

30<sup>th</sup> March 2006

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### **Refugee Children in Scotland – The plight of unaccompanied asylum seeker children**

**An event for Scottish Refugee Council members, child care professionals and campaigning organisations, 1pm-4pm, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006, Our Dynamic Earth, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh.**

Social workers, child care experts and refugee advocacy organisations are gathering in Edinburgh today, to discuss the problems faced by refugee children living in Scotland; particularly those who have arrived on their own.

Scottish Refugee Council has commissioned an in-depth study into the needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeker children. The report entitled; ***“This is a good place to live and think about the future...The needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeker children in Scotland”***, is being launched at the event. It examines the circumstances in which lone youngsters arrive in Scotland, how they are treated on arrival and the support available to them from a wide range of services, including; housing, social work, health and education.

The principle concern for many youngsters is simply to be believed and to feel secure:

***“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” - Lumpungu***

The report identifies key areas for improvements in the care of these vulnerable young people, ranging from their need for safety and security, to the communication gap between the government and child care agencies.

There are 25 key recommendations of the report including:

- The need for unaccompanied asylum-seeker children to be recognised as children first and foremost
- That the Home Office and UK Government must take account of the different legislative framework in Scotland.
- The creation of a panel of independent guardians or advisors, similar to the Panel of Advisors available in England.
- That high quality legal support is available throughout the duration of the young person’s asylum claim, which will ensure that the children understand the asylum process, and the consequences of the different outcomes of their asylum application.
- The provision of suitable accommodation, in which they feel safe.

- That unaccompanied asylum-seeker children are eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

Scottish Refugee Council Chief Executive, Sally Daghlian, Said:

*“We hope that the report will set the standard for the care and protection of these vulnerable young people. They are children and need to be treated as such. By creating an infrastructure designed to meet their needs and help them integrate successfully, we can ensure that Scotland truly becomes a good place to live and think about the future”.*

*For further information, please contact Andrew Dougal, Scottish Refugee Council Press & Communications Officer on 0141-223-7927, mobile 07734-030-763, or email [andrew.dougal@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:andrew.dougal@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk)*

**ENDS**

**Notes**

**\* Spokespersons will be available for interview between 12.30 – 1.30**

**1. Agenda**

**1.00 Arrival/Registration**

**1.30 Welcome :** Sally Daghlian, Chief Executive, Scottish Refugee Council

**1.35 Issues facing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the UK :** Jane Dykins, Head of Children’s Services, Refugee Council

**1.50 Refugee children in Scotland – Scottish Refugee Council perspective:** Nick Morgan, Head of Client Services, Scottish Refugee Council

**2.05 The Needs and Experiences of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in Scotland ;** Dr Peter Hopkins, Department of Geography, Lancaster University

**2.20 Question and Answer session for panel**

**2.30 Coffee**

**3.00 Welcome Back :** Simon Hodgson Scottish Refugee Council

**3.05 No Place for a Child – Stop Detaining Children Now campaign:** Simon Hodgson, Scottish Refugee Council / Sue Fisher, Save the Children introduce the campaign

**3.20 Young refugees, arts and integration :** Louise Irwin, Arts and Cultural Development Officer, Scottish Refugee Council

**3.35 Experience of an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child :** Mosson Saad, a young adult who came to the UK as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child talks about his future.

**3.45 Question and Answer session for panel**

**4.00 Close**

**2. Research**

**This is a good place to live...The needs and experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeker children in Scotland.**

The aim of the research was to explore the experiences and needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeker children in Scotland, and to assess how well current services were responding to the needs of these young people. 31 unaccompanied asylum-seeker children and 71 service providers were interviewed as part of the research.