

Evaluation of the  
SHARED Futures Project

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## **1. Executive summary**

1.1 The SHARED Futures Project, funded by Comic Relief, aims to develop professional practice in relation to the induction, integration and social and educational welfare of young refugees and their families. Since January 2007, the project has produced a research report, conducted interviews with refugees and their families, produced a DVD and a resource book of supporting training materials, set up and developed a dedicated website and disseminated the DVD and resource book through a series of launch events. The principles underlying the DVD and resource book were informed by the research report and interviews. These principles are consistent with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance and recommendations by organisations concerned with the welfare of refugees.

1.2 The DVD and resource book are professionally produced, user-friendly and clearly organised and written. The content is relevant, wide-ranging and illustrates acknowledged good practice. The website is easily located, simple to navigate and up-to-date and contains information and downloads useful to those who want to find out more about the project and its activities.

1.3 The SHARED Futures materials include a wide range of topics which address the often complex needs identified by young refugees themselves, or professionals working with them. The breadth of the topics encourages practitioners to develop a comprehensive view of young refugees and their circumstances.

1.4 The SHARED Futures materials adopt a 'holistic' approach to developing provision for young refugees. This necessarily starts from the experiences of young refugees themselves and is a child-centred approach. It also recognises how the various challenges facing young refugees interact with one another, which may adversely or beneficially affect their overall sense of well-being. The holistic approach of SHARED Futures locates work with young refugees in the collective practice of all the agencies that are involved in a young person's life. In practical terms, this promotes a whole school response to young refugees that recognises that the school is uniquely placed to be the hub for the activities carried out by a range of individuals and agencies.

1.5 Day-to-day practices are shown by the resource, often in schools that have been proven effective in raising the attainment of all pupils, and also in youth settings. A whole-school ethos of inclusion and the building of positive relationships amongst the whole school community are emphasised by many practitioners in the films in the DVD.

1.6 In addition to illustrating good practice in schools, the materials also show how youth-work settings contribute to the welfare of young refugees. Examples illustrate the importance of providing co-ordinated support for young refugees to meet other young people, socialise and make friends in a structured but informal setting. As well as helping young refugees to overcome feelings of isolation, these activities emphasise the importance of building social networks that can provide the emotional

and practical support (information, advice, sharing experiences, etc.), which is often vital to young refugees in dealing with everyday challenges.

1.7 SHARED Futures reinforces a holistic approach through giving young refugees the opportunity to talk about their experiences, which are not limited to a narrow range of 'educational' issues. The holistic approach to provision is also more appropriate for, and consistent with, developing the Government's 'Every Child Matters' agenda. The SHARED Futures materials are therefore an effective tool for mainstreaming provision for young refugees. They also show how the needs of other groups of vulnerable young people could be considered more holistically.

1.8 The DVD contains examples of good practice. The nature of the practice is varied and a range of formal and informal settings are used to illustrate different aspects. The examples shown are convincing and communicate effectively the benefits to young refugees. The variety of settings illustrates that, while contexts may be different, underlying principles remain constant.

1.9 As long as the holistic nature of any provision is emphasised, then it is hoped that practitioners will not approach the good practice captured by SHARED Futures as a 'menu' of the things that should be put in place 'for refugees', irrespective of the tensions such extra resources may create for local communities. Rather they should be seen as specific features of a comprehensive response to the needs of refugees within a local context. The DVD manages to communicate that specific initiatives are set within an overall ethos which is inclusive, but which also recognises the need to target provision in order to ensure equality of opportunity.

1.10 The principles and practice shown in the DVD are entirely consistent with supporting schools and youth settings in moving towards achieving excellence in respect of the new government duty to promote community cohesion.

1.11 In focusing on young refugees, the materials also support consideration of the needs of non-refugee young people. Practice to support refugee children's and young people's integration and achievement, such as buddying, peer mentoring and good English as an Additional Language (EAL) teaching, can also be used to respond effectively to the needs of other international new arrivals.

1.12 The showcasing of practice in schools whose children achieve impressive examination results indicates that a holistic approach is not inconsistent with fostering academic excellence. It suggests that attention to relationships is integral to academic success and developing good practice for refugee pupils is a means of improving school practice for everyone.

1.13 Schools can sometimes argue that because they have urgent priorities relating to all pupils, they lack the time or capacity to focus on a minority group of pupils. Yet if a school embraces provision for refugee pupils as a whole school issue, this may provide a way to engage with their 'larger' priorities. Persuading schools of this, given that refugee pupils will in most schools constitute a minority of the school population, is an important aspect of embedding good practice for young refugees.

1.14 The dissemination 'launch' events have so far taken place in a variety of locations in different areas of England, Scotland and Wales. The events have been organised in partnership with local organisations and included presentations by national and local politicians and also local young refugee and non-refugee people. The average attendance at events has been 65 and over 80 per cent of participants completing evaluations have rated the events as either 'excellent' or 'very good'. The events have been attended by participants from a range of professional backgrounds. The majority have been teachers, mainly those whose role is particularly concerned with the teaching of EAL or Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA). However, participants have also included head teachers, senior school staff, youth workers and local authority officers.

1.15 Whilst the attendance of professionals from a range of roles is welcome, it is disappointing to note that social services seem to have been poorly represented.

1.16 Responses from participants at launch events suggest that as well as presenting practical ideas for developing practice, the contents of the DVD are to some extent 'inspirational'. Comments on the evaluations indicate that a considerable number of participants intended to initiate a change in practice based on what they had seen or heard.

1.17 As a result of the launch events, a number of participants have expressed their intention to disseminate the materials and use them for training. This is particularly important as, for many not experienced in working with refugees, the observations in the DVD may prove to be a revelation.

1.18 There are several further activities and developments in the SHARED Futures project that could prove worthwhile and effective in enhancing the quality, range and consistency of provision for young refugees and their families. These include:

- targeting strategic decision-makers in local authorities and other organisations and producing additional material relevant to their roles
- targeting professionals such as School Improvement Advisers and School Improvement Partners who are in a position to challenge and advise schools and other settings about their provision and producing material which relates to the auditing and development of schools or other youth-work settings
- developing strategies to reach a wide range of schools and also staff in local authorities who work with young refugees and their families but do not necessarily address their particular needs
- developing additional materials which illustrate strategies for providing for geographically isolated refugee families, particularly in semi-rural and rural areas
- developing a number of case studies which explore in greater detail and depth some of the issues and strategies illustrated in the DVD and resource book, such as effective multi-agency work, parental and community involvement and promoting positive perceptions of refugees.

## 2. Introduction

The SHARED Futures Project began in January 2007. It was initiated by the charity Salusbury WORLD and supported and funded by Comic Relief. This project is one of many initiatives that Comic Relief supports through its Refugees and Asylum-Seekers Programme.

The stated aims of SHARED Futures are:

- to enhance the welcome extended to refugee children and their families in schools and local communities
- to improve refugee children's well-being and integration into schools and local communities through the dissemination of exciting, creative and accessible strategies and approaches
- to promote activities that encourage positive relationships in diverse local communities
- to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence of teachers and other education practitioners.

The intentions of the project were to research the issues that affect the education, welfare and integration of refugee children and their families in the United Kingdom (UK) and to produce and disseminate training materials to address these issues. During early 2007 a review of research and current practice was carried out and focus group interviews were conducted with young refugees and their families. In addition, a SHARED Futures website was launched, and this has subsequently continued to be developed.

Both the research review and the data gathered from the interviews were used to identify key issues for further development. The review of research and current practice and the consultation document are downloadable from the website. A DVD and supporting resource book were produced during the latter part of 2007 and the early part of 2008.

The materials produced comprise a DVD and a resource book. The DVD is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter is an introductory film which outlines the range of issues addressed in the DVD. The other chapters each concentrate on a specific topic and are sub-divided into three or four sections which focus on the experiences and practice in a particular setting. The chapters are:

- Chapter 1: Introducing SHARED Futures
- Chapter 2: Listening to young refugees
- Chapter 3: Supporting friendships
- Chapter 4: Creating a safe environment
- Chapter 5: Tackling media myths
- Chapter 6: Celebrating cultural diversity
- Chapter 7: Welcoming new arrivals and supporting transitions
- Chapter 8: Promoting success in schools
- Chapter 9: Involving parents and carers.

The DVD emphasises the thoughts, feelings and responses of young refugees, but also includes the opinions of family members and descriptions of good practice by practitioners. In some cases a setting is used to illustrate a number of different aspects of practice and, therefore, appears in more than one chapter. The settings chosen are spread across a wide geographical area and include locations in England, Scotland and Wales.

The resource book consists of an introduction and a series of workshop training activities linked to chapters 2 – 9 in the DVD. There are also two additional workshops on ‘Developing an Inclusive Vision’ and ‘Promoting Children’s and Young People’s Participation’. There are 22 resource sheets to support the training activities. The resource book also includes advice on the planning and organisation of workshops and a short section on using the DVD with children and young people.

The materials are intended to be used by regional and local trainers in local authority, youth and school locations. The training is aimed broadly at schools, school staff, other education professionals, local authority staff, voluntary sector staff and those in youth-work settings. The training activities use methods that encourage participants to engage in reflection, discussion and sharing of experience and ideas. Materials and activities are also provided so that the DVD can be used with children and young people.

The structure of the units in the resource book and the format of the DVD allow trainers to use the materials flexibly and select specific aspects to focus on. Training can, therefore, be tailored to the particular development needs of organisations and staff and also take into account the local as well as the national context.

The SHARED Futures resources have been disseminated through a series of regional launches, advertised on the website and publicised by regional partner organisations. The launch events have been provided free of charge to all partner organisations and participants and each participating organisation has been given a free set of training materials. Additional copies are available for purchase and can be ordered via the SHARED Futures website.

### 3. Evidence base for the evaluation

This evaluation was carried out between September and December 2008. It has considered and examined a number of sources of information regarding the SHARED Futures materials and its dissemination. This includes:

- review of literature relevant to the topic
- review of the SHARED Futures research report and survey
- review of the SHARED Futures materials
- interviews with professionals involved in the filmed settings
- interviews with young refugees in the filmed settings
- interviews with parents in one filmed setting
- observation of a launch event
- analysis of attendance data from seven launch events
- analysis of roles of participants at seven launch events
- analysis of completed evaluations of participants at seven launch events
- follow-up email questionnaires to participants who agreed to be contacted at five launch events
- output data from sales
- website hits
- scrutiny of professional reviews.

This evidence has generated a number of questions about the project:

- Were the issues identified relevant to the education and welfare of young refugees?
- Were the issues addressed by the DVD and printed materials?
- Are the issues addressed effectively by the DVD and printed materials?
- Is the practice portrayed in the DVD generally agreed to be good practice?
- Will the training materials have the desired impact on practice?
- Are the DVD and printed materials perceived by practitioners as:
  - relevant to their practice?
  - useful in developing their practice?
  - useful in developing training programmes for individuals/organisations/schools in their locality?
- Will people use the training materials?
- Are the materials being successfully disseminated?
- Are they reaching the right people – and in sufficient numbers?
- Are there any problems or issues about the materials that should be addressed?
- What needs to happen for future developments?
  - new products
  - processes.

#### **4. Were the issues identified relevant to the education and welfare of young refugees?**

Since 2000, the Government has operated a policy of dispersing asylum-seeking families and individuals to a variety of locations in the UK. At the same time, many local authorities and schools with considerable experience of working with young refugees and their families have continued to develop and refine their practice, while many other local authorities and schools without such experience have also admitted young refugees. Many schools enrolling new arrivals have responded positively to providing for the education and welfare of refugee pupils and their families. The OFSTED report 'The education of asylum-seeker pupils' (OFSTED 2003) noted that:

“The schools can take much credit for their unstinting acceptance and determination to make a success of the integration of the asylum-seeker pupils.”

However, much recent research suggests that professional practice is often inconsistent across local authorities and schools both in terms of quality and scope. Arnot and Pinson (2005), commenting on research into the experiences of young unaccompanied refugees, say:

“The level of support these children received and their experiences were found to vary greatly across local authorities although many of them felt that they had not received adequate support.”

Candappa (2000), having argued that for young refugees “...the security and support the school could provide becomes all the more important...” notes that “...practice remains patchy, and the level of support for refugee children in schools varies greatly...”.

The review of research and current practice commissioned by SHARED Futures identified the following issues as potential barriers to education and common areas of concern for young refugees:

- racist bullying
- isolation
- loss of identity
- lack of educational attainment
- concerns about the future
- stresses in families.

These themes re-occur in many research reports. For example, Arnot and Pinson (2005) point out:

“...the importance of understanding the multiple complex needs of asylum-seeker and refugee children.”

They identify the following list of issues:

- Children's experiences of war, violence and loss may affect their emotional health and consequently their responses may be interpreted as behaviour problems.
- Children may experience guilt feelings as a result of having to leave family members behind.
- Children have to cope with displacement and adapting to a new environment, language and culture and, therefore, negotiate a new sense of identity.
- Children may have to cope with changes in family relationships as the new situation leaves parents feeling vulnerable and dependent on their children to get things done or become over-protective and authoritarian in regulating their children's activities.
- Children may experience anxiety because of uncertainty over the future.
- Children may suffer from deprivation, poverty and poor housing.
- Children may have to adapt to high mobility because of dispersal, changes in housing providers or apparently arbitrary decisions by local authorities.
- Children may have particular or more frequent health problems.
- Children may experience racial harassment and bullying.

These issues are in addition to the specifically educational needs of young refugees that are more frequently identified:

- needs relating to children's acquisition of English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- the use of EAL in learning school subjects
- adapting to a new school system and sometimes new methods of teaching and learning
- making friends
- coping with having had interrupted formal education
- coping with new syllabuses and expectations of learning
- having their potential as learners identified and being subject to high expectations.

The SHARED Futures materials include a wide range of topics that address the issues listed above either directly, as in the case of issues related to teaching and learning, or less directly, for example, through strategies which support the emotional well-being of young refugees. The breadth of the topics is important in encouraging practitioners to develop a more comprehensive view of young refugees and their circumstances. Practitioners will sometimes define the needs of a young refugee only in terms of their own professional expertise. Therefore, an EAL specialist may define young refugees' needs narrowly in terms of English language development, whereas a social worker may focus on family relationships. Similarly a school or service may exhibit a limited vision of needs and thus restrict the provision they make for young people.

Paying attention only to certain aspects of a young refugee's needs, even if the resulting provision is principled and of good quality, may be ineffective if other unacknowledged factors are impeding the young person's engagement with the provision. For example, a school's lack of action in eliminating racial harassment and

bullying may mean that a young person's learning of English and other subjects and their engagement with school and education will be impeded by anxiety about their personal safety and security, increased feelings of isolation and exclusion and reduced self-confidence. On the other hand, recognition of the inter-relatedness of children's experiences can mean that different aspects of provision are made mutually supportive, which can have a cumulative effect in increasing a young person's sense of success and well-being.

Arnot and Pinson (2005) identified six broad models of local authority provision:

- the holistic model: in which the emphasis is on the whole child and on meeting a range of needs that arise from their individual circumstances
- the EAL pupil model: in which the emphasis is on provision of EAL teaching and support
- the minority ethnic pupil: in which the emphasis is on raising attainment within the National Curriculum
- the new arrivals model: in which the emphasis is on induction of pupils into the school and early EAL teaching
- the race equality model: in which the emphasis is on eliminating racial harassment and discrimination and fostering hospitality to diversity
- the vulnerable children model: in which the emphasis is on gaining and maintaining access to education.

This typology reflects the perceptions different local authorities may have of young refugees and their needs and the priority they give to these needs. Schools within any given local authority are likely to adopt similar responses, although whichever model of provision they use is likely to include some response to EAL. A consequence of this is that young refugees are subsumed within more general groups defined by language background or ethnicity. Consequently their particular circumstances and needs as refugees may not be identified or catered for. While any ranking of priorities which a local authority or school may make in its model of provision should ensure some beneficial outcomes – for example, in terms of freedom from racial harassment or access to high quality EAL teaching – these may not be sufficient. This may also apply to a local authority's youth and community work, where provision is targeted more generally at ethnic minority young people and the particular circumstances of young refugees remain unacknowledged.

This situation has become increasingly complex in the last few years as migration to the UK from European Union (EU) countries has grown. The numbers of families and the settlement patterns have had several consequences. For example, there has been a focus on 'new arrivals' and, therefore, on young people's newness and lack of experience of English, rather than a focus on the reasons why the young people and their families are in the UK and the circumstances under which they are living. This has been evident not only in schools' and local authorities' responses but also in the National Strategies New Arrivals Excellence Programme (2007).

Included in the group of new arrivals are young people whose families are:

- citizens of an EU country

- citizens of an EU country but who were granted refugee status in that country
- seeking asylum in the UK
- studying at a university or college in the UK
- taking up a right to residence in the UK.

These different groups of families may have a number of similar challenges to face in terms of housing, education and dealing with local authority and government administration. However, for refugee families these challenges are often more wide-ranging, complex and difficult. A lack of differentiation by schools of their new arrivals may mean that while some of the educational needs of young refugees are being met, their particular needs and those of their families are left unacknowledged and therefore not addressed.

The SHARED Futures materials attempt to address this complex range of issues and adopt a 'holistic' approach to developing provision for young refugees. This necessarily starts from the experiences of young refugees themselves and is a child-centred approach. It recognises that the variety of challenges facing young refugees are not discrete factors but are interacting causes and effects which may adversely or beneficially affect their overall sense of well-being.

The holistic approach of SHARED Futures therefore attempts to locate provision for young refugees not solely in the practice of particular individuals or services but in the collective practice of all the agencies that are involved in a young person's life. In practical terms this illustrates, for example, that a whole school response to young refugees is vital and cannot be the responsibility of just one designated individual or team. In turn, this cannot remain entirely the responsibility of the school but must be shared by various teams within local authority children's services and other service providers such as health and housing. Nevertheless, the school is the crucially important key provider, in that it is uniquely placed to be the hub for all the activities carried out by individuals and agencies. Whether or not the school assumes this role is dependent on the extent to which it has an ethos of inclusion.

The importance of the creation and maintenance of a positive ethos of inclusion is illustrated in the DVD through a number of examples. One school featured in the DVD and also visited as part of this evaluation talked about how "...everything we do impacts on all children...", and that because of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the staff and other adults associated with the school "...every parent has a 'go to' person in the school".

A recent OFSTED inspection of the school noted that:

"Parents also comment on how the school encourages children from different backgrounds to mix and get on so well together. As one described it, '...the school does a brilliant job of bringing children of all backgrounds together in a warm environment'."

The school emphasises the importance of 'raising aspirations of all children'. High expectations, combined with ensuring that classroom teaching and learning is

accessible to all children, has an impressive impact on their attainment. This is borne out again by OFSTED:

“Teaching is excellent because of a genuine concern that every child really does matter. Pupils' thinking skills are developed and nurtured in every lesson, ensuring that pupils 'fly away in their learning'.”

In an interview, the head teacher stated that the key to success was “...building a relationship with the whole community...” and that this involved “...making people feel valued...” and “...building trust...”. She said: “...all the staff model good practice in their interactions with the community”.

A strong message that emerges from the DVD is that paying attention to building relationships and making sure that this extends to everybody involved with a school or other youth-work setting also helps foster success and excellence. Indeed the examples suggest that they are crucial to achieving this end. For refugee children and their families, whose established relationships have been disrupted, this is even more vital. While other children may be able to succeed despite the lack of a positive inclusive ethos, refugees will inevitably be less resilient in dealing with an institution that does not value caring relationships. At another school featured in the DVD a parent commented that: “...this place is my extended family”.

At another location a young unaccompanied refugee said that: “...everybody needs a family and this place gives you a family feeling”. This ‘family feeling’ is achieved in a situation where the young people and staff come from a diverse range of ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds.

The importance of enabling young refugees to build relationships outside the immediate school community is also included in the SHARED Futures materials. Examples of practice in the DVD illustrate the contribution that youth-work settings can make to the welfare of young refugees. They show how co-ordinated support can provide opportunities for young refugees from different school or college settings and those who are not enrolled at any educational setting, to meet each other, take part in organised but informal social activities and begin to develop personal social networks. This kind of activity enables young refugees to make friends and overcome feelings of isolation. In addition, the development of social networks provides the kind of emotional support that is important to everybody. When dealing with challenging circumstances, young people often need sympathy, empathy, encouragement and other emotional responses from others; and for young refugees this may be even more important. Having the opportunity to share experiences, anxieties, hopes and ambitions with their peers is as crucial to them as it is for any young person.

A further aspect of building social networks is the access to information, advice and advocacy that peers can provide. As well as facilitating the creation and maintenance of social networks, youth workers and peer mentors are also in a position to provide the emotional and practical support necessary when complex situations arise involving administrative or legal matters. For some young refugees this can be a bewildering experience. As one young person commented:

“It’s very frustrating because you have to go to too many people and they send you round in a circle.”

SHARED Futures achieves a holistic approach not only through the range of issues addressed in the DVD and supporting resource book, but also through giving young refugees the opportunity to talk about their experiences. Their concerns are not limited to a narrow range of ‘educational’ issues. They speak about the need for friendship and security, family matters and personal ambitions. However, for the young people depicted these concerns are not discrete aspects but interacting elements which have made their experience of settlement more or less satisfactory.

The holistic approach to provision is also more appropriate for, and consistent with, developing the Government’s ‘Every Child Matters’ (ECM) agenda. The ECM agenda highlights five outcomes for children and young people:

- achieve economic well-being
- make a positive contribution
- enjoy and achieve
- stay safe
- be healthy.

Many schools have tended to concentrate on the area covered by ‘enjoy and achieve’ which is concerned largely with progress towards the attainment of academic and vocational qualifications. The broader scope of the ECM agenda should continue to move local authorities and schools towards both greater self-evaluation of the efficacy of their practice and the degree of co-ordination between the agencies and institutions that deliver services. The SHARED Futures materials have the potential to contribute to the development of local authorities’ and schools’ practice in relation to young refugees within the entire ECM framework. In this way, SHARED Futures is an effective tool for mainstreaming provision for young refugees. Moreover because of the child-centred approach of the materials, they also suggest ways in which the needs of other groups of vulnerable young people could be considered more holistically.

For many practitioners who specifically focus on working with refugees, the multiple and inter-connected concerns and challenges for young refugees will be recognisable and familiar. For many who do not share this professional focus, the observations in the DVD may prove to be something of a revelation. This is particularly important because although many who attend SHARED Futures launch events/workshops or are aware of the training materials are professionals working with refugees, those practitioners whose work is more generally focused are less likely to be aware of the realities of life for young refugees. It is this group who will prove vital in initiating, implementing and embedding good practice in relation to refugees in their organisations and institutions. Responses from many participants at launch events indicate that they consider the DVD material particularly powerful as a resource for raising awareness. In commenting on the DVD, one delegate wrote:

“Very useful in giving school staff a ‘window’ into the lives and feelings of a very vulnerable pupil group. Pupils talking about their experiences – the trauma of becoming an asylum-seeker, the challenges they faced and their determination to overcome these challenges and do something positive with their lives.”

## 5. Examples of good practice in the DVD

In addition to documenting the observations of young refugees, the DVD also contains examples of good practice. The nature of the practice is varied and a range of formal and informal settings are used. The examples are convincing and communicate effectively the benefits to young refugees. The variety of settings also illustrates that while contexts may be different, underlying principles remain constant.

A note of caution should perhaps be sounded here. It is possible that the different examples of good practice may be seen by some people as a 'menu' of solutions rather than specific parts of a wider and comprehensive response to the needs of refugees in a local context. However, as long as the holistic nature of any provision is emphasised, the risk of people attempting to adopt single strategy 'quick fix' solutions should be considerably reduced.

A tension can sometimes exist between initiatives that specifically focus on a target group and those that are 'inclusive'. Some initiatives that provide additional support only for refugee children, for example, may be effective but may also have unforeseen 'side effects'. For example, specialist small group extra English lessons may provide a sheltered and very learner-centred environment for EAL development. However, they may also leave children feeling stigmatised or negatively perceived by their peers as attending 'remedial' classes. Other initiatives may give rise to accusations of special treatment or favouritism. Of course, negative side effects do not necessarily occur, but the success of any provision is dependent on the establishment and maintenance of a positive ethos of inclusion.

The DVD shows practice that is focused on young refugees but without any sense that this creates tension either for young refugees or non-refugees. The DVD manages to communicate that these specific initiatives are set within an overall ethos that is inclusive but recognises the need to target provision in order to ensure equality of opportunity. In this respect, Chapter 5 of the DVD 'Tackling Media Myths' is of crucial importance in creating or maintaining positive community attitudes to the presence of refugees. This chapter and others avoid any patronising portrayal of refugees purely as victims in need of sympathy. Instead, they present them as people who have experienced danger, forced re-location and hardship and who need support to help rebuild their lives.

Responses from participants at launch events also suggest that as well as presenting practical ideas for developing practice, the contents of the DVD are 'inspirational', in that they encourage people to want to plan and implement new initiatives. Further comments on the evaluations indicate that a considerable number of participants intended to initiate a change in practice based on what they had seen or heard.

The practice shown in the DVD, and the implicit and explicit principles that underlie it, also need to be considered in the context of community cohesion. Since 2007, schools have been obliged to ensure that they actively promote community cohesion through their everyday practice. To monitor and evaluate whether schools are fulfilling this obligation, OFSTED inspections of schools now include consideration of

criteria which indicate the extent to which they are achieving this. The principles and practice shown in the DVD are entirely consistent with supporting schools in moving towards achieving excellence in this respect.

In focusing on the experience of young refugees, the needs of non-refugee young people who are international new arrivals can also be considered. Young refugees may in many cases be at the 'sharp end' of issues that are shared to a greater or lesser extent by other young people. In addressing these needs comprehensively through the use of a variety of different strategies and systems, a school will be able to benefit not only young refugees but also a much wider group of young people, if not all young people in school.

One example of this is the 'Red Hat' scheme at one primary school featured in the DVD. Volunteer pupils in the school are trained and appointed as playground friends. They are easily identifiable because they wear red hats. All other pupils know that they can approach a 'Red Hat' and be invited to join other children in a game or activity. This measure, implemented to support refugee children, clearly also has benefits for all children including the Red Hats themselves. Similarly, a peer mentoring scheme initiated by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) funded staff at a secondary school was so successful in supporting young refugees that the school adopted the scheme as a resource for all pupils.

Another significant aspect of the good practice portrayed in the DVD is that it is not only successful in helping young refugees to feel safe, secure and settled but also in enabling all pupils to attain high academic standards. For example, one of the primary schools featured in the DVD has had exceptional Key Stage 2 Standard Assessment Test (SATs) results over a number of years and is one of the highest ranked schools in the country for 'value added' pupil progress. Similarly, a secondary school featured in the DVD is achieving excellent GCSE results among refugee pupils and also the rest of the school population.

This is important because it indicates that consideration of the social and emotional needs of young refugees is not inconsistent with the fostering of academic excellence. Instead it suggests that the attention to relationships is integral to academic success. The DVD shows that by addressing the particular needs of a more vulnerable group of pupils using an inclusive approach, a school may find solutions that have benefits for all pupils. Schools can sometimes argue that because they have urgent priorities that relate to all pupils, they lack the time or capacity to focus on a minority group of pupils. Yet, if a school embraces provision for refugee pupils as a whole school issue, this may provide them with a way to address their 'larger' priorities. Persuading schools of this, given that refugee pupils will in most schools constitute a minority of the school population, is an important aspect of embedding good practice for young refugees.

Another significant aspect of good practice illustrated in the DVD is that of active participation. This is particularly evident in the sections that focus on parental involvement and youth work. Parental involvement is perceived as an enabling activity. That is to say that it is about setting up structures and providing opportunities for parents to be as proactive and self-determining as possible in

shaping their lives and those of their children. Although a sense of having some degree of self-determination is a universal need, this may be of special importance to those refugee families who are in the process of seeking asylum and may feel that they have little control over their circumstances. The opportunity to engage with other parents, contribute to the life of the school, and be acknowledged as active partners in their children's education are aspects of the good practice featured in the DVD. One good example of this enabling approach is a refugee parent living in London who describes how she organised a holiday for other refugee parents and children at a farm in Somerset. She received support from staff for doing this, but essentially it was her initiative that enabled it to happen.

Similarly, the youth-work settings highlighted in the DVD present the participation of young people as part of their good practice. As mentioned above, the DVD uses the words of young refugees to communicate the realities of their lives. The youth-work depicted emphasises the need to listen to young people and include their perceptions in any planning of provision. This may help avoid preconceived notions of what young refugees need. At the same time, however, there is no suggestion that an absence of structure is desirable. Instead it suggests that young refugees' active participation in decision-making within a supportive framework is both responsive to their needs and effective in developing their sense of self-determination.

The DVD material provides convincing examples of the effectiveness of this participation in both supporting and enabling young refugees. After-school clubs in Portsmouth and the work of YANA in Cardiff, for example, show how a range of organised activities help to establish friendships and increase integration. In addition, YANA's links to local schools support a peer mentoring scheme which provides the kind of practical and emotional support that young people need. The building of social networks and the provision of practical and emotional support are also illustrated by the work at DOST in East London. Young unaccompanied refugees are supported by staff in dealing with a wide range of issues and, therefore, the wide range of practitioners and administrative staff they encounter. Good practice here involves providing a stable and supportive social environment and friendship building activities; but it also includes staff taking on the role of concerned carers who are able to guide, and sometimes act on behalf of, young refugees in much the same way that a parent might help their son or daughter to negotiate complex administrative procedures or make important decisions about their future.

## 6. The dissemination of the SHARED Futures materials

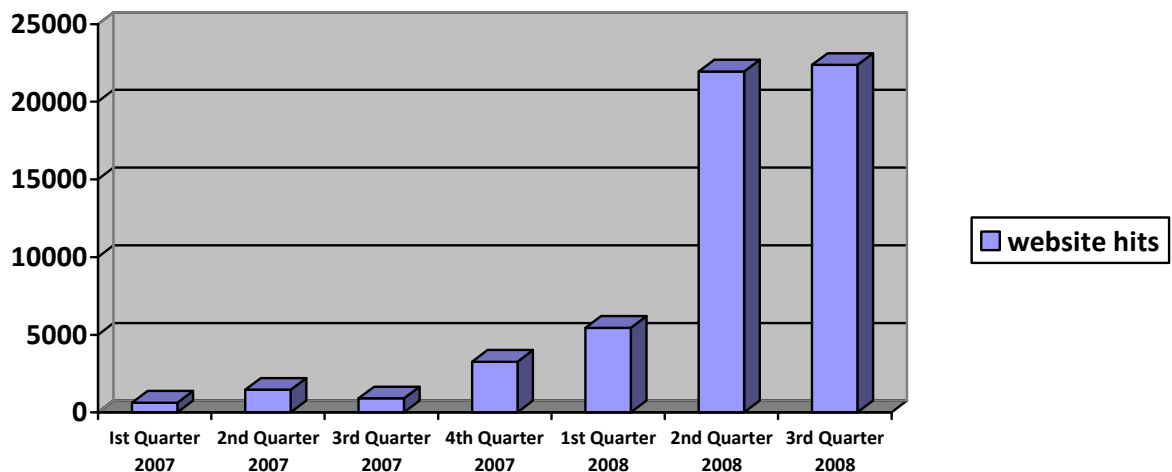
An important aspect of the success of the SHARED Futures project and its materials is the extent to which they reach their intended audience. So far, there have been two main conduits for dissemination of the materials:

- the SHARED Futures website
- the launch events.

In addition to these, reviews on other websites and publications and the distribution of publicity leaflets have helped to make people aware of the project.

The website was set up in the early part of 2007 and now includes six pages. It is easy to find through internet search engines. It is user-friendly and navigation around the website is clear and uncomplicated. The website contains information about the background to the project, the research reports (which are downloadable in pdf format), information on forthcoming training events, downloadable application forms for ordering the DVD and resource book, and links to other websites.

Figure 1 (below) indicates that there was a steady growth in visitors and 'hits' since its inception until April 2008, when the number of hits more than quadrupled. This growth in hits was sustained in the third quarter of 2008.



**Figure 1: SHARED Futures website hits between January 2007 and September 2008**

It is difficult to compare the popularity of the website with other similar websites, but the figures indicate that it is attracting a substantial number of visitors given that it is a very specific website focused on professional practice.

The first SHARED Futures launch event took place in June 2008 in London. This was followed by an event in Portsmouth in July 2008. Launch events initially took place in cities where partner organisations who had been involved in the filming are located. Subsequently, events have taken place in other locations and future events

are planned for a range of locations in the UK. Six events took place in September and October 2008 in Cardiff, Glasgow, Bolton, Doncaster, Newcastle and Luton. A further event took place in Bristol in November 2008. These events were organised by SHARED Futures in conjunction with local and regional partners.

Attendances at the seven events in September, October and November ranged from 135 in Doncaster to 27 in Newcastle. Average attendance at the seven events was 65. The majority of the day was usually devoted to presentations by consultants associated with the SHARED Futures project, but events also included contributions from national and local politicians, local authority officers and young people (both refugee and non-refugee). Participants were asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of each event. As part of the evaluation they were asked to rate the day on a scale of 1 to 6, 6 being excellent, 5 very good, 4 good, 3 fair, 2 unsatisfactory and 1 poor. Figure 2 (below) shows the ratings given on the 275 completed evaluations studied.

Venue	Evaluation ratings						Total
	6	5	4	3	2	1	
<b>Bolton</b>	8 (28%)	16 (55%)	5 (17%)	0	0	0	29
<b>Bristol</b>	8 (44%)	9 (50%)	1 (6%)	0	0	0	18
<b>Cardiff</b>	20 (44%)	22 (49%)	3 (7%)	0	0	0	45
<b>Doncaster</b>	9 (11%)	39 (54%)	23 (30%)	4 (5%)	0	0	75
<b>Glasgow</b>	18 (32%)	27 (48%)	10 (21%)	0	0	0	55
<b>Luton</b>	10 (35%)	16 (50%)	3 (10%)	1 (3%)	0	0	30
<b>Newcastle</b>	6 (26%)	13 (57%)	4 (17%)	0	0	0	23
<b>Total</b>	79 (29%)	142 (52%)	49 (18%)	5 (2%)	0	0	275

**Figure 2: Evaluation ratings of participants at seven SHARED Futures launch events**

As Figure 2 indicates, over 80 per cent of those completing evaluations rated the days as either 'very good' or 'excellent'. Comments from participants who rated the days as either very good or excellent tended to focus on the quality of the materials, particularly the DVD, the quality of presentations, and the opportunities to engage in discussion with other participants.

"The extracts from the DVD are very powerful."

"Very useful to hear about the experiences of others – some excellent contributions and discussions."

"Pacey and well presented, relevant and impressive materials."

Those less satisfied with the events tended to comment on the lack of time to develop group discussions, or indicated that there was a degree of mismatch between their expectations and the content of the event. For example, one participant wrote:

"A diverse conversation, not of much practical use but quite interesting."

Another said:

"Why only Refugee children – why not include other BME children who face the same problems?"

Another participant mentioned that her focus was on:

"...teaching children for whom disability is the main barrier."

This raises the question of why participants chose to attend an event. On the evaluation forms, they were asked to indicate their reasons for deciding to attend. Figure 3 (below) shows the number of times particular key words or phrases were used in their responses.

Key phrases	Bolton	Bristol	Cardiff	Doncaster	Glasgow	Luton	Newcastle	Total	%
EAL	3	4	3	12	7	4	0	33	21
New arrivals	6	3	2	3	4	4	0	22	4
EMA	0	0	3	10	0	0	0	13	8
Refugees	5	1	13	11	19	6	12	67	42
EU/Polish (pupils)	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	5	3
Race equality	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3	2
Inclusion	0	0	0	6	2	1	1	10	6
Community cohesion	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	4	3
Vulnerable children	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1
								159	100

**Figure 3: Numbers of times selected words and phrases were used by participants in response to a question about their reasons for attending a launch event**

Unsurprisingly, over 40 per cent of participants mentioned refugees in their responses. However, a significant percentage of participants used the terms 'EAL' or 'New Arrivals' in describing their reasons for attending. This may suggest that some participants were coming to the event with a more general concern with international new arrivals or EAL learners rather than a specific concern with refugees. They may therefore have been expecting a focus on induction processes and teaching strategies. If this were the case, it does not appear to have caused any level of dissatisfaction. Rather, it may be that the content of the event effectively broadened

some participants' perceptions of how practice needed to be developed. Participants were also asked to indicate what they planned to do as a result of the event. Figure 4 (below) summarises their responses.

Responses	Bolton	Bristol	Cardiff	Doncaster	Glasgow	Luton	Newcastle	Total	%
Disseminate to colleagues/own teams	1	3	6	14	13	3	6	46	18
Disseminate to schools/settings	6	4	9	9	6	6	2	42	17
Work on welcome induction procedures	8	6	3	5	0	3	2	27	11
Use ideas and strategies	6	3	2	3	3	1	4	22	9
Develop peer mentoring	0	0	14	0	0	2	1	17	7
Carry out research in own setting	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4	2
Work on safety and challenging racism/bullying	0	0	1	5	0	1	3	10	4
Work on developing holistic approach	2	1	1	1	2	0	0	7	3
Work on parental involvement	4	0	0	4	10	8	0	26	10
Work on own professional development	0	1	1	3	0	2	2	9	4
Work on countering myths	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	5	2
Developing cultural inclusion	0	0	0	4	0	1	1	6	2
Develop EAL teaching	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	5	2
Work on teaching and learning	1	0	0	4	0	2	0	7	3
Speak to management about issues	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	4	2
Talk to children/parents	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	6	2
Work on reducing isolation	0	0	2	1	0	2	0	5	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 4: Collated responses of participants to the question of what they intended to do as a result of the launch event**

Figure 4 illustrates that many participants intended to disseminate or use the SHARED Futures material with their teams, schools or other settings. Mentions of

developing EAL teaching were rare; instead a much broader range of concerns emerged. This may be the result of participants beginning to see the different factors that impact upon the experience of new arrivals/EAL learners and that future developments need to be more specific towards a more inclusive learning environment. Most noticeably, working with parents and families emerges as a particular area for development for ten per cent of participants.

The professional roles of participants were varied, although the majority were directly involved with education. Figure 5 (below) shows the distribution of roles among participants at six events who indicated their professional role on their evaluation forms.

Role	Doncaster	Bolton	Luton	Newcastle	Cardiff	Glasgow	Total	%
School senior management	4	3	2	1	5	4	19	8
Teacher	13	3	11	1	3	6	37	15
Ethnic minority achievement	30	17	10	0	19	17	93	38
Youth work	1	1	0	11	7	6	26	11
Social work	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Library services	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	1
Health services	4	1	0	0	0	1	6	2
Extended services	6	0	0	0	0	0	6	2
Family learning	1	0	1	0	3	0	5	2
Refugee support services	1	0	0	1	2	3	7	3
Local authority education officer	5	2	3	1	0	7	18	7
Voluntary work	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	1
Education welfare services	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	1
Higher education	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1
Other	3	1	1	4	3	2	14	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100</b>

**Figure 5: Professional roles of participants**

Over a third of participants were involved in the field of ethnic minority achievement (EMA), while school senior managers and teachers made up another 23 per cent of participants. A further seven per cent were local authority education officers. However, nearly a third of participants had professional roles that were not directly related to education.

In many respects, the pattern of attendance is encouraging. It is unsurprising that there was significant representation from those involved in EMA, given that the focus for many of them will be working with new arrivals, teaching EAL, or raising EMA. Although there may be concern that the events were therefore 'preaching to the converted', two points should be noted. Firstly, EMA staff may have a specific role (EAL teaching, for example) or a general role, but not necessarily one that has obliged them thus far to develop a depth of knowledge or awareness of the issues facing refugees nor of good practice in relation to refugees. A launch event and familiarity with the SHARED Futures materials therefore serves not only to build their own professional knowledge, but also their confidence and ability to deliver training.

Secondly, because of their engagement with schools, EMA staff are in a good position to disseminate the SHARED Futures materials, to encourage schools to take up training and to deliver training to schools. In this way, the materials can be effectively cascaded to a wide range of schools. EMA staff also often have strong links with, or are members of, other local authority education departments/divisions such as school improvement, pupil and parent support, educational welfare, etc. Thus, they are again in a good position to disseminate materials and offer training within the local authority and perhaps also to informal settings. This may also include departments within Children's Services which has a wider remit than education and incorporates all services that contribute to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda.

The attendance of school staff, including senior managers, is also important. Schools can use the materials themselves to raise whole school awareness and implement changes in policy and practice. Moreover, many schools are involved in a variety of organisational and networking structures amongst schools in a local authority, which allow one school to disseminate materials to others through network meetings, shared training days and 'cluster' meetings (where a secondary school and local primary schools are able to share initiatives, set up special interest groups and cross-phase initiatives).

The diversity of other participants at the events indicates that the issues addressed and materials presented appeal to interests and concerns that are felt beyond those who work directly in education or targeted support for refugees. Amongst them are diverse a wide variety of roles related to youth work, health services, educational welfare and family learning. It is disappointing to note that social services seem to have been poorly represented, as staff from this sector often have a pivotal role in supporting refugee families.

Further events are planned in December 2008 and in 2009 in Croydon, Newham (East London), Bolton, Hull, Barnsley, Manchester, Leeds, Leicester, Birmingham, Northumberland, Stafford, Bedfordshire and North Lincolnshire.

## **7. Recommendations to enhance and embed future work**

SHARED Futures materials have the potential to encourage practitioners to reflect on their current ways of working and to support them in planning and implementing changes to their practice. In planning future work, four main questions should be considered:

- Are the materials reaching and being used by those who are in positions to make or influence strategic decision-making, which will support the operational work of those working directly with young refugees?
- Are the materials reaching those who work with young refugees and their families but who, because of their role or setting, do not identify their needs as priorities? (This group may include local authority administrators, teachers, youth workers and social workers.)
- Are there other topics and contexts relating to young refugees which could usefully be examined?
- Should any of the topics already covered be explored in greater detail or depth?

### **7.1 Are the materials reaching and being used by those who are in positions to make or influence strategic decision-making, which will support the operational work of those working directly with young refugees?**

Strategic decision-making is important in a number of ways. It can determine priorities, levels of funding, levels of staffing, organisational structures and, therefore, the working practices that result from these decisions. Strategic decision-making that is not informed by the perspectives illustrated in the SHARED Futures materials may directly or indirectly limit the effectiveness of professional practice. For example, the way in which a local authority organises its provision for refugees may 'on paper' cover the range of needs and level of support. But this does not necessarily mean that the support is coherent or easily accessible. Even where local authority provision is structurally aligned, it may be the case that working practices still indicate a culture of practitioners working in professional 'silos'.

Achieving greater cohesion in the delivery of services will necessarily involve greater co-operation and collaboration among teams. It will also involve a sense that everybody's efforts are focused on the 'clients' and the totality of their experiences, rather than isolated aspects which relate to the professional expertise of individuals. Therefore, it is not only the setting up of working structures which support professional collaboration that is important, but also the creation of a culture of collaboration.

Thus, the views of young refugees and their families and the implications of these views are crucial in informing decision-making processes. The SHARED Futures materials, or additions to the existing materials, which draw out the implications of the DVD material for local authority planning, could potentially be very effective in embedding a truly 'holistic' approach to provision. As well as making provision more coherent, it would also present opportunities for good practice in a particular setting to inform practice in other kinds of setting. For example, insights gained from successful practice in a youth and community setting may prove valuable in

improving practice in local schools. Indeed, the sharing of knowledge, experience and skills by practitioners across different kinds of settings has the potential not just to align provision but to be a powerful tool for the continuous development of practice.

## **7.2 Are the materials reaching those who work with young refugees and their families but who, because of their role or setting, do not identify their needs as priorities?**

Schools need to adopt a 'whole school approach' to their refugee pupils. The incorporation of the needs of refugees into school development planning should be on-going and comprehensive, rather than sporadic and included as an addendum to the main parts of the plan. In order for this to be achieved, the school's senior leadership team need to be aware of the perspectives of young refugees.

Again, the SHARED Futures materials potentially have an important role in facilitating such awareness. As noted above, the SHARED Futures materials will often be disseminated to schools through the initiative of participants who attended a SHARED Futures event. However, it is also important that those who work with schools in an advisory or inspectorial capacity are well informed and are therefore able to challenge schools about their provision and advise them on improvements. If there is little or no interrogation of the provision, it is likely that schools will fail to prioritise or even to identify the issues.

Training for local authority School Improvement Advisers (SIAs) and School Improvement Partners (SIPs) could prove to be very effective as a means of obliging more school senior leadership teams to engage more fully with a wider range of issues. The development of additional tools such as audit proformas and question prompts by SHARED Futures would usefully support this work.

Youth and community settings also need to regard development planning as including the best interests of young refugees. Local authority processes for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision in this area of work should ensure a) that an inclusive perspective is adopted and b) that young refugees feel that a setting has something positive to offer them in enabling them to make friends, establish social networks and support them in dealing with day-to-day problems and longer-term issues. An inclusive approach to youth and community work should include extensive work with all young people on counteracting misinformation and refuting myths about refugees.

The wide dissemination and implementation of the kind of initiatives illustrated in the SHARED Futures materials are entirely necessary. While it is true that some schools and youth and community settings in a local authority area will be enabling young refugees and their families to integrate and thrive, even others who are well intentioned may be oblivious to the full range of refugees' needs. The lack of consistency in provision is a major issue for many refugee families. High levels of mobility resulting from forced movements in accommodation can mean that young refugees have to change schools and adapt to different kinds and levels of support. A change of location and school may well be a positive move, but equally it could be

a negative experience compounded by the need for families yet again to build relationships in a new setting.

In recent years the number and range of schools enrolling young refugees and local authorities providing services to them has increased. Therefore if a degree of consistency in provision is to be achieved, there are potentially a considerable number of schools and service areas which need to engage positively with the issues raised in the SHARED Futures materials. This could usefully include local authority staff who are involved in administrative and operational duties such as school admissions, housing and social services. In order to embed good practice, everybody needs to see young refugees and their families as their responsibility and not solely the responsibility of specialist teams or individuals.

### **7.3 Are there other topics and contexts relating to young refugees which could usefully be examined?**

Within and across local authorities, different levels of funding from EMAG and other sources may mean that different levels of specialist support are available both to a school and within a school. This may be unavoidable, but the principles of such support and the desired outcomes remain constant. This means adapting the principles to local conditions. For example, solutions which apply to schools in densely populated city areas may not be realistic in semi-rural towns where a school may have one or two refugee families. In this case, other strategies will need to be developed to achieve the same outcomes. Additional materials and related training that explore good practice in integrating isolated refugee families would be particularly helpful to a large number of schools.

### **7.4 Should any of the topics already covered be explored in greater detail or depth?**

Local authorities and schools would also benefit from additional materials which provide more detailed information about particular aspects of the practice shown in the DVD. These could be in the form of in-depth case studies and could include case studies on the following:

- How schools and settings create and maintain an inclusive ethos that promotes community cohesion. This could include the underlying principles and the strategies and processes that have been used to put the theory into practice. It could also usefully be linked to the guidance on 'Community Cohesion' that was issued by the DCSF (2007) and OFSTED's (2008) guidance on inspecting this aspect of school performance.
- Parent and community involvement, especially family learning initiatives to engage parents with school, support children's learning and access training for employment.
- The development and use of classroom schemes and materials for tackling media myths and promoting positive perceptions of refugees. This should also include how the schemes are incorporated into and link with curriculum subjects, Citizenship, Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), and Personal and Social and Health Education (PSHE).

- The practice of integrating high quality EAL teaching and learning into the study of curriculum subjects. This could include strategies for including young refugees socially and functionally in classroom activity and the methods which promote effective learning and achievement.
- The practice of multi-agency work with young refugees and, in particular, unaccompanied refugees. This could examine how schools, youth workers, social workers, Connexions workers and other agencies work together to provide integrated support for young refugees. It could also usefully look at how a young person can be advised and guided through the processes of choosing GCSE options, exploring career possibilities and taking up post-16 courses.

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