

Virtual School for Children We Care For and Care Leavers, 0-25



Supporting Unaccompanied Children and Young People Through Education – a Handbook for Professionals

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Supporting Unaccompanied Children and Young People Through Education

This pack has been produced by Oxfordshire Virtual School working with colleagues across Oxfordshire County Council – for schools and Social Care colleagues

Introduction

This briefing pack is intended to provide clarity about the expectations for the education of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, now referred to as Unaccompanied Children only (UC), the admissions process and how to support them once admitted to school or an education setting. As UC acquire 'looked after' status, Oxfordshire's Virtual School will continue to support the education of this vulnerable group of learners on an individual case basis as appropriate to their needs.

1. The Legal Definition and Cultural and Local Contexts

The term 'Unaccompanied Child' is used to describe a person who has made a claim for asylum within the meaning of s 16 (3) Nationality Immigration Asylum Act (NIAA) 2002 and is awaiting a decision from the Home Office.

The term 'Unaccompanied Children' is used to describe children who enter the country, apply for asylum and meet the following criteria:

- is, or (if there is no proof) appears to be, under eighteen
- is applying for asylum in his or her own right
- has no adult relative or guardian in this country
- or those young people who enter the UK accompanied but become unaccompanied during their stay in the UK and subsequently claim Asylum in their own right.

Refugee status is awarded to someone the Home Office recognises as a refugee as described in the Refugee Convention. A person given refugee status is normally granted leave to remain in the UK for 5 years and at the end of that period can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain.

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

1.1 Legal context

UC are entitled to care and protection under the provisions of the Children Act 1989 & 2004 and where appropriate the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. They are children first and asylum seekers second, regardless of their immigration status.

Important changes to UC legal status from April 2017

The new status is called 'asylum leave'. It means that UC arriving in the UK from April 2017 will only be Children We Care For (CWCF, formerly known as Looked After Children) until their asylum leave ends (around 17.5 years). They may also have no right to Care Leaver status or support, unlike all other CWCF and unlike UC who have arrived prior to April 2017 [Limited-Leave-as-UASC-May.2017.final .pdf \(childrenslegalcentre.com\)](#). This type of leave is not common with long delays at the home office (June 21)

Schools may also find that this increases the anxiety and trauma that our young people feel around the uncertainty of their status/future and they will need increased mental health support and will be at increased risk of going missing to avoid being deported. It is good to

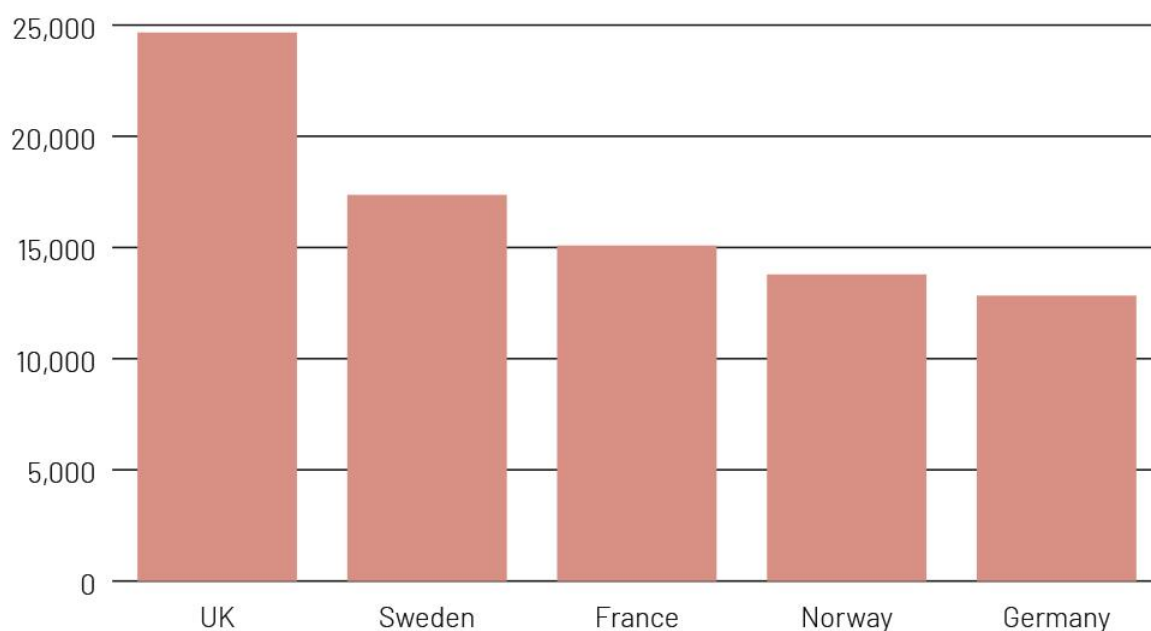
reinforce to the young person that they can only be deported if their country is receiving citizens back and they are an adult who reaches the stage of all appeal rights exhausted (ARE).

1.2 Cultural and social context

Many UC arriving in the UK will have undertaken a traumatic journey, often halfway round the world, without their families - who they may never see again or know whether they are safe in their country of origin. They may have little or no experience of education or experience of a very different educational system and as such will require support to not only settle into the UK but into school life. They may understand very little English and have no experience of reading or writing in their own language. On the other hand, some UC will have received an education and may have a sound knowledge base in a variety of subjects; with good support to learn both spoken and written English they could soon be at a level with many of their peers.

In addition, some young people will have experienced significant and often sustained trauma, and therefore will require additional pastoral support and counselling. They will often have lived in countries that are at war, experienced violence and bereavement, and they may have been trafficked into the UK. Often their legal status remains uncertain and as such they may require time off school occasionally to attend legal and medical appointments.

The majority of UC coming through services are male. Numbers continue to rise and for Oxfordshire there is a greater need to take from the National Transfer scheme to help support other Local Authorities. Despite the pandemic, numbers continued to increase not only in Oxfordshire but country wide.



The UK government reports that it has welcomed 29,000 people through the refugee family reunion scheme between 2015 and 2019. More than half of these were children.

74% of those arriving by small boat in 2020 were aged between 18-39 and 87% of all small boat arrivals were male.

The following links provide an example from the situation in Eritrea of one context a UC may be coming from:

<https://www.hrw.org/africa/eritrea>

[Authoritarianism in Eritrea and the Migrant Crisis | Council on Foreign Relations \(cfr.org\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-information-and-guidance)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-information-and-guidance>

[Homepage - Refugee Council](#)

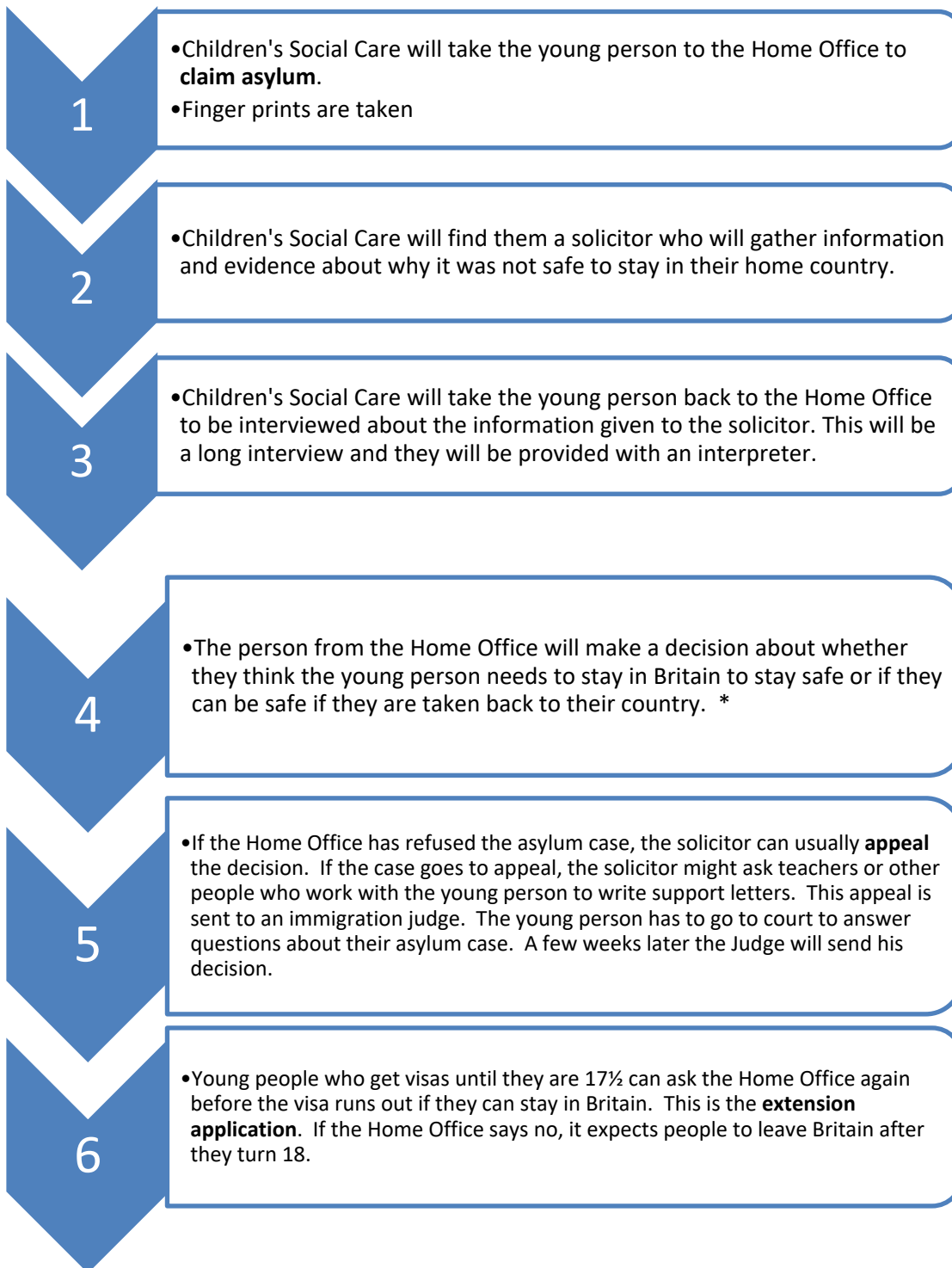
This site contains key documents, templates, tools and clinical guidance used in Kent (where the majority of UC are currently living) to support the health needs of UC:

<http://www.uaschealth.org/>

Many resources have been developed by subject matter experts and are published on this website for use within Kent and to share their learning across the UK.

2. The Asylum Process

The Asylum Process –On first arrival



* The Home Office cannot send anyone back to their country when they are under 18 years old, when they are still a child. However, a child can ask to be returned to family in their home country and the HO will facilitate this with Children's social care. The Home office can issue a visa until they are 17½ years old, if they have refused asylum and all appeals have been unsuccessful.

The Asylum Process – Age Assessment

Information taken from:

[Age Assessment Guidance and Information Sharing Guidance for UASC | ADCS](#) Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and Home Office Age Assessment Joint Working Guidance

Age assessments are a controversial subject, and indeed there is a robust debate on whether social workers should complete age assessments at all. While we acknowledge the contested nature of age assessments, some children arrive in the UK whose age may be unclear, unknown or disputed. The fact remains that social workers are currently required to complete age assessments in England so as to ensure that any service a child requires is provided appropriate to their age and assessed needs. Social workers, by nature of their education, experience and specialist skills in working with and interviewing vulnerable children and young people, are uniquely positioned to undertake holistic assessments.

In analysing the information, social workers will consider:

- The statements of the child or young person
- Country of origin information
- The child or young person's individual history and experiences, particularly any traumatic events
- The child or young person's cultural background, education level, gender, maturity, developmental stage and behaviours
- The appropriately weighted views and opinions of other professionals (key workers or foster carers, educators, medical professionals, etc.). For example, how does this child or young person compare to and interact with their peers? The other professionals should be aware that their opinions are being documented and may be presented in court.
- Any medical evidence, eg psychological reports
- Documentation presented. Are you able to verify the documents through channels that do not put the child or young person at risk?

If the individual is assessed to be a child, the social worker will ensure all appropriate Children we care For protocols are undertaken.

If the individual is assessed to be an adult, the social worker will ensure an appropriate transition to adult asylum services.

3. The Orientation Programme

The Orientation Programme is a four-week education and induction programme for unaccompanied children, aged 13-17, who have just arrived in Oxfordshire. The programme aims to improve the young people's English, prepare them for living in the UK and for going to school. Young people are referred by Social Care.

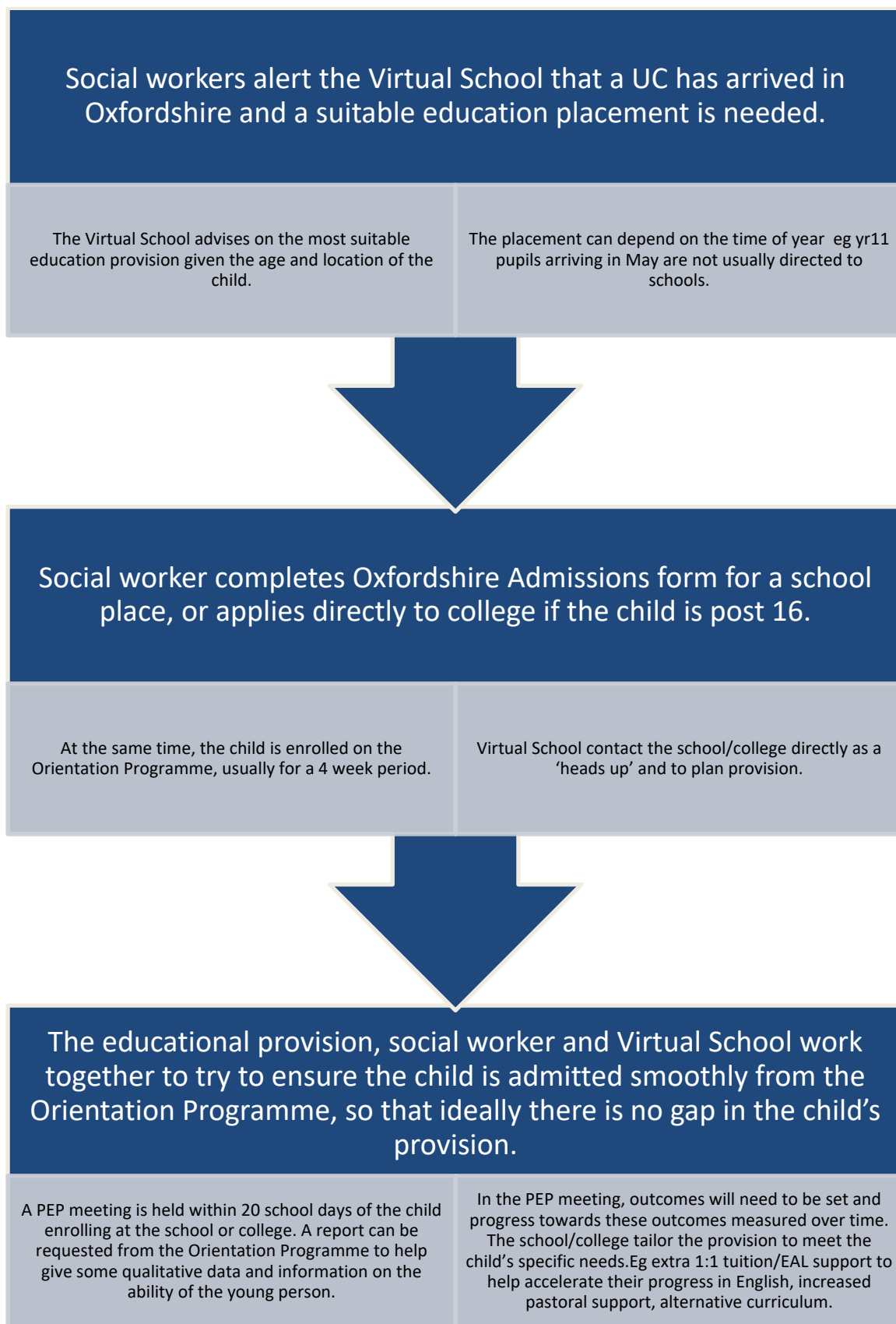
The programme runs five days a week at the Key2 Oxford office and in Banbury. It provides two hours of English lessons every day and includes weekly wellbeing session. On average the OP will run for 12 Hours a week. It is delivered in a gentle and supportive environment in order to help the young people recover from their harrowing journeys and to ensure their first experience of school in the UK is a positive one.

English lessons are followed by Information Sessions about life in the UK and how to stay safe. These sessions have interpreters for each language represented. The topics covered are:

- The Asylum Process: the process step by step, Home Office decision-making, how to work with your solicitor.
Delivered by the Orientation Programme (OP) Coordinator.
- Legal Issues: sex and consent, drugs, alcohol, buying stolen goods, cycle safety.
Delivered by Thames Valley Police.
- Respectful Behaviour: respect for different groups, appropriate and inappropriate behaviour especially in relationships.
Delivered by the OP Coordinator.
- Money Management: financial entitlements, benefits, how to save money.
Delivered by UCYP Team.
- The Education System: entitlements, rights and responsibilities.
Delivered by the Virtual School.
- Social Induction: friendships and dangers of friendships, social activities in Oxford, introduction to Asylum Welcome.
Delivered by Asylum Welcome and the OP Coordinator.
- Sexual Health: consent, contraception, STIs, HIV.
Terence Higgins Trust
- Internet Safety: content, the law, appropriate behaviour, social networking, cyber bullying, grooming.
Delivered by the OP Coordinator.
- Substance Misuse: drugs and alcohol, their effects and legality.
- Wellbeing – routines and sleep.

Young people are also given an orientation tour of Oxford city centre. After completing the Orientation Programme, students progress to school or college. The programme is funded by Oxfordshire County Council.

4. Transition to Full Time Education



Communication with the social worker is crucial during the admissions process to ensure that assessment and appointments can be managed to make sure the young person is in school as swiftly as possible.

School is often a positive environment for UC as it provides much needed structure, helps them to form their identity in the UK and offers them the opportunity to focus on something positive and worthwhile.

Careful consideration should be given as to whether to place UC into a lower year group in school whilst being mindful of age appropriateness. While it may be perceived that this will allow the young people increased opportunity and time to acquire greater English proficiency, in reality UC often become demoralised and disaffected with school provision when they are post 16 and prefer to access age and language proficiency suitable courses with their peers at post 16 provisions. Consequently, in year 11 attendance and engagement can drop dramatically.

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) is a statutory document for all Children We Care For including UC. The PEP should act as a mechanism to hold all stakeholders to account for the aspirational educational outcomes of Children We Care For through targeted planning. Full guidance on PEPs and the meetings can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/personal-education-plan-pep-toolkit>

The Virtual School receives Pupil Premium Plus funding to meet the needs of CWCF. The policy and guidance on how to request funding through the PEP to meet the needs of pupils can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/pupil-premium>

(NB: Post 16 UC as with other Post 16 CWCF do not receive Pupil Premium Plus)

Examples of outcomes and measures of progress for a first PEP that could be suitable for UC

This outcome might be suitable for a young person who has never experienced formal education before

Outcome:	H will be able to bring appropriate equipment to each lesson and follow the timetable of the day
Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning Mentor will conduct daily check in• Carer will support H to pack his bag each evening with equipment needed for the next day• School will provide visual /colour timetable with colour coded site map• H to have a support place or person to go to if uncertain and visuals to use to communicate
Evaluation:	Teacher feedback will indicate that H is equipped properly for the majority of lessons and is in the routine of getting equipment out at the start of each lesson so he is ready to learn. H feels confident following school routines and is able to seek support

This outcome might be suitable to support early English language acquisition

Outcome:	M will be able to recite, sound out and write the English alphabet /phoneme-grapheme correspondence by following a suitable phonic programme.
Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 EAL support lessons per week instead of Spanish lessons to teach alphabet and sounds • Pupil Profile to be created by SENCO /EAL coordinator and circulated to all teachers - best strategies to support M in lessons • Supporting pack to be sent home for homework to reinforce learning and for carers to support using consistent approach
Evaluation:	M will be retested each week in EAL lessons to demonstrate progress in learning and forming the letters of the English alphabet

This outcome might be more suitable for a young person who already has some basic English speaking ability

Outcome:	A will be able to write simple sentences in English in the present tense
Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 EAL/English tuition twice per week • A will spend Humanities lessons in the Intervention Hub receiving extra English support for the first 6 weeks • EAL specialist teacher will run a lunchtime INSET for all staff to offer training on supporting EAL students within their lessons by using visual organisers and substitution tables to support writing. • A will be supported to practice writing sentences at home by carer - homework to be set by Mr C.
Evaluation:	Mr C will reassess A's ability to construct simple sentences continually and provide a report at the end of the 6 week intervention period. Tracking using language specific tool such as A Language in Common will show progress.

This outcome focuses on the development of friendships and feeling integrated into the school community

Outcome:	K will be able to name 3 friends by the next PEP
Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form tutor to match K to a supportive buddy in the class • Form tutor to discuss extra-curricular clubs with K and support him to attend a club • Carer will support K to attend the Venda Club outside of school • Carer will discuss leisure interests with K and support him to attend an activity of his choice eg football club • Social worker will obtain a 'Slice' card so that K can attend the local leisure centre/gym.
Evaluation:	<p>K will have tried at least one extracurricular club</p> <p>K will be able to get to and from the leisure centre independently</p> <p>K will be able to name friends in his Pupil Voice</p>

Transition to Full Time Education: Post 16 Focus

Good transitions to post 16 provision are mostly the same for UC pupils as for other pupils:

- Involve the student in discussions and decision making. For young people less confident with English an interpreter may be required and a friendly face to attend the meeting to ensure the young person really understands what is being said and is not just agreeing as a default.
- Transition planning for year 12 should begin from year 10 with exploratory conversations about core interests, subjects of particular interest and awareness of the local FE providers. The first PEP in Year 11 should confirm actions related to visits to post 16 providers, ambitious grade targets and any additional support required to close the gap between current and target attainment.
- Use PEP meetings and CWCF Reviews to discuss ideas and bring offers of support and opportunities (eg accompany to attend Open Days or speak to course tutors)
- Ensure good careers advice and guidance has been provided to outline different options and describe the characteristics of each.
- Ensure transition planning incorporates all elements the student must cope with and feel confident with to be successful in their new provision (travel arrangements, finance, applications, interviews, knowing key support staff, term dates)
- Ensuring key information eg pupil profiles be passed on (in collaboration with the Virtual School) to support positive engagement with new education providers.

Keeping expectations and aspirations high

- Expectations should be aspirational but realistic to language proficiency to ensure pupils for whom English is not a first language are challenged but not overwhelmed
- For young people who have experienced significant trauma and/or have gaps in their education or are unfamiliar with the local schooling system and curriculum, aspirational attainment targets should be set but with recognition of potential delays in the young person reaching the same levels as their peers.
- Long term planning should be twin tracked to incorporate uncertain outcomes of future legal status and right to remain, recognising a student may not be granted this leave to remain.
- Investigations and formal interviews conducted by the Home Office, complex legal proceedings and uncertainty about their future can cause anxiety for UC students and future planning should be considerate of what fears these processes can entail for a young person in this situation.

More resources and advice for refugee and asylum seeking pupils and their entitlements around further and higher education can be found here:

[Access to higher education for migrant and refugee young people \(childrenslegalcentre.com\)](https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/Access-to-higher-education-for-migrant-and-refugee-young-people)

Oxford Spires Academy - First Steps and Second Steps

School setting offering additional school structures, involvement with mainstream school activities and environment for UC aged 15-18 arriving with beginner level English language. No set start dates, rolling entry. The course will offer basic training in English language and Maths, as well as project-based learning in Science, Humanities and Arts topics. As the name suggests, the aim is to give students a 'first step' to progress in education, whether at OSA or beyond.

EMBS (Cowley and sometimes Banbury) 16+ yrs old

Offer a range of courses with pastoral support to help raise confidence, develop new skills, find employment and progress onto further education. ESOL, Functional and GCSE level maths and English, IT, Sewing & crafts, Careers advice. The service offers free initial assessments to establish learning levels and then offers English from complete beginner levels upwards. No set start dates, rolling entry. [Sixth Form - EMBS Community College - English and Maths Courses in Oxford and Banbury](#)

City of Oxford College – Foundation: ESOL Pathway

For 16-18 year olds who do not have English as a first language and need to improve their language skills, Maths and IT so they can progress to other college courses or get a job. This is a year-long programme, however, it is possible to join the course at a later date if there are places available. [Foundation: ESOL Pathway - City of Oxford College \(activatelearning.ac.uk\)](#)

Banbury College – Pre-Entry Classes and Foundation: ESOL Pathway

Pre-entry classes are available for 16+ students who are complete beginners, alongside adults for 2 days a week. They can start these at any point during the year, following a language assessment.

Students can then progress to the Foundation: ESOL Pathway course or start on this course if their English ability is a little higher. This course is for 16-18 year olds who do not have English as a first language and need to improve their language skills, Maths and IT so they can progress to other college courses or get a job. This is a year-long programme, however, it is possible to join the course at a later date if there are places available. [Foundation: ESOL Pathway - Banbury and Bicester College \(activatelearning.ac.uk\)](#)

There may be other opportunities to boost English language learning, for example through apps and online resources and summer programmes. Contact the Virtual School to discuss current opportunities and consider building the use of these resources into PEP outcomes.

5. Supporting UC in school (including a case study of best practice)

One of the obvious and common barriers for UC is a lack of English language skills. They may find conversations difficult to begin with and will often appear shy or reserved, therefore making group work and informal situations like break and lunch times difficult for them. UC may require additional support to acquire basic oral English before progressing to reading and writing.

Besides provision considerations for schools, some UC may be overwhelmed by the size of a school, the day-to-day routine of school life, and mixing with people of the opposite sex. UC may show reluctance to change in front of others and may have no experience of practical subjects like Drama, or Design and Technology.

What should be part of a good Integration Plan?

Many UC will not be aware of school routines and expectations and will need additional support. In addition to an admission meeting the following could be considered and provided gradually over the induction period:

- Named key worker
- Peer buddy
- Agreed plan of support which will be put in place
- Plan of school and tour
- Plan of the local area, including the route to and from school
- Names and introductions to key members of staff including photos
- Details of the school routine eg breaks, lunch, change of lessons (visual or colour-coded timetable and map)
- Term dates / school events
- Information on the curriculum
- Information on how to access school online learning and after school support
- School clubs and activities
- Uniform list, including PE and equipment list with any necessary religious or cultural adjustments
- Information on wider community support and clubs
- Plan for progression review (could be PEP meeting)
- If possible, an introduction to another student or staff member who speaks their first language, although complete dependence on them should be gently discouraged

Guidance and resources for supporting pupils who have English as an Additional Language can be found on the OXSIT website. www.oxsit.org.uk. Access to the resources is included as part of their Foundation Package offer to schools and education settings.

The following documents can also be found in the [UC section of The Virtual School website](#):

- Making pupils feel welcome
- Monitoring progress in the silent period
- New Arrival welcome box ideas
- Teaching and Learning strategies for new arrivals

The British Council ESOL Nexus website also has lots of information and a *huge* range of resources and suggested lesson activities for a variety of topics and subjects.

[Teachers | ESOL Nexus \(britishcouncil.org\)](http://britishcouncil.org)

What are the most successful classroom strategies?

- ❖ Give students a meaningful task related to the lesson even though they won't understand all the lesson content
- ❖ Provide a high level of visual support to attach meaning to language. For example: mime, gestures, videos, slides, pictures, photographs, diagrams, flashcards, illustrated glossaries, mind-maps, spider diagrams, timelines, graphs, flow charts, real objects etc.
- ❖ Use active, practical tasks and vary the activities in a lesson
- ❖ Provide tasks they can complete independently: matching pictures, words, sentence or sentence halves; sequencing; text marking; labelling; giving yes/no or true/false responses; use of tables/grids/charts
- ❖ Plan opportunities for speaking and listening
- ❖ Identify key vocabulary and teach it explicitly
- ❖ Provide good models of language
- ❖ Use home language where possible
- ❖ Remember it is tiring learning in another language!
- ❖ Consider the language functions the lesson involves and provide the language structures needed:

Language Functions – what is the language being used for in the lesson?	Language structures – the grammatical structures we want children to understand and use
Naming Describing Comparing/ contrasting Explaining Reporting Expressing position Giving instructions Questioning Agreeing / disagreeing Predicting Sequencing	Eg What's this? It's a ... The green line is longer than the red line. The pen is on the table.

How should we assess the progress in English acquisition of UC?

1. Build a profile of the student's prior learning

Information available to the school regarding a new student's prior language and literacy learning will have an impact on the type of support which the school organises and provides. Where possible, it will be important to determine whether the student has previously attended school, in the UK or in other countries. If the student has attended school in other countries it will be useful to know the language of instruction used in the school which the student has attended.

2. Assessment during the 'silent' phase

A student who is learning a new language in a new cultural context may appear withdrawn and experience a 'silent' phase. During this silent phase it is important for the school to monitor the student's ongoing social, cognitive and linguistic development. Each student's experience of the silent phase is influenced by individual factors, so the length of time that the young person remains silent will vary. However, over time it should be possible for the teacher to note increased interaction between the student and others in the classroom. This interaction may take the form of the student looking at and copying the actions of other students, engaging in non-verbal forms of communication such as using gestures or calls for attention or using his/her home language as a means of communication.

3. Teacher observation

Teachers' observations of the student's work, his/her interactions with peers and the strategies that the student uses to engage with a task are an effective assessment mechanism for monitoring the student's learning. Structured observations will also enable teachers to pinpoint specific areas of speaking and social skills which should be supported.

4. Portfolios

Portfolios providing evidence of progress usually consist of purposefully chosen pieces of work. The samples of work chosen for the portfolio should be illustrative of how the student's learning develops over time. For example, a teacher may collect the following types of materials for a student who is at the initial stages of learning English as an additional language:

- drawings, sketches, annotated diagrams
- samples of writing the student has generated in his/her home language as a result of classroom based activities (that is, if the student is literate in his/her home language)
- examples of first letters and words written in English and attempts at writing using one or more sentences
- word lists in English or early bilingual dictionaries which assist the student to use language within his/her immediate school and home environment
- an electronic portfolio of work, including recordings of student reading aloud, samples of presentations or written work and samples of audio/visual work

6. Stages of English Language Acquisition

The Stages of English Language Acquisition can be used to identify and describe language development over time, identify future learning goals and objectives and inform teachers about the rate of progress a student is making.

Several organisations have also produced tools to help schools formatively assess EAL pupils. These are also now linked to the DfE census requirements.

[EAL Assessment Framework | Nassea](#)

<http://www.ealhls.org.uk/product/p9-assessing-proficiency-in-english-for-pupils-with-eal/>

7. Using standardised tests

Many standardised tests are not designed for students new to English. Generally, schools may decide to involve the student for whom English is an additional language in standardised tests once he/she has reached a certain level of the linguistic competence in English. Each year, the Standards and Testing Agency provides written guidance about the administration and reporting of SATs, as do examination boards, about students recently arrived from overseas.

EAL support for UC at Oxford Spire Academy: a case study of good practice

3 key steps

STEP 1: Assess. *Identify the greatest area of need.*

At OSA we do a 30-40 minute assessment of an incoming new student, looking at their ability in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, as well as finding out basic information about their prior schooling, literacy in first language, strengths and interests, and possible difficulties. There is no standardised, national system for doing this. We start with an informal chat with the student (without carer present) and follow this up with a graded reading task and some writing (alphabet for starters). Carers can then fill in any information we may have missed.

STEP 2: Plan support. *What support would you ideally like the student to have? What can your school realistically do?*

Beginners may need intensive support: at OSA we run a 6-week course for 3 lessons per day, but if your school's resources don't stretch to this, consider what you CAN put in place. A big push at the start can build confidence quite quickly. For students above beginner level, consider TA support, once-a-week classes or short-term intensive interventions, for example, one term at a time. Try to be as specific as you can about what the student can't do and what you need to put in place: grammar classes? Reading support? One-to-one speaking practice? Or are the problems more about lack of study skills and organisation, in which case a mentor might be the best approach?

STEP 3: Review and re-assess. *Is the student making progress? What's the next step?*

Students learn English at very different rates. Are you working with a high flyer who just needs an early push and can then progress without help, or will the student need ongoing help? Don't underestimate the power of peer support: a sociable student with English speaking friends can make astonishing progress. You may also see a big gap between oral fluency and competence in writing and you may need to turn your attention to the latter as the former develops. Monitor the student's progress in subject-based assessments and ask subject teachers. Again, be as specific as you can. *He doesn't understand* is unhelpful, whereas *He can follow instructions, but he won't answer questions in front of the class* tells you considerably more.

EAL strategies

TA in-class support

Make sure TAs have as much information as possible about the student's needs. Make sure they have time to plan and review with the class teacher. Small things can make a big difference. If the TA has a list of key words and an idea of the main concept before the lessons, he/she can get a dictionary ready, or prepare a simplified worksheet, or just focus on the main point and ignore the details. Without planning, they (and the student) are flying blind.

Withdrawal support

Our research over the years has told us that very focussed, short-term interventions are much more effective than a year's worth of 'general English' help. We have run grammar classes for small groups of 3-6 students, focussing ONLY on the grammar points the students need. We've also run Speaking interventions for a handful of very shy students; Writing interventions for Year 11 where we take a single topic from Romeo and Juliet and focus on paragraph writing; and Geography interventions looking at data analysis. Students feel

motivated by a short-term class with a goal that clearly helps them tackle an immediate problem.

Homework Clubs and one-to-one tuition

Self-explanatory, really. Try getting parents on board and using volunteers or helpful sixth formers. Invite sixth formers to get community work experience with you, which can be accredited and lead to a reference or an extra paragraph on a UCAS application. Suggest that they do paired reading with younger students or run speaking classes or film shows.

INSET and collaborative teaching

If all the teachers in your school are sensitised to language needs, they will in effect become language teachers and you will be working in an exciting language-aware environment! This may call for whole school INSET. Another approach is for class teacher and support teacher (EAL expert or other) to work collaboratively. Pick a class, assess the needs of the EAL students in it, and then work with the class teacher to prepare differentiated materials, or make class displays and PowerPoints more EAL-friendly, or include a vocabulary starter for the whole class in every lesson. Think about homework tasks, scaffolded writing and 'talking schools'. What's good for EAL students will almost certainly benefit their classmates, too.

10 golden rules on working with beginners

1. **Put yourself in their shoes.** Use your common sense – if you were thrown into a foreign country what would help you survive? What would make you less stressed? What would make you succeed?
2. **Be welcoming.** It sounds obvious! Check you are saying their name correctly, introduce them to the class, find them a buddy, model positive behaviour to the other students.
3. **Plan your seating plan.** If possible, seat them with a student who shares their first language. This works well at the beginning; the next step, however, should be to sit them with others who will get them talking in English.
4. **The bottom line.** Don't expect beginners to understand everything, but plan for the bottom line, below which the lesson will mean nothing to them. Use a picture, a video clip or a few key words to convey the main idea, and don't worry about the details.
5. **Keep it visual.** Make sure there are diagrams and pictures in lesson presentations and materials to give students clues to meaning. Use gestures ('large', 'cold' etc) and ask other students to model or demonstrate.
6. **Use a dictionary.** Keep mono and bilingual dictionaries handy and encourage students to use them. But make sure students don't try to look up every single word. And use Google Translate very sparingly, if at all!
7. **Discuss then write.** A writing task can be daunting for a beginner. Start them off with a speaking activity (pairs or group) to help them dress their ideas in words. Give them sentence starters. Give them LOTS of time! Accept and encourage halting answers.
8. **Review and preview.** Make it a routine for students to go over their notes from your lessons. Tell them what you will be doing next lesson and ask them to check key words in their mother tongue at home before your lesson.

9. **Homework.** Make sure homework tasks are do-able, and if necessary, simplify them. Why not try asking students to translate a few key sentences into their first language?
10. **Correct their language mistakes.** Do they have the facts right? Brilliant, but they need to be shown how to improve language as well. Don't correct every single mistake, though. Concentrate on the most urgent ones.

6. What ongoing pastoral or welfare support might UC need in school and beyond?

As with any new pupil who starts at school, the first few weeks can often feel overwhelming, confusing and lonely. This is especially true for UC who will not have their family with them, in a strange country and who may be concerned for loved ones in their home country. Inevitably, UC will almost certainly show signs of trauma. Many UC may have witnessed terrible events in their home country and will have had a traumatic journey to the UK. In many cases their parents / family members may have been killed. Having arrived in the UK, they have to settle into a new environment, learn a new language and settle into a life with new families / carers who, often, do not share their cultural background. The effects of trauma, loss and change may affect their behaviour in school. Staff will need to be vigilant for signs of any deeper problems or difficulties that may emerge once the pupil begins to settle.

It is important that the social worker is kept informed of any concerns or issues in relation to the young person including attendance, emotional and behavioural concerns. This can then be addressed swiftly, and an early PEP can be arranged if necessary. For some young people, coming to the UK and going to school is their first experience of education, so helping them to get used to the expectation of the school system can take time. It may also be that any educational experience has been negative and possibly oppressive so being attuned to this is fundamental for school staff.

As with all children in care, UC are vulnerable. In particular, some UC may be particularly vulnerable to radicalisation, trafficking or Child Exploitation (CSE/CDE). School staff are important as they may be able to identify concerns in these areas and help to prevent them from escalating. Any concerns related to radicalisation should be discussed with the setting's safeguarding lead who will advise on how to take these concerns forward to the UC&YP Team. For concerns around CSE/CDE, contact should be made with the young person's Social Worker.

A young person may disclose information about their past to school teachers which could happen as they settle into life in the UK. The young person should be asked if they are happy for this information to be shared with their social worker, but it should also be emphasised that information about anything that puts them or others at risk will need to be shared. It should be explained that the information will be handled sensitively with a focus on making sure that support options are explored to help them manage these past experiences.

Some behaviours often caused by severe distress and trauma

- mood swings and showing signs of becoming withdrawn
- reduced concentration, showing little interest and not making progress
- becoming irritable, disengaged and disruptive
- flashbacks or nightmares, disrupted sleeping patterns

- self-harming
- isolation – not being part of a strong friendship group
- trust issues – showing difficulties in building relationships with adults
- deterioration in attendance and increasing lateness

Supportive strategies

- UC will have the services of a CWCF nurse who will oversee their health needs and ensure initial and review health assessments are undertaken.
- offer encouragement and praise
- support with friendship building
- provide an allocated buddy
- include in breakfast and / or homework club
- encourage participation in extra-curricular activities in and out of school
- be aware of potential bullying and / or racism and ensure that such are dealt with promptly
- offer access to in-school counselling support
- where possible, encourage UC to meet with others in similar situations, sharing the same language and / or experiences
- Many UC will have suffered traumatic experiences and may require therapeutic intervention. However, they may initially refuse this if they do not feel ready to share their experiences or are worried that whatever they say will be passed onto the Home Office, so reassurance and good relationships with key staff will need to be built up first. Any in-house referral should include consent from the young person's social worker

Further sources of support

Refugee Resource

Refugee Resource aims to relieve distress, improve well-being and facilitate the integration of refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants – mainly in Oxfordshire – by providing psychological, social and practical support.

They currently deliver the following core services as a means of meeting this overall aim:

- Specialised counselling and psychotherapy (with interpreters when necessary)
- Mentoring
- A weekly Women's Group
- Services for men
- Advice and advocacy

Website: <http://www.refugeeresource.org.uk/> (referral forms can be found on the website)

Email: info@refugeeresource.org

Phone: 01865 403280

Address: The Old Music Hall, 106 – 108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE (Entrance at 54 Marston Street)

Opening hours: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday (10.00 AM to 4.00 PM)

Please contact the social worker before referring to Refugee Resource.

Asylum Welcome

Every unaccompanied child arriving in Oxfordshire is referred here for support from the Youth Service Co-ordinator, who is a qualified social worker. This includes:

- Regular confidential, one-to-one appointments
- Advice and assistance on a wide range of topics including education, training, careers, asylum support, welfare benefits and housing, help to resolve problems at school, or with peers
- Liaising with lawyers, the Home Office and other organisations regarding asylum claims
- Guidance on teenage issues, and referrals to appropriate services including health services
- Assistance for young parents to find support and care in the community
- Connecting them with leisure activities that match their interests.

Venda Youth Club for young asylum seekers and refugees, every Tuesday evening. Activities include pool, table football, films and video games. Volunteers help with homework, making CVs, applying for jobs or finding accommodation. Young people can practice English with volunteers and take part in life skills training, including sessions on HIV/AIDS and substance misuse. Masses of fresh food provided, with hot food every fortnight.

Day trips in the Summer holidays, for example swimming, bowling, trips to London, to the cinema and to watch football at the Kassam Stadium.

Website: <http://www.asylum-welcome.org/>

Email: advice@asylum-welcome.org

Phone: 01865 722082

Address: Unit 7, Newtec Place, Magdalen Road, Oxford, OX4 1RE

The office and phones are open Monday – Friday 10am to 3pm.

Language Line Solutions

Language Line Solutions telephone interpreting service enables you to communicate in over 240 languages 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. No matter where you are in the world, they can connect you to a professionally qualified interpreter using any phone, often in under a minute.

Website: [Telephone Interpreting Services | LanguageLine UK](#)

Phone (for more info): [0800 169 2879](tel:08001692879)

Email: enquiries@languageline.co.uk

NYAS National Youth Advisory Service is an independent service, providing children and young people with an independent visitor or advocate. An independent visitor is someone who can provide a long term, confidential, befriending relationship on a one-to-one basis with young people aged between 8 and 18 and adults who have social care up to age 25.

An independent advocate acts as a representative or assists the young person or young adult with getting their voice heard. Advocacy can be short-term, to assist in a few meetings or to resolve a quick problem. However, in some cases it can become long term if the young person wishes to have the same independent advocate in several meetings.

Volunteers are not part of social care services but commit to make a difference to children and young people by volunteering their time.

[Home | NYAS | National Youth Advocacy Service main@nyas.net](#) 0151 649 8700

Attach

The ATTACH team comprises clinical psychologists and senior practitioners with specialisms in the field of attachment theory and the impact of abuse and neglect. They help Oxfordshire children and young people, who are living away from their birth parents, including those living in foster care, kinship care, or in adoptive families.

Website: <http://oxme.info/cms/life/attach-team>

Email: attach.team@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Phone: 01865 897083

Address: The ATTACH team, 4440 Nash Court, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2RU

British Red Cross

May be able to help you:

- find your missing family: we can help when families are separated by armed conflict, disaster or migration
- deliver family news: when normal means of communication breakdown, we can still send Red Cross messages to relatives. (Note: we do not send money or packages.)
- get a certificate of detention: for people who have been visited and registered by the [International Committee of the Red Cross \(icrc.org\)](http://www.icrc.org) while detained, we may be able to provide confirmation of detention.

All British Red Cross services are free and confidential. Website: [Find missing family | British Red Cross](#)

Phone: 01908 578335 / 07885 969270

Address (for Thames Valley Area): Red Cross House, Colwell Drive, Abingdon OX14 1AU

7. Support and training from the Virtual School for Children We Care For

Please visit the Virtual School website on the link below and click on the Virtual School Training Plan tab to find up to date information about training opportunities and booking details.

[Virtual School for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, 0-25 | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Recent training sessions have included:

Effective outcomes to attract Pupil Premium Plus

Analysis of need is the basis of the PEP and for writing effective outcomes. We consider how determining the pupil's needs and developing your school offer can achieve improved educational outcomes. (The Virtual School)

Attachment

A course which explores the impact of attachment related functioning and neuro-scientific research offering practical support and strategies for both Primary and Secondary settings. Opportunities to have work based discussion to support embedment of new thinking will be offered.

Behaviour as Communication and Strategies to support

Understanding the causes and function of behaviour including practical strategies for working effectively. Working with emotional and behavioural communication effectively in the classroom setting.

We look forward to welcoming all partners in schools to these events and to continuing to provide schools and partnerships with bespoke training sessions.

8. What helped me? Views of the young people, best practice and success stories

What has helped most at school?

'Make sure ALL of our teachers know we don't speak English.'

'Everyone needs something different; I especially need help with spelling and writing – I didn't know anything when I came here'

'Miss X – I would talk to her if I was struggling – she's the best'

'At primary school I had TA support and lots of basic English lessons, 1 to 1 twice a week for an hour.'

'I was given a Chromebook to help me learn English that I could use in lessons and for homework.'

What helped me settle in?

'I was given support and a mentor – it helped having someone I knew I could talk to.'

'I had a buddy at school the first week who I went everywhere with.'

'I find it easy to make friends and that helped me settle in and learn English from them.'

'My social worker introduced me to another Albanian girl, not from school but that was helpful and we are still friends now.'

What do you wish schools knew/had known so that they could help you more?

'Don't make it obvious that we need extra help – come to us quietly during the lesson to check we understand but don't assume we always need extra help or assume that we are ok, ask us.'

'Don't put too much pressure on us to learn English straightaway; don't make us read ALL the time.'

'Make it more fun to learn English!'

'Be aware that things might be difficult for me and that might come out in my behaviour sometimes but I'm not faking it or doing it on purpose, it is just really hard sometimes' (she also talked about needing a timeout card and somewhere safe to go when upset or angry).

'I just want to be a child – don't make me 'be the adult' or have 'adult conversations' about really difficult things all the time, I'm a child and I want to be able to BE a child sometimes.'

'Be patient – we might not understand the rules yet or why we are being told off.'

'Give us more help and time to find our way around – one day I just came home because I couldn't find my classroom and was just walking round for ages – I know now that I could have gone to reception but I didn't know and was too shy to ask because I couldn't speak English. Staff at the Moors asked me why I was home early but I couldn't explain.'

'The first few weeks were very confusing and also boring because I didn't understand what was being said, but slowly, slowly, it became easier.'

'Make us feel confident – we'll be shy and won't be able to ask for help.'

'We come from all different countries where things might be very different - EVERYTHING is different here. We might have been to a school where if you're late, you get hit with a stick, so we might be scared about school and too worried to speak up at first.'

'If I had had someone to tell me the things I'm saying to you now, it would have really helped – I'd like to help other people on the Orientation Programme when they first arrive so that I can say to them 'Be confident! Don't be shy, ask for help!'