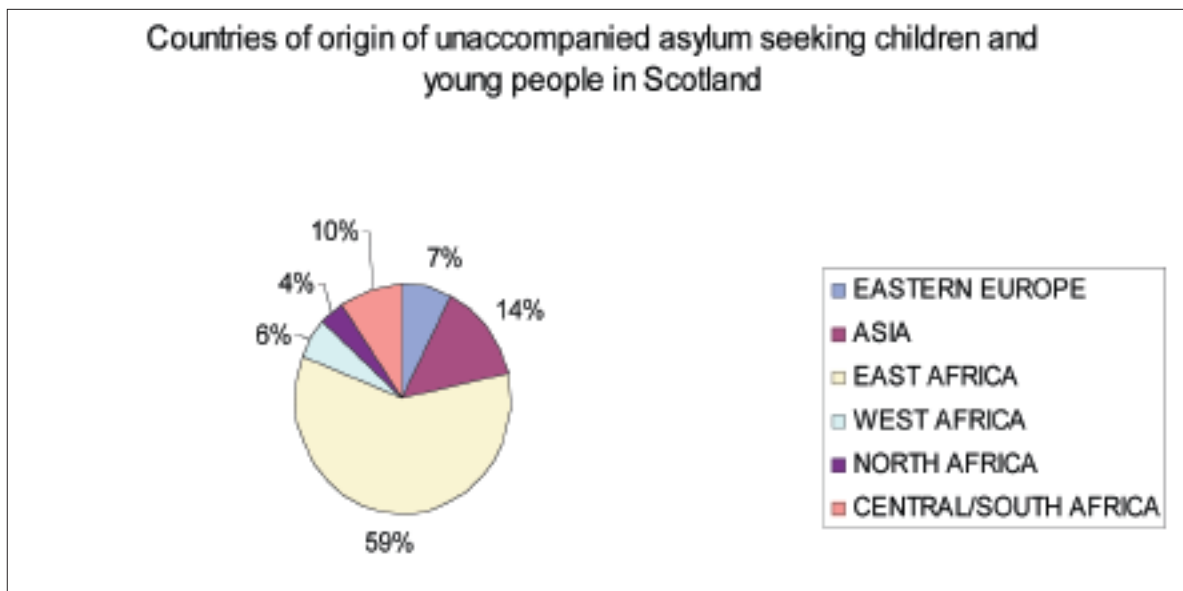
This compares with 3485 asylum seeking and refugee children in Scotland according to the Scottish Executive (2003), as well as 5798 NASS asylum seekers living in Glasgow according to COSLA. Scottish Refugee Council data on the 188 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that have arrived in Scotland since the latter part of 2001 shows that more than a third of the children came from Somalia.

Figure 1 shows the regions of origin of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland, highlighting that the majority of children are of African heritage.

The specific countries of origin, apart from Somalia, have not been disclosed in order to protect confidentiality and anonymity. However, the UNHCR (2004: 6) have observed that 'unaccompanied and separated children from Somalia predominantly seek asylum in the Nordic countries'. This may suggest that, in terms of the countries of origin of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, Scotland may have more in common with countries such as Norway and Finland, rather than being a microcosm of the UK situation.

The age and gender profile of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in Scotland also deserves attention as these may have important consequences for the nature of service provision. **Figure 2** highlights that the majority of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are aged 16-17 with a much smaller number of younger teenagers seeking asylum alone. **Figure 3** demonstrates that there have always been more unaccompanied young men than women seeking asylum in Scotland, although it is now clear that more young women are seeking-asylum as well. Spencer said that more young women are now arriving, whereas previously unaccompanied young men were more likely to seek asylum. However, Elizabeth, who is in education, was concerned that it is “mainly young men” arriving and queried, “where are all of the young girls?”

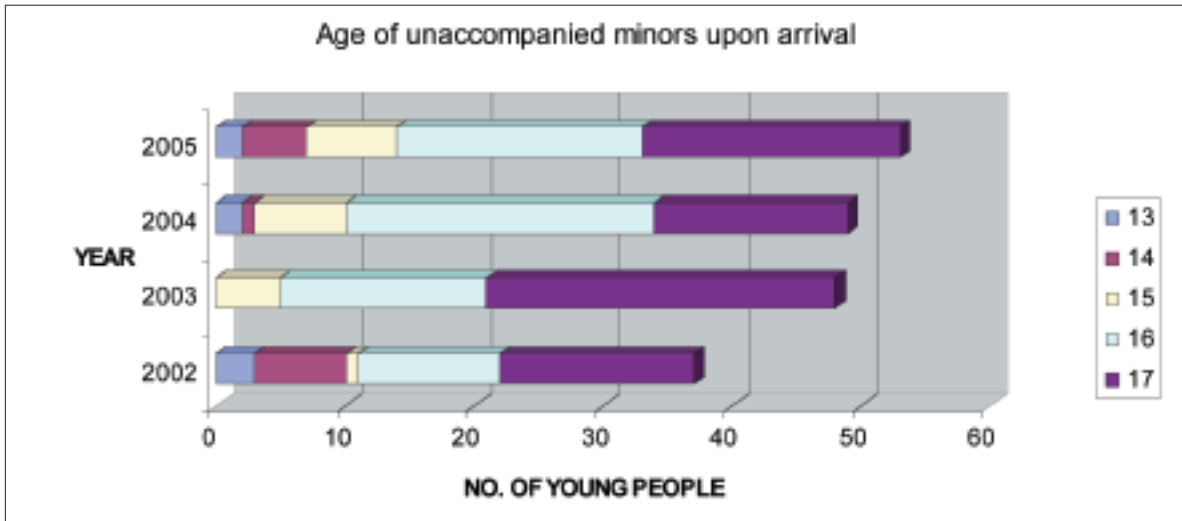
Figure.01



Source: Scottish Refugee Council

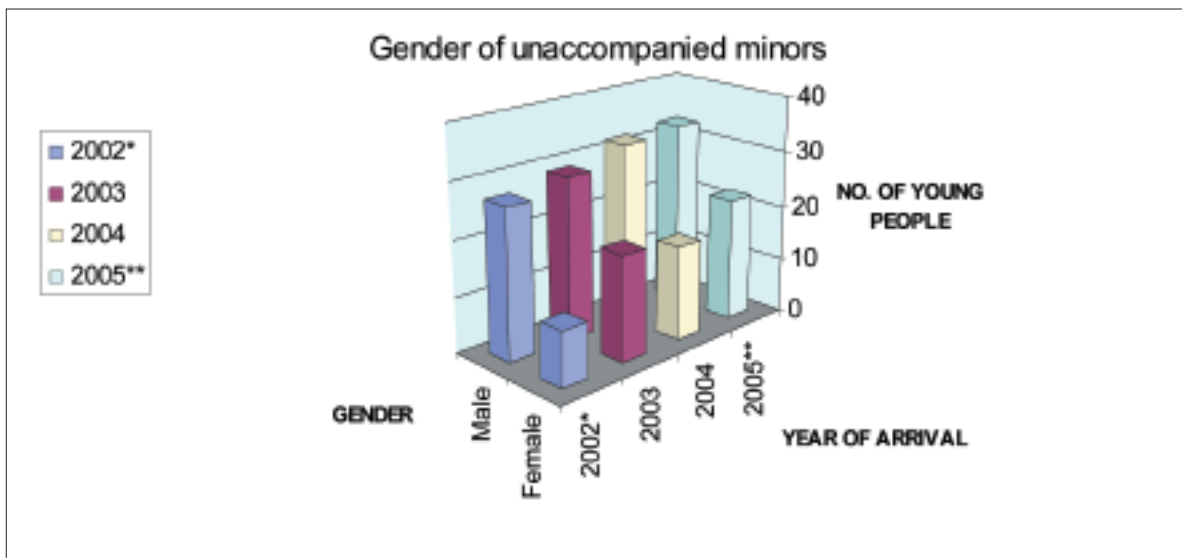
Having a knowledge and understanding of the profile of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland is important for service providers. However, as a result of the changing profile of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland, many noted how they had to “learn on the job” about the diversity, dietary requirements and religious and cultural norms of various countries at different times. This was clarified by Catriona who works in social services. She stated that “it’s all so new to Glasgow ... we are having to learn and adapt as we go along ... [and we] need to seek out information about services.”

Figure.02



Source: Scottish Refugee Council

Figure.03



Source: Scottish Refugee Council

*includes some UASC who arrived in late 2001

**most recent figures available

The uniqueness of the Scottish context

In order to contextualise this study, it is important to think carefully about the Scottish situation. The vast majority of research about migrants and minorities in Britain has focused upon experiences in England, with little research about the needs and experiences of migrants in Scotland (although see Arshad, 1999, de Lima, 2005, Hopkins, 2004, Kelly, 2000, 2002). 'This neglect has been perpetuated through everyday discourses of 'Scotland being a nation of friendly, welcoming people', and racism being portrayed as a predominantly 'English problem' (de Lima, 2005: 143). As a result of these assumptions about racism being an English problem, Rowena Arshad (1999: 221) has suggested that 'Scotland has avoided the realities of confronting racism as a door-step issue'.

When Scotland is referred to within the literature, generalisations tend to be made about, for example, the experiences of immigrants in Britain, or the circumstances of being an asylum seeker in Britain, with the assumption being that 'British' experiences are similar to 'Scottish' circumstances. However, Miles and Dunlop (1987) have put forward a number of reasons why the experiences of migrants and minorities in Scotland is distinctive compared with England. One of their suggestions is that '... what distinguishes Scotland from England is the absence of a racialisation of the political process in the period since 1945 rather than an absence of racism per se' (Miles and Dunlop, 1987: 119). It is therefore not possible to transpose experiences of migrants in England and assume that they are the same as they would be in Scotland. Furthermore, Miles and Dunlop (1987) also argue that the history of migration both into and out of Scotland is different from that of England, both in terms of the profile of new arrivals and their reasons for migration.

The context of migrants' arrival in Scotland has also differed from that in England. For example, the Asian migration to Scotland from the 1950s onwards was not as centrally related to the demands of the capitalist economy as was the case in England (Miles and Dunlop, 1987). Although their work is based on research about Asian migrants to Scotland, many of their suggestions can also be applied to the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland. As such, it is important that research about asylum seekers and refugees focuses specifically upon Scotland, and does not assume that 'British' (and often London-centred) studies provide an accurate account of people's needs, experiences and everyday lives. As Peggy a policy worker consulted in this research stated, Scotland has "smaller numbers, smaller place, different networks".

The different profile of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland compared with England interacts with the smaller size and particular geographical, economic and policy setting in Scotland. The key difference between Scotland and England is the unique legislative context where Scotland has legislation specific only to Scotland (for example, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995) as well as legislation that is common to the UK (e.g. immigration legislation). Government policies, especially in the social and educational spheres, have always been distinct in Scotland, which has been reinforced by devolution. This will be expanded in the following section.

Legislative context

Having arrived in Scotland, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children immediately become part of a complex and controversial legislative system. The complexity of the legislative situation is largely due to the status of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as being both children, and as asylum-seekers subject to immigration control. This situation is complicated further by the existence of legislation on various levels and tiers, including Scottish legislation, UK wide legislation, and European and international law. It is important that the legislative context of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland is explained as clearly as possible, although, as a number of the legal representatives consulted in this research noted, the legislation is very complex, detailed and often ambiguous and contradictory. Crucially, they noted it was ever changing and that the changes were often poorly communicated, if communicated at all by the Home Office. Here we will highlight important legislation applicable to asylum seekers and those subject to immigration control, after which we will explore legislation relevant to children.

As previously mentioned, the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees sets out the internationally accepted definition of 'refugee' and includes a number of requirements for the legal, economic and political treatment of such people. A further Protocol to the Convention was agreed in 1967. The 1950 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) also outlines a number of Articles that Member States must comply with. These include the right to life (Article 2), the right not to be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 3), the right for respect to be given to your private and family life (Article 8), the right to education (Articles 2, Protocol 1), freedom of assembly and association (Article 11), and the prohibition of discrimination (Article 14). These have been incorporated into UK law by means of the Human Rights Act 1998. Thus immigration procedures are intended to conform with Human Rights considerations, while Acts of the Scottish Parliament which breach human rights would be deemed unlawful. Therefore, in order to be awarded refugee status, a child would have to satisfy the Home Office and/or the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal that they had been persecuted as a result of their social group, race, religion, nationality or political persuasion, and were unwilling to return to their country or origin as a result of the fear of such persecution continuing.

Europe has been having an increasing impact on various aspects of domestic legislation in recent years, including immigration. At a summit in 1999, European member states agreed to establish a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) (Refugee Council, 2004). Part of the process of harmonisation of member state policies towards this goal has been the establishment of a Council Directive (2003/9/EC) on 27 January 2003 'laying down the minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers'. Article 19 of this Reception Directive outlines standards for the reception of 'unaccompanied minors', all of which are referred to in this report. In summary, the Directive provides guidance about the training of staff working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, as well as guidance about the best interests, legal representation and accommodation provided for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

A key issue within the EU Directive is the issue of guardianship. In 2003, the Council of the European Union also established a Directive (2003/86/EC) 'on the right to family reunification'. This states that Member States 'shall authorise the entry and residence for the purposes of family reunification of his/her first-degree relatives' as well as suggesting that Member States may also do this for the legal guardian or other family members of an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child.

In the UK context, legislation relevant to asylum seekers has been constantly changing in recent years with major legislative changes taking place in 1999, 2002 and 2004. Moreover, another piece of substantive legislation, the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill 2005, is currently being debated in Parliament.

(see <http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk>). The majority of these legislative changes have aimed to monitor and control immigration, the impact being that it is now more difficult for asylum seekers to be awarded refugee status in the UK.

In compliance with this legislation, as well as the other European and international law mentioned earlier, Home Office caseworkers, currently based in Croydon and/or Liverpool, make decisions regarding the outcome of an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child's asylum application.

There are four responses that an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child can receive. First, they may be awarded Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). This means that they are free to stay in the UK indefinitely; however, recent Home Office policy changes mean that from 30 August 2005, all asylum seekers, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, are only given a maximum of five years' temporary leave to remain if deemed to be a refugee, having successfully claimed asylum (they may seek further leave to remain just before the five years expires). Second, they may be given Discretionary Leave (DL) to remain in the UK. This means an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child is allowed to stay in the UK until they reach their eighteenth birthday. Being awarded Discretionary Leave means that a child's application for asylum has failed and been refused, and a set of refusal reasons should be shared with the child. They can appeal this decision only if they have been given more than twelve months leave to remain. This is the most likely outcome of an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child's asylum application. 72 per cent of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children applying for asylum in 2004 were awarded Discretionary Leave to Remain (Heath and Jeffries, 2005). Third, an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child may be awarded the status of Humanitarian Protection (HP). This is highly unusual decision in such cases but is applied when a child has not satisfied the requirements of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, but it has successfully been argued that the UK would be breaching the Human Rights Act 1998 if they were to return the child to their country of origin. Some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were previously awarded Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR), however this is no longer a decision awarded by the Home Office, and instead, Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave are now awarded when Exceptional leave to Remain would have previously been awarded.

Fourth, an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child's asylum application may be completely refused and so they will not be granted any form of status. The child, through their legal representative, can lodge an appeal within ten working days against the refusal and this will normally result in a court case at the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal (AIT). A very recent change to immigration policy and procedures means that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may now be interviewed about their asylum claim. The EU Directive requires that a responsible adult should be present on such occasions.

The National Asylum Support Service (NASS) is a department within the Home Office's remit and their statutory function is to provide support, accommodation and financial help to asylum seekers when their applications for asylum are being considered. NASS provision commenced in 2000, and previous to this, local councils and boroughs were responsible to financially support cases. As stated, one of the remits of NASS is the provision of accommodation for asylum seekers, which it does through agreements with local authorities. Asylum seekers, applying for accommodation support, are therefore dispersed to local authorities around the UK which have entered into a contract with NASS¹, This is done on a no-choice basis. Glasgow City Council has a large contract with NASS and consequently asylum-seekers are dispersed to the city. This is the only such dispersal site in Scotland as no other Scottish local authority has so far agreed to house asylum seekers. As dispersal to Glasgow has been happening since NASS started operating, a wide range of services for asylum seekers has developed across the city. This explains why, in Scotland, services for asylum seekers and refugees are concentrated in Glasgow.

However, it is important to note that NASS only supports asylum-seeking children who form a part of an asylum-seeking family. They do not support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as they are financially supported by their local social services department under relevant sections of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

So, adult asylum-seekers and their families in Scotland are accommodated in Glasgow², whilst unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland are accommodated and supported by the local authority where they first arrive in Scotland. This means that, theoretically, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may be found across Scotland. Whilst, it is likely that the concentration of refugee communities in Glasgow has acted as a magnet for agents and thus many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have been brought to the city, there are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under local authority care in other locations in Scotland. This situation is particularly challenging for children, and indeed local authorities and social service departments, where the development of services and current provision is often very poor compared with the situation in Glasgow.

¹ People claiming asylum may apply for subsistence only support. This means that they are responsible for their own accommodation and thus may live in other parts of the UK.

² See previous footnote.

In the UK, immigration and asylum matters are reserved to the Westminster Parliament and cover the whole of the UK including Scotland, whilst matters concerning children, education, health and housing are largely devolved matters decided in the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood. As such, there are no Scottish laws that apply specifically to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as asylum seekers subject to immigration control. There is however, Scottish legislation that applies to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as children. At times the interface between these various forms and levels of legislation are unclear, and this makes it particularly difficult to advocate for, and determine the rights of, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

The status of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as children has important legislative significance. The UK is a signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which sets out internationally recognised standards about children's status and treatment, with a focus on 'participation, protection and provision' (Hill and Tisdall, 1997: 28). However, the UK registered a reservation saying that the UK retains the right to apply conditions relating to entry, stay in and departure from the UK. Although the vast majority of the UNCRC is relevant to all children including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, Article 22 focuses specifically on refugee children. Article 22 provides that states should take appropriate measures to ensure that a child asylum seeker receives appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of the rights in the Convention itself and in other international human rights instruments (such as the European Convention on Human Rights). Furthermore, Article 37 (a) and (b) are also covered by the UK's reservation to the UNCRC. Article 37 (b) states that '... The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time', and Article 37 (c) clarifies that children deprived of their liberty should be separated from adults, unless it is in their best interests not to do so (see <http://www.ohchr.org/english/>). These reservations mean that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the UK can be subject to detention and can be detained alongside adults.

The main responsibilities of parents, judicial bodies and local authorities with respect to children living in Scotland are embodied in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. This sets out a range of ways in which children in Scotland should be supported, protected, accommodated and cared for. It also identifies the circumstances in which a child may be accommodated by a local authority. This includes situations where 'no-one has parental responsibility for' a child under 16 (Section 25) and the manner in which accommodation is provided for children looked after by a local authority (Section 26). Furthermore, this Act also seeks to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, up to the age of 18, who are in need (Section 22). Among the duties that the authority has towards a child so accommodated are to: safeguard and promote the child's welfare; promote contact with parents; take account of the child's views; give consideration to the child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.

Part of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 applies to Scotland and stipulates that a child who was previously looked after and accommodated is entitled to financial support from the local authority. The Support and Assistance of Young People Leaving Care (Scotland) Regulations 2003 also require local authorities to provide a range of other preparation, planning and support measures for young people.

As far as we are aware, there have been no relevant court cases in Scotland concerning the rights of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under the 1995 Act, but the Hillingdon judgement of 2003 about the responsibility of local authorities in England under the Children Act 1989 and Children Leaving Care Act 2000 to provide accommodation has been widely cited as relevant to Scotland. Under the Children Leaving Care Act of 2000, social services departments must provide support for those leaving care, ensuring their continuing welfare. The Hillingdon judgement extended this responsibility to include unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Although the Hillingdon judgement was a landmark case in England, the great majority of the Children Act 1989, including the provisions for looked after and accommodated children, does not apply to Scotland. Strictly this has no direct bearing on the legal position in Scotland and would not count as a precedent if a court case arose, but some regard the judgement as having persuasive force. A key conclusion was that local authorities have duties to support children financially after the age of 18, when they have previously been provided with accommodation by the authority concerned.

There is some uncertainty about the extent to which Scottish education legislation covers all asylum-seeking children in Scotland, although strong arguments have been put forward that it does (see CARIS web-site <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/caris/>). The main relevant statutes are the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, with subsequent amendments, and the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000. For instance, any education authority has general powers to provide education (including nursery education) to anyone living within their area, while children below the statutory age limit have a right to receive education.

Also, the Scottish Parliament passed the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2003 establishing the role of Commissioner with the first incumbent took up post in April 2004. The Commissioner has a duty to promote and safeguard the rights of children in Scotland up to the age of 18 (or 21 if they have ever been looked after by a local authority). The role of the Commissioner applies to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in their status as children, and so the Commissioner's role links in with other international and national legislation about children's rights and best interests.

Methods and sampling

This is an applied social research project, and as such, one of the main intentions of the study is to inform future service provision. Overall, the main aims are:

- Identification of the range of services available for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland, as well as the strengths and weaknesses in such service provision (including gaps in provision, training opportunities and best practice examples)
- Exploration of the social, emotional, legal and educational needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland, including the circumstances that led them to leave their country of origin, their experiences of the migration process, and their current situation in Scotland.

Data for the study was gathered primarily by means of qualitative interviews. The research project was originally planned to have two key stages: the first involving interviews with service providers and the second interviews with children. Early on, this was modified so that it would be possible to include some feedback from children sooner. Hence, the project comprised three key stages (**see Figure 4**):

- Interviews with key service provider
- Interviews with remaining service providers as well as some interviews with children
- Interviews with children

Figure.04

Period	Tasks
Nov – Dec 2004	INFORMAL PREPARATION OF THE STUDY Attendance at planning meetings; drafting of interview schedule; completion of forms for the University Research Ethics Committee; arranging initial interviews.
Jan – March 2005	FORMAL START OF THE STUDY PERIOD Completion of interviews with representatives of priority agencies agreed with the Scottish Refugee Council; meeting with Working Group; provision of one-page bulletin (Feb); analysis of interview data; writing up of first progress report (end of March).
April – June 2005	Arranging and conducting further agency interviews; preparation of schedule for interviews and discussions with children; provision of one-page bulletin (May); initial interviews with children; writing up of second progress report (end of June).
July – Sept 2005	Arranging and conducting the main interviews and discussions with children; provision of one-page bulletin (Aug); writing up of third progress report (end of Sept).
Oct – Dec 2005	Completion of remaining fieldwork; final analysis; writing of final report; meeting with Scottish Refugee Council staff to discuss implications.

The present report synthesises the findings from all three of these stages. It was considered valuable to speak to service providers first, as they could provide general context for the research. Equally importantly they helped identify the priority issues for the interviews with children and assisted with the process of gaining access to the children.

The plan for the whole study was to conduct between fifty to sixty interviews with service providers as well as speaking to approximately thirty children. With permission of the interviewee, all of the interviews with service providers were tape-recorded and followed an interview schedule prepared by the research team (see Appendices). Individual interviews were also used with the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, but more flexibility of method was required to adapt to their wishes and circumstances. Some of these interviews included the use of interpreter and a small minority of the children preferred that their interview was not tape-recorded and so the researcher recorded their experiences and opinions in writing.

The project also included a group-work exercise with nine unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, who used large sheets of paper and post-it notes to annotate their feelings, experiences and views about Scotland and their countries of origin.

Overall, seventy-four service providers and thirty-one unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were interviewed as a part of the research. In consultation with Scottish Refugee Council staff key agencies, organisations and individuals were identified as primary contacts for the first phase of the research. A process of snowballing was then used where initial contacts were asked to identify other relevant organisations and individuals who they thought should participate in the research. These individuals included some who provide a direct service such as educational provision, social work, youth services, legal guidance and counselling, as well as policy makers and managers. Almost all of the agencies were in Central Scotland. Interviews were also carried out with representatives of agencies in London responsible for immigration services and with a small number of service providers in other areas of Scotland. The sample of service providers included people working directly with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as well as staff who are employed in a more strategic role, for example, in management or policy making. The service providers were drawn from across the statutory and voluntary services, and included individuals working in social work, children's services, housing, policy and government, secondary and tertiary education, refugee and immigration organisations, health care and counselling, immigration lawyers and staff working in general services for children.

A wide range of organisations and individual were identified initially by Scottish Refugee Council, and this, coupled with the process of snowballing used in the project means that it is very likely that the sample of service providers consulted in this research was broadly representative of the services available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The main topics of discussion included: service provision and perceptions of the adequacy of overall provision; examples of good practice; strengths and weaknesses in services; experiences, needs and competencies of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Nearly all the organisations and agencies approached have cooperated very willingly with the research team. The vast majority of the interviews lasted approximately an hour. They were mostly individual interviews, but some also involved a small team of two, three or four staff working in a similar area.

Contact was made with organisations in a position to identify unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who might choose to participate in the research. All children consulted were provided with information about the research project, including assurances about confidentiality. They were all afforded the opportunity to decline participation in the research without having to give a reason. In the case of anyone aged under 16, consent was also obtained from a person with parental responsibility.

All of the names of the service providers and children have been changed in order to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. Children were offered the opportunity to choose a pseudonym and if they did not want to, the researcher chose a pseudonym on their behalf. For the purpose of this report, the names of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children will be italicised, in order to distinguish their views from those of service providers.

The thirty-one unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who were interviewed in this project included nine young women and twenty-two young men. Twelve stated that they were Christians, seventeen identified as Muslim, and two children stated that they did not belong to any religious group. Four of these children were from the Asian continent, with the remaining twenty-seven coming from Africa. Twelve of the children were originally from Somalia. None came from Eastern Europe. Thus, the countries of origin reflected the recent shifts in wider patterns noted earlier. Six of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children consulted had Indefinite Leave to Remain, fifteen had Discretionary Leave, seven were waiting on the result of their asylum application and two children did not know what their status was at the time of the interview. Nearly all of the children were 16 or 17 at the time of interviewing, although two children were 15, and two stated that they were 18.

Overall, then, this sample could be said to be reasonably representative as a result of the fact that the majority of the sample were young men, aged 16 or 17, who were seeking asylum in Scotland having originally lived in Africa, and in particular Somalia. It would perhaps have to been useful to consult slightly more young women, and more children from the Asian continent. One deficiency of the sample of children consulted in this project was that it did not include any unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from Eastern Europe, for example, from Albania or the former Yugoslavia. It did appear however, that children from these countries, due to the length of time they had lived in Scotland, has already been consulted by a number of researchers, and were experiencing research fatigue.

Previous research about unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

There has been little research conducted in the UK specifically with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and this lack of information about the needs and experiences of this group of children has been one of the motivations behind this research project. Where research does exist, it tends to be short-term, piecemeal and poorly funded. The studies that have taken place have mainly focused on social work practice, medical and health related concerns, or policy and practice related work often conducted by community, voluntary and non-governmental organisations.

The social work literature tends to focus on the response of social work services to the arrival of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (Argent, 1996, Christie, 2002, 2003 Mitchell, 2003, Morris, 2005, Okititikpi and Aymer, 2003). Some of this work also focuses on the rights of the children (Cemlyn and Briskman, 2003, Jones, 2001), and the strategies adopted by social workers in their attempts to help improve the circumstances of the children concerned (Kohli, 2005). The organisation, Research in Practice, recently added a ninth publication to their audio series, by producing a series of insights into the experiences and needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, drawing upon, amongst others, the expertise of social work academics. Although all of this work is important, it tends to focus on England (Mitchell, 2003, Kohli, 2005) or the Republic of Ireland (Christie, 2002, 2003), and there is a clear need to find out more about the Scottish situation.

The second main body of literature focuses on medical, health and psychiatric services. This work tends to be written by practitioners and academics in the fields of child and adolescent psychiatry (Fazel and Stein, 2005, Hodes, 2002, Hoes and Tolmac, 2005, Whittaker, Hardy, Lewis and Buchan, 2005). The general health and well-being of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is often emphasised in this work, as are the children's experiences of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and displacement. Although much of this work is written from a medical perspective, issues of relevance to general practice are also raised where appropriate.

Some of the most relevant research with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children has been conducted by community and voluntary organisations, non-governmental organisations and practitioners working directly with children. Much of this work is very useful because of its focus upon Scotland. For example, Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership conducted research with young asylum seekers in Edinburgh, including 8 of whom they identified as unaccompanied (Owen, 2005). This project concluded with six recommendations, including the need to develop training for practitioners and to develop a welcome pack including local information and details of services. Also, Glasgow Anti-Racist Alliance (2005) recently conducted an independent review of NCH's Young Refugee Project, and produced a range of recommendations covering befriending, policy and practice. Other applied studies of relevance to the experience of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have also been conducted in England (Kidane, 2001) and Wales (Save the Children, 2005). Arguably, some of the most important work with and for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children has been conducted by the Save the Children, including work in the Scottish contexts and elsewhere in the UK (Rutter and Yhder, 1998, Save the Children, 2005). Of particular relevance is the recently published second edition of their guide to the rights and entitlements of separated refugee children (Save the Children, 2005) as well as their good practice guide for the 'Separated Children in Europe programme' (Save the Children, 2004). All of these literatures will be used where relevant to contextualise the findings of the current study.

02.children's experiences

The experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in their countries of origin, as well as their journeys to Scotland and their experiences of arrival in a new place are important in helping to understand and assist unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in their current situations. **As Thomas et al (2003: 114) clarify:**

Given the additional vulnerability of being unaccompanied, it is important to provide a detailed picture of the multiplicity of life circumstances and experiences of UASC, in order to develop and improve existing health and social services to identify and meet needs.

Moreover 'there is no indication when examining the existing literature that a great deal is known about the pre-departure histories of the asylum-seeking and refugee children now living in the UK and in other parts of Europe' (Kohli, 2005: 2).

Although it is important to understand unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's previous experiences, it is also essential that these experiences are explored in a manner that is sensitive to the well-being and best interests of the children involved. Chester (2001: 164) notes that it is 'often unhelpful to ask intrusive questions about the circumstances that have led to the child's being in exile as they will have gone through this process many times already with immigration officers and lawyers and often it will have been a wearing and traumatic experience.'

As there is little information available about the pre-flight experiences and migration stories of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in both academic and policy research, one of the aims of this project was to explore these issues with service providers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, doing so in a sensitive and tactful manner with reassurances not to distress any of the children. Furthermore, 'children's voices are not heard in population geography,' and there is a 'need to value the child's perspective and to appreciate the agency of children in shaping their own population futures' (McKendrick, 2001: 466). While it was vital to recognise the distressing nature of events precipitating children's international moves, the research team also wished to explore the strengths they had shown. In doing so, we offer an insight into the children's life histories, migration stories and current situations. This will build upon the perceptions of service providers and the experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children themselves.

Talking about the experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

All of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who were interviewed as a part of this project were asked about their pre-flight experiences, with a reassurance that there was no obligation to discuss such matters. The interview was structured in such a way that these questions were asked near the end of the interview in order that the possibility of any distress being experienced may be minimised. Service providers were also asked about their perceptions of the children's pre-flight experiences.

Previous research has highlighted that there were three main approaches by social workers with regard to talking about the experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Some took little account of past lives, others believed that 'a movement forward could not be achieved without looking back because the past disrupted the present' (Kohli, 2005: 11). A third group immersed themselves in all aspects of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's lives often becoming trusted companions. Similarly, with the service providers consulted in this project, there were three main responses to questions about the previous experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Firstly, there were a number of service providers who suggested that it was inappropriate or intrusive to ask unaccompanied asylum-seeking children about their previous experiences, and so they tended to focus on helping the children with their present circumstances. The following remarks are representative of this group of service providers:

- Sandra:** "... generally, I didn't see that it was my business to ask ... [the young people] are cagey and extremely sensitive about talking about their backgrounds"
(youth worker)
- Ellen:** "I haven't delved into that, and I mean I have no right to anyway"
(education)
- Samantha:** "I don't normally ask about these things so I don't know"
(advocacy and advice worker)

The second group of service providers displayed an interest and empathy with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's previous experiences, along with respect for privacy. Sensitive to children's welfare, they recognised that children's willingness to communicate often required time to build up trust, but could also fluctuate or take indirect forms. Consider the views of these service providers:

- Simone:** "I don't think that they want to talk about it to be frank"
(youth worker)
- Cecilia:** "... sometimes details are revealed, and other times, they don't reveal things"
(social services)
- Elizabeth:** "sometimes they don't want to talk about that ... sometimes it comes out in a piece of personal writing, or in the third person"
(education)

The third group of service providers suggested that it was important to be delicately pro-active in order to understand the previous experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Like Ruth, they thought that it was important to "untangle the reasons why young people come here", and for some, like Tara, it was suggested that training should be offered to explain "why people travel, and why people come here". Many of these service providers, like Samantha and Sinead below, were aware of the diverse pre-flight experiences of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that they worked with, and had gradually built up this information through their engagement with the children in their daily working lives.

- Samantha:** "... family members are often killed, and a relative helps them to get here. Often they are torture survivors"
(advocacy and advice worker)
- Sinead:** "... a lot of unaccompanied young people themselves have lived in really awful situations where the main reason that they're seeking refuge is because of the political situation"
(social services)

A number of the service providers who adopted the second and third response to questions about the previous experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children also recommended that the researcher speak to the children themselves in order to hear directly about the children's experiences.

Likewise, the children displayed a range of degrees of openness with regards to discussing their previous experiences. Other research has observed that many unaccompanied children are reluctant 'to talk in detail about their pre-flight experiences' (Thomas et al, 2004: 114). While this is often due to reluctance to re-live traumatic episodes, the work of Anderson (2001: 196) highlighted the importance of the 'secret task' to some unaccompanied children in Germany, where the children were given a 'cover story' by family or friends that they must tell about their previous experiences, the assumption being that this would help them with their asylum claim.

Some of the children in the present research did not want to talk about their previous experiences, and this was particularly the case for the young women consulted as a part of this project. *Esther* and *Nancy*, for example, were both very reluctant to discuss their past, and preferred to focus, as Sandra observed, "about the here and now". **Likewise, some of the young men also preferred not to talk about painful memories associated with their previous experiences:**

Junior: "It is very painful for me to talk about life. It gives me bad thoughts"

Abdul: "I wouldn't like to talk about that"

Bashir: "It is better to leave it as it will bring back memories"

Other children appeared comfortable talking about their previous experiences, though with various levels of openness. *Jamal*, for example, on being asked if he would be willing to share some of his pre-flight experiences, openly replied "I'm okay, but it's a long story". He then described his experiences in his country of origin and his journey to Scotland. A number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were willing to discuss how they got to Scotland and who decided that they should come here, but were resistant to discussing their motivations (or that of others) for coming to Scotland. It is important to emphasise that the children were voluntarily participating in this research project, and the researcher stressed that the research participants were entitled to refuse to answer questions.

Pre-flight experiences

A small amount of previous research has explored the pre-flight experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and it is clear that these experiences are wide-ranging and diverse. Primary reasons for flight include the death or persecution of family members or the persecution of the child, as well as experiences of forced recruitment, war and trafficking. A study based in London was able to construct a detailed picture of the children's pre-flight experiences using social services case files (Thomas et al (2000). This study has shown that the main reasons for flight are the death or persecution of family members (37 cases), persecution of the child (21), forced recruitment (15), war (12), trafficking (10), and education (5) (Thomas et al, 2004: 116). Similarly, other studies have identified reasons such as forced recruitment, war, rape and sexual violence (Gracey, 2003, Lynch and Cuninghame, 2000). It was important that this research project identified the range of pre-flight situations experienced by unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland in order that the children's needs can be met and their best interests promoted.

Generally, many of the service providers were aware of some of the traumatic, torturous, and difficult pre-flight experiences of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that they work with. As Ruth, an advocacy and advice worker stated, almost all of the children seeking asylum alone in Scotland are hoping to "get out of a difficult situation". However, Cameron, who works in social services, noted "we are only seeing a fraction of what these young people's lives are about". Despite the partial insights into the children's pre-flight experiences, comments from service providers included accounts of children being hunted out by soldiers, experiencing trauma and loss as well as a lack of "regard for human life" (Lucy, legal representative). Similarly, some of the children talked about experiences of violence, conflict and the devastation of villages and communities. Others did not know where family members were (assuming that they are still alive), and one child stated that his "father was a politician and he was killed". **The comments from these service providers highlight some of the main issues:**

Cecilia:	"horrendous stories" (social services)
Esther:	"terrible situations" (education)
Martine:	"genocide, rape, war, breakdown of civil society, lack of education and support, trafficked to get here, bereavement, separation" (health professional)
Elizabeth:	"some have had a very disruptive education" (education)

It was clear that all of the children consulted were seeking asylum 'because they feel it is unsafe to live in their own country' and they make an application 'based on the Refugee Convention which has very strict criteria' (Judith Dennis, *Research in Practice*, 2005: 1). As mentioned earlier, there may be a range of reasons why a person might apply for refugee status, and these may include a fear of being persecuted on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. From the service providers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children consulted in this project, one of the main general reasons for seeking asylum included issues connected with war, political circumstances, and either the death or persecution of family members or the persecution of the child themselves.

These examples from two children and five service providers demonstrate that a number of the children had suffered as a result of members of their family being killed:

<i>Prince:</i>	"I lost my family. I lost my brother. I lost my father. I lost everything"
<i>Sabir:</i>	"Most of my family have been killed"
<i>Edward:</i>	"witness mother and children being killed" (education)
<i>Sandra:</i>	"parents have been killed, or they didn't know if their parents were alive" (youth worker)
<i>Sheena:</i>	"A lot of them have lost their parents in really traumatic circumstances" (advocacy and advice worker)
<i>Ellen:</i>	"Family members being killed quite recklessly" (education)
<i>Ekram:</i>	"Mother and father died in front of them" (education)

The reasons why family members have been killed, and therefore the children's motivations for seeking asylum are complex and wide-ranging; however, the most frequently mentioned circumstances included war and generally tense political circumstances. For example, *Sabir* mentioned that there was "lots and lots and lots of gunfire, you know. Bullets land in the house. You see in Glasgow too many cars are driving on the road. In my country, bullets are like that, every second you hear bullets and people get shot, you know".

Here, four service providers also mentioned experiences of war and regional conflict as important characteristics of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children' pre-flight experiences:

Peggy:	“caught up in a war zone” (policy worker)
Elizabeth:	“war, disruption, tragedies, traumatic experiences” (education)
Emma:	“War is the main thing” (education)
Luke:	“minority tribes and clan warfare” (legal representative)

However, there was also an indication amongst a couple of service providers that the children's experiences of war were viewed differently according to how well-informed service providers are about the circumstances in the country that the child has fled from, and the related media coverage experienced in Scotland.

It is important, therefore, not to make assumptions about the brutality and severity of a child's pre-flight experiences based solely on perceived knowledge of the circumstances on the child's country of origin.

Connected with experiences of war and persecution of family members, many children and service providers also talked about the ways in which the children experienced difficult political circumstances, possibly because of their religious persuasion, their political opinions or the political views of their family or communities. As a result of religious affiliation, *Alfridi* mentioned “I was hit and beaten up myself, and as you can see, I have scars on my face”, and the views of the four children below demonstrate the difficulties of the political situations that they experienced:

<i>Junior:</i>	“The problems just happened suddenly. Those in power were looking for my family so it is difficult to talk ... apart from my uncle there is none of my family left in my country”
<i>Jaffar:</i>	“we were the minorities, there were problems and I wanted to be safe”
<i>Aluran:</i>	“it was the government”
<i>Arif:</i>	“It was a politics problem”

Many service providers demonstrated an awareness of the children's difficulties. As these statements highlight, it is clear that many of the children fled from their countries of origin because of the actual or perceived threat of personal persecution:

Cameron:	“fleeing religious persecution” (social services)
Peggy:	“pressure from the state or at risk due to protesting against the state” (policy worker)
Sinead:	“Obviously a lot of unaccompanied young people ... they're seeking refuge because of the political situation” (social services)
Patrick:	“Persecuted as people who have spoken out against the government” (policy worker)

A minority of the respondents in this research also mentioned forced recruitment as a concern. For example, Peggy, a policy worker, mentioned that some of the children are “forced into armed conflict”, and one of the group-work participants, when choosing a pseudonym, wanted to be referred to as “unknown soldier”. Furthermore, some service providers also mentioned concerns around issues of sexual assault, rape and female genital mutilation. For example, Luke, a legal representative, mentioned that there are “massive incidents of sexual assault”. Evidently many of the pre-flight experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were interconnected.

As Marion and Tara illustrated, there may be a one-off event or a series of other events that leads to the decision to migrate:

Marion:	“The ones that I've met and heard most direct accounts of ... they've been in a conflict zone and there's been a devastating event. Now, their experience of war or traumatic experience of other kinds have been very variable prior to the devastating event but it was usually something like soldiers coming into their family and setting fire to their house or capturing other family member or they themselves being captured and trafficked or sometimes given up to traffickers by family members trying to protect them or make money” (health professional)
Tara:	“it was to escape a life threatening event” (social services)

Since discussions about the pre-flight experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are sensitive and emotional, it was deemed inappropriate to directly discuss such issues in group settings (Hill, 2005). Therefore a less personalised exercise was devised for the group work which involved ten children. One of the activities during the group discussion involved the use of 'post-it' notes and large sheets of paper where the children were asked to think about what they like about their countries of origin and what they do not like about their country of origin. The use of paper and pen helps to make the process a little more anonymous and so may encourage more of the children to share their views.

The data presented in **Figure 5** is a summary of the statements written by unaccompanied asylum-seeking children during the group work exercise. The most striking finding was that children had more negative than positive comments to make about their countries of origin. Probably reflecting their recent exposure to the higher standard of living and more developed services in Scotland, many negative comments focused on inadequate services and poverty, as well as conflicts. The children's experiences were also gendered. The left-hand column of Figure 6 represents the views of a group of unaccompanied young women with the right-hand column representing the views of a group dominated by young men. In terms of their negative experiences in their countries of origin, the young women were more likely to focus on their personal treatment as well as poor service provision, whereas the young men tended to give more attention to their experiences of war and conflict. Moreover, in terms of aspects of life in their countries of origin that they miss, the young men tended to comment on their participation in sport and leisure activities, yet this is not mentioned by any of the young women.

Figure.05

Bad things about your country of origin (Women)	Bad things about your country of origin (Men)
<p>Services Poor sanitation. Poor sanitation/no water. You have to pay for health services. Poor health. Poor transport. Education is poor. No good schools. Lack of jobs. Poor transport system. No communication systems. Lack of electricity. No hospitals. Bad roads. Poor school and education facilities. No good entertainment. Family planning services are not available. Lack of health services. Poor housing. Poor housing. Lack of basic needs. A lot of accidents</p>	<p>Services Lack of being educated. No transport – ‘walk miles’. Not enough jobs. No social work department to help young children from the war. Lack of clear water. Lack of electricity. No electricity – sometimes eat in the dark. Bad organisation. Dirty</p>
<p>Conflict Wars. Tribalism. Fights and wars between tribes</p>	<p>Conflict War. War. Fighting. Bullets flying from left to right. Violence. People killing each other like they’re nothing. Killing, stealing, bad government. Bad government</p>
<p>Weather When it rains its bad. Excessive sunshine – in fact over 40 degrees</p>	
<p>Poverty There is not enough food. Poverty.</p>	<p>Poverty Poor country. Poverty. Starvation. Food. Hunger – no food</p>
<p>Health The most killer disease which is AIDS. Many diseases - especially AIDS and Malaria</p>	<p>Health Diseases. Disease</p>
<p>Personal Treatment Insecurity. No security – you live in fear. Rapes. Too much punishing of children even for useless issues. Some children – they sleep very rough on the streets. Young people are forced to undergo circumcision. Early marriages. Bribery</p>	<p>Personal Treatment Some people there have no feelings for other – you have to survive on your own. BAD treatment in hospitals. Worry. Insecurity. Discrimination</p>

Good things about your country of origin (Women)	Good things about your country of origin (Men)
<p>Food Good food. Cultural food. Good and real fruit</p>	<p>Food Food</p>
<p>Culture Speak your language all of the time. Good home training. Learn how to cook and it helps when you are older. Traditional culture. Music</p>	<p>Culture Lively country. Culture. When you are sick. You get traditional treatment. No need for tablets and stuff. I miss my street</p>
<p>Personal Treatment We are taught respect of people. Respect. Young people have respect for elders</p>	<p>Family My family. Family</p>
<p>Weather Nice weather</p>	<p>Sport/Outdoor Activities Games. The games we used to play. Coming home from school seeing everybody out playing football. Going and watching friends performing (dancing. singing). Kite flying</p>

The decision to leave

While children had profound reasons for needing to leave home, the actual decision to leave and its timing were often largely in the hands of others. The researcher asked the children about how the decision to leave their country of origin was made, and who it was that made this decision. This is also significant as one of the key principles of the UNCRC is recognition of children's rights to participate in decisions affecting them. **The children's views demonstrated that there were a range of actors who participate in this important decision-making process:**

- Sabir:* "... my uncle decided to send me"
- Junior:* "I couldn't make the decision to come here. My uncle did because it was the only safe way to save my life"
- Bilal:* "My mother decided that I should leave"
- Lumpungu:* "...someone else decided"
- Jaffar:* "my family decided"
- Karen:* "I haven't got any family so it was other people who made the decision"

The most frequently mentioned response to this question was that their 'uncle' made the decision to send them to Scotland. It should be noted here that, although for some of the children an uncle was a blood relative (the brother of a child's mother or father), some of the children use the term 'uncle' to refer to a family friend or a person who lived in the same street or neighbourhood as the child. Some like Karen said they made the decision themselves to leave their country of origin, but, it was clear that many of the children do not have a lot of say with regard to such decisions. Moreover, they often had little influence on the route taken, with some being ignorant of where they were going having left their country of origin, and some children were not aware that they had arrived in Scotland. **Sabir's experiences are an example of this:**

- Sabir:* "On the way I was just following this man ... I didn't know anything ... I didn't know where I was going. I didn't know anything, I was just the luggage taken here and there"

Approximately half of the children consulted in this project were not aware that they were travelling to Scotland, knew very little about the country, and hence were very confused and disorientated when they arrived.

Experiences of the migration process

The children's experiences of the migration process are often complex, traumatic and filled with uncertainty. Sharon, a youth worker, talked about their "dramatic journeys to the UK". Peggy, a policy worker mentioned the "extreme vulnerability" experienced by many children, along with, as Patrick, who also works in policy, observed their "torturous journeys". The vast majority of children consulted in this project had not strictly travelled 'unaccompanied' and talked about an agent accompanying them on their journey to Scotland. This person was often known to the wider family or had had previous contact with a member of the child's local community, and so could be contacted by family or friends in order to request that the child be brought to Scotland.

<i>Linda:</i>	"Yes ... he was a friend of my uncle's"
<i>Sabir:</i>	"Yes ... with an agent"
<i>Junior:</i>	"I came with my uncle's friend. We came together and he left me. We had one hour in another country and then came here"
<i>Zaru:</i>	"I came with someone ... it was an agent"
<i>Bilal:</i>	"I came with an agent"

Luke, a legal representative, clarified that "everyone tends to say that they are brought by an agent". Service providers voiced concern about the motivations and actions of the agents involved in bringing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to Scotland. For example, Sheena who works in social services stressed that the "agent is not a protector and often abuses" the children. Martine, a health professional, stated "rape is often part of the price to pay for getting here" and suggested that some agents used a tactic which she described as "you give me your body and I'll get you out of here". Some service providers also recollected stories about unaccompanied asylum-seeking children being sexually abused by agents as well as the agent allowing their friends to use the children for similar purposes.

It is clear that many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, as Martine notes, "don't know how they got here". Sheena referred to the "complete confusion" of "not knowing where they are", highlighting that many children have little knowledge about the places they visited during their journeys to Scotland, and furthermore, did not know that it was Scotland that they were travelling to. Although the vast majority of children said that they were brought by an agent, there was one child who specified that they "travelled in a lorry". This person said "I was taken with a smuggler who helped me" and then "the lorry changes in [country x)".

Almost all of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from Africa were brought by an agent, while the smaller number from Asia were either smuggled, or had to make their own way here without an agent. There may therefore be a more organised system of agents working in some of the African countries, with children from Asia having to adopt alternative strategies in order to seek safety.

In terms of the children's journeys to Scotland, it is important to distinguish between smuggling and trafficking. Both terms were often used interchangeably by some service providers, highlighting a lack of understanding with regards to migrants' journeys to Scotland. **UNICEF (2003: 4) states:**

Human smuggling is the process whereby immigrants and asylum seekers pay people to help them enter a country illegally. Many pay large amounts for the services of the people who help them to evade border controls, but, fundamentally, this is the extent of the relationship; the smuggler is paid to bring the client into a country and, once this is complete and they have arrived at their destination, the smuggled person is free.

Whereas smuggling is a voluntarily purchased service, trafficking entails force or exploitation. **The Palermo Protocol outlines a common definition:**

Trafficking in persons' shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of person, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at the minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (UNICEF, 2003: 4).

Therefore, the victims of trafficking are often 'coerced or deceived by the person arranging their relocation'. Upon arrival, they 'are denied their basic human rights ... forced into exploitation,' 'are not paid for their services', and have no 'control over their lives' (UNICEF, 2003: 4).

As previously mentioned, a very small number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and service providers, referred to the smuggling of the children. More frequently, service providers referred to the trafficking of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. **For example, these comments are typical of the sentiments of many service providers:**

- Lucy:** “we’re fairly sure they’re being trafficked rather than smuggled”
(legal representative)
- Martine:** “quite a lot have been trafficked”
(health professional)
- Peggy:** “we’re quite sure they are brought by traffickers ... traffickers bringing in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children seem to be targeting Glasgow”
(policy worker)

Although there has been some previous research about the trafficking of unaccompanied and separated children (Bhabha, 2004, Somerset, 2001), much of this work is inconclusive due to the challenges of measuring, proving and demonstrating that trafficking has taken place. As ILPA (2004: 88) confirm ‘trafficked children are highly unlikely to reveal what has happened to them when they initially come into contact with the authorities or other professionals.’ Furthermore, research by Black (2003) suggests that public concerns over “illegal” migration have been exaggerated so that it is assumed that such forms of migration are more prevalent than they actually are in reality. Similarly, Luke was suspicious of claims about trafficking in Scotland:

- Luke:** “trafficking is not as much a problem in Scotland as Glasgow’s sex-trade is dominated by addicts who would undercut any competition”
(legal representative)

However, Selam Kidane mentions how unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in the UK may end up in “various industries” such as “sex industries or domestic servitude” (Research in Practice, 2005). None of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in this research made reference to trafficking, although, if it had occurred the child might well have wished to keep this secret out of fear or shame.

Experiences upon arrival in Scotland

Upon arrival in Scotland, some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children coming to Glasgow recollected being left in Central Station or stranded in an unknown location in the city. Children, like *Prince* said “I was brought here and given the address of the Scottish Refugee Council”, or were left outside Scottish Refugee Council offices. Others ended up being helped by policemen at Glasgow airport or other people they encountered having been left in an unknown location. For example, *Abdul* noted that “when I first came I didn’t know where I was, or where I should be going, but I was told I should go there (Scottish Refugee Council) and that they would give me help”. Apart from the minority who were dropped at or made their way to Scottish Refugee Council, most faced, in the words of Marion, a health professional, “massive adjustment issues that are compounded by the fact that they may be alone in a strange and unknown situation”.

Overall, the early experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children upon arrival were wide-ranging and diverse as feelings of relief and safety were accompanied by feelings of loneliness and isolation, as the views of these children exemplify:

Karen: “I felt really different as everything is so different to what I am used to”

Lumpungu: “The way I was welcomed, I felt safe”

Sabir: “At first I was afraid, but after that when things started to roll, I felt calm”

Jamal: “I didn’t know what to do. I was scared sometimes”

Many of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children consulted in this project recalled visiting the offices of Scottish Refugee Council and then the Social Work offices shortly after their arrival in Scotland. For example, *Bilal* mentioned that “I went to Scottish Refugee Council and social work” and *Sabir* talked about being in “an office in the city centre” before going to “social work”. All of the children felt welcomed, comforted and relaxed by their engagements with service providers during this initial phase of reception in Scotland. Some, like *Beyonce* mentioned the climate noting, “it was quite dark and quite cold”. However, one of the most important issues for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children upon arriving in Scotland is to find suitable accommodation. This was a frequently mentioned concern of both service providers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. **For example:**

Linda: “I was in a hostel and had to wait 9 months to get a house, 9 months. I was waiting and waiting and waiting”

Esther: “... I was taken to [a local hotel] and after 2 weeks I was moved to a better hotel”

Upon arrival in Scotland, many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children like *Linda* and *Esther*, experienced problems resulting from unsuitable accommodation. Some children talked about staying in hotels and bed and breakfast for considerable lengths of time (in some cases for up to seven months), and other recalled being moved regularly and disruptively to alternative accommodation. *Jaffar* mentioned that he “stayed in Hamish Allan for one night³” before being “moved to another place”, and *Aluran* mentioned staying in a bed and breakfast for six months” and being “unable to cook”.

This creates a range of other challenges for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland. For example, Lucy, a legal representative, was very concerned about the isolation experienced by children staying in hotel accommodation. Sheena, who works in social services, commented on the lack of cooking facilities available in such accommodation noting, “food can be very comforting”. Furthermore, it would appear that the experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children upon arrival in Scotland are largely dependent upon the availability of the required services at that particular time as well as the particular place of arrival. This suggests that levels of service provision are uneven, and there may be times and places where children are unable to access particular services. This is particularly the case for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who arrive in places, such as Stranraer, which has few services and lacks staff who have experience in working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

In general, discussions with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children about their feelings and emotions upon arrival in Scotland tended to focus on experiences of loneliness, safety and language. Peggy, a policy worker, talked about the “isolation and loneliness” experienced by unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and *Linda* and *Junior* clarified that these were characteristics of their experiences upon arrival:

Linda: “Coming here, I didn’t know anybody, I didn’t know who to trust or who not to trust”

Junior: “I felt lonely ... You are alone here”

Often children at last felt safe after the threats experienced back home or on their travels. *Lumpungu* mentioned that “the way that I was welcomed, I felt safe” and *Sabir* confirmed that he felt very safe: “Yeah, yeah, very, very safe”. *Prince* was relieved to be “away from danger”. For some, though, insecurity persisted:

Junior: “I didn’t feel safe because I was still worried about the situation in my country”

³ Hamish Allan is a hostel in Glasgow for the homeless.

Many had a limited or negligible grasp of English when first arriving, so language was a common issue. Peggy referred to the “different language” and Patrick the “language barriers”. One group of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children highlighted the challenges posed by either not speaking English, or not being able to understand people due to regional accents and the pace at which people speak:

- Linda:* “Well, when I first arrived people couldn’t understand what I was saying and I couldn’t understand what they were saying because they were talking so fast”
- Junior:* “I didn’t know how to speak the language”
- Mina:* “The language was the main issue – how can I communicate with the people here?”

On top of having to deal with insecure accommodation, a new environment, culture, society and language, some children, according to Esther who works in education, “because they are unaccompanied ... are always thinking about what has happened to their relatives back home”. This is illustrated by the experiences of Junior mentioned above. Therefore, many service providers acknowledged the stress and anxiety that many children had to endure upon arrival in Scotland as well as the emotional and psychological implications of being detached and dislocated from their families, friends and communities in their countries of origin.

Although many service providers were concerned about the negative experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children upon arrival in Scotland, the vast majority of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the research reported positively about the people who have helped them, and the safety they have found in Scotland. *Junior* stated “when I came at first, I felt a little bit nervous, but now I feel more confident because all of my teachers help me to know the language and feel more confident about myself”. Further examples include:

- Linda:* “I came to realise the people here are really, really friendly”
- Sabir:* “It’s a lovely place. It’s nice, beautiful. I wouldn’t worry about being shot or about soldiers in the country so...I like a lot of things in this country”
- Junior:* “I will always be grateful for this country ... I consider Scotland as my second country because I have been accepted here”
- Bilal:* “The people are very nice, I like them very much”

We now consider adjustment to life in Scotland in more detail.

Experiences of living in Scotland

Respondents were asked about adapting to living in Scotland. Concern about negative experiences centred on racism, drunken behaviour and anxiety about the asylum process and the future. It is important to note that many of these were experienced alongside the challenges with language and social isolation mentioned earlier. Some service providers were concerned about the children's experiences of racial harassment, as demonstrated by these statements:

Patrick:	“They receive racist abuse regularly ... racism is a major problem yet a lot of people don't actually know what racism is about. Racism is about assuming something about someone based purely on the colour of their skin” (policy worker)
Martine:	“racism [which caused] reverberations with previous experiences” (health professional)
Esther:	“there is no doubt that racism is an issue” (education)
Sally:	“racism, a lot of racism” (advocacy and advice worker)

Martine, amongst others, was concerned that racist incidents may be particularly challenging for the children as they may resonate with their pre-flight experiences. Everyday experiences of racial harassment, abuse, and sometimes physical assault were mentioned by a vast majority of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children consulted in this research project. These quotes highlight some of the children's experiences:

Sabir:	“Well, some people, you know, speak racist words ... you know, ‘black bastard’, ‘go to your country’, all that stuff. But sometimes I don't mind, I walk away but, you know, it's not nice to...for me it's easy to walk away but...”
Prince:	“There are good people and there are bad people as well. There are people who treat me differently because I am black – in the street, they call me ‘fuckin’ black”
Junior:	“... see I have got different skin. I am black. Some pupils, they say things. Some swear, some abuse me”
Karen:	“...sometimes people are a bit abusive and racist and things ... they say things about my skin colour”
Jamal:	“well, some people, speak racist words”

As well as experiencing racism, many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children felt threatened by the presence of drunken people in the street, probably because of the increased likelihood of experiencing racism, and the lack of verbal, physical and emotional control exercised by some people under the influence of alcohol. These statements are representative of the children's perspectives:

<i>Apollo:</i>	"Some people drink a lot of beer and lose control"
<i>Esther:</i>	"A lot of people who are drunk ...some just call out names"
<i>Alfridi:</i>	"I think that the people here drink too much alcohol"
<i>Mina:</i>	"I don't like people who are drunk, and they look at us as if we are taking something from them"

Furthermore, some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were also fearful of people in uniform as a result of the associations they make between such people and their pre-flight experiences. Alongside this, many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children also had to cope with a different climate. For Peggy, a policy officer, "the weather is an issue", and Cecilia who works in social services confirmed that "they have problems with the climate". When asked if there were any aspects of their lives in Scotland that they did not like, many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, like *Linda*, mentioned "the weather".

Arguably, one of the most stressful experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland relates to the concern, worry and anxiety associated with their asylum application. Martine, a health professional clarified that "one of the biggest challenges is about whether or not they are allowed to be here". Agreeing with this, *Prince* stated that he was "very worried about my asylum status" and *Apollo* said it made him feel "very, very bad". One of the children was reduced to tears on being asked about his asylum status. These and other examples demonstrate the extreme stress and apprehension created by the asylum system.

Alongside these wide-ranging concerns, the children also have to cope with general well-being, health and emotional issues. Peggy, a policy worker, talked about how the children are all "coping with what you've been through" and mentioned that there may be "medical issues relating to previous experiences". Sandra, a youth worker, said that many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have a "deep sense of loss of the place left behind". Some service providers referred to children's experiences of survivor guilt as well as concerns about the safety of other family members.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were also encouraged to reflect upon the positive and negative aspects of their experiences of living in Scotland during the group work exercise referred to earlier. Many of the negative experiences associated with the drinking culture, racism and the different climate were also raised during this activity (see Figure 6). However, the children were generally very complimentary about Scotland and the services available to them. In particular, the group of young women provided a broad range of positive comments about health, education and other services. Furthermore, many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the discussion group exercise commented on the friendliness and helpful nature of the people they had met in Scotland. The children's positive experiences of Scotland are also reflected in their desire to stay in this country, as demonstrated by these children's opinions:

<i>Linda:</i>	Yes, I would like to stay in Scotland”
<i>Sabir:</i>	“Yes, I want to work and go to college, go to university one day. Yes, I have dreams”
<i>Junior:</i>	“I don’t want to go back to Africa. This is a good place to live and think about the future”

Furthermore, some of the children were very inspired by the support they had received from certain service providers and were motivated to get involved in similar forms of work. For example, Linda said “I want to be a Social Worker, I do. Yes, my Social Worker has helped me so much, so much, that I really want to be a Social Worker and help children in my position ... people in a position like that. I want to help them just as my Social Worker has helped me. She is really nice”. However, such positive experiences and ambitions were tempered by worries about the outcome of their asylum claims.

Figure.06

Good things about Scotland (Women)	Good things about Scotland (Men)
<p>Services A good health service. Good health services. Education is free. Good sanitation. The schools are located in a convenient area. Appointments on time. Good transport systems. The places to visit are so many – you can never be bored. Learning Resources Centres are widely available for young and elderly people. The church is near where I live. You can get a dentist or doctor if you fall sick without paying them. Good public transport. Good transport. Good school facilities and trained teachers. Lots of entertainment facilities. The school system is good. Free education of a high standard. Good communication systems. You can have international entertainment easily. The water is clean. The way of living is easier than where I come from. The water is very clean. Good standard of living. Nice buildings. A modern city with lots of development. They have good laws. People here care for young people. Ease of access to health and sanitation. Easier transport system and safer environment. The streets of Scotland are very clean everywhere you go. Children's rights are well dealt with and accepted.</p>	<p>Services Good school. School. Beautiful leisure centre. Lots of facilities. Lots of health centres. Lots of shops and supermarkets. Modern country with good administration. Big factories. Lots of activities to do. Lots of sports events.</p>
<p>People, Society and Culture There are lots of different cultures to interact with. People are lovely. The Scottish people are friendly. People are very friendly and helpful. Lots of interesting people. Scotland is really very safe because you can sleep without hearing any noise. Freedom to do whatever you want.</p>	<p>People, Society and Culture People. Welcoming country. Nice people. Nice people.</p>
<p>Weather Good experiences with the change of weather – like with our bodies</p>	

Bad things about Scotland (Women)	Bad things about Scotland (Men)
<p>People, Society and Culture The availability of our food is scarce. Children don't respect their elders. Lack of respect from young Scottish kids. Scottish boys in particular like bullying. Teenage drinking. Unhealthy food (too much fast food). The language is difficult. Racism. Racial problems (being black). Availability of drugs is too easy and young people are tempted to take them. The food is either too sweet or sour. Fast foods and unhealthy diets are too available. People who have pets put them first before other people, especially when walking their dogs. Too much freedom in Scotland. Smoke can harm someone who is near you, but some people, when they are smoking, they don't respect those who are not smoking yet when you are not smoking, it's the bad smell. Most people swear a lot.</p>	<p>People, Society and Culture Drinking mentality. Alcohol. Criminality.</p>
<p>Weather Weather.</p>	<p>Weather Cold weather. Bad weather.</p>
<p>Sport</p>	<p>Sport No cricket.</p>

Positive attributes of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

During interviews with service providers about the needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, many also reflected on the positive characteristics of the children that they work with. As mentioned earlier, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland are not a homogenous group. Sandra, a youth worker, noted that they comprise “people from very different backgrounds – some very sophisticated young people with city backgrounds as well as young people from villages with little or no English, wearing jeans and a t-shirt”. Ruth, an advocacy and advice worker, commented on the children’s “richness and vitality”. The most frequently mentioned positive set of qualities of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children relates to their resilience, determination and hard-working nature:

Cecilia:	“resilience and gutsiness, courage” (social services)
Sandra:	“very resilient young people” (youth worker)
Sheena:	“very motivated and resilient and need to make what they can of their lives” (advocacy and advice worker)
Sinead:	“... they just seem very, very strong mentally, in terms of their coping mechanisms are just absolutely amazing” (social services)
Marion:	“immense resilience, quite staggering resilience” (health professional)
Samantha:	“Resilient, creative, sturdy and hardworking, brave and courageous” (advocacy and advice worker)
Lucy:	“I think a lot of them are just very, very committed, very hardworking” (legal representative)
Sally:	“they want to work hard, they try at school, they want to get education, and they try very hard to learn English” (advocacy and advice worker)

Although a number of service providers observed the children's resilience, few commented on the source of the strength and resilience that they associated with the children. An exception to this was Marion, a health professional, who suggested that the source of their resilience came from the fact that she believed many of them had experienced privileged upbringings, "extreme affluence", and had been "well cared for in early life".

Other service providers commented on the contribution of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to Scottish society and culture. As Sandra, a youth worker, stated "these young people have lost everything yet they still have so much to give", and in particular, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were identified as being particularly passionate. Cecilia who works in social services talked about their "drive to accomplish things"; Lisa, a legal representative, mentioned how they "have a lot to teach young people in this country", and Patrick, a policy worker, referred to the "renewed vigour" that they bring to communities. Moreover, Catriona, who works in social services mentioned how they have put "the fun back into childcare", and Sandra was complimentary of the ways in which the children are "gracious and dignified", showing "gratitude" and a "positive attitude". The vast majority of the children also have a strong desire to be educated, work hard and gain experience and opportunities wherever possible, as highlighted by these comments:

- Ellen:** "They're young, multi-lingual, generally very motivated, have come with very strong beliefs which I think comes from the family ... their future is sacred in a way as well, that they're going to do something with it, they're going to use that in the future and I think that is really important as well. They have a very clear focus, very ambitious, generally not into drink, drugs and raves"
(education)
- Cecilia:** "real appetite for education"
(social services)
- Edward:** "children desperately want education, are keen to participate, put a lot of effort in and agree with the underlying principles of education"
(education)

The children's commitment to, and appetite for, learning led many service providers, like Edward, who works in education, to suggest that they "could teach indigenous young people about the value of education".

Conclusions

This chapter has offered a detailed summary of the pre-flight experiences, migration stories and current situations of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children living in Scotland. In doing so, we have attempted to value the perspectives of the children and look at the ways in which children shape their own migration stories, as well as giving due consideration to external circumstances. **Thomas et al (2004: 114) in their research in London noted that:**

Given the additional vulnerability of being unaccompanied, it is important to provide a detailed picture of the multiplicity of life circumstances and experiences of UASC [unaccompanied asylum-seeking children], in order to develop and improve existing health and social services to identify and meet needs (Thomas et al, 2004: 114).

All had experienced distressing conflict or persecution, sometimes including murders of close relatives. Some were preoccupied with continuing concern for safety of relatives back home. Often they had little involvement in the decision to leave, with many having been unclear where they were going to and not knowing where they were on arrival. The main problems faced in the early period in Scotland concerned unsuitable accommodation, isolation, unfamiliarity with the English language, racism and the cold climate. Even so, most were very positive about life in Scotland, while service providers recognised exceptional qualities, such as respect and commitment to education.

The detailed picture that has been constructed will help in understanding the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as well as the services required to meet these needs, as the experiences of the children are likely to inform their needs. The following chapters provide an analysis of service provision in the context of the children's needs and experiences and therefore enable a series of recommendations to be made that will help to improve the circumstances of, and the services available to, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland.

03.children's needs

Hedi Argent arrived in England in 1939 as a refugee as she recalls her feelings shortly after her arrival:

I can still become overwhelmed by the memories of my confusion: relief, gratitude, a subtle mixture of safety and insecurity, strangeness, a foreign language, alien food and customs, cold, open fires which might burn down the funny houses, freedom to speak but nothing to say, the incomprehension of the natives, the lure of permanence but not knowing how to fit in (Argent, 1996: 24).

Now that the pre-flight experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have been explored in detail, it is important to focus on the needs of the children. Many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that arrive in Britain, like Argent, are overwhelmed by their new experiences, along with strange languages, cultures, climate and traditions, and completely different everyday lives. In order to help unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in their new situations, it is important that service providers understand the needs of the children themselves.

In terms of understanding children's needs, a number of theories, approaches and insights have been outlined, particularly in psychology and social policy, over the last forty years. Maslow's (1970) approach is one of the most influential early formulations of human needs. His hierarchy of needs suggests that the 'more fundamental needs at the bottom of the hierarchy have to be met before it is possible to devote energies to higher needs' (Hill and Tisdall, 1997: 41). The hierarchy includes physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem, knowledge and understanding and finally, self-actualisation. A range of other approaches to understanding children's needs have sought to build on or critique Maslow. For example, Pringle (1980) focused on non-physical needs and emphasised the need for love and security, new experiences, praise and recognition, and responsibility. The authors of the London study clarify that it is 'important that we do not look at [unaccompanied asylum-seeking children] through a western, professional, 'goldfish bowl'' (Thomas et al, 2004: 120). Similarly Woodhead (1998) argues that application of ideas about needs has often been ethnocentric and over generalised. Therefore it is necessary to explore service providers and children's views about needs, and the extent to which specific needs are being met. Here, Bradshaw (1972), thinking about the methods of identifying needs, distinguishes between four different types of need: felt, expressed, normative and comparative needs. Felt needs are based largely on what people want, whereas expressed needs relate to demand and therefore constitute a felt need that is acted upon. Normative needs are those defined by professionals, and comparative needs are established on the basis comparing particular circumstances and situations with other people or areas (Hill and Tisdall, 1997: 55).

The aim of this chapter is to reflect on the views of service providers (professionally defined needs) and children (felt needs). Overall, it is clear that needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are wide-ranging, diverse and complex, and vary depending on the previous experiences and life histories of the children and their responses to their circumstances (Morris, 2005). For the purpose of this chapter, we have classified the children's needs into seven main categories, all of which are explored in detail. These are: the need to be recognised as children, legal and representational needs; accommodation and housing needs; information and communication needs; health, medial and dietary needs; educational needs, and finally, social, cultural and emotional needs.

The need to be recognised as children

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children' status as children was emphasised by a number of service providers, and many suggested that the children's need to be recognised as children was paramount:

Sandra:	"They are young people first and foremost" (youth worker)
Elizabeth:	"They are children and are treated the same as all other children" (education)
Mark:	"we treat the children the same way as we treat a Glasgow child" (health professional)

Others such as Sheena, an advocacy and advice worker, were more specific about the children's stage on the lifecourse, noting that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are "caught in between – kind of not a child and kind of not an adult". So it is important to stress that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are children and that they are alone in Scotland (or with other siblings). This led many service providers to suggest that their status as children is more important than their status as asylum seekers. Moreover, the unaccompanied status could be seen as both increasing a child's vulnerability and their self-reliance. Sandra explained:

Sandra:	"There is a huge difference between young asylum seekers who come here with families and those that are unaccompanied. UASC are firstly much more vulnerable emotionally and much more mature – they are on a completely different plain" (youth worker)
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Despite the significance of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's status as children, some service providers, such as Edna who works in education, tended to classify them with asylum seekers and refugee families who have been dispersed under the NASS agreement. Martine stressed the importance of individual differences:

Martine: "who are we to assume that an asylum seeker or refugee from the Congo has anything in common with an asylum seeker or refugee from Albania ... just like we can't assume that all Glaswegians want the same thing, we can't assume that all refugees and asylum seekers want the same thing either"
(health professional)

Furthermore, Sinead was very concerned that some children were not getting the recognition they deserve as a result of assumptions made by certain service providers with regards to the age of the children:

Sinead: "there are concerns, quite deep-rooted concerns as well that a lot of these young people aren't the age they claim to be and as such don't get the acknowledgement and recognition that they need in terms of the support"
(social services)

As Save the Children (2005: 62) state, 'young men in particular often look older than their years and the burden of proof lies with the young person'.

Some service providers, such as Peggy, a policy worker, also questioned the grouping of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with looked after and accommodated children, noting that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have "different needs, therefore, they should be classed as UASC and maybe not as looked after and accommodated". Cecilia, who works in social services, suggested that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have "needs that we might never be able to fill". Debates about the classification of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children demonstrate that many service providers are aware of the diversity of their needs, but unsure about how to meet their needs. However, although debates about classification deserve consideration, it is more important to think about the particular needs of the children first. **The Separated Children in Europe Programme's statement of good practice suggest that:**

Separated children are entitled to the same treatment and rights as national or resident children. They should be treated as children first and foremost. All consideration of their immigration status should be secondary (Save the Children, 2004: 7)

It is clear therefore that a very important need of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is the need to be recognised as children and treated like any others of the same age. Where there is uncertainty, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children need to be recognised as children, and the benefit of the doubt should be given to the child.

Legal and representational needs

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children also possess a complex range of legal and representational needs, the most important being legal representation for their asylum claim. As the Separated Children in Europe programme recommends:

At all stages of the asylum process, including any appeals or reviews, separated children should have a legal representative who will assist the child to make his or her claim for asylum. Legal representatives should be available at no cost to the child and, in addition to possessing expertise on the asylum process, they should be skilled in representing children ...' (Save the Children, 2004: 24)

Furthermore, Argent (1996: 26) asserted that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children need 'expert legal advice and representation regarding their asylum claim'. A number of service providers, like Sheena, an advocacy and advice worker, recognised the importance of this need to the children: "access to a good lawyer who knows how to work with young people as this is the where the crux of their lives lies". The child's gender and gendered expectations are important here, and many young women prefer female representation.

The need for legal representation is also connected with the need to provide unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with clear and concise information regarding the asylum system and their claim for asylum. A number of agencies commented on the importance of explaining the asylum process to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and taking the time to ensure that child fully understands each stage of their application.

The lack of understanding and knowledge about the asylum system, and a lack of explanation about how the system works, was a worrying and frustrating experience for many of the children, as demonstrated here:

- Lumpungu:** “The main thing is to be able to stay, to have asylum ... if you can be accepted, you can worry about other things, but if you don’t know, you can be kicked out at any point”
- Sabir:** “... you have to worry because you don’t know if the country accept it, [they] can bring you back to your country, you know?”
- Junior:** “I don’t know, it is up to them to decide what is going to happen. I had a bad story in my country because my father you know, it is very hard to explain and sometimes I don’t like talking about it, you know”

There appears then to be a need for further information about the asylum system, as well as need for certainty regarding the future. Marion was very concerned about the “anxiety around the asylum seeking process”.

Connected with this, many service providers were concerned by the inconsistent outcomes of many asylum applications, and felt that the system often overlooked the emotional reasons why a child might hide or alter their accounts of what had happened. Martine, a health professional, noted, for example, that “... if they don't mention initially that they've been raped, then mention it three months later, it is inclined to be disbelieved”. Some service providers suggested that the asylum system should be open to appreciating the experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and how this influences the claims they make (or do not initially make) in their asylum applications.

Many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and service providers were concerned about the impact of the legislative system on the children’s emotional and psychological well-being, and sense of security. Elizabeth, who works in education, noted that “... they are very aware of their status and they are very fearful. They are very scared that they might be taken away so we try to give them confidence”. Here unaccompanied asylum-seeking children often require emotional support from service providers who have a clear understanding of the asylum system. Furthermore, for some of the children, their lack of recognition is very challenging as *Bilal* notes, “... I feel really bad, because if I drop dead here, there will be no record of me ... If I am beaten up outside, nobody will know about it”. It is clear then that many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children need to be recognised as people, although the asylum system makes this very difficult.

Both European Union directives as well as the Separated Children in Europe programme have stressed that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children ought to have an independent guardian or advisor, partly to provide information and legal assistance. The EU Directive (2003) Article 19(1) states that:

Member States shall as soon as possible take measure to ensure the necessary representation of unaccompanied minors by legal guardianship or, where necessary, representation by an organisation which is responsible for the care and well-being of minors, or by any other appropriate representation. Regular assessments shall be made by the appropriate authorities.

Likewise, the Separated Children in Europe programme advises that 'as soon as a separated child is identified, an independent guardian or adviser should be appointed – in a long-term perspective – to advise and protect separated children (Save the Children, 2004: 16). In the present study some service providers suggested that this 'independent guardian' should be the social worker. However, others like Richard, believed that this person should be independent of statutory services and the legal system:

Richard: "one of the needs is the role of an independent advocate and support outwith statutory service and immigration. I think it's crucial ... to help someone understand and navigate their way through the systems they have to"
(advocacy and advice worker)

The Refugee Council in London operates a non-statutory panel of Advisors for Unaccompanied Refugee Children (Children's Panel). This includes around 25 fully supported and supervised adults who provide support to children who are claiming asylum. As the Refugee Council's leaflet about the Panel states, this support includes:

- assisting the child in accessing quality legal representation
- guiding the children through the complexities of the asylum procedure
- if necessary, accompanying the child to asylum interviews, tribunal and appeal hearings, magistrates and crown court appointments
- building up a support network for the child involving a range of statutory and non-statutory service providers
- supporting the child during the appointment with GPs, hospitals, social services or other service providers.

There is ambiguity about the geographical coverage of this Panel. Refugee Council staff have stated that the Panel is only funded to work in England (although their leaflet states that the Panel works across the UK), while others claim that the Panel is operated by Home Office funding, and so should offer a pan-UK service. However, what is clear is that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland have not benefited from the services offered by the Panel of Advisors, and are losing out as a result of this. For example, *Alfridi* noted:

Alfridi: “I don’t know who my legal representative is and I don’t know what my legal status is. I have not had any response from any legal service. The only thing that I’ve been told is that it sounds as if I’m okay until 18, but I don’t know.”

Alfridi’s comments suggest that the standard of his legal advice representation was very poor. However, if he had received support from a Panel member, he might have had more knowledge and understanding of his asylum status, and be more aware of the services available to him. Furthermore, such people may assist in meeting the aspirational needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in discussing the reality of their expectations in their new lives. On hearing about the format of the Refugee Council’s panel, Marion, a health professional, said “I think that sounds like an ideal model. I’ve not heard of that before and it sounds excellent”. There is a need then, for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland to have access to a Children’s panel of advisors who can help to clarify their legal status and guide them through the asylum system if required.

Recommendation

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland should be given assistance from an independent guardian or advisor. This should be similar to the Panel of Advisors operated by the Refugee Council which unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in England may access. The Panel must have full understanding of the Scottish context. Thus, it is suggested that this should be operated by Scottish Refugee Council or through partnership working between the Refugee Council and Scottish Refugee Council.

Recommendation

All unaccompanied asylum-seeking children must have early access to high-quality legal representation to assist them in their asylum claim. It is vital that legal representation is available throughout the duration of the young person’s claim.

Accommodation and housing needs

EU Directive (2003, Article 19(2)) lays down the minimum standard for the reception of asylum seekers:

Unaccompanied minors who make an application for asylum shall, from the moment they are admitted to the territory to the moment they are obliged to leave the host Member State in which the application for asylum was made or is being examined, be placed:

- (a) with adult relatives;
- (b) with a foster-family;
- (c) in accommodation centres with special provision for minors;
- (d) in other accommodation suitable for minors

Member States may place unaccompanied minors aged 16 or over in accommodation centres for adult asylum seekers. As far as possible, siblings shall be kept together, taking into account the best interests of the minor concerned and, in particular, his or her age and degree of maturity. Changes of residence of unaccompanied minors shall be limited to a minimum.

It is therefore important to keep family members together, as well as minimising the number of changes of residence of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Overall, this demonstrates that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children need safe, secure and consistent accommodation with adequate cooking facilities.

Generally, respondents considered that provision of accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland was very poor, so some of the children's housing needs were not being met. Marion, a health professional, suggested that "the gap [in service provision] would be in suitable housing", and Valerie, who works in social services, also mentioned the "lack of suitable accommodation" as a major concern. *Nasser* agreed, saying that one of his unmet needs was "housing, other places to live". The organisations and agencies that provide these services often have waiting lists, insufficient resources, and issues with funding and staff availability. Furthermore, some of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arrive in Scotland with other siblings, and so need accommodation with room for their family members. Also, some children are housed in accommodation for homeless people, and find such places disruptive, abusive and dangerous. As Marion observed "I would say the homeless hostels, like, with all the best will in the world, the high turnover, the noise, the restrictions most would be terrifying", and some service providers suggested that the disturbances and behaviour of people living in such accommodation may result in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children having flash-backs to their pre-flight experiences.

Not only was somewhere to stay important in itself, but the location, setting and nature of such provision was also significant:

Marion: “accommodation had a big impact - how and where they were accommodated, mattered considerably”
(health professional)

For example, an important consideration raised by a number of service providers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was the need for accommodation with adequate cooking facilities. Some service providers were very concerned by the ways in which some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are temporarily housed in hotels, or bed and breakfast accommodation, unable to cook and lacking social support. *Prince* felt that one of his main problems was the inability to cook because he was staying in a hotel. He stayed there for a number of months, highlighting the urgent need for appropriate accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and when he was asked if there were any unmet needs, he said, “moving out of the hotel”. *Sabir* said, “you know, you can’t cook in the hotel, you can’t”. This need was related to a wish to cook food more suited to their culture and country of origin, and so the need for particular forms of housing provision is not only to meet their accommodation needs but is also a matter of both dietary well-being and cultural continuity.

Recommendation

The standard of accommodation available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children must be improved. Children should not be housed in homeless hostels for even a short the period of time. Access to safe, stable, clean and good quality accommodation is vital and must include the provision of appropriate cooking facilities, social support and advocacy.

Recommendation

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children must be given the same opportunity as Scottish children to be engaged in decisions about their accommodation and welfare. A Children’s Rights approach should underpin this.

Information and communication needs

The Separated Children in Europe Programme (Save the Children, 2004: 19) recommends that ‘the views and wishes of separated children should be sought and taken into account whenever decisions affecting them are being made’. Furthermore, they also recommend that ‘separated children should be provided with accessible information about, for example, their entitlements, services available, the asylum process, family tracing and the situations in their countries of origin’ (Save the Children, 2004: 10). An important need of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is therefore that they are able to communicate with services providers, and are given information about their rights, entitlements and the services available to them. As Rachel, an advocacy and advice worker, stated, it is “integral for young people to understand and be understood”.

For example, here are two examples of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children clarifying that they need more information about local services:

Abdul: “there is not enough information about services”

Aluran: “I like to do sport, but I don’t have any information about it”

A particularly important need for information concerned the wish of some to restore contact with relatives. The vast majority of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were unaware of the Red Cross’ International Tracing and Messaging Service. Some of the children will not have family to contact, or may not want to contact their family, however, the 2003 EU Directive (Article 19(3)) comments on the importance of tracing family members in a sensitive and confidential manner. It would appear that the standards set by this directive are not being met:

Member States, protecting the unaccompanied minors’ best interest, shall endeavour to trace the members of his or her family as soon as possible. In cases where there may be a threat to the life or integrity of the minor or his or her close relatives, particularly if they have remained in the country of origin, care must be taken to ensure that the collection, processing and circulation of information concerning those persons is undertaken on a confidential basis, so as to avoid jeopardising their safety.

As well as the information about specific forms of service provision, some service providers suggested that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children often need general information about social norms, or what Cecilia, who works in social services, called, “cultural sensitivities” about personal conduct, behaviour and attitudes in Scotland. This is likely to be of benefit to the children as they negotiate their everyday lives.

Furthermore, Richard, an advocacy and advice worker, mentioned the need to explain concepts such as ‘social work’ to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who come from countries where such services do not exist. This connects with the findings of the London study (Thomas et al, 2004: 121) where they flag up an important consideration for service providers: These services must recognise that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may be more reluctant to seek help from traditionally ‘western’ services and may require additional outreach. Discussions with service providers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children demonstrate that the knowledge and understanding about the services available to the children were variable and often misunderstood. Luke, a legal representative, noted that service providers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are both “empowered through information”. It may therefore be useful to develop information leaflets for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and service providers that contain information, contact and details about the various services available across Scotland.

Recommendation

Detailed information should be developed for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who arrive in Scotland. This should be in a format appropriate for the age group and should contain information about unaccompanied asylum-seeking children’s rights and the services available to them such as the Tracing and Messaging Service, as well as other points of advice and information about Scottish society and culture.

Culturally-specific terms such as “social work” need to be carefully explained. This information should also be distributed to organisations and agencies working with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in order that they are also familiarised with the range of services available.

Connected with the children’s need for information, it is also important that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are able to communicate with service providers, and this often requires an accurate and trustworthy interpreter. As Argent (1996: 26) notes ‘in the first place, nearly all refugees need a reliable and readily available interpreter – someone who not only speaks their language and understands their dialect and customs, but is also a person the child can trust’.

Again, the Separated Children in Europe Programme recommends that:

Separated children should be provided with suitably trained interpreters who speak their preferred language whenever they are interviewed or require access to services or legal procedures (Save the Children, 2004: 9).

The standard of interpreting services in Scotland appears to be variable as Sally clarified:

Sally: “some of [the interpreters] have been very good, very professional and translate what you say exactly, translate back, never make another comment, which is good. Some of them have been very supportive with people. Others do not translate correctly; there is no doubt of this”
(advocacy and advice worker)

It was clear that some service providers were very aware of the importance of efficient interpreters and attempted to use the same interpreter for particular children having observed that they had built up a rapport with each other. Sinead, who works in social services, stated that “young people start to establish relationships with interpreters and get to know the way they work”. This is an important need for the children: ‘when picking an interpreter it should not be assumed that because the interpreter is from the same country as the child that they speak the same language or dialect. The interpreter may in fact come from another ethnic, religious, cultural or political group that may hold views opposite to that of the child (Chester, 2001: 165).

Service providers should be cautious about how they select interpreters, and it is also inappropriate to use children as interpreters (Lynch and Cuninghame, 2000: 386).

There was an indication that some service providers were open to the children interpreting for each other, and it was also suggested that the researcher used this technique to interview a child. This offer was refused on the grounds of the well-being of the children.

It is therefore important that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are able to be voice their opinions on matters affecting them and are consulted about issues relating to their circumstances, experiences and futures. This often requires an interpreter, and as these service providers noted, such services are sometimes not readily available:

Sinead: “We had a situation where a young person arrived in the country and we couldn’t find an interpreter for him ... we couldn’t find him an interpreter so we couldn’t even establish his basic needs. Was he safe? Was he ill? What could he eat? All these kinds of things and the staff had to learn on their feet and basically get on with it until we could find an interpreter”
(social services)

Mark: “It took months to find an interpreter in some cases”
(health professional)

Recommendation

It is essential that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have access to appropriately trained interpreters. Organisations providing interpreting services should draw up a set of guidelines or best practice suggestions for interpreters and service providers working with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in order that the communication needs of the young people can be met.

Educational needs

Educational needs were also identified as being particularly important to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Argent (1996: 25) states that 'education is a basic right for every child, and it is one of the ways children can reclaim their normal childhoods'. In agreement with Argent, many service providers noted how school or college performed not just educational functions, but also provided a safe place for the children to be and learn. This was evident in the views of many in the teaching profession. Martine, a health professional, noted that it "is a normalising experience to go to school", and Elizabeth, who works in education, saw an important part of her job as the "building up confidence and thinking about their futures". For Edward, his field – education – "comes out tops" particularly because it "symbolises security", and Patricia, a policy worker, stated that "I think education is paramount". In line with this, the advice of the Separated Children in Europe programme states that:

Separated children should have access to the same statutory education as national children. Schools need to take a flexible, welcoming approach with separated children and provide second language support. In order to preserve their cultural identity separated children should have access to mother tongue teaching. Vocational and professional training should be available to older separated children. It is likely to enhance their life chances if they return to their home country (Save the Children, 2004: 22).

In terms of thinking about educational needs, Eric, who works in education, stressed that many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have had "no previous access to formal education", and so it may take time for the children to become accustomed to the "challenges of the Scottish education system". This is supported by Chester (2001: 166) who notes that 'often, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arrive in this country without any education history' (Chester, 2001: 166). On the other hand, EIS (2003: 7) warn, 'do not assume that refugee children have no knowledge. Experience tells us that many are very intelligent and knowledgeable whether through formal education or through their experiences.' Overall then, it is important that the educational needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are carefully assessed, and service providers should be cautious about making assumptions about their previous levels of educational attainment.

In terms of specific educational needs, many of the research participants suggested that linguistic support was one of the primary issues, as Esther and Eric explain:

Esther: “support with English language is the first need”
(education)

Eric: “support with English language provision is the first need”
(education)

Furthermore, some of the children also noted that learning English and receiving language support were very important to their personal and social development:

Lumpungu: “English is the main thing, if I could just learn English”

Sabir: “First of all I want to learn a lot more about reading and writing, speaking English”

Glasgow City Council operates a system where asylum-seeking children are only placed into mainstream classes after it is agreed that they have the appropriate language skills to cope with mainstream teaching. There are only specific schools that are staffed to provide such a service. One of these schools is Shawlands Academy, which has its own unit devoted to bilingual support, as *Alfridi* clarified:

Alfridi: “I got told that my English wasn't very good so I was told to go to Shawlands as they have better facilities there”

As a result of the dispersal of asylum seekers to Glasgow, service providers have often adapted provision in order to meet the needs of new arrivals. However, services in other places have not, and so unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who live outside of Glasgow tend to be educated in mainstream schools.

Some Further Education services operate various levels of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) in order to meet the language needs of the children. It was suggested that it can take up to 5-7 years to learn English, and this was particularly challenging for the older unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Furthermore, Edward noted how the children's linguistic abilities may be strong with regards to verbal skills, but poorer in writing or reading.

This suggests that it is important to assess fully the strengths and weaknesses of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children verbal, written and listening skills, as well as their knowledge and understandings about ideas and concepts:

Edward: “... verbal skills are good but understanding of concepts in some subjects is not so good”
(education)

Sensitivity to the children’s linguistic needs is therefore important for their educational development. It is important to value the child’s first language and their previous educational achievements as well as their progress in learning about a new educational system and a new language.

A number of service providers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children commended the schools and colleges for their work in this area, and Emma, who works in education, was one of the few to state that there is a need for “better educational provision”. However, whilst school is seen to provide a safe environment, some service providers were concerned about the lack of services available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children after school. Edward suggested that a key need for the children is “access to out-of-school activities”. Furthermore, comments were also made about the restricted access that some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have to specific courses because, for example, funding is restricted for college places, or the higher fees levied on foreign students attending universities. It was noted that Strathclyde University offers a free place to an exceptional member of the asylum-seeking and refugee community each year, but this is restricted to one place.

Recommendation

It is vital that the high-quality education and support provided to most unaccompanied asylum-seeking children by schools and colleges should be available to everyone. The Scottish Executive should give unaccompanied asylum-seeking children the same rights and entitlements to access further and higher education as all children in Scotland.

Recommendation

There is a need for statutory and voluntary organisations to develop out-of-school provision, after-school care services and extra curricular activities for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Health, dietary and medical needs

One of the most important health needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, according to some service providers, is the need to ensure that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have been immunised against the same diseases as other children in Scotland. For example, Mark, a health professional, when asked about needs suggested that “immunisation is the top one”. Alongside this, some service providers, in agreement with the findings of the London study, also acknowledge that the ‘psychosocial and general health needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may well develop over time as they adjust to life in their new countries’ (Thomas et al, 2004: 120). Clearly, the health, dietary and medical needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are complex and may change over time.

A number of service providers intimated a concern for the dietary needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Cameron, who works in social services, noted that “dietary needs are very important”, and Mary, a health professional, observed that “many are not accustomed to the Scottish diet”. The vast majority of interviewees expressed knowledge of dietary requirements such as the need for Muslim children to be given halal meat, and some service providers showed initiative in finding out about local shops that stocked particular food types associated with some of the children’s countries of origin.

However, due to the financial and housing circumstances of some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, they may have to survive, like Prince had to, by “eating KFC everyday”. As Sheena, an advocacy and advice worker remarked, “McDonalds is cheap but it’s really bad for you as we have seen on TV”. There was frustration about some of the stomach complaints from the children due to the changes in their everyday diet, as well as their reliance on buying in food due to a lack of cooking facilities in some of their accommodation. As a result of this Lucy, a legal representative, stated that a number of children have been “prescribed Gaviscon by the bucket-load”.

A number of service providers also emphasised the importance of considering the medical and sexual health needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Gracey (2004: 1424) suggests that when refugees arrive in foreign countries, their settling process ‘must include clinical and laboratory screening for infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis B, sexually-transmissible diseases, gastrointestinal parasitic infestation and gastrointestinal infections which can be spread throughout the community.’ Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are classified as looked after and accommodated children are often given thorough medical assessment for such health issues, however, older unaccompanied children often do not receive such treatment. Yet, ‘separated (unaccompanied) children were described as having more severe health needs, which were due in part to the traumas they had encountered within their home countries, the journey to the UK and lack of emotional support upon arrival (Save the Children, 2005: 52).

There is therefore a clear need to ensure that all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and not just those classified as looked after and accommodated, receive a thorough assessment of their health and medical situation.

Concern about the children's sexual health was also raised by a number of service providers, and it would appear that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children rarely access services provided in this field. Therefore additional outreach may be necessary. In particular, some service providers were concerned by the situation of young women from a range of African countries, some of whom arrived pregnant. These children were often referred to sexual health clinics; but, many of these only cater for women over 18.

Mental health care support also raised by a number of service providers as being an important need to many of the unaccompanied children that they work with. Previous research has also noted that 'regarding gender, males and females may have significantly different exposure to war and other violence, including rape, which may affect mental health' (Hodes, 2002: 367), and so mental health issues is likely to vary according to the age, gender and previous experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Sinead and Saeed emphasise the importance that they place on the mental health and well-being of the children:

Sinead: "the mental health needs of these young people are dramatically higher compared with a lot of other young people"
(social services)

From discussions with service providers, it was clear that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children mental health needs are diverse, and there were a wide range of opinions about how best to deal with these needs. Some service providers emphasised speed and response and would often immediately suggest that an appointment should be made for an unaccompanied child to meet with a mental health worker or a counsellor. However, others such as Edward suggested that mental health needs be responded to in a more measured way:

Edward: "They need to get everything else sorted out, then they might need to get help with mental health"
(education)

Similarly, Martine, a health professional, suggested that the children needed to socialise, make friends and become accustomed to their new lives in Scotland before seeking out specialist counselling services or mental health support. From this viewpoint it was important to build up informed support networks before or instead of access to specialist professional services.

One of the main challenges experienced by many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is coping with the stress, anxiety and trauma often associated with their pre-flight experiences. As Sinead and Marion observed, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children often therefore have problems sleeping at night:

- Sinead:** “We’ve got numerous unaccompanied young people who can’t sleep at night because they have severe nightmares about they experiences they’ve had back home and that’s quite a specialist counselling role again that’s not filled. So mental health support is on of the biggest [gaps]”
(social services)
- Marion:** “Almost all of them have sleep disturbance because of the psychological symptoms. So they’re often exhausted and have to conceal that. They’re often depressed and irritable and that can lead to flashpoints when they start to argue with a teacher or argue with friends”
(health professional)

Many of their pre-flight experiences act as the catalyst for mental health problems, and, as Marion notes, these “symptoms are exacerbated by stress of being here”. Furthermore, the children’s mental health may also be influenced by the extent of their negative pre-flight experiences, their age and their general life experiences:

- Marion:** “we see young people with other problems including psychosis, you know, major mental health problems and then more non-specific problems, particularly in the younger age groups, regressive behaviour, bed wetting, temper tantrums, fear of the dark”
(health professional)

Recommendation

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children must be offered access to a range of health services in a similar manner to that offered to all children in Scotland. Attention should be paid to the children’s health needs as a result of pre-flight experiences; in particular their mental health.

Overall, the Separated Children in Europe Programme clarifies that ‘separated children should have access to health care on an equal basis to national children. Particular attention should be paid to their health needs arising from previous physical deprivation and ill health, disabilities, and from the psychological impact of violence, trauma and loss ... (Save the Children, 2004: 21).

Social, cultural and emotional needs

Clearly, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children also have a range of social, cultural and emotional needs. *Mina* noted that “the people should give us the chance to say what we want, but they don’t listen to us. They don’t want to listen to us, or they think they know better”. Unfortunately, *Mina* felt that she did not have opportunity to participate in decisions about the activities available, and so there is a clear need to involve unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in decisions with regards to social activities and events.

For some service providers, it was important that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are involved in a range of social activities both for their own sake and to develop new friendships, participating in sport or leisure activities or attending local youth groups, drop-in centres or religious activities.

Luke even proposed that a national plan be prepared to coordinate such activities:

- Samantha:** “... need to form more friendships and have social contacts and opportunities”
(advocacy and advice worker)
- Emma:** “I mean somebody working in community education, or in youth groups or something. I mean these young people are stuck in homeless centres and things”
(education)
- Luke:** “[there is a need for] a more focused national plan for unaccompanied minors social activities and such like”
(legal representative)

Service providers were concerned about the potential experiences of isolation and loneliness amongst some of the children:

- Lucy:** “...there’s a couple of kids that I do feel are a bit isolated and I don’t particularly want them to cluster up and get together and always go round in the same group”
(legal representative)
- Martine:** “... great danger of these young people being very isolated and lonely ... some go home after school, close the door and have nothing”
(health professional)

There appears to be a concern here for the children's isolation from anyone as well as their potential isolation from the host community, hence the importance of information and communication needs mentioned earlier. Furthermore, there is often a need for additional outreach in order to encourage unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to access social activities.

Some service providers said it was more important that they get involved in social activities than receive counselling and therapy:

Sheena:	"Children don't need therapy, they need a life" (advocacy and advice worker)
Martine:	"need to get a life" (health professional)
Sandra:	"I think that the young people need somewhere where they can go, meet up and have fun rather than dwelling on their past" (youth worker)

From this point of view, it was better to engage in new experiences which would help forget past trauma, rather than deal with that openly straightaway.

An alternative view expressed by some service providers was that an immediate need for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is counselling in order to help explicitly with the past. However, a number of experienced service providers in this area challenged this asserting the importance of the children developing social networks which would meet their initial emotional needs first. These service providers suggested that specialist therapy is often more useful once the children had settled into the everyday routine of their new lives. This is supported by Ravi Kohli (Research in Practice, 2005) when he states that "the normal patterns of resettlement is present first, the future next and the past last". In terms of dealing with the present and the future, many service providers suggested that there is need for social activities for the children, and like Martine, a health professional, recommended that "there's a huge need for befriending services" in Glasgow. These opportunities would help the children to interact socially and learn about their new country.

In the context of social needs, many of the service providers consulted mentioned the importance of enabling the children to maximise their self-esteem and confidence, as these quotes demonstrate:

- Richard:** “Personal image and self esteem”
(advocacy and advice worker)
- Paula:** “well, like us all, your emotional needs”
(policy worker)
- Simone:** “emotional and psychological issues”
(youth worker)

Many of the service providers were concerned therefore, about the children’s senses of identity, feelings of belonging, and social and emotional well-being. It was encouraging to hear some service providers talk about the importance of building up the children’s confidence and offering them encouragement and support, and there was general concern about the children’s overall well-being. These views imply that not only is it vital for children to be able to develop ‘normal’ relationships and networks, but some may need more specialist counselling or other help. This is clarified by the Separated Children in Europe programme when they note that ‘for many separated children access to counselling is vital to assist their recovery’ (Save the Children, 2004: 21).

A small number of service providers also suggested that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may need particular support in terms of dealing with everyday experiences of racism, intolerance and xenophobia. Marion was particularly articulate on this matter, highlighting differential responses:

- Marion:** “In my experience working with young people, African boys seems to fair best in the peer group because they ... there’s a racism but it’s a ... sometimes, an inverse one where they’re idealised a bit. I think that’s based on American culture and often the young people adopt mannerisms that are more like American mannerisms – getting into basketball, wearing, what I would regard, stereotypically, as American type, rap culture, sort of thing. They’re often held in very high regard by Scottish boys ...Arabic people fair less well ... I’ve had fewer complaints of racism from African males ... though the African boys do describe feeling picked on by the police and they do describe fights with other refugee males from other countries”
(health professional)

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children therefore need assistance in dealing with racism; though, some of the children may need more support than others. O'Donnell and Sharpe (2000: 79) have observed that stereotypes of Asian youth as weak and effeminate have been fed by 'the apparent tendency of Asian boys to be physically smaller', and Sallie Westwood (1990: 56) has observed that 'for black men of African descent the stereotypes have been fixed on the body, on physicality, physical strength, and as a site for European fantasies about black male sexuality'. As Marion suggested, some of the young African unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may experience less racism and be more likely to be highly regarded by their classmates, and so it may be unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from the Asian continent to experience more problems in this regard.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's cultural and religious needs are also very important. The Separated Children in Europe Programme states that:

It is vital that separated children be able to maintain their mother tongue and links with their culture and religion. Provision of childcare, healthcare and education should reflect their cultural needs. Care should be taken not to perpetuate those aspects of cultural traditions that are harmful to and discriminate against children. Preservation of culture and language is also important should a child return to their home country (Save the Children, 2004: 8)

Furthermore, the European Union's directive (2003/9/EC) laying down the minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers, Article 19 states that:

'Member States, protecting the unaccompanied minor's best interests, shall endeavour to trace the members of his or her family as soon as possible. In cases where there may be a threat to the life or integrity of the minor or his or her close relatives, particularly if they have remained in the country of origin, care must be taken to ensure that the collection, processing and circulation of information concerning those persons is undertaken on a confidential basis, so as to avoid jeopardising their safety'

It is therefore important that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, if appropriate, maintain contact with their own culture and country of origin, alongside learning about life in Scotland.

A number of service providers commented on the importance of assisting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, if appropriate, in maintaining contact with family members and keeping in touch with events in the children's country of origin:

- Sandy:** “... it is the need to know what is happening in their original country. Just somehow, the fact that you know, still wanting to be able to find out what happened to childhood friends, grannies, whoever”
(youth worker)
- Richard:** “regarding needs ... there’s things like the Red Cross tracing service”
(advocacy and advice worker)
- Mark:** “a lot of them don't know how to contact their families and they must be thinking about that a lot”
(health professional)

Kidane (2001: 9) has suggested that ‘wherever it is deemed safe, and if the child so wishes, attempts should be made to trace families via International Social Work and the Red Cross’, and Chester (2001: 168) also stated that ‘unaccompanied asylum-seeking children should be encouraged to maintain contact with their own families, whether in this country or abroad’. An important social and cultural need of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children then is the need to maintain contact with their country of origin and any cultural issues associated with this connection. It is however, equally important that this need is fulfilled with the best interests of the child in mind, particularly where there is any uncertainty or anxiety associated with making or maintaining contact.

Alongside this, many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children also have specific cultural and religious needs. It has been suggested that there should be an ‘awareness and promotion of their distinctive culture ... with opportunities to celebrate special events and participate in associated rituals’ (Kidane, 2001: 9). There is therefore a need for service providers to increase their awareness of and sensitivity about such cultures and this is connected with information and communication needs mentioned earlier. Many service providers showed an awareness and initiative in this regard. For example, with regards to some of the African youngsters, Stephanie remarked:

- Stephanie:** “cultural issues ... kind of hair braiding and stuff like that. We forget, you know ... hair products, they have to be of a specific type or kind of hair products”
(youth worker)

Furthermore, many service providers had identified particular groups, shops and places where the children may readily access activities, materials and food associated with their cultural traditions. In this context, the religious needs of the children are also important, although Sinead feels that these are often neglected:

Sinead: “given the specific group of young people, has anybody actually asked them what their religious needs are? That’s a huge gap.”
(social services)

Furthermore, there is a need for religious organisations, communities and groups to reach out to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in order that they can feel welcomed as part of their new religious community. Unfortunately *Aslam* did not experience this:

Aslam: “I go to mosque sometimes ... nobody talks to you, you go in, you pray and you leave”

As well as this, it has been recommended that ‘refugee children should also be given opportunities and support to join with other children in their host community and to positively experience living in a multicultural environment’ (Kidane, 2001: 9).

04.service provision

So far, the experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland, as well as their diverse needs have been outlined. The study sought to assess how well current services were responding to the needs identified. The services available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children include statutory services (such as social work, education and health provision), community and voluntary organisations (such as social inclusion partnerships) as well as other local and national organisations and agencies. One of the main aims of this research was to explore the services available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland, the strengths and weaknesses of such provision, examples of good practice, and gaps in services. As such, we have engaged in discussions with over seventy service providers in order to assess perceptions about overall and specific service provision.

In this chapter, we start by exploring general perceptions about overall service provision, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses in the services available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland. Following this, we look at issues that often have most direct influence on the children themselves, such as age assessment and youth transitions. Finally, some of the challenges facing service providers, such as the legislative context and international learning opportunities are discussed, and throughout this chapter, recommendations for future service provision are outlined. This chapter therefore, whilst promoting the importance of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children' best interests, is also, unlike the previous two, more concerned about the strategic and operational aspects of service provision.

Perceptions about general service provision

Generally, there were mixed views amongst service providers about the adequacy of the range of services available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland. Elizabeth, who works in education, said that she thought service provision was "very good", while Sheena who works as an advocacy and advice worker noted that "I think that there are lots of gaps". Cecilia, who works in social services, thought services could be "greatly improved". Peggy, a policy worker, stated, "I think that you can always argue that services can be improved, re-focused, bettered or whatever", suggesting that it can be very easy to criticise all forms of service provision, but she did acknowledge that there "could and should be better services provided".

General service provision varies widely across Scotland. Partly as a result of the dispersal of refugees and asylum-seekers to Glasgow, the vast majority of organisations and agencies working with this client group are based in Glasgow. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in Glasgow therefore have a wide range of services available to them, and many of these services now have much experience in working with these children. However, although there are some services in Edinburgh, places outside Glasgow tend to be inexperienced in working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and there are few services available to the children in these locations. Recently, some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have been arriving in Stranraer and this has proved particularly challenging for local service providers.

Many of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were positive about the services that they have used. *Junior* said, “the people here care a lot about me” and clarified that “I like it here as the people treat me the way I like to be treated”. A lot of the children said that service provision was adequate and mentioned, like *Apollo* and *Jaffar* that “everything is fine”. It seemed that many of the children are positive about the services available to them, largely because such services were not available in their countries of origin. Many children talked about being delighted that people were willing to help them.

A substantial number of the organisations and agencies consulted in this research suggested, like *Lisa*, a legal representative, that they would “go the extra mile for people”, because of their perceived vulnerability. Some, like *Esther*, who works in education, suggested that it was important that they created “a safe space where children feel protected”, and therefore felt that an important part of their job was in “creating safety and normality”. Furthermore, *Sinead*, who is employed in social services, said that “the most important part of my job is establishing relationships with children so that they do feel confident to come forward and speak to me about issues”. Alongside these strengths, others commented on the commitment and dedication of their staff as an important strength. For example, *Peggy* said that “some people go beyond what they need to in working with or for asylum seekers”. Given the relatively recent arrival of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to Scotland, a minority of the organisations consulted mentioned their knowledge and understanding as a positive aspect of their work. The vast majority of service providers conveyed commitment and dedication to their work, and were keen to promote the best interests of the children where possible. There was evidence of service providers sharing best practice, increasing communication and collaboration, providing guidelines and assistance to others who worked in their organisation, and showing care and consideration when escorting children to various organisations and meetings.

In terms of levels of service provision, all service providers consulted so far agreed that there were some weaknesses in service provision as well as gaps that need to be addressed. *Ronald*, a policy worker, for example, suggested that there are “islands of best practice amongst lots of indifferent practice”, and *Esther*, who works in education, thought that service provision is “all just adequate”, clarifying that there is nothing that is excellent.

The most frequently mentioned criticism by respondents related to the lack of resources available to them in their work with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and some related this to problems with obtaining funding. This meant a lack of trained staff, shortage of available time to offer to children, and inadequacies and insecurities in funding structures. Accessibility, including out of hours, was an important consideration for many service providers. Sheena, who works in social services, said that “access is the main issue”, and Sandra, a youth worker, explained, “in terms of timing, 5 o’clock can be very loosely interpreted by different cultures”. This suggests that organisations and agencies need to explore the various barriers to accessing services and think more carefully about the outreach strategies they adopt to encourage unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to utilise their services. Furthermore, some service providers, like social services employee, Tara, raised concerns about the fact that “all the services seem to be concentrated in Glasgow and nobody seems to really accept the fact that there are young people ... who are deeply isolated”.

According to Spencer, who works in social services, many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arrive in Scotland from countries where some women are “suppressed and oppressed”, or where norms around appropriate sexual and gendered behaviour differ from those in Scotland. Many service providers noted that children had to be informed about such issues in order to minimise the harm they may experience, and some service providers’ demonstrated sensitivity to children’s views, experiences and expectations with respect to gender and behaviour. However, it was also noted that some service providers needed to be more aware of children’s expectations with regards to gendered behaviour and expectations.

A minority of those consulted suggested that their organisation was the best and did not need to improve, which might in some cases show a lack of reflexivity. Although there is much evidence of organisations and individuals sharing best practice and working in partnership in order to meet the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, some service providers suggested, like Sheena, who works in social services, that it “can be difficult to refer people on to other organisations”. A number noted, as Sheena did, “I think that a lot of people are quite territorial about the work that they do”. Yet, as Peggy, who is a policy worker noted, “the expertise is second to none ... there is a pool of expertise in Glasgow”. It could therefore be productive to encourage organisations and agencies to work in partnership and share the skills and expertise they have developed in working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

There was also some evidence of service providers who took a reactive rather than proactive approach to working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. This viewpoint is demonstrated by Simon, a youth worker, who stated that “I think it is about waiting for the opportunity for us to be identified ... that there is a need for our service and at that point in time”. It is clear that there may be a minority of organisations who are waiting to be invited to work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, rather than reaching out to the children.

Simon: “while we are probably not targeting that group specifically, we have got to be prepared to offer a service that is requested or required of us”
(youth worker)

Although such an approach is unfortunate, the evidence of racism amongst staff working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is very worrying. Sinead observes this when asked how she feels about overall standards of service provision:

Sinead: “Highly inadequate ... I have concerns about racism taking place with our [workforce]. I’m glad this is confidential, in terms of this groups of young people are very much seen as being not ‘our young people’ if that makes sense”
(social services)

It is therefore important that all staff working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive racism awareness training. Furthermore, a number of service providers, like Sinead, were also concerned by the lack of refugee and black and minority ethnic staff working in this area:

Sinead: I think the main thing is obviously that there aren’t any minority ethnic workers with the [workforce] as such so where you and I would look for a role model and get one, these young people probably aren’t getting that
(social services)

Steps should therefore be taken in order to encourage refugees to work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the statutory and voluntary sector.

Recommendation

Inter-agency co-operation, joint working and the sharing of good practice should be encouraged through the creation of collaborative and networking opportunities.

Recommendation

Refugees and members of the black and minority ethnic communities should be encouraged to work in professions which have contact with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, including work in both statutory and voluntary organisations.

Perceptions about specific services

The majority of service providers regarded the integration of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children into mainstream society as an important aspect of their work. However, the pace and timing of this needed to be in tune with the child's experiences and readiness. Sandra, a youth worker, said that "what we found with unaccompanied young people, and because of their traumatic experiences, we had to be careful about integrating them with all young people immediately". The pre-flight and migration experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may result in some lacking in trust, confidence and self-esteem. Therefore some service providers, like Sandra, suggested that it is important to consult children regarding integration opportunities, ensuring that the children feel comfortable and confident about such engagements.

In discussions with service providers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, it was often education services that received the most positive reviews. Sandra said she had heard "very good reports about their experiences at College" and "supportive teachers" at school. Marion, a health professional, similarly stated that "the schools are excellent at engaging them in their curriculum and school based activities". In particular, the work of staff at Anniesland College, Shawlands Academy and Drumchapel High were commended. A number of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children consulted in this research were passionately committed to learning, and were lively and animated about their experiences of school and college. They wanted to progress through the educational system and gain further qualifications. Many were inquisitive about the university system. However, there were some complaints, such as *Nasser's* comment about the pace of teaching:

Nasser: "... with teachers at school they can slow the pace, but some people speak too quickly and do things too quick ... people need to slow down"

One of the concerns raised with regard to education was the ambiguity associated with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's eligibility for Education Maintenance Allowances (EMA). Being awarded an EMA offers children over 16 the opportunity to be given up to £30 per week. Cameron, who works in social services, informed me that a number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children applied for this and were refused on the grounds that they had not stayed in the country for more than three years. Similarly, some of the children experienced barriers to progression at college as a result of their status, and access to universities was also restricted.

The frustration that this created is highlighted here:

Linda: Right now I'm doing an access course but I want to move to a higher level but they say if you're moving on to a higher level they cannot support you, they cannot pay my college fees because I don't have indefinite status to stay in this country.

Recommendation

All unaccompanied asylum-seeking children should be eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) in Scotland.

The provision of suitable accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children demands urgent attention. Many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, especially those over 16, have to stay in bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation in isolated parts of urban Scotland until suitable accommodation can be found for them.

For example:

Sheena: People being abandoned in a B and B and only seeing a social worker once a week (social services)

During the research, new accommodation became available for unaccompanied young men in student flats in Glasgow. Many of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children living there liked the accommodation and preferred it to where they were previously housed. However, the children have had no staff present in the evenings or weekends, and many service providers were worried about the risks this poses to the children. Indeed, *Bashir* confirmed that “there is not enough support here”.

Social work provision also received criticism from a number of service providers, though *Peggy*, a policy worker, did think that there is “lots of social work support”. Again, the provision of social work services appears to depend largely on the availability of staff at an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child’s time of arrival, as well as the consistency in staffing. For example, *Linda* was so inspired by her social worker that she wanted to train to work in the same field, “yeah, I like my Social Worker very much. She is so good”, whereas *Alfridi* has little or no contact with his social worker, and informed me that he had received an inconsistent service from them. Two further statements from children demonstrate the varied views about social work provision:

Bilal: “well, honestly, the people that I have difficulty with is the social workers ... since I have applied for asylum nobody has come to see me”

Arif: “Also, I have a social worker, and she is quite helpful”

Opinions about the standard of interpreting and translation services also varied widely. *Cameron*, who works in social services, noted how his organisation tries “to use the same interpreters” especially if the child has built up a rapport with their interpreter. Similarly, *Sheena*, who also works in social services, said “we hand pick our interpreters”.

Peggy, a policy worker, noted that there has been an “enormous explosion in demand” as “so many new languages have been required very quickly”. Some service providers, like Sandra, who is a youth worker, intimated that they have heard “a few bad reports about interpreting”, and Peggy noted how the process is “open to exploitation and misrepresentation”. Tara, who works in social services, noted how they used “telephone interpreting services” due to a lack of face to face interpreters close to her place of work. Others sympathised with service providers noting, like Lisa, a legal representative, that “you can’t display compassion as easily when going through an interpreter”. In terms of the practice of interpreting, it was accepted by most service providers, like Peggy, that it is “not good practice to use friends or family members as interpreters”. However, as mentioned earlier, there were a minority of service providers who thought it was acceptable for the children to interpret for each other.

Recommendation

Service providers should not use unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to interpret for each other.

The legal support offered to the children was also regarded as variable, and it appeared that many children were very confused about the legal system. There were some accounts of lawyers not turning up for meetings or neglecting to take forward children’s cases. By contrast there were also very positive accounts of caring, passionate legal advisors who worked hard to help unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Staff at the Immigration Advisory Service and the Ethnic Minorities Law Centre were identified as being especially helpful, engaging and successful in their work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Opinions about health services were also mixed. Some children were very thankful of the help they received from their doctors, which was much better than the standards of care they were accustomed to in their countries of origin. Services providers tended to be more critical of health provision than children, especially more specialist services. Social services employee Sinead, for example, said “there is nothing in terms of specialist mental health or assessment services for these young people”, and Richard, who works as an advocacy and advice worker, emphasised that “...sexual health – there needs to be a definite improvement there”. It was also suggested that children who are not classified as looked after and accommodated may be receiving poorer health care or lower priority compared with other children.

Having summarised some of the general views about overall service provision as well as some of the views about specific forms of service provision, we now consider particular aspects of overall service provision that we feel need specific attention.

Age assessment

Age assessment (sometimes referred to as age determination) is the process of attempting to establish the age of an individual. This is relevant to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children because many of these children do not have documents or papers clarifying their age or date of birth, and many come from cultures where birthdays are not celebrated. Assessing the age of an individual has a direct influence on the services that will be available to them. Age assessment is therefore a key issue for service providers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. As Paula provocatively suggested, a number of service providers are unprofessional in their assumptions about the ages of the some of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children they work with:

Paula: “I hate this, but I have heard this comments before – “aye, 16, but he is shaving twice a day!” But to me that is someone that has been in the job too long, you know, change your job”
(policy worker)

Age assessment was raised by a number of service providers, and their concerns here were directed at children who were receiving poorer care and consideration than other children due to an inaccurate age determination decision. Sheena, an advocacy and advice worker, intimated that “age dispute issues can be very difficult”, and Patrick, a policy worker, was worried about the age assessments that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children often “have to endure”. In particular, he talked about seeing “age assessments going one way or the other”, and for him the process had connotations with “1930’s race science”. *Apollo* also revealed how immigration officials suggested that he was 22 or 23, and hence lying when stating his age as being 16. It was clear from the views of a number of service providers that they were unsure about the age determination process, which led to some suspicion associated with some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who appeared to be older than the claim to be. Marion was one of the few service providers who was confident about the medical basis of age assessment procedures:

Marion: “Dentition is an obvious way, obviously with wisdom teeth, so dentition bone, the bony bits of the body, generally are a good clue ... a good dentist could work out the age of a person within, I would reckon, a year or two but that isn’t done as far as I know
(health professional)

It was clear that many service providers were unaware of existing advice regarding age assessment, and it is vital that they are informed of such guidance. Age assessment may be required for a number of reasons, as IND and ADSS (undated: 1) clarifies:

- not all countries and cultures attach the same importance to chronological age, and birth records are therefore afforded less importance
- recording conventions and calendars are different in other countries and may not be easily reconciled in the UK
- adults may wish to avail themselves of asylum processes and support arrangements made for children, as these are perceived to be more favourable
- there may be a need to assess age for protection or care reasons
e.g. traffickers may present young people as older or younger in order to avoid immigration controls or social services checks

Some service providers were aware of some of these reasons, as Marion outlines:

Marion: “they may also not know their age. You know, some of the children we’ve come across don’t know their age for various reasons, they haven’t celebrated birthdays, its not always cultural to celebrate a birthday and in some countries they don’t have official birthdays”
(health professional)

The Separated Children in Europe programme suggest the following about age assessment procedures:

Age-assessment includes physical, developmental, psychological and cultural factors. If an age assessment is thought to be necessary, independent professionals with appropriate expertise and familiarity with the child’s ethnic/cultural background should carry it out. Examination should never be forced or culturally inappropriate. Particular care should be taken to ensure that they are gender-appropriate. In cases of doubt, there should be a presumption that someone claiming to be less than 18 years of age, will provisionally be treated as such. It is important to note that age assessment is not an exact science and a considerable margin or error is called for. In making age an age determination, separated children should be given the benefit of the doubt (Save the Children, 2004: 18)

Clearly then, age assessment is not a precise procedure and there may be considerable margin of error. Judith Dennis clarifies that when in doubt it is better to age band a child rather than to give them an exact age (Research in Practice, 2005).

The Immigration Law Practitioners Association (2004: 76) note that 'a third of all births worldwide are not registered and many countries do not issue contemporaneous birth certificates.' Therefore, children who are unsure of their age and have no documentation connected with this are not necessarily concealing their age. Furthermore, 'children and young people may look older than they are because of their experience in the country of origin' (ILPA, 2004: 176). Some may have taken on adult responsibilities from a young age, and may appear mature as a result of their experiences of trauma, migration and culture. Young men often grow facial hair from a younger age, and some service providers noted how some of the African young men appear physically taller and bigger than Asian young men. Overall, 'age determination is a process, not a single event. It is an inexact science and the margin of error can sometimes be as much as five years on either side' (ILPA, 2004: 78). In terms of the process of age assessment, Melzak and Avigad (2005: 2) suggest that the practice of service providers should be informed by need and not by political concerns, and they suggest:

To avoid being re-traumatised, humiliated and embarrassed, most of all those who have survived do not want to be disbelieved as is so often their experience with professional in this country. Any assessment technique will therefore be useful only to the extent that the person carrying out the assessment actively conveys respect, acceptance and validation during the assessment process and is attuned to the client's need for safety and control over the answering of difficult questions.

Overall then, it is important to emphasise that age assessment is a process that should be conducted with great care, and children should be fully informed of all stages of the process. If there is any uncertainty, the benefit of doubt should be given to the child. Furthermore, in the process of conducting age assessment, 'it is very important to ensure that vulnerable children are not left without services while their age is being determined by professionals' (Kidane, 2001: 19)

Recommendation

Information, guidance and best practice regarding age assessment must be followed by all statutory service providers working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children should also be informed of such issues.

Youth transitions

Many service providers were concerned about the difference in service provision offered to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are 16 and 17, compared with their younger counterparts. The vast majority of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are under 16 are accommodated in Children's Units in Glasgow and attend a local secondary school (or travel to the bilingual base at Shawlands Academy). A number of service providers have suggested that this group of young people are therefore provided with a structured, formal and safe setting. For example, Sandra, a youth worker, referred to the fact that younger unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have the "safety net of school". However, service providers expressed concern about the lack of comparable support available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are 16 and 17, and attending college instead of school. Many of these children are provided with accommodation that is less structured than that of a Children's Unit, such as the student accommodation in Glasgow.

Besides the disparity in the structured services provided for children under 16 compared with the lack of support offered to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are 16 or 17, a further issue was the need for additional support to older unaccompanied asylum-seeking children aged over 18.

Sandra observed that a lot of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children "are very adult-like", especially when they move into their own tenancies, or reach 18, but still need help though it is rarely available:

Stephanie: "I think there is a significant gap already been identified for unaccompanied minors, in terms of support, when they become 18 and the lack of it"
(youth worker)

Here there are two interconnected issues. Firstly, unaccompanied refugees who turn 18 may no longer be eligible for services previously available to them and secondly there are adult services that the child could access, but their level of maturity may mean it is appropriate for them to maintain their connection with the services they already use. Steps should therefore be taken to ensure that unaccompanied children who reach 18 have a range of adequate services available in order to meet their needs, ensuring that they are not isolated between children's and adult's services. Some suggested that youth drop-ins, advocacy and mentoring projects might be useful for children who are in their late teens and early twenties.

Connected to this, unaccompanied asylum seeking children who reach 18 no longer benefit from Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) concessions to children (ADSS, 2005).

The Separated Children in Europe programme recommends that children who experience being 'aged-out' should have access to the same services as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under the age of 18:

Separated children who become adults during the course of the asylum process (sometimes called "aged-out") continue to benefit from the same special procedures as those under 18 years of age. In this regard states should eliminate unnecessary delays that can result in a child reaching the age of majority during the process (Save the Children, 2004: 27).

Furthermore, Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (2004: 81) also recommend that extra effort should be made to ensure that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have the necessary level of maturity to cope with their adult status:

Significant unfairness can result when a child becomes an adult during the asylum determination process, particularly where this 'ageing out' occurs as a result of delays. Steps should be taken to eliminate delays that can result in a child gaining maturity during the process (ILPA, 2004: 81).

Recommendation

Further youth work provision, advocacy and social activities for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children of all ages should be developed.

Recommendation

Additional statutory and voluntary services should be made available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are beyond the minimum school leaving age in order to offer social opportunities, personal support and confidence building.

Recommendation

Services for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and refugee and asylum seeking young people who are 18 or over must be developed by statutory and voluntary organisations, as many young people at this stage still require additional support. The statutory duty of local authorities in Scotland to provide for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children over 16 years old as "looked after" children needs to be clarified.

Learning opportunities and partnership working

A small proportion of the service providers consulted suggested that it would be useful for professionals to engage in international learning opportunities by engaging with examples of good practice from other agencies and organisations that work with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in different countries across the world. Given the numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in different countries around the world (e.g. Netherlands, Australia), this may be a useful way of improving the standards of service provision. Although the immediate assumption may be to look at examples from England, it may be useful to explore opportunities for sharing good practice with some of the Nordic countries, given that their profile of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is more similar to the profile in Scotland. This could include visiting other projects to see how they work, sharing good practice with other service providers working in different contexts, and reading literature, advice and guidance about the needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Furthermore, it is clear that the services provided for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland vary across the country as whole. It is therefore important that organisations, agencies and bodies based in Scotland share best practice, particularly those based in Glasgow, in order that service providers working in more isolated locations can benefit from their expertise. Here are examples of service providers who suggested that it might be useful to engage with learning and networking opportunities:

- Lucy:** “...I think it probably is time we all rolled up our sleeves and actually got down to it ”
(legal representative)
- Pamela:** “we need to look elsewhere and build on their experience”
(policy worker)
- Paula:** “I think there can be an opportunity to share good practice outside Scotland – outside the UK and find out what is happening elsewhere so that we can say, “that is a great model, I wish we had thought of that”
(policy worker)

One service provider also noted that they had anticipated the arrival of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland, because they were aware of their arrival in other places, suggesting that more international awareness may help to improve service provision and plan for future provision as well.

Related to this, a number of service providers also suggested that partnership working should be encouraged. Some service providers voiced concern that there was a territorialism amongst some service providers, who were said to be secretive about the services they offer, and resistant in sharing information.

Furthermore, there was also an indication that certain areas of service provision had a number of different organisations offering a similar service, whereas in other areas, there was a lack of services available. Sinead and Luke demonstrate the nature of this situation:

- Sinead:** “People are away doing their own wee bit of work, aye, there’s good practice and folk are doing well and there’s negative practice as well, but there’s no coordination of the services that are happening ... As I say, services need to be joined up and coordinated a lot better”
(social services)
- Luke:** “not enough joined-up work – too piecemeal”
(legal representative)

It is clear then that there is a need to be more strategic about the services offered to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and perhaps Luke’s earlier suggestion of a national plan of service provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children would ensure that the children receive an adequate level of service in all areas. It has, after all, been recommended elsewhere that ‘organisations, government departments and professionals involved in providing services to separated children should co-operate to ensure that the welfare and rights of separated children are enhanced and protected. A holistic approach should be adopted in trying to meet the interconnected needs of separated children’ (Save the Children, 2004: 10).

Recommendation

Steps should be taken to encourage the establishment of international links between service providers working with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, so that Scottish service providers can gather best practice from countries with similar experience.

Recommendation

An annual audit of the services provided for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children should be conducted in order that areas of deficiency and excess can be identified and addressed.

Training

Lynch and Cuninghame (2000: 384) note that ‘many [unaccompanied asylum-seeking children] come from cultural and religious backgrounds with which those in the statutory [and other] services who will be responsible for providing care are unfamiliar’. Moreover, the EU Directive (2003, Article 19(4)) laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers, states that: those working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children shall have had or received appropriate training concerning their needs’. This is also supported by the Separated Children in Europe Programme which recommends that ‘those working with separated children should receive appropriate training on the needs and rights of separated children (Save the Children, 2004: 10). The need for further training was realised by a number of service providers. Sandra, a youth worker, said there was definitely a “need for training”, and Lucy, a legal representative, said “absolutely” to suggestions that training should be offered. Sinead and Stephanie also commented on the importance of training:

- Sinead:** “In terms of religions as a whole, again this is down to lack of training and basic awareness and if members of staff has access to training and information about the specific needs of the Muslim faith for example, then it would open up their eyes and make them a bit more aware”
(social services)
- Stephanie:** “Again, you know, if the staff have not been trained, or don’t have a good grounding or knowledge of the issues these young people, again, they have to think on their feet”
(youth worker)

The vast majority of service providers attended regular and general training courses about equality, anti-racism and asylum and immigration. Two service providers, who have set up a course specific to working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, have given training to a range of organisations and individuals. However, this has been done informally and on an ad hoc basis, and has had to be added to the extensive remits of those providing the training.

Recommendation

Further training opportunities should be made available to all service providers working with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland. This training should be detailed in content, updated regularly and accessible to a range of service providers. Furthermore, this should include race awareness training in order to ensure that practice is based on values of equality and respect.

Frustration with the asylum system

For many service providers the quantity of legislation as well as the pace of legislative change is a frustrating aspect in their work. A number said they were unable to keep up with what Luke, a legal representative, refers to as “constantly changing legislation”, and others, such as Callum, who works in social services, suggested that the legislation “could be greatly improved”. Generally speaking, respondents disliked the thrust of the legislative framework. Lucy, a legal representative, described it as “horrendous” and Esther, who works in education, thought it was “draconian”. Martine, a health professional, said “I think it is crap ... appalling ... slow, cumbersome and unfair”, and she suggested that “we should stop pretending that we are, in any way, observing human rights”. Marion, who also works in health, felt that “the mechanism and decisions seem inconsistently applied, bewildering, decisions seem to be erratic, the legal framework can change very suddenly with no apparent reason”. Many service providers saw it as constraining rather than enabling, so holding them back from concentrating on what they saw as the more significant aspects of their job, promoting the best interests of the children they are working with. Thinking about gaps in service provision, Edward observed:

Edward: “the main area with a massive gap is... that you’ve got children that have maybe been here for three or four years and they have not had a decision”
(education)

Many service providers as well as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children suggested that the asylum system often caused emotional and psychological problems for the children involved. *Linda* said, “it makes me feel so bad, you know”, and a number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were clearly upset, emotional and anxious about their asylum claims. Some talked about nightmares and fear of being sent home to an unsafe place.

This all influences the nature of service provision, and some service providers talked about how they, like *Lisa*, a legal representative, “ran out of words” as a result of the “heart-wrenching” revelations of some of the children, thus suggesting that some staff may find the emotional and psychological aspect of their work particularly challenging and may require more management support to deal with this. Similarly, *Sandra*, a youth worker, said that there is an “emotional strain on workers working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who feel they have to be there”. This suggests that there is not enough staff working with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, leading to added pressure for those who do provide services in this area.

Alongside a general frustration with the asylum system, many service providers were also irritated by negative stereotyping of asylum seekers. Patrick, a policy worker, said, “I have found so much of what is being said in the media to be false”, and many others were angry by the way in which politicians used the asylum system to create hostility towards asylum seekers amongst the electorate. Many said that there is a need to change attitudes, and the sentiments of these service providers emphasise the significance of their frustrations:

- Patrick:** “I would really like these people who are hysterical about how asylum seekers are going to corrupt this country to explain why one of the countries in Europe with the most liberal asylum policies, Sweden, is also the country in the world with one of the highest living standards”
(policy worker)
- Luke:** “...turn back the tide on Enoch Powellesque ranting”
(legal representative)
- Sinead:** “I just think the biggest downfall at the moment is the suspicion and the negativity that is around this group of young people and they need to be seen as having the rights and the same eligibility for services and support as every other looked after and accommodated young person in the country”
(social services)

It is clear that many service providers were conscious that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may have negative experiences as result of a lack of understanding amongst the general population about why asylum seekers are in Scotland, the service available to them, and their experiences and circumstances. Perhaps it would be useful to emphasise the positive contributions made by unaccompanied asylum-seeking children living in Scotland, alongside the contribution of asylum seekers, refugees and other children. As COSLA (2005) have demonstrated, asylum seekers make a significant contribution to the Scottish economy, because of the money that local councils receive to cover costs, and because of the fact that that as Luke notes, “most of the money they get is spent in this country”.

Recommendation

The experiences and contributions of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children should be promoted in positive images projects and campaigns. These could be stand alone or alongside other positive images work with asylum seekers and refugees or part of mainstream children’s campaigns.

The interface between UK and Scottish legislation and policy

Alongside their frustration with the asylum system, some service providers commented on the unclear boundaries associated with separate Scottish and UK legislation and policy, which has been furthered by devolution. Some were unclear about where legislative powers are based, and others were confused by the mixed messages from the Westminster and Holyrood administrations with regards to asylum and immigration. However, some people did note “the Children’s Act obviously helps us to some degree” (Lucy, legal representative), therefore suggesting that the impact of some Scottish legislation has a positive influence on their service provision. Martine, a health professional, like many, said that it is clear that “we are working in a political environment”.

The Scottish Executive website clarifies that devolved matters include health, education and training, local government, social work, housing, planning, tourism and economic development, some aspects of transport, police and fire services, the environment, sports and the arts and the natural and built environment. Matters reserved to Westminster include, amongst others: immigration and nationality; defence and national security; social security; trade and industry; employment legislation; equal opportunities and energy. Although this is the case, a number of service providers were very frustrated by the way in which legislation passed by Westminster, and therefore applicable to the whole of the UK was being implemented in ways that often only referred to England and Wales and were ignorant of the Scottish context. Paula, a policy worker, for example, argued that she had to regularly “tartanise” UK legislation in order that it could be understood in the context of specifically Scottish policies such as that of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. The ambiguity between some Scottish and UK legislation can make it difficult to advance children’s rights, especially due to the complexity of the system.

Highlighting the importance of the Scottish context, some noted how “Scotland has a falling population and a skills shortage” and so could see little relevance in limiting the numbers of asylum seekers entering the country. Peggy, a policy worker, observed that “we do have a very different situation in Scotland” and that immigration is a “difficult situation for the Scottish Executive”. Although some service providers suggested that the Scottish Executive’s Fresh Talent initiative runs counter to immigration policies, Pauline, a policy worker, suggested that the initiative “is what Scotland can do within the constraints of the current system. Although appearing contradictory, it is rather trying to improve the situation within the available constraints and rules”. She felt that some Scottish ministers received undue criticism for their lack of action with regards to asylum and immigration, and instead she said that they regularly “meet with Home Office officials, and issues related to Scotland are discussed so that they are aware of Scottish issues”. Nevertheless, many service providers, like Martine, a health professional, concluded that there are “problems about retained powers”.

Recommendation

The Home Office and the UK Government must take more account of the particularities of the Scottish context in developing policy which affects unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland.

Recommendation

Clearer guidance is needed with regards to the remits and responsibilities of the Scottish and UK Parliaments. Service providers must be aware of the legislation, policies and procedures that apply to their work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland taking account of children's legislation and devolution.

05.conclusion

In conclusion, this report has explored the experiences, needs and services provided for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children through consulting both service providers who work with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children themselves. This has revealed the complexity, diversity and richness of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children experiences and needs.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland are a diverse group of children who have lived through different experiences in different parts of the world. The majority of the unaccompanied population are male, aged 16 and 17 and from Africa, but there are also unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from the Asian continent and Eastern Europe, and some are as young as thirteen. The Scottish situation is not simply a microcosm of the UK environment and it is therefore important to think carefully about the Scottish context. In particular, Scotland has unique legislation, devolved powers and a different socio-political situation in terms of working with immigrant communities. In terms of the profile of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, Scotland has more in common with the Nordic countries than it does with England and Wales.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children's pre-flight experiences were often characterised by traumatic and disturbing events. These often involved war and the death or persecution of family members. Furthermore, some of the children have also been persecuted themselves because of religious or political connections and a minority have been employed through forced recruitment. The children's experiences of the migration process are often long and difficult and most frequently involve being accompanied by an agent. There was suspicion that some children are being trafficked for work in the sex industry or in domestic servitude. Upon arrival in Scotland, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children recalled feeling safe, along with being worried, alone and anxious about the uncertainties of their new lives. Although the vast majority of the children are excited, positive and encouraged by the opportunities available to them in Scotland, many also suffered as a result of mental health issues, racism, a lack of understanding of their original culture and uncertainties about their present and future legal status.

Just as the children's experiences are complex, so too are their needs. One of the most important needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is to be recognised as children, and therefore afforded the services and treatment normally available to other children. They also have accommodation and housing needs, and many of the children were frustrated by their inconsistent housing circumstances, which often also negatively influenced their other needs, such as dietary and cooking requirements. Information and communication needs are also important, and it is clear that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children require more information about the services available to them. Interpreting and translations services could also be improved.

The children's educational needs, along with specific health, dietary and medical needs also deserve particular attention, and mental health and sexual health services appear to be particularly lacking. The children also need legal advice and representation. As a result of ambiguities regarding the coverage of the Refugee Council's Children's Panel of Advisors, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland appear to be receiving poorer care and consideration in this respect compared with their English counterparts. Finally, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children also have a range of social, cultural and emotional needs, such as maintaining their cultural and religious identity, keeping in contact with events in their countries of origin, and the need for care and support in this process.

Finally, this report explored service provision, highlighting that overall provision is variable, with the support offered to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children depending very much on the services that happen to be available at the point when a child arrives. Overall, education services received the most positive comments, and mental health and sexual health services the most negative. Other forms of service provision such as legal advice, social work and accommodation were variable with examples of very good practice alongside cases of unmet needs and neglect. Of particular concern to the children themselves are issues around age assessment and youth transitions. Many service providers lack understanding of age determination procedures, and although guidance exists, it is not always used, and so these service providers should be informed that such information exists. Services for children aged under-16 appear to be more supportive and flexible than those for 16 and 17 year olds, who still require support and continuity. Likewise, services could usefully address the gap in provision for children who reach 18 and who may still need access to a range of services normally only offered to children. Service providers could also learn by sharing good practice on local, national and international levels, and partnership working may help to ensure that a broad range of services are offered. It is clear that more training needs to be provided for service providers working in this area, in order that they are made aware of the children's complex needs and experiences. Finally, many service providers were frustrated with the complexities of the asylum system and the tension between devolved and reserved matters. There is a need for legislation to take more account of the Scottish context. There may be benefit in promoting the contribution that asylum seekers, refugees and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children bring to Scotland in order that negative associations with their presence in Scotland may be erased.

In conclusion, it is clear therefore, that action is required if the services offered to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are to be improved. This research project has recommended that a range of changes are put in place in order to improve the experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland. Only when these are actioned will we see an improvement in the children's everyday circumstances and experiences and Scotland can truly become a good place for them to live and think about the future.

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07.appendices

Interview schedule for adult interviews

Interview schedule for child interviews

**List of organisations working with or for unaccompanied
asylum-seeking children in Scotland**

representatives of key organisations and services interview schedule

Services

Your organisation

- What is the general role of your agency/department/project?
- What is its role in relation to asylum seeking children?
- Roughly how many asylum seeking children and young people does your agency/project/department deal with a) at the moment b) over the course of the last 12 months? (Precise figures)
- What are their main national backgrounds?
- What languages do they speak?

Your role

- What is your professional background (e.g. lawyer, social worker)?
- What is your remit in your current job?
- Who are the main groups of children and young people that you work with?
- How long have you worked in your current position?
- What experience do you have in working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children a. now b. in the past?
- Do you have specific qualifications and/or training relevant to your work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children?

Services your organisation provides for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

- What services does your organisation offer to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children?
- What do you think are the main strengths in the services that you offer?
- What do you think are the main weakness in the services that you offer?
- Is there a particular service that you offer that you think could be used as an example of best practice? if so, please tell me about it?
- Do you think that are significant gaps in your service, and if so, what are they?
- Are there any problems or issues about how children and young people gain access to your service? If so, what are they?
- Does your organisation offer training for staff working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children? If so, may I have a copy of the training programme?

Services other organisations provide for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

- What are your views about the adequacy of the range of services available from other organisations for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children?
- What do you see as the main gaps in services?
- Is there a particular service offered by another person or organisation that you are aware of that could be used as an example of best practice? If so please describe it.
- Given your knowledge of service provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (including your organisation and the work of others) are particular types of services offered that you would say are in plentiful supply?
- In what ways do agencies take account of the children's religious, linguistic and cultural background? How could this be improved?
- Are there any problems or issues about how children and young people gain access to other service? If so, what are they?
- What do you think about how well services for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are co-ordinated?
- How could arrangements for care, support and counselling be improved?
- What are your views about mentoring - is this desirable for some/many/all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children? how easy is it to arrange for mentoring?
- What additional training is needed for agencies working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children?
- In what ways, if any, do you think that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive poorer care and consideration than other children?
- In what ways, if any, do you think that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive better care and consideration than other children?

Legal issues

- What is your understanding of the way that UK Immigration and Asylum legislation affects unaccompanied asylum-seeking children?
- How do you think it could be improved?
- What is your understanding of the way that Scottish legislation affects unaccompanied asylum-seeking children?
- How do you think it could be improved?
- How could legal information and advice for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children be improved?
- It has been suggested that all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children should have a designated guardian to ensure their interests are promoted and safeguarded. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or not have strong views? Why?

Children's experiences and needs

The experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

- From your experience, what do you think are the key challenges facing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in their countries of origin?
- What do you see as their main motivations for seeking asylum?
- From your experience, what are the key issues they face during the process of migration?
- Could you please give (anonymously) examples of how children have suffered in the process of coming to Scotland?
- Could you please give (anonymously) examples of how children have shown resourcefulness in the process of coming to Scotland?
- Do you think that asylum seeking children are given adequate time and resources to discuss their experiences?
- What key challenges do they face when arriving in Scotland?
- Are there particular challenges that you think are greater than others?
- Could you please give (anonymously) an example of a young person who is doing well? Why is that?
- Could you please give (anonymously) an example of a young person who is doing badly? Why is that?
- In what ways are asylum seeking children given opportunities to participate in decisions about their future? What limits their participation?
- Could you give particular examples of the different ways in which unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are treated well in Scotland?
- Could you give particular examples of the different ways in which unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are treated badly in Scotland?

The strengths of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

- What do you see as the main strengths and positive qualities that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have?
- How can they be assisted to make best use of their strengths?

The needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

- In relation to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
 - What are their main practical needs?
 - What are their main social needs?
 - What are their main emotional needs?
 - What about their educational needs?
 - What about their health needs?
 - What about their legal needs?
- What needs may they have maintaining or resuming contacts with their family?
- What needs may they have maintaining or resuming contacts with their country or community of origin?
- How good are interpreting and translation services? How could they be improved?
- Which particular needs do you think are largely being met by most organisations?
- Which particular needs do you think are more neglected than others?
- Which unmet needs do you think are most important?

Conclusion of interview

- As you know this interview has been about your work with and knowledge about the needs, experiences and services provided for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Is there anything else that you think I should have asked you? Are there any other issues or concerns that you have regarding unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that you or I have not mentioned in this interview?
- Does your organisation have specific policies or guidelines that refer to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children? If so, may I have a copy?
- Thank interviewee for taking part and stress confidentiality.

child interview schedule

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed (ask participant if they would like to choose another name to be identified with, clarify confidentiality and anonymity of research, confirm that they can refuse to answer certain questions if they want and they may stop the interview at any time). Hopefully what you tell me might help to improve the services that other young people in your situation experience in the future

Current situation

- Could you tell me about your current situation?
- Are you studying at the moment? (School/College)
- What do you do in your spare time? (TV/Sport/Other)
- How are you finding your accommodation?
- Who are the main adults that you have contact with?
(Teacher, support worker, social worker)
- Do you feel that you are given enough support from these people?
- Would you like to have a designated guardian? Mentor?
- What are the main services that you have contact with?
(Social work, housing, youth work, etc)
 - How do you feel about the adequacy of these services?
(Gaps, strengths and weaknesses, best and worst services)
 - Is there a particular service that you have been unable to find/access?
- Do you feel that all of your needs are being met? (support, counselling, health, education, legal)
- Is there a particular need that you think is more neglected than others?
- What is your current asylum status?
 - How do you feel about that?
- What do you hope to do in the future?

Arrival in Scotland

- Thinking back to when you arrived in Scotland, what were your first impressions?
- What did you like/not like about Scotland?
- Did you feel safe? (explore)
- What were the first services that you contacted? (SRC, IAS, EMLC etc)
- How did you feel about the way that you were treated by these organisations?
- Were there particular individuals that helped you? How?
- Who helped you the most?

Experiences before arrival in Scotland

- Would you be willing to share with me some of your experiences before you arrived in Scotland?
- How did you travel to Scotland? Did you come with someone?
- Do you remember any of places you visited on your journey?
- Did you make the decision to leave your country of origin or did someone else?
- Would you be comfortable talking about what made you leave?
- What do you miss your country of origin? (family, friends, culture, climate)
- What do you not miss?

Conclusion of interview

- As you know this interview has been about your needs and experiences and the services that you have accessed.
- Is there anything that has been really useful to you? (Person, service etc)
- Is there anything that could have been in place to improve your situation?
- Is there anything else that you think I should have asked you?
- Are there any other issues or concerns that you have?

Thank interviewee for taking part and stress confidentiality.

Organisations working with or for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland

Anniesland College
Cardonald College
Castlemilk Churches Together
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
Council for Homeless Young People
Glasgow Campaign to welcome refugees
Edinburgh City Council
Edinburgh Refugee Centre
Ethnic Minorities Law Centre
Glasgow Anti-Racist Alliance
Glasgow Asylum Seekers Support Project
Glasgow City Council
Immigration Advisory Service
Kingsway Court Health and Well-being centre
Legal Services Agency
McClure Collins solicitors
Medical Foundation Scotland
Meridian Project
National Children's Homes
North Glasgow College
Positive Action in Housing
Red Road Women's Centre
Royal Hospital for Sick Children
Sandyford Initiative
Save the Children
Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People
Scottish Children's Reporters Administration
Scottish Executive
Scottish Parliament
Strathclyde Police
Student Action for Refugees
The Big Step
The Initiative
West of Scotland Commission for Racial Equality
Woodlands Youth Initiative
Youth Counselling Services Agency
YMCA

Useful web-sites

Save the Children CARIS website

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/caris/>

The National Register for Unaccompanied Children

<http://www.nruc.gov.uk/default.htm>

Scottish Refugee Council

<http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/>

The Refugee Council

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

The Children's Legal Centre

<http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/>



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Website: www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

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