

**EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS FOR THE LABOUR
MARKET INTEGRATION OF YOUNG UNACCOMPANIED
ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THE UK**

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ABSTRACT

This research is about one of the most vulnerable groups who have always been a part of the global migration flow – unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people. They flee their home countries and cross international boundaries in the hope of seeking refuge in safer, more peaceful and promising lands elsewhere. Whether their flight is voluntary or involuntary, their reason for leaving their home is influenced by many factors: predominantly, war, violence, persecution, or the hopelessness of failed and fragile states.

Their arrival brings many challenges to host countries in terms of receiving, protecting, assisting, and finding durable solutions. The focus of this study was the UK's position as a host country, and how it had assisted unaccompanied asylum seeking children to find lasting solutions. It aimed to explore how best the country could shape their futures by implementing a better educational process that would be specifically designed to improve their employability and smooth their entry into the labour market and society.

The main objective of the study was to examine the availability, nature and effectiveness of current educational and vocational intervention programmes designed for improving the children's future employability. It also examined the present situation of the system of educational and vocational training provision, and the participants' perceptions of the impact of education and employment on social integration.

This qualitative study comprised two components; a systematic review of the research on educational and vocational intervention programmes, and the main component, the field research. The field research was conducted in different locations in three regions in England, and in one region in Scotland. The data was collected by in-depth semi structured interviews with a sample of thirty-eight professionals and fifteen male and female young unaccompanied asylum seekers. The children and young people were between sixteen and twenty-two years of age and represented ten countries. The findings of the field research were analysed by the constant comparative method, and the study has yielded a considerable amount of rich information that has addressed all the research questions.

As for the key finding, the current system has failed to uphold the principle of serving the best interests of unaccompanied children and young people in relation to meeting their educational and vocational needs. This needs to be rectified if they are to integrate successfully them into the labour market in the UK (or in the country of origin in the event of repatriation).

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Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and the work presented in it has been generated by myself as the result of my own original research. None of the work contained within this thesis has been published prior to submission. I have fully acknowledged and referenced the ideas and work of others, whether published or unpublished. The thesis does not contain work extracted from a thesis, dissertation or research paper that I have previously presented for another degree, diploma or other qualification at this or any other University or similar institution.

FOR CHILDREN SEEKING ASYLUM

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A successful refugee experience is one which provides a better future than the past.

(Demirdjian, 2009, p. 23)

The story of refugees goes far back in history. The imprints of their misery and survival are embedded in every era they advanced through. Either it was the tale of seeking sanctuary in holy places in ancient Greece, or the 20th century saga of the greatest human displacement in living memory during the world wars. The story of refugees is a story of remarkable human fortitude, and children are always a part of it.

In the 21st Century, a new chapter of this story has been unfolding, as the world has witnessed the highest number of forcibly displaced people in recorded history. For instance, by the end of 2015, 65.3 million people were forcibly displaced globally due to conflict, persecution, general violence or human right violations. This means, on average, 24 people displaced every minute of every day around the world. Among them, there were 21.3 million refugees while 3.2 million were seeking asylum (UNHCR, 2016).

There exist children at the centre of every refugee flow. For instance, 51% of this current refugee population are children. More importantly, among them were 98,400 unaccompanied or separated children seeking asylum in 78 countries by the end of 2015, and they were mainly from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Syria, and Somalia. This was the highest number ever recorded since the UNHCR records began (UNHCR, 2016). The majority of them are young males over 16 years of age compared to their female counterparts.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children are the most vulnerable group of children crossing international borders today. They seek asylum on their own without their parents or a legal or customary primary care giver, having fled from war, conflict, persecution, fragile states, economic hardship or natural disasters. They make arduous journeys, largely with smugglers or traffickers, and are vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and violence. This is a global catastrophe that challenges receiving countries, which are left with no easy or straightforward solutions. It requires many different initiatives at the global, regional and national levels in order to provide them with protection and assistance, and more importantly, to find durable solutions to their precarious lives.

Searching for durable solutions is mainly based on three concepts: voluntary repatriation, local integration (into host countries), or resettlement in a third country (UNHCR, 2016). These are fundamental to protecting the children and finding lasting arrangements for them to lead stable, successful and dignified lives. More importantly, education and employment play a pivotal role in this process regardless of the children's final destination. Their right to access education, training and employment is protected by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005). Therefore, they should be given the opportunity to enhance their employability, as it will help them to integrate into the labour market and make them independent and self-reliant. Moreover, through all these measures, host countries should ensure their full incorporation into the new society as full and equal citizens.

However, as the evidence shows, at the global level, the process of finding durable solutions seems to be ineffective and as a result, children suffer from far-reaching consequences. The displaced youth in the world in particular appear to be an underserved population. For instance, those in developing and middle-income countries are thought to be in difficult and uncertain situations in their new environments, where no solutions are in place (e.g. UNHCR, 2013).

Against all odds, they seem to show resilience, agency and adaptability to difficult situations, hoping for positive future outcomes. For them, education is one of their highest priorities as they consider education as the '*top solution to the problems they face across all conflicts*' (ibid. p. 22).

In the light of the empirical evidence presented for many years, whatever the aspirations, the issue of finding durable solutions for all refugee children and youths in the world has not received the attention it deserves, and therefore the refugee policies should be aimed at long-term and sustainable plans. For instance, as Otto Hironymi pointed out:

Refugee children represent a tremendous potential for the good and also for future crises and suffering. Thus, one of the principal litmus tests of the quality of refugee policies should be: "What do they do for the long-term future of refugee children?" (Hironymi, 2009, p.1).

Rationale for the research

In view of the plight of all refugee children in the world in general and unaccompanied youth in particular, this research was created to support policies that would develop long-term sustainable plans for their future. Given their vulnerability, the research was specifically aimed at young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees aged between 16 and 24 who live in the UK. Its main issues of focus are their education and employability as the key factors that facilitate the process of finding durable solutions.

First, it is important to understand the country's role and responsibility towards those who seek asylum. Historically, its connection with asylum seekers can be traced back to c.600 AD, the

time when King Æthelberht of Kent made the first laws regulating sanctuary in holy places (Bullen, 1923). In its long history, the country has offered refuge to many thousands for centuries, for instance, from Huguenots in the 17th Century to the Syrians fleeing the war today. More importantly, receiving unaccompanied children is not a new phenomenon either, as the country has hosted many thousands of them in the past. For instance, between 1936 and 1939 during the Spanish Civil war, some 3,889 Basque children came to the country unaccompanied. Furthermore, nearly 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish children were brought on the 'Kindertransporte' and settled in the country during the period 1933-1939 at the time of World War II (Refugee Week, 2015, Rutter, 2003).

However, the UK's role as a refugee hosting nation has been viewed from many different angles, and at times it has drawn criticisms, condemnations, and also positive responses. In the case of unaccompanied children, there is limited literature available on their psychological and educational problems or their development (ibid.). Whatever the view, it is also fair to say that, over the centuries, the country has brought the best out of many of those who sought refuge, and has created great philosophers, scientists, politicians, musicians, artists, entrepreneurs, sportsmen and many other valuable citizens who have made their contribution in return (Refugee Week, 2015).

Although the country has changed the lives of many of those who have sought asylum, in recent years it has had difficulty proving its role as an effective host, especially in the case of unaccompanied asylum seeking children. According to the evidence, there were problems with the system of providing reception and assistance to them once they arrived in the country (CONNECT, 2014). Moreover, there seem to be significant gaps in policy planning and practice, and in finding durable solutions. For instance, as some research evidence shows, in England, there has not been an official or formal system and approach in place to develop long-term solutions for these children; there have only been temporary short-term solutions. Therefore, the children are deprived of solid, sustainable plans for the future (Gregg & Williams, 2015). Moreover, in the case of trafficked children, there seem to be serious problems across the board, for example, weak interagency partnerships and a lack of research into the subject (UNICEF, 2015).

At a time when the European Union is facing its greatest humanitarian crisis in its history, the UK has to prepare for the challenge. For instance, by the end of 2015, a total number of 1,321,520 people had applied for asylum, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq in the EU. There were 88,300 applications lodged by unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and 23% of all applicants were under the age of 18; 91% were males. Moreover, 51% of all asylum applicants were from Afghanistan. As for current statistics, between January and May 2016, a total number of 105,140 UASC aged 17 and under applied for asylum in the EU Member States (Eurostat, 2016).

In the UK, during the last ten years between 2006 and 2015, a total number of 23,796 UASC applied for asylum. According to the most current information, 3,206 applied for asylum in the first quarter of 2016 (Home Office, 2016a).

At present, unaccompanied children are in a dire situation in Europe. As the Lords EU select committee report '*Children in crisis: unaccompanied migrant children in the EU*' published on 26th July 2016 warned, Europe and the UK are letting down thousands of unaccompanied children by leaving them to fall into the hands of traffickers. They are at risk of exploitation abuses. At least 10,000 unaccompanied children have gone missing in the EU and many children have disappeared from care in the UK, which was identified by the committee as a 'scandal'. Furthermore, the report claimed that the UK has failed them in many aspects of their lives. For instance, there are acute problems with access to education, transition to adulthood and leaving care provision, mental health care and many other areas.

More importantly, the EU, including the UK, has failed to find durable solutions for young unaccompanied asylum seekers and to respect the principle of children's best interests. For instance, firstly, the current process of repatriation causes uncertainties and disruption in young people's lives. There is no proper monitoring system to obtain information about their wellbeing in the process of reintegration into their home countries. Secondly, given the uncertainty of their situation and the fear of removal from the country, when turning 18, many of these young people go into hiding and live in the underworld of street life ((House of Lords, 2016b).

As the committee declared, the process of durable solution seems to be only a repeated phrase:

The creation of durable solutions, like adherence to the best interests principle, appears to be a mantra rather than an effective guiding principle for EU and Member State action (House of Lords, 2016b, Chapter 4, para.199).

Finally, it is undoubted that there is an enormous challenge facing the UK (and the EU) in solving the growing problem of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UNICEF, 2016a). There seem to be no easy answers to the problem of finding lasting solutions to these children's plight and helping them shape safe, stable and dignified futures

Vision and goal

The imperative challenges facing the UK motivated the idea of this research project. It is obvious that an academic study on this scale is unable to find answers to such complicated problems. However, it can contribute to knowledge by exploring new options in order to help find answers. Therefore, this research was meant to provide a compass for new directions and possibilities that would help to plan new policies. As the evidence shows, in general, planning

refugee policy, especially relating to their labour market integration, is complicated. For instance, as explained in the European Parliament report *Labour market integration of refugees: Strategies and good practices* (2016) the policy response should be targeted and comprehensive:

Humanitarian migrants are a particularly vulnerable group who clearly require targeted, co-ordinated and comprehensive policy responses. Due to the forced nature of their migration and the traumatic experiences frequently associated with it, many suffer from psychological distress. They also face barriers over and above those encountered by other migrants in making the successful transition into employment (p. 20).

Therefore, the vision behind the study was to help plan durable solutions to the plight of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children in the UK. As discussed before, education plays a major role in their lives and it is their right. Effective formal or vocational education will improve their employability. As has been discussed in this study, the existing literature and the research findings confirmed the barriers to finding gainful employment, and the difficulties of competing in the UK's changing labour market. Therefore, it is important to find new and effective ways to improve their opportunities.

The ultimate goal of the study was to help young unaccompanied asylum seekers improve their employability and achieve their full potential in the UK labour market (or beyond, as in some cases, according to their final country of settlement). This would open the avenues for them to integrate into society. To achieve the research goal, the project was designed as the first step of a series of research studies that would facilitate the creation of educational and vocational intervention programmes. These initiatives should be effective, time-bound and client-centred. In addition, the research would also examine the possibilities of re-designing and improving the ongoing programmes (if any) where necessary.

In this regard, the study mainly aimed to explore which educational intervention programmes could best prepare unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children for employment and entering into the UK labour market.

Principally, it was an exploration of 'what works, for whom, in what contexts' in order to produce evidence on how a programme works, for whom it works, and the influence of the context within which it takes place. The findings would take the project to the next step as planned. More importantly, the study was planned to promote evidence-based policy planning which brings together current best evidence, practitioners' expertise and wisdom, and clients' expectations. Therefore, it would help policymakers and practitioners to make well-informed policy and practice decisions.

Research objectives and method

Main objective

The main objective of the study was to explore the availability, nature and effectiveness of current educational and vocational intervention programmes specifically designed for improving the children's employability. Based on this information, it will further investigate how to remodel currently available programmes (if any), and the ideas and requirements for new programmes.

Specific objectives

To understand the current situation of educational and vocational training provision for unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children.

To examine the benefits that the children will gain through formal and vocational education and training.

To explore the impact of education on employment and their social integration.

Overarching research question

How effective are the specific educational and vocational intervention programmes designed to integrate young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees into the UK labour market?

The sub questions that explore all of the objectives are presented in the methodology chapter.

Research method

This was a qualitative research based on a mixed-methods approach and was divided into two main components that complement each other:

1) Systematic review of research on intervention programmes – this was an analysis of available secondary data according to the pre-determined review protocol.

2) Field research – this was the main component of the study.

The field investigation was based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The sample comprised of fifty- three participants in total; thirty-eight of them were professionals while fifteen were children aged between 16 and 22.

Theoretical framework

A few selected theories and concepts provided the road map for the research and the following is a brief discussion of their relevance to the study.

Four main categories of theories guided the investigation:

- 1) Push/pull theory of migration
- 2) Human capital theory
- 3) Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of child development
- 4) Integration concepts and markers

With respect to the phenomenon of children seeking international asylum, there have been many different theoretical frameworks that explain the various forms of migration patterns and the impact of their actions. However, as the evidence shows, migration is a diverse process that is difficult to explain with a single theory (King, 2013).

Concerning this investigation, the push-pull theories of migration seemed relevant to understanding children's flight and expectations. For instance, as Castles and Miller (2003) described in *The Age of Migration*, pull and push factors influence migrants' motivation and decision to seek international sanctuaries. According to them, the push factors are economic hardships, limited educational prospects, high population, natural disasters or man-made catastrophes (e.g. war, persecution, ethnic cleansing). Pull factors seem to be the economic prospects, safety and security, and family connections, in the country of migration.

As they claimed '*Its central concept is 'human capital'; people decide to invest in migration, in the same way as they might invest in education or vocational training, because it raises their human capital and bring potential future gains in earnings*' (Castles & Miller 2003, p. 23).

According to this perspective, migrants' ultimate goal is to develop themselves into productive individuals for their future benefits. This relates to human capital theory, which is the linchpin of the theoretical framework of this study. The most influential economic theory of the western education, human capital theory, provides a powerful perspective on the relationship between education and individual productivity (Kwon, 2009). In general, it emphasises the contribution of education and training in relation to raising the productivity of an individual.

In economic migration studies, this neo-classical theory can be seen as one of the popular standpoints for determining the reasons for people's flight and the possible causes of actions taken by the hosting countries. However, there seem to be limitations in this explanation relating to

asylum seekers or forced migration. For instance, even though this economic theory seems to be applicable to all migrants, it begs the question of how relevant it is to forced migration. In a crisis, people may not have the choice to make calculated plans for their future prospects or their destinations (e.g. Watters, 2008).

It is important to note that, as with any theoretical perspective, these theories may not have all the answers and explanations. However, concerning this particular study, the theory of human capital has made a positive contribution to understanding the interrelated aspects of asylum seeking, aspirations, and approaches to finding solutions through education and employment.

Maximising the individual skills of these children who are alone, and shaping them into resourceful individuals, are inevitably the social responsibilities of the country of refuge. These children have competing needs and they have to make social and cultural adjustments. Their vulnerability and resilience have to be understood and supported by the new society that they rely upon. Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.22) offers, in broad terms, a clear theoretical framework for analysing the relationship between the individual asylum seeking child and the social system around him. According to Bronfenbrenner, wider social systems have an impact on the development of a child. As he describes, the child as a Microsystem interacts with the Mesosystem (e.g. home, school), the Exosystem (neighbourhood, community, agencies of government), and Macro system (e.g. beliefs, laws, regulation) in his developmental process. Concerning unaccompanied children and young people, they have to adapt to a new post-migration ecological system. As Rutter (2006a) argues in her book *Refugee children in the UK*, these ecological factors affect their educational progress. As she suggests, this theory should be the basis for understanding their vulnerabilities and resilience, and supporting their adaptation to the new society.

Integration theories and indicators also gave a sense of direction to this investigation. However, integration is a complicated area where different theories, models and concepts conflict with each other and no one theory has a broader appeal. The complex human interaction between groups makes it difficult to theorise about the meaning of the process. According to some explanations, it is a combination of assimilation, multiculturalism or a legal, social and moral process (Malischewski, 2013)

In relation to migrants, as some argue, successful integration can be the result of acculturation and placement and this process depends on the individual's education, which determines their employability and career success. Conversely, it is common knowledge that migrant communities have difficulty competing in the labour market with non- migrants (Bogai, 2016).

Given the complications in integration theories, the study followed the European Union principles for migrant integration (Council of Europe, 2004) and the indicators of integration published by the Home Office (Ager & Strang, 2004). According to these principles and indicators, education and employment are pivotal factors that facilitate the process of successful integration.

The theoretical framework gave a focus and helped to manage the vast quantity of data that was acquired by the study. The implications of the research for theory will be discussed in the discussion and conclusion chapters.

Researcher's knowledge and understanding

Many years ago, I became interested in refugee studies, when I was a research assistant in the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES), in Sri Lanka, my country of origin. During that time, when the country was embroiled in a civil war, my first research assignment was a collaborative work on the paper '*Sri Lankan refugees: Fallout from ethnic violence: A preliminary investigation*', which was presented at the International Workshop on Economic Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict, in Kandy, Sri Lanka. I have seen the perils of war, and realise how it can destroy children and rob them of their innocence, dreams and lives.

Moving to the UK from a refugee generating country exposed me to the refugee hosting world, and especially to the phenomenon of children seeking asylum on their own. Having seen the challenges facing both the children and the host country, I took my research interest further and wrote a thesis on '*The needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children in the United Kingdom: A critical literature review*' for my Master's degree in Evidence-Based Social Intervention. During this course, I gained an in-depth knowledge of refugee issues by completing the optional course on promoting the welfare of children and families. Refugee children's education became my primary concern as I became aware of their unmet needs and the deep-rooted limitations within the system.

My current thesis is the result of exploring the subject in depth in order to contribute to the existing knowledge of refugee children.

Contribution of the study

The study has made a small but unique contribution to the area of research. First, it has introduced new perspectives on planning effective and pragmatic education and vocational intervention programmes that address the complex needs of young unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Second, it has examined the current state of play regarding intervention programmes and also educational and vocational training in general by exploring the views of the professionals who were working in the area and the views of young unaccompanied asylum seekers themselves. It is

evident from this study that the research evidence for successful intervention programmes is scarce and the evidence base to guide effective provision is weak. Moreover, the complexities of the circumstances of unaccompanied asylum seekers have made it difficult to address their needs adequately. Third, as the study found, there is a lack of clear strategic policies regarding what type of provision is appropriate and how best and to whom such provision should be offered.

As stated before, this is the first step of a series of research studies that would explore and gather in-depth knowledge in order to design effective intervention programme(s), which may lead these children towards the right path in order to realise their education and vocational potential.

The structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into eight chapters including this introduction – Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 – This chapter provides an overview of unaccompanied children and the legislative framework. This includes the definition and the demographics of unaccompanied children in the UK. It also includes the international and national legislative framework for providing care and welfare for the children.

Chapter 3 – This offers the literature review of existing literature on the research topic. It first gives an introduction for the two reviews in the study: the traditional literature review and the systematic review. The chapter only comprises the traditional literature review, which critically synthesises and analyses the existing literature related to the subject. For instance, it predominantly reviews the literature on the factors related to refugee children's education and employment in general, and the problems facing unaccompanied children in particular.

Chapter 4 – This chapter focuses on the methodology of the study giving a detailed analysis of the research design, and the field research. It also provides the method of data analysis.

Chapter 5 – This chapter is the systematic review that aims, first, to find the available educational intervention programmes and second, to systematically analyse the research or reports of such programmes. There is a detailed description of the outcome of this review.

Chapter 6 – The chapter reports the findings of the study. It has two main sections: findings of the professional sample and findings of the children's sample. Under these two sections, the findings are arranged under sub titles.

Chapter 7 – This discussion chapter provides the main discussion of the findings. It is divided into two sections, representing the findings of the desk research and the main field research findings. Under these two sections, the discussion is arranged according to the research questions of the study.

Chapter 8 – Finally, the research draws its conclusions providing a detailed description of the implications of the research for theory, practice and policy. It also discusses the limitations of the research, and more importantly, it suggests new research avenues for future researchers.

Chapter 2

UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING AND REFUGEE CHILDREN IN THE UK: AN OVERVIEW

The following is an overview of unaccompanied children in the country, including the definition, the demographics, their rights, and the legislative framework.

Who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children?

Unlike many countries in the world, the UK has excluded the term 'separated children' to describe unaccompanied children. There is a difference between these two groups and this exclusion is seen as unfavourable to separated children.

The Home Office definition of unaccompanied children is as follows:

An unaccompanied asylum seeking child is defined by paragraph 352ZD of the Immigration Rules as one who is:

- under 18 years of age when the claim is submitted
- claiming in their own right
- separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who in law or by custom has responsibility to do so.

Being unaccompanied is not necessarily a permanent status and may change, particularly if the child has family members in the UK (Home Office, 2016a, p. 9) .

Who are separated children?

As the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines:

Separated children are children, as defined in Article 1 of the CRC, who have been separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members (UNCRC, 2005, para. 8 p. 3).

The difference between the two groups is that unaccompanied children arrive on their own, but separated children are accompanied by some adults who may be extended relatives, but not their parents or legal or customary caregivers. Regardless of how they arrive, both groups are equally vulnerable. Therefore, as the experts argue, the UK's common reference to both groups as 'unaccompanied children' may deprive separated children from care and protection if they become at risk of harm. For instance, they can be at risk of physical, mental or social suffering at the hands of adults appearing to be other family members (Children's Society, 2015, p.11; Crawley,2012, p.10).

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children are often abbreviated to UASC in the UK and, for clarity, this thesis will use the term 'unaccompanied children' and UASC interchangeably in accordance with the government definition.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the UK: demographics

It is difficult to know the accurate number of unaccompanied children who live in the country. Many of them live hidden lives unknown to the authorities. For some children, it is a change between hidden and open living according to their changing immigration status (Children's Society, 2015, p.12). The Home Office produces the official data of those who have applied for asylum, and the following is a brief interpretation of the recent and most current statistics of UASC.

According to the most current information, in the first quarter of 2016, there was a rise of 57% in asylum applications from UASC, compared to the same period in March 2015. A total number of 3,206 children had applied for asylum by the end of the first quarter of 2016, compared to 2,046 applicants during the same period in 2015. Currently, unaccompanied asylum seekers comprise 9% of total asylum applications. By the first quarter of 2016, the highest number of children were from Afghanistan (709), Eritrea (645) and Albania (425), comprising 55% of total applications (Home Office, 2016b). In addition, in May 2016, the government has announced its decision to resettle some more unaccompanied children from other European countries into the UK (Local Government Association, 2016). The total number of children who are being resettled depends on the agreement between local authorities and the government (ibid.).

Granting asylum for these children also varies annually, and the latest figures show an increase in the number of children receiving asylum in the country. For instance, in the year ending March 2016, 73% were granted asylum out of 1,982 initial decisions made. This was higher than same period in 2015, when only 67% were granted asylum out of 1,671 total initial decisions (Home Office 2016c).

2.1 UASC total applications by gender 2006-2015

Year	Total Applications	Male	Female	Sex unknown
2006	3,333	2,505	828	0
2007	3,489	2,814	675	0
2008	3,976	3,471	505	0
2009	2,857	2,517	338	2
2010	1,515	1,221	293	1
2011	1,248	1,026	221	1
2012	1,125	936	188	1
2013	1,265	1,086	179	0
2014	1,945	1,713	232	0
2015	3,043	2,755	275	13
Total	23,796	20,044	3,734	18

Source: Home Office (2016b)

According to Table 2.1, a total number of 23,796 people applied for asylum between 2006 and 2015. From these, 20,044 were male compared to 3,734 female applicants.

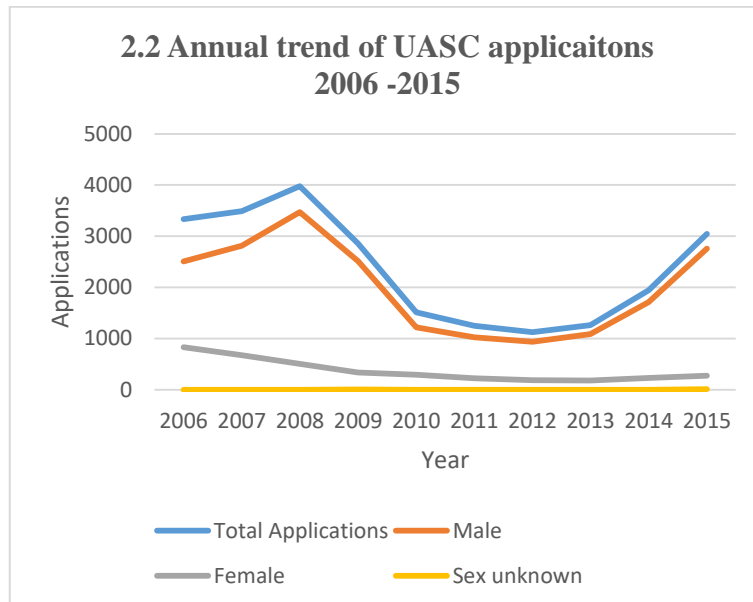


Figure 2.1 Source: Home Office (2016b)

The trend of unaccompanied children claiming asylum varies from year to year. This is clearly shown in Figure 2.1 as there was a sharp drop between 2008 and 2010, and there was a consistent increase in numbers between 2013 and 2015. However, the numbers are still below the 4,285 applications received in 2008, the highest number recorded during this period.

2.3 UASC applications by age 2006-2015

Year	Males under 14 to 15	Males 16 to 17	Females under 14 to 15	Females 16 to 17
2006	1,099	1,248	320	483
2007	1,081	1,375	212	404
2008	1,348	1,636	160	295
2009	1,084	1,126	115	196
2010	450	615	117	156
2011	394	532	57	147
2012	324	532	53	119
2013	317	711	44	125
2014	583	1,052	55	168
2015	959	1,689	77	187
Total	7639	10,516	1,210	2,280
Per centage	42.1%	57.9%	34.7%	65.3%

Source: Home Office (2015)

In general, as Table 2.2 shows, there is a large age gap between UASC in the country. For instance, 57% of total male UASC are between 16 and 17, compared to 42.1% of males being under 14 to 15. Among female children, 65.3% are aged between 16 and 17 while the 14 to 15 group comprises only 34.7% of total applicants.

Unaccompanied children in care

According to the current statistics, there were 2,630 children who were looked after by the local authorities in England, as of 31 March 2015. There was also a vast gender gap between male and female children in care, as 90% of them were males and the rest were females. More importantly, 75% of children in care were aged 16 and over (Department for Education, 2016). In 2015, there were 7,198 UASC aged over 18 who had left care in the Local Authorities in England

(Humphries & Sigona, 2016, p.7). Their top five countries of origin are: Afghanistan, Albania, Iran, Eritrea, and Vietnam (ibid. p.6).

Legislative framework

There are international and regional (e.g. European), instruments and national and domestic laws, policies and statutory guidance set out to protect, assist and find durable solutions for unaccompanied children in the UK. It should be noted that immigration and asylum policies are non-devolved and apply to England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, education and other social care support services are devolved and all four regions operate under their own legislative and policy frameworks.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the main international legal agreement that protects children seeking asylum alone. As a signatory to the UNCRC, the UK is responsible for implementing the terms of the Convention on the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children. The following are some of the main rights outlined in the Convention, which are specifically important to this research, namely child's best interest, listen to children's voice, local integration and return to the country of origin (Source: UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005).

- **Best interests of the child as a primary consideration in the search for short- and long-term solutions (Art. 3)**

Article 3(1) states that *'In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration'* (para. 19, p.8).

- **Right of the child to express his or her views freely (Art. 12)**

Pursuant to Article 12 of the Convention, in determining the measures to be adopted with regard to unaccompanied or separated children, the child's views and wishes should be elicited and taken into account (para. 25, p. 9).

- **Full access to education (arts. 28, 29(1)(c), 30 and 32)**

States should ensure that access to education is maintained during all phases of the displacement cycle. Every unaccompanied and separated child, irrespective of status, shall have full access to education in the country that they have entered, in line with articles 28, 29(1)(c), 30 and 32 of the Convention and the general principles developed by the Committee. Such access should be granted without discrimination and in particular, separated unaccompanied girls shall have equal access to formal, and informal education, including vocational training at all levels. Access to

quality education should also be ensured for children with special needs, in particular children with disabilities (para. 41, p.13).

- **Local integration**

Local integration is the primary option if return to the country of origin is impossible on either legal or factual grounds. The separated or unaccompanied child should have the same access to rights (including to education, training, employment and health care) as enjoyed by national children. In ensuring that these rights are fully enjoyed by the unaccompanied or separated child, the host country may need to pay special attention to the extra measures required to address the child's vulnerable status, including, for example, extra language training (para. 88,89, pp. 21, 22).

- **Return to the country of origin** (para. 84, p.22)

Return to the country of origin shall in principle only be arranged if such return is in the best interests of the child.

The following requirements should also be met:

The child's level of integration in the host country and the duration of absence from the home country

The views of the child expressed in exercise of his or her right to do so under Article 12 and those of the caretakers.

Domestic legislative framework: England, Scotland and Wales

All domestic regulations are drawn according to the principles of UNCRC.

England:

In England, the main protection of unaccompanied asylum seeking children comes from the Children's Act 1989. There is also a guideline for Local Authorities on the care of these children (Department for Education, 2014a). The following are some of the laws and acts set to protect children's welfare: the 1951 Refugee Convention; the European Legislation of Asylum Seekers (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2005; Dublin Regulation, Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009. Other immigration rules and the Immigration Act 2016 are also directly related to these children. However, as discussed in later chapters, some of the legislations have negative effects on these children's, education, leaving care support, etc. For instance, the Immigration Act 2016 and the Education Act 2016 are considered unfavourable to UASC (NRPF Network, 2016; Refugee Children's Consortium, 2016). Considering the overall impact of the immigration and education regulations and rules that came into force in the recent

decades, as the evidence shows, the system has had negative effect on refugee children's welfare and education (e.g. Anderson, Claridge, Dorling, & Hall, 2008; Hek, 2005, Rutter, 2006a).

Scotland

The following are some of the main Scottish Government legislation, policies and statutory guidance: the Children Scotland Act 1995; the Children and Young People Scotland Act, 2014; the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009; Do the Right Thing – Guardianship for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (Scottish Government, 2016, 2012).

Wales

These are some of the Welsh Government regulations that contain the rules for local authorities for their duties, powers and responsibilities relating to looked after children and care leavers: the Children Act 1989; Children (Leaving Care) 2000; the Children and Young Person Act 2008; the Children and Families Act 2014; Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014; the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2014 (NSPCC, 2016).

Northern Ireland

The following are the regulations set out by the Northern Ireland Executive for local authorities in respect of their duties and responsibilities for looked after children and care leavers: the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995; the Children (Leaving Care) Act (Northern Ireland) 2002; the Children (Leaving Care) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 (NSPCC, 2016).

Finally, it should be noted that UK's immigration legislations, rules and guidelines are prone to be amended frequently and sometimes these changes make asylum seekers' and refugees' situations complicated (Freemovement, 2015).

Chapter 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is, first, to provide the background knowledge about the existing literature related to the study and connect it to the wider academic field. Second, it aims to explain the rationale for the investigation in relation to the relevance and limitation of the current available information on the subject. The review is based on a collective body of literature found by a thorough and in-depth search. The relevant information has then been analysed, summarised and synthesised to produce the review. Given the dearth of the specific literature available on the issues addressed by the study, the review has incorporated a variety of empirical evidence from many backgrounds that are closely associated with the area of research. Therefore, the review can be identified with the following definition:

A literature review is [An opportunity] *to look again at the literature ... in ... an area not necessarily identical with, but collateral to, your own area of study* (Leedy, 1989, as cited in Murray, 2011, p. 122)

The study has two reviews of the literature: 1) traditional or scoping review; 2) systematic review of intervention programmes (Chapter 5). The two reviews were interconnected and provided the basis for the investigation. This is the traditional literature review that gives an overall critical appraisal of the existing literature. As the traditional reviews take different forms and names according to their purpose, this review can also be called a scoping review given its role as a stepping stone to the more specific systematic review of the literature.

As Jesson, Matheson and Lacey (2011) describe:

A scoping review sets the scene for a future research agenda....The review documents what is already known, and then, using a critical analysis of the gaps in knowledge, it helps to refine the questions, concepts and theories to point the way to future research. It is also used as the first step in refining the questions for a subsequent systematic review (p.76).

Selection criteria

The following is a brief description of the selection criteria for the review, as they are similar to those of a systematic review in terms of the sources of literature and time period (a detailed description of these components is given in Chapter 5).

Type of literature

Published literature predominantly related to the education, employment and integration of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children and young people in the UK. In addition, specifically selected literature, especially from Europe, was also reviewed in order to compare the contextual differences and similarities of the issue under investigation. Unpublished literature, (grey literature) was also scrutinised for background information but they were not selected for the review.

Source of literature

Published literature was extracted from printed and digital sources, for instance, scholarly journal articles, books, government reports, websites, and digital library catalogues. Grey literature (not formally published literature) including conference papers, reports on programme information received from Charities and NGOs, and theses, etc.

Time scale

The literature has been predominantly selected within the period between 2000 and 2016 because of its legislative importance and the need for time-relevant literature and continuation. Given the rapidly changing nature of the refugee flows, up-to-date knowledge is key for effective policy making and service delivery. However, the review provided a well-balanced knowledge of the literature spanning the selected period in order to present the development of UASC problems over time (a more detailed description of the time scale is given in Chapter 5).

Search Engine

Google Scholar

Search terms

E.g., the search terms comprised of various combinations of the following key words: education, intervention programmes, refugees, migration, refugee children, unaccompanied refugees and asylum seekers, labour market integration, refugee integration, refugee youth, ethnic minorities, refugee employment interventions.

Overview

The review was guided by the research questions introduced in the methodology section in Chapter 4. In that regard, the review aimed to critically examine the selected literature that would shed light on the complex issue of providing educational and vocational opportunities for UASC. The review has also examined the following: employment skills and the labour market integration of young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees, the impact of labour market integration on their social integration and bring to the fore the research and practice gaps that exist on the subject.

Issues of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children in the UK

As has been discussed in this study, unaccompanied children and youths are recognised as being among the most vulnerable asylum seeking groups in the world. Moreover, given the current migration crisis unfolding in Europe, they have become the focal point of concern of European states and the refugee protection and relief agencies. Children seeking asylum unaccompanied is not a discovery of a new phenomenon in the UK as the country has given refuge to unaccompanied children over many decades. However, in recent times, the issues surrounding their welfare have become complicated and the situation has been scrutinised and examined by the legislative body in the country and many other national and intergovernmental organisations. Their concerns and recommendations have been well documented.

For instance, the reports of the recent Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) inquiry into the human rights of unaccompanied children and young people, and the government's responses to the report (HM Government, 2013; HM Government, 2014a) provide comprehensive knowledge about the extent of the problems faced by these children in the UK. The JCHR has examined every aspect of their welfare, mainly mainstream education and higher education, vocational training, transition to adulthood and personal ambitions, guardianship services, and better integration. Many recommendations have been made by the government. More importantly, the current House of Lords' European Union Committee report *Children in crisis: unaccompanied migrant children in the EU* published in July 2016 shows how the UK government and the EU member states systematically fail the children in accessing education, care, transition to adulthood, integration and in many other elements of their lives (House of Lords, 2016a). The central message of these reports is that these children's best interests have not been protected and durable solutions to their problems have not been found. As the Lords recommended, the government should strongly focus on finding durable solutions while observing the principle of a child's best interest (ibid.).

The above reports have produced the most compelling and reliable evidence on the situation of UASC at present in the UK.

Refugee education in the UK

Educational provision for children labelled as ‘non-citizens’ (Arnot, Pinson & Candappa, 2009) has become a challenge for the state when the forces of democracy, morality, justice, political and social climate contradict each other. In the light of the literature, it can be argued that since the introduction of the 1905 Aliens Act, the first modern immigration legislation in the UK (Bashford & McAdam, 2014), there has been a continual legislative process that appears to have been restricting the full potential of children seeking asylum.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the education system

The literature shows that, in general, they are determined and motivated children and young people who want to find stability and success. For them, education plays a major role in their future plans (Doyle & Toole, 2013; Gregg & Williams, 2015, p. 38). However, as the following discussion explains, in the UK, refugee children’s education in general, and unaccompanied refugee children’s education in particular, has been a controversial social, political and policy issue that has always been subjected to scrutiny. Upholding the universal fundamental right to education while delivering an inclusive education system for a group of diverse educational, racial, cultural and social backgrounds is complicated, not only for the UK, but for any refugee receiving country. The country has seen many initiatives being implemented by successive governments, educational institutions and Non-governmental Organisations at local, national and also European levels, in co-operation with some other European countries (Dada, 2012; McCorrison, 2012).

Over the past decades, however, refugee children’s education in the UK seems to have been subjected to scrutiny and criticism by international and national organisations, academics and researchers alike.

Even though unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) belong to the category of refugee and asylum seeking children in general, in relation to education and welfare, their rights are different to those of their counterparts who are accompanied by their parents or legal guardians. Unaccompanied children and young people seeking asylum alone are considered as looked-after children and care leavers. Local authorities are responsible for their care and welfare under the provision of Section 20 of the Children’s Act 1989 and the Children Leaving Care Act 2000.

Under these regulations, they have the right to the same welfare and care provision provided to the citizen children in the country who are looked after predominantly by the local authorities, who act as ‘corporate parents’. It is a challenging responsibility, as the National Children’s Bureau defines:

For children in care, it is local authority elected members and officers (termed 'corporate parents') who are responsible for providing a standard of care that would be good enough for their own children (NCB, 2013).

In this context, UASC and young people are in a better position for accessing educational provision compared to refugee children in general. For instance, according to the government school admission code (Department for Education, 2014b), they should be given the same priority to school admission as that extended to all looked-after children. Local authorities have the power to direct the school admission if school places are not available and it is considered to be in the best interest of the child. Similarly, when they reach the age of 18, local authorities have a duty to provide their welfare and to prepare and support them for adult life, by planning their future pathways, and supporting their further education and training until the age of 21 (or 25 if they are in full-time education and training) (Department for Education, 2014a).

Regardless of these rights and benefits, evidence shows that unaccompanied children and young people in general are in a disadvantaged position with regard to accessing educational services, and attaining educational success, even though they have high aspirations. However, some research evidence shows that, under difficult conditions, they perform well in education compared to the other looked-after children in public care. Some local authorities hail them as a success story (Rutter, 2003, 2006).

In general, the education of children in public care is a well-researched area and the problem of their educational underperformance has been a well-known problem in the UK for many years. As Slater (2002) claims, *“the dismal performance of children in public care is perhaps the longest-running scandal of our education system”*. Some claim that their disadvantaged position is compounded by being in public care, which seems to be a more hazardous experience than their previous problems (Fletcher-Campbell, Archer, & Tomplinson, 2002).

Local authorities have the *“statutory duty to enable, encourage and assist young people’s participation in education and training”* (Department for Education, 2013c, p.4). However, according to the evidence, and also the government’s own admission, the gap between the outcomes of looked-after children and their peers has been widening. The alarming underachievement of looked-after children has been a cause for concern of successive governments in the past decade (Department for Education and Skills, 2003). It is important to mention that, on 5 June 2013, the Department of Education commissioned the National Children’s Bureau to launch a website for informing the best local practice in effective corporate parenting as a measure to narrow this widening gap (NCB, 2013). In relation to this, Edward Timpson, the current Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, in his letter to lead members of Children Services, claimed that they should have *“a real sense of parental responsibility for their*

outcomes. This concern should encompass their education, their health and welfare and their aspirations as they enter adulthood” (Timpson, 2013).

Lack of available literature

There seems to be an unavoidable destiny of most young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees who get caught up in the system. However, due to the severe gap in research evidence, it is problematic to present a comprehensive discussion on this issue. Nevertheless, a handful of credible pieces of literature show the severity of the problems that this group of youngsters faces with achieving educational and career success in the UK. As the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) declares, *“the lack of available information about the range of children in the UK who are subject to immigration control itself raises considerable concern about safeguarding arrangements”* (Behan et al. 2005, p. 87).

This also applies to the educational experiences of unaccompanied asylum seekers and young people. The most noticeable finding appearing in the literature in this subject area is the lack of available knowledge on refugee education in general (Arnot et al., 2009; Boyden 2009; European Union, 2010; Hek 2005; Pinson & Arnot, 2007; Rutter, 2006; RSN, 2012; Refugee Council 2005; Wade et al., 2012; Warren, 2004), as Pinson and Arnot (2007) point out in the essay *Sociology of education and the wasteland of refugee education research, ‘there is a gaping hole’* (p.399) in sociological research on refugee education. They assume that it might be the case of perceiving the ‘asylum crisis’ as an adult problem and a problem of immigration control, rather than one of educational policy making.

By contesting this claim, Boyden (2009) says that the education policy towards these children should be viewed in the historical context of government efforts to address the social diversity in Britain, and in recent times, its conciliatory approach towards people’s disquiet about the threat of terrorism. In Rutter’s invaluable compendium *Refugee children in the UK* (2006), she discusses the research perspectives on refugee children’s education. As she explains, there is a large body of literature available on the traumatic experiences of refugee children compared to the limited empirical evidence on their social world. According to her, refugee children’s educational issues have become invisible among the large amount of research literature available on ethnic minority children’s educational experiences. Although these research studies are not specifically about refugee children, they highlight the problems faced by refugee children as a whole, which can also be applied to UASC and young people.

Apart from the dearth of data, according to a comprehensive review of evidence carried out by the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), most of the evidence based on this subject is provided by small scale, qualitative studies which are *‘overwhelmingly focused on*

London'. This results in an inconsistent evidence base that does not show the national or regional variations (Warren, 2004).

Compared to the research literature on refugee children's education, specific literature on unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children is extremely limited (Rutter 2003, 2006; Wade et al., 2009, 2012; Mitchele, 2007; Hek 2005; Stenly, 2001; Trolle, 2010; European Commission, 2010; Steward, 2009).

According to Rutter (2006), there is no data on UK-educated refugee children's experiences in further education or higher education. The long-term experiences of young refugees are not properly researched or documented. Their education record ends with the completion of GCSEs and there is hardly any information on their labour market integration. As she says, "*there is a powerful argument for a longitudinal study of young refugees' adaptation, educational progression and eventual employment*" (p.211).

In the UK, the boundary between three groups, namely, UASC and young people, refugee children and undocumented migrant children, is blurred. UASC belong to looked-after children, refugee children and at times irregular migration groups. As some research evidence shows, there can be an overlap between their immigration status as unaccompanied children sometimes come under irregular migration groups according to their changing immigration statuses, especially when their asylum claims are rejected. They can then go underground and become destitute (Pinter, 2012; Sigona & Hughes, 2012). This confirms that some important pieces of literature on education and also the employment issues of unaccompanied young people have to be found in other research that is focused on similar groups.

A handful of prominent academics and researchers have published extensively on refugee children's education in general and unaccompanied children in particular. Similarly, Government and Non-governmental Organisations such as the Department for Education (DfE), the Department for Health (DH), the Children's Commissioner's offices (for England, Scotland and Wales) and more specifically the Refugee Council, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), Save the Children, the British Red Cross, the Children's Society and Bernado's, are among the many important contributors. New charitable organisations such as the Refugee Support Network have been adding a wealth of new knowledge to the subject of education, employment and integration of refugee children, including UASC.

Educational aspirations and attainment

As discussed previously, children and young people leave their own homes and embark on arduous journeys to unknown territories for a reason. Many of them look into the future with resilience and hope and these may be the very characteristics that sustain them through a difficult

journey to a host country. Watters (2008) provides a compelling description in his book *'Refugee Children: Towards the next horizon'* which is one of the vital contributions to the literature on refugee children. Drawing on his case studies, he explains how unaccompanied youths wait in the European mainland after an exhausting journey, in order to cross the channel to the UK with a dream of education and a determination for future success. As evidence shows, the majority of them attempt to realise their future success through education and they are enthusiastic and diligent learners, inspirational peers and promising achievers who are committed to education (Rutter, 2006; Wade et al., 2009, 2012; Waters 2008; Stanley, 2001; Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Hopkins & Hill, 2010; Kohli, 2007; Stevenson & Willot, 2007; Refugee Support Network (RSN), 2012).

However, as some research shows, there are exceptions. For instance, Wade et al. (2012) found in their research that although most of the UASC were strongly motivated to succeed in education, some needed persuasion to attend school. As they described it, the lack of motivation can be associated with attachment difficulties, severe emotional or behavioural difficulties, inappropriate educational courses, and poor English language skills.

Some empirical evidence suggests that their motivation and determination pay dividends. For instance, given the circumstances, many of them perform well in education when compared to other looked-after children who alarmingly underperform (Berridge, 2007; Wade et al., 2009, 2012; Kohil, 2007; Brownlees & Finch, 2010; Rutter, 2006). As Jill Rutter classifies, most of these children are from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Vietnam and Tamils from Sri Lanka (Rutter, 2006).

According to the research evidence, asylum seeking and refugee children's educational attainment seems to vary according to their country of origin, race, gender, culture, socio-economic status, pre-migration educational level, physiological and emotional adaptation, identity and so on. Rutter (2006) in her *Refugee children in the UK* has given an interesting comparison of refugee children's educational success and their nationalities. This is one of the most important pieces of information of this kind as it shows the vast variations in educational performance between children belonging to the same country or race. For instance, Sudanese refugee children in the UK are a success story of educational attainment. However, there is an exception between South Sudanese children who are doing better than their underachieving Northern counterparts. Compared to the Sudanese, Somali children and young people seem to have complex trends in educational performance and are recognised as underachievers according to the various local authority level data. Even though Rutter shows a systematic and thorough investigation of refugee children in general, including some information about unaccompanied children and young people, there is no specific description of them.

There is limited data available on UASC's education performance according to their demographical, cultural, racial or socio-economic backgrounds. It is crucial to know their performance and experiences compared with accompanied refugee children as they come under public parenting. Therefore, their circumstances are different from those of accompanied refugee children.

This information is useful when making pathway plans for young unaccompanied asylum seekers. As most researchers recommend, these young people's motivation and educational achievements can be contributory factors when making their future life plans for employment, social integration and meaningful resettlement pathways (Wade et al., 2012; Rutter, 2006; RSN, 2012; Brownlees & Finch, 2010; Hek, 2005).

Barriers to access to education

In relation to planning UASC future life pathways, the literature consistently refers to the importance of an inclusive education system in the UK for a group of vulnerable young people who seek potential benefits and stability through education (Hek, 2005; Rutter, 2003, 2006; RSN, 2012). However, limited but well-clarified empirical evidence shows the weaknesses and complexities of the education services and the implications for this group. Accessing higher education and vocational education has become particularly problematic and there seems to be no long-term solution at the government level (Brownlees & Finch, 2010; Hancilova & Knauder, 2011; RSN, 2012; Rutter, 2001; Sigona & Hughes, 2012; Stevenson & Willliott, 2007; Warren, 2004; Hek, 2005, 2006).

Furthermore, the literature also shows that young unaccompanied asylum seekers face a catalogue of problems in meeting their educational needs. For instance, they have to deal with social and cultural differences, psychological problems, legal matters in relation to immigration controls, age dispute cases (Crawley, 2006, 2007), language barriers, finding school places and/or higher and vocational educational opportunities, funding for higher education, and inadequate or inaccurate advice and guidance. Hek (2006) has given a detailed explanation in *The Role of Education in the Settlement of Young Refugees in the UK: The experience of young refugees*. This is a good and rare qualitative study on this subject and it gives a detailed account of all the problems faced by young refugees in London. She also describes the policy failure at the government level.

In relation to policy planning, developing and delivering educational services for UASC is no easy proposition for policy makers, frontline service providers and more importantly, for the government or local authorities.

The evidence suggests that at the policy-making level, upholding children's rights and their human rights, and providing their welfare while being accountable for solving immigration and nationality issues of the country, are challenging issues (Crawley, 2012; Hancilova & Knauder, 2011; Rutter, 2006; Sigona & Hughes, 2010; Troller, 2010). Furthermore, at the institutional and frontline service level, dealing with a heterogeneous group with national, racial, linguistic and education diversity makes welfare planning complicated (Hancilova & Knauder 2011; Rutter 2003, 2006). The research evidence shows that local authority support and services for UASC have deteriorated since 1996 and local authorities are unwilling to allocate financial support to the welfare of these children and young people (Brownlees & Finch, 2010; Rutter, 2011).

Brownlees and Finch (2010) in their report for UNICEF *Levelling the playing field* provide a detailed account of both the barriers faced by UASC in the UK and the views and problems encountered by the frontline professionals providing educational services. They also discuss the need for more consistent policy planning and financial support from central government and the gaps and weaknesses in the local government welfare services for UASC. According to them, there are significant differences in the level of service provision to this group among local authorities. In some authorities, these children and young people do not get care and welfare and access to health, housing and education services.

Access to education is one of the major problems faced by this group of young people. The report shows the difficulty and frustration faced by both UASC and professionals in finding secondary school places (especially for year 11) and the amount of negotiation they have to engage in with the reluctant schools. It is astonishing to know that at times local authorities have to take legal action or use the 2007 Admission Code (Department for Education, 2007) to persuade schools to admit young unaccompanied refugees. This is a well-noted problem which almost every piece of literature found in this review in relation to the educational services for these children. It is believed that schools are not in favour of taking asylum seeking children out of the school cycle and they worry about risking their place in the school league tables because of the risk attached to the newcomers' performance (Brownlees & Finch, 2010; Rutter, 2006a).

As the literature shows, access to higher education is more problematic for UASC, mainly due to their unresolved immigration status. Some other problems are: lack of financial support for higher education, poor English language skills, lack of guidance and advice on the correct sources, etc. Especially, restricting UASC's eligibility for tuition fees for higher education has become detrimental to their educational progress (Bowerman 2013; HM Government, 2015; Refugee Children's Consortium, 2012).

At present, the major obstacles to entering higher education are the tuition fee status (for asylum seekers) and the rising fee rates for refugees (Coram Legal Centre 2008; Higher Education

Funding Council for Wales; Hoare, 2009, 2010; Refugee Children's Consortium, 2012; Refugee Support Network, 2012; Stevenson & Willot, 2007). The recent Home Office decision to charge overseas fees for UASC have affected their access to higher education as overseas undergraduate fees range from £8,500 – £29,000 per year (The University UK, 2010). Local Authorities have to bear the brunt of financing the students who want to enter higher education. It is worth mentioning that there is evidence of legal challenges against local authorities that refuse to finance UASC, for instance, the recent court order against the Newcastle Local Authority in which the court found that the Local Authority has a duty rather than a discretion to give former looked-after asylum seeking children relevant educational assistance, including the payment of university tuition fees (NYAS, 2013; NCAC, 2013). However, in Scotland, higher education funding for asylum seekers is different and it is more favourable to UASC than that of England and Wales (RSN, 2012).

Some other barriers to access to higher education are inadequate English language skills, universities' unfavourable decisions on admission policies, and inadequate and inaccurate advice on education services and entitlements (Hopkins & Hill, 2010; RSN, 2012).

Further education and unaccompanied asylum seeking youth

As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) describes,

Vocational training also has an empowering effect. It enables asylum-seekers to meet the host population on equal terms rather than as recipients of services, and facilitates access to employment in case permission to remain is granted. Vocational training may also be beneficial for reintegration upon return of rejected asylum-seekers, as it can open new employment opportunities in the home country (UNHCR 2007, p.4).

This statement itself explains the importance of vocational training for unaccompanied asylum seeking youth. In relation to the UK's situation in vocational education, Jill Rutter claims *“there is a long standing divide between academic and vocational qualifications in all parts of the UK and reform is needed in 14-19 education as refugee children will benefit from the mix of academic subjects with vocational subjects”* (Rutter, 2006, p.210).

However, vocational education is a crucial element in planning UASC employment pathways. For instance, as the Children's Commissioner to England explained, most UASC are above school age and there is a dire need for a proper system of vocational education (Children's Commissioner, 2015).

In general, improving further education and vocational qualifications in order to create a skilled workforce has been on the government agenda in recent years because of the gap in vocational education and failing youth employment prospects (Department for Education 2011a, 2011b). New initiatives, such as *New challenges, new chances: further education system and skills*

reform plan (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2013) were launched to improve vocational education and employability. However, there has not been significant progress as vocational education is still facing serious discrepancies and is in need of a more effective and robust system (Woolf, 2015, 2016).

Whatever the reforms, the research evidence suggests that entering Further Education is still an obstacle for UASC and refugees in general. There was scarce information on this subject, but some specific research reports show the obstacles to post-16 education and vocational training for all refugees. For instance, there is no proper guidance and advisory system for refugees or staff members, there is lack of course options, no added support from peers and mentors, a lack of financial support, and more importantly, travelling costs and options to colleges (Doyle & Toole, 2013).

The majority of UASC are 16-17-year-old males, and entering Further Education or tertiary colleges is their obvious option. For instance, given their varying degrees of educational levels, the interruption of their education, inadequate English language skills, psychological and emotional problems and financial hardship, finding suitable Further Education colleges may well be an appropriate option. Further Education colleges offer English language skills and other vocational courses that can be beneficial to them. However, according to the UNICEF report compiled by Brownlees & Finch (2010), there are serious concerns among professionals and UASC alike about the level of education they provide. According to the professionals, the Further Education system does not deliver an inclusive education system to them. As they pointed out, if the goal of Further Education is to train people in what they aspire to, in the case of UASC, it fails to achieve that goal.

Moreover, a lack of access to courses, especially for English language learning, and other vocational courses to suit their individual skills, a lack of pastoral support and inadequate career guidance may also make Further Education a frustrating experience for YUAS (Rutter 2003).

To have an in-depth understanding of the issues of Higher and Further Education provision and UASCs' educational attainment, it is essential to have a credible and reliable knowledge base. The scarcity of available literature on this issue is a hindrance to making a well-informed evaluation or judgement. Although the selected literature in this review is reliable and provides a comprehensive picture of the situation, it is hard to find information on UCAS Higher Education data, their educational performance and so on. There is only a limited amount of information available on the types of Higher and Further Education courses and their appropriateness and outcomes.

Specific educational programmes for improving employment skills

As the evidence shows, education plays a pivotal role in improving employability. For instance, in relation to the youth labour market crisis in Europe and the developed world, a recent OECD report (OECD, 2014) describes the importance of the education system in assisting the youths into employment. It also specifies the need of strengthening vocational training, especially apprenticeship and work experience opportunities.

In general, the youth labour market in the UK seems to have been in a weak position for a long time. As stated in Wolf's report "*the youth labour market has been in a growing crisis for years and ... a quarter to a third (300,000-400,000) of 16-19 year olds are on courses which do not lead to higher education or good jobs*" (Department for Education, 2011a). This has not changed as the recent parliament report shows that unemployment rates among young people are three times higher than those of the rest of the population and they are economically inactive. There is also a mismatch between their skills and employment rate (HM Government, 2015).

This evidence reinforces the dire reality that may inevitably affect the employment prospects of young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees. It also provides the rationale for this research study.

As explained in the methodology section, one of the main components of this research study was reviewing and evaluating the available literature on education and vocational intervention programmes designed for improving the employment skills of UASC. This review is presented in Chapter 5.

In relation to planning UASC's employment pathways, there are specific contradictory factors which need to be considered, namely the specific psychological conditions of these youths and the challenges faced by the professionals. For instance, there are two probable psychological conditions that young unaccompanied asylum seekers may experience, namely, 'psychological hypothermia', defined as being unable to reflect on their past or look into the future and plan their life because of their uncertain immigration status (Papadopoulos, 2002 as cited in Refugee Support Network, 2012). This condition can be a cause of anxiety and 'temporal panic', a situation whereby a person comes under considerable pressure to react urgently to achieve their goals within the time available (Lewis and Weigert, as cited in Wade et al 2009). This psychological dilemma may drive them to look for optimal use of the educational opportunities available, as they are concerned about their future employment prospects and life chances (ibid.). This over ambition challenges the policy making and service delivery process. Policy makers are in a difficult position in order to meet these high aspirations, given UASC's complicated situation. For instance, they need to take into account many factors, such as their uncertain immigration status, human rights and children's rights, their psychological condition, prior educational qualifications and so on. In addition, the financial

constraints also need to be taken into account. Moreover, they may have to be sensitive to media pressure and the public perception of asylum and immigration when formulating educational interventions (Demirdjian, 2012; Hek, 2006; Home Office, 2007; Sigona & Huges, 2012).

Given these circumstances, planning and delivering effective intervention programmes is a complicated task that needs well-informed knowledge and a pragmatic approach. Not only creating interventions but also evaluating the efficacy and effectiveness is crucial for the continuation of suitable initiatives.

In relation to the intervention programmes and initiatives available for UASC at present, it appears that there are limited specific programmes available to them. However, recently established charitable organisations, such as the Refugee Support Network (RSN), have initiated young unaccompanied people-centred education and employment-related support services. RSN's Access to Higher Education programme is a promising initiative that helps unaccompanied young people to go to university and build up future career paths (<http://www.refugeesupportnetwork.org/news/toolkit>). The new campaign group 'Student Action for Refugees' is also active in promoting the equal access to higher education for refugee children through their 'Equal Access' Campaign (http://www.star-network.org.uk/index.php/campaigns/equal_access).

UASC may be included in these programmes at a national or local level. The problem is that there is hardly any specific information on their participation and progress. The lack of a well-developed central database on their attendance of these programmes, performance and attainment makes it difficult to carry out empirical investigations or assumptions on these issues.

There are also refugee specific programmes run by the Refugee Council, local authorities, refugee community groups (RCOs) and Non-governmental Organisations. For instance, programmes such as refugee induction programmes, English language programmes, peer support and befriending programmes are some of many running in the country on a piecemeal basis. Special programmes, such as the SMILE Programmes run by the Refugee Council, were one of the main programmes that had successful outcomes in relation to young asylum seekers' education (Refugee Council, 2010; Walker, 2011).

As stated above, the study will present an in-depth discussion about the availability and effectiveness of intervention programmes designed especially for UCAS in the systematic review chapter.

Young unaccompanied asylum seekers: employment and labour market integration

In general, the integration of migrants and refugees into the labour market has become a challenge for host countries in Europe. In recent years, terms such as ‘employment and integration’, ‘immigrant economic integration’, ‘employment integration of refugees’, ‘labour market integration of refugees’ or ‘refugee employment chances’ have not only become common vocabulary but also controversial issues that seem to challenge host countries without exception. As the latest European Union integration report *Time for Europe to get migrant integration right* (Council of Europe, 2016) shows, getting migrant communities into education and employment is a challenge, and a variety of new initiatives are needed to improve the integration process. Especially, giving them employment opportunities, apprenticeships, and making employers recruit more migrants and refugees are some of the initiatives introduced in the report. As for the UK's situation, according to the Migration Integration Policy Index (2015), the UK has stopped its already weak targets set for migrant integration, while other Northern European countries are increasing their integration measurements. As the report says, it was a policy change towards migrants and the UK integration polices dropped six points in 2015; this was the second largest restriction in recent years. These changes affect migrants' education and employment opportunities.

As the literature shows, the economic progress of refugees has many positive outcomes for countries, as UNHCR explains:

Providing access to the labour market can reduce reception costs, discourage informal employment and facilitate reintegration into the country of origin by allowing asylum-seekers who return home to do so with a degree of financial independence or acquired work skills (UNHCR, 2007 p.13).

However, in Europe and in the UK, there has been acute unemployment among refugees (Archer, Weldon-Hollingworth; European Union, 2016; Maylor & Moreau, 2005; Sheibani et al., 2005). In the UK, according to the government's strategy for refugee integration *Full and Equal Citizens* (Home Office, 2000), employment is the key factor in the integration of refugees into the country of asylum. However, access to the UK labour market is a major challenge faced by many refugees. They are in a disadvantaged position and experience high levels of difficulty with finding employment in the UK (Bloch, 1996, 2002, 2004, 2004b, 2013; Carter, 2003; Dumper 2002; Greater London Authority, 2004; Hancilova & Knauder, 2011; ICAR 2008; Refugee Council, 2003; Rosenkranz, 2002; Refugee Council, 2003; Schreiber, 2006; Sheibani et al., 2005). As the literature shows, refugees face high barriers in finding jobs and most of them are underemployed and underpaid. Racism and employer discrimination are some of the factors that hinder them entering the labour market (Blotch, 2004). However, disputing these views, ICAR (2004) argues that there is no sufficient evidence to prove employer discrimination against refugees on racial

grounds. As some agree, including the Home Office racism is a negative factor affecting the employment prospects of refugees (Home Office, 2000) More significantly, some researchers have criticised the British media for generating hostility towards refugees, which puts them in a weaker position when competing for employment (Black, 2001; Greenslade, 2005; ICAR, 2004; Rosenkranz, 2002). Some argue that, over time, the government policies have contributed to the hostility and negative opinions about asylum seekers and refugees in the country who are looking for work (Rosenkranz, 2002; Schuster and Solomos, 2004). As Rosencrantz (2002) claims, *“politicians from all parties have contributed to the negative representation of refugees by the media [and] the xenophobic exploitation of the asylum seekers threat”* (p.93).

This claim is reinforced by the report published by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI, 2001) stating that *“many politicians have contributed to, or at least not adequately prevented, public debate taking on an increasingly intolerant line with at times racist and xenophobic overtones”* (p.18).

Other than racism, there are other barriers preventing refugee and asylum seekers from finding employment. The main barriers are personal social and economic risk, vulnerability, financial problems (preventing access to education, training etc.), lack of social connections, inadequate language skills, social and geographical isolation, physical and mental health, cultural adaptation, lack of knowledge and information about employment structure, lack of support and advice, lack of qualification and credentials, and lack of work experience and UK references (Bloch 2004, 2005, 2013; Mayor of London, 2004; Refugee Council, 2003; Sigona & Hughes, 2004; Sheibani et al., 2005).

Moreover, the length of time they stay in the UK, their levels of qualification and gender difference also seem to affect their employment prospects. For instance, male refugees who have lived in the country for a long time with UK qualifications are likely to find employment (Bloch & Rosenkranz, 2002). In terms of regional employment trends, evidence shows that refugees and asylum seekers who live in London have an advantage when it comes to finding employment, compared to those who live in other regions (Greater London Authority, 2004; Sheibani et al., 2005).

According to Blotch (2004), in the UK there is a contradiction between two policy fields, namely, policies on refugee labour market integration and policies on restricting labour market access for asylum seekers.

In relation to young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees, employment is a key factor that facilitates finding durable solutions. Moreover, employment is a fundamental right of refugees and unaccompanied refugee children and young people who are eligible to work under

legal visa status in the UK. However, evidence shows that UASC are in a disadvantaged position for accessing employment opportunities (Bloch, 2013; NIACE, 2009; Refugee Council, 2005).

Although these findings show the general picture of refugee employment problems, it is important to mention that, as in education, the literature on employment opportunities and labour market integration of UASC also seems to be extremely rare and mostly exists as grey literature. This shortage of literature has been one of the common features noted by the researchers and experts in this subject area (Bloch et al., 2007; Hek, 2005, 2006; Refugee Council, 2005; Sigona & Hughes, 2010, 2012; Somerville & Wintour, 2004).

Knowledge of the employment issues of UASC can largely be drawn from some scholarly writings of a few experts, especially on the 'irregular migrant children' category. The distinction between both groups can be blurred as some argue that irregularity is not a fixed status as many different children can be included in the group, e.g., those who have asylum applications refused, unauthorised entry and so on (Pinter, 2012; Sigona & Hughes, 2010). In particular, the children can be destitute and have no access to education, employment or other welfare services. Therefore, in relation to their employment issues, both groups are likely to share the same experiences. These young people are at risk of being victims to forced labour or exploitive labour, physical and mental abuse, prostitution and so on (Refugee Council, 2005; Sigona & Hughes, 2010, 2012; Bloch 2013).

According to the Mayor of London Report '*Young refugees and asylum seekers in Greater London: vulnerability to problematic drug use*' (2004), young refugees work long hours for less money and very few options of occupation are available. It describes how very few young people who were interviewed were problematic drug users and involved in selling drugs. However, it indicates that there is a pressing need for a systematic approach to meet the needs of this highly vulnerable group. It also shows employers' hostility towards migrant workers as employers do not possess a clear idea of immigration rules and their right to employ refugees or asylum seekers.

It is difficult to find any literature that has fully contributed to drawing a profile of young unaccompanied refugee groups and their employment prospects. There is hardly any literature on the type of employment and the experiences they go through in finding employment.

As some research shows, most of them who have the right to remain in the UK as refugees may come under the category of NEETs, young people who are Not in Education Employment or Training. They tend to be socially excluded, homeless, with no future direction or plan. Research shows that they need to be given proper interventions that improve their motivation and aspirations (Viswanathan, 2010).

However, as discussed previously, young unaccompanied children are a determined and motivated group that are seeking opportunities; in which case it is the very quality that should be

identified in order to plan future pathways to their lives. As shown by the RSN (2012) research report *I just want to study*, it is an investment to give them education and employment opportunities as a part of finding durable solutions. The report finds that educational opportunities qualify them to be a strong workforce in the UK economy. Employability and equality of access to employment are important, as employment not only gives them hope for the future and the country a workforce, but is also the path to meaningful social integration.

Integration into society

As discussed above, for asylum seekers and refugees, employment is seen as a meaningful way to find lasting solutions and to blend harmoniously into the new society. The inclusion of refugees in the labour market is a crucial element of the integration process and it is generally a key measure in evaluating the outcome of integration policies, and a force for social cohesion (Ager & Strang, 2004; Cebulla et al., 2010; Council of Europe, 2016; Demirdjian 2012; ECRE, 2004, 2010; Hansen, 2012; Hansilova et al., 2011; UNHCR, 2007; DWP, 2005; Home Office, 2000; Stewart, 2009; McCorrison, 2012).

According to the UNHCR:

The workplace offers extremely important opportunities for positive socialization and for the development of resourcefulness. Employment provides the individual not only with an income but also with independence, social status, and recognition. UNHCR's Executive Committee has recognized that promoting the self-reliance of refugees from the outset will enhance the sustainability of any future durable solution (UNHCR, 2007, p.4).

The need to improve employment opportunities for refugees is considered crucial according to the EU at both European and national levels, not only as an economic task, but also as a catalyst for social cohesion and social integration (European Commission 2016). In Europe, integration is considered a main requirement for the settlement of refugees.

As the European Council's Common Basic Principles (CBPs) on integration defines:

Employment is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the receiving society and to making such contributions visible (Council of the European Union, 2004).

However, full integration of refugees and their secure settlement is a challenge for many countries. In the UK, scholarly writers on the subject emphasise the power of labour market integration on social cohesion, social integration and harmony. For instance, according to Bloch (2004), getting refugees into employment that specifically matches their skills is a crucial aspect of

integration. As Colic-Peisker (2003) claims, employment “*seems to be the single most important aspect of successful resettlement and social inclusion in general*” (p.17).

Refugee integration has become an important discussion topic in the last decade in the UK. According to the government’s view, integration means refugees are “*empowered to achieve their full potential as members of British society; contribute fully to the community; and access the public services to which they are entitled*” (Home Office, 2005).

There have been numerous government initiatives and action plans, proposed and implemented over the past years, notably, *Secure Borders and Safe Heavens* (Home Office, 2002), *Working to Rebuild Life* (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005), refugee employment strategies, such as *Full and equal citizenship* (Home Office, 2002), *Integration matters* (Home Office, 2005), and the Home Office Integration plan *Moving together* (2009). As for the action plans and programmes, there is the nationwide SUNRISE programme which was initiated in 2005 and its replacement RISE programme, introduced in 2008 ((ICAR, 2008).

It is worth mentioning that it is harder to find comprehensive evaluation reports on the outcome of some of these programmes and it seems that the initiatives have been overlapping. There is also a tendency to re-programme the initiatives. In relation to UASC, there have been some strategies directly applied to unaccompanied children and/or aimed at improving the social inclusion of young people in general in the UK. Instances of these include the government initiatives *Planning Better Outcomes and Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children* (2007) and also ‘*Opening Doors Breaking Barriers* (Cabinet Office, 2011) which might have included young unaccompanied refugees.

There is limited research available on the overall progress or outcome of these initiatives. Therefore it is not possible to measure the impact of these interventions. Among the very few studies, the Home Office commissioned the investigation ‘*Spotlight on Refugee Integration: Findings from the survey of New Refugees in the United Kingdom* (Cebulla, Daniel & Zurawm, 2010) which provides a detailed explanation of all the programmes carried out in the UK for refugee labour market participation. However, there is hardly any detailed evidence related to promoting the employability of unaccompanied asylum seeking youths. Lack of literature on the impact of employment on social integration is a barrier to effective and coherent policy development.

Destitution and young unaccompanied asylum seekers

When there is no hope for the future and they find themselves in limbo without any legal right to remain in the host country, the only option that remains to some UASC is to return to their own countries. According to the available evidence, some decline to take up the offer of voluntary

repatriation or find their own means to return and decide to disappear into society without trace. This is known to be a common practice among asylum seekers in general.

The National Audit Office estimates that 283,500 failed asylum seekers were in the UK in 2005 (National Audit Office, 2005). However, some dispute these numbers as it could be much higher than this estimation. For instance, according to the Home Secretary's announcement in 2006, there were 450,000 incomplete or unresolved asylum cases to be dealt with (Crawley, Hammings, & Price, 2011). A growing body of current research shows the severity of destitution and the implications it brings to asylum seekers themselves and to the wider society (Crawley et al., 2011; Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2009; NAO, 2005; Pinter 2012; RSN, 2012).

Some argue that the government asylum policy and legislation have caused asylum seekers to hide and survive illegally in the country and the legislation has been inhuman and tends to breach the common law of humanity and international human rights. For instance Crawley et al. (2011) in their research report commissioned by Oxfam warn that an urgent review is required to ensure that the destitute asylum seekers' dignity and sustainability are upheld. They urge that the government and civil society need to change their practices. Similar concerns are made by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. As its research report '*Still destitute: a worsening problem for refused asylum seekers*' (2009) on Leeds Destitution Survey shows, administration delays worsen the crisis and the system is simply not working. Exhausted charitable foundations and NGOs are at breaking point trying to provide services to these people. It shows that the New Asylum Model introduced by the government in 2007 is not working and urgent changes are required to end this worsening crisis.

It is also believed that pushing asylum seekers into destitution has been a deliberate attempt by successive governments in order to force them out of the country (Pinter, 2012; Crawley, 2011; House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2007).

There has not been well-documented information on the overall number of hidden asylum seekers, their experiences, or the coping strategies of the destitute (Crawley et al., 2011). The available data and information gathered by civil society organisations tend to show the situation related to adult asylum seekers, and the information about destitute children and young asylum seekers is limited (Pinter, 2012).

A recent report published by the Children's Society *I Don't feel human: Experiences of destitution among young refugees and migrants* (Pinter, 2012), gives a compelling account of young destitute asylum seekers. It claims that there has been a sharp rise in the numbers of destitute young asylum seekers, especially in London. For instance, between 2009 and 2011, the number of young destitute asylum seekers seeking the help of the Children's Society 'New Londoners Service' increased from 14% to 34% (of the total clientele). The reasons for their destitution are:

having been discharged from social services support at 18 and/or having had their asylum claims rejected, failure to win age dispute cases, and problems with residential arrangements (e.g. relationship problems with foster carers or residential care).

Especially, these are formerly relevant children who have the right to have local authority support, regardless of their immigration status, until they turn 21 (or 25 if they are in full-time education or training). However, this support differs according to the decision of the local authority.

In this context, young unaccompanied asylum seekers experience homelessness, psychological problems, exploitation, financial hardships and become more vulnerable. The impact of this situation on themselves and society seems to be far and wide and largely unknown. This is a waste of the talents of these young people who can make an enormous contribution to society.

Voice of unaccompanied children and young people seeking asylum

In his recent letter on looked-after children in care, Edward Timpson, current Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, says;

At the heart of the care system should be the voice of the child Children in care know better than anyone else what works well, what is less successful, and what needs to change. They need to be able to challenge and influence strategic planning and day to day decisions (Timpson, 2013).

This is the vision he wants to promote among those who are responsible for corporate parenting in the country. Although expressing their opinion on decisions relating to their welfare is a fundamental right of a refugee child (according to the Convention of the Rights of the Child 1989), evidence shows that their voice is silent when it comes to their future plans. As Hancilova and Knauder (2011) explain in their report *Unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers, overview of Protection, Assistance and Promising Practice*, their voices are hardly heard in supporting policy decisions in Europe and in the UK.

In accordance with the Children's Act 1989, it is the duty of those who are responsible for children's care and welfare to keep the children informed about the decisions affecting them (Legislation.Government.uk, 1989). As Jill Rutter claims (Rutter, 2001) the starting point for changing education policies is to listen to the voice of refugee children as they are often clear about what they need.

In relation to asylum seeking children and young people's opinions, there are very limited research findings available on the subject. Among very little empirical work, the recent research report '*Flowers that grow from concrete* (Brighter Future London, 2013) seems valuable. It

provides a compelling account of young asylum seekers' experience in education, employment and integration. This includes their own views and their frustration at not having the opportunities to express their views. More importantly, the voices of children and young people should be incorporated with the professional expertise and best available current evidence in order to make meaningful policy decisions.

Conclusion

In society, education, employment and social integration can be viewed as the facilitators of economic emancipation and social harmony. They are bound by a common thread and therefore, need to be understood in their entirety. In relation to asylum seekers and refugees, the interaction among these elements appears to depart from its normal order in a given country, resulting in wasted human capital, crisis and catastrophe. The negative personal and social consequences that are likely to follow from this phenomenon could only be prevented by adopting responsible, systematic and multi-disciplinary actions taken by the state and civil society. Reliable and credible knowledge about these phenomena forms the basis for state and societal action.

In relation to young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees, the specific refugee group that is central to this review and research, the knowledge about their education, employment and social interaction is limited and fragmented. In this context, current policies that rely on a weak evidence base may be focusing on wrong trajectories.

As this review emphasises, more appropriate empirical evidence is needed to form a rich knowledge base. An effective and informed decision-making process should be developed by incorporating current best evidence, experts' wisdom and the opinions of the children and young people seeking to develop a better and meaningful life. This research has attempted to contribute to the existing knowledge base, which is in need of reliable empirical evidence in order to strengthen current policy and practices and to explore new avenues.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

Good research is not cheap, but neither are failed policies.

Sue Duncan (Duncan, 2011)
Former chief government social researcher

This chapter offers the blueprint for the process of generating and analysing the information that addressed the research questions. It describes the philosophical, theoretical and pragmatic underpinnings of the research methodology and methods chosen for the study. It also allows the reader to comprehend the research and critically evaluate its overall trustworthiness.

Knowledge creation

Firstly, the research strategy was created in view of the ineffective policies that have come to exist in the area of welfare provision for asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. As discussed in the study, asylum policies are mainly planned on assumptions rather than sound evidence, and there is a dire need for reliable information about the real stories and situations of asylum seekers in order to plan better policies (e.g. Crowley, 2010). According to the evidence discussed, wrong asylum decisions tend to have a colossal impact on all aspects of refugee welfare, and the most vulnerable group that suffer significantly are unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Their educational and vocational development is one of the areas that is affected the most.

Need for best evidence for best policies

Taking these facts into consideration, every aspects of the research method aimed to generate best evidence relating to the issue under investigation. As Crowley (2010) above pointed out, best policies need best and reliable evidence. Especially with regard to vulnerable children who are in care, policies based on evidence are crucial for providing their welfare, particularly their education. For instance, expressing the importance of evidence-based policies in planning education for children in care (e.g. UASC) the Minister of State for Children and Families declared:

We all know that the reasons why children who come into care don't perform as well as their peers are both complex and enduring. So if we're serious about improving their educational outcomes, and helping them reach their potential, we need to avoid over simplistic

conclusions and ensure that our policies and decisions are based on strong, reliable evidence (Edward Timpson, 2016).

As further evidence shows, it is important to state that, in recent years, evidence-based policy making has become central to consecutive governments, especially, the policies related to education or social mobility in the UK. For instance, in 2012, the former government wanted to '*adopt a ruthlessly evidence-based approach*' (HM Government, 2012, p.12) to improve the social mobility and education of disadvantaged youths. Furthermore, the following indicates one of the former Education Secretaries' concerns over the lack of evidence for policymaking and the importance of knowing which policies work and what is effective:

We clearly need to ensure that the government and the research community are working together to address the lack of good research evidence in some of the key issues facing us. Good government is thinking government. And a good department is a thinking department. I invite social scientists to work with us to find out what works and why and what types of policy initiatives are likely to be most effective (Blunkett, 2000).

Regardless of good intentions, the literature has proved that there is a great deal of work to be done in order to solve the problems in the education system in general and refugee education in particular. This prompted the specific research interest in educational programmes for UASC and the desire to understand the availability and effectiveness of them. The knowledge generated by the research would contribute to the evidence-based policy making process that brings best available current evidence, experts' wisdom and client's expectations together (Gibbs, 2003). In other words, it is a process whereby best evidence, expert knowledge (tacit and explicit), and the expectations of those in need work in conjunction to make well-informed judgements in policy making and service delivery.

What works?

More importantly, understanding how an intervention works, and for whom it works, and in what conditions it seems to thrive, are crucial to avoid the harmful effects of wrong interventions on children and young people. Evidence-based policies promote the 'do no harm' principle by introducing the most appropriate interventions where necessary. This is the guiding light for the study in its effort to explore the real nature of existing intervention programmes. As history suggests, intervention programmes can go wrong, resulting in devastating effects on children throughout their lives.

For example, one of the most debated failed social experimentations in history, the delinquency preventing 'Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study Programme' still has disastrous effects on the people who took part as children in the intervention in 1935 in Massachusetts (McCord &

McCord, 1959; Sayrie, 2007). As this programme shows, there are many reasons for failure, such as ineffective planning, not knowing the aetiology of the issue or problem being considered, and not implementing the proper process or outcome evaluation. In this context, planning intervention programmes for UASC is a serious affair that needs in-depth knowledge about many different factors. The intention of this study is to explore those factors in order to understand the best programmes possible.

The vision and goal of the study

The vision behind the study was to help to find durable solutions to the plight of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children in the UK. The ultimate goal of the study was to help young unaccompanied asylum seekers improve their employability and to achieve their full potential in the UK labour market (or beyond, as in some cases, according to their final country of settlement). In this regard, the study mainly aimed to explore the educational intervention programmes that can best prepare unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children for employment and entrance into the UK labour market. Principally, it was an exploration of 'what works, for whom, and in what contexts' in order to produce evidence on how a programme works, for whom it works and the influence of the context where it takes place.

Research objectives and questions

Main objective

The main objective of the study was to explore the availability, nature and effectiveness of current educational and vocational intervention programmes specifically designed for improving the children's employability. Based on this information, it will further investigate how to remodel currently available programmes (if any), and the ideas and requirements for new programmes.

Specific objectives

To understand the current situation of formal and vocational training provision for unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children

To examine the benefits that the children will gain through formal and vocational education and training

To explore the impact of education on employment and their social integration

Overarching research question

How effective are the specific formal and vocational intervention programmes designed to integrate young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees into the UK labour market?

Sub-questions

Questions for professionals

- 1) What educational support do unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) receive?
- 2) What vocational support do they receive?
- 3) Are there specific educational and vocational programmes designed to integrate young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees into the UK labour market? What evidence is there regarding the effectiveness of such programmes?
- 4) What is the professionals' perception of unaccompanied asylum seeking children? Is education a pull factor in their seeking asylum?
- 5) What is the professionals' vision for these children's education?
- 6) How do the professionals deal with the educational and vocational needs of young unaccompanied asylum seekers? In particular, how effective do they view the support they receive, and what do they perceive to be the positive and negative aspects of the current provision?
- 7) How do the professionals perceive young unaccompanied asylum seekers' and refugees' employment prospects? What barriers do they face in unlocking their employment potential?
- 8) What educational interventions will work for UASC's integration into the UK labour market? How best to plan new intervention programmes?

Questions for children

- 9) What are the academic and career goals of unaccompanied refugee children?
- 10) How do the young asylum seekers and refugees describe the educational and vocational support they have received? In particular, how effective do they view it, and what do they perceive to be the positive and negative aspects of the current provision as experienced?
- 11) What are their career aspirations and goals? What challenges do they face during transition into the labour market?

Research strategy for researching refugee children

The study aimed to adopt academic rigour and the most relevant methodological strategy in order to gain the optimal level of accuracy and to produce credible evidence. The methodology and methods were determined on the basis of the research question(s), and the nature of the special research subjects involved in the study.

Research with refugees

It is important to note that there are specific issues surrounding refugee research in general and the research on unaccompanied children in particular. As the evidence shows, research on forced migration has changed over the decades with the changing concepts of refugees (e.g. creating different categories such as asylum seekers, irregular migrants, and undocumented migrants). It has become multidisciplinary, and researchers communicate across their own disciplinary frontiers and create many different research approaches. There were specific problems in refugee research that challenge access, the sampling process, representation and ethical practices. This field of research is complicated and has been changing and reconnecting in different ways to other social research subjects (Voutire, 2007; Black, 2001).

Research with unaccompanied asylum seeking children

In relation to unaccompanied children, there seems to be an increase in research and debate about their issue, given their rising numbers in the UK (Byford, 2003). Doing research with unaccompanied children and young people is complex as they are on their own and their circumstances and needs vary from normal children in the country or accompanied refugee children. As research evidence shows, they have to overcome cultural and language barriers, their past and pre-flight experiences, while being becoming accustomed to a new environment without family support. They tend to mistrust authority and in some cases, even their own community. They fear deportation and prefer to live clandestine lifestyles, which makes it difficult to locate them (Bloch, 1999; Byford, 2003; NCB, 2011; Sourander, 1998; Thomas, 2004; Psoinos, 2007; Sigona & Hughes, 2010; Wade et al., 2005). A detailed account of the UK's situation when conducting research with refugees is offered by Bloch (1999) in her report '*carrying out a survey of refugees: some methodical considerations and guidelines*'. As it shows, refugees are not used to the research environment and their relationships with their own communities are complex. Therefore, researchers have to foresee the barriers, cultural differences and the special circumstances when planning research strategies for this group of children. The help of gatekeepers and community leaders is important to gain access to them and to obtain their informed consent to participate in the research. The immigration process in the UK makes the situation even more complicated and researchers have to adopt a more personalised approach to choosing research samples.

Researching educational issues with refugee children

Moreover, researching the educational issues of refugee children is complicated and sensitive as their cross-cultural transition, the impact of past family connections, present experiences and their resilience building need to be considered (Hopkins & Hill, 2008). As Rutter (2006) claims, researching refugee children needs a 'new psycho-social adaptation' (p.39). In this context, researchers should take due care when conducting investigations with the children in order to minimise harm to them. When working with this vulnerable group of children with troubled backgrounds, researchers have to adhere to specific guidelines and considerations in every stage of the planned research, for instance, before and throughout the planning stage, and during and after the research, in order to minimise the distress. Researchers need to be sensitive; they should have proper consultations with appropriate service providers and gatekeepers, acquire informed consent, adhere to child protection issues and protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the children involved (Byford, 2003; Leaning, 2001; NCB, 2011).

All these concerns were taken into account when planning this project, and all the relevant guidance and rules were adhered to while carrying out the investigation. The researcher also brought her knowledge of working with refugee and unaccompanied children, supporting their educational needs on a voluntary basis in educational settings. The training in this role was acquired from a leading National Children's Charity that supports refugee children.

Research approach

This exploratory research was based on qualitative method of inquiry. The aim of the investigation is to produce a rich description of the respondents' experience while allowing the researcher to pursue an appropriate line of reasoning. Selecting the appropriate research method solely depends on the research question. Therefore, with regard to this study, a qualitative inquiry proved to be the suitable option. For instance, the qualitative approach reveals how a phenomenon takes place in a certain context. For instance, it opens the world of the respondents and reveals their explanations and predictions according to their social construction of the reality of the matter under investigation.

As Mason (2002) describes:

Qualitative researching is exciting and important. It is a highly rewarding activity because it engages us with things that matter, in ways that matter. Through qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings they generate. We can do all of this qualitatively by using

methodologies that celebrate richness, depth, nuance, context, multidimensionality and complexity rather than being embarrassed or inconvenienced by them. Instead of editing these elements out in search of the general picture or the average, qualitative research factors them directly into its analyses and explanations. This means that it has an unrivalled capacity to constitute compelling arguments about how things work in particular contexts (Mason, 2002, p.1).

The study was created on the notion of pragmatism in order to view and deal with the issues concerned in a practical manner, bringing sensible, realistic and efficient solutions. Therefore, if the research goes forward towards creating intervention programmes as planned, it will need a quantitative design to evaluate the effectiveness of such initiatives, given its scientific and numeric rigour and the objective notion of reality (Bryman, 2004). Therefore, this study has provided potential insight into the issues and laid the path to develop a quantitative investigation(s) in future. In this regard, both qualitative and quantitative methods will equally contribute towards the goal of the research at appropriate times.

Research design

The study was divided into two main components, which complement each other:

- 1) Systematic review of research on intervention programmes
- 2) Field research

The main component of the study was the field investigation. However, the first stage, the systematic review, was designed to provide the basic information on available intervention programmes defined by the main research objective. This was also divided into two sections. The first section was aimed at creating an inventory of intervention programmes available in the UK. The second section was the review that would systematically synthesise the available research and information on programmes. The reason to execute a systematic review over a general literature search was to search for specific programmes according to the pre-determined protocol by using rigorous review methods. As the following definition claims, a systematic review follows a standard set of stages – it is accountable, replicable:

The purpose of a systematic review is to sum up the best available research on a specific question. This is done by synthesizing the results of several studies. Procedures are explicitly defined in advance, in order to ensure that the exercise is transparent and can be replicated. This practice is also designed to minimize bias (The Campbell Collaboration, <https://www.google.co.uk>),

Chapter five contains the detailed description of the review and its outcome. However, it should be stated that the review was unable to find any programmes that matched the criteria defined by the review protocol.

Profile of the research sample and sampling method

Two groups of respondents participated in the study: unaccompanied refugee children and professionals.

Children's sample

Firstly, the children's sample made an enormous contribution to the study in relation to the research subject. Their open and honest discussion about every aspect of their lives and the issues of the research (at their own discretion) took the project to a new level as far as researching refugee children, and specifically UASC, were concerned. For instance, contrary to the popular belief that they are reticent to talk (Kohil, 2006), they expressed their feelings and opinions clearly and gave definitive answers as much as they possibly could. They all aspired to achieve their full potential and to settle in the UK.

The majority of the children enjoyed and were enthusiastic about the process of participating, except two who had a slightly worried disposition (as they were going through immigration problems and mental health issues). However, both took part voluntarily, shared all of their problems, and more importantly, showed some resilience and comfort towards the end of the discussion. Besides, similar to the many identified benefits that children participants bring to a research project (NCB, 2011), the children kept the project grounded in their lived experiences, ensured the researcher's consideration of their perspectives, and supported their peers in the interview process (by interpreting) when needed. Many showed sincerity about the success of the research project.

As shown in Appendix 1, a total number of fifteen UASC participants who were between 16 and 22 years of age (some did not disclose their age) took part in the research. The group comprised four female and eleven male children from 10 different countries (and two females from Africa who did not disclose their country of origin). Their age range represented the post-16 education level and the transition years of 16-24. This age range is also applied to NEETS – young people Not in Education, Employment and Training (Cabinet Office & Department of Education, 2015, ONS, 2016).

The children represented a diverse group of participants from different nationalities, races, religions, age, educational qualifications, immigration status, and current education level and employment. Almost all of the participants were in education, mainly in Further Education colleges.

There was an effort made at the planning stage of the study to recruit a representative sample of a cross-section of nationalities among the UASC and refugees in the UK. However, there were a large proportion of Afghan children, who were the largest group at the time, and others represented many refugee generating countries, such as Iraq, Eritrea, and countries in Africa.

The majority of the respondents were UASC who were unaccompanied and living without parents or legal care givers, except two male and female children who were living with their families after a family reunion. The study recruited them to evaluate specifically the impact of the family on their education and welfare, compared with those who were unaccompanied. Most UASC were living either in foster care, were semi-independent or in independent accommodation, apart from the two who were with families.

The children were mainly in full-time college education studying ESOL, IT, maths or life skill courses. One participant was a second-year undergraduate reading sociology. A few of them had already obtained BTEC level diplomas and were aiming to progress into higher education. Only two young men were looking for jobs; one who had refugee status wanted to be a bricklayer or decorator (in the construction industry), and the other one wanted to be self-employed as an electrical installer. He was also going through immigration problems and his future here was uncertain. Almost everybody wanted to go to university or the highest level of their education, except one who wanted to be a manual worker. None of the participants were in full-time employment, except the undergraduate and another student – they were working part-time as a cleaner and a supermarket cashier respectively.

Professionals' sample

The study comprised of thirty-eight professionals. This was also a diverse group of participants whose roles were directly connected to the process of protection, assistance and more importantly, finding durable solutions. The majority of them were corporate parents employed by local authorities, schools and colleges, International NGOs and national charities. Others were drawn from institutions directly connected to policymaking and welfare, especially related to the education, psychological health, and legal issues of UASC. For instance, some of these organisations were Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB), universities, think tanks, Refugee Community Organisations (RCO), hospitals and law firms. More importantly, the study recruited three participants from Afghanistan in order to incorporate the views of those who had a broader understanding of the issues addressed in the study. The group comprised of an academic specialised in education in Afghanistan, a professional who was involved in development projects in Afghanistan, and a researcher (Appendix 4). They were found through a web search and were selected for the diversity of their roles and their speciality. Ironically, one professional had once tried to enter the UK as an unaccompanied child himself but had failed. In his adult life, he had

managed to come back to a university in the UK as a scholar and had gained a successful position in the country. His contribution to the study was unique. Although the aim was to recruit a few participants from different source countries, the study could not find appropriate participants. However, Afghan participants were more appropriate given the high number of Afghan children in the study and the fact that Afghanistan is one of the major refugee producing countries in the world.

The professionals brought a unique experience to the research project and contributed enormously to the knowledge with their forthright opinions about every aspect of the research issues and the expectations of and directions for future changes.

Diversity of organisations involved

Even though all the institutions involved in the study were selected by snowballing, they were different in character. For instance, the colleges had significant differences between them in many areas, such as performance, finances, organisational structure, teacher numbers, and psychological help. The college in London was well ahead in performance (outstanding, or said to be considered 'above outstanding' by Ofsted). It had a higher concentration of migrant and refugee children who had performed extremely well in education. For example, the college has produced many valuable citizens including prominent politicians some of whom were from refugee backgrounds or refugees themselves. It had good staff numbers, a special refugee co-ordinator, and excellent study facilities. On the other hand, the college in the Midlands was not performing well (according to Ofsted) and the researcher became aware that there were problems with class size, level of study courses, level of help, and so on.

However, both institutions were supportive of the research and made every possible arrangement to facilitate the interview sessions. They kept away from the interviews to ensure the children's independent participation in the research (the decision was taken at their discretion).

Incentives

Only the children who participated in the study received small packs of gifts as a token of appreciation, which comprised a few items of stationery and a gift voucher from a stationer. The items were decided according to the advice given by the professionals. Professional participants did not receive any incentives.

Sampling method

The study employed the snowball sampling (or chain sampling) method to recruit the study participants. According to the sample method, the research was initiated by writing to three organisations: two local authorities in London and the South East, and a leading national charity that runs support services and education advocacy services for refugee children in the country. Three professionals were recommended by the organisations as research participants. They were among the first interviewees and the next possible recruitment event, the National Virtual Head Teachers Conference, was held in Bath Spa University in March 2013. The researcher was given the opportunity to attend the conference, which was the turning point of the research. The conference was attended predominantly by Virtual Heads of School and/or other officials who performed similar duties. There were also policy makers, academics, parliamentarians (who were responsible for looked- after children) and the then Children's Commissioner. The research was introduced to the conference by the organisers and welcomed the delegates' participation.

A total number of one hundred and forty-two brief open-ended questionnaires with a consent form and a research information sheet (Appendices 2 and 3) were included in all of the delegates' conference folders. Out of the total delegates, there were eighty-one Virtual Heads of School (or designated officers for the same role) who received the questionnaires. The questionnaire was the first step of the ground work in preparation for the systematic review and the field research. Its aim was to know the programme initiatives available for UASC in their local authorities or regions.

However, no completed questionnaires were received (even after following up contacts). One of the Virtual Heads of School in a region in England invited the researcher to their regional Virtual Heads of School meeting to make a presentation on the research in order to increase their awareness of the research. More importantly, he made a request to the researcher that he would appreciate if she could present the findings to them in a similar meeting once the project was over. He believed that the findings would contribute to their practice and policy decisions. The researcher made the presentation at the meeting and it was a success as a few delegates offered their support. As a result, the project made good progress by recruiting professionals and UASC in that region, which has a large concentration of UASC and refugees.

Taking everything into consideration, regardless of the set back with the questionnaires, the conference became the central event for snowballing and it helped to recruit the most appropriate professionals with diverse expertise in UASC education and welfare, expanding the pool of participants considerably.

The other main recruitment points were: the Refugee Council Annual Conferences in 2012, 2013, and 2014; the University of Leicester Conference on 'Hope and Resilience for Refugees and

Asylum Seekers, in June, 2012; the British Sociological Association Annual Conference, in April, 2103; and the Psychology of Education Section Annual Conference in November 2013. These events helped with the snowballing recruitment of professional participants.

Firstly, selecting the conferences (related to the research area) as a starting point of snowballing, provided the researcher with the opportunity to recruit the most appropriate participants from many parts of the country, mainly refugee hosting areas. Secondly, it assured that the participants were independently selected and were free from any personal contact with the researcher. They were chosen on their own merits and expertise in the subject under investigation. This secured the credibility of the samples of both professionals and children.

A few specific professionals, a psychiatrist, for instance, were selected and contacted by the researcher based on her well-publicised work with unaccompanied refugee children in the country. A total number of thirty-eight professionals were recruited. The target number of total participants for the research was fifty. Given the difficulty with recruiting children and the importance of the knowledge that professionals would bring to the study, more professionals were recruited than children. The children's sample was selected with the guidance of the professional participants in the study. Fifteen children were selected for interviewing.

The optimal sample size of fifty was determined based on the research questions and the methods of the qualitative research approach. For instance, this study did not require a large sample to test transferability or to make theories. This was an exploratory study and it valued the quality of information rather than the quantity. As a qualitative study, a larger sample may produce too much material that would be problematic at the analytical stage. However, the decision to end interviewing was not rigidly observed according to the pre-planned schedule. To ensure that all the relevant data was gathered in order to answer the research questions, the cut-off point was decided once the data started reaching the saturated point. Even though the study did not aim to create theory, when the data started to repeat, it was an indication that no more data was needed.

'Receiving saturated point' or 'data saturation' is considered somewhat complicated terminology in qualitative research (Bowen, 2008). However, it can be simply defined as:

Data saturation entails bringing new participants continually into the study until the data set is complete, as indicated by data replication or redundancy. In other words, saturation is reached when the researcher gathers data to the point of diminishing returns, when nothing new is being added (ibid. p.140).

Rationale for sampling method

It is important to discuss the rationale for selecting snowball sampling. Firstly, failing to receive the questionnaire back from one hundred and forty-two conference delegates, the research

had a strong case for resorting to approaching the professionals individually. Secondly, snowballing was appropriate to recruit UASC who were a hard-to-reach group. Snowballing, a non-probability respondent driven sampling technique (RDS) relies on research participants to identify other potential subjects (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981; Heckathorn, 2011). It has been one of the most employed methods when researching hard-to-reach groups since its invention by Coleman (1958-1959) and Goodman (1961) for investigating social networks (as cited in Heckathorn, 2011).

As one of its inventors, Coleman (1958) defined it, '*Snowball sampling: One method of interviewing a man's immediate social environment is to use the sociometric questions in the interview for sampling purposes*' (as cited in Handcock & Gile, 2011, p.2).

As the evidence suggests, this method seems to be largely employed to reach hidden populations who cannot be recruited by large scale surveys, as it is difficult to find a good sample frame to select the participants randomly using statistical methods. Moreover, these groups are either suffering from stigma or belong to small networks that are difficult to penetrate (Sudmen & Kalton, 2006). In this case, snowball sampling was the suitable option to study unaccompanied asylum seeking children – one of the most vulnerable group of children who lead complicated lives; the problems of researching them have been explained previously.

Secondly, as discussed in previous chapters, there are no systematically documented comprehensive official records of the total number of UASC living in the UK at one time. For instance, neither their geographical distribution nor socio-demographic characteristics are available, except the Home Office statistics of those who applied for asylum or some records held in local authorities. Even though these numbers are officially published, it is not straightforward to recruit them as research participants. It needs the support from the gatekeepers of local authorities, schools or NGOs in order to approach them and obtain their consent to be interviewed (Bloch, 1999).

However, it is also common to apply the technique of focus enumeration for hard-to-reach or hidden populations (Smith, Pickering, Williams & Hay, 2012). This method is widely used to screen hidden groups such as refugees and it needs proper census data and locations with a good concentration of the target population. Concerning this study, UASC are scattered in small groups in the country and focus enumeration is not an option (Bloch, 1999).

It is important to note that there are also disadvantages of using snowball sampling. As Atkinson and Flint (2001) describe, firstly, there is no diverse and large sampling frame and this poses problems of representativeness and sampling principles. The participants are not randomly selected and this selection bias prevents the generalizability of the findings. The sample may be limited or small when drawing the sample from a small community through personal contacts. It is also biased towards inclusion of participants through personal contacts or inter-relationships. There will always be missing participants who are important for the study. Normally, these are the ones

who do not have a close association with their community. This causes selection bias that threatens the credibility of the research findings. Finding a diverse sampling frame is costly and time consuming. However, in order to reduce selection bias, researchers should find many different starting points, such as a variety of people in the community, rather than relying on one group (Bloch, 1999).

Convenience sampling, on the other hand, provides the most appropriate participants from a selected group or organisation (Bryman, 2004; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011) For instance, it is easy to find the most useful gatekeepers through this method. However, sometimes gatekeeper bias can occur, according to the gatekeepers' approach towards the research participation. For instance, in the case of unaccompanied refugee children, their gatekeepers can be protective towards them and it may be difficult to obtain informed consent from them. However, if these biases are minimised, this method is economical and it produces rich and accurate information. It does not give a generalisable set of data because of the selection bias and the findings can be predominantly contextual.

However, given the research question, the aim of this study was to achieve rich, detailed and accurate information that was credible and transferable. Although snowball sampling has its disadvantages, the same as any sampling method, it has worked well for this study and generated rich data that is essential to address the research questions.

Research locations and preparation

The study was conducted in England and Scotland. Most of the areas selected in both regions had a high concentration of asylum seekers and refugees. However, there were some locations that had been hosting a limited number of UASC. This gave a good insight into the different views of the professionals dealing with UASC's situations and problems in different locations in the country. In England, the areas included London and the South East, West Midlands, West Yorkshire and East Yorkshire. Interviews were conducted on premises of the participants' choosing, often colleges or places of work. All of the children were interviewed predominately at their colleges and two national charity premises where the children were being supported. The professionals were interviewed in private offices in their workplace, except two home visits due to the participants' time constraints. Interviews with children at school and in charities were conducted in specially assigned rooms for the research.

As NCB guidelines suggest (Davey & Wakley, 2011), location and environment are important for research with children, and the researchers should try to make a relaxed, free, and familiar atmosphere for the respondent, especially without any officials present. This atmosphere

was created in all the premises and the children felt comfortable and relaxed. The researcher followed the guidance at all times.

Research instruments

In-depth semi-structured interviews were the main research instruments for the study. As discussed before, using qualitative open-ended short questionnaires to gather basic information proved to be fruitless and the research had to rely on interviews to gather data. In addition, two small group discussions were also convened with some children.

Formulating and refining research instruments

Individual interview schedules were developed for the two groups of children and professionals (Appendices 3 and 4). The scheduled topics were first developed from the existing literature and were slightly modified, with new topics being added after conducting some preliminary or test interviews. The small group of six professionals from London and the South East, and one young unaccompanied refugee who had lived in the UK for a long time, were interviewed. The topics were finalised in order to understand the experience and the perceptions of the participants according to the research questions. The schedules were flexible and provided opportunities for the participants to express their views freely and to ask questions.

With regard to piloting, unlike quantitative studies, qualitative methods do not necessarily require pilot studies. That said, the project benefited from conducting a few preliminary interviews. It helped to refine the interview guide and gave a general feel about interviewing and other practicalities of the process (e.g. timing, tape recording).

Administration of research instruments in the field

The field research brought a degree of real-life experience to the study. In a natural environment, the researcher was able to explore the issues through the views and experiences of the participants. Integrating field research into the investigation, the study also sought to emphasise the importance of the participants' involvement in planning their own welfare. Field work continued between January 2013 and July 2014. Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews were carried out with thirty-two professionals. The majority of the professionals' interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours. All except two of the interviews were tape-recorded. One interviewee had health issues and the other one felt that he would be more vocal away from the tape recorder. One group interview with four respondents was held without tape recording due to confidentiality. Two other professionals opted to Skype and the telephone interviews lasted for around twenty to forty minutes.

One-half of the children's interviews lasted between twenty and forty-five minutes and the other half lasted between forty-five and just over sixty minutes. Two group discussions (each with three participants) were held with children in London and Scotland. These were rich in interaction among them as they tended to ask questions of each other and discussed the issues raised at the interview, referring to and evaluating their own experiences. These two group interviews made a good contribution to the research. During the interviews, as stated before, the majority of the children became very vocal and open.

No interpreters were employed, but one participant helped his friend with the interview as he was not confident about his English language skills. The children managed to speak simply and expressed their opinions well. Some spoke fluently but felt that their English was not good.

It should also be stated that observations (e.g. body language) and important discussion points were recorded manually during the interviews. The interviews provided the opportunity and flexibility for the researcher and participants to understand each other and to conduct the discussion in a trusting and confidential manner. As Bryman (2004) explains, the researcher can uncover the story of the interviewee by '*seeing through the eyes of the people being studied*' (p.65) and reconstruct a story with past happenings and present circumstances. Other qualitative methods, such as participant observation, are not that appropriate for exploring personal issues such as education and employment prospects.

Personal one-to-one interviews create a mutual bond and knowledge. Kvale (cited in Opdenakher, 2006, p.174) gives the following definition:

An interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena'. As Opdenakker (2006) describes, face-to-face interviews make '*synchronous communication*' in time and real space, not in a virtual or cyber space. This takes place in a natural setting and both interviewer and participant can use social cues, such as voice and body language, to communicate with each other. This is beneficial especially for this study as asylum seeking children have language barriers. Sometimes the help of an interpreter is needed to communicate with them (Bloch, 1999) and telephone or internet interviews are not beneficial as a researcher is unable to capture the body language, and respondents may not show commitment to or interest in the interview (Thomas, 2010). However, during the interview process the researcher maintained a good rapport with the participants, but kept her distance from the interviewees in order to ask questions and explore the issues well without sharing assumptions and ideas. As Sidman (2006) describes,

'Interviewing requires interviewers to have enough distance to enable them to ask real questions and to explore, not to share, assumptions (2006, p.100).

Face-to-face interviews are costly and time consuming compared to focus groups or group interviews. Focus group interviews are cost effective and easy to manage. However, given the nature of the target population, it would have been difficult to gather reliable and adequate information in a focus group situation. For instance, unaccompanied youths with their complicated situations would not want to share their experiences openly with an unfamiliar group. As discussed previously, they tend to mistrust both their own communities and authority. In addition, in a mixed group with diverse nationalities they may also have guarded their true opinions.

Interviews based on a semi-structured plan made the process more flexible than the rigid structured interviews sometimes used in quantitative surveys. With a set of aims and themes, the researcher directed the interview following the emerging information that was interesting and useful. This gave a guide to the researcher that made the process smoother than using unstructured interviews.

As the evidence suggests, in semi-structured interviews, the interviewee has the main role in the discussion when unprompted discussion takes place. It also gives continuation to the interview process as the researcher can revisit the interviewee and explore new ideas that have emerged in previous interviews (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2011; Thomas, 2009).

Structured interviews, on the other hand, give the interviewer a standard format of well-planned topics. The interviewer has the command of the conversation. It is easy to administer them face-to-face or by telephone. It produces more straightforward answers that are easy to analyse. However, this method can cause bias in answers as the interviewer has a strong influence on the process (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2011).

Data analysis

Characteristically, qualitative research amasses a vast amount of data as discovery is its core concept. This study is no exception as it has accumulated a large and rich amount of data throughout its field investigation. Even though this was a marker of the success of the research method, it posed a challenge to the process of moving from the detailed account of the participants' views towards a reliable and condensed interpretation. For instance, the richness of the materials they reported produced a basic findings report of over 125,000 words. According to the target word count for the final findings chapter, the project faced the challenge of reducing this amount by seventy-five percent. (However, the actual research findings present a well-integrated and holistic account by comprising up to sixty percent of the original amount of data).

Preparation of raw data

As discussed before, no questionnaires given to the Virtual Heads of Schools were sent back and the main data sources were the field interviews and existing literature. The researcher transcribed all of the tape-recorded interviews verbatim. The group interviews were given extra attention during the transcription because of their interactive nature in the group setting. To preserve the original form of the discussion, full verbatim transcriptions were produced electronically with all the actual words spoken, with the speaker's pauses and intonations, and the words of the researcher.

At this stage, the researcher did the initial reading of the whole set of transcripts, the few manual notes of interviews that were not tape-recorded and the other observational notes, and prepared the documents for the next stage – data coding. This was the stage of 'living and breathing' the research, which gave the researcher a good grip of the findings.

Analytical process

The interviewer must come to the transcript prepared to let the interview breathe and speak for itself (Seidman, 2006, p117).

Irvin Seidman first published his thoughts on the analytical process in his popular book *interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences in 1937*. This was the guiding principle that directed the analysis of the research data.

The research data analysis was based on the constant comparative method, which is a main feature of grounded theory procedures. Its importance was also recognised by the pioneers of the grounded theory, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, in the 1960s (Charmaz, 2014 p.132). Constant comparative theory has been identified as a less complicated method than ground theory, which seemed to have developed into more conflicting guidelines and procedures over the years (Bowen, 2008; Kolb, 2012).

As Thomas (2009) argues,

Constant comparison is the basic analytical method for interpretative research and it prevents the unnecessary complications inherent in grounded theory approach which is perceived to be inappropriate and outdated. However, there is no significant division between grounded theory and constant comparison as Lincoln and Guba, (as cited in Thomas, 2009) suggest that 'the constant comparisons are the kernel of grounded theory that is worth preserving' (Thomas, 2009, p.202).

Based on this approach, the analysis followed the basics of the analytical structure below (Ibid. p.210):

1. Read through the data thoroughly and make temporary constructs (important ideas, subjects) and read it through again to eliminate some of the constructs that are not emerging again. Carry on with this process until the second-order constructs, which summarise the important themes, emerge from the data.

2. Refine the second-order data in order to 'capture the essence of the data' and construct themes.

3. Match and connect the themes and find comparisons, contradictions etc.

4. Mapping the themes using network analysis or construct mapping (**this analysis adapted construct mapping**).

5. Illustrate the themes from selected quotations from the interview data.

Identifying themes in qualitative data analysis is an integral but complicated task. As Ryan and Bernard (2003) claim, '*Theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research. It also is one of the most mysterious*' (p.85). In view of this, the analysis followed an explicit theme-tracking process in order to preserve the highest degree of strength in the emerging themes. The themes identified were divided into two categories, namely, pre-set themes (identified with the elements of the research question) and emergent themes (generated from the interviews). All of the themes identified under these two groups were divided into basic themes and sub-themes.

For example:

Basic theme	Sub-theme
Impact of programmes	English language, employment, life chances, social integration

A number of main themes were identified from the basic themes and constructed mapping was employed (Thomas, 2009) to identify the connections and relationships between the themes.

The coding and theme mapping process was carried out both electronically and manually where necessary. This iterative exercise was predominantly completed using Microsoft Word 2010, and an illustration of the task is shown in Appendix 13. The computer assisted qualitative data sorting tool, NVivo, was also used at the initial stages to organise a clutter-free coding presentation. However, it was used only up to a certain level as there was a danger of the qualitative analytical process becoming too technical and time consuming. As the researcher realised, bringing extensive use of technology into a small qualitative project of this size prevents the researcher from 'living and breathing' the research. It would have harmed the richness of the qualitative data, which exudes human feelings. It is important to note that, as shown below, some research experts have expressed

their experience and reservations about the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis programmes (CAQDAS).For instance:

There are a number of data analysis programmes available (sometimes called computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, or (CAQDAS).Whether or not you use these depends on the amount of data that you have to process. Nothing, of course, substitutes for your intelligent reading of your data, and this to my mind is the main danger of software in qualitative data analysis: it leads you to the false belief that something else is going to do the hard work for you. My one trial of CAQDAS left me disappointed and I have never used it again. It left me believing that there's no substitute for a good set of highlighters from W.H.Smith, a pen and paper, and a brain. (Thomas, 2009, p.207)

Validity and reliability

The soundness of research depends on its use of strategies that ensure validity and reliability throughout the process. This research was designed and implemented according to the criteria that ensure these qualities in qualitative research. However, the determinants of validity and reliability are not as clear cut and scientific as in quantitative research. Moreover, the meanings of the terms are based on the researcher's philosophical perspectives. Over the years, many different terms have been introduced to assess validity and reliability in qualitative research. For instance, according to Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Bryman, 2004) trustworthiness and authenticity can replace the terms validity and reliability in qualitative research assessments. In their view, trustworthiness is the result of credibility, transparency, dependability and confirmability (ibid., p276).

The study had done or will do its utmost to adhere to these concepts in order to safeguard the quality. For instance, to uphold the credibility of the research, the researcher will inform the participants of the findings (e.g., the professionals) as they will be interested in knowing the outcome. As discussed before, this was a special request made by a professional believing that the findings would help shape their policy and practice. The researcher has the confidence of the truth of the findings and its contribution to the professionals and to the welfare of the children.

With regard to transferability, the subject of the study has become a critical issue, especially for the UK and many countries in Europe. More importantly, the collaboration among European countries is crucial to solving the refugee issue. It is not only a European issue – as has been discussed in the study, it is also a global issue that needs a global solution (Tusk, 2016). Therefore, regardless of the size of the study, it can definitely be transferred to relevant contexts. The researcher has made every effort to produce a credible study and the transferability or generalisability depends on the judgement of those who are interested in using the research findings.

More importantly, the researcher has upheld dependability, which entails providing a clear and explicit account of the research for potential future researchers to repeat the work. The thesis has been developed in a clear and concise manner, including all the necessary information for others to evaluate the conduct of the research, its effectiveness and credibility. In addition, the research was conducted in a manner that ensures the objectivity of the decisions, free from the researcher's bias, in order to adhere to confirmability. Being an academic exercise completed by an individual researcher, the supervisor has been the only independent auditor who has overseen the project. All the decisions related to the study were made in consultation with the supervisor in order to safeguard transparency and to eliminate the researcher's errors and biases. Every step of research implementation, data analysis, and reporting findings were done under his supervision and advice.

Moreover, authenticity is the other marker of trustworthiness. It represents the wider political impact of the research and its fairness to the participants. The research has fairly presented the viewpoints of the participants and has helped others to have a better understanding of the issues investigated. It may act as an impetus to change the circumstances of the children in this study. However, it would also help the participants to change their own circumstances (e.g. some children learned about the education system and employment opportunities in the country, e.g. about apprenticeship) as they questioned the researcher about the issues and opportunities open to them in the country during the interview process. They also asked the researcher's opinion about their education and career opportunities (an appropriate response was given according to the ethical guidelines). Therefore, the study must have been a revelation for many children and a comfort for some others.

Ethical considerations

The ethical conduct of research largely lies in the researcher's sense of responsibility. The study has followed all the necessary rules and guidelines to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the participants and the integrity and credibility of the researcher. The Ethics Committee of the Department of Education at the University of York approved the research project. The researcher had to obtain the CRB clearance (Criminal Record Bureau) in order to work with UASC who are vulnerable and being at risk (Department for Education, 2014). The study adhered to the University of York's ethical guidance approval procedure, and the Ethical Guidelines for the Educational Research of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). Given the ethical sensitivity of the research population, the study also consulted the ethical guidelines of the following organisations:

- 1) UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Research Ethics Framework (ESRC, 2010)

- 2) National Children's Bureau (NCB) Guidelines for Research with Children and Young People (Shaw, Brady & Wakely, 2011)
- 3) The European Commission Guideline on Ethics for Researchers (European Union, 2013)
- 4) The Guideline of the Ethics Committee of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (Paediatrics, Committee & Hull, 2000)

In essence, this research project followed the principle 'do no harm' when conducting the research with UASC.

Anonymity, confidentiality and data protection

The identity of the participants was anonymised, and they were given individual coded identification. Also, the actual research locations were not revealed, apart from mentioning the regions of the country where the research took place. The data was kept strictly private in the researcher's possession and did not use cloud computing or the university network drives to store and access information. The retention and disposal of all records and data (electronic and manual) will be followed according to the university guidance after the completion of the PhD.

Participants' informed consent

This is one of the most important principles in research ethics and the study followed it according to the guidance. Informed consent guarantees voluntary participation and it covers three main ethical rules: adequate information, voluntariness and competence (European Union, 2013). According to these rules, the participants were given all the necessary information about the research prior to their consent to participating in the research. Once they had agreed, a hard copy of the information sheet was also given before the actual interview took place, to ensure their full awareness about the research, and to give them the opportunity to have more clarification if needed. They were clearly notified about their voluntariness and their right to withdraw from the interviews at any time without any consequences. The researcher also ensured their competence to understand the whole process and the meaning of their consent. The participants were also given the opportunity to check their statements after the interviews if needed, and were informed that the research findings would be available to them after the examination of the thesis. As discussed previously, a request has already been made for the researcher to present the findings at a Virtual Heads of School meeting once the research is over.

The confidentiality of the participants' identity was guaranteed by exchanging a signed copy of the statement of consent (Appendix 5) between the researcher and the participant before commencing the interview. Those who were interviewed by telephone and on Skype had been sent

the information sheets and statements of consent electronically before the interviews, and the signed copies were returned to the researcher. Finally, the tape recording of the interviews was done at the discretion of the participants.

Researcher's personality, research environment, and specific needs of refugee children

Researching involves the personality and the sensitiveness of the researcher, especially when working with vulnerable children. As the National Children's Bureau Guidelines describe (Shaw et al., 2011), the researcher should consider their appearance and dress code, making a suitable research environment, warming up before the interviews, and creating a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere. The researcher followed all these steps appropriately.

Moreover, as the guidelines further describe, when dealing with sensitive issues or topics, the researcher should consider de-personalising the questions, and this became a useful method at times. For instance, the researcher used this method if the discussion moved onto difficult subjects, e.g., repatriation. However, it should be stated that no direct questions were asked about the participants' personal life other than the issues relating to education and employment. When they shared their personal life with the researcher, it was at their discretion.

It is important to note that some asylum seeking and refugee children may be uncomfortable with voice recording as it may remind them of the detention and immigration procedures they must have been through (ibid. p.18). However, the majority of children in the study were relaxed about tape recording, apart from two participants who were going through psychological problems and immigration battles.

Finally, the project has gained considerable success given the difficulty in researching refugee children. It has achieved its objectives and amassed a rich and useful amount of information within a limited time and budget. The new information emerged from the study will contribute to the existing knowledge in making well-informed policies based on current best available evidence.

The findings of the research and its relevance to policy and practice will be discussed in the next two chapters respectively.

Chapter 5

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES

It is important not only that we know what we know. But that we know what we do not know.

Lao-Tze, Chinese Philosopher (as cited in Petticrew & Roberts, 2012, p. 2)

This chapter focuses on the systematic review, which was one of the two main components of the research method used in the study. It provides the protocol of the review, the outcome, and suggestions for further reviews.

The need for a systematic review

As discussed in the methodology section, the aim of this review was to find and synthesise the relevant and accurate research findings on educational and vocational intervention programmes. For instance, the effectiveness of an intervention programme cannot be judged by only one evaluation or research paper. Multiple research evidence needs to be found, identified and synthesised to extract accurate information using explicit methods that reduce bias. Therefore, systematically reviewed pre-filtered evidence would give practitioners and policy makers sound knowledge that is essential to make well-informed policy and practice decisions. It also saves their time and energy when the skilled reviewers provide the evidence for them and it helps to shape future research (Schlosser, 2006). Moreover, as has been stated before, this research aimed to promote an evidence-based policy and practice approach to policy making. Finding the current best evidence is pivotal for the evidence-based approach and systematic reviews play an integral part in that process.

Saini & Shlonsky (2012) define systematic reviews as the '*Primary vehicle for preparing, maintaining and disseminating high-quality evidence* (p.12). Although it has its limitations and biases, for instance, reviewer biases, a costly reviewing process, ethical considerations, study selection bias, publication bias and government influence, its benefits outweigh its shortcomings (Jesson, Matheson and Lacey, 2011; Saini & Shlonsky, 2012; Gough, Oliver & Thomas, 2012).

In relation to this study, it was important to find systematically reviewed evidence, as this would be beneficial in two ways. Firstly, it would help with understanding the real nature of the interventions by employing systematic and explicit methods for collecting, appraising and

synthesising the findings. Secondly, it would contribute the findings to the development of new policies that maximise benefit to one of the most vulnerable asylum seeking groups that need help.

As the literature review had indicated, there were hardly any systematic reviews, let alone a well-developed evidence base, in this specific research area. In view of this, the main objective of this review was to map the evidence available in order to identify the gaps in the literature and requirements for future research.

As defined by Petticrew & Roberts (2012):

Systematic reviews are a method of mapping out areas of uncertainty, and identifying where little or no relevant research has been done, but where new studies are needed. Systematic reviews also flag up areas where we think we know more than we do, but where in reality there is little convincing evidence to support our belief (p.2).

The goal and objective of the research

The methodology chapter has provided a detailed discussion of the goal and objectives of the study. In brief, the ultimate goal of the study was to explore which educational intervention programmes could best prepare unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children for employment and entering into the UK labour market. Principally, it was an exploration of 'what works, for whom, in what contexts' in order to produce evidence on how a programme works, for whom it works and the influence of the context in which it takes place.

Main objective

The main objective of the study was to explore the availability, nature and effectiveness of current educational and vocational intervention programmes specifically designed for improving the children's employability. Based on this information, it would further investigate how to remodel currently available programmes (if any), and the ideas and requirements for new programmes.

Overarching research question

How effective are the specific educational and vocational intervention programmes designed to integrate young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees into the UK labour market?

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW PROTOCOL

Preparation of systematic review question

The review was based on a well-built PICO question according to the PICO guidelines (EPPI Centre, 2015; Davis 2011) based on Population, Intervention, Comparison (optional) and Outcome. This was also one of the sub questions used in the field research.

Research population

Young unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children within the age range of 16 and 24 years old.

Intervention

Educational and vocational intervention programmes that aimed to improve the employability of UASC. The programmes should show a clear purpose, plan, time period, and the target group.

Outcome

The individual outcome measures of the intervention programmes according to the programme objectives were planned to be measured. The programme delivery process should also be examined while measuring outcomes. Some outcomes could be, for instance, skill development, improved employability, and positive changes in education or vocational training.

Review Question

Are there specific educational and vocational intervention programmes designed to integrate young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees into the UK labour market? What evidence is there regarding the effectiveness of such programmes?

Main sections of the review

The review was planned to have two sections:

1) Mapping the intervention programmes – making an inventory of programmes and categorising them according to their appropriateness. For instance, there might be different types of programmes, such as promising programmes, model programmes, local programmes, nationwide programmes or proposed programmes (to be implemented).

2) Critical review of selected programmes – selected studies from the intervention map would be critically evaluated and synthesised.

Search strategy

Sources of literature

The aim was to review all the published and grey literature (unpublished literature). Given the significant lack of data on the research area, grey literature would have been important to this study.

Grey literature is defined as:

That which is produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers' (The Fourth International Conference in Grey Literature (GL' 99, 1999).

The items of this literature should be, for example, non-academic reports, government reports and documents, conference papers, theses, newspaper articles, policy papers etc. They would be found electronically using specialised databases, such as the Social Science Information Gateway (SOSIG) or by manually searching.

Library catalogues

E.g., search for print and electronic materials (all published and unpublished).

Digital Library and electronic library

E.g., COPAC, Forced Migration Online.

Individual full-text data bases

E.g., Sage, Taylor Francis, Wiley Online Library.

Official Websites and online repositories

Government and non-governmental (mainly in the UK).

Government Websites

E.g., Department for Education, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Department for Work and Pension, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, Institute of Race Relations, Office of the Children's Commissioner (England, Scotland and Wales), www.parliament.uk.

Non-Governmental Websites (UK)

E.g., Save the Children, Refugee Council, Children's Society, Refugee Support Network (RSN), National Children's Bureau (NCB), British Red Cross.

Academic Institutions

University departments, Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford University, Sussex Centre for Migration, Research centres; e.g. COMPAS (Centre for Migration Policy & Society), ICAR (Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees), Education Evident Portal (EEP), Centre for Economic Performance in LSE.

Other open access websites

E.g., European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), Europa.eu (European Union), European Migration Network (EMN), European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), European Website on Integration (MPG), The European Asylum Support Office (EASO), European Commission (europa.eu), IPPR (Institute of Public Policy Research), Centre Forum, UNHCR the UN Refugee Agency, Refugee Council, National Register for unaccompanied children, UNICEF, UNESCO.

Bibliographical databases

E.g., British Education Index (BEI), Applied Social Science Index and Abstract (ASSIA), Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), RAL (Researching Asylum in London), British Humanities Index (BRI) ChildData (ncb), Social policy and Practice, Social Science Information Gateway (SOSIG), Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX).

Journals (Electronic and printed)

E.g., Journal of International Migration, Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Migration Review, International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care, Community Care, Forced Migration Review, British Journal of educational Studies, Cambridge Journal of Education, Children and Youth Services Review, Children & Society, Educational Research, Oxford Review of Education, Social Policy and Social Work, Social Policy and Society, Work, Employment and Society.

Reference lists contained in relevant publications

Searched appropriate references in other publications.

Personal recommendations

Recommendations from researchers and academics in the area of research interest and recommendations of professional agencies; NGOs that are active in the area.

Contacting authors

Some of the authors of the reports were contacted to gather additional information.

Search Engine

Google Scholar

Search terms

E.g., the search terms comprised of various combinations of these key words, education, intervention programmes, refugees, migration, refugee children, unaccompanied refugees and asylum seekers, labour market integration, refugee integration, refugee youth, ethnic minorities, refugee employment interventions.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria of studies

Inclusion criteria

1) Language

Reports written only in English

2) Literature from 2000 to 2014

This period was selected for two factors in relation to asylum and immigration: legislative importance and current awareness. Firstly, this period saw some significant changes in asylum policy. The major change was the introduction of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (Legislation.gov.uk, 1999) which introduced the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and initiated the refugee dispersal programme. These initiatives seemed to have a drastic effect on refugee children's education (Rutter, 2006; Hek, 2005). During this time, many legislative changes had occurred and there was a slow decline in refugee children's welfare in general. Secondly, current awareness is key when it comes to the rapidly changing phenomenon of refugees and asylum seekers. In this regard, the research aimed to search recent changes and developments occurring in the subject area. The period selected was appropriate in terms of the number of UASC who came to this country and its legislative and socio-economic impact.

3) Report of the programmes undertaken (preferably, outcome and programme processes should be objectively evaluated).

4) Reports or plans of the programmes scheduled to be implemented.

- 5) Materials containing original data collected in the UK by the author(s) of the report.
- 6) Materials containing data dealing with educational interventions aimed at education, employment and transition to the labour market.
- 7) The focus of the materials should predominantly be on unaccompanied youths aged 16-24.
(They should be at secondary, higher or a vocational level of education). However, programmes aimed at refugee youths in general in the UK will also be considered.
- 8) Materials that only give opinions (not objectively evaluated) such as media publications containing information about intervention programmes
- 9) Data relevant to apprenticeship programmes for refugees/or unaccompanied youths.
- 10) Similar interventions aimed at unaccompanied women asylum seekers aged between 16 and 24.

Exclusion criteria

- 1) Non-English articles.
- 2) Educational interventions for all young people in the similar age group in the UK.
- 3) Materials published before 2000 (unless they were of significant importance).
- 4) Other interventions aimed at helping young refugees to find employment (not educational and vocational programmes).
- 5) Other employment-related interventions aimed at the refugee population in general.

Data extraction

The researcher was the only data extractor under the audit of the supervisor. The aim was to gather two types of evaluation reports.

Quality assessment and relevance appraisal

A quality assessment of the research reports was planned to be carried out in order to evaluate the soundness or the quality of the studies and their relevance to the research question. The weight of Evidence Framework explained by Gough (Gough, 2007) was selected for assessing the studies.

Data synthesis

The findings would be synthesised either using a mixed-method review synthesis process (Gough, Oliver & Thomas, 2012) or a realist synthesis approach (Pawson, 2011). This will be a

narrative systematic review predominantly based on qualitative studies. The review will use the systematic review guidelines developed by the Campbell collaboration (www.campbellcollaboration.org) and the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre (IPPE, 2015) at the Institute of Education, London.

Review bias

Given the nature of the literature available and the scarcity of the data, the reviewer envisaged selection bias, publication bias, language bias etc. Even though implementing well-planned rigid inclusion criteria, which would reduce selection bias, it was expected that the rigidity would reject some valuable pieces of information or studies.

Limitations

The main challenge foreseen was the methodological limitations of the reports available for the review. Given the qualitative nature of the materials expected to be found in this review, it was expected to be difficult to employ rigid methods that are predominantly designed for quantitative studies. This would undermine the transparency and consistency of the review. Similarly, the unpublished nature of the literature available on intervention studies would cause difficulty in tracking the studies.

Outcome of the review

Although the review was planned to assist the research in finding appropriate research reports, there were no programmes found that matched the pre-set criteria. However, only specific support services and a programme relevant to educational developments seemed to be delivered by the Refugee Support Network (RSN, www.refugeesupportnetwork.org). These are on-going support services that target UASC and other young refugees, by helping them to enter higher education. For instance, they run education-mentoring programmes, such as the ‘Thinking Ahead to Higher Education’ toolkit. There were also befriending and mentoring programmes run by the Refugee Council that seemed to help with overall wellbeing and also accessing education. One of those programmes was the Refugee Council’s Smile programme (Walker, 2011).

It should also be noted that UASC may be supported by organisations such as Catch 22 with their interventions for children and young people who are looked after or leaving care in the country in general. They run successful programmes such as the Care 2 Work project, helping vulnerable young people re-enter education and develop their employability (www.catch22.org).

In conclusion, even though the review did not yield the expected outcome, it has provided the rationale and foundation for the field research and for further systematic reviews. It has shown the scarcity of intervention programmes and the vast gap that prevails in educational and

vocational intervention services. The next chapter, which provides the findings of the field research, brings a deeper insight into this problem. It also discusses the research participants' views and suggestions about possible courses of actions that need to be taken in order to help UASC achieve their full potential in education and employment.

Chapter 6

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the field research. It is divided into two main parts:

Section 1 – the findings of the professionals' sample

Section 2 – the findings of the children's sample

The focus of this chapter is to summarise and discuss in brief the key findings that answer the research questions.

Chapter 6 – Section 1

6.1 FINDINGS OF PROFESSIONALS' SAMPLE

6.1.1 UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN – THROUGH THE EYES OF PROFESSIONALS

To set the context for the discussions, the participants were eager to call attention to the cause and consequences of the flight of unaccompanied asylum seeking children. They seemed to place their flight within the broader human migration phenomenon. In their view, migration was a response to a combination of natural human instincts for safety, freedom, hope, aspiration and success, and the flight of unaccompanied asylum seeking children was no exception.

As an Afghan academic, whose country is one of the largest source countries of refugees argued:

The migration phenomenon has to be understood within a broader context. This is not simply about Afghanistan. I mean, look at developed societies, we often see that people go outside the United Kingdom and they settle in other countries, because they want to have better job opportunities ... to have a better economic future (PIISYB8).

In a British academic's view:

I think it is a part of the traditional migrant story of going for a better life (PKUAS26),

Underpinning these claims, a young, white, British youth worker drew an analogy between his own desires and others:

[Talking animatedly] *If I think I can get a better life sitting over here [pointing towards a chair] I am going to sit over there it is hard to deter people doing something (PSTB30).*

Involuntary departures

Young people are not coming on their own choice really (PYPPJA23, a lawyer).

The respondents believed that the UASC's departure from their home countries would largely be involuntary, as the decisions to send them away would normally be made by their parents or care givers. The children's voices would not be heard and they had no knowledge of their final destination:

They do not want to become refugees, I am going to end this discussion as I started it, that, this is not a choice, they do not come here because of their choice, they do not chose to come here, they do not chose to become refugees, we are talking about children, I am talking about children, a child does not decide where they are going to go ...

... very often their parents who sell their lands, all what they have in order to pay for a person who is taking these children to safety, so most of them do not know their destination, to my knowledge, this is my 12th year, I have never met a student who knew that he was going to be here in this country (PHSBB32, a School Refugee Coordinator).

Implications of the flight for family and children

The practitioners, however, emphasised that in reality, no parent would send their children away and no child want to be separated from their parents in any circumstances either:

I do not think a child would come independently and secondly, a parent would not send a child to a different country to live just for fun, or just because they want them to, or do not want them anymore... so no parents would ever send a child to a different country to live on his own just for the sake of sending them (PHSBB32).

In their opinion, it was an act of desperation based on a catalogue of reasons, such as, war, violence, persecution, the forcible recruitment of children into militant groups, and also, extreme economic hardships. As many of them believed that the parents were unaware of the risks and dangers involved in the journey.

Family trauma of separation: a sociological impact

Although the participants in general were aware of the implications of separation from one's own family and country, it could be best understood by the account of those who belonged to the source countries. Recollecting her experience in a war-torn European country in 1990s, the above participant further explained:

... I have seen myself how children were put on buses by their parents thinking ' just go anywhere, you will be safe', that was very traumatic separation for a child and parents (PHSBB32).

Exemplifying these views, another participant claimed:

Obviously no parent wants their children to go to another country in such a young age, but, in times of extreme economic hardships, if they see a way out from it, obviously, if you tell them that your child is going to have a lot of exploitation, I think then most parents would not send them, (PBGK21, a Research Officer).

Following is the Afghan academic's explanation of the sociological impact:

... you can think about their families, somebody is their son or daughter, and their separation tends to leave quite an impact on the family, like the family will be traumatic missing this child, you look into a country made up of families and families made up of these individuals, then, it is the sociological impact (PIISYB38).

Children's traumatic journeys

Furthermore, he also drew the attention to the personal impact on children in their traumatic and risky journey:

There are individual impact as well, for example, somebody leaves Afghanistan and reaches United Kingdom, that journey is obviously not without risks, that could be quite traumatic, and, again not every journey ends up at the destination, and, in between there are a lot of traumatic situations.

Sharing his concerns, some of the participants discussed their awareness of dangers, exploitation and abuse. While showing his dismay, the above research officer of a leading children's charity claimed:

I think, looking at the case studies of the children that we work ... the exploitation happens along the way when they come into England that is how I see it. So it is hopeless (PBGK21).

Echoing his views, another participant discussed her worries about the added trauma of exploitation and being subjected to forced labour:

What happens very often is that these children do stop in different countries, in European countries ...that is where they are being used as forced labour in different European countries, this is yet another trauma apart from the separation from their own country, parents and family (PHSBB32).

Many professionals had their own story or vivid memories to recount. Without hiding, a professional shared her dismay at a journey of one of her pupils, a seven year old Afghan unaccompanied boy:

Imagine what that child must have seen...? (PSCKK20, an outreach teacher).

Education: pull or push factor of migration?

While talking about the pull and push factors, the respondents hotly disputed the notion that children flee their countries mainly for the opportunities, especially, the educational opportunities available to them in the western world. According to their knowledge, these children and young people predominantly run away in fear of their lives. They would escape violence and chaos; it did not seem probable for anybody to make opportunity -driven calculated attempts in such situations:

... to my limited knowledge, people who are in traumatic circumstances, I tend to think what they do is they are reacting to the moment rather than planning long term because actually, neurologically, in the mist of trauma you are not in a position to do long-term planning (PSTTC28).

Seeking education: A calculated attempt or a myth?

As a college lecturer who was chiefly involved in educating UASC depicted, the influence of education as a pull factor is a complete myth:

So these young people do not sit and go, "I want to go to London, I want to go to Glasgow", they have no idea where they are going, and when they arrive in London, and that is where they are, but they did not plan it, and they did not choose it, and they certainly did not choose it, because they do not go "I'm going to go to university here", that is a myth, a complete myth (PCCLM14).

Generally, in my experience, when I ask young people 'Why did you come to the UK?' they will say I did not know I was coming to the UK, my mother, my father, my family paid the agent to get me out of Afghanistan, Somalia, wherever, OK, to get me out, I did not know where I was going, I knew only that I was getting out and I thought, maybe I will arrive in Europe or somewhere.

Safety: the push factor

They come to be safe – number one.

In her view, the intractable traumatic situations propelled them into uncertain journeys of finding safety – that was their number one priority:

Young people have left their country because they have experienced the most horrendous trauma, or they themselves are in danger... or lost everything, so they haven't come with the reason to get education, they come for to get, to be safe, number one (PCCLM14).

The majority of the professionals agreed with her. For instance, as another respondent reiterated:

The parents, as I said before, pay a large amount of money to bring them here and to bring them to safety, this is what we need to remember, safety (PHSBB32).

Contributing a different experience to the argument, a lawyer, who was specialised in the immigration and education issues of UASC claimed that education did not seem to be the attraction for their flight:

I am an asylum lawyer and I do believe that young people who are coming here fleeing persecution, and are not coming on their own choice really ... they are not coming because there is a better system of education they can access, necessarily (PYPPJA23).

These views were fundamentally in line with that of the participants from Afghanistan. As an Afghan professional who now holds a high calibre occupation in the UK explained:

They are running for their lives out of the country, so, the first thing they need is security, these kind of education and other things come second. You know what I mean? (PBAAGJW12).

Pull factor of education: exceptional cases

However, making a self-confession about his own failed attempt to be trafficked to the UK with his brother, he accepted that education was one of their considerations. But, safety always remained their primary concern. Replying to the question about education as a pull factor:

Well, for some of them, I, for example, when I wanted to leave the country, one of the main reasons was that, I thought I could study in the West

Researcher – *Education was your purpose then?*

Participant – *Yes. My purpose and my brother also wanted to study*

As the Afghan academic who was a specialist in his country's education system explained, children's struggle between their hopes and barriers for education could force them out of their country.

Every child has a dream: Education as a pull factor

As he believed, children have dreams the same as anybody else, but their dreams may not always come true:

Well, obviously, everybody has dreams, even little kids, children, they all have their dreams, but they do not achieve their dreams always ... (PIISYB38).

One's basic need is another one's dream and luxury

Comparing the contextual differences between the education systems of the UK and of war-torn Afghanistan, he explained how one's basic need of freedom to pursue education in a secure environment becomes another one's dream and luxury:

...so to talk about the dreams of a teenager, In Afghanistan is obviously, for them it would be a luxury, but here in the context of the United Kingdom it is not a luxury, for example, to have peace and security and access to education, access to education facilities, modern education facilities like, and to pursue their education by their own will, they can't always do it there. So, that is a dream which is a basic need, actually, it is not a dream, but this basic need becomes a dream and a luxury in a country, a war-torn country like Afghanistan.

According to him, there were wide ranges of barriers that hindered their access to education. For instance, war, poverty, parental education, gender diversity (e.g. the disadvantaged situation of girls) and regional, cultural, religious and tribal diversity in 'a mosaic country' were significant among many others and there was no one answer for numerous challenges:

When you talk about challenges and barriers, there is no one answer for all of them, there is no one scenario for all of them, so there are different places in Afghanistan, and different social political circumstances, and different geographical circumstances, they face different challenges.

More important, however, was the danger of war and security.

Education: a risky business

Education is quite a risky business (PIISYB38).

As he explained, the atrocities and violence committed against the whole educational establishment of the country would not only threaten lives of children, teachers or property but also demonise their communities:

The security, whether you are in a rural area or in an urban area, if you are in a rural area either school is too far from your home or the journey between your home and school could be sometimes risky. Look into the southern part of Afghanistan, education is quite a risky business because the insurgents would do attack on schools, on teachers, and girls and boys , so that , attack... meaning firing and bombing, all these things ... imagine that if an area a school is in is bombed and a teacher is killed it is leaving a quite a significant negative impact on the entire community

Interviewer: *Does this happen very often?*

Respondent: *Yes, of course, it happens, Taliban did burn schools, and they did kill teachers and students.*

6.1.2 EDUCATION AND UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN

Should we educate unaccompanied asylum seeking children? Obligation, moral duty or righteousness?

Why stop somebody have the courage, the intelligence, they want to do well, why stop? (PHSBB32).

The answer given to the first question was unanimous, unambiguous and clear –it was a resounding 'yes'. The participants expressed their explicit and sometimes, controversial views, rich in political, moral and legislative realities. According to them, educating these children was a deed that encompasses compassion, righteousness and morality, legislation, and responsibility.

Political argument

Referring to Britain's role in the world and the responsibilities that come with it, a participant put forward his politically provocative moral argument:

....now whether we have a moral duty to the rest of the world or not, whether we should be saying please come to Britain if you are in need, because we are rich and our wealth actually has been based on your poverty, that is a big economic and moral argument and an interesting one (PSTTC28).

Britain's moral obligation and responsibility as a global society:

Besides the political stance, another participant drew attention to Britain's responsibility and moral duty as a global society:

I think, that the UK as a global society, we have that responsibility, you know, for a child or young person ... the exercise of planning their future, preparing them for going into adulthood and living successful lives, I think, as a society, we have that moral obligation to support in their education' (PKUAS26).

Researcher: *Moral obligation, regardless of the law?*

Respondent: *If you put that to a side, yes.*

Regulations and morality

For some respondents, however, regulation and morality were interrelated concepts. According to an officer of a prominent international refugee agency, regulations were born out of a moral heart relying on fundamental moral principles:

You know, the Convention of the Rights of the Child, I mean, these conventions are drafted based on humanitarian concerns ... and the CRC was drafted from the moral place of morality (PUNSS25).

Education is a human right

Concerning the rights, the respondents emphasised their views on upholding children's basic human right to education.

Of course, it depends very much on values. In my opinion, education is a human right, and we should educate everyone who wants to be educated (PIESJ3, an academic).

Whether we have commitment and responsibility for them or not, it is their human right, that is why they are here (PCSJS33).

According to a teacher/teaching coordinator working with UASC, every human being is entitled to a fair and equal chance to education:

Never mind the moral side of it give everybody fair and equal chance to get an education ... I think ... that is what I truly believing in. Again, as a human being, I strongly feel that everybody is entitled to education ... every human being, regardless of their situation (PSCKK20).

Education: a necessity in knowledge societies

As some viewed it, education was generally a necessity of survival in knowledge societies, especially for looked-after children as they need an education to compete in such an environment. For example, as a respondent explained:

...Well, absolutely crucial, because, now all European societies are becoming knowledge societies, people who have no education qualifications are in a very very bad position, and ,if that passes to children in care generally of course... (PIESJ13).

Children's readiness for education

The respondents in general seemed to find the children's desire and determination to be educated refreshing. For instance, bringing her own research experience on UASC's education, an academic claimed:

They feel they can learn and they want to learn. I mean, obviously, that is generalisation, does not apply to absolutely everybody, but , it does apply to almost every young person who would coming to your categories that I have interviewed myself (PIESJ13).

Many of them expressed their admiration for the children, who they came to know for their quality of their character, especially, their resilience, motivation, affability and respect for authority.

They believe in education more than their British peers

More importantly, the practitioners' judgements were mostly based on the comparison between UASC and their native peers – looked-after children in the UK. In the respondents' view, UASC tended to embrace an education opportunity (however unrealistic it might be), as that was their means to escape the vicious cycle. However, according to some, looked-after children in general (in the UK) lacked that perception.

As the above academic explained:

I mean, I find it very sad, children in care in general do not have the perception that education is their only means of escape, and I do not exaggerate that, their only means of escape, otherwise they just repeat the pattern of their parents. But, young people who come from abroad as asylum seekers they see that very clearly, and even if it is unrealistic that they aspire to go to university. They (unaccompanied children) seem to have more motivation to do it (PIESJ13).

Different attitude to society and life

Some participants believed that the children's attitudes to life and their aspiration for education were shaped by their family, culture and country, where self-reliance would be the norm. Based on her experience in working with UASC from over 20 different countries, the above participant claimed:

Even if they had not seen their both parents for a long time they have a very strong message in their head that education is the way to succeed and have a better life. I think, almost everyone ... often they say, I remember my mother or my father saying this before I left home.

In another professional's view:

They come from a culture that there is no expectation that the government will support you on benefits. That is not how life works there, you know. You work with your family, you get a job, you support the rest of your family that is what life is. So they have a very different understanding of what their role in society, attitude to work and attitude to education (PCCLM14).

According to her, the children found it difficult to grasp the differences in the socio-economic make up of their own countries and the host country:

Sometimes they ask me (whispering) Miss, why don't these young people here work? Why do they get money from the government?

UASC's contribution to education

Moreover, some professionals claimed, UASC would bring unique and noticeable qualities into the UK's education system. For instance:

Dedication

A quality that inspired others:

I would say that young people generally that I work with, but, of course not all young people, generally, are incredibly focused, hardworking, they are inspirational to others (PCCLM14).

Motivation: an essential but a neglected component of education (in the UK)

No one can make you want to learn ... you've got to want to learn in order to learn (PIESJ13).

According to those who directly worked with UASC, their motivation and determination seemed to help them gain considerable success compared to their peers. Unfortunately, the motivation of the learner was a concept that had long been forgotten or been neglected by those who had political responsibilities in the country:

They {UASC} are very rewarding, they tend to be highly motivated to pursue educational goals and have a strong learning identity for the reasons I said, really, it is all to do with motivation, and motivation is, all the discussions we hear about education from politicians, one thing they leave out is, motivation, and yet, that is the crucial thing, motivation of the learner I think it is the essential component. No one can make you want to learn. It is like little children, if

they do not want to eat no one can make them eat. [Laugh] you know, you've got to want to learn in order to learn (PIESJ13).

It is worth noticing that their motivation did not seem to have gender or ethnic variations. As a participant described:

Once there were a lot of Somalian, Nigerian, unaccompanied young women here... they were very good, they were very motivated, they wanted to move onto education and find employment, they had one or two children, to look after (PSDSAR24).

Resilience

The children's' resilience was held in high regard by almost every professional in the study. In a psychiatrist's view, they were exceptional children in the family and extraordinary beings:

I think that every child has the capacity to be very resilient, but I think the ones that we see here are a particularly resourceful group (POUMF38).

As she further said:

Well I think, you know the people who manage to leave their countries and make it here are extraordinary individuals. They are not an average child in a village in Afghanistan, the one that their families think that are going to most likely to achieve things.

According to many professionals, these children deserved their respect. The following are some of their sincere feelings:

...the resilience fact, of course, is that, it is not that pity but respect, people who survive tough circumstances actually deserve our respect (PSTC28).

I have huge respect for the young people, what they actually endure, what they actually go through just simply to get here very often (PSCDW19).

A testament to their resilience

There were many narratives about children's unwavering resilience to achieving their goals. This is a story of a young unaccompanied asylum seeker's progress to university education against all the odds according to his former lecturer:

One of the young people that I worked with, who is at university now, was detained and quite amazingly, even though he was detained he continue to manage to do his Higher National Diploma, and then went to university... the pressure and stress of that is enormous, so you can imagine that it is hard enough to young people to go to university, but, to go to university with all of those barriers and then a language barrier, you know (PCCLM14).

Skills and competences

Besides their personal qualities, the variety of skills they possessed was widely admired by many participants, especially in comparisons with their British peers. For instance:

Practical skills

What is interesting is that they have many skills, beautiful skills that a British child will never have ... because they survive differently, they live in a different country... (PHSBB32).

...for example, having a chicken and plucking their feathers, he will do that with no problem at all, give it to a thirteen year old British child, he would not do that.

Work-related skills and experience

Similarly, some of their specific and general skills and experience would be beneficial to the UK:

I think there is a whole lot of benefit these young people bring to the UK. The first benefit is they have usually a wide range of experience which can include skills they have already picked up from their own country, as quite often they would have worked as children or as very young people, so I have a young person in my class at the moment who is a mechanic and was a mechanic in Sudan, now he is 18, he knows how to do that job already because he has been doing it since he was 12 or 11, so there is the issue if what skills they bring (PSTCR28).

One of the skills mostly talked about was their multilingualism. This was seen as an incredible skill compared to British children:

Most of these young people can speak at least three languages not including English. For example, if you take an Afghani young man, an Afghani young man possibly will speak 4 or 5 languages, English probably being the least fluent until they get to the level, but, to be able to speak in five languages is an incredible skill, most of our young people in the UK can only speak English, you know ... (PCCLM14).

Benefits of education

The consensus was that education was a crucial requirement for the future benefits of UASC. The compassionate discussions on the benefits of education were mainly based on three areas: benefits to themselves; global relevance; integration and benefits to children's own country and host country.

I tend to think that what lends itself most to social mobility and to positive contribution, whether it is in this country as they choose to stay or whether they choose to leave, it's good education (PSTTC28).

Making her case for educating this considerably small number of children another professional declared:

Actually, it is not a big number, if they are able to achieve at school and can get good employment they are likely to be able to help their families at home as well as people here, you know, it is likely to be a benefit, to them, their families and for us (POUMF38).

Firstly, it is important to scrutinise the evidence for the global impact.

Global relevance: Reducing people seeking asylum

Their education seemed to make a significant global impact. They would contribute to their birth countries and make them stable and safe. As a result, the practitioners, argued that there would be fewer reasons (push factors) for people to find sanctuary elsewhere:

Actually, an unaccompanied asylum seeker who has had a first rate education here and if they leave, they will leave and make a positive influence on their birth country, therefore help that birth country to become a more stable, safe place. Therefore, may be, people are less likely to want to leave it' (PSTTC28).

Benefits to host country

Whether they stay here or do not, I think, they are an asset to this country and potential asset to their own countries. And, the more educated they are the better. ... They are not going to be a burden on us or on the country. So, it seems to me, it is not a difficult problem (PIESJ13).

This view represents the consensus of all the participants. Some viewed that it was a good investment for the country. The following is the summary of their main points.

Young work force for aging population in Europe

The majority of the participants expressed their view on creating a young, skilful work force for filling the labour shortages in the UK and Europe:

If we educate them, they will fill the labour gap in aging societies especially in Europe (PGSPU4, Head, School EAL department).

Role models for other refugee children

'I can do it and you can do it. You know, I was where you are sitting now' (a young refugee undergraduate to the newcomers in his former school, as described by his tutor).

This is one of the unique events noted by a participant. She explained how three of her former unaccompanied refugee students had gone to university and they had become inspiring role models to her present students:

I have three young people who are at university now who came here five years ago. They are role models for other young people which I think is hugely important (PccLM14).

Benefits to birth countries

We must 'give them certain pride' to take with them if they go back. It is good for the future of everybody (PGSPU4) .

This is the sentiment that almost every participant felt about UASC's future, especially in the event of repatriation, as they believed that educated people would be a blessing for their countries and for the future of the world.

Firstly, as an Afghan academic viewed, contribution to birth countries had always been a historic practice among refugees in the world

If they settle here and they get good education and good income then they can support their families back, like oldest asylum seekers throughout the world not just from Afghanistan, they all make a significant contribution to their home economy (PIISYB8).

In most participants' view, these children never forget their countries. As another Afghan professional pointed out:

I think the majority of the Afghans want to go back to Afghanistan; they carry with them lots of skills (PBAGJW12).

Every participant in the study agreed on and shared their knowledge about the contribution that educated refugee children in general could make to their own countries. However, based on their own country's experience, the Afghan professional best explained the benefits to the birth country.

Transferring knowledge from the most developed to the least developed countries

When they come here, they excel in education and sometimes sports, which is good (PBAAGW12).

It was, as he further explained, the process of transferring knowledge from the most developed to one of the least developed countries in the world through asylum seeking children:

... those who are under aged, when they come here, actually, it is sometimes beneficial for them because they leave a country, one of the least developed countries and come to one of the most developed and here everything is new and is a skill for them.

As he said, every skill, ever encounter, every opportunity could be new and fascinating:

If they learn, let's say, how to speak good English, how to learn computer, how to operate a machine, working in the pizza parlour delivering pizza, you know, then how to cook all these skills are good for them, otherwise in Afghanistan they would not be able to learn any of these things.

Agents of new eras of birth countries

Moreover, the refugees' contribution to sports, art, culture and music, was regarded as crucial:

They carry with them lots of skills. Talking of sports, for example, our cricket team, we have qualified for the international World Cup, they all learned cricket in Pakistan and went back ... our football team, the reason now we are champions of the South Asia, it was a good thing, one of the reasons was that two of our good players were from Norway, and from Germany, they were living in Norway and Germany, they were football players in their host countries, they are now members of the Afghan national team. And also the area of culture, music, a lot of good things are happening in Afghanistan because of the refugees went back to Afghanistan, they have the dual passport.

Agents of re-building states

Young refugees have been involved in higher roles in governance and international affairs transferring knowledge to their country:

I will give you the example of people who went back to Afghanistan and now they are attaining great achievements ... For example, some Afghans who have done their education here and have gone back to Afghanistan, they work as consultants for International aid Organisations like [naming an organisation]. They work with the Afghan government, so, there are a lot of success stories that people who have taken the knowledge from here to Afghanistan

Building bridges among nations

Some of the participants believed that they would help to build bridges among nations and countries. Answering the question of building bridges between countries, a participant replied:

Respondent: *Yes, completely, and I think, absolutely.*

Interviewer: *Building a new world? Do you think that is possible?*

Respondent: *Absolutely (PUNSS25).*

Integration through education

Education is the most successful vehicle for integrating these children into a country (PCSSS10).

This was the general attitude of the participants towards the impact of education on integration. More importantly, as a country, that seemed to be the best way we could help them.

... and without an education and the support to integrate into their community, they become more of a hardship for that community... that is my opinion (PSCJS33).

Interviewer: *As a country, how can we help them fulfil their aspirations?*

Respondent: *Integrate them into society. That is the best way we can help them. This should be done through education (PHCMP3, a manager, LA Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding Children).*

Lesson on 'how to be a citizen' of a country

First step of integration – education teaches them ‘how to be a citizen of a country’:

Education makes you learn not only the language of the country that you are living in, but you also learn how to be a citizen of that country, and therefore, how to be a successful part of that society, whether that means further study or eventual employment, which is the goal of most young people, and whether they need further study before they can gain employment is a different issue (PCCLM14).

Education, employment and social integration

I mean education and employment, they are basic needs, you need to be in one or the other, and they do really help with integration initially (PCSCN11, a programme coordinator).

The cohort of respondents (except one) agreed that there was a positive and straightforward relationship between education, employment and social integration.

....absolutely. I think if you want young people to be integrated into society that they are living in and you also want them at some future point to be in employment of some kind then it's

absolutely essential that we educate them, and I think the two issues of integration and employment go hand in hand (PCCLM14).

Education is an investment

In terms of whether this is a good use of money from the government's point of view, my personal opinion is that it is an excellent use of money because it is about what you will get in the future (PCCLM14).

Confidence, purpose and social connection

Education and employment help build successful lives and open up social connections:

I think for migrants of any age getting successful outcomes in terms of participation in their education and employment is often one of the key aspects of successful integration, for all sorts of reasons. First of all, having some kind of purpose in their lives, in terms of terms of confidence and being able to build a successful life. And also, in terms of the social aspects of integration, for young people being able to meet other young people (PKUAS26, an academic).

As a young research officer commented on integration with others:

...of course, if you had a job here, if you had steady educational opportunity then you are going to feel more integrated, you are going to meet people that you would not meet (PBGK21).

Integration ends ghettoisation

Some thought that integration would hinder ghettoisation:

In a country like this, which is very wealthy, obviously, if we leave them feeling rejected and therefore encourage ghettoisation, they make less of a contribution (PSTTC28).

As another participant pointed out, people want to contribute to the country or community they came into and education makes them thrive in those communities.

Opposite views on UASC integration into society

It is important to note that there were opposite views on UASC integration into society. In the view of a young British youth worker, it would be difficult for them:

I think it is difficult, because, I have been brought up around a certain way of life, you know what I mean, these young people can go and get a job but the life style so different to mine, where would they be educated on such a life style, it is something you brought up with, but, some of these young people who are new to the country, or to the area, they have not been brought up around it (PST 30).

As he further explained, refugee children would always tend to segregate themselves because of the 'refugee' label they carry with them:

I think , they are still segregated, I think, the classification of asylum seeker or refugee or whatever draw a line , not from my view, in their head, yeh (PSTB30)

Positive feelings for the country

Surely, more people in the world feel positively towards our little island the better it is ... (PIESJ13).

In the participants' view, there was a positive feeling towards the host country in many children's hearts, especially, if things were going well for them. As the above respondent continued:

...people who are educated in this country develop a sort of feeling for the country, you know, a positive attitude towards Britain, in this case.

Feeling of gratitude

Some participants, however, thought that they wanted to give something back as a gesture of gratitude to the country. One participant referred to the young people who she knew before (especially before some changes to immigration rules had taken place):

(Previous) young people are massively contributing, motivated, and grateful, they want to give something back, and they are good citizens' (POCES5, a manager, LA Child Education and Families).

As a Scottish participant claimed:

Participant: *They talk about how hard it is and how much work they have to put into, but, why are they doing it because we want to give something back to Scotland, we want to give something back to the UK.*

Researcher: *Is there a feeling of gratitude?*

Participant: *Absolutely, absolutely ((PCCLM14).*

In this context, it is worth understanding how satisfied the professionals are with their roles that help to achieve the above mentioned benefits, fulfilments and gratitude.

6.1.3 PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTION: ROLE, RESPONSIBILITY AND CHALLENGES

Professionals' role and responsibility

Firstly, the participants demonstrated their genuine dedication and compassion towards helping UASC to become successful individuals and productive citizens wherever they would choose to live. Secondly, two significant aspects seemed to define their service to these children; their recognition of the children and parent relationship – UASC as 'children' first and foremost, and themselves as their 'corporate parents'; and the self-evaluation of the meaning of their service.

UASC – children first and foremost

It is important to note that almost every practitioner tended to refer to UASC as 'children' or 'my children' showing a unique and clear recognition of who they cared for.

Some of them are teenagers but we call them as children, you know, they are legally children, they are still children (PKUAS26).

Practitioners as 'corporate parents'

... I always say if this would be good enough for your child then it is good enough. If it isn't then it is not good enough (PSTTC28, VHS).

Similarly, every participant was clear about the identity and responsibility of the role of a corporate parent, a person who treats the child in his or her care as their own. The majority of participants, however, were corporate parents themselves. The above Virtual Head of School (VHS) identified the challenges of his proactive role in finding the very best for UASC in his care:

In my role, these are children who we take into care, we take them into care because they have not got parents to look after them, so we as a local authority have taken over the role of a parent and it is very important that we think about what that really means... this is actually a proactive role, and where we seek to provide the very best possible support, and that's what the parents do. And I always in my job say if this would be good enough for your child then it is good enough. If it isn't then it is not good enough, and it is easy to lose sight of that and it is a very simple helpful challenge, it's one of the things that I refer back to in my own practice.

A college refugee coordinator on corporate parenting:

All agencies involved in the care of these children are part of the team looking after them, corporate parents. For example, social services, schools, foster care, all other authorities around this child, we corporate, we have to, we look after this child (PHSBB32).

Self-evaluation of professionals' role: do they achieve the objectives?

The participants contributed their fair share of direct and honest opinions on this subject. Their expression reflected varied sense of feelings, mainly, difficulties, anxieties, and barriers related to their respective roles. Although their dedication took them forward against all the barriers, the general attitude towards their success in meeting objectives was negative.

Morally indefensible role of managing risks

...all it demonstrates actually, what we are doing is managing the risk to ourselves. We can avoid being blamed for allowing the child to be harmed on our watch, but clearly not behaving like corporate parents... (PSTTC28, VHS).

As the participant further claimed, there was a difficulty in rationalising their decisions and possible failures in their own role in upholding the ethos of 'corporate parenting' and meeting their objectives. Based on his compelling self-evaluation, the respondent further explained that their role in general is an exercise of managing risk to themselves. Referring to an unaccompanied child's experience in a host country, (immigration rights and possible repatriation), he viewed the whole process as morally indefensible, and a huge waste of public money. The process in place would not secure the best outcome for UASC:

Well ... I think we have this problem that we are parents to this child, we support him through education, if you put aside the moral argument, you look at the pragmatics, you invest a huge amount on this persons education up to the age of whatever... and then all of a sudden, their immigration status is in doubt because they are going to be an adult, and their looked-after status ceases and then they might end up being forced to leave this country. As well as being morally indefensible, it's utterly pointless because actually, that demonstrates that what you done is not sought the best outcomes because this will not clearly secure the best outcome. Absolutely, nobody can argue that educating somebody to 17, 18 and sending them to a country that does not want them, where they in danger, will secure a good outcome. So, all it demonstrates actually what we are doing is managing the risk to ourselves. We can avoid being blamed for allowing the child to be harmed on our watch, but clearly not behaving like corporate parents.

Disillusionment with the role of self-protection

In this regard, as he claimed, he was not satisfied with his role as it was only a way of protecting his own self. Answering the question about the meaning of his statement and his role, he claimed:

If that is my job, then my job will become focused entirely on me, focused entirely on protecting myself. And if that's what I do and it proves that's what my job is about, no, I am not satisfied by that, and it's very very expensive, it is a huge waste of investment.

Professional role of self-satisfaction

Resonating with the above opinion, another respondent claimed that, sometimes, the key element of the professional role was self-fulfilment and it would affect the creation of appropriate interventions.

When they [UASC] are traumatised, unhappy and worried we just want to make ourselves feel better by giving them skills they just do not want to learn it at all, you know (POUMF38, a psychiatrist).

Not promoting children's best interests

Apart from the above views on their roles, there were many more challenges and limitations that hinder practitioners in achieving the objectives of delivering effective educational support to UASC. As a manager for corporate parenting who was mainly involved in UASC education planning in a local authority claimed:

This is a problem. We can't support them in a way to promote their best interest (POCES5).

Her views echoed the dissatisfaction held by the majority of the participants in the study.

6.1.4 EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Professionals' challenges and limitations seemed to be complex and multifaceted and in most cases, interrelated.

They can be analysed under three categories:

- Policy-related
- System-related
- Children-related

Policy-related barriers and limitations

Government policy planning

The research participants demonstrated their acute grasp of the role and responsibility of the government and its impact on UASC's education. While accepting the positive facts that make the

asylum system function in the UK, they did not hide their views on the predicaments of government role and policy planning.

In general, these children seemed to have been failed by the system and the majority of the respondents were not convinced about the children's future prospects and impact on society. As the Head of the EAL Department at a school claimed:

They punish children, government fail them very badly and these kids can never have stable life whether they are here or there, because of the government's actions we are missing a beneficial opportunity to build a multi-cultural society (PGSPU4).

According to him, as a society it was crucial to take responsible actions. Especially when they reached 18, their support system changed and there was nothing for them. They would become vulnerable, frustrated and helpless. It made them mentally unsettled and under that pressure, they tended to go underground. There were many reasons for unsuccessful policies, as discussed below.

Policy shifting

The main problem discussed was the impact of constantly changing policies across the board. Making policies in 'shifting sand' would have a negative impact on children's education and professional practice:

I think it is such a shifting policy scene, it is so tied, things like educational access and progress so tied to policy changes. You know recently with all the legal aids cut has been happening, that has massive implications for a lot of young people, so you are kind of focusing on one aspect of work but actually you can't ignore the fact that it is been massively affecting the whole system, which have implications on other aspects of young people's lives which then impact their educational progression (PRSNEB7, a programme Officer, NGO).

Immigration and education policies were the key elements of the policy planning discussion. There were robust views that explained both positive and negative aspects of both policy areas.

Positive factors: good civil society

Firstly, on a positive note, the UK was praised for having a good civil society and a good organisational structure in place in order to support asylum seekers. This was the stance taken by the officer representing an international refugee agency:

In this country, there is a very very strong civil society, and stakeholders, and NGOs and charities that support asylum seekers and refugees in term of their lives and their social circumstances (PUNSS25).

Immigration policy

Migration first and children second

However, as many respondents agreed, the whole system of policy and regulation did not seem to respect the notion of 'children first and immigration second'. In their view, the primary concern of the successive governments in general was immigration control, and their decisions had been based on the conception of 'immigration first and children second'. This was a breach of the UK's obligations to protect the child's best interests.

As the respondent explained:

....officially and formally, international law, and you know national law have obligations towards the children if and when they arrive in this soil and, if you're considering their best interest as the primary consideration, then they should be getting educated regardless of their immigration status, and I think, this whole phrase of 'child first migrant second' is not being met, it is very much 'migrant first child second'.

Stunting development of the youth of the world

According to her, this approach hampered these young people's development, who in her eyes were 'the youth of the world':

...and, I mean it is stunting young people's growth. I am sure you have heard 100s of stories of these young people that are here in such a limbo situation who can't do anything with their lives, and, how is that affecting, you know, just development of the youth of the world?

This was the general perception of the participants although they were sensitive to the country's right to control immigration. Many participant articulated their concerns and personal experiences (e.g. with the Home Office system) which reflected the failings of the immigration policymaking and its consequences.

Not found the 'happy medium'

Briefly, the country seemed to have not yet found the 'middle ground' or 'happy medium' between immigration and border control, and upholding their obligations to protect and provide welfare for these children:

I mean, UK has the right to control immigration and its borders but I think they have not yet found the happy medium between ensuring that children, regardless of whether or not they get returned ultimately because of an assessment of their situation, and in the meantime, they are allowed to develop as human beings. And, I think that is why we are trying to encourage the UK to find the ways that they can find that middle ground (PUNSS25).

Not fair and transparent system

In the view of other respondents, there were many factors that contributed to the situation. For instance, the Home Office operated a broken system that was not transparent, and it created a hostile environment for children who needed help and were in danger:

I think, that is a massive difficulty that we face as an organisation ... we work with the Home Office and officially, they have a hostile environment, they want to create a hostile environment, so they can limit immigration. I think whole asylum system is not fair and transparent (PBGK21).

Danger to the children

The system pushed them back to their traffickers when suddenly they were asked to go back after living in this country in most cases until the age of eighteen:

... when they see they might have to return, we lose touch with them and they might go back to their traffickers then, because they are afraid of being sent back ... they have no country to go back to, this is their country, you know.

No sense of social justice

Adding to this, another respondent pointed out that the Home Office lacked a sense of social justice:

I have worked with the Home Office. I think that generally we just think differently. I think the Home Office has a way and a responsibility of thinking that is a different way than people who want social justice (PSCJS33).

Home Office political agenda

Some of the participants believed that the immigration policy and border control measures had been driven by a political agenda as the governments wanted to be seen as strong on immigration. However, this approach had made UASC's lives difficult in this country:

I think that it is a political tool, I think, they want to look strong on immigration ... and I think all that leads to these massive difficulties for the children, and vulnerable people who are here already, and who are going to come here anyway ... if you look at the people that we work with some of the conditions they have to live in is just completely unacceptable... (PBGK21).

Children's limbo situation and education system

One of the consequences of the facts discussed above was the children's protracted state of limbo in the country due to unresolved visa status. Some respondents claimed that the government's

aim seemed to be deterring these children and young people from establishing their life here, to prevent their immigration claim becoming stronger.

I understand where the government is probably coming from ... they think that if we do not prevent these children from putting down enough ties that will give them the rights under article 8 of the European Convention of Human rights to stay here ... For example, when young people go to university or study they are inevitably building up a life here, you know, and that will inevitably strengthen their immigration status (PUNSS25)

How this decision affects children's education

As for the children, their limbo situation seemed to cause immense psychological distress and a sense of insecurity and fear about their future.

Children's distress

The majority of the participants expressed their dismay about their limbo situation and the waste of their young lives:

It massively affects their education, and then on top of that, so you have all of that and then you have the uncertainty about whether they are going to be allowed to stay in the UK, what's going to happen to their asylum claim, all those things on top of that, that is a huge amount to deal with for a young person, and so, some young people manage and some young people do not (PKUAS26).

Impact on professionals

Similarly, as many professionals claimed, they were also in a dire situation with their service plan and delivery. For instance:

These young people are in limbo with their visa status and it is not easy for us to plan our support service around their immigration issues, it is very difficult (POCES5).

As some professionals described, dealing with children's distress and sometimes their mental health problems, make them anxious and stressed as it put pressure on their work (e.g. PRSNEB7).

Education policy

Besides the immigration policies, according to the majority view, government policy planning regarding refugee education was deemed to be complicated, unfair and problematic for delivering a quality education system.

Complicated policy gaps

First, as a practitioner pointed out, there seemed to be complicated policy gaps in the education system because of the variety of children's groups involved and the negligence of local authorities regarding their education.

There are different groups of children, for example, children in need, looked after children, children supported by private foster care, so the education system has become complicated because of the different categories of refugee and UASC... local authorities sometimes neglect some kinds of children, even though the council knows they are in danger, they do not do anything (PCCW37, LA Community, Schools and Group Consultant).

Government's target- oriented policies

Another problem with the education policy seemed to be its target-oriented nature and UASC happened to be within the system. As an academic claimed:

I do not know whether you know that the whole education system became very much target focused and it is all target defending, so it is not targeted at unaccompanied but unaccompanied children are there in the system (PIESJ13).

As she further discussed, this was not appropriate for this particular group struggling with many difficulties.

Financing refugee education

Minimal educational provisions

Firstly, as those who were directly connected to education agreed, in general, the education services available for all asylum seeking and refugee children were minimal. Young people in particular seemed to have limited access to further education:

...and in terms of education, I think it is beyond basic services, it is very minimal and that is also applicable to children, so as you know, you know very well from the research you have been doing, I am sure, the issue around, for example, young people not having access to further education (PUNSS25).

Education policy as a deterrent tactic

More importantly, in many participants' view, government used education as a deterrent for the potential asylum seekers entering the UK. According to them, education policies seemed to have been designed to deter potential asylum seeking children's journey to the UK by prohibiting education opportunities for those who were here already. On the contrary, the government seemed

to argue that the measures were for curbing child trafficking. Some participants believed that there was a rationale behind the idea in terms of child protection.

I mean, there is a deterrent aspect in the asylum system and deterrence is a big debate... and also there is child protection concerns. The last thing they (the Home Office) want to do is to create a system here that facilitate and encourage them to go via these dangerous networks and trafficking to come here (PUNSS25).

However, the participant repeated that the tactics had grave effect on the development of these young people.

This was a controversial issue, which was brought to the fore by almost every participant in the study. For example, they commented on the policy on banning university tuition fees for asylum seeking children. There was a feeling of dissatisfaction with the illogical policy:

... So what the government actually think, and their internal rationale, what they do I could not comment on. But it's demonstrably illogical and demonstrably not focused on a child, it's focused on something else (PSTTC28).

This is a waste of young people's youth, it's causing them problems down the line as well' (PUNSS25).

Do deterrent tactics work?

Professionals rejected the higher education financial cuts as a failed tactic and they believed that UASC would always come to the UK and it would always be a challenge to educate them. There were many views worth noting. For instance, according to the policy advisor on UASC for a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB):

The government does not want to spend money on welfare of unaccompanied children because of the current financial situation and austerity measures... it does not want to make education easily accessible as it will be a pull factor that attracts more unaccompanied asylum seekers... now the numbers are dropping significantly...but this is not because of the UK initiatives. The main factor is Europe's policies aimed at curbing asylum seekers... but, unaccompanied children seeking asylum will always be there ... they will always come and you can't stop it ... it will always be a challenge.

Rejection from a wealthy country

As one practitioner claimed, the real deterrents were their risky journeys, rather than rejection by a wealthy country such as the UK:

I also think probably, that leaving your own home your family and the risk of the journey are deterrents in themselves without them knowing that you will be at risk of further rejection or neglect by an incredibly wealthy country when you get there (PRSEB7).

Rich and poor gap and asylum seeking

According to some, as long as the gulf between the rich and poor countries in the world exists and as long as countries like the UK do not help to alleviate poverty, there would always be world unrest, war and movement of people:

...as long as there are rich countries and poor countries an depressive countries, like people from Eritrea, things that they have escaped, it is a horrendous place, you know the government is really awful ... so there is always going to be war, there is always going to be inequality, there is always going to be movement of people (PCSCN11).

Wrong education policies of past governments

According to a specific view, this was a historic mistake. Introducing higher tuition fees for foreign students in the UK was a mistake made by a past government at a time when the country actually needed people from overseas:

But, this whole thing about people from overseas, not just asylum seekers, all started from ...[referring to a past government] like almost every bad thing, when ... raised the tuition fees for people from overseas, enormously, of course, which I think was very bad mistake, you know, our universities need people to come from overseas (PIESJ13).

Unlawful education policy

It was not only unfair but also seemed unlawful, as a lawyer believed:

Asylum seeking young people, I think, they should see asylum seeking young people as potentially refugee children, right, and therefore, they should have the same rights as native British children to education, further education and higher education, the government position is actually unlawful, that is my view (PYPPJA23).

Cutting tuition fees for higher education

Firstly, it should be noted that, as some participants claimed, it was a myth to believe that there was a huge number of UASC or other asylum seeking children who are able to university or who want to go to university.

Actually, the idea as well that we have huge numbers of young people that are going to go to university is not true, we don't, because as we know, accessing higher education is very very difficult and not all young people can do it and neither do all young people want it (PCCLM14).

Moreover, for most of them, their immigration status would become a barrier to entering higher education:

Bearing in mind newcomers... the vast majority of them are not going to go to higher education. The vast majority who get DL will be refused at 18. Very few of them are given five years [to stay in the country] (POCES5).

Implications for children and professionals

There were many concerns about the implications for both children and service providers. As a respondent felt, preventing their educational development make them more isolated and deprived:

I feel that when you lock young people out of education through these kinds of rules what you do is actually you increase their isolation, and you increase their deprivation because when they cannot go, when they cannot access basically other routes, they are basically, their lives are on hold which is not fair (PYPPJA23).

One participant had a strong vision of giving this small number of young people higher education and using their skills to fill the skill gap in the country, releasing their full potential to contribute to society:

What do we want these young people to do? If we deny this group of young children higher education what would we offer them, how can they reach their full potential, because not every young person will go to university, those who can go to university, why would you not allow them to go to university? ... then what you have is a group of young people who are educated to the highest level they can be and therefore can actually start to contribute to society (PCCLM14).

An illogical step puts children in 'no man's land'

As a senior local authority officer who was admired as an architect of successful educational programmes argued, preventing UASC from accessing university was illogical.

I do not know that is right or wrong (cutting higher education grants), there is no logic on that. Previous young people are massively contributing, motivated, and grateful, they want to give something back, they are good citizens. I know that they are doing well, contributing here and there and professionals. Cutting educational support and funds ... It is not a great argument (POCES5).

As she further described, when the opportunity was taken from them, they remained a directionless and vulnerable group, who were, in her words, in "no man's land":

Under the old provision before 2007, we had lots of people go to university. Some of them have gone back, done a bit of both, it is sensible way. They can invest in the system, pay back their loans, and contribute to this country and their country if they so wish. Under the new system barely anything is going to go well... so... they are in a very odd place, where they are going to be in no man's land. They can't really invest here.

However, the majority of them who had a good level of education before they came to the UK wanted to go into higher education and achieve career success to the highest possible level. But, it was a very limited number who would have the right to pursue higher education because of their immigration status.

The drain on resources and road to insanity

In her view, not only the young people's lives were in misery and at risk of being forced into a shady existence, but also they had become a drain on public finances.

They are completely unable to do anything, they are doing nothing, contributing nothing, we pay for them, they are drain on resources, lonely and they can't contribute and completely insane. They get unwell, going underground, working illegally. This is very unsatisfactory for the majority of the cohort, just complete insanity to see the change of their mental health situation.

Not protecting children's best interest and professionals' best practice

As many professionals pointed out, the whole situation was going against the principle of protecting children's best interest and professionals' best practice:

As the above respondent claimed:

This is a problem. We cannot support them in a way to promote their best interest (POCES5).

Similarly, the policy changes had made life difficult not only for the children, but also for professionals in their roles:

It is a difficult situation and relationship for case managers who support this cohort; it is a harder place to be for everybody (POCES5).

As agreed by all the respondents, there has been an inevitable negative impact of policy decisions on their professional roles. Their attempts to deliver effective services were said to be suffering from financial and regulatory constraints (e.g. issues related to budgetary plans, immigration and legal matters).

Children's negative attitude towards the country

This frustration and sense of failure could become anger and hatred as some of the practitioners warned. They might feel revengeful and could fall prey to extremist activities in their home countries, especially if the government repatriated young people with a failed sentiment:

If the government could not understand or think of the future benefits, it could be a problem in the future for everybody. These children can hide here or fall into wrong hands. If they go back (under volunteer repatriation) sometimes they might go back with anger, frustration and hatred towards the country... (PGSPU4, Head of the EAL Department).

Government policy and education funding

The policy had serious implications for local authority finances.

Referring to her academic work and her warning to the government about the implications, a participant expressed her strong opposition to this unfair government policy on funding cuts in UASC higher education:

Of course, I think, the government policy is completely wrong, and I do not think it should be up to the LAs at all in fact, quite a long time ago, I wrote a chapter in a book and pointed out that if the same trend continues, there will be more and more demand on the LAs for finance to send asylum seekers to university, because they want to go and they are qualified to go and they ought to be enabled to go, and that it was unfair that they should come on LAs because asylum seekers as you know are concentrated in particular places, Kent, particularly, and Croydon, Hillingdon (PIESJ13).

Central government funding system is key

In her opinion, the central government should fund higher education for refugees. This view was supported by almost all the other participants, as central government should play a responsible role in refugee education:

It is completely unfair, so I suggested, there should be a central government fund, for funding higher education, for immigrants and asylum seekers

Implications of funding cuts in education service in general

This appeared to be one of the most difficult situations facing the participants when planning educational provisions for UASC. Their narratives were rich in funding related discrepancies, scenarios and problems that failed looked-after children in general and asylum seeking children in particular.

Restriction on education service providers

For example, as many participants explained, there were restrictions on the education system that were related to funding arrangements, even though this might not be discriminatory but it had become policy.

They do struggle with a lot of decisions on how they view or how they engage these young people as well... but it is not just for unaccompanied children though, it is for everybody, so it is not like a discriminatory policy, it is a policy (PIESJ13).

As some pointed out, education providers had to meet targets, such as children's attendance at college, school and at exams in order to receive funding. This was a challenge for the organisations when working with a group like UASC who were struggling with attendance and passing exams because their lives were difficult.

Curbing educational support services

Moreover, because of limited funds, some of the services provided by charitable organisations needed to be restricted at the expense of these children's education.

Cutting bursaries

The discrepancies related to the gap in Pupil Premium bursary are worth discussing. As some respondents claimed, although the Pupil Premium and PPP Plus (Pupil Premium Plus) bursary system is meant to help children up to the end of year 11, it does not cover the children who continue education until the age of 18 (according to the extended school age regulations that came into effect in 2015).

The PUPIL PREMIUM would be distributed according to the plan in the PEP [Personal Education Plan]. This takes the child currently through the end of year 11. Because, we do have an issue about the fact that we are raising the participation age right through to 18, but 2015 as you know and yet the PUPIL PREMIUM will currently stop at the year of 11 and not the end of the year 13.

So, the first point is, yes, the PEP is powerful and important, particularly, it links to the PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS. But the fact that the PEP and the PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS cease the end of the year 11, there is a gap for year 12 and 13, for your 16 to 18 year olds (PSTTC28.)

Inadequate level of funding for post-16 pupils

Furthermore, even though there were other funding opportunities available, they did not cover the full range of post-16 provisions because some courses would not qualify for bursaries as the funding was for the child not for the provider. As the respondent further clarified:

Though there are other sources of funding that will take over because they retain the bursary for children in full-time education, that same money is not available for the full range of post-16 provision. Say for example, some training courses do not attract the bursary. So young people who need some funding do not get it. And, the funding is there for the child not to the provider.

Moreover, the annual bursary of £1,200 was meant to support them to live independently, but it seemed inadequate for meeting all their needs:

The child has a right to the bursary to enable them to live independently. Theoretically, it's only 1,200 pounds a year, so isn't enough to actually cover everything anyway. 1,200 pounds, this is the bursary, for year 12 and year 13 in full-time education.

Implications for school departments

Once you lose your structure in society, it is very hard to get it back (PGSPU4).

As this EAL coordinator explained, the main problem was the cuts to school budgets and he was concerned about the implications for the future of refugee children's education. He explained the strain put on his EAL department work and also the impact of cutting the EMAS (Ethnic Minority Achievement Service) in 2011 on children. Curbing the SEN (Special Education Needs) budget also had a colossal impact on children, such as UASC who need extra support.

More importantly, teachers leaving the profession, and recruiting and retaining specially trained teachers (e.g. in maths, IT and science) were other problems faced by educational institutions across the board. There seemed to be no coherent approach to addressing these problems.

Staff changing, teachers are leaving, these things are affecting the children. There are no experienced teachers, most of them are leaving, some schools replace EAL teachers with TS (Teaching Assistants), this is another gap. Small schools do not have all the facilities, there is no coherent approach, this is the problem (PCCW37).

Regional policy variations in the country

Especially, those who represented Scotland in the study discussed the educational and other policy differences in the subject area as discussed in previous chapters. However, the notable variation discussed was the vision of policy planning between the two countries. As an academic who was an advisor to the parliamentary committee for UASC described, the Scottish system seemed to have a long-term planning strategy and vision for educating unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

I think, the difference is that Scotland has more long-term education plans for these children than we have in England (PBURK9).

The Scottish Guardianship service for UASC was also seen as a successful and essential service by many participants in the study.

Public perception and the role of media

You know, people have this perception that England is overrun with immigrants. Of course, as you know, it is total nonsense... the reason why there is such anti-immigrant feeling is because of the government policy... I think, we should try to educate all these young people, actually, it is a very small number... (PIESJ13).

Most participants expressed their negative views especially on public perception and disquiet about immigration. As an officer added, there was always a ripple effect in society when the authorities tried to explore the welfare arrangements for refugees:

When they explore that, it creates huge ripples in the communities of this country (PUNSS25).

As stated previously, media intrusion supported by the political agenda seemed to have a negative influence on the somewhat insular public view about asylum seekers in general.

Exactly, all the political parties and public opinion is currently kind of against the immigration, unfortunately... I think it is also because of the media which is pushed by the political agenda, which makes people think there are so many more asylum seekers and refugees than there are and that is not the truth (PBGK21).

However, most participants believed that public attitude might change if they became aware of these children's situations. As the above respondent believed:

I think, if the public is more aware of that (the conditions children were in) hopefully, I think that they would move towards the children's right side as well.

For some, the country needs immigrants:

But, I really do believe that this country actually needs immigrants, there aren't people qualified to do all the jobs that need doing or willing to do (PCSSS10).

Views on contribution of immigrants

Moreover, it was important to note a young British youth worker's argument about the country's resistance to educating immigrants, and his personal desire to educate people:

Personally, I think, if it was up to me I would open education to anybody... (PSTB30).

I think it is 70s and 80s we went to places and did a recruitment drive, telling them we provide you with jobs ... now it is like, wow, wow, this is our money, we do not want to educate other people, we got people who need jobs over here ... I think, it is a bit contradictory, for me, you should offer education, you should never deprive somebody of education.

He appreciated the contribution of immigrants:

...even though people will view in terms of this is our country, we should spend our money what is the tax payers in educating people from overseas. These people from overseas who play a massive part in our society ,for example, the doctors from Pakistan or wherever that will save thousands of British lives, so, these people may have been educated in this country, if we never let them have that opportunities, our society would slip down a bit.

System related challenges and limitations

System-related problems were mainly twofold: first, the problems relating to secondary and further education system, and second, practitioner-related problems. Practitioners appropriately focused their discussion on secondary, higher and further education systems in the UK because the young asylum seeking participants in the study belonged to the 16-24 age range. They directed their comments at the shortfalls of these systems and their impact on UASC in particular and British children in general.

General perceptions

Negative views

Primarily, both professional and academic participants who possessed a wealth of experience in the education system in the country believed that, in general, the secondary and post-secondary education system in the UK was not fit for purpose. In particular, they viewed the system as not capable of adapting to meet the needs of those who come from outside. The following is an academic's stance on the non-adaptive secondary education system that failed all children:

Interviewer: As a renowned academic in the education of children in care, what is your perception of the education system? Does it meet the needs of these children?

Respondent: No, not at all. I mean the odd one, yes. You know, in general, no. It is not adapted to individuals with different biographical disadvantages of different kinds. It is not adapted to English children either, British children. But it is even less adapted to children coming

from abroad, immigrants, I mean, I think a lot of British schools just write them off – children who did not speak fluent English when they arrived (PIESJ13).

Secondary education system and curriculum

The participants also expressed their views on the lack of breadth and depth of the secondary education curriculum, and how it needed to be enriched, especially, with vocational educational pathways for all children.

There ought to be a breath, shouldn't there, particularly, actually, now we are going to extend the education to 18, somewhere between 14 and 18 everybody could fit in and should fit in a chunk of vocational learning, I think for asylum seekers, it is not that we should do something radically different (PSTC28).

Reinforcing these views, some of the participants pointed out the dire need for curriculum change, especially modernising it and adding some vocational educational methods. This was well-discussed by a respondent who had initiated work-based and vocational educational programmes for ethnic minority children in the UK, and in Afghanistan:

Our secondary education system needs a total restructuring. It needs more vocational education opportunities (PAACB15).

Upper secondary and Further Education (FE) system

No proper pathway

Most crucially, the system was thought to be failing in transforming young adults from secondary education to successful further education and career paths.

School provides good structured system until they are 16. However, when they leave school, they do not have an effective progression path to vocational education or to employment (PGSPU4).

The view held by a head of the EAL department in a secondary (and sixth form) school reflects the consensus expressed by the other respondents. In their view, the further education system had been incoherent and weak.

Chop and change system of post-16 vocational education

As some believed, the system of chopping and changing the process of decision making on vocational education had not been helpful. It had failed children in many different ways. As a professional claimed:

I think, in general, how we do education in this country, we have, this is a more general issue, we are so chopped and changed in terms of what we want to do in vocational education in year 9 onwards, that the confidence in the qualifications has been undermined, and the understanding of their significance has been undermined, and the relationship therefore with the work place has been undermined (PSTTC28).

Incoherent upper secondary education and unaccompanied asylum seeking children

Resonating with the above opinion, a participant pointed out that the incoherent system of upper secondary education failed young people in general in engaging them in appropriate courses and UASC were no exception:

...because there are a lot of colleges as you know which offer hundreds and hundreds of qualifications and courses, because, in this country we do not have a coherent system of upper secondary education, it is very very hard for any young people, particularly these young people, to make good choices (PIESJ13).

Education, social class and UASC

Continuing the argument, the respondent also unhesitatingly attributed the educational failures of UASC to the social class division in British society, especially in children's educational decision making:

Middle class children simply stay in school until they're 18, until their A levels and then they either go to university or they will go and do some other kind of training or whatever, you know, they do not have to make a decision at 16 anyway really the system carries them along.

You know, middle class people, especially academics, they know their way around the system and what they absolutely, invariably, advise their children is to keep your options open.

As she said, UASC's lack of class and parental guidance prevent them from pursuing a proper path of education.

Denying the opportunity for formal education

Normally, they would not be encouraged to stay in school, instead, they would be given poor guidance and sent to FE colleges, according to the respondent:

These young people are always sent off to FE colleges, they very rarely stay in schools for the sixth form ... and so they've got this enormous number of courses that they can choose between and very poor vocational guidance, because of the advice.

She strongly opposed the idea of not giving them the opportunities to be at school, which would give them a good basis, rather than doing a FE course:

They do not have to be at FE colleges, they could be in school. 16 to 18, 16 to 19, you could be at school, it is just an assumption that they should go to an FE college after 16, it is not they have to, no, nothing like that...

Denying better career path

You could come as an immigrant at 15 and you could go to school and do your A Levels, which is going to give you much better basis for the future than going to an FE college and doing hairdressing, in my opinion.

School system: limitations and challenges

In addition, the study participants voiced their opinions on the challenges related to the school and college education structure, type of courses, professional attitude and limitations.

Limited school and college places

It is quite difficult to get access into that mainstream education (PKUAS26).

Firstly, finding school or college places for UASC was one of the significant problems highlighted by the practitioners. Almost every respondent agreed that there was a scarcity of places. Especially, those who arrived out of the school cycle said that they had a long waiting time to enter a school or a college in most regions in the country. However, there were many different views of this problem. Firstly, it was the problem of UASC's arrival out of the school cycle:

It is very difficult to get schools places for 14-15-16 year olds. Most of them come outside school cycle, there are no school places. Especially key stage 4 is the difficult level for getting into mainstream schools. Mainly, these children have language issues and some have not been to school at all

Denying school places and problems with alternative options

Some professionals claimed that school denied places for UASC and instead they placed them in other courses such as ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) in colleges. Moreover, the children were also placed with hard-to-manage British young groups:

Ok, I am going to go from secondary level, because that is my experience, so, one of the things is that it is quite difficult to get UASC into schools, and especially a lot of our young people arrive at that kind of age, 15. So, if they are year 10 or year 11, some boroughs say that we're not to have them in schools at all, they are going to put them in an alternative provision, and the

alternative provision quite often is ESOL or some kind of provision which is actually there for young people who really struggled in mainstream schools, English young people, so, there might be kids who are being excluded, or there might be poor behaviour in the school or, you know (PSCCK20).

Even in Scotland, there were long waiting lists for college places:

OK, the best they can hope for, during the asylum process, if they needed to do my programme, they get a college place, but, there is up to a two year waiting list in Scotland for a college place (PBRCMR36, a programme officer, NGO).

Issues with league tables

Some professionals thought that some schools were reluctant to take UASC because of the possible negative impact on their league tables.

...school admission, some schools think if they take a young person who has a different language they are going to get poorer exam results than if they were English, because of all these school ratings, and league table, they do not want to take them (PSCCK20).

As the professionals explained, many UASC would follow intervention programmes delivered by voluntary organisations until college places became available. Most of the respondents attributed the problem of school places to many factors such as funding, shortage of teaching staff, inadequate student numbers and so on.

Finite resources infringe right to school places

Interviewer: *What are the barriers to accessing education in the UK?*

Respondent: *There are quite a lot of barriers, the barriers generally are the number of spaces for children, I think generally in the UK, and in Scotland (PCCLM14).*

As the professional further explained:

My experience is that if a young person is at school age, up to the age of about maybe 14 or 15 and then they will get a place in school, once he become 16, if their language level does not allow them to take part in what is going on at school, then there is no provision for them, so, the only provision would be college, and then, that comes down to how many spaces we have in college, and how many we can accommodate from that particular group of young people.

Interviewer: *Do you think, if we could we should let them be at school?*

Respondent: *I think that children need to be at school, absolutely, I think, the difficulty with school is there are not the resources in school to support the language learning that needs to have before you can access any other part of curriculum.*

As she explained, schools did not have resources or expertise to help these children, especially with their language, to follow core subjects, such as maths or the full curriculum.

Unable to provide support with learning

For example, we have young people who want to study maths. Maths is a core skill, the problem with maths is the lower the level of maths the more language there is around it, if you do not have the ability in that language you can't access maths, because, the curriculum is made for native speakers. If you do not have the language level that allows you to access the curriculum, you can't learn all those other subjects, and schools do not have either the resources or the expertise to teach those different language levels, they may have support staff, and they may have a unit for second language learners that is an initial thing, that happens when you are looking at accessing big curriculum, particularly as the young people get older, the age of 16 17, it is almost impossible.

Interviewer: *If you could, you would keep them, but it is impossible?*

Respondent: *It is impossible because of resources and expertise, I think*

School attitude, structure and efficiency

The majority of the participants, however, expressed rather negative views about the education provision and its impact on UASC education and achievement.

Negative attitude towards UASC

Especially, the education models adopted by local authorities and schools seemed to be negative and the children were seen as 'a problem' and the 'can do' approach was not promoted:

There is a lot of prejudices and stereotyping – I mean, promote resilience, rather than to be looking all the time at seeing them as a problem, I think it is very important to adopt a strength perspective, not a deficit perspective. So to look for what the child or the young person can do and not for what they can't do. You understand.

As another respondent claimed:

...Schools are a bit, woo, woo... can't do this can't do that, and actually when they have somebody done actually incredibly well woo ah ... yes, yes, you know what I mean? (PSCDW19, a VHS).

School attitude and inappropriate courses

According to their opinion, this attitude led them to place UASC in inappropriate courses and levels, despite some practitioners' efforts to find the right courses. However, in most cases, they were left with no choice except sending UASC to other areas/LAs where there were suitable courses available. As a respondent described, the main reason for this situation was the general assumption that these children are not of high intelligence.

A lot of them found that they are not available in where they are, where they are living. So, particularly, the particular complaints that I heard is about the level, and that it is simply assumed that they are people of not very high intelligence and so they are putting at classes that inappropriate level, and that happens very often (PIESJ13).

Practitioners' skills and limitations

Although the corporate parents seemed to provide an effective service to these children, there were some shortcomings in their roles. For instance, as some respondents pointed out, social workers have to be more persuasive in finding school places. A practitioner described that efforts were 'worth fighting for' (PSCCK20).

Others claimed that teachers' attitudes were not favourable either:

...a lot of teachers do not like the students who could think for themselves, they do not like to be questioned, do they?

And also they seemed to have low expectations of these children and label them as difficult children (e.g., PCCW37).

Lack of culturally relevant practices

Some practitioners themselves claimed that they needed more training and awareness of these children for instance, about their cultural practices, life style and so on in order to plan services. For instance, one of the youth workers (the female participant) shared her experience in making wrong training events without knowing refugee children's cultural background. She regretted asking an Afghan young man to cook his own meals in her life style and health training event being unaware of his culture(where cooking is a traditional role of a woman). She felt that she needed more cultural awareness training to fulfil her role:

In his culture, he was saying 'we do not cook , because it is all made, the females cook' and that is a bit of a barrier for me because I thought was insulting him to get him involve in this activity ... that is why we need more cultural awareness, don't we? We need a lot of research into their background where they come from ...(PSTN29)

Joined-up thinking of professionals and institutions

Some respondents pointed out the lack of collaboration between authorities, organisations, and officials.

We try to get social workers and educational institutions together as it's important if they work together (PCCW37).

There is a gap in joined-up thinking in the system (PCSA34).

However, some respondents claimed that they work in good partnership.

As for other regions, for instance, in Scotland the practitioners seemed to have a more cordial relationship among agencies and authorities.

There is a smaller number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, and there is better cooperation between agencies, and that includes the Home Office , we are I think, quite a lot more cordial with the Home Offices than in England, I think , there is two ways to looking at it, I think, the professionals who work in Scotland, are more cordial and there is more of an effort to find a solution for young people (PYPPJA23)

Standard, effectiveness and achievement of education providers

This seemed to be a complex subject. While attempting to give fair conviction, the respondents focused on specific aspects of the delivery of education, such as teaching facilities, delivery and effectiveness of courses, and professional competence. The opinions remained divided as some were satisfied with the courses, but agreed that there were serious limitations to be addressed.

Views about the education delivery appeared to be divided because of the competence of school and colleges. For instance, good schools seemed to be satisfied with their courses.

I am happy with the course we offer (PHSBB32).

Firstly, the respondents generally believed in the success of their education provision, and talked proudly and confidently about the achievements of UASC. They were attached to highly performing institutions with a good Ofsted rating which were delivering successful courses for

UASC. However, they did not deny the difficulties and gave explicit views about the shortcomings that existed within their school and college system.

Weak and unadoptable school structure

Some participants identified the level of performance of schools with the number of UASC they hosted. For instance, as they explained, schools with a higher number of UASC would successfully deliver good education under a good structure and with efficient teachers as opposed to schools with a lesser number of UASC:

If I just focus on the education issues, for our unaccompanied asylum seekers the obvious big issue is the language barrier and it varies in terms of how well it's addressed, so probably, there are settings where they have a larger number of unaccompanied asylum seekers or people whose first language is not English and they are quite good at absorbing and supporting these children, so we have a secondary school ... [name of the Academy] which has got dedicated member of staff who works with the children with English as the second language and so they are very adept at supporting these children, and other schools are much much more isolated, that there might be only a few children and not have good system in place (PSTTC28).

As the professional further said, this could result in UASC being in a disadvantaged situation:

...and there are cases therefore where people are doing courses that are below their level of ability because of the way that the courses are structured.

This factor also appeared to be related to the evaluation and assessment of UASC by the schools in the first place.

Issues with initial evaluation and assessment of performance

A considerable number of participants seemed to hold more pessimistic views about these issues except a few professionals who were satisfied with or neutral about both the initial evaluation of children's abilities and the method of assessment of their performance. Being positive, a participant from a secondary school declared:

We have a very good system of evaluation and assessment in place' (PGSPU4). He also sent a detailed assessment procedure of his department to the researcher after the interview.

Assessment by status not by ability

On the contrary, some claimed that these children were assessed by their status but not by their ability by educational institutions.

Well, I think, it is that they do not do proper assessment. They just categorise them by their status instead of by their individual ability (PIESJ13).

Placing UASC with inappropriate groups

Furthermore, as some participants pointed out, as with any other children, UASC's abilities vary, for instance, even though most of them do not have English language skills, they may be good at other subjects such as maths, IT, etc. or possess other skills. The problem was that, in a practitioner's view, it was improper and unfair to categorise them as weak and put them in unsuitable classes, for instance, in some cases, with those who have behavioural problems.

This really doesn't happen in this school, I am talking about different schools, where they put them in classes with children with behavioural issues, just because their level is low, their level is low because they do not speak English (PHSBB32).

As she accepted, though, some asylum seeking children seemed to have behavioural problems and different needs. In her view, those matters should be solved separately (without them being placed with children who had other behaviour problems).

Interviewer: *Do you dislike putting them together?*

Respondent: *Of course, asylum seekers do have behavioural issues, they also have their own needs, but these issues have to be tackled in a different way,*

Recognising individual needs and giving the right support

As professionals agreed, evaluation should be aimed at recognising individual needs and catering for that. Some were pleased with their well-planned system in their institutions to deliver the right support. In addition, as the above respondent believed, their motive was to:

We need to make sure that we have to put them in the right group, with right teachers to support in classes.

Having said that, they were also aware that most institutions were not able to give the right support due to variety of reasons such as financial constraints, teacher shortages and so on.

UASC need tailor-made one-to-one support

Some professionals thought that an asylum seeking child or young person should be given the tailor-made specific individual support that they needed. Only some schools had this support in place, especially, the schools that topped the league table. As the refugee coordinator of such a school where children speak 70 languages claimed:

Each year group will have one-to-one or small group for beginners, we tailor a timetable around this child, sometimes it is one-to-one, depending on how many we have at the time, sometimes it is with a few, two or three (PHSBB32).

However, as she said, not every school had these facilities in place.

Measurement of performance

Although almost every practitioner in the study admired these children's motivation, skills and achievements, some of the participants seemed to question the appropriateness of performance measurements. Relying on such measures may narrow their learning opportunities and the opportunity to realise their full potentials. For instance, as one participant pointed out, UASC's exam results should not be the major determinant of measuring their intelligence and skills. Test scores may not gauge their real intellect or other skills. More importantly, they thought that it was not fair on asylum seeking children, to be assessed according to the same criteria as native children who have had structural education all their life.

Their performance should not be compared with that of the British children who had been in well-structured education system. Whereas, the majority of UASC have not had any prior education, except a few who had been up to primary school level or in rare cases, up to secondary level. In this context, as some of the respondents pointed out, given the educational background and the challenges they had to overcome in a structured British education system within a strict time period, their achievement or results needed to be evaluated fairly.

Teaching quality

Firstly, the respondents were not in doubt about the importance of teaching UASC English language, maths and science for their future career progress. The children would have different levels of knowledge according to their past educational experience.

As a respondent claimed:

If you have a young person who comes into this country as a refugee and their level of language is at what we call at ESOL Upper Intermediate, then it is very likely that they can access most of the curriculum in schools. If their language level is below that which is the majority of young refugees they won't be able to access those subject (PSCKK20).

Another participant commented on past educational experience:

... this is my experience, with previous education in their own country, which means, the child does have education, and he could be very good at maths, he could be very good at science, just the language is the barrier (PCSPE2, Coordinator, Education advocacy service, NGO).

English language education

Their focus was mainly on English language education. Besides the usefulness of the subject, those who had expertise especially in the area of education expressed the inadequacy, unavailability, weaknesses and flaws of English language education and its impact on these children and young people.

Inadequacy in English language Education: Teaching 'tourist English'

The following view came from a respondent who had experienced the complaints and frustrations of UASC about English language teaching. In her view, the language education was basic and not fit for those who needed more advanced knowledge to pursue post-16 education:

We do not have very good language tuition, and especially what I heard from young people who come already with quite a good basic secondary education, which some of them do, they want to do the higher technical kind of education and they have great difficulty in learning English at the level that they need to pursue their education beyond 16, because the English language tuition is very basic, obviously, it is very basic, it is designed to enable people to integrate for their everyday lives, you know, things they need for, like, usual things, like tourists do, like shopping, ordering food, this and that, but that is not what they need, because they need much more advanced vocabulary and grammar to pursue further and higher education., at the level which they might well be qualified before from their home country (PIESJ13).

Not enough English education in schools

As a respondent claimed, it was not the college courses but the language education in schools that was inadequate:

I mean, the college programme's actually are quite good, so I think it is not the bad situation what we have, good, I think the one at schools they do not do enough English language instruction so the students do no learn English very quickly, that is a bit of a shame (PSTCR27, College Student Mentor).

And as discussed previously, when the appropriate courses were not available in their locality, the children had been assigned to classes that did not match their levels.

Inappropriate course and education structure

There seemed to be many factors responsible for unsuitable course structures, among which the availability of time, lack of alternative accreditation, limited course options, and imbalanced course structures were the most significant.

UASC unrealistic time period

Firstly, the time frame of UASC education was not realistic. In some respondents' view, they would not be able to learn proper English or any other subject within their limited time in the UK (in some cases) and their limited education qualifications would also be a barrier.

Replying to the question about English language acquisition, one participant said:

You know that is not something you can teach them when they arrive at 16, it is not something you can teach by the time they are 18, you know, they need to learn literacy, that takes a long long time, they are learning literacy not even in their own language, you know, all those skills take a long time to learn you can't learn to become an administrator if you are illiterate and you arrive at 16, there is no way, it takes much longer, and at 18 they are sent back, so, that is not realistic, so, it is not about the education provision, it is about that it is not realistic time frame to achieve that (PSCCK20).

Lack of alternative accreditation options

As some viewed, there should be an accreditation option in schools for those children who are struggling with GCSE English. However, school did not seem to offer that due to their unawareness of what to do and the lack of teaching staff. As the above participant noted:

So the next problem is, in schools as well, with English, particularly, some young people need alternative accreditation, not the GCSE, because it is much harder for a young person who does not have English as a first language to get GCSE English, so if they are not going to get a decent grade, ideally, it is better for them to take alternative accreditation, preferably, an ESOL qualification within the school. Quite often that does not happen. Schools are just not aware what to do, if we suggest, you know, this accreditation or this one or this one, they then say, quite often, there is nobody at school that can teach that (PSCDW19).

Limited education options available

As many participants noted, schools did not have enough education options available for UASC who already possessed good education qualifications even though their English language skills were limited. Schools, however, would not consider their education levels and not provide an alternative pathway to continue their level of education similar to GCSE level:

... also, a lot of our young people have had full form of school in their first countries, a lot of Albanians have been well educated up to the point they left, and just because they have got weaker English than an English young person at year 10 they are not taken into school, but what we say is the language comes very quickly with support and give them the opportunity to get some exams and some qualifications, that it is going to recognise and reflex the whole nine years of schooling that

they had in Albania, because if they do not get that chance, they can't go to do GCSE programmes in colleges, they do not exist, they only exist as reset programmes that people that have already taken, and not got good results. There are some individual GCSEs offers like, you can go and do evening class GCSE English or they can do an evening class GCSE Maths but, that is only really two subjects, as far as I know there are not many GCSEs offered (PSCKK2).

Imbalanced course structures: ESOL

This was concerning, especially, the type of modelling and delivering of ESOL courses in particular. Some respondents were not overly satisfied with the contents, length and planning of the courses, as they believed that ESOL courses were not well planned and the outcome was not impressive.

Too much English

They can go on to courses that they really do want to do rather than just get stuck with more English, more English and more English (PSCKK20).

Most participants who were directly connected to UASC education were concerned about this factor. Education institutions tried to put too much emphasis on language skills and it was not the way forward. Many of them claimed that it wasted children's age and time, and more crucially, they would be bored and lose interest altogether. Instead, as some of the participants suggested, these young people could do something better with their time and skills, if they had already had some education.

If they come in Year 12, hundred percent of them are put on an ESOL because they do need it, but, it does take them 4 years to get to a point where they can do anything else meaningful. You know what I mean? (PSTCR27).

ESOL course makes them isolated from British society

Although learning English was a crucial part of UASC education, some professionals questioned its impact on their social connection with their young native British peers. This could not be a preferable way to improve UASC social and cultural integration:

I think, sometimes 'yes' ESOL courses are really important to new people to learn English, I think, they also need to have opportunities to meet other young people, you know, the UK born young people, people from different backgrounds, because what sometimes happens they are only meeting other young people who are migrants and therefore, feeling quite separate from British young people, so much of it, you know, learning how, the so-called culture, and you know, young person's culture here and how it works and so much of that through friendships and networks (PKUAS26).

Availability of ESOL course

As some academics believed, the progression with ESOL courses was slow because it was difficult to get places on more advanced courses:

I think, I mean, one of the main aspects of learning English, you know, is that being able to progress from the basic ESOL courses up to more advanced ones, I know, sometimes it is harder to get places in more advanced ESOL courses (PKUAS26).

Gap in ESOL course structure

In some participants' opinion, ESOL courses did not seem to deliver a balanced course content that improved children's language skills up to the required level. This would put children in a disadvantaged position when they wanted to access other educational opportunities:

My feeling is that there is a quite a big gap between entry 3 and level 1, yes, as with any course. Say for example, the people you have seen today pass their entry 3, Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing, and once they go into level 1 mainstream class, I am not talking about courses like hairdressing, but for other course, the level of English that is expected sometimes they get knocked back, because they say the level is still not good enough, but, they say I pass entry 3, I am now level 1, but I think there is still a gap, we need to bridge the gap (PSTCR27).

Difficulty getting into vocational courses

This is mainly about the further education courses. Most participants appeared to have negative views about children's access to the courses due to many reasons as a programme coordinator of a leading children's charity explained:

Well, let's say, I was running a programme for unaccompanied minors, and you know, I have one person who wants to be a bricklayer and another person wants to be a hairdresser and another person who wants to be an electrician... I can't teach all those things, they have to go to specific programmes for those particular skills, I do not think you can get anyone to run a programme that has all those different things, it is not realistic, so they have to go into programmes that already exist, and, OK, maybe you can let them go in with less English, but those health and safety rules, it is very difficult actually to make that happen, I do not think the system is bad, I just think it is not accessible for them because their English is not high enough, and we can't get their English high enough, quickly enough because they often arrive at 16 - 19 (PCSCN11).

Children-related challenges

According to the study, there were a catalogue of children-related barriers and challenges faced by the professionals. The main challenge faced by the professionals was the conflict between

children's unrealistic expectations and engaging them in finding realistic solutions. In their view, the children's urge to acquire education posed a challenge for both local authorities and professionals.

Conflict between unrealistic expectations and realistic way forward

The children's ambitions seemed high and unrealistic:

Young people who come from abroad as asylum seekers they see that very clearly, and even if it is unrealistic that they aspire to go to university (PIESJ13).

Conflicting elements (in children), such as ambition, fragile and unsettled immigration status, language barrier, unfamiliar education system, and scarce resources, and engaging them with the reality of their situation, make it harder for policy makers to plan the education provision to safeguard the best interests of these children and young people. As an officer pointed out:

There is a conflict between their aims and aspirations and actually the reality of their immigration status, their language barrier... Language barrier runs through the whole thing ... biggest problem is trying to engage them in the reality of the situation (POCES5).

Children's denial of reality: 'they are here to stay'

According to the practitioners, no child or young person wanted to discuss the possibility of returning home. In particular, the topic was emotionally disturbing for the children, and practitioners, on the other hand, found it difficult to raise the topic:

When we talk about the visa situation and their faces go like this [pulling a long and sad face].

As the above respondent explained, they were deaf to the message about the government's stand on their asylum claim. Their only aim was to build up a successful life here, fulfilling their family obligations, but not to return. In her view, it was understandable.

The vast majority who get DL [Discretionary Leave] will be refused at 18. Very few of them are given five years. The message (what government is saying) is that we do not accept your asylum claim, because you are a child and we have a duty to look after you until you are 18. They do not want to engage with that idea; they do not want to think that it is an option, completely understandably. They are here to stay and get educated and get professional jobs and financially sufficient, and support the family. That is what they want.

Professionals' dilemma

The professionals' duty of care was to engage them in reality; it seemed emotionally difficult for the children as well as the frontline practitioners to talk about the uncertainty:

We are trying very hard to give them the message very strongly. We want them to know what is coming. It is going to be a horrible shock. It is a very hard conversation we have to talk continually. In schools etc. we have to do this hard thing, see a person deflates in front of you ... it is difficult. In the orientation programme, as a part of that we have the conversation in first four weeks about their entitlements if their claim fails. We talk about time frame etc. 15-16 keen on education and then we have the conversation saying that ... there is a good chance to refuse, and whole class room of people ... we have to have it again and again as we have a duty of care ... we can't let them believe that they are going to be here.

Aspiring high: Unattainable aspirations

It is fair to say that practitioners, unquestionably, admired children's expectations and were willing to give them their utmost support. However, some professionals had reservations about UASC's ability to realise such dreams:

There is a young guy from Afghanistan who reads and writes fairly well, he challenges all the time, enthusiastic, I admire his effort. He wants to be a lawyer or a politician ...but I wonder when he can achieve such goals, it will take long for him to achieve his goals (PGSPU4, a Head of an EAL Department).

Opportunities bring aspiration and challenges

As another practitioner explained, for instance, some children were inspired by the opportunities given here. In particular, female asylum seekers saw that opportunities would come with inspiration and challenges, too:

They don't have that (structured education), or they have very fractured education, for example we have girls who come here who have never been to school, so they come from countries like Somalia, where girls do not go to school. So for them, their focus and their motivation is incredibly high, because they have given the opportunity that they would never get in their own country. But, the challenge is enormous, because they are starting from zero (PCCLM14).

Issues with education

They should know 'how to learn':

'How to become a student' seemed to be one of the biggest challenges the children faced. They need to know how to learn – to become a student in an educational setting:

So not only are they needing to learn the language. They also need to know how to learn,. How do you write an essay? How do you do research, how do you learn? Vocabulary, for example, that is very difficult, when you have never experienced it from school, so it is inspiring, but it is challenging (PCCLM14).

Problem of lacking prior education

UASC's inadequate prior education was their challenge to adjust to a structural education system in a classroom setting. This was a challenge to the professionals as well. As the above respondent further explained:

I think it is very inspiring and it can also be very difficult having said all of that about this group of young people. The other side of that is they very often come from countries where they have no education, so they are starting from a zero level and that had major implications in terms of how to behave in a class room, how to learn, the kind of knowledge that we take for granted, because our children go through a school system from the age of 4 or 5. These young people haven't had, they do have other things, but, to work together as a group, how do you learn how to do that if you have never ever been to a school?

Language barrier

This was one of the main challenges faced by UASC in their educational journey in the UK.

Language barrier runs through the whole thing (PSCDW19).

It had a crippling effect on their educational progress:

So what we do at the college, well, for this programme, we do just English and extra things as well, but not in terms of what you would get from a range of curriculum in school, in school you might have 8 subjects in a child's timetable, those subjects, history, geography, Maths, physics all of those subjects demand very high level of English, if you do not have that English you can't access them, so, even if you can do the subject, even if you can do maths, you can't do maths if you do not understand the English, so it is catch 22 situation, really (PCCLM14).

Intellectual shift: Clashing perceptions

The next uphill struggle faced by UASC was the adjustment to the intellectual shift, especially structural learning and critical thinking. For instance, even those who had a certain level of education (mainly primary) would still find it challenging to adjust to the structured education system in Britain:

...of course, we also know that they may not have had structured, specific education in the countries from which they come and yet they are often very keen to learn and progress, so, in the

worst case scenario you actually got a very bright very able young person who could achieve, for whom language is a major barrier also makes a huge adjustment to structured learning (PCSPE2).

Teacher-dominated vs. critical thinking: two different worlds of education

Furthermore, in the practitioners' view, these children faced a clash between their predominately teacher-dominated education system and the critical thinking model in the western education system. This sudden transformation would be an 'intellectual shift' that they had to get used to. This adaptation, however, was a challenge to the children and professionals alike. As a practitioner explained:

In education, students are struggling. Their language skill is not quite good enough, and partly because of their experience of education in the home country and what education means in their home country. There was a young man who went to university and struggled a lot... his home country education was about ... it was about learning the answers and answering again. In UK universities we have critical thinking ... this is a massive transition and he really struggled. His language is good enough ... but he really struggled with the intellectual shift (POCES5).

Take long time to study

As a result, these children would take a long time to study compared to British-born children. Drawing on her own research, an academic explained:

I found, in my research, that people who come from another country, immigrants, spend twice as much time on private study as indigenous English, British students, Because we ask how many hours a week on average you spend on studying independently, and, they spend twice as long as the English students (PIESJ13).

Making cultural adjustment

Adjusting to the new cultural settings is also a problem for these young people. The majority of the professionals stated that it was a struggle for them to get to grips with their new environment.

If you mean vulnerable young person, which is what I would say, vulnerable, then some young people managed to deal with all of the differences they are facing, so, for example, they manage to deal with the trauma of separation and loss, they manage to deal with learning a new language, they manage to deal with budgeting on their own, they manage to deal with cooking, shopping, cleaning, you can imagine, younger Afghani men who have never cooked in their life, never bought anything, how do they learn that?(PSGSCM22).

Isolated and withdrawn from others

As some practitioners noted, UASC tended to be distant from others. For instance, the young youth workers' opinion was that UASC or other refugee children normally do not approach them (when they are at colleges on project work). They were even considering a new approach to engage them in supporting projects:

I think, socially they're kind of enclosed off, may be because they interpret themselves as different because they are asylum seekers or it is just the language barrier, I do not know, there is always that kind of gap, a little bit distance, you know what I mean ? (PSTB30)

I think, they are, none of them coming to us... I do not know because it is in a college, it is in dinner, they go and get the dinner, so they won't come and speak to us, we got to look for other alternatives, kind of, outreach sessions, and try to engage them in something (PSTN29).

Different outlook on independence: unfamiliarity of independent choice

As some practitioners viewed, their outlook on independence was different from western children. They would need a lot of adjustment to get used to the new culture:

If a young person arrives at the age range from 16 up, they are arriving in a culture when some other peers are already seen as living independently, having their own lives separate to their parent, and yet often these young people coming without that experience, I often feel that they need a lot of skill in both becoming independent in a culture that they are not familiar with.. They get held away from their parents, it is not a choice, whereas a young person here chooses to live away from his parents at 16 (PSCJS33).

Psychological needs and mental health

I had a young person just was sectioned recently and had complete breakdown (PRSNEB7).

One of the main topics discussed in this investigation was the well-documented problems facing UASC – their psychological and emotional problems. In general, the respondents discussed the severity of the mental health status of some UASC, and in particular, some of them pointed out the difficulties they faced when dealing with these conditions.

Mental health is also a big barrier, yes, I think it is not always recognised but I think a lot of young people have mental health problems... so I had some young people who had mental health problems and you can't support them until they resolved that.

Firstly, unaccompanied children's psychological issues seemed to be different from those of the general refugee population. Secondly, these problems were closely connected to their

educational performance. As a leading psychiatrist working on the mental health issues of unaccompanied children explained:

The evidence on unaccompanied refugee minors compared to the accompanied, the unaccompanied do worse on most measures of mental health., understandably, So they have more kind of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and so on (POUMF38).

As some respondents claimed, they were subjected to racial issues and abuse; some have problems with foster care and accommodation, and financial problems.

Impact of mental health on education

Applying her expertise in unaccompanied children's mental health problem to the young adult group in the study, the psychiatrist explained the impact of untreated mental health issues on their education:

I do not know much about adult groups, that is not my area, but there is a lot about them. I would think some of the principles are similar, the main issues are if they both have serious mental health problems, they have got to find it very difficult to learn, so, they can't really access education well, if they have got untreated psychological needs (POUMF38).

Personal biological issues: transition to adulthood

As some of the respondents pointed out, as all teenagers, their transition to adulthood was also challenging for them, especially given their unusual situation. An academic who was specialised in UASC education and transition to adulthood explained:

I think ... part of the challenge is that, while a lot of research shows that the pathway to adulthood is quite ... so long ... it is not a linear path to adulthood, so much of what happens is guided by this dichotomous policy of you are a child until you are 18 and you are suddenly an adult on your 18th birthday, really the transition is, I do not think., like that, and I do think there should be more support to young people in that age category (PKUAS26).

Besides the issues mentioned above, there were many challenges for them to overcome. For instance, accommodation, foster care, lacking parental guidance and love, immigration and legal battles were some of the main issues discussed by the participants. The lasting results of all these were the loss of hope and shattered dreams.

Mental health and anxiety – shattered dreams and expectations

Their mental health and anxiety should be considered in three stages: mental health before leaving home, during the journey and the life in the host country. At last, once in the UK, they

began to realise that their situation was not what they expected, and their hopes began to be shattered:

When they come to this country, initially they feel very protected and safe and happy, but slowly they realise that they are not necessarily always welcome, they are not necessarily having the support they thought they would receive, which means their dream about coming to a safe country where everything will be alright is completely shattered, and that is the different kind of anxiety we deal with. So, in their mental health, their mental health issues have to consider on three aspects, before they left their home country, they journey and then they arrive in the UK, and often, the anxiety, the now and present become pre-dominant factor because they are not feeling secure and safe and settled which is mainly to do with large number of unaccompanied minors often not getting a settled status in the UK (PCSSS10, Programme Coordinator, a children's charity).

Relationship with own communities

Firstly, the professionals were not in doubt about the importance of children's engagement with their own communities and peers. They seemed to encourage such relationships especially when a child or young person failed to make social connections with others. Some professionals, however, were forthcoming about their dismay at the bad influence of their own peers and community relationships.

When they go to their own communities and get too friendly with young lads they just change, they aren't always the best influence (PGSPU4).

There were many issues raised by some professionals. For example, lack of English language usage, lack of role models, exploitation and information about the birth country, seemed critical.

Unsettling information about home and behavioural challenges

One of the negative factors that would occur in the school classroom was their hearing daily information about the catastrophic events happening in their home countries through their communities.

They do want to know everything, because worse thing is coming here and not having any contact ... most of these students are very aware, they are very politically aware things back home (PHSBB32).

However, sometimes, the devastating news about family or country was disturbing and it would cause unsettling (violent) classroom behaviour. This was a teachers' dilemma. Sharing her experience, the respondent explained:

The teacher will contact me and say something is wrong with him he kick off his chair he was rude, and things like that. I know why he is rude, because he is sad, because night before he heard that whole village may be shot at last night...

Community relationship: English language acquisition and absorbing new culture

As some of the respondents pointed out, community relationships would hinder their English language acquisition and their absorption into the new social environment.

Well, this is the other problem, that we found with the young people, that they naturally tend to associate with other young people from the same area, yes, and to stay within that community, and of course, in that case it delayed their acquisition of the English language and also of the social skills we have been talking about. It is not so much skills, it is absorbing the culture, because I found that, particularly young men but much less young women, they can often alienate people simply because of the way they speak, you know, some African languages have sort of loud abrupt way of speaking, which to an English person seems offensive (PIESJ13).

6.1.5 How to educate UASC

Despite all the challenges discussed above, professionals showed a sense of optimism in their views on how to educate these young people. Their explanations reflected four aspects that the education should aim to deliver: namely, 'how to make a good citizen', 'what Britain means to them' and 'how to learn' and mastering the English language. As already discussed, teaching UASC how to be a good citizen and how to learn in a school environment seemed crucial. The concept 'What Britain means to them' reflected the idea of teaching them about the country's system and values while respecting theirs:

We should give them English support preparation classes and we should work in this transcultural context which is exactly what I am talking about, to teach them this is Britain, this is what happens here, this is what you normally eat, and all these things are different here, of course, we have to show a lot of respect for their own culture, too (PHSBB32).

Teaching 'how to learn' and mastering language

The participants agreed that UASC's need for English language proficiency as the means of communication and learning. In UASC's case, both tasks of 'learning English' and 'how to learn' would be inseparable and needed to be addressed simultaneously:

Interviewer: *What are the most important aspects of their education, language skills, vocational skills or general academic skills?*

Respondent: *That is a very difficult question I would say that language always comes first. However, you also have to have learning skills to be able to learn the language, you know so you have to learn the language but you have to know how to learn the language.*

So, that is why I think those two things can't be separated, actually you have to learn how to learn and you have to learn language (and they both go hand in hand) they are the most important things, because if you do not have that you can't do anything else, it is just nowhere to go if you do not have that (PCCLM14).

As the participant explained again, teaching UASC, (most of whom might not been to school), 'how to learn' is a complicated process that needs many skills, commitment and care.

... so as I said before, a lot of my job and the other teachers that work with this group is teaching young people how to learn, how do they, for example, in literacy, how do they actually form the letters, how do they then revise that, how do they do homework, what is home work, sometimes it is being how do you hold the pen, how do you sit in a chair, and to sit still and to listen.

Comparing the background of the researcher and herself she claimed:

Like you and me, we were trained at very young age, 3 4, but for them to work together as a group, how do you learn how to do that if you have never ever been to a school?

Teaching English language

Method of teaching English language

The majority of the respondents preferred to have English (as a second language) to be taught as one subject in schools until UASC acquire the necessary skills. However, as a respondent pointed out, this facility was not available in schools.

It is better for them to study English totally as one subject, until the language level is at the level that helps them to access the rest of the curriculum. If there were dedicated English as a second language classes at school, and there was provision and that would be ideal, but there isn't (PCCLM14).

Moreover, some participants suggested that there were gaps in ESOL courses (discussed in the previous sections) and said that more time was needed to plan them, and that English courses needed to be conducted over a long time period.

Improve cultural awareness through English literature

In the view of an academic:

Actually, I think cultural education also very very important, I think we ought to encourage young immigrants to read as much English literature both contemporary and classical (PIESJ13).

Teaching transferable skills and social skills

Transferable skills seemed to be seen differently by the respondents. For some, it was academic and other career related qualifications, and for others it was social skills:

They need the language to acquire skills, but I do think transferable skills are very important, if they stay or they go back home or to another country, but, it is not just mechanical skills is it? Social skills as well.

Moreover, as some others suggested, social skills should be taught quickly and the children should not be left to self-learn as they had to integrate into society within a limited time:

I think, because the time is often too short they got to integrate so quickly in order to succeed, I think, it needs to be taught, not just left for them to pick it up (PIESJ13).

System of education delivery: segregated vs integrated

The opinions about educating UASC in a segregated or integrated classroom system varied and were complicated. However, the consensus was that there was no one system that fitted all.

Integrated education system: the philosophy of education

The majority of those who believed in the integration system thought that the main objective should be integration with others in an educational environment. As a manager who served in a local authority that accommodates one of the highest number of UASC in the country stated:

The main objective of getting them to mainstream educational places is integration – the philosophy is integration (PHCMP3).

As a coordinator of an education advocacy service of a leading charity claimed:

The British education policies promote the concept of integrated education system – that is the whole point of educating them with other children (PCSPE2).

Segregation system of education

On the other hand, some professionals were not that convinced about all of the integrated systems in schools or classrooms because of the language difficulties. In their view, it should be a

gradual process depending on their communication ability and children should have intensive English language training first.

If you do not have that language level, then you can't integrate, how can you integrate, so what I think is important is that young people are given intensive language learning, that is separate from, that is purely for them, which is what we do, so the provision is you are learning English, intensively for maybe two or three years depending on your ability how long it takes you, but you are learning English. When you have learned English, and you are able to communicate and you are confident and it is the time for you to think about doing a different kind of course which integrate with Scottish young people (PCCLM14).

A programme coordinator for young unaccompanied asylum seekers added:

It is good to integrate and if they meet and befriend British students that is wonderful, but, often, the unaccompanied ones that I often meet and I know, apart from one, they have such low English, they can't possibly access the curriculum, so we are putting them in special programmes so they are already segregated, unless they are under 16 and then they go on to mainstream (PRSNEB7).

Intriguingly, there was also a strongly held argument for segregated systems by both Afghan participants.

In the Afghan academic's view, the initial education setting for refugee children should be segregated:

I would support an integrated system, but, it is good for these children to receive at least a year of language and the preparation in mathematics, biology, chemistry and other subjects... because I know that the quality of education in Afghanistan is much lower than the quality of education in the UK (PIISYB8).

Segregation is good for cultural adaptation

As another Afghan professional explained, segregation would be a good option for English language and cultural adaptation:

There is another problem, learning ability of Afghans is quite different, especially English language, it is a big problem, we come from a very different part of the world, there is a complete set of culture and value system (PBAGGTW12).

Education pathways: vocational or general education?

In relation to education pathways, professionals, based on their expertise and experience, discussed current systems available to all children in general and expressed their views on what

best suited UASC. Some saw a broader global picture in relation to their education. Besides their different opinions, participants unequivocally agreed that UASC should be given as much opportunity as possible in order to achieve success, especially if they go back to their home countries. As a head of Virtual School stated:

In terms of these young people, who may be ending up going back, is that not going to open more doors to them in Afghanistan or is it going to close doors? I do not know, but I would prefer to see that at least being given the opportunity they would turn round the chance, the opportunity should be there (PSCDW19).

The professionals thought that they should be given the opportunities available, either academic or craft-based skills:

In the UK, depend on abilities, I think ... they should be given as much opportunities as possible even if they get sent back to their own country, should we give them much opportunities, whatever it is academic or craft (PSDSAR24, Work coach, Skills Development, Scotland).

Identify individual ability

Some respondents preferred to see children's individual ability getting honed in order to build their confidence and employability.

So, they need to be able to do the English, maybe they need to be able to do the maths, they need to be able to do the social skills necessary to participate, and I tend to think what lends itself most to social mobility and to positive contribution, whether it is in this country as they choose to stay or whether they choose to leave, it's good education (PSTTC28).

General education: the better option than vocational education

There were strong views in favour of providing UASC with general education as opposed to vocational education through Further Education colleges. In the view of some, these children were given advice on the basis of their immigration status but not on their ability or motivation.

The idea that more vocational qualification you get the better is not true, no...

I think there is always danger, which I have come across so many times, that young people in care in general, not just immigrants, who being encouraged to enrol in shorter vocational programmes instead of in higher level academic programs, so, for instance, you know, girls, are encouraged to do things like hairdressing, even if they have the potential to study history or geography or philosophy or medicine ... because, they are advised on the basis of their status either as children in care or immigrants, rather than on the basis of their individual ability and motivation (PIESJ13).

As the respondent further explained:

It should be based on the characteristics of the individual and their motivation and not on their status, because it is unpredictable, isn't it? We do not know what the Home Office decides.

Knowing the needs of source country: paradoxical views

Supporters of mainstream education rejected or questioned the popular view of the majority of the participants on the usefulness of skill-based employment for children's birth countries.

Well, I do not think so, they have no idea what their country is going to be like... who is going to predict what Afghanistan will be like in seven years' time, how can you possibly tell?

Rejecting the idea of some participants in the study to plan intervention programmes according to their source country's requirement, a respondent replied:

No, I think that is stupid, because it is unpredictable, what I think is we should give these young people the best possible general education and then they will decide themselves what will be useful to them, their own countries if they are going back, I mean, you know something, it will always be useful, for instance, medical skill, always going to be useful (PIESJ13).

Explaining further her case, she doubted that producing many plumbers would be the answer for the skill shortage. Those countries would appreciate other professions:

... but, other things, less obvious things like, writing skills, journalistic skills, legal skills, hundreds of different kinds of things will be useful, but, what we do not know is that what will be specifically useful, so, if we teach them all to be plumbers, that may not be useful at all.

Pastoral care and general education

Another argument was about the element of pastoral care embedded into the general education system. A significant number of participants valued the pastoral support received by UASC in the school environment.

Schools still have this tradition of pastoral care and some FE colleges do to some extent, but they are much larger enormous places, and it is very easy for individuals to get lost in them, and especially, if they are not making social relationships (PSTCR27).

Vocational education

Firstly, there was strong education support for learning a vocation (vocational pathways) from all of the participants as they expressed the importance of vocational education not only for UASC but also for all young people in general in the UK. They saw it from different angles and this also depended

on the country of the practitioners. For instance, practitioners in the UK seemed to have a more pragmatic approach to it compared to the clear-cut approach suggested by those who represented the source countries, e.g. Afghanistan.

A path to a world of work

As a practitioner explained, everybody needed to understand the world of work regardless of their career paths. Therefore, vocational education would be useful to everybody.

Because everybody needs to understand the world of work whether they are going to be a pure academic or not, there is all possible routes, aren't there? (PSTTC28).

Making an example of the researcher:

You are an academic more or less or close to be a pure academic ... your area of research is into young people, unaccompanied asylum seekers, most of the work is pure academic, you need to understand the vocational world, so do I, or anybody working in any field. So, my own view is, everybody ought to have considerable chunk of vocational learning, and needs to maybe understand and what the work place is about ,how work place processes work and feel confidence and we should start pupils.

As he further explained, the children should not be led to the vocational path with promised guarantees, but they could be made aware of the options:

So instead of saying, well, actually, you do a vocational qualification it will lead you straight to a vocation. We can say, that is one option, because it will give you a range of skills applicable to any vocation.

Non-compartmentalised vocational system for asylum seeking children

Many respondents stated their strong views against compartmentalisation of asylum seeking children although they were in favour of the option. As they clarified, the process should not be strictly aimed at asylum seeking children and young people. They should not be compartmentalised in vocational education because of who they are. There were some factors that needed to be considered when leading asylum seeking children on a vocational path. It may put them in psychological strain and prevent them from realising their full potentials.

I think for asylum seekers, it is not that we should do something radically different, we should not actually push somebody into a particular pathway because of our pre-conception. It must be a very difficult, frightening, very scary thing to be an unaccompanied asylum seeker and locked up in that person is (maybe) all sorts of potential.

Vocational education: the best option

The importance is that, they should be given professional and vocational education before they are repatriated (PAIMK18, an Afghan Researcher).

The option of vocational education was highly regarded by the Afghan participants for a variety of reasons. For instance, as discussed in the previous sections, any skill they would take back with them would be immensely useful. Moreover, their countries do not have the systematic vocational training system to train the workforce and those who have qualified from here could make a significant contribution with their skills, joining the organisations.

As a participant noted:

The schools are all very only academic; there are not a lot of vocational schools, the government has its plans but the number is very limited, only people who want to do academic courses go to school. Those who want to learn skills they actually go and learn their skills carpentry, mechanics from family ... and the waiters in Afghanistan and other people, there is not a centre, there is not a teaching and training centre in which they are trained and they receive a licence to run a hotel.

As the participant further explained, the vocational education option would be crucial when the country progressed with its development:

It is important for a variety of reasons. First, it is about job creation, second, at the moment, our vocational industry in Afghanistan is very informal, so, if you are a mechanic then you teach your child how to be a mechanic, if you are a blacksmith, you learn it, it is a family business, they do not need licence, to do these businesses. But in the future, with the introduction of let's say, more legal framework and you know, these family businesses will turn into more formal businesses. I think in the future, if somebody is working as an electrician, he should have a licence, at the moment they are not licenced. Everybody can't do it. So, I think it is very important for the construction of the country as a whole (PBAAGJW12).

6.1.6 EMPLOYMENT AND UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREEN

The participants were not in doubt about the significance of providing meaningful employment opportunities for young unaccompanied refugees and its wider benefits. As a psychiatrist explained:

...the most important thing is to find employment. If you can help them find good work it is going to be very meaningful (POUMF38).

Especially referring to the positive impact on their psychological wellbeing, she claimed:

Although they might be ok without that, but it is likely to help them more if they have it, because employment is essential. So, access to education and employment is going to be very important, like it is for everybody. You know, they need the opportunity to work.

As discussed previously, among many benefits, education and employment would be crucial for their integration into society.

It is a one way, I mean, they are basic needs, education and employment you need to be in one or the other really, and so they do really help with integration initially (PSNCN1).

There was a clear recognition of these young people's desire to find employment in order to build up a new life in this country:

Eventual employment, which is the goal of most young people, the young people that I work with, they all want to work and to make a life here, because this is where they have to live... they want to get their English up to a certain level and that allows them to get a job (PCCLM14).

The practitioners' dedication and expectation for positive outcomes for these children seemed obvious in their discussions. However, their overwhelming concerns about the limitations of the system, and the difficulties of providing the support and guidance needed, unfolded in the investigation.

Practitioners' awareness of employment prospects and intervention programmes

Awareness of UASC employment prospects

Firstly, it is important to know the professionals' awareness of the employment prospects of the UASC who have been in their care or who they have come to know. It appeared that the majority of them did not possess a clear idea, or proper facts or figures other than anecdotal evidence about UASCs employment circumstances in the UK or back home if they had returned home.

No obligation to hold information

As some of the respondents explained, the local authorities were not under any obligation to keep track on UASC employment of those who remained in the UK. Similarly, UASC did not have to inform their progress once they left care.

We do not keep track on them or they do not have the obligation to inform their progress to authorities (PHSMP3).

As a result, local authorities would lose track of them. Moreover, some of the professionals believed that it was not necessary to know about their life once they were adults. However, there

were a few practitioners who mentioned about the career prospects and problems of some of the children they worked with.

What they know about employment in the UK and in source countries

Some participants mentioned how they do menial jobs in the UK because of their problems in relation to finding jobs. (This will be discussed in later sections in detail).

What do they know about employment of returnees?

A few practitioners could specifically mention the career prospects of some children who remained here and gave anecdote evidence of those who had gone back home. As a programme manager pointed out, she had heard from another charity about returnees doing interpreting and teaching jobs back in their countries.

There are examples when young people went back and became interpreters and teachers, I am talking about what we heard from (naming a charitable organisation) (PCSSS10).

She further said that there were young people who were doing well in business in the UK:

On the other hand, I have seen young people doing great and starting small businesses, it is fine, and again, just not forget that they are very resilient sometimes they find opportunities within that.

UASC suitability for employment

Although UASC's goal was to find employment, in the professionals' view, the majority of them were under qualified for competing in the labour market.

Interviewer: *What about their readiness for employment?*

Respondent: – *No... (shaking her head) they are so far from that (PBRCMR36).*

Struggling with practicalities for entering the labour market

As many practitioners realised, it was a struggle for them to get used to their new life, and meet the requirements needed to find jobs. More importantly they did not have references for potential employment:

They need to have driving skills, they are struggling, they can't go to the centre, they can't put their CV together struggling with their English, trying to look for jobs, if there is no one to support, it is a struggle. I keep them well... to get into the system, especially, new arrivals, it take nearly two years sometimes before they actually get to grips with things. I think ... to do with

qualifications, getting references for example, you need a good reference to know what you have done what your achievements were (PSDSAR24).

Professionals' awareness of intervention programmes and support services for employment

Except those directly involved in support services and programme delivery, most respondents showed less awareness of these aspects. For instance, a professional accepted her unawareness of such information and how they lose track of this type of information:

Interviewer: Do you know anything about the employment situation if they get the leave to remain? What type of support is available to them?

Respondent: It is a very good question. I am sure there are LA-funded programmes to help people into employment, but I agree with you that I am not aware of any research. It is all about where they collect statistics, their status changes, ultimately, if they get refugee status then become citizens, then any information about them is included in the UK citizen statistics, you lose track of what actually happened (PUNSS25).

More importantly, the majority of the respondents claimed that there seemed to be no specific educational programmes designed for unaccompanied children.

No programmes, apart from the programmes like Prince's Trust Life Skills programme, apart from this programme there is nothing specific. Most of the programmes I would look at for unaccompanied people will be the same programmes for others refugees (PSDDSAR24).

As an officer running programmes for potential returnees claimed:

Researcher: Do you know any educational programmes aimed at improving these children's employment skills?

I do not know, I have no idea, sorry (PBGK21).

What is available to them?

A significant number of respondents themselves were involved in planning and delivering some of the main interventions and support services for young refugees in general. They talked about their support services and their views and opinions on the relevance of their own programmes.

Importance of intervention programmes and the role of professionals and organisations:

Every respondent was explicit about the need for and importance of interventions and support services, and the role they play in these children's lives through that. They especially explained the support they provide in schools, colleges and Further Education colleges. The following is a testament to that:

It is massively important, because there is this whole group of young people, they come to the... [her NGO office], and say, help me I want to go to college, because they know that college exist, they know that they want to learn English, so they knock on the door every day and say, I hear that ... [her NGO] ... can help, I want to go to college, that is one section, but then, there are another section who are so vulnerable that they do not know what they need, so they do not seek that support, they do not knock on the door (PBRCMR36).

According to her it seemed somewhat complicated to support a group of two different kinds – those who were looking for help with their needs and those who were vulnerable and unaware of what to ask for. However, the professionals showed a good understanding about their roles and its objectives. She further explained about her role as being responsible for getting them into education:

It is vast ... in my role, it is the link between refugees and services, all these young people just need support, and then get these young people into education is a big part of what I do.

Positive role of charity and NGOs

In general, they seemed positive about their roles and organisations (although they faced many challenges). As she further claimed:

My big concern is that if it was not for charities those young people will have no chance of even accessing college, because, no one would tell him that you have got a right to go to college, or this is how you prepare to go to college.

A programme officer for the only charity that specifically provides educational support for UASC said:

I think we have a lot of positive stuff, I think we do work quite efficiently (PRSNEB7).

6.1.7 PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTION: INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Are the programmes effective?

With the exception of a few professional's positive impressions of their own programmes, the respondents as a whole were in agreement with the weaknesses, limitations and ineffectiveness of the interventions on offer.

Positive views: in difficult conditions

They are very happy with the orientation programme, because, before the young people just had nothing so they waited maybe for months, and they were just at home, they had their journey, sometimes traumatised, nothing to do, terrible, whereas now, they go on to my programme as soon as they are age assessed and they are doing education and they feel more positive because they feel like OK, I am starting my future in this country now, and they are learning, so you know, it has been a really positive thing, because, A - they are learning and B- they are no longer lonely, they are active, basically (PCSCN11).

First and foremost, as the respondent described, the beauty of programmes were their contribution to UASC giving them hope for the future and engaging them in something worthwhile at the end of their traumatic journeys. On the positive side, it is noteworthy that some practitioners, who were mainly the architects of the initiatives, displayed an optimistic sentiment and genuine enthusiasm about the outcome of their own work. Even though they had less influence and control over making decisions on UASC who were going through turbulent times, their efforts had helped the children:

I think the client group we work with have got their life completely up and down, it is not going from down to up and up to down, all these changing, things that change their lives is that almost beyond our control, like their immigration status, I think we are really good in holding and containing them and making significant short-term changes in their lives (PCSSS10).

If they get the immigration status, but, that is very few though, that is a longer term goal that we achieve but it is not easy to achieve., you know what I mean, so longer term is the most hard, most difficult one .On the other hand, we have good example of supporting young people really well who received settled immigration and refugee status and have done well.

Another programme officer claimed that her Life Skill programme is a springboard to getting into full-time college education. Even though most of the children received support from their

guardians, residential units and social workers, they still needed extra support from intervention programmes:

The guardians, residential units and the social workers are saying that they can't handle college yet, so we still get a fair amount of referrals. I see, every course there is a few people who are in that position where they got other support, but, still their support workers believe that they benefit from this programme as a pre-step, as a stepping stone to...[naming a college program and the tutor] (PBRCMR36).

Two youth workers talked about their new programme called 'Youth Actions':

This is quite a new project really, – it is generally youth actions, we come in and engage young people. All our aim is to engage young people, some asylum seekers and refugees, that is our target audience (PSTB30 and PSTN29).

Apart from these positive sentiments, overall, their experience in planning and delivering successful supporting initiatives seemed quite the contrary.

Educational intervention programmes and employability – what works?

Negative views: do they know what works well?

They seemed to have no answer to this question. As a programme manager declared:

...that is one example of the kind of questions I am asking myself – what is the best and I do not have an answer to that (PBRCMR36, a programme manager, NGO).

This brisk summing up echoed the consensus of practitioners' opinions and dilemmas concerning all the aspects of programme initiatives. As the respondent further explained, she needed answers to the question 'what works best?' for these children, in another words, 'how effective the programmes have been or what needs to be done'. But, for her, there were no answers. Moreover, by confirming others' opinions, her discussion also revealed how ineffective and unsuccessful the programme initiatives could be for a catalogue of reasons.

How ineffective are the general educational and vocation programmes available?

The professionals viewed the ineffectiveness of support services and interventions from many different angles, such as the quality and structure of the interventions, children's engagement and enthusiasm and the process of delivery. In addition, the professionals discussed the limitations of other general educational courses available to UASC. Those who were working in support services took a keen interest in expressing their views on this issue. They shared a consensual view

on the limitation of bespoke and needs-driven formal and non-formal educational interventions aimed at employability. In their view, the programmes on offer are inappropriate and ineffective.

As discussed previously in the education section, there were serious gaps and inadequacies in ESOL courses. Similarly, the practitioners flagged up some fundamental flaws of other programmes on offer especially at Further Education colleges. As a Senior Project Worker in Education Advocacy Service in an NGO explained:

If they are under 16 they will have to go to the mainstream that can be problematic. If they have to do GCSE it is disastrous, No way that they can come out as well as the rest of their peers are very focused on exams, so sometimes they go a year down. Sometimes, 15 and 16 year olds enrol on a Work Skill programme, e.g. BTEC programme, BTEC for work skills. BTEC is ideal for learning English and getting qualification, but the BTEC work skills programme is a very low level, some literacy and maths classes as well. My personal opinion is it is very flawed. Lots of it actually focuses around work, focus around health and safety and I do not think it gives these young people anything Some of the language is very difficult to understand and it is very boring... but it is better than nothing is, it is great that they can be offered something... the alternative is [naming a college in her region] ELEMENT and ESOL programme. They teach maths, IT, English, they used to have vocational programmes, they used to have work skills as well. It is good ... the problem is that they do not now offer some programmes ... (PCSP1).

Another professional gave an opinion on some of the programmes available in the area:

Skills for life programme. My concern is following Skills for Life.... Where is the progress? I have not got any hard data. My feeling is that it has a difficult progression path.

ELEMENT programme... it has straight progression. Young people progressed and engaged in mainstream programmes. There is a clear programme path. But, there is a reasonable number of drop outs. Language barrier is the problem and the levels of aspiration and how those relate to their immigration statuses (PCCES5).

Lack of quality educational programmes; nothing exists

According to her, there is a gap in good educational programmes. She believed that the educational programmes available were only results-driven and the qualifications were not well recognised or useful. She thought that these children and young people needed more bespoke programmes designed for their level of intellectual capacity and life experience.

Quality education programmes... characteristics of good programmes? I do not think I know of one yet. There is a gap there. We get really hung up with providing them with qualifications. It does not mean anything. It is not valuable qualification or not recognised by anybody. You can do things without getting hung up on National Certificates.

We need to have bespoke programmes better designed for these children.... Some of them do not know the biology of the human body or the biology of reproduction ... In an ideal world they need programmes with some elements of English language and other subjects that are useful.

No desired outcomes of short-term programmes

According to some other practitioners, short-term interventions did not have the desired outcomes, such as promoting the independence of these young people (they had a reverse effect to that intended). The programmes failed to attract and engage the clients because they did not find the events useful or have the inclination to take part. For instance, a programme officer explained the failure of her three-year Life Skill Programme funded by the European Social Fund (from 2009) to reach its objectives:

...the idea is that (the objective of the programme) the person moves on independently. So, that was not working for young people, for various reasons it was not having the desired outcomes, it was not promoting independence. Young people do not engage in that sort of short interventions, because they need to turn up for appointments with the volunteers... (PBRCMR36).

(Her further explanation for the reason for their reluctance to engage in supporting programmes will be discussed in detail in subsequent sections).

In this context, it begged the questions of what caused the ineffectiveness and what needed to be done to overcome the problem/reverse the failure. First, in the participants' view, there are enormous challenges and barriers that hampered the programme's process and resulted in failure. Second, to overcome the problem, they emphasised the need for a complete overhaul of the supporting initiatives, and more importantly, introducing new, effective interventions where possible.

Requirements of new educational initiatives for formal and non-formal education

Almost every interviewee agreed that in order to uphold UASC's right to education and to engage them in an appropriate educational system, government, local authorities and other service-providing organisations would have to find new initiatives, especially for post-18 educational provision. It is important to repeat the view of a Head of EAL about UASC's education and employment path:

School provides good structured system until they are 16. However, when they leave school, they do not have an effective progression path to vocational education or to employment (PGSPU4).

6.1.8 PLANNING AND DELIVERING EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMES: CHALLENGES, LIMITATION AND BARRIERS

As claimed by the participants, interventions failed due to the complex interplay of various factors, limitations, and challenges. This would affect planning, delivering and assessing the process of service.

There are two overarching challenges for the overall system of support services and intervention programmes:

- 1) Overarching challenge to the whole system: managing infinite needs and finite resources.
- 2) Overarching challenge to planning programmes: realistic goal setting with children.

1) Managing infinite needs and finite resources

Considering their reasoning, it could be identified that the overarching challenge is the struggle between the infinite needs of UASCs and the finite resources available for the service providers. As the above participant defined:

The need is massive and the resources that we have to respond to that need are limited (PBRCMR36).

According to the programme officer, children's needs were massive and multifaceted regardless of whether they had the right to stay (refugee status) or not. Especially, the transition from asylum seeker to a refugee also posed a challenge to the children as they had to make future career plans with limited skills:

For example, 18 year old comes on my programme and ... three month ago they get the refugee status, amazing, that means like, for them the journey is going to be easy that compared to someone else, but, that moment onwards they need to get a job, so they come to me they do not have ... skills, they do not have English skills, negotiating the job.

2) Realistic goal setting with children

As for any programme intervention, setting realistic goals is the key component of the planning of support services and interventions for UASC. However, as some professionals claimed, they were in a difficult situation when it came to being realistic with their goals. Firstly, the young asylum seekers had no proper idea of how the system works; secondly, the youngsters had unrealistic expectations of their future plans and thirdly, professionals did not have control over the situation, for instance, influence over government regulations or its policy planning.

Expectations, I probably say is a big thing as well. Sometimes, their expectations probably not always realistic... I think, and what they can achieve, because there are so many things they got to deal with, obviously the fear of being sent back to their own countries, language issues (PBRCMR36).

Unrealistic aspirations and not engaging with programmes

Their high expectations cannot be realised and they ended up doing menial jobs.

We can do the programmes but they do not go. We can put on brilliant programmes but they won't go.

They want to get educated here then they can go back to their country not to live there necessarily.... but to contribute. It is a lovely idea. But.... actually, realistically, that is not going to happen. The vast majority work in kebab shops, catering, waiting jobs. They are not going to get the chance to do that.

Professionals' duty to guide them: look what works

A respondent explained that UASC would not know the career opportunities available to them. Therefore, professionals had to guide them well and children had to explore more:

I think for them, people say that you can get adopted and you can do that, but they don't really know and it is a difficult area to get into, you have to look at how you get into that, and what we are try to do is ... career guidance, we will be negative, we will look at what will work, you can't do that, what else you can do, take a job, for example, health sector, UK...so many, and a lot of them would not have that knowledge because the countries they are coming from do not have all those professions maybe ... still difficult to get into ... degrees like radiographer or occupational therapist ...they will have other options, lot of them have not thought about that ... most would think, 'I do not know these jobs, this is not in our country', maybe they should explore more and, maybe that is an option, without thinking 'I must be a doctor, I must be a lawyer'.

Leading in the right direction

We look at peoples' strengths and abilities, we can't do entry stage to do that, we can talk to people to find them right option or come to a conclusion what they want to do. If someone insist he want to be a doctor, we would not say you can't do that we would say this is what you have to do, and for a lot of people English is their second language, you've got to pass your English test, academic ability and all other stuff.

Making alternative plans: a professional's duty

However, as a practitioner pointed out, it was their duty and responsibility to be realistic with the young clients when they had unachievable expectations. Therefore, they should always implement a 'plan B' for their lives: as professionals they have to teach them realistic goal settings when it comes to employment.

Sometimes help them with that journey, because young people will sometimes have this idea in their head and they will say I want to become an engineer, on one hand, not disbelieving and believing that actually you can potentially become an engineer but can you also have an alternative plan B, it is our duty as professional to make sure that they have alternative options in their lives (PcsSS10).

As she further said, they do not have control over the situation.

Finding realistic balance between programmes

It was also a problem for practitioners to find the right realistic balance between the right kind of programmes. One of the problems was focusing only on English, which would hamper them from learning other skills or vocations.

...and the other thing I find very difficult for these group of young people is sometimes they are, they need to learn more English, sometimes they get stuck, stuck in that learning English and not doing anything else, (meaning vocational courses) so they spend three years learning English (PCSSS10).

There were barriers to overcome these challenges and they can be analysed under the same categories:

- Children-related
- System-related
- Policy-related

The effects of these problems on children's education and employment were largely interrelated and have been discussed in previous sections. However, the following are some examples that specifically explain the impact on building their career prospects.

Children-related barriers

Children's diverse needs and challenges relating to education would have the same impact on their progression into employment. For instance, language skills, life skills, academic and work-related qualifications, psychological status and self-confidence posed a huge barrier for delivering

support programmes. As the practitioners claimed, even though they get refugee status and the right to stay in the country, their problems are overwhelming for professionals:

It is difficult; I still get some refugees in my caseload. I am still working after two years, and they moved on to things, to programmes, training or education. But, sometimes, they get dependent, they need support for quite a long time, we have to let go and get other agencies to work with them ... I think some groups gets refugee status quite fast, but, unfortunately ... they need a lot more support, I think, this is my personal feeling, basically (PSDSAR24).

Bureaucracy: reason for pushing towards menial jobs

Firstly, the bureaucratic aspects seemed to be a barrier for these young people's engagement in available programmes. Secondly, the process tended to push young refugees into menial jobs. According to a programme officer's account:

Yes, because, obviously, having leave to remain takes away some of the most important problems, I guess, that is the fundamental thing and they are safe and that is great, but, they instantly become job seekers, on job seekers allowance and I am saying to the job centre that this person is on a basic course, they should be considered as job hunting, but then quite often they drop out Red Cross or the college and go and work, and really really low-paid low-skilled jobs, because the pressure, the inability to manage to keep the job seekers allowance, it is so hard for them (PBRCMR36).

Language barrier

Learning English and be able to read and write is absolutely necessary for them to flourish in this country and have employment opportunities (PRESK35).

As another participant stated before, those who gained English language skills were employed as interpreters and teachers in their birth countries. According to the professionals, English language proficiency is the key requirement for UASC to access and use the support services and progress within the system in the UK or in their own countries and beyond. It was crucial for their career progress.

Barrier to communicate with authority

As a practitioner explained, it is difficult for them to articulate their situation to agencies because the children cannot express themselves or negotiate with the officials:

They do not understand these young people's lives, of course, if there is a problem they can go to the services, but without having the ability to articulate the whole stories ... to all these different agencies is a problem ... (PBRCMR36).

Citing their difficulty in negotiating a potential job:

So they come to me, they do not have English skills, they can't negotiate the job.

Hindering employment opportunities

Their lack of English language skills hindered their employment opportunities. Most of them were lacking the desired level of language skills even to perform the simple jobs they desired:

A lot of young people at the age of 16 /17 came about two years ago and I work with them. Their English is not very good, no English at all, so support would be more like to get them into ESOL class and help them doing the CV. Some of them want to do stuff like working as a barber, some want to work in shops, even then it is quite difficult as the English is so important.

Not achieving full potential in employment

If you do not have the level of English, you will struggle, you may be able to do some jobs, but, you won't be able to achieve you full potentials, you need to access, even vocational employment impossible if you do not have good language ability, for sure (PSDSAR24).

They are so far from employment market

As a participant explained, they needed massive help with English language skills and other skills. They were so far from the labour market:

Learning English is a massive need. I would say I come across much more than 100 young people a year who are asking for help accessing English. They are coming into the... [her NGO] saying, I do not have the life skills to get myself a college place, to fill in the computer application form, they have never been to school, so how could they ever be ready? They are so many steps away from the employment market (PBRCMR36).

English language skills for accessing services

Without English they could not explore the employment-related services available to them:

There are also job focused, employment focused opportunities in college as well, which they can explore. But, not knowing enough English and poor literacy does affect them in those courses as well.

Need support to realise skills

The practitioners believed that every young person needs support to develop themselves and to realise their hidden talents and skills. In the case of UASC, some of them were too vulnerable to seek help:

...there are another section who are so vulnerable that they do not know what they need, so they do not seek that support, they do not knock on the door.

As the respondent further explained:

No young person can ever develop or realise their own skills and personal qualities without support to do that, so, even if this young person has got amazing mechanical ability and they grew up watching this kind of work. That skill will never be beneficial if we, as a community, do not feed him the other things he needs, like the support, encouragement, access to work where the skills can be used, so, the skills is there, I do not think they can realise it.

Waste of skills and falling into unsuitable career paths for survival

Even if he is a genius mathematician, he is going to go and wash cars, just to survive illegally (PBRCMR36).

As some respondent agreed, given their unpredictable situation, for UASC their survival would come first. They may engage in menial and illegal work that might be below their unrealised skills:

I don't think their skills getting realised, because all their energies have gone to survival and that like, an 18 year old that I work with could be made homeless tomorrow, and nothing else anyone can do, of course, even if he is a genius mathematician, he is going to go and wash cars, just to survive illegally.

Unawareness of the system

As in education, these young asylum seekers' general awareness of the system and the organisational structure of support services, employment structure and career opportunities available in the country seemed to be inadequate. In the professionals' view, they did not have an understanding of the importance of the services available to them. Thus, they were not punctual and had no awareness of the types of service providers that existed. As a practitioner explained, they even had difficulty differentiating between 'colleges' and 'charities':

They start calling it ... college [the name of her NGO] and I said, no there is no ... college, that is ... [name of the programme] but, then, the ... college [naming the NGO] was the only thing they know...'

In some other cases, they could not even recognise the role of the officers involved in their lives. Giving an example of the event of an age-disputed young man's case hearing, the practitioner explained:

An officer from the LA and a police officer and an interpreter, were present. But, he could not distinguish between who was the police officer or the social worker. He did not know what their roles were.

Psychological problems

As in education, professionals were acutely aware of the impact of these problems on their participation in the support services available. They also expressed their dismay at planning services or programmes for a group who were suffering such difficulties, because their mental and emotional conditions discouraged them from pursuing support.

Mental health is also a big barrier, yes, I think it is not always recognised but I think a lot of young people have it... so I had some young people who had mental health problems and you can't support them until they resolve that (PCSA34, Senior project worker, NGO).

Planning programmes according to children's convenience and lifestyle

As a practitioner pointed out, their chaotic life styles and lack of parental guidance made them anxious and depressed. It seemed to affect their attendance at intervention programmes and she opted to plan the programmes to suit their life style.

It comes on top of the other teenage stuff, every teenager stays up to 2 in the morning, but, it is easier to do that when you are not living in a house with parents, like, when you are living in a flat, spending all your time with friends, rather than any ... family structure, I think, they are staying up late and when they do go to bed not sleeping because of anxiety and nightmares, and in the morning, just, the mornings are hard for them. For various reasons, we do my programme in the afternoon (PBRCMR36).

Lack of punctuality, chaotic life and hopelessness

UASC seemed to be not punctual or interested in attending the programmes, mainly due to their problems, worries and uncertainty about the future, they do not see a future for them:

They do not understand why it is important. The volunteers are there on Wednesday afternoon, and they asked them (UASCs) to come on Wednesday afternoon, the young person was turning up on Thursday morning. I did not have the flexibility to be responding how chaotic their lives were. I am sure, I have imagined, every morning, I can imagine, I can picture that, like, every morning there is horrendous struggles, I know that he stays away all night worrying about the situation, then morning comes, it is dark, he has to get two buses to college, what is the point anyway when you do not know what is happening in future, – because, sometimes there are doubts, sometimes, because, they do not see a future for them.

Lack of engagement in voluntary work, work experience, and apprenticeship programmes

Children's engagement with employment-related work was not satisfactory according to some professionals. There were a variety of reasons that seemed to be keeping them away from these opportunities. For instance, lack of interest, lack of qualifications, immigration status, inappropriate advice, cultural beliefs and different expectations, and lack of opportunities.

I can only go by my experience of working with those young people, very few of them, maybe do not get the opportunity to go into vocational, for different reasons, could be put off or it is difficult to get into, could be a lot of different reasons, not one reason (PSDSAR24).

In particular, their immigration status seemed to be one of the biggest barriers for getting into work-based experience or apprenticeships. As many practitioners explained, employers seemed to be reluctant to offer them any placement because of their uncertain immigration status. Moreover, their social skills would also play a part in a work place. As a British youth worker believed, it would difficult for them to be in that environment:

...making apprenticeship more available to asylum seekers and refugees... I would be scared that it would get to the point where asylum seekers and refugees get put into the corner of certain apprenticeships, that is what I will be afraid of, because of the possible lack of social skills (PSTB30).

Winning Apprenticeship places: a difficult task

It should be fair to say that, according to some practitioners', getting into apprenticeship was equally difficult for British born young people and it is a common problem in the country.

I think it is also difficult for British young people, anyway, to get those sorts of opportunities as well, it is sort of general issue and also the case for British young people you know everybody is supposed to want to go to university... (PSCDW19)

Lack of volunteering

One of the disadvantages faced by these asylum seeking children seemed to be their approach to voluntary work. According to many professionals, the children were not enthusiastic to volunteer. As they thought there may be many reasons, cultural or financial. However, explaining their cultural tendency to volunteering, an Afghan professional believed that these children appreciated the financial side of work according to their circumstances:

Volunteerism is in our culture, we do volunteer in variety of ways, probably, one of the reasons is that the Afghans who come here want to earn money ... they do not have any money and

need to do something to earn money. When they come here they pay a lot of money to people, they have to pay off their debts (PBAAGJW12).

Lack of past educational experience for apprenticeship

The children's lack of language and educational qualifications were some of the major barriers to entering these fields.

The problem is ... because of the English and because of the lack of qualifications, and a lot of them come at 16, very difficult to get into anything, no qualifications, even they do not have any education in their own countries, young people from Somalia and Afghanistan, they are two extreme examples, Afghanistan and Somalia, their school system is really non-existent (PSGSCM22).

Barriers faced by female unaccompanied asylum seekers

As a respondent who worked with female UASC claimed, there were specific barriers to them engaging in programmes or finding employment, for instance, some of them had children.

Once there were a lot of unaccompanied Somali, Nigerian, young women, they came at 17, they were very good, very motivated, they wanted to move into education, employment, some Somali young women, they are motivated, they managed to go to college to do child care courses or care courses, they have lots of barriers, child care, lack of qualifications, especially child care, they have one or two children to looking after, a big challenge, they get support, but it is a struggle (PSDSAR24).

Ethnic makeup and cultural differences

A few respondents made some comments about their working relationship with different groups of nationalities. According to them, some nationalities were more difficult to work with than others.

The [stating nationality] are a tough group to work with, the experience I had with [the group] was not good. So a lot of... [nationality] young people are more of a challenge... They are one of the toughest groups, quite difficult to work with, the support we give is like a contract, so they really got to meet up with me, I suggest support and they take it, but they do not turn up, so do not meet up with me or take the support we offer, it is more difficult to move them with the plan (PSDSAR24).

Community influence

As discussed previously there were positive and negative aspects of UASC relationship with their own communities. With regard to their career development, there seemed to be specific negative factors that would affect their progress. For instance, exploitation, lack of social capital, and lack of role models in their communities to look up to.

Community exploitation of UASC

As the above respondent claimed, as in any society, there might be exploitation of these children in their societies:

In every society, probably they might be exploited, other Asian communities like...[naming the community] even black, whites, I mean there are various varieties of people established here, I think some of these Afghani boys probably working in these communities and, yes, probably, they may get exploited, but, it happens also in any community.

As he explained, UASC were more prone to be exploited than those who would come to the country accompanied with their families. Giving an example of Iranian boys:

Iranian young people, they are probably more successful, they have much more support ... not many of them came alone, most of the Iranian young people I worked with probably came with the family, that is the difference, they have a lot more family support.

A social worker explained how one of the young unaccompanied refugees who was in her care suddenly appeared to be living a luxury life with expensive cloths, flashy cars and so on. He was unemployed but claiming that people in his community supported him with his life style. She seemed puzzled by the situation (PERCGS31). Moreover, UASC could be influenced by their peers and be discouraged from finding jobs and developing themselves. They were pushed to be dependent on state benefit, following some of their peers.

These children come from very rural backgrounds and easily led by others. Their friends in their own communities can mislead them. Their friends will say that school is not important and government will look after them (PGSPU4).

Lack of social capital

The other crucial problem was their lack of social capital. They did not earn this by being with their own communities:

It's your relationship that is important in terms of finding work, I think it is called social capital in sociology, if you do not have the social and cultural capital then it is difficult to find that work, basically. At the same time, I have to say that having the support of your communities also an

important aspect of it, I would not say that they should not be involved in their own communities, that is actually a really important part of it (PBGK21).

Lack of role models

Many practitioners were concerned that UASC were in a disadvantaged position in their own communities where there were no role models. This would hinder their awareness of the opportunities available and their aspiration to explore the outside world.

One of the other barriers I think is where you come from, and what you are surrounded by and it is the same for English kids actually, no difference. For example, let's take the Kurdish lads that come, or the Afghani lads that come, if they end up really staying quite close to their community, the people that they know in their community are all doing things like selling phone cards on the street or running convenient stores, or running car washes (PSCKK20).

Interviewer: *They do the same menial jobs, or anything that the others do?*

Respondent: *Yes, just those kind of roles, and what quite often happens is that our young people say I want to be a car mechanic, or I want to have a car wash or I want to work in a shop. In a way it depends who they are surrounded by, their Afghani community. If they got, you know, somebody is a doctor, somebody is a car mechanic, something is that, something is this, something is the other, great, that is brilliant, there is lots of options dreams, role models etc., but what quite often happen is and I think this is a big barrier as well...*

As she explained, UASC situations pushed them into their communities:

Traditionally, our 16-18 unaccompanied children are moved out of foster care at 16 and a half and put in hostels for a period and then put in semi-independent living, what can happen is, you hear it, in colleges, people drop out of colleges, which is one of the barriers, and also, if you got 16-18 year olds, hanging around with whole lots of other 16-18 year olds and they are in their community, the other people that they know are running car washes, running shops or this and the other, quite often that is the aspiration they end up having, if you ask them what you thought about what job you like to do in future, for some of them it is that kind of level.

Need of a guardian

With regard to all the issues relating to their community involvement, many professionals believed that the main solution was to establish the Guardianship service (e.g., as available in Scotland). They believed that it would give UASC an independent help, comfort and advice, which would be crucial for their vulnerable lives:

I think, what would be useful is to have advocates for young people or guardian, like in Scotland , I think that is a very good idea , so ,then they can take everything into consideration more broadly than just the immigration issue, I think it is more consistent...

System-related problems

I think the UK is not bad compared to other countries, it is not the best, definitely not the worst (PSDSAR24).

There were positive views as above and also limitations that obstructed the programme's process. These problems were also interrelated with the issues discussed under education previously. However, there were specific situations that seemed to affect planning employment interventions and encouraging UASC engagement.

Practitioner limitation and challenges

As they defined, there were many limitations and obstacles that they had to overcome. Every participant expressed their frustrations and concerns about the challenges they faced. However, the following information will be mainly based on the explicit clarification given by some of the experienced programme offices in the study.

Practitioner awareness

When asked about the professionals' awareness about UASC issues, a respondent's answer was:

Still the services aren't, they do not understand these young people's lives.

As the respondent claimed, and as was also discussed previously, one of the foremost obstacles appeared to be the practitioners' limited knowledge and understanding about the lives of UASC and young people. Almost all of the respondents who were involved in delivering interventions and support services mentioned the gaps in their knowledge about these young peoples' lives, for instance, their pre-flight life style, academic and professional qualifications, and social and cultural background and their needs.

Unawareness of children's needs:

As the respondent further explained:

If we get a referral, and I say to the volunteer, OK, meet them, find out what they need, it was not working, I mean, we did not have enough understanding of the needs of these young people

...

In particular, programme planners expressed their dismay about its implications on the programme process in different ways. Firstly, without understanding their needs, as she explained, it would be difficult for practitioners to make effective planning decisions to respond to their needs. The planning process was not cost- or time-effective:

I did not know what they need and we do not know how we are going to respond to that need, so, in the first year we spent first part of the funding year trying to figure out, you know, how to make plans (PBRCMR36).

Listening to children's voice

Only a few practitioners agreed that listening to the children's voice would be pivotal when planning their interventions. Some explained that their voice had not been heard and they were not here on their own accord. A practitioner explained her approach:

Absolutely, we try to involve them as much as we can. We have weekly activity programmes, we have a panel of young people and they meet the candidates and we ask their opinion, and their agency is important. They did not have any agency in their position... children often get not that much say about what they do (here she meant children in general).

However, not many professionals in the study seemed to make thorough efforts to listen to children. For some, children were not knowledgeable enough to make decisions or it was difficult to plan their engagement given the practicalities involved in the professionals' work.

Overwhelmed by demand for support

Adding to that, the respondents were overwhelmed with the demand for meeting the diverse needs of young asylum seekers and the above programme planner claimed that she had to prioritise the most eligible clients for one of her programmes:

...when you are overwhelmed by people that got no support at all, who are aged 18 to 25, I said, if you go to college, you can't come in, and, basically I said, we needed to focus on the people who were least able to access services independently.

However, prioritising was not a clear-cut process (because of the demand). As she admitted, the social workers and college staff continually requested her support for those who were classified as able clients because they were not fully prepared for college. In this context, some programme planners seemed to be vulnerable and confused about the best approach, firstly, for selecting the right targeted group and secondly, for setting clear programme objectives and goals.

... then,, we opened the door to any 16-25 year old who wanted to do a Life Skills programme but, we could not tell them what it was going to look like because we did not know.

This shows the problems and uncertainties involved in professionals planning and delivering their own programmes.

Introducing structured life through programmes: training punctuality

For some programme planners, the programmes should also give them a structured life while providing those skills and knowledge. For instance, UASC's unstructured and complicated lives had a direct bearing on programme planning and delivery (as explained under children's problems). Therefore, programme planners had to arrange the programmes based on their poor attendance, limited prior educational experience, and so on.

The idea was to have two (programmes) so then we changed it, so we found that if the young person did not have any college (experience) in their life, coming one day a week was really really difficult, attendance is bad, because they, so their life is so unstructured, so at that we started getting each group two workshops a week.

In her opinion, it would be difficult to make programmes work without introducing structure into their lives through programmes.

The programme has to be 2:30 to 5:30 pm because I wanted to create a full programme with young people got into the habit of coming at the same time every day, because without that structure I just could not make it work, because they would just not come.

Adjustment to programmes: merging and restructuring

Moreover, she claimed that, as a new approach, they also tried to merge their programmes with some other community support services e.g. community ESOL programmes which had problems attracting young UASC and refugee children. However, their efforts at merging had not been successful.

Inappropriate adjustments and unsuitable programme contexts: culture, age and societal factors

Age, confidence, cultural differences and familiarity could make programmes unsuccessful as the children seemed not to have confidence or character to come to a class with strangers. The respondents claimed that these merges or restructuring may not always be fruitful. According to her, the success of the programmes also depends on the clients' feelings towards the programmes, especially the type of participants involved in it. There were cultural, social, and demographic sensitivities that needed to be taken into account.

Proving her claim, she explained how the young clients were reluctant to engage in the said Community ESOL programme as it comprised adult participants:

The programme was free, but the young people do not go, because it is full of adults, it's really hard for them to be there, they do not have the confidence, they do not have the discipline, every time they walk into that class they feel like strangers.

She also mentioned that the cultural differences and values of other adult participants in the group had made her young clients (maybe from the same countries as other participants) uncomfortable. For instance, one of the young male asylum seekers was frowned upon due to his friendliness with a female college friend and its impact on his motivation to continue:

As soon as he moved onto the adult course, he dipped in his confidence and he is surrounded by all these adult English learners .So, then he just instantly liked an older Pakistani woman, this conflict between kind of, he was used to be like, there was a girl who come from his class and they were really close because they have been on a residential, they touch each other, so in...[mentioning a college class] class it is OK, young people can touch each other, whereas, he was getting reprimanded from the others in the class because he touched her, and he was ...so he totally lost the motivation.

Programme evaluation: limitations and weaknesses

Although a few practitioners were positive about their own programmes and support services, their evaluation processes were subjective and did not follow an objective method or guidelines. For some this was not acceptable and they explained the need to have a robust evaluation system in order to plan effective interventions.

However, there were counter opinions on programme evaluation. As one respondent claimed, it was only a political process which would not have any impact on programme planning.

Oh God! I do not think evaluation has got anything to do with anything, it is all about policy, you know... the politicians make the decisions before, they make the decisions at the point when they commission the evaluation, it's a kind of establishing one's credentials rather than actually finding out anything new (PIESJ13).

Policy-related challenges

As discussed before, immigration, education and financial policies had negative effects on children's education. These policies had similar effects on planning their employment pathways. For instance, the shifting nature of immigration policies and curbing financial assistance to intervention programmes and support services were said to have a detrimental effects on not only programme planning and delivery, but also on young asylum seekers' participation in support initiatives.

Firstly, the undecided long-term immigration process and sudden decisions to reject applications could make these young people lose their motivation and become sad and withdrawn.

Policy shifting

Secondly, as some of the programme planners pointed out, the shifting nature of government policies made programme planning complicated, as it needed to be constantly changing with the shifting policies.

I think it is such a shifting policy scene... we are trying to work in a context that is constantly shifting, so you are constantly having to adjust the frame work while trying to be focused, but, also recognising that this happens or that happens, or you know, the young person I work with just get depressed, I had a young person just was sectioned recently and had complete break down and so it shifts the nature of the relationship and try to kind of being responsive and focused, it is a challenge (PRSNEB7, a programme officer planning educational interventions for UASC).

Financial problems

According to the professionals, funding cuts had serious implications for their programmes across the board. Professionals viewed it as a short-sighted policy which prevented meeting the needs of these children.

I think one of the barriers is funding, you need funding to be able to do the programmes, less funding for organisations like mine, for example, I worked for another organisation previously the whole organisation went bust basically (PCSCN11).

Explaining how the funding cut axed a supporting staff member of her former further education college, she said:

And then we had several years where the needs of the children were not met, and you know, there is so much demand for work, and, so it is short-sighted, to cut, because actually the need is there, and the needs have to be met.

6.1.9 APPROACH TO CREATING INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES

Principles of planning interventions

Although the respondents had consensus about adopting a new and effective approach to programme initiatives, some of the participants specified their preferred planning principles:

Principle of holistic approach

One of the programme planners explained that the whole exercise of programme planning and delivering should adapt a holistic approach to achieve successful outcomes.

Principle of dual- planning approach

The majority of the participants unequivocally agreed that some form of dual planning strategy was crucial to meet the educational and employment needs of UASC given their unusual and uncertain situation. More importantly, under this principle, the planners should develop initiatives that prepare them to use their skills either in the UK or in their home countries (in the event of repatriation).

... because, you have to think , Ok, there is a group of hundred young people asylum seekers or refugees or whatever 70 of them may go back within the next 7 years, then you need to start thinking, OK, if the stuff we are delivering is going to be useful for only people who are staying here in the UK, can we tailor that to people who can take the skills internationally.

Principle of global approach

Some practitioners (as the above) however, had adopted a more global approach. They believed that these young asylum seekers needed education and skills that equipped them to compete globally, depending on their immigration issues.

They need skills and training that they can use wherever they go. Their training and education should be planned that way as they are a very mobile group (PRCSK35).

Principle of needs-driven approach

As discussed previously, the needs-driven approach to education and educational programmes was appreciated by almost all the respondents. The following is one of the respondent's experience of implementing a programme that mainly addressed the complex needs:

It was mainly to address the needs in school where there was a huge influx of unaccompanied asylum seeking minors around that time, shortly after the Kosovo war, Bosnian war and the schools were struggling to cope with the huge number of unaccompanied minors with very specific very different kind of needs, and the project did a small scale research, based on that we decided that they need to support them outside, just not focused on education but provide other practical emotional support (PCSSS10).

As another practitioner explained:

I think it does need to be tailor-made to that particular young person ...their existing level of education and abilities and also that interest (PCSA34)

Empowerment and resilience building approach

In her view, this group of children needed programmes that empowered them and helped them to find their way forward:

Also, I guess a programme that could empower young people, to have the voice of themselves, make them aware of the situation to voice their rights and entitlement, then they will be able to find their way. Building resilience is our focus. What they are able to have in their life and with this group it is really important (PCSCP1).

Principle of peer group approach

As in education, bringing similar peers together (peer group participation) in intervention programmes appeared to have positive outcomes according to the majority of the respondents. Based on the discussions, the social, demographic, ethnic and cultural similarities of a group may bring merits to programmes.

A programme officer talked about the problem in her region in Scotland:

I think all young people, when they study English, I think they should be with their peers, specific classes for 16 to 18 year olds and 18 to 25 year olds because as soon as you put them in with adults of any age, I do not think it is working, that is what happening all over the rest of Glasgow, you could ask other people what if it is like to have one 18 year old with a bunch of 40 year olds in a class (PBRCMR36).

Do interventions do more harm than good?

Whatever the approach, some interventions could have negative consequences. For instance, teaching English. As some professionals explained, for Afghani returnees, English language skills seemed to have become a hindrance rather than a help with re-engaging with their communities.

As a practitioner suggested:

We have conversations and feedback from young people. Up skilling them for instance, in English language is good ... they can do tourism etc. depending on what country they are from. However, on some occasions, the English language is creating a distance between them and their community (POCES5).

For instance, their Western life style and ways were being shunned by the locals. And also, they seemed to be accused of being foreign spies. An Afghani professional explained this situation:

Sometimes, being too westernised is a problem for those who going back to Afghanistan. Westernising and taking that ideology there is dangerous. They call them spies. This, eventually make them leave again. They are very mobile people, UASC (PBAAGJW12).

New intervention programmes needed

Based on their experience, some of the practitioners suggested a variety of interventions, which they thought were beneficial for UASC regardless of their future destinations.

Teaching professionally relevant English language

As some suggested, if these children were settled here or returned, there should be specific and quick skill development programmes available to them. The idea was to create a professionally focused tailor-made language skill courses to make them be economically independent.

We have to send them with something: economic dependency is important... And work towards providing the right language quickly enough to get the skills (POCES5).

She thought that creating language courses specifically aimed at a career, for instance, catering, would be an option.

Teaching mother tongue

As some professionals explained, a lack of knowledge in UASC's own languages put the returnees in a disadvantaged position in terms of employment, reintegrating into society and establishing trust and identity. As discussed before, English language skills could be of a hindrance to some returnees. Moreover, as some practitioners emphasised, their own language skills would be crucial for finding employment in their own countries in the case of repatriation. As one programme manager claimed in an anecdote, some other countries taught them their mother tongue:

They need their own language skills. In some countries these children get that (meaning some other host countries). If you do not have the literacy and the ability to write in your own language then they would struggle in the job market, so it is possibly worth looking at developing, helping them learn in their own language and where would you do that?(PCSCP1).

Another programme planner explained how difficult it was for them to switch from English to their own languages:

... because they are here for long time and they might not have been in education before coming into the UK, so the issue then is, if they want to get a job that enable them to speak English, they are lacking sufficient fluency or literacy in their own language, when they go back, so that is the other problem (PRSNEB7).

As she suggested, doing GCSE in their own language is another option.

Work experience and volunteering programmes

These seemed crucial for improving children's employability, language ability and integration into society.

A respondent who had a positive approach to these programmes claimed:

I think it is so important... fantastic volunteering, good volunteer opportunities helps integration, helps their English, help getting experience (PSDSAR24).

Needs-specific part-time schools

As an Afghan professional suggested, there should be institutions that deliver part-time tailor-made courses:

I think there are community type of schools here, let's say, if they are not taught all the subjects, there should be specific subjects taught to them, instead of full-time schools there should be part-time schools (PBAAGJW12).

Interviewer: *Do you mean specific schools that offer tailor-made courses?*

Interviewer: *Yes, tailor-made, exactly.*

Programmes based on IT-related learning and teaching

In order to explore new concepts and methods of supporting UASC in education and career progress, the study attempted to understand the professionals' viewpoint on Information Technology -based teaching and learning: CAL (Computer Assisted Learning) and CAI (Computer Assisted Instruction). These two methods could introduce to them a means of continuing educational and skill development opportunities, regardless of the geographical locations of these young people. For instance, giving returnees the opportunity to continue with what they had already started in the UK, or more importantly, delivering educational and skill development programmes to children in source countries.

First, the concept was well-received by the majority of the practitioners, except two who expressed discouraging responses. The majority of them viewed it as a novelty option that they had

not considered before. Most of them showed their enthusiasm and voiced the benefits that it would bring to UASC and their countries in a positive light.

It depends on their countries, some countries are better than others, IT in Afghanistan, or Somali, going back to I said before, I think it is important, in the short time when they are here they should get as much opportunity, it is better for them if they go back or send back, it is also better for their country if they get sent back (PIESJ13).

The idea was considered by the Afghan academic and in his view, it should be an initiative between Afghanistan and the UK government. The following is what he envisaged:

They have to build some centres in Afghanistan, and the skills, so, if these young people will be given skills and education here, they could be used as the teachers as facilitators in those centres on one hand, but also they could also decide to go and join the labour market, but, there could be a mechanism could be established that the these energies should not be wasted (PIISYB8).

Some centres could be built in connection with the government of Afghanistan ... but then again, there will be a different debate, because then the government of UK and the government of Afghanistan have to talk and negotiate and see what the options are ...

However, a few of whom held negative views as they were convinced that introducing information technology to the source countries of asylum seekers and refugees was downright impossible.

Repatriation

Repatriation was one of the topics that immersed in every discussion and many practitioners had doubts about the meaning of voluntary repatriation. In their view, children would rather go underground than going home voluntarily:

Very rarely they take voluntary repatriation ... They'd rather take the chances for all the reasons and go underground (POCES5).

None of them were in favour of the idea and there were many arguments about its practicalities and purpose. Some expressed their emotional feelings and the guilt associated with the decision of repatriating them to violent, war-torn countries (e.g. PHSBB32). However, professionals unequally believe that the children should be well-prepared and given the necessary skills (educational or vocational) to take with them if they were repatriated. Some wanted to be realistic about the situation.

As some of British and Afghan participants pointed out that, returnees would become vulnerable, as they would be seen as a failure by their families when they go back empty handed. The families had given money to traffickers or they still owed money to them.. They only learned English in the UK but did not have any other support. The helpless situation of the young returnees could turn them into different and dangerous people:

As an Afghan participant described:

If the child goes back home with the empty hand what answer he will give to his family?

In this situation the young man's feeling and the action would be disastrous:

*'I learn English language but the system did not really support me ', this is very dangerous, we are turning this child or **this teenager into a very dangerous machine, and in that can do anything, they become very vulnerable***

Others argued that UASC were mobile and they would always come back. Many thought that the UK was big enough to give them refuge as the country needed people, and it was a wasteful use of public funds as the country had invested money in them.

Some professionals were concerned about returnees being ostracised by their society for being westernised, English-speaking young men:

They have been here for so long, they see them as westernised, speaking English, wearing jeans and doing bit different things, they are not accepted, they are not welcome anymore, this is what they say (PHSBB32).

6.1.10 WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE? REQUESTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Requests for future research

The professionals made the following requests for future research and information in many different aspects when asked about their opinions on the knowledge required. However, there were paradoxical views about some of these ideas.

Promoting public perception

For instance, some would like to promote public perception on the contribution of refugees to the UK, especially, potential employers should be one of the target groups.

I just think promoting the benefit that refugees can bring to the UK is important. Some know the benefits of those communities, but not all. Asylum seekers and refugees get negative tone,

unfortunately. People are very afraid, especially, because of the economy is not very good (PSDSAR24).

Some others believed that the British public would be sympathetic towards UASC if they knew the real story about them. For instance, as the Afghan academic claimed:

If you say to the public, look these people have come from countries like Afghanistan and would you mind give them some education? No, people won't say do not do that, I doubt (PIISYB8).

Information on other programmes in the UK

In particular, some programme planners and officers were interested to know what or if other educational programmes existed in the UK in order to replicate them:

I would like to know that are there any programmes in the UK... might be models replicated elsewhere, I do not know of anything ... even if we would find that there was another programme something like bespoke programmes, I am really interested to get there and visit the programmes (PCSCPI).

Connecting both worlds: need information on source countries

Some described planning programmes that suited both source and host countries; they required knowledge about the socio-economic conditions and the needs of the source countries:

We do not know, we'd love to know, what are the vocational skills they need and what would be helpful to take back with them ... probably, we need something like the World Health Organisation, in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Albania to provide information on what are the sort of up-and- coming career pathways, key vocations and opportunities for young people who want to work. Then we can connect that to our programs. How we connect this, we do not know, actually we do not know this information. We can just assume ... but who knows? (PCSCPI)

However, some rejected this idea as the situation could be unpredictable and the best thing was to give children general education:

I think that it is stupid, because it is unpredictable, what I think is we should give these young people the best possible general education and then they will decide themselves what will be useful to them, their own countries if they are going back, I mean, you know something, whether they are 46 or 26, it will always be useful, for instance, medical skill, always going to be useful (PIESJ13).

Information about integration programmes in the world

Some professionals had discovered successful integration programmes elsewhere in the world (e.g. Australia) that seemed to be better than the programmes available in the UK. Therefore, it would be beneficial to research those programmes in order to compare the differences:

I have just come from Australia, there the Afghan community, especially the younger ones, are more integrated, they are doing very well. I would say they are better integrated there than those who are in the UK. Especially, I think Australia would be an interesting case, I did not do a proper research, I saw a big difference, I saw the students, they do volunteering for charities and government, volunteerism there is higher, here it is lower, still.

I think that is an important thing to produce knowledge and also to do comparison of where this kind of intervention works (PBAAGJW12).

Research information about post-repatriation life

Similarly, some would appreciate information on returned children's post-repatriation life:

It is nice to get some feedback on how voluntary packages are working. Research should tell us this... I would love to know what will be useful for them when they return home (POCES5).

Suggestions: what needs to be changed?

The following is the summary of the practitioners' suggestions for providing efficient and effective education and support services for unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the UK.

For policymaking: immigration polices

The Home Office needs to make quick and fair decisions to eradicate children's limbo status: resolving immigration problems and finding the 'happy medium' were the suggestions of some of the professionals. A professional who was knowledgeable of the Home Office immigration decision-making process suggested that there should be an independent panel separated from the immigration authorities. These determinations should be in the best interest of the child. On that basis, the immigration authorities then decide the immigration status with their own laws and rules while promoting the child's best interest:

...so that determination what is in the best interest of the child is outside of the remit of the immigration authorities, that it is a child specific analysis, and so they become separate, because at the moment the immigration authorities decide in the best interest of the child, it is not the part of their duty (PUNSS25).

As she explained, a good robust immigration system together with a good social care system would prepare the children to return home if they wished and they would take the skills with them. However, there seemed to be lack of coordination within government departments connected to international affairs:

If you have a robust and fair immigration system that aligns with a good social care system, you can return children or young people if the circumstances are relevant for them to do so, and they will have received an education and there is an international development aspect to that, you know, that they go back with skills and brings skills to their own countries, and I think that, I do not think that there is enough alignment between like FCOs and international development.

Difficult to change government policies

Some had different views, for instance, the Afghan academic believed it would be difficult to change state policies but it is the politicians' responsibility to act honourably:

I do not know how your research can help this, as long as their state policies are there and it works the way that it is not in the best interest of the children's education, so what can you do then? That would be of course violation of human right, but, they have to accept that, so they cannot play with the lives of these children, There's nothing much one can do. But, in an ideal situation, this is the politicians' responsibility, they should clarify their responsibility, either to ignore the international laws... and repatriate them immediately (PIISYB8).

Central government role and financial support for education and interventions

Many believed in the central government's responsibility for UASC education and welfare, and its role in refugee education. Moreover, the biggest problem faced by institutions and professionals was the shrinking budgets towards education and vocational training. When asked about the message to the government, the only request was adequate finances.

We could do it if the money was there. At the moment nobody has got money for anything (PCSCP1).

Collaboration with Europe in planning support services for UASC

To explore good systems and work together with Europe was an important issue for a few participants, especially those who had experienced the systems operating in European countries. A participant who visited Sweden was impressed by the system in place for UASC:

I think that we should look at what other countries have done. We should see the outcome of their systems. We went and visited Sweden twice with the education needs team and I was

impressed... actually their educational system was interesting... It is almost like a home tutoring... they set up some really good enterprises around vocational skills (PCSJS33).

Practitioners' approach and training

The important aspect was to strengthen the multi-agency approach and local authority accountability in decision-making. As discussed before, there was weak joined-up thinking and decision making at a multi-agency level. Moreover, practitioners should be supported by giving continuous professional training.

For children: what needs to be done?

Professionals unequivocally wanted the children to be given free and fair access to education and every support to achieve their potential.

Granting the right to stay

The participants believed that giving children the right to stay would make their lives much happier and a more meaningful experience:

I mean you see with the young people that are given status, there is a tangible kind of relaxation and a joy... it just means in terms of their plans for the future, it can be much more concrete, much more meaningful, because they know they can stay (PHSBB32).

6.2 FINDINGS OF CHILDREN'S SAMPLE

The following section presents the findings of the children's sample. The data presentation is arranged by the themes and sub-themes discovered in the primary data collection of the study. There is one leading concept, "Flight, gratitude and hope" emerging through the whole story of the children as it reflects the three stages that the children appeared to have gone through.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children: flight, gratitude and hope

When I was in my county, I was just thinking , I wanted to go to school, I want to lead a good life in my country, you know, but I was not thinking there was a good life over there and school, I did not know – a reflection of a trafficked female asylum seeker from Africa (COO3F).

The young woman's claim found an echo in the stories of the majority of children in this study. In general, they wanted to be educated in order to live fulfilling lives in their home countries. But schooling was a distant dream for many children as their war-torn and fragile countries were not in a position to meet their needs. However, the prime motive for their decision to leave home seemed not to be a calculated attempt to gain education or the best possible opportunities. For instance, as the participant claimed, she did not know whether the fulfilment existed in the outside world. They all claimed that the motivation of their flight was seeking safety. Even though in rare cases they had the awareness or time to plan, always the main factor that pushed them out of their countries was safety.

They had fled the most conflict-ridden and dangerous places in the world, seeking asylum in unknown territories:

I just came to save myself; my country is dangerous (CAKS7M, from Afghanistan).

In my country, we have war... in my area, people shooting without any reason, no enough food, drink, nothing, it is hot every time, you can't do anything (CSA9M, from Sudan).

As discussed before, they seemed to have no calculated plans for education or prosperity (except in a rare case of family reunion):

If somebody asks me 'why you came here?', I did not come here for anything, because I did not plan (COO2F, a trafficked female participant from Africa).

Education was not my priority, but now it is my priority (CGM15M, from Guinea, who was a second-year undergraduate in Scotland).

However, in a case of family reunion, future success was an aim:

I want to be successful, that is the reason I came here (CSA9M).

Unheard voices

Many claimed that they left the countries obeying parental decisions to send them away, even though it was not always their own choice or wish. Their parents were being assured by those who brought them over. The following reflects the harsh realities of their stories:

I came here not for happy life. I did not decide, my parents asked to come. Somebody brought me here, my parents paid them, I came through countries, I did not plan to come straightway to England, it took one year via Turkey to come here, by car, by walking. I did not come to have easy life. I love my country (CAN1M, from Afghanistan).

Some countries, if something happen in your country, you do not know where your parents are, you go missing, that is how some people came in, some people, like some agencies, they come to you parents and say that we want to take your daughter or your son we are going to make him like, get good education, and something like that, when they brought them here ,it is a different issue ... that is how people end up claim asylum (COO4M, a trafficked young male from Eritria).

However, some were rational about their parents' decisions:

Especially, when you are vulnerable, you want a better life for your kids (COO3F).

Perception of and feelings for host country

If you came from a country that have war, there is nowhere to go, and you came here, and they try to help you, I will say I am grateful (COO4M, from Eritria).

I am grateful, like some good things happen, I do not think I would make it if I was back in my country, like education (COO2F).

UK is very good for me, because they let me to study, they support me (CID8M, Afghan refugee from Iran).

It was fair to say that, in general, there was a sense of achievement, gratitude, admiration and sincerity towards the UK and its people. Recalling the unhappy times spent with non-native carers, a young man expressed his feelings about his English foster carers:

I moved to live with English family, I can say, they are really good, yes, I can't say more like, they are like, no my country people, no like them, they are more good (CAKS7M, from Afghanistan).

For him, Britain opened a diverse world with different cultures, races and nationalities that he had never seen before:

I feel ... like this country, interesting, like life and culture ... you can see in this country, you know, no race thing, but I say to you, I never see black people in my country.

For some, Britain was not a racist country:

I like here, I like everything, I am happy here, it is not racist, some countries racist. My friend told me, he is from Chez Republic ... he told me ... [naming an Eastern European country] is racist, I asked why it is racist, he said if you are brown , you can't get a job (CKM10M).

Some also admired Britain's social equality and state-welfare system that looked after them and educated them, refugees. However, not all were positive, as a participant who had serious immigration issues claimed:

They divide people, America, Russia, UK, then we fight, thousands of years ago we lived with different groups like Pashtun, Hazara, without fights... now they fight for our country, I do not like this country, but no choice (CAN11M, from Afghanistan).

Surprisingly, he liked the people: *System is ridiculous but people are lovely.*

Expectations from host country and hope for the future

Whatever their perceptions, the children are here. As some of them explained, they expected the country to understand their situation and look after them. According to a young woman from Africa:

You know we were brought here we are expecting someone to look after us (COO2F).

They all looked into the future with resilience and hope to give their lives a meaning, and stability as discussed in the following sections.

6.2.1 EDUCATION

Meaning of education

Education, that is the main thing in whole my life (COO4M, from Eritrea).

Sometimes education is not about where you are ... it is something be there as a foundation in your life, you have that proof anywhere you go, you always have something there to protect you (COO2F).

When you are doing education, you kind of like occupy your mind an occupy space, for example, sometimes, if I want to go out , but, I have to do my assignment , I just go like, I have to finish my assignment before I can go anywhere (COO3F).

Irrespective of their diverse backgrounds, every participant had a clear and unmistakable desire to achieve one goal in life – education. In their view, it was the foundation of life, protection, an absolute necessity to progress towards their career goals. It was also a proof of achievement, a positive identity and a possession that could not be stolen.

It give you success, if you get a good degree, definitely you get a good job (COO3F).

Yes, definitely, if you have your experience, and if you have your certificates, then definitely yes, you get a good job, I think, the qualification is important, if you do not have that certificate sometimes they do not put you first (COO2F).

Besides, education cannot be stolen:

No one is going to take it away from you (COO4M)

Future expectations

Although their ultimate aim was to achieve success through education and settle in the UK, there was a desire to contribute to their own countries and to the world.

A female participant talked about her mission to reach out to young people in Africa, and share her experience, educate them and teach them about life:

Most of these African countries see these young kids, they are not in school, most of them, they have little kids, when they are like 16 or 15 years, because, if you are not in education you might do something rubbish...

... you can do something for your country, not even my country, I like to help any country, especially like African countries, that is why I am doing this course basically, Health and social

care, it is not even based on money, but, for me to go out there to educate the young people, to tell them about education, to explain to them about life and all that stuff, so I would like to do that (COO3F).

Current education

As shown in Appendix 3, the majority of the participants were in full-time college education studying ESOL, IT and maths. Only one participant was a second-year undergraduate reading sociology. A few of them had already obtained BTEC level Diplomas and were aiming to progress into higher education. Almost everybody's aim was to go to university or the highest level of their education, except one who wanted to be trained as a manual worker in the construction industry.

Education opportunities in the UK: perception and expectations

So, when we come here and we get all these facilities like, using computers, doing this, doing that, so for us, it is just like, opening our eyes like for the first time, because we never had that, you know, education in Africa is really hard, it is no easy access as here, you know (COO2F).

This was the view echoed by others as they considered their current experience of education as an eye opener and exciting lifetime opportunity. In general, they admired the education system in the UK.

Education: a positive experience

I do not want to miss anything, and I do not want to stay at home, yes, I like college, I like everything (CSA9M, a Sudanese student).

Many appreciated the relaxed educational environment compared to the strict and cruel practices in their countries.

I really enjoyed school (CAKS7M).

As this Afghan student (animatedly) explained how learning was an unpleasant and unproductive affair under the cruelty of teachers and parents:

No respect for children in my country... this country not same like that, teachers... they hit the students if they can't understand ... they can nearly killing them and you forget when they hit you, when you come back home, then father and mother will angry and they hit them as well.

That is why I do not like study there ... if somebody help you to learn then you like to study.

According to the Eritrean's experience:

Even when the teacher explains something to you and if you ask questions they punish you (COO4M).

A fortunate change: limited vs. broad spectrum of knowledge

According to the undergraduate, he was fortunate to be in the British system, which opened him to a different mentality and culture:

You know, when I was in my country I have two type of education, as a Muslim, in the mosque and normal school, and then you come here, the mentality is different, different perspectives, and different culture, and you know what I mean, you have to learn it and you have to deal with it, so I was quite fortunate to come here, yes, definitely, be part of that, because, I would never ever learn the things I am learning now If I was in my country, So that is important (CGm15M).

Education: challenges, limitations and barriers

However, the system was not without its limitations. They faced many interrelated challenges, mainly, self-related and system-related, at all levels.

Self-related challenges

The study found multiple barriers and constraints faced by the participants in accessing and continuing with their education. They were mainly personal, legal and knowledge-related.

Learning difficulties

Two participants were diagnosed with a learning disability and dyslexia (under investigation).

They had problems with learning difficulties:

I have like a, learning disability...learning is very difficult when I... the thing is... I learn English like children {dragging his voice} A ... B... C (CAKS7M).

Psychological problems

In general, the children's psychological difficulties appeared to be caused by their trauma, difficult cultural adjustment, lack of parental care, loneliness, lack of trusting relationships, immigration and legal issues, and failure in friendship making.

Trauma, suicidal tendencies and self-harm

A couple of participants had serious psychological problems, For instance, one young man was suicidal and had serious evidence of self-harm due to racial abuse, and immigration problems. The other was undergoing psychological treatment and was also dealing with immigration issues.

Cultural adjustment and lack of parental care

A participant talked about her difficulties with adapting herself to a nuclear life style in the host country:

... life style here, I am not used to that (in her country) we live as a family , friendly , you know, here it is not like that , here is like , everybody is individual, it is difficult for me to move on (CCM13F).

They needed parental support too:

...first time it was difficult. I was with my parents. It was difficult to adapt here on my own (CAN1M).

In need of help for loneliness: a request for the government

The participant above, a 21-year-old who had refugee status, was lonely and yearning for a trusting bond, security and love. This was his message to the government:

Support the education first, support when they live lonely first, nobody when you upset, you need somebody, I had somebody I do not have confident to talk, I did not tell them inside my heart... Who you can trust? No matter who they are. I have friends. I have ... (name of the officer) at Children's Society. I still need somebody to trust and Government support to my loneliness. Loneliness and education first. Definitely jobs as well. Without a job does not have enough money.

Immigration and other legal problems: unfair treatment

For some, it was anger and frustration about being in limbo in an absurd system in the UK:

I am not happy, the system is ridiculous (but people are lovely).

They do not treat us like humans. We are in 21st Century, they should help the poor. Why do not help people like me suffering here asking asylum in their own country (meaning the UK). They should do something. At the beginning, they should tell us. They change your life, they educate you, and then they ask you to go (CAN11M).

Many revealed the difficulties they had been through (and were still going through) with their unsettled immigration status and its impact on their education.

...that time I had trouble with my immigration stuff, going to courts and rejection, all that sort of stuff in my head, I almost dropped out of the course because of that all (COO4M).

Immigration status hindered university admission:

My immigration status has not been settled yet, I could not apply to university (COO2F).

They were unclear and confused about the agencies that would finance their higher education. (e.g. Local Authority or NASS – National Asylum Support Service). Another found the gruelling interviewing process hard:

Some interviews very hard for me. My country we do not have interviews (CAN1M).

There was also an age disputed case (CID8M), which was a distraction for his education.

Financial problems

A few participants specifically referred to their financial difficulties. They juggled with part-time work and education.

For instance, as the undergraduate who worked as a cleaner explained:

I mean , financial help is always be the main problem for the kids like me, they give you some money ,it is not enough to cover everything, you know what I mean, so sometimes ,you have to find a part-time job to cover, actually I work as a cleaner, because I need some money, it is very difficult, you know, to work and do the time table at school , but I have to pay the bills so I do not have the choice (CGM15M).

Other personal issues: accommodation and self-care

Some of them had difficulties in the past with their accommodation and foster care placements while a few revealed the problems of becoming used to independent living, such as cooking or managing their affairs without help:

It is very difficult, because, I do everything myself (CAKS7M).

I can't cook. I always buy fast food, chicken and chips, burgers, pizza, when I was in London, my foster carer tried to teach me how to cook, but I can't learn (CID8M).

Knowledge-related challenges

Lack of prior educational qualifications

The participants possessed diverse and inadequate prior educational qualifications. As shown in Appendix 5, six participants had no prior education (except religious education) while only two had been to primary school. Others had managed up to the secondary level without gaining formal qualifications equivalent to British O Level or A level examinations. They were aware of the inadequacies and recognised the deficiencies in their English language skills, IT skills and in other subjects. As a young man explained:

I never go to school, I was just learning only Islamic study in Mosque, yes, reads Koran books, no normal study in the mosque, Islamic studies, it is very good, but thing is that we need to study other language, because you need to find jobs, like mechanics (CAKS7M).

Problems in own countries' education system

As they explained, there were many reasons why they were denied a proper education. For instance, living in chaotic war-torn countries, under resourced education facilities, weak education strategies and limited options, economic hardships and technological backwardness:

For instance, a participant talked about their teachers' computer illiteracy:

People do not understand computers, the teachers there they can't use computers, they do not understand it, they never use computers (CAKS7M, from Afghanistan).

Some had limited educational options:

...we do not have further education, we do not have colleges... you know here, when you are 16 you have two choices, to go to college or start work or to continue and then go to university (CCM13F).

Being a refugee elsewhere

More importantly, being a refugee in another country, before coming to the UK, denied some participants their access to education.

A young Afghan man who lived in Iran as a refugee shared his experience:

I did not go to school, no, because I did not have any ID there, In Iran they do not give asylum seekers any ID (CID8M).

Extracurricular activities and interests

Their interests were limited in scope (Appendix 5). Their sports activities (e.g. football, cricket) with friends were largely leisure and recreational. A female respondent was taking piano lessons as she did back home and only the university student was interested in travelling and had been to a few European countries.

Unawareness of British education system

This was one of the major limitations. Only a few who had been in education for some time in the UK showed some knowledge of the system, and even that was limited. It is fair to say that, in general, their knowledge about the overall education system and process was limited.

As a participant claimed:

I need the knowledge about the system, it is very different form French system, and you do not understand what you are going through... (CCM13F).

She seemed to be confused about her ability and to have lost her self-belief, but believed the teachers and trusted the teachers' opinion:

Especially, once you are told you are good ... or not, if my teacher who knows my progression, when he told you that, I just think that he knows me better than myself, he knows how I work, maybe, I stuck somewhere, may be that way is better.

Surprisingly, even many of those who were in the system for years were unaware of apprenticeships and the vocational educational avenues available to them.

For instance, some questioned each other and the researcher in a focus group:

What is it? Apprenticeship? (COO4M)

Is it for foreign people? (COO2F)

System-related challenges

System-related challenges were also multifaceted and interrelated, and mainly based around the structure and delivery of education.

College education: access and delivery

As I say, this college gave me so much, help me about everything, give me all the facility to improve myself, even to find myself, from here I realised that I have got some skills, who I am and,

you know, if I have to have a better life I have to go to higher education... my number one priority, be a graduate (undergraduate) (CGM15M).

His views reflected the positive consensus about college, the place that provided them with education and hope (despite its shortcomings).

As a participant felt:

For me everything is good, yes, I am happy with what I am getting (CICY14M).

However, there were frustrations and constructive criticisms about the system that needed to be dealt with. Most vocal were those who had prior education and had been in the British education system for a long time.

Access to education

The children remained largely neutral about their experience in accessing education. Some of those who came at school age had entered secondary education while others waited longer for college places:

I came I was 15, in 2009. I never had any education for few months. I started 2010 at... (naming his college) (CAN1M).

While waiting for college, most of them had followed life skills or English language courses run by charities (e.g. the Refugee Council, Children's Society etc.), which they found useful and enjoyable.

Perception of current studies: choice, selection, and limitations

Choice of courses and stream of education

You know, when you come first, you can't even talk English, you can't communicate with people, the only thing, you have to just go and do English and that was the first option (CCM13F).

Resonating with this view, other participants noted the importance of ESOL courses available to them. However, many had difficulty finding their choice of study. As discussed in detail in the sections that follow, the problems arose from the catalogue of interconnected limitations they faced in the system. Only the university student had a relatively smooth progression into a social science degree:

I studied some of those subjects I am studying now, psychology, sociology and history... and the way I have been taught, then the way the subjects I am studying now is kind of like pretty related (CGM15M).

Initial assessment and class placements

There were disappointments about being placed in unsuitable levels based on improper initial admission assessments. Firstly, as many complained, colleges assessed only their English knowledge, and in their view, all subject knowledge must be assessed to understand their strengths and weaknesses and to find the right level of study.

One shared his negative experience:

From the start they should do good assessment, when I enrol on level 3, I told the teacher that English is not my first language and but they just enrol me, I think I should be at level 2... they are not going to think that your level is high for you (COO4M).

Another participant who was denied an ESOL course blamed the weak and improper assessment and selection process:

I have not been to ESOL class, because as soon as I speak English they said that you do not need it ... then about my writing, sometimes they give you some form for you to fill, so I did fill a form for the exam and they said OK, so I did not do ESOL (COO3F).

This decision made her struggle with her creative media course (where even native speakers had language problems).

They put me on level 3 straight away, and English is not my first language, even though people who were English is their first language, they were also struggling.

Another respondent raised concerns about mixed classes with different nationalities and English language skills:

Europeans' writing is good, but they cannot speak, they put all together. They should think how they communicate (CAN11M).

As for IT education, there was no basic assessment before assigning them to courses:

Researcher: Do they assess your IT skills?

Respondent(s): *No, they just test our language, English (CCM13F, CICY14M).*

According to them, teachers should never place them with British children, who are well ahead with using computers, without assessing their IT knowledge.

As a teacher, you need to know what group of people you should put together... they start using it since very little so obviously, they are capable of doing more than us, so, definitely, the ability of their levels are going to be different (COO2F).

As she further pointed out, mixing abilities would not only frustrate the children but also jeopardise the teaching process:

All of them get mixed and then, they have different problems... they will be calling the teacher and ask different question, the teacher get confused.

Performance assessment

They seemed to prefer two yardsticks to assess their performance: Self-assessment and formal assessment.

Self-assessment of performance against British peers

If you think of my world, you say that I am much better than some of the kids that born here, at least I have got a little certificate, and I am thinking about good future, while other are not (COO4M).

Similarly, many asserted their level of achievement, performance, commitment and diligence with their British peers. They seemed to be pleased with their standing.

As he further noted:

They (British children) do not have got problem with English, ... but, in my college, the ones that came from different countries, they did very good in my class, better than the one that born here, they come from Somalia, China, Vietnam, they get distinctions for all subjects (COO4M).

Finally, his view on his native British classmates' lack of diligence:

...they get passes, they do not get distinctions, because they do not have the patience to sit down and work, they say "how am I going to sit down 12 hours and doing my assignment instead of texting on my phone?" ... Sometimes, they do not go to college for weeks.

Formal assessment

Many relied on formal assessment and accepted the outcome, but some seemed confused and disappointed about the assessment system, thinking that they were unfairly assessed. For instance, a participant talked about her dismay at not having the chance to resit an English writing paper and the promotion of less competent classmates:

The thing is when I passed my three exams, reading, speaking and ICT class, I failed writing, they did not give me the chance again I am wasting my time, no exam... some people not pass they go to other level, I do not know what teacher is doing... there was a person he is not speaking properly, I am better than him (CAKS7M).

Help needed with education

The majority of them were in dire need of subject-related help, especially with the English language, maths and IT skills. The following is the narrative of a participant who followed the advice to be a bricklayer, reflecting the difficulties with fulfilling their educational needs:

I want to pass maths and English. Without maths, you can't do anything. I liked it bricklaying, teacher wanted me to do bricklaying, but managers did not allow me to continue because I did not pass English. I want more support in education, English maths ... important to me. My English is not good enough to do computers. Construction work I can. I need to build up English. If you think in future, if you do not speak English enough you can't get the job you want, you are losing. If you have English and maths you can do everything (CAN1M).

In general, their need for help seemed not to have been met, and some of them resorted to taking private tuition and family help.

As a Somalian young woman explained:

Maths, no, I do not like maths, I do not know, it is very hard, very complicated, I take private tuition (CSH12F, living with family).

Teaching: support and quality

You need your teachers to guide you and persuade you ... I mean, their job is to teach you, right, but, their job is necessarily to tell you about your future (CGM15M).

They expected teaching and guidance from the teachers. It is fair to say that, in general, the teachers had their affection, respect and admiration.

I am happy with my teacher, he is helpful, he is trying best, yes, he is a good teacher, all three different teachers are good (CKM10M).

The participant who had learning disabilities expressed her gratitude:

I am not steady in the class, In a separate class just only for me, my own teacher (giving the teacher's name) at school stick with me and teach me A-B-C ... I think ... when I learning quickly I forget quickly (CAKS7M).

However, there were negative experiences and frustrations with the teachers' approach and teaching quality.

I did not like the teachers. English teacher was fine. I did not like others (CAN1M).

Lack of understanding

It emerged that 'knowing children's' background' was crucial in many respects. However, many participants were frustrated about the teachers' unawareness of their backgrounds and the gulf between foreign children and British children:

... sometimes, when we, people that were not born here, start college, they expect you to know certain things, which you do not (COO2F).

Yes, IT skills, in this country, who were born here already know IT, they have been to school, they do more computer... in my country (meaning Africa) it is hard for you to get access to a computer (COO3F).

Not listening to children's voice

There was unhappiness about the teachers' lack of attention and not listening to their needs and pleas for help. As the above participant complained:

Sometimes I try to explain to her about it, she is not even listening to me.

Explaining her frustration further:

... because, I told her (the teacher) that I need more help, you do not need to include me in this kind of people, because, they have the basic ability and you need to pay attention to me, I told my teacher about that, but, she did not do anything about that.

Inability to assess the level of student

Moreover, some claimed that teachers relied on exam results and did not consider their real weaknesses. Bringing this to light, the above participant claimed:

Every time I have exams, I pass the writing , but I do not know how to construct a sentence, I just can't write English ... that is why I told my tutor (asking help), I need someone to guide me, to help me construct my English ... he said, your writing is perfect.

Negative and insensitive approach

I just hate that class, because the teacher, she made me hate it, and I hate IT since then, she was giving me a lot of problems (COO4M).

This potential engineering student had experienced one of his teachers' negative attitude and insensitivities towards him while he was struggling with IT in her advanced class:

Other students in my class are really good at IT, and I should be in Level 1, but I was put in Level 2, ... she always shouting at me saying that "why you are too slow why you are always behind?", I said, "look, I never had IT skills before, I should be in Level 1"... but she said, "you have to be here you have to catch up with that, that is what most student do" (COO4M).

Recognition and encouragement vs. discouragement and humiliation

On the other hand, some were delighted to be praised by the teachers.

A participant's gleeful narrative:

Some of the students in my class have to come to me, and ask {his name} "Can you do this? Then, teacher says that {Name} "You show him how you do the PowerPoint for this unit" (CICY14M).

An Afghan young man talked about his accomplishment and the teacher's recognition:

I came to this country... I cannot, turning off or tuning on computer- I do not understand. But I passed my ICT, I am really good. I make different different thing, like different population charts and show the teacher, yes, teacher told me you are very good at ICT (CAKS7M).

In contrary, there were feelings of discouragement and humiliation about the teachers' approach and some felt that their efforts were unrecognised:

Our main tutor... he knew that English was not my first language, so he was encouraging me saying " If you are committed and trying to attend the classes, and if you really want to do this I know you would do something" but the other tutor he discouraged me, he was even surprised to see that I even got a high pass... he kind of like, you know, put me down (COO2F).

Teachers' commitment to teaching

Although there was no general criticism levelled at the teachers' overall commitment, only one viewed the teachers at his college as self-serving individuals:

They (teachers)only get paid for passes, so, that is why... they do not bother come to class to teach you, if you want a distinction you have to do it yourself (COO4M).

College facilities

The majority of the participants highlighted the following limitations in their colleges and their impact on their education.

Weak advisory service: seeking researcher's advice

They were concerned about the level of educational guidance and advice. Newcomers seemed to be unaware of advisory services and one who wanted to follow a course to become an engineer sought the researcher's advice.

Respondent: *Of course, I need help in everything, with my studies, sports, I just want to study full time after ESOL, I want to study more (CID8M).*

Researcher: *Did you try to talk to anybody about the next course?*

Respondent: *No I did not, I do not know anyone.*

Researcher: *Does college give you advice?*

Respondent: *No, nobody, I do not know.*

Researcher: *You can talk to ... {college Mentor} about these thing, can't you?*

Respondent: *yeh, yeh*

He then asked the researcher:

So, if I finish ESOL what should I have to do?

Moreover, some of them were disappointed about the wrong guidance and advice given by teachers, other advisors or sometimes by social workers. For instance, some of them were led into a variety of uninteresting, unfruitful and inappropriate courses, wasting their efforts and time. As a participant who was aiming to do civil engineering (and was advised to follow environmental science and business studies for years against his wish) claimed:

I am in the second year doing level three at college now, but, I should be at university now, because previously I had bad advice. I had a bad advice from the social worker and the teacher (COO4M)

Another participant who wanted to go to university to become a journalist shared a long story about her bewildering struggle with the creative media course she was diverted to.

When I went to enrol, I told them I am interested in journalism and the lady told me, this creative media course is going to be perfect for you. But after sometime, I got confused, when I had the first assignment I wanted to leave the course.

When I finished, I was so confused, you know, inside me, I did want to go to university, that was my plan, but everything was confusing (COO2F).

The participants had mixed views about the social workers' role in educational matters. One mentioned specific support received, e.g. getting a computer, while another felt that the help was not much more than just an enquiry:

Social worker just asks me ... how you study... {name}? (CAKS7M).

Problems with study courses

Oh, my gosh!!!...I was at level 3, I was supposed to start level 2, but, they did not have level 2 (COO2F about her struggle on creative writing course).

Inappropriate course levels, a lack of course choices, and abrupt discontinuation of courses also had an impact on their education. Moreover, one of the above participants (COO4M) had to waste his time on a business study course when the college abruptly axed his environmental science course. There was not an appropriate course in the civil engineering stream:

I did business level 3 last year, I got good grades, I just see it as a boring subject I wasted a year doing it, a waste of time.

(Logistical problems and poor academic standard had prevented him from enrolling in a college that had the subject choice).

Limited facilities

Internet does not teach. It is good for extra work. Teacher has to teach at school. I still like to have one-to-one tuition from a tutor (CAN1M).

Resonating his view, the majority felt that they were deprived of good help (in spite of help available via the internet, e.g. BBC Learning English, BBC Skillswise). There was desperation for extra help and longer teaching time, especially with English, maths and IT studies.

Limitations in college drop-in centres

Many described the problems with understaffed facilities failing to deliver a good service:

Drop-in sessions, when you get there, they do not teach you anything, the last time I went there, the lady was saying to me ... you have to use BBC Skillswise and said that you should do that in your computer, is that help? (COO4M).

Self-help in education

A few who possessed a television or a computer seemed to use it for learning English and other subjects. However, some did not have any of these facilities and relied on college facilities.

Lack of proper teaching

So lot of students go and say "I have a little problem with my sentences or my course work", they just amend that, they are not just going to help you with English.

They ask you to find a book, but I need someone to guide me, to help me (COO3F).

Age barrier

Some, however, had an age barrier to accessing support:

... because I am now 18, and they do not give that one-to-one support (COO3F, who needed support in English writing).

Class size and structure

Being in overcrowded classes with a group of diverse nationalities, cultures, and education and skill levels was a problem, especially during ESOL lessons:

There are too many students in the class, now 25 students in one class , entry 1 and entry 2 sit together, and only one teacher there, you can't learn anything (CAKS7M).

A participant (who preferred one-to-one English teaching for a whole day) spoke about the problems:

Very difficult to learn, it is too hard, because, all languages, like, Polish, Slovakian, Czech, Arabic, Pakistani, all are there, so can't learn properly, because it makes your brain very busy, you can't learn, you can't listen... (CIKA5M).

They also felt that being with the same nationalities and friends together did not help to improve their language:

When I sit with Afghans, I can speak my language, it is difficult to learn, I need to separately sit down to learn English (CAKS7M).

He was sensitive to the teachers' feelings when students used their mother tongue to make remarks about them:

It is very rude for the teacher, sometimes, student talking about their teacher in their own language that is not nice for the teacher.

Curriculum planning and subject-related problems

The participants commented largely on the advantages and limitations of the ESOL course. In general, the first-time learners in particular appreciated the ESOL course:

Yes, it is very good for me, it is easy and it is very good (CID8M).

I did ESOL for one year, it gave me some foundation to do foundation skills (COO3F).

However, some felt the need for more advanced courses that were better than ESOL:

I want to learn more English and do different course better than ESOL (CKM10M).

As some suggested, if they ever went back to their country with their current ESOL level knowledge, they would not be able to find a good job as their countries would expect more than that level from them.

Other study courses

A participant displayed his dissatisfaction about his on-going course:

'Elements course' is not enough, I want to do extra course English and maths (Can1M).

Segregation in college environment

Many acknowledged that ESOL and other courses are designed for only foreign students, promoting segregation from British students.

My friends in ESOL class go with me to ICT class, maths class, we all work together, no mixing (CAKS7M).

Especially, ESOL classes would not give the opportunity to mix with others:

ESOL, you know, you are only with the people English is not their first language (CGM15M).

Even in a mixed class, they were distant from British children:

One day we have class at study centre, we do homework and things (CSH12F).

Researcher: Do you meet others, British students?

Respondent: Yes, but, we do not talk together, it is only self-study.

However, those who followed other courses seemed to forge closer and more supportive friendships with their British peers. As the participant who did the difficult creative media course noted:

I did continued it, because of my friend, Ella. It was so stressful, and she was so encouraging (COO2F).

Difficulty in making friendships

If you say to people, to him or to her 'Hi' they say to you 'Sorry, do I know you?'

I need to mix with English people, it is important for me but I can't get them, English people, as friends, I do not meet anybody, no (CSA9M).

As the young Sudanese newcomer felt, the majority of them seemed not to receive extended friendship from British students at college.

Playground meetings: effort and disappointments

Most male participants seemed to meet British and Scottish young people largely at the college and community playground through sports (e.g. playing football and cricket with native children). However, some used the playground as a venue for listening to English speakers rather than friendship making:

Researcher: Can you make friends? (When playing football)

No they are not friends, but, I try to listen to them what they say, I never miss football, because I want to mix with them, I am just listening (CSA9M).

Integration for education

Education is different when you live with somebody different. I want to be with English speaking people. I like to be with different people, you learn different things, different culture (CAN1M).

In general, the participants strongly believed the impact of integration on their education and social development. The following are views from a group session (in Scotland) on language improvement:

CICY14M: For me, in my opinion, you need the basic from the college ... and after that, you need to go outside you need to add things, like, from this country, so that it will be more helpful. You have to go to the society to improve more.

Many participants believed integration with British students helped them to improve their English and to get to know about future study courses they were planning to follow:

I think it is good to have friends, I do not have British friends, I will have to mix with the British, it will help me to improve English, and especially for us, and me. I want to do know more about the new course, I like to find some students that who did the same course, I want to meet with them and have chat to know more about the course (CCM13F).

I need help with grammar and speaking, I need to talk to somebody, talk talk talk (CID8M).

Only a couple of participants (including the undergraduate) seemed to integrate fairly well. For instance, a participant above (CICY14M) found friendships and romance in Scotland:

Yes, I have lot of friends, a lot of Scottish friends, anyway, my girlfriend is Scottish.

Impact of education on integration

In general, the participants did not express explicit and convincing views on the impact of education on their integration into the new country, except a few who thought that it would have an impact on integration, and that integration was important.

For instance, the strongest and positive views came from the undergraduate student:

Definitely, you have to integrate, otherwise, you know, you will be lost in society (CGM15M).

For some, there was no straightforward answer. A participant's response to the question of education and integration:

I do not know... only the sport can make some friends (CSA9M).

Education: support from wider world

Their views on other means of support in their education were varied. For instance, some of them appreciated the help from charities (e.g. the Refugee Council, the Children's Society).

Children's Society helped me a lot. They help me with everything. They were very helpful when I was at school (CAN1M).

Moreover, foster parents were also a source of educational and emotional support:

My foster parents, she is teaching IT ... she helped me a lot, when I was taking GCSE she teach me a lot, like every night she taught me maths, English... she always encouraged me (COO4M).

They also relied on the help, advice and friendship of their friends and peers.

Family help

Those who lived with their own families (CSH12F & CSA9M) were receiving strong support from within the family network, for instance, help with studies, arranging private tuition and so on. As one explained:

At home, yes, my sister, my cousin, all of them they always trying to help me, they tell me if you want to be an engineer you have to improve your maths (CSA9M).

Help from own communities

Almost every participant admired their relationship with the own communities. However, the research did not find compelling evidence for strong community support for their overall needs. As a participant explained:

We have a very good Afghan community. I have lots of friends. I know every Afghan there. We have New Year parties. Very nice community, I am happy... they do not support with other things. I have to ask social workers, Children's Society for help (CANIM).

Repatriation and continuity of education

There were thoughtful discussions of continuing education via digital means in the event of repatriation. For them, technology was undoubtedly a worthy means of education. In their view, such a system would be hard to implement given their countries' financial, infrastructural, educational and political problems. However, the most educated participant remained optimistic about the prospects:

You know, now we can't do anything without technology , so it is powerful, I mean , yes, it would be great if you have the skill to use the computer in the process of the learning , I mean it is a possibility, but you have to think about what type of country it is, My country people cannot afford to have computers. I mean, it is going to be difficult for some countries. I am not saying impossible, I do not use impossible, it is going to be really hard, but, possible in the future, yes (CGM15M).

6.2.2 EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER BUILDING

To set the context, the participants were not in employment (except a few part-time student jobs). Therefore, the findings were mainly based on their career ambitions and the obstacles to achieving their goals.

Attitude to employment

I want to work, I want to go to work, I do not want to be sitting at home. you know ... for me to have a start in my life, like, I want to have a job, like, that guarantee me I can look after myself, I can do everything (COO2F, a female from Africa).

I want to work all the time (CLKA5M, a young man from Iran).

Regardless of their diverse backgrounds, their lasting goal was to find meaningful employment and promising futures in the country of asylum. Their attitude to a career seemed to be borne out of many factors, such as their strength of character, ambition, lack of opportunities in own countries, family responsibilities, and most importantly, self-reliance and religious convictions. For instance, the young woman above showed no anxiety about losing her benefits (due to her unsettled immigration issues)

Ok, my money is coming now... if they cut that they cut that, no, it is not like a big deal for me, if everything is settled later {her visa status}, I want to work.

For the young man above, according to his religion, receiving taxpayers' money for his own welfare was exploiting another hardworking being:

It is not right to get that money. If you can't get a job, you just stay at home, just get money just free houses, just watch TV ... you did not pay any tax... somebody working hard outside paying for that, the government gives money to me, it is not nice, I can't keep that money, because my religion is Islam (CLKA5M).

Career choice and aspirations

As shown in Appendix 6, the young people 's career ambitions range widely, for instance, there were potential businessmen, sociologists, translators, journalists, dentists, engineers, civil servants, IT consultants, policemen and tradesmen among them. Their ambition stemmed from many factors, for instance, childhood dreams, lack of opportunities in own countries, opening to a new world and seeing new opportunities in the host country to market themselves – e.g. selling their language skills by becoming an interpreter for the Home Office or back home, (CLKA5M) or becoming a police officer to help non-English speakers out of trouble (CKM10M).

Some would go with realistic ambitions according to their hearts to find a career that suits their ability:

One thing I tell you, my heart tells me do not go for money... do something you can easy to learn, do not think like a doctor, and very good and good money, do not do that because you can't do it (CAKS7M).

For some, however, there were no apparent reasons for their choice:

Researcher: Why do you want to be an engineer?

Respondent: I do not know, I just want to be engineer, but, I know it is late for me, but I know I can (CID8M).

In general, they aspired to stable employment in the UK. However, some seemed to want to take their experiences and skills back to their own countries, for example a Somalia girl who wanted to be a dentist:

I like to go back to my country, and maybe open a hospital or something like that, because, we do not have a lot of dentists in my country, that is why I want to learn dentistry (CSH12F).

Another showed admiration for the country's care for vulnerable people and wished to take that quality back to her native Congo to improve lives:

Because, the thing I like here is, how they treat their disabled people, it is the most thing I love here, because in my country we do not do that, we push them (showing animatedly) they do not care about disabled people, so it makes me feel like I must go back to my country and help them (CCM13F).

Current experience in career building

Even though the majority appeared to be strong willed and aiming high with their future employment plans, there were signs of faltering ambitions and losing hope in those who were looking for employment (e.g., CAN1M).

Disillusionment with unsuitable career path

The following is the story of a directionless young man's struggle to find a suitable career path.

I do not like Element course, I do not like carpentry...

I really want to be mechanic or construction worker, bricklaying, painting decoration. I am good enough to fixing the matching. I did work ... watch doing machines back home. I did construction work in Afghanistan. I like... 1. mechanic 2. painting decorating 3. brick laying this three things in my future I want. I spoke to the teacher about this. Next year they say if you build up English the clerk [college administrator] said and then he can go to mechanic course. There is motor mechanic. I can apply but my English is not enough. I do like office work. But I am not that good ... I am not young ... too late (CAN1M).

Challenges and limitations in career planning

The young unaccompanied asylum seekers had to overcome many self-related and system-related obstacles to planning their career goals.

Self-related barriers

As discussed under education, there were personal, psychological and immigration problems that caused a profound impact on their lives. In addition, there were specific factors that would obstruct their access to employment. For instance, they were both academically and professionally unprepared for employment in the UK; they were also engaged in limited extracurricular activities.

Current employment

Only two participants were in paid part-time student jobs as a cleaner and a supermarket cashier while studying full time.

I work as a cleaner; I work for a company called ... (naming a famous national company), it is a cleaning company (CGM15M, undergraduate student).

Attitude to part-time work

They only use the part-time work to earn extra money to support themselves. They found juggling their studies and work difficult. However, they had no intention or interest in continuing permanently with the menial jobs. As one determined, he wanted to focus on education in order to achieve and make more money:

Maybe I will do a job, part-time but not full-time, I want to be very good {in his IT studies} then I can earn a lot of money.

Commenting on his part-time job as a supermarket cashier, he said:

You know, some places, we are doing part-time jobs, like, when I see the managers and workers, I am just thinking that oh my god! This is not my future work, because, I am not going to continue with this (COO4M).

His challenge to the supervisor reflects his determination:

... so I said to him, look, you think that this job is your life, because just you are the supervisor, but this is not my future job.

Professional qualifications and training

Given their age of arrival in the UK, it was obvious that the participants did not possess any professional qualifications or training before they came to the UK.

Past work experience

As shown in Appendix 7, a couple of children had done varied and intermittent physical work in their countries, such as building construction and mechanical work (Can1M). Female participants, in particular, had not done any work back home.

Case of child labour

Another participant had been used in an illegal trade (as he described it) in Iran transporting goods on his bicycle between Iran and Kurdistan when he was nine years old. He had done it in order to support his family. He gave a long narrative of his work and his perceptions, including the following:

... everything is illegal in Iran ... I working for one man, from this man house, from Iran , 10 boxes something like that , to take to another place like Kurdistan, he said this one is electric things like lights bulbs something like that, but he did lie to me, I do not know what is inside... I try to work for myself from my country for my mum and dad... (CLKA5M).

Past voluntary work experience

Only the undergraduate had been involved in a fundraising activity when he was at school to support Liberian child refugees in his country. Another participant voluntarily helped people with IT problems (CICY14M).

Current work experience: opportunities, perception and limitations

Only one participant had two work placement opportunities. At the time of the interview, she was assisting with administration work in the children's charity that supported her and was happy with the opportunity.

She also had just one-day's work experience (out of a possible two-week work experience schedule) at a film and TV production company doing simple tasks:

Researcher: *what work did you do there?*

Respondent: *You know, when you start, you just do things like, serving teas, things like that, I was really happy (COO2F).*

However, the work had come to an abrupt halt due to some problems in the organisation.

Lacking personal contacts

However, she realised her lack of personal contacts, which she thought was needed in order to secure a job in the film industry. As a result, she had changed her mind and chosen an accountancy course to become a bank cashier to avoid risks:

You need to have links, you need to know people for you to get in there, you know, so I do not want to risk that... so I am going to take another course in the meantime, what I am going to start end of this month ,accountancy and I like working as a bank cashier (COO2F).

Volunteering

Only three respondents had done voluntary work. For instance, the undergraduate had worked for Barnardo's and found the work useful:

It really helped, you know, in the process of my English and help me to interact with people, it really really helped (CGM15M).

Volunteering for trade and manual work

Another respondent was working voluntarily in a bakery as a cashier and for a builder (who promised him £50 a day once he was qualified) for a few hours per week:

Researcher: *Who found you this work?*

Respondent: I found it myself... I said can I come with you to learn something about plumber or tiling, he said yes, he does not pay me anything, he said , when you learn properly, I am going to pay you, like a fifty pounds a day.

Researcher: *Are you going to continue with the work?*

Respondent: Yes, for some time (CLKA5M).

Work experience: limitations

For example, the participant above was dissatisfied about the piecemeal basis of acquiring skills and needed proper training and multiple work experience:

I want to learn properly, now I do things like everything half half.

I like learn more things like whatever, like a businessman, chef, restaurant. I do not like to just stay in home do not do any work, you can find any work and learn other things.

Lacking work experience opportunities

Especially, when you are applying for jobs, because they ask for experience ,for me, I never worked, I have never done anything, so when they ask for my experience, so difficult to give experience, because, I do not have any, so we need the work experience to give us that experience (CCM13F).

Agreeing with this claim, the participants overwhelmingly agreed that work experience was key to getting a foot on the career ladder.

Need experience through volunteering

Some participants wanted to gain experience by volunteering:

I tried to find a job. I did not find it. They need English. They need experience. I send my CV. I do not have experience. I like to do voluntary work. The college said if you want volunteer they will find you. College knows the teams. I am trying to do that (CAN1M).

For some, volunteering was the way to unlock their hidden talents:

I am looking for volunteering job that I can link with my course, sometimes, you have your talents hide and you do not know, when you go there to do this skills it comes out, I think it is very good (COO3F).

Another young man who wanted to be a policeman was happy to volunteer in a police station:

If you do not know the work, how can you be a policeman? (CKM10M).

Limited knowledge and awareness of career-related issues

Firstly, the participants in general showed minimal awareness about the attributes of the UK labour market or the employment-related opportunities open to them in the UK.

Knowledge about apprenticeships

For example, as discussed previously, even those who had been in the education system for a long time had no idea about apprenticeships. However, having discussed it (in a group interview) many felt that the apprenticeship route would have good potential, provided that both academic and vocational routes were valued equally.

They should give the option, if the option is the same, it is good (COO2F).

There was an enthusiasm about the option and following that route.

Which is good, as I say, I think that is good, yes, at least I know this is what I wanted and you go straight away (COO2F).

She also explained her confusion from doing many different studies:

That is why I am confused like, I go and do this and this and this{showing animatedly} then I find I kind of like, stuck with more than three things, so, I do not know if I go to uni or which one should I study, so that is why I am confused you know.

System-related barriers

Career guidance and advice

If God helps you, he is going to give you the right people to guide you ... I mean, it is really hard to decide your own future. So, you need to have people, teacher or your mother or family or someone can guide you or, ask them, 'please tell me about... my future' and then you can decide (CGM15M- undergraduate student).

When asked about what guidance he was lacking, he answered:

Career guidance, because you know, it is really, important.

Echoing his idea, many participants specified their need for career guidance and advice.

I need career guidance (CICY14M, a potential software engineer).

Researcher: *Career guidance? Do you have anybody to get advice from?*

Respondent: No.

Expectations of guidance and advice

Answering the question about his understanding of becoming a policeman, another participant claimed:

I want to understand , I want to learn how to do training , I do not have any, if someone teach me, I want someone to teach me how to be a policeman (CKM10M).

Because of what happened to me, I do not want my life to be messed up again (COO2F).

As one participant claimed, planning the future was a challenge but she did not want to be messed up again:

I have to make sure that I am getting something good... I do not want to mess it up, for someone like me anything that I do or anything that I thinking of, I have to think about it before I act, so it kind of like prepare me, before I do something (COO2F).

Need information on financial support and networking

As one participant who wanted set up his own electrical engineering/electrical installation business in the UK complained:

I want to start my own business and I need financial support, I want to know the website... I want to have connection with the people I think, in contracting side.... I did not have support (CAN11M).

Gap in guidance: seeking researcher's advice

According to the narratives, it is fair to say that there was a severe gap in career guidance and advice services. On one occasion, a participant wanted the researcher's opinion about his choice of career (even though he had already spoken to his teacher) and was not aware of where he could seek career advice at college:

I really like a police officer, then I feel like, there is need to experience and English , I do not know whether it is easy is police officer or mechanic, I do not know, really, what can I do, I do not like to be a mechanic and I feel like it is stressful mmm ... that is why I am asking you police easy or mechanic? (CAKS7M).

When the researcher advised him to see the college career advisor, he replied:

Career advisor, yeh ... mmm ... where are they, do you know?

Sources of career guidance

As the study found, the main source of career guidance was mainly teachers. In some cases college administration staff were also involved in giving advice. Although the teachers' advice was well received, the participants seemed to need more help. An example is a teacher's advice to a participant above who was desperate to know how to become a policeman (CKM10M).

Someday my teacher told me when we have free time in the class she was talking about what course you like, what job you want to do – she said, yes, you do police it is a good job and you speak different languages, we need more police like from different countries (CKM10M).

Some participants experienced discouragement but believed the teacher knew best. The following is the story of a young woman and her childhood dream to be a doctor and her view on teacher's advice:

When I was young, I want to be a doctor but, when I came here, I talk to my teacher, she said, yes, it is good you can be a doctor but, your English is not good, English is not your first language and you need more time to... I said , I am not really bad for that, so, I changed my mind,

I chose health administration, just to be in the hospital environment, with people, and I think it can change my life (CCM13F).

Even though she could improve her language, she needed work.

I can improve, but it will take a long time, I do not want to be that long, in short time I want to start work.

She respected the teacher's decision:

I just think that he knows me better than he knows myself, he knows how I work, maybe I stuck somewhere, may be that way is better ...

However, she had not given up her career dream and planned to use her options well:

Researcher: *Do you still feel that you could have worked towards medicine with some help?*

I still feel that, yes, but, the way I see health care administration , I start with that and then, may be, I have one career or two, to have two career with me it is better.

Guidance from advisors and college staff

As discussed previously, there were many example of guidance given by college staff in both education and employment. The advice, however, did not seem to work in their favour. Some participants had lost trust in the advisors.

A discussion in a focus group meeting:

I did not talk to them about the work, because, long time, I did the interview with one girl, remember? (asking her fellow students in the focus group), and then she said she will come back , but, we do not know what happened (CCM13F).

She did not come back, replied a fellow respondent (CICY14M).

Guidance from own community

Although community support in planning employment was rarely mentioned, only one participant believed in the importance of family and community connection:

You should know people to get into job. If people know you, they give you jobs. In McDonalds, Burger King, like places most of the workers are Asians (CAN1M).

Community exploitation

However, the respondent was quick to point out his dislike for working for his fellow Afghans self-employed because of the exploitation:

I do not want to work with Afghans, people from your own country do not pay, and they expect more from you (CAN11M).

He also claimed that he was happy to work for native British people or any other nationality, claiming that he had a wide circle of friends from many countries.

Peer support and advice: helping each other

There was a general tendency to follow their peers and friends (regardless of nationality) when it came to making career choices.

If I finish public service Level 3 then I can get my job, my friend, he is doing level 3, he is doing Army now, he is from UK, yes, he is from here.

They seemed to have a strong bond and to rely on each other for help, and to be sensitive and caring. For instance, hearing his (depressed) colleague's career intention to be a mechanic for the first time in the interview, his interpreter swiftly offered his help to find a suitable college:

I am going to ask... (name of their mentor) and talk to the social worker about this (CIKA5M).

6.2.3. FUTURE DESTINATION AND REPATRIATION

They change your life, they educate you and they ask you to go, then it is harder to go, the things and opportunities we have here do not have back home (Afghanistan). I can't imagine going back, and, life has changed, it moved on, and I am changed (CAN11M).

This strong view of the unfairness of repatriation came from a respondent who had problems with his immigration status. According to the participants, repatriation, either voluntary or by force was not an option, given their personal circumstances and the dangerous situation in their countries. Some felt that they were not yet qualified enough to find employment in their countries as they expected more from them:

If you have qualification, any qualification that you present to them then you will be OK, they expect it from you now, I need more, I definitely need more qualifications (COO3F).

It was not easy to find employment back home either:

....because it is so difficult, even in my age it is difficult to get a job in Africa, even old people do not get jobs, so for me it is so difficult (CCM13F).

In her view, going back empty handed was a waste of time if they were asked to go after receiving some education in the UK, but not having proper qualifications to prove themselves and make a career back home.

So, if you are here you have been to college, then you do not go to university because of your status, and then they ask you to go to your country , it is a waste of time, because even if you go to your country you do not have anything to present for you to have a good job, for you to have something to support yourself (COO3F).

Lasting goal

Although there was a wish to help and maintain ties with their families and own countries, without exception, their lasting goal was to settle into a stable and fulfilling life in the UK. For them, it was a struggle between determination and uncertainty.

As a participant (CAN1M) said in the conclusion to his interview:

I am hoping to make a life here ... I do not know. Good luck for you! {wishing the researcher success}.

Conclusion of the findings chapter

Finally, the information presented in this chapter leads to the conclusion that, firstly, the study has addressed the main and associated research questions, and discovered answers that were informative, compelling and sufficient. Secondly, the professionals and children seemed to have a good grip of the state of education and employment issues raised in the study. They have made their utmost efforts to view the situation in a critical but positive manner and suggested sensible future actions that may improve the services concerned. A critical analysis of the implications of the findings is presented in the following chapter, which has positioned the research findings within existing literature in order to evaluate the relevance and contribution of the study to the subject area.

Chapter 7

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a critical synthesis of the research findings with the existing literature related to the study. In doing so, it aims to evaluate the relevance of the research evidence in relation to current policy and practice. This will provide a deeper understanding of the issues investigated, and logical and appropriate solutions will be suggested to the research objectives where necessary.

The chapter is divided into two main sections according to the research questions:

- 1) **Revisiting the landscape** – This section comprises the basic questions answered by the desk research. This provides the foundation for the discussion.
- 2) **Unearthing the reality: What does the study say?** – This is the main section of this discussion as it focuses on the field research findings of the study. This brings together the two forms of evidence gathered from the samples of professionals and children.

Section 1

7.1 REVISITING THE LANDSCAPE

7.1.1 QUESTION 1:

What educational support do unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) receive?

Chapter 2 of this thesis has presented a detailed description of the main aspects of UASC education: UASC's right to education, the UK's legislative role, the regional variations (between England and Scotland) in educating refugees and asylum seekers, and the UK's responsibility for delivering an effective education service. As it described, once UASC are recognised as looked-after children, domestic legislations and a wide range of regional and international instruments protect their rights. In theory, they have the same right and entitlement to education exercised by the citizen children who come under the 'looked after' and 'leaving care' categories.

However, there have been widely debated issues around their education rights and support services. This answer will highlight the key elements of these issues and the impact of ongoing legislative changes and the government's position.

One of the main issues was higher education funding for UASC. Their fee status depends on their residency status. Those who do not meet the residency criteria come under the fee band of international students. Therefore, financing higher education has become a problem for both UASC and local authorities in the UK (RSN, 2014, Refugee Children's Consortium 2012, HM Government, 2015).

Moreover, the future prospects of financing UASC's higher education seem negative. For instance, Schedule 9 of the new Immigration Bill (Part of the Immigration Act, 2016) sets out to prohibit local authority funding for higher education for care leavers aged over 18 who have limited leave to remain (Home Office 2016, 2016b, Refugee Children's Consortium, 2016). Supposedly, this regulation may also apply to Scotland (CELCIS, 2016).

UASC's disadvantaged situation was recognised by the recent parliamentary Joint Committee of Human Rights (JCHR) inquiry on human rights of unaccompanied migrant children and young people in the UK (HM Government, 2013, p.5). Although the committee's position was that UASC's right to education should be protected regardless of immigration status, it did not consider higher education as a matter of these children's human rights. In their view, it was an issue of fair access to higher education (HM Government, 2013, 222). The government's position regarding the funding of UASC's education was articulated by the then minister as '*if domestic funding facilities were to be extended, all we are doing is incentivising [young people] to stay when they should be leaving*' (Ibid. 220).

As discussed later, the study found opinions that confronted this position and called for fairer and more realistic arrangements that facilitate UASC access, continuation, and achievement in higher education regardless of their immigration status. Whatever the argument, at present, as the House of Lords EU Committee report *Children in crisis: unaccompanied migrant children in the EU* (House of Lords, 2016) concluded, the country is failing to meet the educational needs of thousands of unaccompanied children.

7.1.2 QUESTION 2:

What vocational support do unaccompanied asylum seeking children receive?

As described in Chapter 2, UASC have the same rights as citizen children to vocational education and training. Compared to Scotland, in England, the regulations have always been complicated and many UASC are in a disadvantaged position with regard to accessing vocational education. For instance, when they reach 18 years of age, their rights and entitlements depend on

their immigration status. Those who do not have leave to remain status only receive temporary support on the basis of their human rights, provided that they are working towards returning home (HM Government, 2014, p.22). Even though the JCHR report of 2014 recommended a full range of leaving care support, including vocational education for UASC (ibid), this study found that no improvement seems to have been made.

Vocational education is a crucial element in planning UASC employment pathways. For instance, as the Children's Commissioner to England explained, most UASC are above school age and there is a dire need for a proper system of vocational education (Children's commissioner 2015). Interestingly, this study found that, although UASC have specific needs compared to their British leaving care peers, as a group, they all seemed to suffer the same implications in the transition to vocational education and training. Furthermore, a fragmented and complicated further and vocational education system in the country does not seem to fulfil UASC's specific needs either.

A detailed discussion of the participants' opinions on vocational education and training will be presented in later sections.

7.1.3 QUESTION 3:

Are there specific education programmes designed to integrate young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees into the UK labour market? What evidence is there regarding the effectiveness of such programmes?

This question corresponds to the overarching research question and the main objective of this study. The systematic review in Chapter 4 aimed to find the answers to these questions. As the review identified, although there was a large amount of literature on programmes and support services existing nationwide, none of these initiatives matched the category the study searched for – educational intervention programmes designed to integrate UASC into the UK labour market. Therefore, there was no evidence to be found about effective programmes.

In this respect, the field research aimed to explore this topic in order to understand the need, importance and new ways to introduce these specific programmes to support UASC's entry into the UK labour market.

Section 2

7.2 UNEARTHING THE REALITY: WHAT DOES THE STUDY SAY?

7.2.1 DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS OF PROFESSIONAL SAMPLE

7.2.1.1 QUESTION 4:

What is the professionals' perception of unaccompanied asylum seeking children? Is education a pull factor in their seeking asylum?

It is imperative to know the professionals' viewpoint on the children who seek asylum and survival under their care. From a policy and practice point of view, proper understanding of service users' personal circumstances, expectations, strengths and limitations is a key element of planning and delivering effective service of care and welfare. In their considered opinion, professionals would only see a child in their care, not an immigrant. And also, it was a 'myth' to believe that the children's flight was a calculated attempt to gain educational opportunities or prosperity. In exceptional cases, only those who were financially able may have considered education as a motive; safety was the main push factor that influenced children's flight. However, as an Afghan academic pointed out, in his country education was a 'risky business' where violence and intimidation against the education system was commonplace (Pinheiro, 2006, UNESCO, 2011). In his view, for Afghan children, education was a luxury; a basic need of a child had become a dream. It was a different world compared to the educational provision enjoyed by children in the western education system.

The professionals believed that the decision to send the children away was chiefly taken by their parents and that the children's opinions had not normally been consulted. In their view, however, no parent would resort to such a decision if they knew the extent of exploitation (e.g. UNICEF, 2016) that their children would be subjected to throughout their arduous journeys. Some professionals also pointed out the families' immense emotional pain and the social impact that the children's departure would cause.

However, while Europe is dealing with the current migrant crisis, there is an ongoing debate and concerns about the role of parents in sending children away. Some hold the opinion that it is a long-term, carefully crafted strategy towards future family migration. On the contrary, as some argue, it may be a strategy that would be deployed by any normal parent in adverse circumstances.

As Professor Heaven Crowley explained at the House of Lords inquiry into unaccompanied children in the EU:

It is sometimes a strategy, if you have a limited resource in the household and you are very worried about the safety of your children. In those circumstances, I would send my children first if it came to it. That is often what happens. It is not a strategy in the sense of hook, but it is a strategy for saving the family (House of Lords, 2016a, p.72)

In line with this view, the study participants believed that these children's flight should be understood within the context of the human migration phenomenon and normal human instincts. In their explanation, people tend to move away from adversity or hopelessness to find favourable conditions: safety, freedom, hope, aspiration and success. They viewed the children they came to know as motivated, resilient and aspiring individuals who searched for safer and stable futures. They possessed admirable language skills, and practical survival skills that most British children seemed to lack. In their opinion, every child has dreams and unaccompanied children are no exception. Therefore, their role is to help realise their dreams.

7.2.1.2 QUESTION 5:

What is the professionals' vision for these children's education?

The professionals believed that education was not only the right of UASC, but also the key element of their future. Meeting UASC's educational needs was the participants' number one propriety as it would be the best way to integrate them into the country, as one declared: *Education is the most successful vehicle for integrating these children into a country'* (PcsSS10- a programme manager). Moreover, education would fulfil their aspirations, and prepare them for modern knowledge societies. In their view, the effects of children's success could be multi-dimensional, as it would have individual, national and global relevance. For instance, they would contribute to their adopted country and could develop sincere feelings and gratitude. Their contribution would be an asset to Europe's aging societies. This is a widely held belief in the world (Schleicher, 2016). At a global level, they would also transfer much needed knowledge, skills and resources to their own countries (mainly to help post-war redevelopment processes), helping their social and economic uplifting. This would eventually contribute to reducing the number of people seeking asylum in the world.

How to educate UASC in the UK?

Considering the overwhelming inadequacy and variation of UASC's prior education experience, first and foremost, it is pivotal to teach them 'how to learn' in a school environment as the majority of the children have never been to school. Second, the overarching goal of education should be to teach them 'how to be a good citizen'. In the professionals' opinion, it is also important to educate them about the host country – Britain. It is important to expand their horizons in order to develop their own judgement about 'what Britain means to them'. This, together with proper formal and non-formal education, would prepare them for future achievements, for instance, employment, integration and social mobility.

What education system is needed?

Opinion was largely divided on this issue. For instance, some were in favour of a system that would promote globally relevant knowledge and training, while others focused on narrower and more specific conditions. However, the participants unequivocally agreed that English language acquisition should be the central goal when planning UASC education pathways. More importantly, the majority of them realised that there was no 'one fits all' solution, and children's individual abilities should be taken into account when planning education pathways. More importantly, in their view, UASC's education should not be planned on the basis of practitioners' or policy makers' 'pre-conceptions' of them, and refugee children should not be compartmentalised in the education system.

The majority of the participants' aims was to find the right balance between formal education in a mainstream setting and non-informal education in Further Education (FE) colleges. However, many viewed vocational training as a pivotal element of their education given their limited formal education skills and uncertain immigration status. In the event of repatriation, knowing a vocation would be beneficial for them when looking for employment back home. Vocational education and training was also the preferred option of the Afghan participants in the study.

On the contrary, taking a unique position, an educationist argued that every UASC of school age should receive formal education at school and they should not be enrolled in FE colleges, which leads them into inappropriate and worthless courses. In her view, firstly, school gives better pastoral care, which is a pivotal need in UASC's lives. Many professionals in the study agreed with this view. Confirming her standpoint, some studies highlight the role of school pastoral care with vulnerable children and its growing popularity in England (e.g. Kyriacou, 2014). Furthermore, as the participant believed, formal general education would better prepare them for their final country of settlement. In the event of repatriation, their formal education would contribute to rebuilding their countries, more so than vocational skills.

This is an important case to consider. For instance, some academically qualified children from refugee backgrounds from the UK (and the West) want to be a part of rebuilding their own countries. For example, a London-born young female Somalian lawyer's recent return to contest for the newly emerging parliament in Somalia is one of these unique events (www.bbc.co.uk, 2016).

Learning environment

One of the critical issues of educating refugee children in general is the learning environment. As the study found, the majority of the participants preferred an integrated education environment with other children as opposed to a segregated system. In their view, integrated education was the philosophy of British education, which encouraged interaction with other children. This would be beneficial to English language improvement and friendship building. However, those who opposed this viewpoint, especially the participants from refugee source countries (e.g. Afghanistan) were supportive of an initial segregated system for UASC until they acclimatised to the new country and its education system. Once UASC were confident enough with their language skills and familiar with the system, they could learn with others. Furthermore, as an Afghan professional suggested, there should be specific community colleges or schools that would offer specific subjects (e.g. English) on a part-time basis.

Getting the learning environment right has been a controversial issue in refugee education. According to a recent OECD review on migrant education (OECD, 2015) in Europe, immigrant children (aged 15) do better when they are immediately assimilated into classrooms alongside native language speaking host country non-immigrant children. Conversely, it also showed that immigrant children who received targeted extra language education, for instance in German schools, made marked gains in academic achievement. Again, as the report concluded, there has always been a paradox between research and reality.

In summary, as the study confirmed, the professionals seemed to have a long and hard path to achieving their positive aims.

7.2.1.3 QUESTION 6:

How do the professionals deal with the educational and vocational needs of young unaccompanied asylum seekers? In particular, how effective is the support they receive, and what do they perceive to be the positive and negative aspects of current provision?

In the absence of their own parents, the majority of professionals in this study had stepped into the complicated lives of these children as 'corporate parents', committing themselves to providing them with care and welfare. They believed it to be their moral righteousness and professional duty to safeguard them, support them with achieving success, and find durable

solutions. In this regard, one of their main priorities and responsibilities was addressing the needs of formal and non-formal education of UASC.

Despite the professionals' genuine efforts, providing welfare for UASC appeared to be a challenging proposition. They spoke extensively about the positive and negative aspects of services that hinder the fulfilment of the educational and vocational needs of these children.

Positive aspects of support provision

Civil society contribution

Many participants, especially, those who were connected to international refugee protection, admired the well-organised civil society and its contribution towards the welfare of refugees in general and UASC in particular in the UK. For instance, NGOs, Charities, Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) and other civil support groups were credited for their help and commitment to UASC's education and welfare.

According to the evidence, it can be stated that the unique role of Britain's civil society has been well recognised compared to its European counterparts (House of Lords, 2016a). Moreover, a well-planned civil society engagement in European nations seems significant for refugee and immigrant integration and welfare at this crucial time of mass migration (Zugasti et al., 2016, European Commission, 2016, European Economic and Social Committee, 2016).

On the other hand, some participants in the study held a different view about the role of these organisations. As a senior manager of a local authority claimed, in most cases, the motivation behind such organisations is their own self-interest to make money. Therefore, she insisted that there was a need for governments and local governments to play a role above any other organisations, with regard to UASC's welfare. This claim needs attention, given the fact that the financial handling of charitable organisations has attracted criticism recently (HM Government, 2014).

However, it is difficult to be judgemental about the principles of these organisations. Even though it is a complicated debate, it is fair to say that the trustworthiness of civil society organisations is vital if they are to be directly involved in welfare interventions. More importantly, NGOs' credibility is crucial to their role of supporting the potential educational intervention programmes considered in this study.

Negative aspects of support provision

In contrast to the positive aspects, there was a catalogue of negative factors affecting the support received by UASC. Regardless of the professionals' vision and optimism, in reality, they

had to deal with many obstacles to delivering satisfying and effective educational and vocational services to the UASC they cared for.

Failure to uphold best practice and promote children's best interests

In their own admission, in many ways, they failed to uphold their best practice and promote the children's best interests. As some confessed, their role was only concerned with managing the risks to themselves, rather than providing a service to the children. Many felt that their dedication as professionals was not fulfilled and they failed to uphold the ethos of corporate parenting, defined as *providing a standard of care that would be good enough for their own children* (National Children's Bureau, 2013). In their own words, they seemed to be engaged in a 'morally indefensible' 'irrational' and 'ineffective' system, which was only a waste of public money.

Their experiences and perceptions were similar to the situation across the country. As the JCHR committee on UASC declared, professionals' best practice had not been delivered as there were many discrepancies and inconsistencies in professional roles throughout the country (HM Government, 2013).

Professionals' dilemma

With regard to the services, professionals were primarily caught in the conflict between two situations: problems with limited resources, complicated policies and organisational structure versus children's boundless needs and aspirations.

The following is their interpretation of the causes and consequences of this struggle, and some suggestions to eradicate the weaknesses and strengthen the services. According to their explanations, the obstacles to effective service provision were mainly three fold and interrelated: policy- and society-related; system-related; and children-related.

Policy- and society-related barriers

The study found a robust discussion on the impact of policy and public perception on the welfare of UASC.

Government policy landscape: not found the happy medium

With regard to the policy landscape, professionals painted a gloomy view of the government's role in planning asylum policies in general. However, it is fair to say that this seems to be a Europe-wide crisis faced by many national governments. As some argue, the current refugee crisis in Europe 'is a crisis of policy rather than refugees' (Flynn, 2016). In the view of professionals, in the UK, the predicaments of refugee policies seem to have a colossal impact on the welfare of unaccompanied refugee children. As they explained, Britain has not yet found 'the

happy medium' in planning policy and strategy for these children's welfare. Their main concerns were the impact of immigration and education policies. In general, the respondents viewed both policy fields as two sides of the same coin upon which the future of these children would depend. In their view, both immigration and education policy decisions had contributed to 'stunting the development of the youth of the world'. The impact of ineffective policies seemed to damage the intellectual, social and emotional development of these children.

In their opinion, the policy decisions regarding UASC were not based on the child's best interests, one of the core principles stipulated by Article 3 of the UNCRC as:

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005, p9).

The practitioners' disappointment with the country's failure to respect UASC's best interests is consistent with the views of many national and international authorities and organisations (e.g. UNHCR, 2015, HM Government, 2013). For instance, as the first report of JCHR on unaccompanied migrant children stated:

The best interests of unaccompanied migrant children must be at the heart of all asylum and immigration processes affecting them. However, we find that immigration concerns are too often given priority instead. We call for change to shift the emphasis accordingly (HM Government, 2013, p.3).

Impact of immigration policies

This is the major policy component that influences every decision on UASC's welfare. However, as the research participants pointed out, Home Office decision making was influenced by its lack of social justice. In this context, the government's decision making is based on the notion of 'immigration first and children second' irrespective of its obligation to consider 'children first and immigration second'.

As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) declared, '*the current practice of the UK is only to consider the best interests through an immigration prism, rather than as a process where the decision maker is required to weigh and balance all the relevant factors of a child's case*' (UNHCR, 2015, p.15).

This practice caused immense problems to UASC. For instance, as the study found, it would make UASC languish in limbo for years, uncertain of their immigration status, resulting in them being subjected to a psychologically distracted and unproductive period in their lives. More importantly, these conditions would jeopardise the entire process of planning and implementing

UASC educational and career pathways. The consequence of this was also a matter of concern to the professionals.

For instance, as some participants viewed, the whole policy approach would act as a catalyst for causing frustration and disappointment in these children, which may possibly be turned into anger and hatred towards the host country. As they warned, the children would resort to seeking revenge on the host countries by the means of harm and terror, threatening social harmony, integration and multiculturalism.

Considering the disturbances taking place in Europe at present, their warning seems to have some substance even though direct assumptions cannot be made. For instance, recent violence perpetrated by some UASC in some parts of Europe ignited a debate on whether frustration and hopelessness were the real causes of the violence (Knight, 2016, Richter, 2016, p. 37).

It is important to state that, according to the emerging evidence, European countries have to resolve the problems of children's growing frustration. For instance, the latest European Union Committee report *Children in crisis: unaccompanied migrant children in the EU* highlighted that children were frustrated because of their loss of trust in officialdom, due to its dysfunctional and delayed nature of service provision (House of Lords, 2016).

Changes needed in immigration policies

In the professionals' opinion, there should be a fair and transparent immigration policy framework planned by a diverse group of stakeholders. The Home Office decision-making process should be free from the political agenda and more importantly, children's asylum decisions must be made quickly to prevent their limbo status. It is also crucial to have honest and straightforward dialogues between UASC and the Home Office.

Government's help towards returnees

The situation of returnees was also a concern for many participants. For instance, the majority of UASC they had worked with seemed to be unaware of their post-repatriation lives or what system was in place in their countries to support them. In their opinion, the government has the responsibility to assure returnees safe re-integration, their welfare and development (UNCRC, 2005). To play an active and responsible role in post repatriation there should be an effective system in place. However, as a participant connected to international refugee organisation pointed out that the current system in the UK seemed not in a strong position as there was no proper alignment between responsible departments, such as, FCOs (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and the Department of International Development.

According to many International and national agencies and more importantly, the national legislative bodies, the government have to respects the human rights of the young returnees and assure their welfare and development when implementing repatriation process (House of Lords, 2016)

Impact of education policies

Education policies were largely considered as unfavourable and ineffective by the majority of the study participants. Firstly, as an academic claimed, a 'historic mistake' was made by introducing tuition fees for foreign nationals. In a legal practitioner's opinion, some refugee education polices seemed to be unlawful. Moreover, consecutive governments' tendency to impose strict education polices on UASC who were already in the UK as a deterrent for would-be asylum seekers was widely discussed in the interviews. In the participants' view, first, it was unacceptable to punish the children who were in the country, and second, it would not deter children from seeking asylum, as their prime concern was safety not education. Their opinion seems to be correct given the waves of unaccompanied children risking their lives and reaching the shores of Europe at present (HM Government, 2016).

Children in no man's land

More importantly, the government's target-dependent education policies and financing refugee children's education has come under criticism. The implications of a funding cut in education in general were one of the most difficult situations facing the professionals. For instance, funding cuts had put constraints on bursaries (e.g. Pupil Premium) and school budgets across the board, crippling every aspect of education provision. This had a negative impact on UASC's educational achievements. The professionals believed that the prohibition of student support and eligibility for 'home fees' for UASCs who would qualify for higher education was illogical and insane. This policy left many children in no man's land and they had become a drain on public resources. In addition, the whole system had put local authorities under an unfair financial burden.

Implications for education institutions and services

As the evidence shows, an inadequate level of funding for local authorities has severe implications for education across the board (NUT, 2015). Currently, local authorities are in dire need of swift financial support, given the government's plan to welcome more unaccompanied asylum seekers into the country (Stone & Goodfellow, 2015). In this context, local authorities are unable to uphold their responsibilities towards UASC education according to government regulations (Department for Education, 2014). As stated before, the situation has dire implications for practitioners' 'good practice' towards the 'children's best interest'. Practitioners were unable to

make correct decisions on UASC's educational and vocational needs according to their practice regulations and guidelines (Department for Education, 2014).

Even though, over many years, there has been a plethora of discussions, suggestions and recommendations regarding the above concerns about UASC's education in the UK, the evidence shows that the problem remains the same (House of Lords, 2016).

What needs to be done?

The study found that there was a pressing need for effective education policies in order to provide meaningful education plans for UASC. The majority of the participants believed that the central government should first address the financial shortfall to eradicate the weaknesses in the services thereby strengthening them. It should also commit to play a leading role in providing education and welfare for refugee children in general.

Regional policy variations

The regional variations in education provision and the policy landscape between Scotland and England was one of the concerns expressed by the professionals. Some were in favour of Scotland's long-term vision for planning UASC education policies, and more importantly the need for the implementation of the Scottish guardianship scheme for UASC in England. It is interesting to note that the study experienced the enthusiasm and passion of the Scottish participants for helping UASC achieve their full potential.

Society-related barriers: Public perception and the role of the media

There were concerns about the public disquiet over the problem of unfettered migration and refugees, and its negative impact on policy planning, service delivery and on the children themselves (e.g. racism and xenophobia in communities). Especially, the biased media reporting on refugee issues seems to have had a pivotal effect on public perception.

However, the need for enhancing public knowledge of the real situation about refugees and UASC was strongly felt in the discussions. A participant made a personal request for the researcher to enhance public awareness about the refugees and their contribution to British society. They believed in the compassion and generosity of the British people and that they would feel empathetic towards the children if they knew their real stories. The perils of bad press about refugees have been well documented in the UK (White, 2015). On the other hand, the British people's compassion and understanding of refugee children's issues were also well proven and widely admired (House of Lords, 2016). That said, at present, public sentiment has become complicated, as evidence shows a polarised public opinion based on humanity and pragmatism (e.g. British Future, 2016).

The worrying issue is that, in mainland Europe, the negative public mood has already caused crippling effects on initiatives aimed to promote the labour market integration of refugees. For instance, in Germany, the planned labour market integration programmes seemed to suffer setbacks due to ethnic conflicts, institutional racism and movements for discriminatory legislation (Pfluger, 2016). If this trend gains ground, given the current climate of mass migration into Europe, public opinion may become a destructive force against refugee participation in the labour market. In this regard, hopefully, the anti-discriminatory measures (against, racism, xenophobia, ethnic profiling, and violence) introduced by the new EU integration policy report *'Time for Europe to get migrant integration right'* (EU, 2016, p. 8) may make a welcome change.

System-related barriers

First and foremost, as the research analysis showed, UASC were subjected to the same limitations and inadequacies in the education system in general as their British-born looked after and leaving care peers. However, as some academics stated, the system was not adaptive enough to accommodate individual needs, especially the needs of those who come from outside the country. As some participants claimed, the system seemed to deny UASC the opportunity to be in formal education; instead, they were directed to FE colleges. Given their specific needs and challenges, UASC seem to be in a more disadvantaged and difficult position than their British peers.

Professionals' struggle between infinite needs and finite resources

In particular, the ineffective policy framework has created a weak and complicated education system for UASC. As noted before, professionals seemed to be in a continuous struggle between the infinite needs of UASC, finite resources and weak education provision.

Limitations of education options

There seems to be many barriers to UASC education due to weak education options, class barriers and UASC immigration status.

Problems with secondary and post-secondary education

According to the study, in general, the secondary and post-secondary education system in the UK is not fit for purpose. As some professionals claimed, there is no breadth and depth to the secondary level and no effective system of transition to post-16 education (especially further and vocational education). These claims seemed to be substantiated by empirical research evidence, for instance, Gillard (2016) provides an interesting and comprehensive account of some of the serious failures of the country's education system in relation to the different regulations between the 17th century and the present day, especially the negative impact of controversial regulations on children's education in very recent years. More importantly, the unfortunate recipients of this

system happened to be children from disadvantaged backgrounds. As the evidence shows, this has become one of the most challenging problems in the British education system, and it needs to be solved (Jackson ed. 2013, Jackson and Cameron, 2011, Drissoll, 2015). Regardless of the remedial initiatives implemented over the years, the problem seems to remain the same. For instance, as proven by the most current evidence, disadvantaged children are still generally almost two academic years behind others by the end of secondary school (Centre Forum, 2016).

Need for a new model

As some participants believed, secondary education system needed a total restructuring with the added elements of vocational education and skill development.

Class barrier and education opportunities

Interestingly, in the view of some professionals, UASC experienced the class barrier just as their British counterparts in social care do when making the correct move in education, contrary to children from middle-class background. As the findings revealed, it was a compounded misfortune for UASC in the study, as they had no parental guidance and were alien to the country and the education system.

There has been a strong argument about the impact of social class in Britain on children's education and employment (e.g. Balls et al., 2000). As some participants explained, this may have contributed to creating a 'lost generation' in the country (Allen & Ainly, 2010). In this context, the class barrier may affect UASC's ability to achieve their full potential.

Further and vocational education: system of chop and change

The study found that UASC were in a disadvantaged situation with regard to their further and vocational education, similar to many citizen children in the country. In the professionals' opinion, in general, the 'chop and change' nature of the FE system has long been weak and incoherent. As empirical evidence suggests, the FE system should be free from constant tampering for short-term political gains and it needs a long-term plan to prepare a skilful young generation for the future (e.g. Mercieca, 2014).

As the evidence confirms, fewer than 75% of young people in the UK are in FE, the lowest level compared to other developed countries, which have more than 80% (UNICEF, 2016). Moreover, the view of academics, civil servants and other experts in the area confirmed the study findings related to vocational education, and the need for a more effective and robust system (e.g. Woolf, 2016). For instance, Sir Andrew Foster compared the neglected FE education to the "middle child of the education family" in one of his reports on the subject (Foster, 2005). In his view, the failing system should progress in line with the FE systems in the world, and revive its primary

purpose of improving employment, skills, economic growth and social inclusion. Similarly, in the view of some other experts, the failing further and vocational education system hinders 'human capital development. For example, as Professor Alison Wolf claimed in her recent report *Heading for the Precipice: Can further and higher education funding policies be sustained*:

The current situation is financially unsustainable. It is deeply inegalitarian in its allocation of resources. It is also inefficient and bad for the “human capital development”, which increasingly drives and justifies education policy (Wolf, 2015, p. 8).

Work experience and apprenticeship

According to the investigation, UASC engagement in work experience and apprenticeships was almost non-existent. In the professionals' view, there were limited opportunities available for UASC and they had educational, legal and social barriers to entering this field. However, as some participants noted, there seemed to be a complicated and failing system in place for all young people in the country. For instance, higher entry requirements and a lack of meaningful apprenticeship places available were some of the negative factors affecting potential candidates. Although there have been new initiatives to encourage the young into apprenticeships, the limitations, effectiveness and credibility of those programmes have also been subject to criticism (Raikes, 2015, Ofsted, 2015a, 2015b). As the experts warn, the adult skill development sector is in danger of 'vanishing into history' if the current trend continues: '*Should we accept that the adult skills sector, out with apprenticeship, may as well vanish into history, as a low priority area of expenditure?*' (Wolf, 2015, p. 73).

It is important to note that apprenticeship and work experience opportunities have been considered as pivotal for refugees in general. Given the refugee crisis facing Europe at present, proposing new methods to provide more apprenticeships and vocational training opportunities to refugees are at the forefront of refugee integration plans (European Commission, 2016).

Limitations of education service delivery

An effective education system should go hand in hand with effective service delivery. The following are the professionals' views and concerns about the role, responsibility and barriers faced by the service providers.

Limitations and failures of service providers

There were three main categories of service providers identified in the study, namely, local government, educational institutions (schools, colleges and universities), and civil society organisations (NGOs, charities). The interconnected limitations and shortcomings of these

organisations are said to have a profound impact on UASC access to education, along with their progress and achievement. The following is an illustration of some of the significant factors.

Firstly, the discussions shed light on organisational failures related to attitude and good practice, scarce resources, and education structure.

Attitude and lack of good practice of institutions and individuals

The majority of the participants believed that the attitude and approach of those who plan and deliver the educational services for these children matter the most. In some instances, education services were driven by prejudice and stereotyping relating to the children's immigration status, or the local authority and school system tended to consider refugee children as a 'problem' or less intelligent due their lack of English language skills. As a result, the children were denied school places, fearing that they would lower the school's ranking in the league tables. As the study found, the majority of UASC would be denied formal education and be lead to FE colleges instead, placing them in inappropriate courses and levels (e.g., hairdressing courses for female children).

Need for adapting a child-centred 'can do' approach

As an educationist argued, the system should adopt a 'strength perspective' not a 'deficit perspective'. Many participants believed that children should be evaluated by their character and motivation, not by their immigration status. This view resonates with the compelling arguments on 'deficit perspective ' presented by many theorists, academics and experts alike. In their view, it is important to 'find the gift in every child', and our mistake is to see others' differences (from ourselves) as deficits (Gorski, 2010).

In British schools, there have been emerging support and guidance for teachers and other professionals on adapting a child-centred approach while promoting a 'can do' attitude when planning refugee children's education (NUT, 2015). Moreover, the majority of the participants agreed with the needs-driven approach to planning UASC education as the children's psychological status, personal circumstances and learning abilities need to be considered.

As the evidence confirms, UASC education is a matter that requires a child-specific approach according to the children's individual needs, psychological status and coping abilities (Mitchell, 2015).

Professionals' good practice and training

Participants in general admired their colleagues' dedication and commitment, although some pointed out the incidents of negligence and lacklustre work ethics, for example, not making real efforts to find school places and levelling the blame at schools. Many believe that the education

system needs a committed and dedicated work force to challenge the authorities; as one claimed, 'it's worth fighting for'. Moreover, there should be a good training process available to practitioners.

Practitioners' knowledge base and joined- up thinking

The study found a mixed response from the practitioners to the idea of expanding knowledge, involvement in research and using current research evidence in practical decision making. Although many were enthusiastic participants (e.g. programme managers) who strived for well-informed programme planning, some professionals, for instance teachers, showed no interest in being involved in this research project as it would not bring the school direct benefits. Moreover, some participants in the study also discussed the lack of joined-up thinking among practitioners and organisations on UASC education. As the study found, participants who were attached to education institutions or local authorities were less interested in a collaborative approach at local, regional or national levels. In contrast, many of those who worked for NGOs valued working with a wider network of collaborators. It should be noted that possessing a broad knowledge base is an essential element of the role of caring professionals, especially for teachers, in order to make well-informed practical decisions, even though it had not been a norm in the teaching profession (e.g. Hiebert et al., 2002, Sutton Trust, 2014).

Problems of scarce resources

As discussed previously, one of the professionals' dilemmas was the problem of meeting infinite needs with finite resource, and as the study found, this was a problem confronting schools and colleges across the country. Specifically, disadvantaged children seemed to be the worst affected. As the study uncovered, education budget cuts impact upon the following areas: recruiting and retaining teaching and support staff, educational materials /resources (e.g. computers), impact of the curriculum (e.g. in reduced number of maths and English classes), class size, support for SEN (Special Education Needs) and EAL (English as an Additional Language) provision and student activities. The testament to these findings was the National Teachers Union's (NUT) report on *'The impact of cuts in school funding'* (NUT, 2015).

Teacher shortages and recruitment

Subject-specific teacher shortages (e.g. English, maths and IT) were one of the main problems affecting UASC. According to the latest public account committee report (HM Government, 2016), the wide regional variation in teacher recruitment and shortages affects pupils' educational attainment and life prospects. As for IT teaching, the country is suffering a digital skill crisis due to the shortage of trained staff (HM Government, 2016).

In UASC's case, the research found that the service providers tended to allocate resources according to the headcount. For instance, institutions that hosted a large number of UASC tended to

provide relatively good facilities (e.g. qualified teachers) compared to those in isolated places with fewer numbers. At the time of this field investigation, some local authorities were cutting services due to the dwindling numbers of UASC.

Limitations of education structure

As presented in the analysis, there was a catalogue of other limitations that affect UASC access and progress in education.

Lack of realistic time frame and issues with FE courses

Firstly, there seemed to be no realistic education period for UASC, whose length of stay in the country was unpredictable. There were limited vocational and GCSE courses available for those who already had secondary education. According to some practitioners, there was a lack of accredited courses, such as English language studies. Moreover, the course content and structure of some vocational course were also not satisfactory or beneficial to UASC. Even some BTECs, NDs and other freestanding courses were inadequate and left the children with little knowledge.

EAL and ESOL provision and limitations

The professionals unequivocally believed that the most essential part of UASC education is acquiring English language skills. However, the budget cuts on EAL and ESOL over the recent years seem to have had a colossal effect on refugee children's' English language education (NOLDIC, 2015, NUT, 2015, Leadham, 2016).

In some professionals' view, however, English language education was not good enough for refugee children as the course only taught 'tourist English'. In addition, ESOL seems to have many gaps and limitations, such as inappropriate course structure, limited content, and limited classes in advanced levels. Moreover, a long period of learning English would make the children uninterested and prevent them from learning other subjects which may be more meaningful to some children. As some participants stated, ESOL education also tends to isolate UASC from their British peers, preventing them from building friendships and understanding the country and culture.

Children-related barriers and limitations

There were many children-related barriers faced by the professionals in planning and providing their education and training. The following are the main problems identified.

Struggle between unrealistic aspirations and limited resources

In the professionals' view, UASC in general are a highly ambitious, motivated and resilient group who tend to have unrealistic education and career goals. This very quality has become a

dilemma for professionals and local authorities. They are in a constant struggle between children's unrealistic aspirations and limited services in order to help UASC realise their aspirations.

Intellectual shift and adjustment to education system

One of the main problems discussed in the interviews was the 'intellectual shift' experienced by the children. Majority of them were used to a teacher-dominated education model where independent learning and critical thinking were not promoted. As many professionals noted, children struggle with the western model of education, especially if they progress into higher education in the UK; they therefore need more support to cope with the situation.

Lack of prior education skills and language barrier

The English language barrier and a lack of prior education qualifications were major barriers to UASC education. As the study found, the majority of UASC did not have any English language skills or proper education skills on arrival. They needed more help from the education system to overcome their obstacles to progress in education, which posed a challenge to the system.

Cultural and social adjustment

This was recognised as one of the major challenges faced by any asylum seeking child in an alien culture, and UASC are no exception. As the study found, given their upbringing, they tend to be dependent on parents, and as adolescents their perception of independence was different to that of their British counterparts. In this context, asylum seeking children were held away from their parents, as opposed to British youngsters who would exercise their 'choice to be away' as adults.

Professionals had to deal with these challenges when leading UASC along an education pathway. However, as some professionals (e.g. young British youth workers) believed, there was always a gap remaining between asylum seekers and others in the country, and in the case of UASC, it was difficult for them to adopt to the British culture and engage in it.

Psychological issues

This is one of the most talked about and researched areas related to unaccompanied refugee children in the world (e.g., Demirdjian, 2012, p. 16-20). As discussed in detail in the analysis, the issue of UASC's psychological needs was a major concern for practitioners. According to them, the psychological problems were multifaceted and the dominant factor of psychological distress was their shattered dreams and expectations. Moreover, there were other adversities: separation from parents and family, the trauma of the journey, the deprivation of parental care, personal biological issues of transition to adulthood, adjustment to the new settings, racism, accommodation and foster care issues, and more importantly, fighting legal battles for immigration status; these were just a few of many.

It should be noted that two young unaccompanied asylum seekers who participated in this study had been going through psychological problems. One was suffering from serious self-harm and suicidal tendencies due to racism and his immigration issues. These are universally recognised psychological matters common to UASC, and their impact on their lives is colossal (Jensen, Skadalsmo, & Fjermested, 2014, Mind, 2009, Fazel & Stein, 2002).

Professionals showed their commitment to dealing with the problem and sharing the children's pain. As a practitioner explained, she was happy to cry with them. However, as many practitioners suggested, educational institutions need more help with mental health services in order to deliver an effective service. As the psychiatrist specialising in refugee children's mental health explained, schools are struggling with the mental health issues of UASC.

These concerns resonate with the current crisis in school mental health support services in the country. Especially, secondary schools facing a 'perfect storm' of mental health issues (Thorely, 2016). However, as the evidence suggests, schools are incapable of solving the problem due to inadequate funding, lack of expertise and incoherent support services (National Audit Office, 2015).

Influence of own community relations

Own community relations are seen as an integral part of these children's lives, according to the professionals. They believed that the cultural familiarity, friendship and care of their own people were comforting for the children. However, opinions were divided on the influence of these communities on UASC's lives. In particular, socialising with their own community hinders their English language improvement. Moreover, information sharing about their home countries' troubles (e.g. war, violence, poverty) seemed to make them distressed. This would result in distressing behaviour in a classroom setting.

On the contrary, there is a strong positive opinion about community participation in migrant children's education and bringing the community into the education process (Migration Policy Institute, 2015, Sirriyeh, 2011).

In conclusion, providing effective support for UASC in the education system is a challenging proposition for the government, local authorities, institutions and professionals alike. According to the evidence produced by the study and the view of many participants, it needs a holistic approach in order to meet the children's educational and vocational needs.

7.2.1.4 QUESTION 7:

How do the professionals perceive young unaccompanied asylum seekers' and refugees' employment prospects? What barriers do they face in unlocking their employment potential?

Planning employment pathways: need, readiness and barriers

As the study confirmed, the professionals indisputably viewed employment as one of the enduring solutions to the plight of young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees. In their view, it would be the beginning of a stable, safe and fulfilling phase of their lives, and the path to smoother integration into society. This standpoint resonates with the world view of refugee employment as an essential element of integration, empowerment and finding durable solutions (European Parliament, 2016, UNHCR, 2003, p. 3, UNHCR, 2014). In addition, from a psychological point of view, practitioners believed that meaningful employment and productive lives would be the key to the mental wellbeing of these young people. As some empirical evidence confirms, there are detrimental effects of unemployment on mental health of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the UK (Public Health England, 2014).

UASC Readiness for employment

In the professionals' opinion, UASC's determination, hard work and ambition to educate themselves in order to prosper in employment were crucial to their success. However, they explained that a rocky path existed ahead of them in the transition from education to employment. Regardless of UASC's ambitions to reach their employment targets, as a practitioner explained, *'they are so far from that'*. They were not capable enough of entering or competing in the labour market, for a whole catalogue of reasons. Many of them seem to be engaged in menial jobs (e.g. car washing, cleaning, pizza delivery) or illegal employment within their communities. More intriguingly, the study discovered an unexplained and unconvincing account of an UASC leading a luxurious lifestyle (e.g. flashy cars, luxury cloths, money) without being employed. According to his social worker, his explanation was that his community members were providing him with the luxuries out of generosity.

Whatever work UASC decide to do, according to the professionals, they would do it only for their survival. In their view, this is such a waste of skills as the children would not have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

UASC's barriers to entering the labour market

According to the study findings, the children seemed to have multifaceted problems with entering the labour market. As discussed in the literature review, the problems appeared to be common among all refugees and young migrant groups such as UASC and undocumented

migrants. As the study revealed, UASC's own personal limitations were interconnected mainly with system and policy obstacles in the country. All their problems related to education (e.g., immigration, educational, psychological, and personal issues) had a detrimental effect on gaining employment or training (e.g., apprenticeship, work experience, voluntary work). More importantly, gaining refugee status and being free from immigration problems would not solve all their problems. In reality, the transition was complicated and it would take a long time to adjust to the system and the country, regardless of their immigration status. As the evidence highlights, their transition to adulthood is a complicated process (Shalayeva, 2011).

What does the evidence say?

In general, according to the evidence, refugee integration into the labour market seems a complicated process. For instance, as the recent European Parliament report *Labour Market Integration of Refugees: Strategies and good Practice* (European Parliament, 2016) confirms, refugee integration into the labour market in Europe is a slow process and it also depends on an individual country's approach. More importantly, there is a research gap on this field, especially regarding the outcome of their integration:

Information on labour market outcomes of persons eligible for asylum is scarce. Due to the lack of data, there has been very little empirical research done on the labour market integration of refugees. (ibid. p.21)

As the report further explains, the speed of integration depends on the condition of the labour market at the time of their entry. In the case of refugee women, they fare badly compared to their male counterparts, possibly due to their cultural factors. This is an international issue, and there needs to be more integration measures such as language courses and training designed for women refugees. As the report suggests, there should be more gender-sensitive applications and the reception procedure should also be beneficial.

As for the UK's situation, according to the Migration Integration Policy Index released in 2015, the country had changed its policy towards migration integration. For instance, it had stopped its already weaker targets for migration integration measurements while Other Northern European countries were increasing their integration initiatives.

Role of education in labour market integration

Currently, there is a pressing need for addressing youth unemployment, especially in industrially developed countries in Europe and around the world. As some research confirms, many different initiatives (such as apprenticeships and work programmes) are needed to address the problem (OECD, 2014). More importantly, education should play a crucial role in preparing young people for the world of work:

The education system could do more to assist the transition from education to the world of work. Preparing youth for the labour market is one of the key functions of the education system (ibid. p.11).

It is also important to note the youth employment problem in the UK. According to the evidence, the youth unemployment rate was three times higher than that of the rest of the population, and they seem to be economically inactive. There is also a mismatch between their employment and skills (HM Government, 2015).

Unawareness of system and barriers with bureaucracy

UASC's unawareness of the system of the country, for instance, its legal, bureaucratic and social order, appears to hinder their access to the proper support to which they are entitled to. Some of them became caught in the bureaucratic process, losing any long-term career development opportunities (e.g. engaging in unsuitable training courses to access job seekers allowance).

Other limitations

Lack of prior education, the language barrier and work experience are major barriers facing this young group. Even those who had some skills and qualifications had no proof or references to convince potential employers or trainers. They were lacking practical skills, such as CV writing, interviewing and job searching skills, the ability to drive, and some needed child care (in specific cases related to young mothers).

Lack of social capital and role models

Finally, yet importantly, these children were lacking a crucial requirement for finding employment – social capital. As the study found, they did not have wider social connections outside their own communities. Their community relationships seemed to deprive them of wider social connections, prudent advice and role models. In this context, UASC's career paths seem to be influenced by those around them. In addition, in some professionals' view, community peer influence seemed to discourage them from being self-sufficient and encourage them to rely on state benefits.

In relation to social capital, as the researchers specialising in migrant social groups explained, the concepts of migrants' 'social network' and 'social capital' differ slightly and how both interact makes complex social units within them (Ryan, Erel, & D'Angelo, 2015). As they highlighted, '*social networks are often characterised by a complex balance between solidarity and exploitation, trust and conflict*' (ibid. p. 4). It is not easy to generalise the impact of community ties on UASC.

However, it is important to point out that this is a problem faced by many disadvantaged children in the country. As current evidence shows, social capital or 'inherited opportunity', and lack of role models have a colossal impact on youths from deprived backgrounds in general. For instance, one in ten 16 to 25 year olds lack role models in their family (Prince's Trust, 2016).

Need for a guardian

In UASC's case, as the majority of practitioners insisted, there need to be guardians who could be role models, trusted confidants, and advisors to them. For example, the guardianship scheme in Scotland has been a success. Unfortunately, this is not available in England, although it has been recommended by many experts and more importantly by the JCHR on unaccompanied children:

'There may also be a role for other individuals to advocate the best interests of unaccompanied migrant children. We are persuaded that providing children with a guardian could support children more effectively in navigating asylum, immigration and support structures and help them to have their voices heard. We therefore support establishing pilot programmes in England and Wales to examine the case for guardianship in more depth (HM Government, 2013, p. 5).

However, it is important to note that children in care in general miss the help of independent mentors. According to Barnardo's, there is an urgent need for mentors in many local authorities across England (Barnardo's, 2016). Therefore, regardless of their immigration status, all looked-after children in England seem to lose their right to have the trusting and positive relationship that an independent mentor brings to their lives.

Lack of apprenticeship and work-related opportunities

According to the study, there is a chronic limitation of apprenticeships or work-based training programmes and voluntary work placements available to UASC. More importantly, except a few who had worked in NGOs and charities, the majority of the professionals were not well-informed about the opportunities available. However, UASC seemed to have difficulties with securing these placements for many reasons. For instance, employers' reluctance to offer placements because of UASC's unsettled immigration status, lack of formal education and experience, the language barrier and socio-cultural awareness and practices such as punctuality. More specifically, potential employers' unawareness of the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in general (compared to all migrant groups) and their skills also appeared to be problematic. As the professionals suggested, employers should be educated on these issues in order to encourage them to open up opportunities for UASC.

There was evidence of some training programmes that aimed to support potential voluntary organisations that recruited young refugees as volunteers (British Red Cross 2014). However, there appeared to be no well-documented information on such programmes operating in the country.

Employers' reluctance and apprehension to employ refugees and migrants has been a widely discussed issue in the UK and in Europe. As the latest European Commission's integration report *Time for Europe to get migrant integration right*, published in May 2016 (European Commission 2016) has recommended, there should be tougher regulations for employers who do not help migrants into the workplace. It has also introduced new guidelines to ease the migrant employment process, for instance, easing reference requirements, new criteria for qualification matching and so on.

Finally, the majority of the problems discussed so far are universal experiences that apply to all migrant groups (e.g. UASC, other asylum seekers and refugees, undocumented migrant children) in Britain or elsewhere (Waddigton, Bloch & Macky, 2016). Given the current refugee crisis in Europe, a close examination of the refugee employment situation is urgently required in order to recognise the problems. Many positive interventions and support services seem to be on the European agenda in order to break their barriers to entering the labour market (European Commission, 2016).

7.2.1.5 QUESTION 8:

What educational interventions will work for their integration into the UK labour market and how best to plan new intervention programmes?

Firstly, no professional in the study had a straightforward answer to this question. There was a genuine consensus of frustration among them about not yet discovering the best intervention programmes for these children. As a programme manager for an international children's NGO declared, *'that is one example of the kind of questions I am asking myself – What is best? (talking about her programmes)... and I do not have an answer to that'*.

Secondly, none of them were aware of any formal or non-formal educational intervention programmes specifically designed for helping either UASC or refugee youths in general to access employment. Only those who were involved in planning and delivering some supporting programmes (e.g. life skills, education advocacy, skills training for finding employment) were optimistic about the benefit of their efforts. As they explained, their services keep UASC occupied and help them to learn new skills. However, the majority of them insisted that their programmes only aimed to fill the large void existing in the system of education and employment support services. More needs to be done.

Need for new intervention programmes

Practitioners emphasised the need for a complete overhaul of support initiatives in spite of their own programmes. There was an overwhelming requirement for new and effective intervention programmes delivered in formal and non-formal education settings (or if appropriate, in informal settings). In general, as the evidence shows, the importance of intervention programmes for young people has been widely expressed regarding young people's transition from education to employment (e.g. Wilson, 2013).

In their view, some of the education and vocational courses (such as ESOL, BTEC, ND, HND) currently available to UASC are not satisfactory and lack depth and substance. For instance, with regard to ESOL or BTEC learning for life courses, they claimed that the children themselves seemed to not be enjoying some of these course and/or the short-term initiatives (e.g., life skills or some employment-related training courses). They appeared to feel the ineffectiveness and worthlessness of the courses, and were reluctant to participate in them. As discussed previously, the participants largely blamed the education spending cuts for the gap in good educational programmes and the lack of long-term education and welfare planning for UASC (especially in England).

Types of new intervention programmes proposed

Many participants expressed their preferred areas that needed to be considered as essential for UASC education and future career development.

Providing work experience, apprenticeship and voluntary work programmes

As discussed previously, this essential area needs to be looked into. In the professionals' view, workplace-related opportunities are crucial for these young people in order to get them into the work environment. This view was an echo of the suggestions of many researchers and experts (e.g., Oxenbridge and Evesson, 2012). However, according to the study, one of the problems facing UASC is the lack of good advice on these options.

Teaching mother tongue: reducing harm

Undoubtedly, mastering the English language is a key element of every aspect of UASC's life in the UK. Nevertheless, some participants from both Britain and refugee home countries insisted that there was a need to teach these children their mother tongue. For instance, UASC from Afghanistan should be taught Pashto and Dari, the official languages of their country. According to them, fluency in their own languages would re-integrate them into their country well, as it forms a substantial part of their culture. More importantly, it would prevent them from being ostracised by

their own communities who either accuse them of being western spies or reject them because of their western ways.

This may be a cause for concern as the tension between local communities and returned asylum seekers is common, and some of the world organisations have taken steps to promote peaceful coexistences (UNHCR, 2014). More importantly, some practitioners even suggested the idea of UASC being educated in bilingual classes in order to facilitate them taking exams in their own languages. There has been a long-standing debate about bilingual education for refugee children and it needs careful consideration when introducing such interventions (e.g. European Commission, 2016). There seems to be different opinions based on empirical evidence. Therefore, the advantages and disadvantages of learning in the mother tongue may also need to be evaluated when considering such interventions (e.g. European Commission, 2016). However, there is much guidance for teachers in the UK on encouraging refugee children to learn their mother tongue in education settings (National Union of Teachers, 2015, UNICEF, UK, <http://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/resources/rrsa-teaching-resources/secondary-starter-pack>).

Internet-based education for returnees

Practitioners undoubtedly agreed that UASC should be literate in Information Technology. Moreover, they were enthusiastic about exploring the possibility of using digital means and Internet-based education to help returned UASC to continue with their education. They had realistic concerns about the obstacles that exist in UASC's home countries to such sophisticated methods; however except for one participant, all were optimistic about the idea. In their opinion, Computer Assisted Learning (CAL) and Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) might well be the future means of education. They thought that it would be possible to reach out to all children, not only returned asylum seekers, in order to provide them with an education. These expectations may sound impossible but the evidence shows that Internet-based education programmes have already been gaining ground in countries such as Afghanistan with international collaboration (NATO, 2011, SEETA, 2016, UNESCO, 2016). As the Afghan academic pointed out, implementing such initiatives requires collaboration between the British and Afghanistan governments. Moreover, this idea is of importance at present when Europe is drawing up plans to build migrant camps for returned asylum seekers (Stevens, 2015).

Approaches to plan interventions

The study identified the following specific interconnected principles of planning intervention programmes for UASC:

- Principle of the holistic approach: a child-centred holistic approach that should take every issue concerning the child into consideration (e.g. psychological, immigration, educational, social and personal welfare). This approach is crucial for not only said interventions but also every aspects of UASC welfare planning. For instance, the experts have endorsed this:

It would take a holistic approach to considering matters, including the child's best interests. That consideration is at a very preliminary stage... putting all the strands together so that the child can be seen as a whole person in that context (Professor Ravi Kohli, in his evidence at the House of Lords Inquiry on Unaccompanied Minors on the EU, 23 March 2016) (House of Lords, 2016a).

- Principle of dual planning approach: this would need dual planning strategies to equip UASC with educational and vocational qualifications that would be useful both in the UK and in their own countries. This approach comes under the government guidelines to local authorities (Department for Education, 2014).

- Principle of global approach: UASC educational and employment skills should have global relevance in order to enable the refugees to survive in any part of the world, given their highly mobile nature.

- Principle of a needs-driven approach: Their interventions should be needs driven and tailor made to suit their education and skill levels.

- Principle of resilient building approach: intervention programmes should aim to build or conserve resilience.

- Principle of peer group approach: interventions should promote peer group participation by bringing together groups with similar age, socio-ethnic and cultural attributes. For instance, the need for peer involvement is confirmed by some research evidence (Doyle & O'Toole, 2013).

Although the desires for new initiatives were clear, there seemed to be many obstacles to realising such plans.

Challenges to plan interventions

According to the study, there were multiple challenges confronting the planning and delivering of intervention programmes. They were mainly related to practitioners, policy and children.

Practitioner-related challenges

As discussed previously in education planning, the overarching problem was the professionals' struggle between the finite resources and infinite needs of the children. Financial constraints and constantly shifting policies appear to have a drastic impact on planning programmes.

Practitioners' unawareness of children's needs and development

Firstly, as the study found, without better understanding of UASC (e.g., their plight, emotions, hopes, needs, cultural and social beliefs, skills, strengths and weaknesses) it would be difficult to produce cost- and time-effective support systems through definite goals and clear approaches. As some participants declared, the biggest obstacle was their unawareness of these children's needs and who they were.

Secondly, most professionals seemed to lose track of UASC post-16 or as they progressed into employment once they left care. In the professionals' own admission, they were not obliged to do so.

Issues with listening to children's voice

One of the specific findings that emerged in the study was that of professionals' limited interest in listening to the children's voice. Although they agreed that the children's views should be heard, only a few discussed their importance in shaping their practical decision making. Interestingly, having realised the importance of listening to children's voice, a virtual School Head requested to be in a focus group discussion with the researcher (unfortunately, this did not come to fruition). In his admission, he had never had the opportunity to talk to UASC directly.

For some practitioners, the children's opinions were unnecessary for planning interventions or services as they were unaware of the system in the country, while others were unable to plan such meetings due to practical reasons. UASC's right to be heard is protected by Article 12 of the Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC, 2005). Therefore, professionals are duty bound to consult them when taking decisions. In his appeal to the corporate parents, the Minister of State for Children and Families declared:

At the heart of the care system should be the voice of the child... children in care know better than anyone else what works well, what is less successful, and what needs to change. They need to be able to challenge and influence strategic planning and day-to-day decisions (Timson, 2013).

Limited awareness of current evidence and openness to information

As in education, professionals' openness to new information on programme development seemed to be patchy. The majority of them appreciated the need for broader knowledge but many

were confined to their own regional or national organisational strategies. However, only a few specific programme managers were in dire need of information on interventions from around the world in order to replicate them in the UK. They were also keen to know the economic situation and skill shortages of UASC's own countries and requested the researcher for information from institutions such as the World Bank, the World Health Organization and so on. Their aim was to equip UASC with the necessary education and vocational training, which would fill the skill gap if they returned home. On the other hand, some practitioners believed that knowledge of international evidence was not necessary, as programmes could not be replicated in the UK. Some did not see the necessity to have UASC's own country information when planning programmes.

These views need to be explored further, as asylum seeking children are a global phenomenon and it needs an open approach to plan their future pathways, as discussed in the following section.

Lack of professional training and practitioners' psychological health

As discussed previously, continuous professional training is essential for all professionals. As for programme planning and delivery, professionals need more specific, needs-driven training arrangements. For instance, as a youth worker insisted, they need to know culturally relevant practices when working with such a diverse group as UASC.

It should also be noted that the study found some underlying feeling of frustration and stress in some participants. According to some accounts, this frustration and helplessness might be the result of the barriers to supporting the children or dealing with UASC who suffer from serious mental issues. This is an important issue as practitioners' mental health is paramount and there needs to be more professional help available for them.

Lacking a credible evaluation process

As the study found, there seems to be a lack of a credible evaluation process in place for the support services and programmes already on offer. Many practitioners (e.g. from NGOs) relied on their localised subjective evaluation process without a planned national framework. However, a senior programme planner expressed the urgent need for an objective and reliable evaluation process as a prerequisite for the improvement of programmes, while expressing her dismay at not getting an impartial and effective evaluator. According to the evidence, there are many different problems, for instance, the influence of donors, unsuitable assessors, and financial constraints, that obstruct objective and transparent evaluations.

On the other hand, some questioned the role of evaluation in programme planning. As a participant claimed, the political process, politicians' views and policies dominate programme planning and implementation. In this context, commissioning evaluations was an exercise that

aimed to only achieve favourable outcomes. Its main aim was to establish individual credentials rather than to implement effective interventions.

These views are important to the study as they bring a complicated argument on programme and policy planning to the fore. Although the government's position on the importance of impartial evaluation of initiatives is well established (National Audit Office, 2013) it needs deeper understanding of the process. There seems to be a need to promote an impartial and transparent evaluation process free from politics and vested interests when planning intervention programmes for UASC.

Collaboration with Europe

Although international collaboration on interventions was not a prominent topic in this study, a few had understood the need to broaden the horizons of the professionals and policy makers involved in UASC welfare. For instance, a practitioner who had experienced the UASC welfare system in Europe emphasised the need for 'thinking outside the box'. In her view, more collaboration with Europe was necessary as some countries had more innovative and successful education and employment programmes on offer for UASC (SWR, 2015). There is substantial evidence to confirm her views, as a recent OECD report *Working together: skills and labour market integration of immigrants and their children* (2015) suggests the effectiveness of the Swedish system in planning all refugee children's education and welfare with innovative interventions. For instance, they seem to provide effective programmes in language learning and improving employability. As the report points out, the country is in a strong position in relation to refugee integration even though in 2014 and 2015 it became the first OECD country ever to receive the largest per capita inflow of asylum seekers.

At this very time when the refugee crisis is engulfing Europe, these views hold credibility. There is a wealth of expert evidence out there about the new ways of making effective intervention programmes for refugees, and critical evaluations about existing interventions (European Commission, 2016 a, European Commission 2016 b). Therefore, investigating other options available regionally and internationally, and incorporating new ideas appropriately into practice, would be a positive way forward for the welfare of UASC.

Children-related obstacles to planning and delivering programmes

The combination of children's barriers discussed previously seemed to have a direct impact on programme planning and delivery. In relation to intervention programmes, as some studies documented, children's characteristics proved to be crucial for both planning and delivery (Wilson, 2013).

The following are some of the specific characteristics of children identified in the study.

Realistic goal setting

As in education, children's unrealistic expectations and aspirations seem to be challenging for professionals when planning programmes. They seem to be struggling to make realistic plans according to their clients' abilities, skills and immigration status.

Giving up hope

The study found that when these young people became exhausted with their legal battles and the other day-to-day challenges, they seemed to lose hope and enthusiasm for engaging in support services or intervention programmes. Professionals feel helpless, as they do not have control over the children's lives or government regulations or policies.

Lack of parental guidance

Again, this is about lacking guidance and role models in life. As with many normal adolescents or young people, UASC require guidance, love and encouragement from parents or caregivers. As a few practitioners experienced, some of these youngsters need that motivation to go forward with changing opportunities. As discussed before, UASC need guardians to fill these gaps in their lives.

Differences in ethnicity and nationality

As the research found, children's ethnicity and nationality seem to affect their relationship with professionals. For instance, some nationalities seemed to be more difficult to work with compared to others, and this would affect the healthy and cordial relationship when working on programme initiatives.

Professionals' views on repatriation

In conclusion, from the discussion with the professional participants, it is important to know their standpoint on UASC repatriation as it is an integral factor in their service provision. The study participants unanimously opposed the repatriation of UASC, as for many, it was illogical and immoral. Moreover, they thought that investing in their education and welfare for years and not seeing the fruits of this effort was financially wasteful. They strongly believed that the children's contribution to the country would far outweigh the perceived problems. One of the professionals envisaged that it would be a pleasure to see an asylum seeking child achieving success against all the odds, looking into the future, making romantic relationships, and settling in a country that gave him or her hope and life.

Message to the policy makers and appeal to the researcher

Finally, it is important to recap on the main requests from the study participants to the authorities and the researcher. Firstly, their main wish was to have appropriate financial support for their services. Secondly, they hoped for an effective immigration system that promoted quick and permanent decision making on children's status. Thirdly, they requested mental health support and guardianship for children, and creating a welcoming and fulfilling atmosphere for them during the time of their stay the UK.

For the researcher, some of them had the following requests: providing current evidence and information regarding refugee education and employment initiatives around the world; promoting awareness of refugees (their plight, skills, and potential contributions to the country) among the public and potential employers; and researching successful refugee integration models around the world (e.g. Australia) in view of replicating them in the UK.

7.2.2 DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS OF CHILDREN'S SAMPLE

7.2.2.1 QUESTION 9:

What are the academic and career goals of unaccompanied refugee children?

The story and the future expectations of the young unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee participants form the basis of a realistic discussion about the importance of effective education and career development initiatives.

Flight, gratitude and hope for the future

Their discussions reflected the story of their flight, their gratitude and feelings towards the host country, and their hopes for the future.

Firstly, the majority of the children in the study had left home with the blessings of their parents or caregiver, but the decision was predominantly taken for them, not taken by them. Their voices had not been heard. In their explanation, it was not education but safety that was the main reason for their flight. However, in many cases, their parents were being lured by promises of good education and success for their children by those who arranged the flight. But, according to the children, the reality turned out to be different to what they had expected.

In this regard, their stories reinforced the fact that education does not always act as a 'pull factor' in their decision to seek asylum in the UK. Therefore, this finding was in conflict with some

of the pull and push theories of migration (Castle and Mark, 2003). The children demonstrated their feelings of enormous gratitude and sincerity towards Britain and its people. Many admired the kindness of British people, the openness of British culture, the fairness of society, and the rule of law especially, in comparison to their own people and societies. It should also be noted that there was also visible frustration and resentment towards the system (not the people) in some of them who had become embroiled in long immigration battles or were facing possible repatriation.

As for their future, the children had only one hope: the hope to be educated in order to carve a career path and settle in Britain. Although they had no desire to return home permanently, they wanted to contribute to their countries and families in every possible way. For many, it was a feeling born out of responsibility. In general, they seemed to be pleased with the support they had received and the achievements they had made. However, feelings of self-doubt, uncertainty and disappointment with the system were also expressed by a few who were experiencing immigration problems.

Education and employment: aims, motivation and hope

The children were unanimous in their belief in education. There was no gender difference as female participants were equally ambitious – in actual fact they appeared more focused, confident and determined about their education and career aspirations than their male counterparts. There was an unmistakable desire and optimism among them to have education in order to achieve their potential. In their view, education was an absolute necessity as it had given structure and meaning to their lives. For them it was the foundation of life, proof of achievement, and protection. In their view, its ultimate prize was an appropriate career that would guarantee stability, independent strength, and be the source of financial and material possessions.

UASC's educational aspirations and their motivations to be successful are well-documented attributes (Doyle and Toole, 2013, Gregg and Williams, 2015, p. 38, Elwyn, Gladwell and Lyall, 2012). Their desire for education, however, appears to be a universal attribute in asylum seeking and refugee children. For instance, As the Save the Children report *'What do children need in time of emergency and crisis?' (2015)* explained, these children seek comfort and hope through education and it is also their motivation and resilience that drive them through the challenges in progressing in education. Confirming this view, the study participants showed unwavering motivation and resilience. This may also seem to be the case of 'temporal panic' (Lewis and Weigert, 1981) as some of them referred to their difficult past and future uncertainties when talking about their plans within a limited time span. There seemed to be an urgency and restlessness to achieve more as quickly as possible.

As the evidence shows, their motivation and desire make them achieve success in education compared to their native peers (Schleicher, 2016). Even though their performance depends on other

factors (e.g. educational programmes, emotional problems, accommodation and social care) they seem to progress in education better than the other looked-after children in the UK (Sirriyeh & Wade, 2013, Cameron et al., 2012).

Therefore, it can be argued that, as the professionals believed, supporting them with their education will be an asset to the country. For instance, evidence from around the world shows migrant children's positive contribution to their host countries if their untapped skills are developed through education; generally, they perform better than their native counterparts (OUCD, 2012).

Moreover, the children showed an ambitious and courageous stance on their future employment and career building. As discussed before, this was the sentiment largely experienced and articulated by the professional participants in this study. Besides, this seemed to be the consensus found in many investigations (e.g. Refugee Council, 2013).

7.2.2.2 QUESTION 10:

How do the young asylum seekers and refugees describe the educational and vocational support they have received? In particular, how effective do they view it, and what do they perceive to be the positive and negative aspects of current provision as experienced?

Children's perception on education in Britain

To begin with, this diverse group of children had nothing but admiration for the education system in the UK, for its refreshingly different system. For many, schooling in the UK was a pleasant experience in a kinder and more helpful educational environment. In comparison, it was far removed from the strictly teacher-driven, somewhat arbitrary, teaching and learning systems practising physical punishments that they had experienced in their home countries. They admired the lifetime opportunity that Britain had given to them by opening the doors to new kind of world, knowledge and subjects (e.g. predominately different to religious education and cultural practices in their home countries). Moreover, they were excited about the array of facilities opened to them and wanted to make the maximum use of them. However, they were also aware of the difficulties in progressing in education.

Challenges and barriers to education

They faced a catalogue of self-related and system-related barriers, which were consistent with the challenges discussed by the professionals. Therefore, the children reinforced the professionals' opinions in the study.

Self-related barriers

Concerning their self-related barriers, there were personal and psychological issues, difficulty in educational adjustment, knowledge barriers, immigration problems, financial constraints, accommodation and foster care issues, loneliness and lack of trusting parental or family support.

Losing hope and trust of authority

Fading hope for the future and disillusionment with the system and authority was visible in more mature participants who were either dealing with serious immigration issues or failing to find employment. Some were forthright in expressing their anger with the system, blaming its inefficiency for wasting their lives and keeping them in limbo.

This feeling of dissatisfaction with officialdom, and losing hope, are not exceptional. As discussed before, this is a Europe-wide problem among UASC, which needs to be recognised and addressed by the host countries (HM Government, 2016).

Loneliness: a plea for the government

This was one of the significant findings of the study. According to their different narratives, children seemed to be deprived of trust, security, social connection and stability. For instance, there was a common concern raised by many children about a lack of friendships at school (as discussed later). However, a young man who was granted permanent residence in the country, specifically expressed the feeling of loneliness and missing trusting family support and guidance. He requested the researcher to ask the government to facilitate forging a trustworthy friendship with someone who could lend him care and advice. As discussed before, these children's loneliness is a well-documented fact and it has been enquired into, discussed, and a recommendation was made at the government level in the UK. For instance, giving evidence at the recent House of Lords inquiry on unaccompanied children, Professor Ravi Kohil claimed:

One of the things that we have described is the sense of isolation and bewilderment that is commonly experienced by unaccompanied children, not just during the asylum phase but after they have been given some form of permanent status (House of Lords, 2016a, p. 72).

The JCHR and many experts in this subject have continuously recommended the introduction of the Guardianship Scheme for UASC in England as the solution to this problem (HM Government, 2013).

According to the study, children's psychological health would have a profound impact on their engagement in educational and employment-related programmes. On the other hand, planning

education and employment pathways and programmes would also be affected by their behavioural patterns. Therefore, implementing the recommendations stated above appears to be a matter of urgency.

Knowledge barriers

The children were realistic about their inadequate prior education, and the inadequacies of their native education systems. Many understood the limitations of the religious studies which was the only prior education they had in mosques. Other than knowledge-related challenges, a few of them had learning difficulties and (suspected) dyslexia that seemed to make education problematic. As the professionals pointed out, losing special needs support would be catastrophic for these cases.

System-related challenges

The investigation found that system-related challenges seemed to appear in many different forms and they were predominantly similar to the problems discussed by the professionals. Therefore, the following discussion will be based on specific barriers and their impact on planning educational and vocational interventions.

Accessing education: a paradox

Even though finding school and college places was one of the major problems for the professionals, paradoxically, the children were unaffected by the long wait. Those who waited a long time did not complain or seem to be affected by it. In fact, they had enjoyed the short programmes offered by NGOs (e.g. the Refugee Council, the Children's Society) during the waiting period. However, there were other concerns worrying them more than quick access to education.

Unawareness of British education system

This was a major problem found in the study. The system had failed to give them a proper understanding of the education process. The children had extremely limited awareness of the education system in Britain and the options available. Some were anxious and frustrated about the lack of awareness of their own path of education, except the undergraduate who showed a clear understanding of his academic path. The majority of them were lacking clarity with regard to their immigration and education rights.

Unawareness of vocational opportunities: attitude to apprenticeship

The children, including those who completed post-secondary education in the UK, showed limited awareness of the vocational education and training opportunities available to them. Surprisingly, many were not aware of the meaning of 'apprenticeships' until they participated in the

research study. However, when they came to know about it, they became over enthusiastic about becoming apprentices, assuming that it was the right approach for their long-term career building.

It is important to note that there was an instance when a professional gave misguided and false explanations about career-related issues, e.g. about the principles of apprenticeships. This may well be unintentional but the confusion it created among the participants was concerning.

Weak advice and guidance services: seeking researcher's help

There was a serious gap in advice and guidance services in educational institutions. The majority of children (especially new comers) were unaware about education or career guidance. Their sources of guidance seemed to be mainly teachers and college administration staff. However, there were disappointments, confusion and mistrust about the guiding process and the advisors. Ironically, some sought the advice of the researcher on deciding future employment options.

These children need proper advice about choosing their education and vocational opportunities, and practitioners should be well-qualified to lead them towards the correct path. This problem has come under scrutiny recently and recommendations were made to rectify the situation (HM Government, 2013, 2014). However, it is far more complicated than it seems as a lack of guidance in post-16 education, vocational training and career progress has been a widespread problem faced by many young people in the country (HM Government, 2016, Wilshaw, 2015) and UASC are no exception.

Problems achieving work experience, training or voluntary work

Some of the participants were in real need of work experience or voluntary work opportunities and did not have help with finding suitable placements. There was only one female participant in the study who managed to secure a one-week work experience in a film producing company to enhance her creative media experiences. (However, she was only allowed to complete one day's work.)

Lack of work experience places is a national problem for post-16 students, and it needs to be urgently resolved. The withdrawal of compulsory work experience in England in 2012 has dire implications for young people's career progress (Burns, 2015).

Perception of current studies: selection process

The main problem that affected many participants was the initial assessment and formal assessment process. As the study found, without a proper initial assessment of skills (e.g. English, maths and IT) and educational qualifications, children were being placed in either inappropriate classes with British children (or with other nationalities) or at an inappropriate level of study.

Therefore, in the participants' view, there should be a coherent and thorough initial assessment process, which assesses not only English but also other subject skills (e.g. maths, IT, etc.)

Similarly, with regard to formal assessment, the children's views echoed the professionals' opinions. For instance, some felt that they were unfairly assessed on the basis of exam performance and not given recognition for their abilities. This was viewed as the teachers' inability to evaluate their real strengths or weaknesses because they only relied on exam results.

Need for study support

The children had an urgent need for help with their education. According to them, they were in need of extra support and time for every subject, but mainly ESOL, maths and IT. As a young man explained, he could not enrol in a bricklaying course without the required level of maths and English and was not receiving enough support with these subjects. As the study found, the system was not capable of catering for the need of these children.

Teachers' role: listening to children's voice, support and commitment

It is fair to say that, in general, the children had affection and respect for their teachers and appeared to be surviving with the support available. The majority of them did not even seem to ask for support or advice if they needed it. Ironically, some of the participants asked for the researcher's advice on their course choices and employment paths. However, there was dissatisfaction among some of them who had been in education for some time in the country. The main problem was teachers' failure to understand the children, who they were, their background, their needs, their weaknesses and strengths. This was the main frustration expressed by some of the participants. As they explained, teachers need to listen to their voice – their expectations, concerns and needs. For instance, a young woman vented her frustration saying that 'Sometimes I try to explain to her about it, (her struggle with the English language) she is not even listening to me'.

Moreover, some teachers seemed to have a negative and insensitive approach to the children in the classroom, and this put children off subjects for life. Not offering encouragement, recognition of their hard work and praise was another shortcoming of the teachers, according to the study. Although the majority of them seemed to praise the children's efforts, some seemed to meet the children's work with scorn. It was one of the hurtful experiences found by this study.

In general, teachers' commitment to teaching did not attract criticism and their help and attentiveness touched especially some of them (new comers in particular). However, in one young man's experience, teachers were only interested in furthering their own interests and securing jobs, rather than being committed to teaching.

Institutional limitations

Although the children were happy to be in their school and college environment, there seemed to be many limitations confronting their education. The problems mainly related to advice and guidance, study courses, facilities available, class structure and integration with others.

Educational course: choice, availability and curriculum

There were many discrepancies in study courses. Firstly, many participants seemed to be struggling with the limited courses available in their colleges and were stuck with the unsuitable choices available, given the financial and logistical difficulties with switching colleges. There were cases of abrupt discontinuation of courses, and more importantly, assigning the children to inappropriate levels of study courses due to lack of resources or expertise. These problems seemed to have serious implications for the UASC's education. These issues are universal and many institutions and children are struggling with the same problems in the country in general. Moreover, the causes of the difficulties faced by the educational institutions were examined previously in this discussion.

Educational facilities

The children were in need of extra help from the colleges. Many expressed the need for good teachers through Internet-based support (e.g. BBC Learning English, BBC Skillswise), longer teaching time, especially with English, maths and IT studies, and other extra help. There seemed to be under-resourced college drop-in centres where help was minimal and unsatisfactory. A few of the children tried self-help in education by using their own computers and learning English through the Internet etc., but most of them did not possess computers let alone a television. Their age was also a barrier in accessing extra help as some claimed that students over 18 years of age were not entitled to extra help at their colleges.

Class size, curriculum planning and subject-related problems

Overcrowded classrooms with many different nationalities seemed to make the learning process difficult and unpleasant for children themselves and in their view, for the teachers. For instance, especially in a diverse class, the children used their mother tongue to communicate with their peers and friends, rather than speaking in English. Some children were uncomfortable in this type of class environment and sensitive towards the teachers' feelings when the students were speaking in other languages.

As for the course structures, the majority of them appreciated the option of ESOL courses. However, some found the course levels were low and there was a need for more advanced course

structures. With regard to some vocational courses (followed by a few), they were not good enough and considered mediocre (e.g. Element course in a college).

College environment, friendship building and integration

There was strong evidence for the segregated nature of the college environment for UASC. As many acknowledged, they were segregated through courses (e.g. ESOL, ITC and so on) that were only designed for foreign students. They did not have any opportunity to connect with the British students, which was a concern for the majority of them. They wanted to share their education experiences with them and learn from them, and most crucially, they needed this friendship to improve their English language skills.

However, some found making friends with British college peers difficult, and they did not seem to receive extended friendship from them. Many UASC seemed to mingle with British youngsters in playgrounds in community settings through leisure activities (e.g. playing football).

Integration and education

There was a strong desire for integration and education in the participants. They wanted to be with others, to learn from others and to make friends. As one young man claimed: *'Education is different when you live with somebody different. I want to be with English speaking people. I like to be with different people, you learn different things, different culture'* (Can1M).

Impact of education on integration

However, according to the study, there was no convincing evidence drawn from the children's views on the impact of education on integration. There were limited and vague answers to the question. It can be assumed that they were genuinely unaware of where education would take them in the host country or were simply uncertain about their future. These views simply did not contribute to either the views of the professional participants' or of the wider world that education is the marker of integration (UNHCR, 2016, Council of Europe, 2016).

Education: support from the wider world

Although the children seemed to have close relationships with their own communities in Britain they did not show a specific sense of support in educational matters. Peers from the communities or colleges seemed to be more supportive than others. Many of them tended to rely on NGOs and other supporting networks for educational matters other than their communities. They specifically admired the support of NGOs. They also received emotional and educational support from foster carers.

The study found that the contribution of civil society organisations is crucial for planning and delivering care and welfare to UASC. It is imperative to incorporate these organisations into the planning of educational and career promoting interventions.

Family reunion and help

It is important to note that those who were reunited with their families in the UK seemed to receive stronger support for their education than the UASC who lived on their own. This shows the importance of family support in education and UASC in general who miss that crucial element in their lives. Unaccompanied children have the right to family reunion (Home Office, 2016) and this may be one of the crucial factors that need to be considered where possible. However, it should be noted that, as some empirical evidence highlights, this is a problem faced by many children from deprived backgrounds in the UK, and it has colossal impact on their educational performance (Prince's Trust, 2016).

Post-repatriation and continuing education via digital means and the Internet

Using the Internet and other digital means for continuing education, especially in the event of returning home, was considered a worthy option. The majority of the children, however, were not hopeful about such methods, given their own war-torn countries' financial, infrastructural, social and political problems. Surprisingly, there is still hope for such educational networks connecting their part of the world in the future, as the most educated participant in the study declared:

'I mean, it is going to be difficult for some countries. I am not saying impossible, I do not use impossible, it is going to be really hard, but, possible in the future' (CGm15M).

There may be many options that can be explored to make these children's lives successful, as long as they remain optimistic about the possibilities.

7.2.2.3 QUESTION 11:

What are UASC's career aspirations and goals? What challenges do they face with the transition into the labour market?

Career goals, perception and challenges

Many of the views found in this section tend to reinforce the professionals' opinions about UASC's future career goals and challenges. Interestingly, however, the study showed apparent paradoxical and contradictory ideas between two groups regarding career perceptions and choice decisions.

Career aspirations and goals

As discussed before, the children's ultimate aim was to forge a meaningful career that would make them self-reliant and financially independent. Some were confident enough not to be reliant upon welfare benefits and valued the reward of work. More intriguingly, for some, it was religious convictions that prohibited them from living off state welfare. Others were realistic about gaining employment according to their skills, and mature enough not to be driven by money.

These views were paradoxical as some professionals hold the view that community peer influence discourages them from working and encourages them to become recipients of state benefit. Also, many children seemed to have realistic and rational career plans, as opposed to some of the professionals' views of children being driven by unrealistic expectations.

There were many different experiences and situations that seemed to have inspired their career ambitions. For instance, childhood dreams, lack of opportunities in their own countries, seeing the astounding employment structure and societal practices in the host country, and the desire to take it back to their own countries (for instance, a Somali girl's desire to establish a dental practice in her country where such services were rare, or a Congolese girl's admiration for UK's care arrangements for the disabled, which she wanted to introduce to her people).

More importantly, some of them decided their future career by recognising a niche market in the host country, for instance, becoming police officers given the advantage of being bilingual (e.g. seeing the need for Turkish speakers in the police). This seemed to be a wise choice given the current migration issue in the UK and Europe, and evidence shows that recruiting migrants into the police force has already begun in Germany (The Daily Telegraph, May 2016, p. 8).

Although none of the participants in the study were in full-time employment (except two who worked part-time as a cashier and a cleaner to support their education), as Appendix 4 shows, the group was comprised of potential engineers, academics, interpreters, journalists, businessmen, tradesman, police officers and so on.

Understanding the strength and diversity of their career aspirations and goals is crucial for employment-related policy-making. Children's strong ambitions and dreams should encourage more positive and broader perspectives on shaping policies. This would inevitably support children to achieve their career goals and make their contributions to society visible. For instance, as the recent OECD report has highlighted, migrant children in general may bring out the best of themselves by hard work and ambition in the pursuit of a career, and thus make a greater contribution to the host countries (Schleicher, 2016).

Challenges to finding employment

The children were aware of the obstacles they had to encounter when realising their career aspirations. A few of those who were looking for work seemed disappointed and disillusioned with their own inadequacies and the failures of the system to support them. As discussed before, their limitations and barriers to progressing into training and/or employment were multifaceted. It is important to say that this has been the case for majority of UASC throughout Europe (e.g. Shalayeva, 2011).

The following are some of the specific factors found in the study that claimed to be obstructing children's path to gainful employment.

Lack of financial and practical help

This was problematic for those who planned to set up businesses. For instance, one participant needed financial help and support with web-based networking to establish a domestic electrical instalment business. He was disappointed after not having the right support he needed.

Lack of social capital and networking

As discussed previously, in the professionals' view, the impact of social capital was crucial for these children in career building. Reinforcing those views, some of the children believed that without family connections it was difficult to find a job regardless of the type of the work (e.g. in the film or media industry or in places such as McDonalds and Burger King). There was helplessness among them about their limited social capital. The impact of social capital on UASC employment opportunities has been discussed previously. However, this does not seem to be just a UASC issue; it is an issue for all young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who do not have the 'inherent opportunity' needed for social mobility (Prince's Trust, 2016).

Community relationships and exploitation

According to the study findings, this is one of the issues that needs to be considered when planning career-related interventions (e.g. selecting work-based training, apprenticeships, community involvement in interventions). Although the majority of the young people in the study valued their community relationships, some were forthright in their views on the exploitation existing in their own communities. For instance, a young man who wanted to be self-employed as an electrical installer declared that he would not wish to work for his own community because he would be exploited (e.g. not paid for his services) and be taken advantage of. This was a reiteration of the suspicions of exploitation expressed by some of the professionals in the study.

In general, exploitation of asylum seeking and refugee children both within and outside their own communities has been an alarming global issue. At the time when UASC are going missing in

their thousands in Europe, mainly due to failing asylum policies (EUROPOL, 2016, Mucci & Paravicini, 2016, Beals, 2016) it poses a direct challenge to the UK's approach to safeguarding them. Especially, there is a need to eradicate the labour exploitation (e.g. in construction and agriculture industries) existing significantly within their own communities (Refugee Council and Children's Society, 2013,p.16,18, EUROPL, 2016, p. 12).

Repatriation: uncertainty, diminishing hopes and progress

The prime aim of the participants was to make UK their permanent home. Their lives had dramatically changed in the host country, and the abrupt change would make it harder for them to re-establish their lives in their own country if they returned. As a young man claimed, *'I can't imagine going back; life has changed, it moved on. I am changed'*.

In their view, repatriation is an unfair and obstructive process that shatters their hopes and abruptly ends their pursuit of achieving life chances. More importantly, they were not qualified enough or best equipped to be employed if they returned, as their countries would expect more from them when they returned from a western developed country, such as the UK. Besides, there were no career prospects in their troubled countries. According to them, repatriation was a waste of government resources. The investment of the country's efforts and money in them would pay no dividend if they were not allowed to achieve their full potential and contribute to the host country.

Although repatriation is part of a durable solution, countries face legal, moral and practical dilemmas in the process (ERPUM Watch, 2014, Murk, 2015). For instance, to uphold children's best interests, the host country should ensure children's protection, permanency, their development needs and their point of view before their return (Landsberger, 2016). As the evidence shows, promises of new beginnings could be elusive and returning home could prove to be a distressing experience for asylum seeking children in general (Knaus, 2012, p. 31). In addition, there is the problem of a shortage of information about the post-repatriation lives of returnees (Gregg and Williams, 2015, p. 43).

In this context, children's expectations should be the key factor, as this would bring them lasting solutions. For instance, as the writers argue: *Only when the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account through this process, can a truly durable solution be found* (bid, p. 23).

Therefore, considering both children's and professionals' opinion in this investigation, the best answer is to have long-term developmental plans for their lives in a safer and more stable environment, instead of an abrupt discontinuation of the process that they have already begun as a step towards building their futures. This resonates with the primary goal of this study, which was to make a positive contribution to such a process in order to find a lasting solution to these children's plight.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the explanations and arguments presented have clearly highlighted the significance of addressing the issues relating to UASC's education and employment prospects. Both professionals and children seem to struggle with their situations and their desire to achieve one goal – Education. Crucially, they need more comprehensive and long-term support in their efforts to overcome the barriers and to achieve success.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

8.1 CONCLUSION

A problem well put is half-solved.

John Dewey

(as cited in Garrison, 1999)

At present, when many parts of the world are grappling with the complexities of hosting unaccompanied asylum seeking children, an acute need for knowledge about this phenomenon seems unavoidable. In this respect, the investigation aimed to create knowledge about a specific issue concerning these children in a specific context.

While there may still be many questions to be answered and much to be uncovered about the subject examined, this simple but unique exploratory study has laid a foundation for further investigations to be built upon. The vision behind the study was to help to find durable solutions to the plight of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children in the UK. It was designed to be the first step of a series of research studies that would facilitate the creation of effective, time-bound and client-centred educational intervention programmes. Apart from this, it also aimed to re-design and improve the ongoing programmes (if any) where necessary. Principally, it set out to explore 'what works, for whom, and in which contexts' using the best available current evidence. In doing so, the ultimate goal of the study was to help young unaccompanied asylum seekers achieve their full potential in the UK labour market (or beyond, as in some cases, according to their final country of settlement).

The main objective of the study was to explore the availability, nature and effectiveness of current intervention programmes. The specific objectives were to examine the conditions of education and vocational training provision, to understand the importance of education and employment to these young people, and to grasp the impact of education and employment on their social integration.

In its attempt to achieve the objectives, the study has explored the real situation of educational intervention programmes, and the discrepancies of the formal and vocational education systems in

the country. For instance, there were no intervention programmes that met the study criteria, and the limitations of the education system seemed to affect not only unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children, but all-looked after children and care leavers in the county. However, there were regional variations – for instance, the Scottish system seemed to be more favourable to unaccompanied asylum seeking children compared to that in England.

Moreover, the investigation revealed the importance of education and employment for finding lasting solutions to the plight of these children. And also, it has shown the professionals' positive opinions of the impact of education and employment on the children's social integration into the country. However, it has recognised the difficulty in achieving educational and employment success, and the problems of social integration within the current system in operation.

The study not only discovered the problems in depth but also identified the causes of such problems and received suggestions for rectifying the issues. In this respect, as John Dewey (1859-1952), the educational reformer and philosopher who was a proponent of pragmatism and progressive education, once said, '*a problem well put is half-solved*'. According to this thought, it can be argued that, in its capacity, the study has made its contribution to knowledge by unearthing the deep-rooted problems that hinder these children's educational and vocational development. Moreover, its findings are largely relevant to all asylum seeking and refugee children in general in the UK. Significantly, it has also thrown light on the system of formal and vocational education and training in the country, and its impact on all looked-after children and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Key findings of the study

The core finding:

1) Failure to uphold the best interests of unaccompanied children and young people in relation to meeting their educational and vocational needs required to integrate them into the labour market in the UK (or in their country of origin in the event of repatriation)

The following are the key elements that verify this assertion:

- 2) Unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children, and citizen children in care in the country, are confronting the same problems in formal and vocational education and training.
- 3) The non-existence of specific educational intervention programmes designed to support UASC integration into the labour market (either in the UK or beyond).

- 4) The absence of a comprehensive approach to grasp which educational and vocational interventions work best for these children.
- 5) There is an acute need for bespoke, needs-driven, child-centred, formal and non-formal educational initiatives. These should aim to empower the children by enhancing their employability and facilitating their labour market integration.
- 6) Young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees are facing difficulties with progressing in education, and finding training and employment. They have uncertainties about carving future career paths.
- 7) Existence of policy and system related limitations and gaps in the provision and delivery of formal and vocational education and training.
- 8) Professionals' self-justification suggested that their efforts were focused only on managing the risk to themselves, rather than providing welfare services for unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children.
- 9) Professionals are facing barriers to implementing best practice in planning and delivering educational and vocational support.
- 10) Child-related limitations interfere with planning and delivering educational and vocational training.
- 11) Some educational and vocational provisions and guidance given were deemed to cause more harm than good.
- 12) Listening to the children's voice and agency is paramount in order to meet their educational and employment needs and yield positive outcomes.
- 13) Education and employment were considered specifically by the professionals as the essential prerequisite for labour market and social integration, which would lead to finding durable solutions for unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children.

As the key findings suggest, the study has pinpointed the implications of the problems identified for children, practice and policy, and the areas most in need of reform or a total change of direction. In addition, the study evidence will also help with the theoretical understanding of the subject area of investigation.

Implications for theory

As has been discussed under the Theoretical Framework (p.16), this study was guided by four theories and concepts, namely, Push/pull theory of migration, Human capital theory, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of child development, and the concepts and markers of integration. The following discussion presents an appraisal of these theories and concepts based on the findings.

The research has identified interesting as well as paradoxical views on certain theories. For instance, some theories presented in the theoretical road map of the study were proved to be relevant, while others seemed to be oversimplified in relation to the actions, ideas or behavioural patterns of the research participants. For example, the study has proved the relevance of human capital theory in understanding the educational and vocational needs of refugee children. Both the professionals and the children unequivocally agreed that education improves human capital, enhances employability and life chances, and bridges the talent gap. Moreover, in the view of the professionals, education and employment were the indisputable markers of social integration. The children also expressed a strong desire to integrate into their native British peer groups and society in order to make educational and social progress. However, as discussed previously, the majority of them showed less awareness or experience of the impact that education or employment can make on their integration into British society.

The study has also recognised the importance of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of child development when considering these children's psychological needs as discussed in the findings. On the contrary, the investigation has not fully confirmed the notions associated with push/pull theories of migration. For instance, the study has proved vagueness around the push and pull factors of migration, as the evidence suggests that education is not the dominant pull factor of the children's flight to the West. According to the findings, their flight was predominantly based on seeking safety. Therefore, it can be argued that the push/pull theory seems to be oversimplified and there is a need for a thorough investigation of its relevance and applicability. As pointed out in the study, in order to eliminate assumptions, a clear understanding of the theoretical position on the cause of children's flight is crucial when making immigration and education policies.

It should also be noted that, while the research has identified new theoretical viewpoints, it has not attempted to present new theories or concepts given the limited size of the research sample.

Implications for practice

The investigation has uncovered many different aspects of the practice framework, and the practitioners' roles and responsibilities. It has shown their limitations and disappointments, and the

barriers to upholding their best practice in order to safeguard the children's best interests. Even though the professionals believed in their righteousness, morality, and responsibility towards unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children under their care, there was an underlying dissatisfaction or self-questioning of the meaning of their role. As the evidence suggests, many practitioners seem to view their role as a mere process of managing risk to themselves, rather than one of providing for the children's welfare. Moreover, they seem to be in a constant struggle on two fronts simultaneously: the struggle between finite resources and the infinite needs of the children; and the battle between the children's unrealistic expectations and the practitioners' limited capacity to realise those expectations.

Although the professionals' vision was firmly set on teaching these children 'how to learn and 'how to be a good citizen', there was a catalogue of barriers to realising their desires. For instance, they had to overcome some of their own limitations, system-related obstacles and children-related issues. For instance, as the study discovered, some practitioners' lack of understanding about the children's needs, their inability to listen to the children's voice, the application of a 'deficit perspective' rather than a 'strength perspective' to education planning, and seeing these children as a 'problem' and a less intelligent group were amongst many shortcomings revealed in this study. Moreover, in some instances, the practitioners' lacklustre work ethics and the lack of a continuing professional training also seemed to have an impact on their service. Although the study found that some practitioners efficiently collaborated with their colleagues at a local, regional and national level for joint decision making, the majority of them seemed uninterested in collaborative approaches.

However, according to the study, practitioners' failures were largely caused by the system, policy landscape, and children's limitations. As discussed in detail in the previous chapter, there were many factors affecting their services, namely, government immigration and education policy planning, public opinion and the role of negative media, poorly funded education services, and more crucially, children-related problems were the major factors that would impact on practitioners' role. The study revealed that there were no easy answers to solving the children's psychological needs, their lack of educational and vocational qualifications, their legal battles over immigration, their shortage of social capital, and many more challenges.

In addition, one of the important findings of the study was the professionals' lack of consuming knowledge, and openness to research and the wider world. To make well-informed practice decisions and to shape their practice into an effective and coherent service, they need to be open to knowledge and to embracing new opportunities. Therefore, these wide gaps in relation to the use of knowledge may need to be addressed.

Finally, the discussion above showed the effect of a complicated web of discrepancies in the provision of the children's educational and vocational services. This evidence will help both practitioners and organisations to resolve practice and institutional shortcomings and reorganise their services.

Implications for policy

This policy-orientated study has made a meaningful input into the immigration and education policy landscape and the development of intervention programmes. It has presented evidence for exploring new policy initiatives and ideas that work in collaboration with the children's countries of origin, by for instance promoting digital technology, Computer Assisted Teaching (CAT) and Computer Assisted Learning (CAL) to educate the children in those countries and help the returnees continue the education they had in the UK. Similarly, the investigation has brought the importance of collaboration with Europe and the wider world to the fore when making policy initiatives for the welfare of these children.

The research was designed in accordance with the concept of evidence-based policymaking, which is based on current best research evidence, professional wisdom and clients' expectations. The study has incorporated evidence from all three elements to create accurate and current knowledge to the best of its ability. It has uncovered some acute discrepancies in current policies and reinforced the existing negative opinions on policy implications for refugees in general and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in particular.

Even though all of the three above elements have contributed to the research in equal measure, the children's expectations brought a significant richness to the study. For instance, contrary to popular belief, they were vocal about their lives, and spoke openly about their very personal feelings, expectations, limitations and uncertainties about the future. This has produced vital and rich information about them, as knowledge about their real feelings is still in short supply.

Understanding the real children behind the immigration label is considered to be important. As has been stated in this study, the 'culture of disbelief' and assumption-based asylum policies have infringed their rights and obstructed them from achieving their full potential. The study also found that inappropriate immigration and education policy decisions had contributed to stunting the development of the youth of the world and putting these children into no man's land.

The investigation further discovered that the country has not yet found the 'happy medium' of policymaking relating to these vulnerable children. There is a need for a fair and transparent immigration policy framework, which is free from the political agenda, in order to prevent the children from being put into legal limbo with their immigration status for years.

In relation to education policies, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and their British counterparts in social care appeared to suffer the same implications of a weak and inappropriate policy framework. Historic policy mistakes made in relation to foreigners' higher education tuition fees, and also imposing restrictions on unaccompanied children's university tuition fees, had a colossal impact on their educational achievements. They were also in a disadvantaged situation with regard to accessing vocational education and training due to their immigration status. These are the issues that need to be addressed.

Considering the programme interventions, the study has produced significant evidence for the need to create new programmes and opportunities. For instance, promoting children's participation in apprenticeship and work based training, improving their skills in their mother tongue, planning extra English language learning placements and so on would be beneficial. The study has also introduced some principles of programme planning, such as a holistic approach, a dual planning approach, a global approach, a needs-driven approach, a resilient building approach and a peer group approach. Some of the principles reinforced the ideas already being acknowledged by the experts, for instance, holistic and dual planning principles.

The importance of collaborative work with Europe for planning educational, vocational and employment pathways is one of the important ideas presented in this study. Moreover, it has conveyed special messages to the policy makers and the researcher. The investigation has brought to the fore the professionals' request for more financial help, good mental health services for the children, the establishment of a guardianship scheme and more importantly, efficient immigration and education policies. Some of the participants asked the researcher to inform the public about the real story behind these children, and refugees in general, and their contribution to the country. The vital request to the researcher was to search for new and successful refugee integration models around the world, with the idea behind the request was to experiment with them in the UK and replicate them if appropriate. In this regard, the study has identified an important need that lies between policy and practice contexts – the need for wider and current knowledge to challenge the existing ways of thinking. This would ultimately shape the system of protection and assistance, and facilitate durable solutions to unaccompanied children seeking refuge in the country.

The study has made its contribution to the research field of unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children. It has made its best effort to produce more accurate current evidence through a more collaborative partnership with both knowledge producers and users.

Finally, research, practice and policy are the pivotal elements that drive every initiative forward. This is the case when planning and implementing the best possible educational interventions for unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children in order to make them achieve their full potential. However, given the extraordinary situation of these children, inevitably, this process

tends to be influenced by the sense of righteousness, morality, public perception, politics, and the worldview. At the time, when the world is on the move producing millions of children seeking refuge alone, countries are left with no easy answers. As one of the popular refugee hosting countries, the United Kingdom is not an exception to this challenge.

However, history tells that the country's commitment, responsibility, and morality have given freedom, success, and dignity to thousands of children who have sought refuge there for centuries. Undoubtedly, the country will rise to the current challenges in order to find lasting solutions to the children who seek asylum alone.

Limitations of the study

The obvious truth that no research is beyond limitations also applies to this research project. Even though the study did not face major obstacles or failures in terms of its research design or data collection, it would have been more complete if the following conditions had been met.

Firstly, although the study incorporated participants from different regions from England and from one of the main areas with the highest refugee population in Scotland, it did not represent participants from Wales and Northern Ireland. The original design aimed to recruit from these two regions, but the research received limited response from the authorities regarding the matter. However, it has almost certainly not made any difference to the findings because these two regions host a limited number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children compared to England and Scotland. The study was supplemented with good sources of subject- related secondary literature on those regions.

Secondly, given the deeply politicised nature of the refugee problem in the UK and internationally, and the need for European collaboration regarding migration and broader control, there was a particular desire to have political opinions included in the study. The original plan was to interview two politicians from the governing party and the opposition(s), who were familiar with the subject under investigation. This would have given a balanced view between the government position, the opposition party and the professional participants. Unfortunately, this did not materialise due to the time and financial constraints of the project and, the study consequently gathered a good amount of current best evidence from parliament reports and proceedings. However, it can be assumed that these limitations may give more opportunities and inspirations for future researchers in their efforts to take this subject study to new levels.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As has been discussed previously, this exploratory study has raised a number of research questions and found gaps in the literature, practice and policy. More importantly, the study is the first step of a series of investigations towards planning an experimental intervention programme(s), and it is therefore essential to take the study to the next step. The following are the study's recommendations:

- 1) Create a database of all formal and non-formal intervention programmes and support services (e.g. programmes run by NGOs, Charities, Community Organisations and so on) available in the UK. This needs to include basic information, such as duration, funding source, and evaluation reports (if available).
- 2) Conduct a thorough systematic review on formal and non-formal educational interventions that aim to improve the employability of unaccompanied refugee children. (This can either be a Europe-wide or worldwide review according to the research objective).
- 3) Plan a localised experimental programme of the above category for a selected cohort of unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- 4) Explore the options for incorporating civil society organisations into the education and vocational training process of all refugee children in general.
- 5) Explore the possibility of using technology and Internet-based education in refugee generating countries.
- 6) Identify new methods of integrating refugee children into their native peer groups.
- 7) Explore ways of making practitioners consume research in order to make well-informed practice decisions.
- 8) There is a dearth of literature on female unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people. There is a pressing need for more research into every aspect of their lives.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1	Abbreviations, definitions and terminology
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APPENDIX 4	UASC's Educational qualifications and career aspirations
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APPENDIX 1

ABBREVIATIONS, DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

UASC -	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. This thesis will use the term 'unaccompanied asylum seeking children' and UASC interchangeably in accordance with the government definition.
UNCRC/CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child /Convention on the Right of the Child
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

Asylum seekersⁱ: People who move across borders in search of protection, but who may not fulfil the strict criteria laid down by the 1951 Convention. Asylum seeker describes someone who has applied for protection as a refugee and is awaiting the determination of his or her status. Asylum seeker can become a refugee if the local immigration or refugee authority deems then as fitting the international definition of refugee .

Best interest of the child: The basic guiding principle in any child care and protection actions is the Principle of the "best interests of the child". Effective protection and assistance should be delivered to unaccompanied children in a systematic, comprehensive and integrated manner.

Children: A child is defined as anyone who is under 18 years of age (UNCRC). However, in this document, the term 'Children' is used as a generic term for children and young people and those who were between 16 -24 years of age (given the age differences in the research sample). This is the generic term professionals used in the study to refer to UASC regardless of their age.

Country of origin: The country of nationality or, in the case of a stateless child, the country of habitual residence.

Durable solutionsⁱⁱ: Identification of durable solutions: If the child is granted asylum or permitted to stay on ground, possible durable solutions are either local integration or resettlement in a third country normally on the grounds of family reunification. If the child

is found not to qualify for asylum, either as a refugee or on humanitarian grounds, an assessment of the solutions that is in the best interest of the child should follow as soon as practicable after the negative results of his/her application is confirmed. The identification of the most appropriate solution requires that all the various aspects of the case be duly considered and weighed. One way in which these objectives may be ensured is by the establishment of multidisciplinary panels in charge of considering on a case –by –case basis which solution is in the best interests of the child, and making appropriate recommendations.

Implementation of durable solutions: In recognition of the particular vulnerability of unaccompanied children, every effort should be made to ensure that decisions relating to them are taken and implemented without any undue delays.

Three durable solutionsⁱⁱⁱ: **Voluntary repatriation:** May be one solution for refugees who have made the brave decision to return home. **Resettlement:** For those who cannot return, either because of continued conflict, wars or persecution, resettlement in another country is one alternative.

Integration: Another alternative for those who are unable to return home is integration within the host country. This is often a complex process which places considerable demands on both the individuals and the receiving country.

Migrants^{iv}: People who choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants face no such impediment to return. If they choose to return home, they will continue to receive the protection of the government.

Refugee^v: A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reason of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.

Separated children: Separated children' are children, as defined in Article 1 of the CRC, who have been separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.

Unaccompanied children: An unaccompanied child is a person who is under the age of eighteen, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier and who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so.

Sources: ⁱ UNESCO, 2016, ⁱⁱ UNHCR, 1997, ⁱⁱⁱ UNHCR, 2016a, ^{iv} UNHCR, 2016b, ^v UNHCR, 2016c

APPENDIX 2 - CHRONOLOGY OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

PROFESSIONALS

	DATE	CODE	OCCUPATION	ORGANISATION	PLACE OF INTERVIEW
1	30 January 2013	PCSCP1	Senior Project Worker – Education Advocacy Service for UASC & Refugee Children	National Children's Charity	South East
2	30 January 2013	PCSPE2	Co-Ordinator , Volunteering process, Education Advocacy Service, for UASC	National Children's Charity	South East
3	4 March 2013	PHCMP3	Manager, Corporate Parenting, Safeguarding Children and Quality Assurance Services	A London Borough	London
4	14 March 2013	PGSPU4	Head of EAL Department (English as an Additional Language)	Sixth Form College	South East
5	09 April 2013	POCES5	Manager, Raise Service and Joint Housing Team, Corporate Parenting, Children Education and Families	County Council	South East

6	23 April 2013	PCCAM6	Principle Policy Advisor , Asylum and Immigration	Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB)	London
7	1 October 2013	PRSNEB7	Programme Officer	Refugee charity promoting UASC education	London
8	4 November 2013	PIISYB8 From Afghanistan	Research Associate, Central Asian Studies	Research Institute	London
9	7 November 2013	PBURK9	Academic and a special advisor to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights on unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people	University	East of England (SKYPE interview)
10	20 November 2013	PCSSS10	Programme Manager	National Children's Charity	South East
11	20 November 2013	PCSCN11	Co-ordinator – Orientation and Induction Programmes	National Children's Charity	South East
12	13 December 2013	PBAAGJW12 From Afghanistan	Director	Advocacy agency for Development Programmes in Afghanistan	London

13	7 January 2014	PIESJ13	Professor	University Research Institute, London	Gloucestershire
14	14 January 2014	PCCLM14	Senior Lecturer and Coordinator, special programme for unaccompanied asylum seeking children	Further Education College	Western Scotland
15	24 January 2014	PAACB15	Chief Executive	Social Enterprise, in Afghanistan and the UK	London
16	24 January 2014	PSESPMRM16	Officer, Sub Regional Strategic Migration	South East England Councils	London
17	24 January 2014	PCIMN17	Managing Director	Social Enterprise supporting public and voluntary sector organisations	London
18	24 January 2014	PAIMK18 From Afghanistan	Office Manager/Researcher	International charity supporting South Asian countries	London
19	29 th January 2014	PSCDW19	Virtual Head of School	Borough Council	West Midlands
20	29 th January 2014	PSCCK20	UASC Coordinator/Outreach teacher	LACES Team (Looked After Children Education Support), Borough	West Midlands

				Council	
21	31 January 2014	PBGK21	Research Officer	National Children's Charity	London
22	6 February 2014	PSGSCM22	Senior Officer, Scottish Guardianship Service	Western Scotland	Western Scotland
24	6 February 2014	PSDSAR24	Work Coach	National Skill Body supporting Businesses and skill planning and development	Western Scotland
25	20 February 2014	PUNSS25	Senior Officer	International Refugee Organisation	London
26	21 February 2014	PKUAS26	University Lecturer, specialised in UASC	University, North East England	West Yorkshire
27	25 February 2014	PSTCR27	Student Mentor	Further and Higher Education College	West Midlands
28	24 February 2014	PSTTC28	Virtual Head of School	Further and Higher Education College	West Midlands
29	25 February 2014	PSTN29	Youth Worker	Local Authority	West Midlands
30	25 February 2014	PSTB30	Youth Worker	Local Authority	West Midlands
31	4 March 2014	PERCGS31	Advanced Social Work	A Yorkshire Council	Yorkshire

			Practitioner, Pathway Team - Leaving Care Service		
32	10 March 2014	PHSBB32	Refugee Co-ordinator and Induction Mentor	A comprehensive School, in a Greater London Borough Council	London
33	13 March 2014	PCSJS33	Programme Manager	National Children's Charity	West Yorkshire
34	13 March 2014	PCSA34	Senior Project Worker, and project co-ordinator for young refugee projects	National Children's Charity	West Yorkshire
35	11 March 2014	PRCSK35	Young Refugee Development Officer	International NGO	South Yorkshire (Telephone Interview)
36	21 March 2014	PBRCMR36	Refugee Life Skills Programme Manager, Orientation Service	International NGO	Scotland
37	28 March 2014	PCCW37	Community, Schools and Group Consultant, Refugee Forum, in London	A Greater London Borough Council	London
38	29 July 2014	POUMF38	Psychiatrist, Research Fellow	University Department of Psychiatry	South East

**APPENDIX 3 - CHRONOLOGY OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
YOUNG UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES**

NUMBER	CODE	DATE	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	EDUCATION INSTITUTE/ REGION	OCCUPATION	PLACE OF INTERVIEW
1	CAN1M	08 March 2013	Afghanistan	Further Education College South East	Student	National Children's charity
2	C002F (trafficked)	20 February 2014	From Africa/country not declared	Further Education College London	Student**	Children Protection organisation
3	C003F (Trafficked)	20 February 2014	From Africa/country not declared	Further Education College London	Student**	Children Protection organisation
4	CE04M (Trafficked)	20 February 2014	Eretria	Further Education College London	Student*	Children Protection organisation

5	CIKA5M	25 February 2014	Iran	Further and Higher Education College West Midlands	Student	At the college
6	CAF6M	25 February 2014	Afghanistan	Further and Higher Education College West Midlands	Student	At the college
7	CAKS7M	25 February 2014	Afghanistan	Further and Higher Education College West Midlands	Student	At the college
8	CID8M	25 February 2014	Iran/an Afghan refugee	Further and Higher Education College West Midlands	Student	At the college

9	CSA9M	25 February 2014	Sudan	Further and Higher Education College West Midlands	Student	At the college
10	CKM10M	25 February 2014	Kurdistan/Iraq	Further and Higher Education College West Midlands	Student	At the college
11	CAN11M	10 March 2014	Afghanistan	Further and Higher Education College London	Student	At the (previous) comprehensive attended, London
12	CSH12F	21 March 2014	Somalia	Further Education College Western Scotland	Student	At the college
13	CCM13F	21 March 2014	Congo	Further Education College	Student	At the college

				Western Scotland		
14	CICY14M	21 March 2014	Ivory Coast	Further Education College Western Scotland	Student	At the college
15	CGM15M	21 March 2014	Guinea	University in Western Scotland	Student	(Previous) Further Education College attended, Western Scotland

00 = *These participants were possibly be over 17 but did not declare age, name or country

0 = * Not declared name or age

APPENDIX 4 -- CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS

Code	Age	Prior Education	Prior English Language skills	Qualifications gained in the UK	Current Education and Future Educational Aspirations	Career Aspirations
CAN1M	19	No prior education	None	Been to an academy but did not enjoy and disliked the teacher. Did skill work course with IT, gardening and carpentry. Did not enjoy.	Currently doing elementary English full-time. Planning to do a bricklaying course. No proper guidance or qualification eg. English and maths to qualify for that.	Wanted to be a brick layer working in building trade or a decorator
C002F (Female)	Did not declare	Primary to secondary (like English subjects) Started college education in the UK	Learnt English at school	Creative media course – Diploma 2010/2012	Want to do another course in accountancy and want to be a bank cashier. Given up going into film industry as no social capital to pursue it. Wanted to go University	Wanted to be a bank cashier. Childhood wish was to be a journalist
C003F (Female)	-do-	Had education for only three years from age 7 to 10	Learn little English, got the language improved by watching English films		ESOL and planning to go to university	Nurse or midwife

CE04M	-do-	Primary to secondary education (French system) No O/L or A/L levels		ESOL Uncompleted Environmental science course and one year business management course.	BTEC science course, second year. Plan to go to university	Engineer
IKA5M	16	No prior education in Iran	None	ESOL – Entry level 2	ESOL – Entry level 3	Interpreter to Home Office /college/local authority in the UK If return home, want to start a business or work in a foreign company
CAF6M	19	No schooling before	None		ESOL, wanted to learn English well	Car mechanic
CAKS7M	18	No prior education, never been to school, only religious education in mosque	None	Been to a secondary school in the UK for three years, year 9, 10 ,11	ESOL – Entry level 2	Police officer or mechanic

CID8M	16 (Age dispute case)	Darosh – From Iran (Originally refugee from Afghanistan to Iran and lived in	None	ESOL – Entry 2 Full time course started two weeks ago	Full time education course after completing ESOL, but did not know what	Engineer or Businessman
CSA9M	18	Education up to secondary level	Had followed Cambridge Certificate for six months back home but not finished.		ESOL – Entry level 2 – other subjects ICT and Maths University education – Engineering course. Wanted do another course to support his career aspirations, but did not know anything at the moment	Electrical Engineer / want to be self-employed as domestic electrical installer
KM10M	16	Started schooling at age 7	Elementary English	Been to school in the UK for 3 years. passed IT, Sports and science with high marks. 80%. Did not do O/Ls. Did not passed maths and English at school.	ESOL –entry level 2, ICT and maths / wanted to do entry level 3 ESOL and then public service courser and then go to University (Friend’s advice who had taken the same root)	Policeman in the UK because of his language skills
CAN11M	21	Schooling up to age 9		Entered year 11 but did not achieve anything.	Electrical Installation Course – Level 3 at	Plan A: Electrical Installation / Plan B: want to do

				Followed English and math up to level 2 at FE college. 2 year BTECH course in Business and then following Electrical installation course	College	a solar system course
CSH12F (Female)	Did not declare	No formal education – only religious education in the mosque	None	ESOL	ESOL Intermediate. Hope to go to University	Dentist/ want to return home and establish a dental hospital
CCM13F (Female)	-do-	Primary to secondary level, not finished secondary exams	Little English knowledge – watching movies but no opportunity to speak or practice writing	ESOL – Intermediate level – doing this for a year with maths & citizenship education	Next course is NC National Certificate in Administration in the same college with IT and it takes three years (NC, HNC, HND) and then university to do health care administration	Health care administrator although childhood dream was to be a doctor
CICY14M	Did not declare	High school level – In French education system (which is different to English system)	Could understand a little	ESOL for two years	Next course HNC and HND in Software Development and then go to university. HND 2 years and University in the third year. After the first degree wants to	Software engineer

					do a Master's degree or PhD, want to go to the highest level	
CGM15M	Did not declare	Secondary level education and taken sociology, history as subjects	Little English knowledge before came to this country	ESOL and other courses up to undergraduate level	Second year undergraduate in sociology	Undecided but want to work for people in social sciences or public service

**APPENDIX 5 - UASC'S CURRENT WORK ACTIVITIES,
GENERAL SKILLS, AND EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

CODE	CURRENT WORK (IF ANY)	CURRENT WORK EXPERIENCE IN THE UK	PRIOR WORK EXPERIENCE	LANGUAGE SKILLS	EXTRA CURRICULAR/LEISURE ACTIVITY
CAN1M	None	None	Building work and mechanical work in Afghanistan	Afghan languages	Playing football with friends in his Afghan community
C002F (Female)	None	Currently helping voluntarily in the office at the child protection charity she was supported by. Previously, had a chance to complete only a one-day training session of a week's work experience assignment in a film production company e.g. making teas, helping others. The company	None	African languages and English. Spoke fairly good English	Not settled yet with the new life

		stopped her work abruptly because of its internal problems.			
C003F (Female)	None	None	None	African languages	None
CE04M	Part- time super market cashier		None	Eritrean languages and English	Playing football
CIKA5M		Present – Part time voluntary work in a bakery for two/three hours and with a builder doing tilling, he was promised money -£50.00 per day once he was qualified	Past – Child labour Started work at age 10 in Iran in illegal trade according to him transporting things by his bike from Kurdistan to Iran. He was the breadwinner for the family	Kurdish, Persian	Playing football with friends
CAF6M	None		None	Afghan languages	Like playing cricket but never go out to play (he suffered mental health problems and racism in the community)

CAKS7M	None	None	None	Afghan languages Did not want to use his mother tongue in college or in a class environment. Wanted to be separated from Afghan friends to improve English.	Go to the Gym – weight training and running Playing both football and cricket with friends from both English and his own community in the local park
CID8M	None	None	None	Persian and local languages	Playing football with friends
CSA9M				Sudanese languages and limited English	Playing football in local community grounds
CKM10M	None	None	None	Kurdish and Iraqi languages	Playing football and tennis with friends
CAN11M	None	Worked	None	Afghanistan,	Meeting friends in the

		voluntarily in building projects before		Baghlan province language, e.g. Pashto	community (suffering from mental health and immigration problems)
CSH12F(Female)	None		None, only house work	Somali language	None
CCM13F (Female)	None		None	French (main language), in addition, she speaks five national languages: Kituba, Lingula, Swahili, and Tshiluba	Playing the piano /taking lessons. She played the piano at home
CICY14M			Used to Help others back home with IT problems with his self-learned computer skills. His work was mainly unpaid.	French (main language) and national languages	Football – played for college, Basketball, black belt in Karate
CGM15M	Part-time cleaner		Used to do fundraising and charity work as a schoolboy for	French (main language) and English. Also fluent in	Football – played for college. Interested in travelling and visited France, Portugal

			refugee children from Sierra-Leone Also worked in charities in the UK e.g., Barnado's	African languages used in the home country, e.g., Susu	and Belgium.
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APPENDIX 6

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

RESEARCH

EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUNG UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKERS

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

This is the main component of a PhD degree thesis which is being compiled by the said student at the Department of Education, University of York, UK, under the supervision of Professor Chris Kyriacou.

The scope of the research is to examine the availability and effectiveness of educational interventions designed for improving the integration of young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees into the UK labour market.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Your participation as an interviewee and your views are the most important element of this investigation. Young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees aged 16 – 24 years and professionals working with refugee children will be selected for the interviews. Your participation is voluntary and you are at liberty to withdraw at any time without prejudice or negative consequences.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION AND TYPE OF DATA NEEDED

Individual interviews will be used to gather detailed information that you wish to provide on education and employment situations relating to young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees. The interview will be audio recorded at your discretion. I will see you for one interview which will take 20- 60 minutes. At the end of the interview, I would check with you the main point I have written.

I will use the information to produce the research thesis.

DATA PROTECTION

Confidentiality and anonymity of your information will be protected according to the University's data protection policy which is governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. Your information will be kept safe from unauthorised access and not be kept long than necessary.

Complaint about the conduct of this research should be addressed to Research Administrator, Department of Education, University of York, YORK, Yo10 5DD, UK. Tel: 01904 324476, fax: 01904 323444
Email: education-research@york.ac.uk

I welcome your participation.

Thank you.

Harsha Wilkinson

(Version 1P – 29 November 2012)

APPENDIX 7

EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUNG UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKERS

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet (Version 1P dated 29 November 2012) regarding the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that the audio recording of the interview is optional, each interview is strictly private, and that all the information I give will be treated confidentially during the research project and during the presentation of any results. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and I am at liberty to withdraw at any time without prejudice or negative consequences.

Please write your name (in BLOCK letters)

Signature _____ Date _____

Interviewer's name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

One copy to be retained by the participant and one copy to be retained by the researcher.

Any queries about this research should be addressed to Harsha Wilkinson, Department of Education, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD. Complaints about the conduct of this research should be addressed to Research Administrator, Department of Education, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD. Tel: 01904 324476, Fax: 01904 323444.
Email: education-research@york.ac.uk

APPENDIX 8

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EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUNG UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKERS

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DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Your participation as an interviewee and your views are the most important element of this investigation. Young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees aged 16 – 24 years and professionals working with refugee children will be selected for the interviews. Your participation is voluntary and you are at liberty to withdraw at any time without prejudice or negative consequences.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION AND TYPE OF DATA NEEDED

Individual interviews will be used to gather detailed information that you wish to provide on education and employment situations relating to young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees. The interview will be audio recorded at your discretion. I will see you for one interview which will take 20- 60 minutes. At the end of the interview, I would check with you the main point I have written.

I will use the information to produce the research thesis.

You will receive reimbursement of expenses and a small token of appreciation.

DATA PROTECTION

Confidentiality and anonymity of your information will be protected according to the University's data protection policy which is governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. Your information will be kept safe from unauthorised access and not be kept long than necessary.

Any queries about this research should be addressed to Harsha Wilkinson, Department of Education, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD. Complaint about the conduct of this research should be addressed to Research Administrator, Department of Education, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD. Tel: 01904 324476
Fax: 01904 323444 Email: education-research@york.ac.uk

I welcome your participation. Thank you.

Harsha Wilkinson

(Version 1C – 29 November 2012)

APPENDIX 9

EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUNG UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKERS

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet (Version 1C dated 29 November 2012) regarding the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that the audio recording of the interview is optional, each interview is strictly private, and that all the information I give will be treated confidentially during the research project and during the presentation of any results. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and I am at liberty to withdraw at any time without prejudice or negative consequences.

Please write your name (in BLOCK letters)

Signature _____ Date _____

Interviewer's name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

One copy to be retained by the participant and one copy to be retained by the researcher.

Any queries about this research should be addressed to Harsha Wilkinson, Department of Education, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD. Complaints about the conduct of this research should be addressed to Research Administrator, Department of Education, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD. Tel: 01904 324476, Fax: 01904 323444.
Email: education-research@york.ac.uk

APPENDIX 10

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

Department of Education

Questionnaire for Virtual School Heads - UK

Research study: Educational interventions for young unaccompanied asylum seekers in the UK

Researcher: Harsha Wilkinson – PhD candidate, Department of Education

The scope of the research is to explore the effectiveness of educational interventions on the integration of young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees into the UK labour market. This is the main component of a PhD degree thesis which is being compiled by the researcher under the supervision of Professor Chris Kyriacou at the Department of Education.

Your views are important for this investigation and your participation is voluntary. This research has received the ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the Department of Education at the University of York. Confidentiality and anonymity of your information will be protected according to the University's data protection policy which is governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. Your information will be kept safe from unauthorised access and not be kept long than necessary.

Any enquiries related to this research should be addressed to Harsha Wilkinson, Department of Education, University of York, YO10 5DD Email: hnw501@york.ac.uk.

This questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Please return the completed questionnaire in the stamped-envelope provided. Alternatively, if you would prefer me to send you an electronic version of this questionnaire, please contact me at hnw501@york.ac.uk

Please answer the following questions. If necessary, please use the extra pages provided.

Abbreviations: UASC = Young Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers
LA = Local Authority
EET = Education, Employment and Training

- (1) Please estimate the number of UASC aged 16 – 24 registered in your Local Authority?
- 2) Are you overseeing EET needs of this group as a part of your statutory duty?
If not, who is responsible?
- 3) Could you name any intervention programmes designed for meeting EET needs of UASC that have been available in your LA for the past six years?
- 4) Have the programmes been successful?
- 5) How do you monitor and evaluate the process and outcome of these intervention programmes? Do you follow National or LA Guidelines?

- 6) What is your view on consulting these young people when planning and evaluating intervention programmes and initiatives related to their EET needs?
- 7) Could you name any apprenticeship, work experience or voluntary work available to UASC in your LA? Are you satisfied with the level of availability?
- 8) In general, are you satisfied with your participation and knowledge sharing with local, national, regional or international bodies when developing initiatives for UASC? Would you consider exploring and replicating new initiatives operated in other regions and/ or other countries?
- 9) How beneficial are Computer Assisted Learning (CAL) and Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) for UASC? Would you like to promote these methods under the virtual school system?
- 10) What are the barriers that you face when developing efficient strategic plans for educational and employment attainment leading to positive life pathways for young unaccompanied asylum seekers in the UK?

Thank you for your participation.

Harsha Wilkinson

APPENDIX 11

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PROFESSIONALS

This is the basic guide used for all interviews. Individual guides were used for interviewing each professional according to their area of expertise.

- 1) Brief reminder of research objectives and the expected contribution of the study to existing knowledge, policy and practice
- 2) I like to discuss particularly about available intervention programmes, general view about refugee education and UASC education (in relation to the participants area of expertise)
- 3) talk about the UASC under their care
- 3) About general condition of asylum seeking children's welfare and education in the region /area
- 4) Educating UASC and other asylum-seeking children in general? Personal views and opinions
- 5) What benefits it brings to children themselves, the host , and own country and to others?
- 6) What are the personal and institutional challenges facing the individual or his/her organisation to good education plan and delivery?
- 7) Are there support services available to assist them choosing their education options and future career path ?
- 8) Are there specifically targeted intervention programmes,(educational or vocational) available for helping young UASC into employability ?
- 9) If yes, what are they and his/ her evaluation about them?
- 10) If not, what system of programmes or initiatives need to be considered? The reasons for suggestions?
- 11) the problems of delivering /planning such programmes?
- 12) How they perceive UASC readiness to accept new methods of employment target educational and vocational options?
- 13) How to deliver new methods of education and what system is good for them (mainstream, vocational or both combined)
- 14) what are the problem faced by UASC in achieving education ?
- 15) what are their problems in finding employment?
- 16) Views on how the UK (or host countries) should help to address the issues that push young children seeking asylum?
- 17) Is there any specific gap the researcher should address as a knowledge maker?

APPENDIX 12

INTERVIEW GUIDE: CHILDREN

- 1) Begin discussion asking them about their hobbies, leisure activities, friends, school and any plan to do something new or learn something new. They may talk about their country and family at their discretion
- 2) About present studies, the favourite subjects and what new subjects they want to learn or what subjects they want to learn more
- 3) According to the answer, talk about the problems or why they want to learn a subject in-depth or why they want to learn new subjects
- 4) What is the most important subject they want to learn and why? Why it is importance?
- 5) This might lead to the employability factor and turn the discussion towards that
- 6) What employment plans or aspirations they have and, why is the specific field attractive?
- 7) How the present education system caters for that need? Are they happy with the facilities and system or not?
- 8) If not, what needs to be done? What are the problems? Prompt topics (e.g. teaching, subject structure, facilities, help etc.) and develop the discussion
- 9) What education method or delivery system do they prefer: segregated or integrated ?
- 10) What difficulties do they face in accessing or progressing in education, listen to the frustrations and try to expand the topics broader
- 11) Their views on eradicating the difficulties?
- 12) The importance of their communities and friendship in their welfare, security, comfort and also education
- 13) Repatriation – Depersonalise the topic and talk about other young people who go back voluntarily. Assumptions about those who have return should be positive. This will lead the discussion in the right direction according to the reaction.
- 14) Discuss about the internet, their computer use and ask whether those who have gone back keep in touch via internet. Lead the topic about IT facilities in their Countries and possibilities of developing a system that allows exchange and deliver education via the Internet. Those who have gone back can learn via Internet what they learn in Britain. Discuss further according to the answers given.
- 15) Their general feeling about Britain and its people and friendship building. Is it easy to build friendship with native peers at school? What needs to be done to make friendship with the native people and peers. Will education and employment help them get to know the people in the country?

APPENDIX 13

AN EXAMPLE OF RESEARCH DATA ANALYSIS

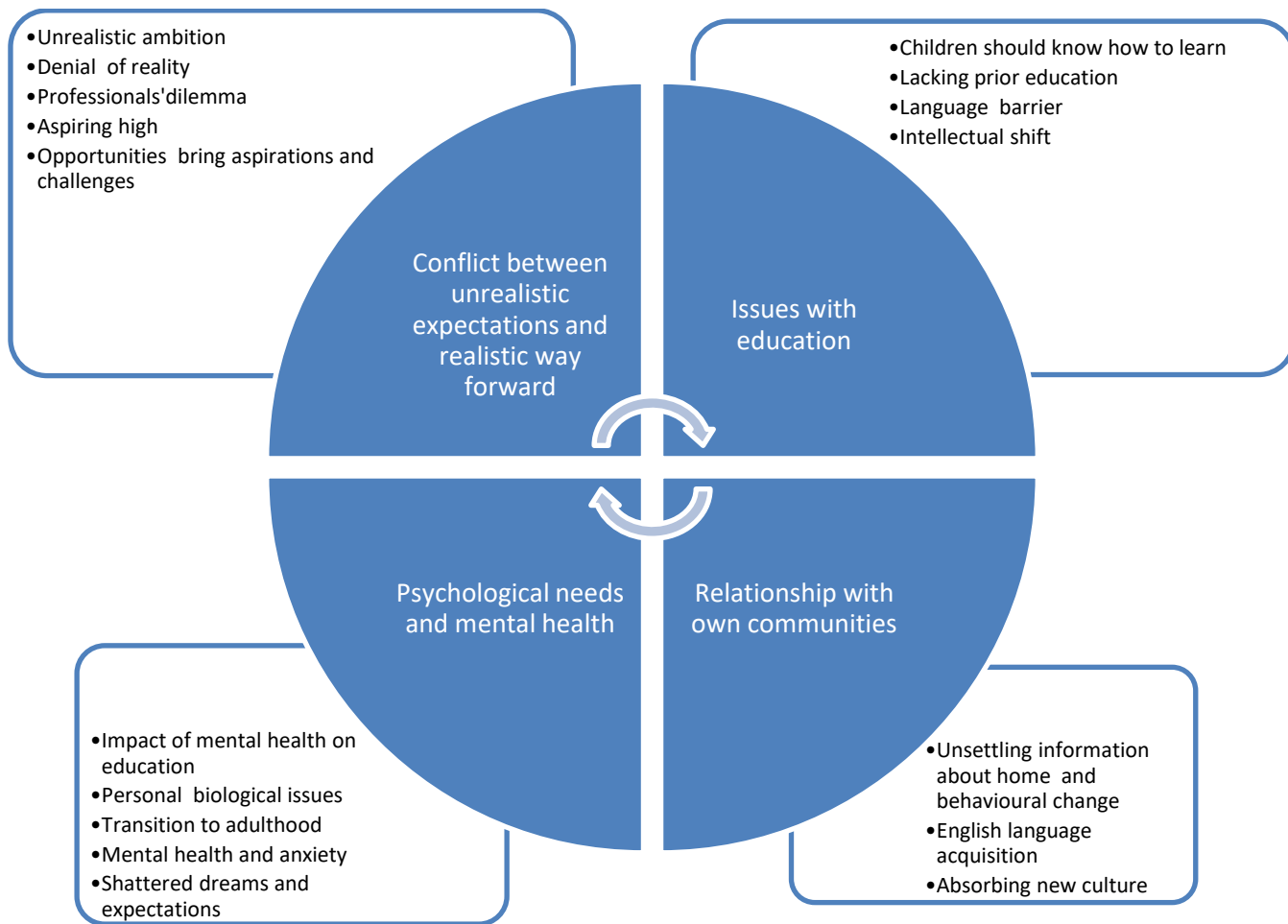
The following process of data analysis was based on the constant comparative method (Thomas, 2009, pp. 197 – 201). This analysis and presentation was created by using Microsoft Word 2010.

EXAMPLE: The creation of the theme 'CHILDREN-RELATED CHALLENGES'. This is one of the three components of the main topic 'PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTION: ROLE, RESPONSIBILITY AND CHALLENGES' included in the findings of the professionals' sample.

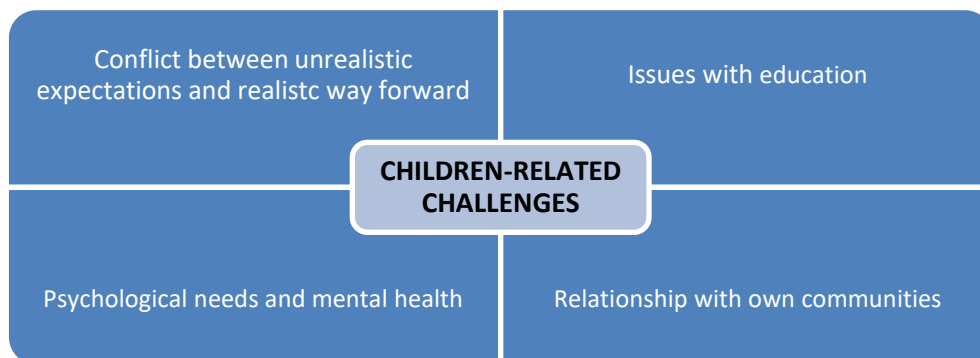
STEP 1: An example of extracting Temporary Constructs (e.g. recurring ideas, subjects, events, opinions) and recording notes and responses

Temporary construct	Participant No & notes	Participants' responses
Unrealistic ambition	PIESJ13, Transcript 13, p. 14	<i>Young people who come from abroad as asylum seekers, they see that very clearly, and even if it is unrealistic, they aspire to go to university</i>
Children in denial of reality/visa situation	POCES5, Transcript 5, p. 10	<i>When we talk about the visa situation and...their faces go like this [pulling a long and sad face].The vast majority who get DL will be refused at 18, very few of them are given five years...They do not want to engage with that idea; they do not want to think that it is an option, completely, understandably. They are here to stay and get educated and get professional jobs and financially self-sufficient, and support the family. That is what they want.</i>
Professionals' dilemma	POSES5, Transcript 5, p. 11	<i>We are trying very hard to give them the message very strongly. It is a very hard conversation...we have to do this hard thing, and see a person deflates in front of you...</i>
Aspiring high: unattainable aspirations	PGSPU4, Transcript 4, p. 5	<i>...I admire his effort. He wants to be a lawyer or politician, but, I wonder when he can achieve such goals...</i>
Opportunities bring aspirations and challenges	PCCLM14, Transcript 14, p. 18	<i>They don't have that [structured education], or they have very fractured education, for example, we have girls who come here who have never been to school, so they come from countries like Somalia, where girls do not go to school. So, for them, their focus and their motivation are incredibly high because they have given the opportunity that they would never get in their own country. But, the challenge is enormous, because they are starting from zero.</i>

STEP 2: An example of Second-order Constructs (e.g. Creating and summarising important themes) and finding interconnection between them



Step 3: Creating a main theme connecting second-order constructs



Main theme created: CHILDREN-RELATED CHALLENGES

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