

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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**Paul Givan, Minister**  
Rathgael House, Balloo Road  
Bangor, BT19 7PR

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**Gerry Carroll MLA**  
**Parliament Buildings**  
**Ballymiscaw**  
**Stormont**

03 January 2025

AQW 19875/22-27  
AQW 19876/22-27  
AQW 19877/22-27  
AQW 19878/22-27  
AQW 19879/22-27

Gerry Carroll has asked:

To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 14705/22-27, (i) when his Department and the Education Authority reviewed this arrangement; (ii) who conducted the review; and (iii) to detail any equality screening and child rights impact assessment carried out as part of the review.

To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 14705/22-27, to detail the outcome of the review, including whether it has been communicated to families and stakeholders who support those families.

To ask the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 14705/22-27, (i) when an update was shared with the Education Authority's Joint Consultative Forum and with Refugee and Asylum Forum; and (ii) to provide a copy of this update.

To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) when Intercultural Education Service provision for children living with their families in initial or contingency asylum accommodation was last reviewed; (ii) who conducted the review; and (ii) any equality screening and child rights impact assessments that were carried out as part of the review.

To ask the Minister of Education to detail (i) the outcome of the review of the Intercultural Education Service provision for children living with their families

in initial or contingency asylum accommodation; and (ii) whether the outcome has been communicated to families and stakeholders across all sectors who support families.

## ANSWER

The Service Leads of the EA's Intercultural Education Service (IES) and DE's Additional Educational Needs Team (AENT) carried out a review of the temporary operational arrangements pertaining to families seeking sanctuary arriving into initial hotel contingency accommodation on 5<sup>th</sup> November and again on 19<sup>th</sup> December. Following these reviews agreement was reached to maintain temporary arrangements as the average length of time families are placed in initial hotel contingency accommodation remains unchanged, i.e. around 4 weeks before being moved to dispersal accommodation within the community.

All new families arriving into initial hotel contingency accommodation are met by IES as soon as possible after arrival and informed about the support on offer and are supported throughout early school enrolment procedures.

The EA undertook equality screening of the original temporary change in operational procedure in September. Equality screening was concluded on 31st October with the document published on the EA webpages.

EA IES presented a full update on the temporary arrangements to the Joint Consultative Forum on 17th September 2024. The presentation and minutes of the meeting have been shared subsequently with members of the Forum.

There was no separate update to the Refugee and Asylum Forum requested or provided.

There was no direct prior consultation with individual families or external groups as service provision is a system-wide decision for EA. Operational decisions around how resources are deployed to help meet the needs of children and young people with additional educational needs are based on existing policies, procedures and resource allocations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Givan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Paul Givan MLA**  
**Minister of Education**

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## **EQUALITY SCREENING & ENGAGEMENT TEMPLATE**

### **ASSESSING IMPACT ON S75 EQUALITY CATEGORIES, THE CHILD'S RIGHTS/HUMAN RIGHTS AND RURAL NEEDS**

This screening will help ensure your policy/decision is scoped and developed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable as best possible. If a policy/decision can be developed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, it will likely meet the needs of all.

#### **Part 1 The Policy/Decision**

<b>Title: Change in Arrangements for Provision of IES Support for Asylum Seeker and Refugee Families</b>	<b>Screening Ref No. 299</b>
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## Background

The Intercultural Education Service (IES) aims to support Asylum-Seeking, Refugee, Traveller, Roma and other Newcomer pupils and their parents in accessing education. IES provide advice, guidance and focused support to schools, families, and other educational support services to help meet the Education Authority mission:

*"To give our children and young people the best start in life and to provide a high-quality education for every child"*

Approximately three years ago, IES was made aware of unplaced children within MEARS accommodation (explain what this accommodation is) and, since then, has worked in partnership with others to provide educational access to children and young people.

This screening will focus on two procedure changes relating to:

- 1. Support arrangements for Asylum Seeker children and young people within MEARS IA hotel accommodation.**
- 2. Support arrangements for children living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation.**

Before these process changes are explained, further background information relating to IES will be provided.

Key definitions:

Contingency / IA Hotel Accommodation:

Dispersal Accommodation:

Non-Standard Accommodation:

Fail to Travel

## IES Objectives

- IES, to align with its value as an intercultural support service, has several objectives including:
- To meet the learning needs of our children and young people with additional needs.
- To provide excellent educational supports for our schools and target communities.

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- To provide a consistent service to schools and families in need of support across Northern Ireland.
- To facilitate equality of access and equality from pre-school to post-primary education.
- To build the capacity of schools to meet the intercultural development needs of children and young people.
- To promote whole school approaches to service development.
- To promote full inclusion and integration across all areas of education and youth services.
- To support and encourage family learning, out of school hours learning and life-long learning.
- Specifically in relation to Asylum Seekers and Refugees (ASR), the ASR team aim to:
- Improve the quality of educational support provided to the ASR community.
- Provide a consistent service to schools and families in need of support across Northern Ireland.
- Facilitate equality of access from pre-school to post-primary education.
- Provide information and guidance around pathways into further and higher education.
- Build the capacity of schools to meet the educational needs of ASR children and young people.
- Support and encourage family learning, out of school hours learning and life-long learning.

### **IES Staffing Structures**

The EA IES team is relatively small, and the current staffing structure within IES includes:

1 x Adviser (Head of Service)

1 x AAO

1 x Admin Officer

1 x Executive Officer

1 x Digital Content Support Officer

22 front line IES support staff, which covers all areas of (approximately 1,477 schools)

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### **Increasing Levels of Newcomer Pupils in NI**

At present, there are in excess of 20,000 Newcomer pupils (pupils who do not have English as their first Language) in NI. Within this, there in excess of 2,000 Asylum Seekers and Refugees (ASRs). Of the current school population of NI, Newcomer pupils represent approximately 5.9% of all NI children., which is a rise of almost 4,750 pupils since 2018/2019.

Since 2016, 900 Syrians have been assisted, however there have been 900 Ukrainians assisted in the last two years alone. In addition, there have been 800+ Asylum Seekers and 300+ Refugee families, including family reunification cases and SUAS (separated and unaccompanied asylum seeker) alongside, Health and Social Care Trust partners.

It is widely accepted that children facing significant educational disadvantage include recently arrived ASRs (including Afghan, African, Syrian and Ukrainian pupils), as well as those from the Roma and Traveller community.

### **IES Support for Asylum Seeker and Refugee Families and Pupils**

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IES works on supporting Asylum Seeker and Refugee pupils in schools. Further information on all types of IES support provided is available online [here](#).

The support available to Asylum Seekers and Refugees, detailed within this document includes:

- Early intervention child and family support to ensure access to education for both contingency accommodation and dispersal accommodation families,
- Support for arrivals under the various resettlement schemes,
- Involvement in strategic and operational planning with agencies and schools,
- Development of resources for schools,
- Support through SEN processes
- Parent/teacher meetings,
- Transitions support,
- Meals/uniform/transport applications,
- Multi-disciplinary meetings and case conferences,
- Referrals to external support agencies.

IES also provides:

- Resources to welcome asylum seekers and refugees to the school community.
- English language resources to make an initial language assessment and ongoing assessments of asylum seeker and refugee pupils in schools. Assessments span from the pre-literate level CEFR Pre A1 level to CEFR B1 level.
- Resources to help schools develop buddying and mentoring support.
- English language resources for schools.
- Interpreting and translation services for schools and can signpost them to this support.



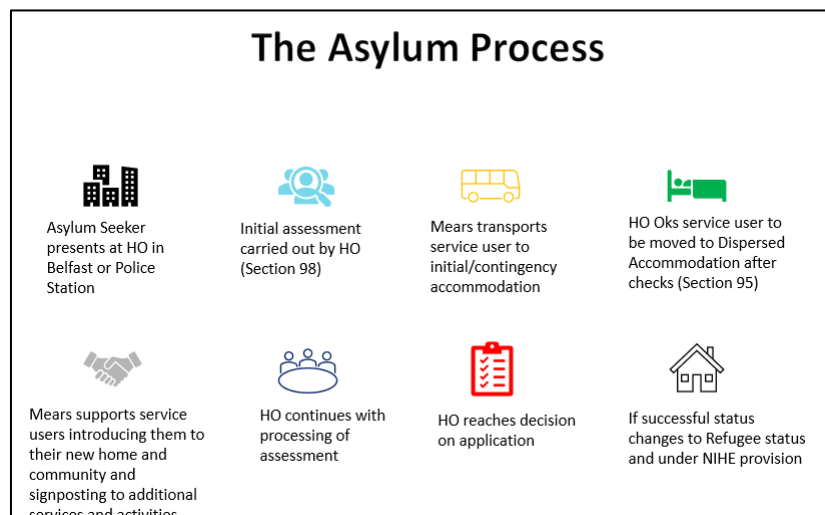
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- Advice and resources to help schools become more inclusive.
- Provide or signpost schools to community language and home language support.
- Signpost schools and families to other support agencies, community groups and educational institutions.
- Help for schools to access support from other EA educational services.
- Help for schools to develop their own understanding of other cultures and religions.

## The Asylum Process

The process facing ASR individuals and families is detailed in the below diagram:



Whilst it is acknowledged that EA, and education providers, has a key role to play in the settlement of ASRs it should be noted that much of the process detailed above is outside EA's control and relates to UK-wide legislation such as: Sections 95 and 98 of the [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#). Other key pieces of legislation include:

[Immigration Act 1971](#)

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[Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#)

[Immigration Act 2014](#)

[Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#)

These laws are supported by various policies, guidelines, and international obligations, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights, which guide how the UK handles asylum seekers and refugees.

### **Challenges facing IES in supporting ASR Pupils**

#### **Funding**

There has been no increase to the IES core funding budget to meet the needs of the new arrivals under Asylum or Refugee processes. Staff are doing this work on top of their core funded posts. Interventions have been supported by Home Office payments which arrive late in the year (Often Jan/Feb) and must be spent by end of financial year in March.

#### **School Placements**

Schools are at capacity in many areas of NI particularly in the post primary sector. (Limitations of practical sets, high SEN numbers and older buildings with no space to expand). New arrivals must follow the systems designed for the NI population. (Applications 9 months ahead are difficult to do). Those arriving at 15/16 with limited English are going to find it difficult to fit into the GCSE pathway. Children with SEN have never been previously known to services. The application of the Transport Policy is difficult for families who have no support structures and limited money.

#### **Trauma**

Many young people arriving have fled their home countries due to war, persecution or threat and have witnessed horrors. Their journey before arrival is usually at the hands of traffickers and can be long and frightening. Uncertainty in relation to safety, food and shelter can be part of the journey. Separating from parents/carers to go to school can be difficult.

#### **Misconceptions of the system**

Families arriving as Asylum Seekers, Refugees or Migrant workers must follow all the processes NI families go through to access education. They complete the same enrolment forms.

Must meet the same deadlines in relation to transition years. Must show evidence to meet Free School Meals thresholds. SEND needs are assessed and processed in the same way.

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### **The Asylum Process is driven by factors outside of IES control.**

For example, the provision of Dispersal Accommodation is driven primarily by the availability of houses, regardless of their distance from local schools and the availability of places within these schools or the availability of transport.

### **Summary of the broader issues facing the ASR community**

Some of the broader impacts Asylum Seekers and Refugees face in relation to educational access, include (but are not limited to):

- Language Barriers: Refugees and asylum seekers often face challenges with the English language, which can hinder access to education.
- Mental Health Support / Trauma: Many asylum seekers are fleeing traumatic situations, and mental health issues of children and young people can severely impact their educational attainment.
- Cultural Sensitivity: The need for culturally sensitive educational approaches is vital and schools that are aware of new/emerging cultures should limit the isolation of refugees and asylum seekers.
- Many asylum seekers, and refugees, arrive in NI as either single parents or unaccompanied minors due to their unique situations. As a result, many have no family/community support, both financially and socially.

The focus of this screening is in relation to the process change on the support provided by IES to ASR children and families in securing school placements whilst living in MEARS Initial accommodation (IA), dispersal accommodation (DA) and temporary NIHE non-standard accommodation. The previous IES support process and new IES support process will be explained in detail, including reference to the changing external circumstances that impacted this decision. In addition, the alternative options IES explored and the mitigations IES have implemented to support ASR families will also be highlighted.

### **1. Support arrangements for Asylum Seeker children and young people within MEARS IA hotel accommodation**

Previously, due to the backlog of families to move on into Dispersal Accommodation, ASR families could find themselves living in Contingency Accommodation (hotels) for substantial periods of time e.g. 6-12 months, and in some cases longer. This was as a result of a backlog in the Home Office processing of Asylum Claims, meaning that families could be in DA homes for years while waiting on a decision and as a result the MEARS property portfolio did not free up for families in IA. Whilst the housing arrangements for ASR families is beyond the control of IES, it was acknowledged that families had no access to daily necessities such as play equipment or facilities. Therefore, commencing a school programme was deemed beneficial to ensuring that children and young people had access to play equipment, play facilities and open spaces.

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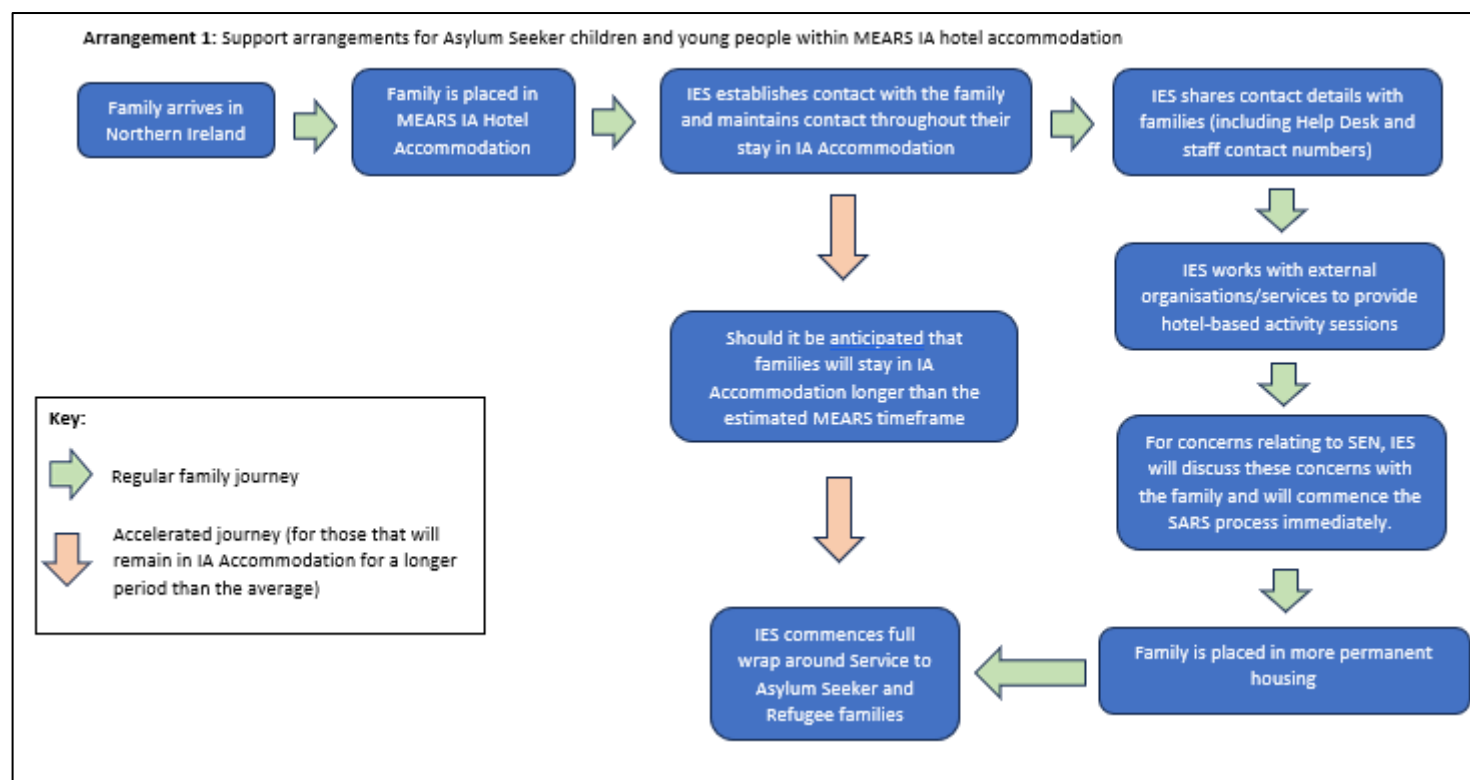
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During this time, IES provided support as follows: IES met with all families arriving in hotels as soon as possible after arrival and identified the types of school provision required. IES made applications, set up intake meetings with schools, helped families obtain uniforms, applied for school meals and uniform grants, applied for transport where thresholds were met and supported families where children had SEN needs to work through the SARS process.

During this time, IES also identified a shortage of places in schools in Belfast and worked with DE and TEO to secure funding to set up a primary and a post primary Welcome Club model with transport solutions in Malvern and Glengormley High School.

Therefore, commencing a school programme was deemed most beneficial, ensuring that children and young people had access to play equipment, play facilities, open spaces and a learning environment.

### Current Process



In recent times, MEARS has indicated that the average stay for families in IA hotel accommodation has fallen significantly to approx. 4-5weeks.

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This is mainly due to external factors, impacting the housing stock options available to MEARS.

In October 2023, the UK Government began a concerted effort to reduce the number of Asylum Seekers in the UK. The Home Office then significantly increased its processing team and there was a push to get families who had been waiting processed. At the point of a positive decision granting a family Leave to Remain, the family get a maximum 28-day notice period (often significantly less) to vacate their DA home, they then had refugee status and the responsibility for housing moved from MEARS to NIHE. MEARS had also been working on widening dispersal property locations and increased their property portfolio. MEARS began to see properties becoming available and moves from the hotels began to happen at a much faster pace. By May 2024, the data from MEARS was showing us that the number of family arrivals had decreased slightly and the length of stay in hotels was also much shorter before the move to DA. IES and DE discussed this with MEARS and with schools directly impacted who reported the same findings. As the pattern continued through the summer IES realised by Sept 2024 we would be facing a backlog of unplaced children who had been moved into homes while schools were closed.

As IES resources remained unchanged, it was agreed with DE that IES focus needed to be with the children who were in accommodation which was going to allow them to stay in the schools within their community for a longer period of time. The time taken to get a family through all the steps to starting school would likely be of no or limited benefit as the child may only be able to attend school for a few days before being moved out of the area. This can cause further distress to a child who perhaps has not been apart from their parents during their journey. Some children need significant staff support to settle in a new place and the revolving door of children is a strain on the small number of schools close to the hotel sites.

Therefore, IES and DE agreed to adopt a wait time of four weeks before seeking school placement for children in hotels as the data demonstrated that the majority of families would move on in that time frame.

IES continued to meet families after arrival, introduce themselves, share contact details, observe any children presenting with SEN needs and begin the SARS process as soon as possible. IES, at this point, advised parents around why waiting for school is the most sensible option for their child but if a parent does not want to wait we give them an AP1 form and direct them to the EA website to get the information they need to apply themselves to school.

IES does not provide its full service until the four-week mark has passed. In some cases where it is identified, or IES is made aware of a circumstance, whereby the family will be forced to remain longer in IA accommodation IES begins their full support model immediately.

Families who do not flag as having particular needs which prevent them from moving through the Asylum process as set out by Home Office are required to wait four weeks and at that point our team will provide direct placement support.

The temporary decision to reduce the comprehensive 'wrap-around' support provided to families and children likely to be moved to a new school within several weeks was not made solely on the grounds of arrival numbers. An assessment was made around the time and cost attached to the complete set of tasks this small team performs, including assisting greater numbers of families receiving positive 'move-on' decisions requiring resettlement in areas outside Belfast.

The temporary service change also reflects the complexity of casework management rather than just the number of new cases joining the team's workload every day of the week.

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Given the resource implications and the potential disruption for Asylum Seeker children and schools it was agreed with DE that IES will not seek immediate school placements based on hotel addresses as we have previously done. This occurs for a variety of reasons, including:

- Current resource availability and the time it takes to arrange a school place, even with the expedited channels IES have access to including:
- Sourcing an available place.
- Setting up Welcome meetings with Interpreters
- Applying for transport.
- Applying for school meals.
- Providing Medical Care plans where needed.
- Applying for uniform, grants, etc.

Delivering curriculum content in hotels is not possible due to the mix of ages, languages and the variety of previous educational experiences. This, multiplied by the fact that the cohort of children will also turnaround quickly makes any meaningful planning or delivery difficult. As a small team (6 staff working on ASR cases across NI) we cannot be in the hotels delivering curriculum or play opportunities as well as supporting placements for children in DA.

Trauma – if a school place was able to be secured in such a short timeframe, it is likely that the child would be moved within a matter of days or weeks once the family had been processed and placed into dispersal accommodation. The ASR children that IES supports have likely already gone through a significant amount of trauma, and having to transition into a new school and move immediately is likely to compound the impact of this existing trauma.

Both EA and DE accept that it is not in the best interests of the child to be accommodated, enrolled in school, provided with uniform, free school meals, transport and other school-specific support, only to be moved on within a short number of weeks and to begin the same process again.

Therefore, the new process for IES involves the below steps:

- IES staff will keep in touch with the Mears Welfare Support Link Officer in each hotel who will inform of new school age arrivals.
- IES staff will visit Hotel Sites and introduce themselves and the service to newly arrived families. They will inform families that it is better to wait to make an application for school when in their MEARS dispersal housing as this is likely to be a longer-term school for their child. IES visits each IA Hotel site 2-3 days per week.
- Whilst it is acknowledged that there are significant adverse impacts associated with children not being placed in education, and this can impact upon health, well-being and development, IES does work with external organisations/services (such as Barnardo's, Sure Start and EA Youth Service) to explore the potential for hotel-based activity sessions during this wait time.
- IES staff will share the Help Desk Information and Staff Mobile Numbers with families and ask them to reach out when they get their new home. IES will also accept contact, on behalf of families, by the MEARS Welfare Support Officer.
- If IES have any concerns relating to any child (of an SEN nature), IES can meet these families individually to discuss concerns and commence the SARS referral pathway.
- Following moves to more permanent housing, families (or MEARS staff) will inform IES and the school placement process will begin. As part of this:

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- Families can be visited at home, or the visit can take place at a suitable central location, and this commences and progresses applications for enrolments.
- IES staff will then follow the usual steps for a new enrolment. At present there is no definitive time for enrolment each application and placement is unique because of issues outside of IES control (i.e. available places, care plans, etc). IES receives weekly data on new addresses for families and will get in touch as soon as we have this, but often the family themselves contacts IES when they have their address (prior to the actual move). Additionally, IES is content to receive a call from the MEARS welfare support officer to inform that the family are ready for education.
- For families who Fail To Travel (FTT), discussions can take place with MEARS re the potential expected length of stay. If MEARS expect the family to exceed the 5/6-week period applications to schools based on the hotel address may be made. IES will begin to seek placement for all children still in IA after 4 weeks as this indicates the family are not moving smoothly through the Asylum process and have likely rejected moves from the hotel for a variety of reasons.

In addition, EA's IES team has drawn down external funds to assist Asylum Seekers to receive initial uniform supplies, laptops and wi-fi dongles, as well as free school meals, on humanitarian grounds for up to 12 weeks, until the paperwork is provided to EA demonstrating that the family is entitled to free school meals and free transport support (if applicable).

### **Review Process**

[The change to support arrangements within MEARS IA accommodation is interim and in response to current need within resource for the reasons outlined above.](#)

IES will be reviewing current support services at the end of October 2024 and as part of that review consultation [and](#) engagement [is ongoing](#) with those families currently experiencing frequent accommodation moves.

Whilst this is the current arrangements (agreed with DE), should there be a change (indicated by MEARS) in the average length of stays, due to increased numbers of Asylum Seekers or the lack of available housing stock, IES will review these processes.

IES remains, at all times, available to receive firsthand or written requests for support as well as to have early notice of any complaints families are making to third parties.

## **2. Support arrangements for children living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation**

### **Previous Process**

There was no previous process but as the numbers impacted upon were smaller, with fewer children ended up in non-standard housing IES had a limited capacity to try and continue to support the families where relationships were built.

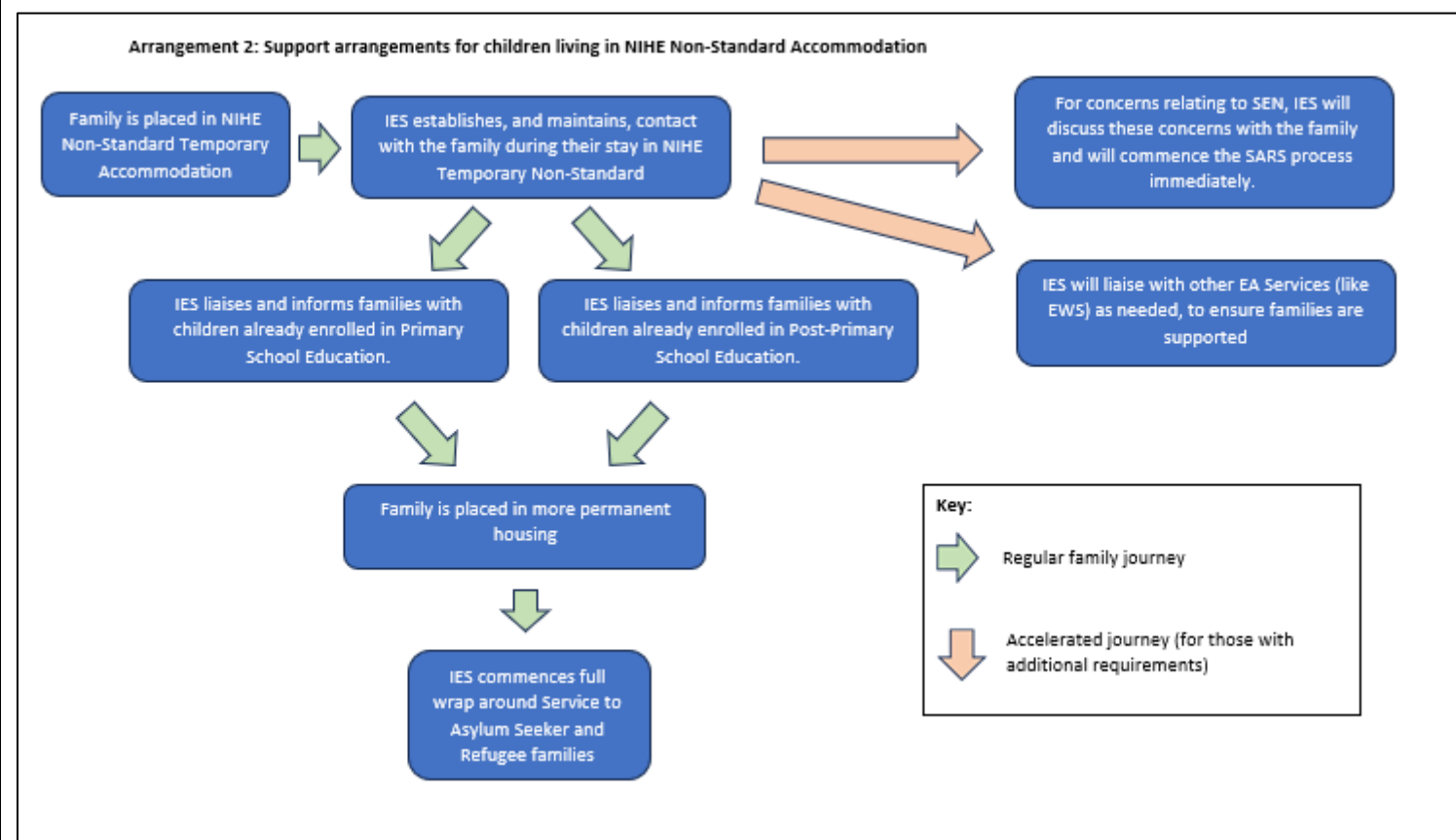
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IES was able to offer reassurance that the time in non-standard was likely to be relatively short and that a bed for the night was the primary concern for the families and education would settle when a home was identified.

Due to the increase in numbers, and change in turnaround times, this process was required to be assessed and commenced.

### Current Process



Due to external pressures on housing providers a significant proportion of Asylum Seeker families that are supported by IES, will at the point of being granted refugee status be placed in temporary non-standard accommodation by NIHE.



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These accommodations can be in any part of NI (e.g. hotels, hostels, B&B's, etc.) and are provided on a night-by-night basis. This has huge implications for all parts of the lives of the families and education is of course disrupted and there are no predictable time frames as to how long a family will be in this situation or how many moves they will receive into varying, and diverse, localities.

Whilst NIHE does provide weekly updates to IES on who these families are and their current non-standard address, due to the uncertainty and transient nature of this process, it was deemed (agreed by DE) that it is not possible to provide consistent education for children in this situation. This was enhanced by the fact that:

- Current resource availability and the time it takes to arrange a new temporary school place would make it impossible to keep up the move on times dictated by NIHE.
- Children would be required to deregister from their school, with no guarantee of being able to get that place back if the family got a tenancy in the area again.
- Delivering curriculum content is not possible due to the mix of locations (across NI), ages, languages and previous educational experiences. This, multiplied by the fact that the cohort of children will also turnaround quickly makes any meaningful planning or delivery difficult.
- Trauma – if a temporary school place was able to be secured in such a short timeframe, it is likely that the child would be moved after a matter of days or weeks based on NIHE ability to secure bed spaces.
- The ASR children that IES supports have likely already gone through a significant amount of trauma, and having to transition into a new school and move immediately is likely to compound the impact of this existing trauma.

Again, it is acknowledged that there are significant adverse impacts associated with children not being placed in education, and this can impact upon emotional and physical health, well-being and development but IES is not able to control every element of the life of a family in the Asylum process, there needs to be a government level strategy to address these issues.

There are a significant number of children who are not refugees who are also in this situation, however there is no service in EA who holds data on these pupils or can offer any support to these families.

Whilst these adverse impacts are acknowledged, IES does not have the responsibility for the processes that cause several of the adverse impacts i.e. these are decisions from outside it's control (e.g. Home Office application process, housing availability, etc). However, IES does so to ensure that IES maintains contact and relationships with families deemed 'at risk as well as ensuring that support was available for those within the SEN process or within examination year groups. the only mitigating actions within IES's responsibility are:

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- Maintaining contact links with families in non-standard accommodation, as due to the geography of the non-standard accommodation and how often families can be moved, contact tends to be by phone or email as and when the the families reach out.

- For families with children enrolled in Primary Schools, IES will explain the situation fully.

They will remain enrolled in their school and maintain their place however, unless they are housed in accommodation within walking distance (or a short bus journey) of their original school they are not going to be able to attend school. (short bus journey – is this to do with transport policy??) Transport policy plus access to a bus stop, parental ability to pay to accompany their primary age child on the bus,

If at any point on their temporary housing journey they are placed near to their base school, they can attend.

That placements in the temporary locations will not be sought, due to the above difficulties and restrictions.  
Once a family secures a home on a more permanent basis, IES will re-examine the school placement process.

- For families with children and young people enrolled in Post Primary Schools, whilst the process will largely be the same as for Primary School pupils, they will also be informed that if the child holds an EA Bus Pass and there is a sensible route by bus or train back to the base school parents and children should consider this option.

A sensible route relies on a decision being made by the parent, following discussion between the parent and IES staff (for example, if a child currently travels two hours to get to school, some may think this is too much).

- For children and young people with SEN, they will continue to be processed in line with SARS processes, in consultation with IES staff.

Whilst it is acknowledged that all children will not have access to a laptop or smart tablet and broadband internet, if families do have access to these devices the base school could be requested provide some level of remote learning activities [but this is at the discretion of each individual school].

IES cannot provide taxis or teachers due to funding, resourcing and time constraints.

### **Support from other EA Services and Directorates**

It is acknowledged that education provides young people with the opportunity to prepare for life. EA's Education Welfare Service (EWS) is a specialist education support service which seeks to help young people and their families get the best out of the education system by ensuring that they receive the support they need to attend school regularly.

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EWS engages primarily with vulnerable children, including those with multiple needs. In doing this, EWS works in partnership with the young people, their families, their schools, other education services as well as other statutory and voluntary agencies.

Whilst the majority of referrals are made by schools, outlining the interventions/supports that the school has put in place to address their concerns, referrals to EWS are also accepted from other sources such as parents, social workers and other agencies e.g. family support hubs and other Education Authority services (like IES).

Whilst the Services provided by EWS does not differ in relation to Asylum Seeker and Refugee children, there is significant collaboration between IES and EWS when working with ASR families within Non-Standard NIHE Accommodation.

These referrals must evidence all.

Referrals are also A parent/carer must always be informed that a referral has been made to the Education Welfare Service.

#### **Summary of Policy Changes:**

##### **Arrangement 1:** Support arrangements for Asylum Seeker children and young people within MEARS IA hotel accommodation

Rather than starting the education application process immediately, IES is following DE guidance to allow families to settle into IA accommodation, as going by recent MEARS approximations the average stay in IA accommodation is 5-6 weeks. During this time, IES will:

- Maintain contact
- Visiting IA accommodation
- Working with external organisations/services to explore the potential for hotel-based activity sessions
- Commencing the SARS referral pathway immediately (as needed)
- For families who are likely to remain within IA Accommodation

##### **Arrangement 2:** Support arrangements for children living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation

Previously, there was no specific process in place as the numbers were very small and these could be dealt with on an adhoc basis. Again, during this time (based on external agency guidance), IES was able to offer reassurance that the time in non-standard was likely to be relatively short and that a bed for the night was the primary concern for the families.

The current process, based on DE approval, was to reduce the 'wrap-around' support provided to families and children likely to be moved to a new school within a short period of time, and to focus on providing this service to families who have more permanent locations.

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## Review and Monitoring

As mentioned above, the arrangements will be reviewed in light of:

- Any changes (indicated by MEARS) in the average length of stays.
- An overall review of IES support services (end of October 2024).

## Part 2 Stakeholders

Which are the stakeholders that may actually or potentially be affected by the policy/decision?							
Staff				Service Users			
EA staff – Corporate	Actual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Potential <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff	Actual <input type="checkbox"/>	Potential <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff – School based	Actual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Potential <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Schools	Actual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Potential <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Agency Staff	Actual <input type="checkbox"/>	Potential <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Children & Young People	Actual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Potential <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Potential staff from external market	Actual <input type="checkbox"/>	Potential <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Families/Parents/Carers	Actual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Potential <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Other: e.g. Trade Unions	Actual <input type="checkbox"/>	Potential <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other: <i>please state</i>	Actual <input type="checkbox"/>	Potential <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>

## Part 3 Considering Needs & Experiences of Stakeholders

For each of the nine s.75 Groups below, follow these 4 steps:			
<b>Step 1: What is the profile of the people that are impacted by this policy or decision?</b> Provide the statistical breakdown of the stakeholders affected.	<b>Step 2: Consider the needs, experiences, and views of these stakeholders.</b>	<b>Step 3: Consider whether the policy/decision could have a possible negative (or positive) impact on their needs and experiences.</b>	<b>Step 4: Consider how you might implement your policy/decision differently to mitigate any negative impact.</b>

### AGE

<b>1. Consider the <a href="#">AGE</a> ranges of the stakeholders affected:</b>	Refugee children and young people will struggle with the language barrier, differences in curriculum as well as the trauma that they have experienced. This cumulative impact will have significant adverse impacts upon their learning.	It is anticipated that the changes in both processes ( <i>Support arrangements for Asylum Seeker children and young people within MEARS IA hotel accommodation and Support arrangements for children living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation</i> ) will have significant	For all mitigating actions, please refer to the <a href="#">Ethnicity section</a> of this table. Mitigations relating to age, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IES works with external organisations/services (such as Barnardo's, Sure Start and EA</li> </ul>
IES provides services to children and young people of all ages – ranging from young children applying for nursery and pre-nursery places right up to 16-year-			

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olds – with and without the qualification to meet sixth form (post-16) criteria.

School and management type	2023/24 number	2023/24 %
Voluntary and Private Pre-School Centres (funded children only)	239	3.5%
Nursery Schools	476	8.2%
Nursery Classes & Reception	871	8.7%
Primary Schools & Prep. Departments (Year 1 - Year 7)	14,236	8.4%
Secondary (Non Grammar) Schools	4,331	4.8%
Grammar Schools (Year 8 - Year 14)	634	1.0%
Special Schools	200	2.8%
EOTAS Centres	-	-
<b>ALL FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL, NURSERY, PRIMARY, POST-PRIMARY, SPECIAL SCHOOLS and EOTAS CENTRES</b>	<b>20,987</b>	<b>5.9%</b>

Source: School Census 23/24

UK wide statistics:

Date of application	Year ending June 2023	Year ending June 2024
<b>Total people</b>	<b>102,371</b>	<b>97,107</b>
Under 14	12,191	12,742
14 - 15	2,608	2,155
16 - 17	5,898	4,959
18+	81,670	77,250

In 2023, there were 3,412 applications from unaccompanied children (some of whom were as young as 14 years of age) to the UK, accounting for 5% of total asylum applications.

Changes to any educational access could significantly impact their integration into communities as well as any long-term prospects educational and career opportunities.

Improving access to education for young asylum seekers and refugee children is vital to helping them integrate into society more smoothly, learning English, and succeeding academically. Early access to education provides social and emotional stability for children, which can help them overcome trauma and transition into their new environment.

Older refugees and asylum seekers may have limited access to further, or adult, education. Due to the nature of their situation (potential limited English skills/qualifications) reskilling/upskilling opportunities will be limited and the need for English language development is more appropriate (as this will be vital for integration and employment).

Older asylum seekers and refugees will benefit from adult education and retraining programs, giving them opportunities to contribute economically and socially. This can reduce isolation and help them become more independent, improving their overall quality of life.

impact upon Asylum Seeker and Refugee children, young people and families.

Whilst IES involvement is limited to educational access, it should have a positive impact upon impact upon all children, young people and families. It should also be noted that any delay to interaction/support may result in substantial adverse impact in relation to educational attainment and trauma recovery as well as general emotional/physical health, well-being and development.

Youth Service) to explore the potential for hotel-based activity sessions during this wait time.

- IES makes a conscious effort to engage MEARS and lobby relevant organisation to resist the urge to relocate families around exam time, for those who have pupils facing key exams.

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## DISABILITY

2. Consider whether stakeholders have/likely have a <a href="#">DISABILITY</a> :																																	
<p>IES do not necessarily know if a child or young person has a disability or a SEN.</p> <table><tr><th>School and management type</th><th>2023/24 number</th><th>2023/24 %</th></tr><tr><td>Voluntary and Private Pre-School Centres (funded children only)</td><td>239</td><td>3.5%</td></tr><tr><td>Nursery Schools</td><td>476</td><td>8.2%</td></tr><tr><td>Nursery Classes &amp; Reception</td><td>871</td><td>8.7%</td></tr><tr><td>Primary Schools &amp; Prep. Departments (Year 1 - Year 7)</td><td>14,236</td><td>8.4%</td></tr><tr><td>Secondary (Non Grammar) Schools</td><td>4,331</td><td>4.8%</td></tr><tr><td>Grammar Schools (Year 8 - Year 14)</td><td>634</td><td>1.0%</td></tr><tr><td>Special Schools</td><td>200</td><td>2.8%</td></tr><tr><td>EOTAS Centres</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>ALL FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL, NURSERY, PRIMARY, POST-PRIMARY, SPECIAL SCHOOLS and EOTAS CENTRES</td><td>20,987</td><td>5.9%</td></tr></table> <p>Source: School Census 23/24</p> <p>The World Health Organisation estimates that approximately 15% of the world's population has a disability. However, the most recent Census data estimates that</p>	School and management type	2023/24 number	2023/24 %	Voluntary and Private Pre-School Centres (funded children only)	239	3.5%	Nursery Schools	476	8.2%	Nursery Classes & Reception	871	8.7%	Primary Schools & Prep. Departments (Year 1 - Year 7)	14,236	8.4%	Secondary (Non Grammar) Schools	4,331	4.8%	Grammar Schools (Year 8 - Year 14)	634	1.0%	Special Schools	200	2.8%	EOTAS Centres	-	-	ALL FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL, NURSERY, PRIMARY, POST-PRIMARY, SPECIAL SCHOOLS and EOTAS CENTRES	20,987	5.9%	<p>Asylum seekers and refugees with disabilities face significant barriers to accessing education. This is compounded by the lack of familiarity with the support services in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Any change in process should address the accessibility of educational institutions and services, including tailored support for mental health issues, which can be exacerbated by the asylum process, as well as the trauma suffered by the child and family before settling in NI.</p> <p>Asylum seekers and refugees with disabilities should have equal access to facilities, support services, and tailored learning environments. This should, in turn, lead to more opportunities for personal and professional development, helping individuals with disabilities overcome barriers to education and employment.</p> <p>By ensuring specialised education resources, refugees with disabilities can</p>	<p>The procedure in question i.e. '<i>IES commencing the formal process of school enrolment</i>' should have a positive impact upon Asylum Seeking families and Refugees.</p> <p>Asylum seekers and refugees with disabilities often face a lack of appropriate support as well as a delay in received appropriate support elsewhere, which can delay the service delivery of IES.</p> <p>As a result, there is a potential that individuals with disabilities may be excluded from educational services (due to a lack of awareness of their rights, as well as challenges in navigating bureaucratic systems that are difficult to understand).</p> <p>However, it is anticipated that IES involvement (from early stages in their settlement) will have a positive impact upon impact upon all, however it should be noted that any delay to interaction/support may result in</p>	<p>For all mitigating actions, please refer to the <a href="#">Ethnicity section</a> of this table.</p> <p><b>Mitigations specifically relating to disability, include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Interpreters/Signers</b> are utilised by all EA staff, however due to the nature of the current situation these interpreters are not always available on a face-to-face basis for the initial introduction meeting. Where interpreters are not available (face-to-face), IES will endeavour to ensure they are available on either video call or by telephone call.</li><li>The IES team offer a stable, reassuring and consistent communication pathway for each family they deal with, as well offering advice on the educational/SEN process they</li></ul>
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<p>approximately 24% of the NI population are limited in their day-to-day activities either a little or a lot.</p> <p>A full breakdown of the Census Disability data is available in Appendix 1 within this document.</p> <p>Forced displacement disproportionately affects persons with disabilities. They are often at higher risk of violence, and exploitation, face barriers accessing basic services, and are often excluded from education and livelihood opportunities</p>	<p>gain the skills and confidence needed for integration, reducing the likelihood of social isolation which is potentially compounded by having a disability.</p>	<p>substantial adverse impact in relation to educational attainment and trauma recovery.</p>	<p>face. In addition, this regular communication channel should help families to settle into their new surroundings/communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commencing SARS referral pathways immediately, when identified.</li> <li>• Exceptional arrangements in place for those who may be expected to remain longer in IA hotel accommodation than the average 5/6 weeks, e.g. family members with disability.</li> </ul>
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## GENDER

<p><b>3. Consider the <a href="#">GENDER</a> breakdown of the stakeholders affected:</b></p>	<p>It is noted that female asylum seekers and refugees, can face unique barriers to accessing services, such as childcare responsibilities or cultural factors that prioritise male interactions, development and/or education.</p> <p>Some women and girls, due to cultural factors or conflict, may have missed out on education prior to settlement in NI and as a result language and skills may need development. However, by ensuring children have access to education can (and will) promote gender equality -helping men, women and children to learn about gender equality.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the changes in both processes (<i>Support arrangements for Asylum Seeker children and young people within MEARS IA hotel accommodation and Support arrangements for children living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation</i>) will have significant impact upon Asylum Seeker and Refugee children, young people and families.</p> <p>Whilst IES involvement is limited to educational access, it should have a positive impact upon impact upon all children, young people and families. It should also be noted that any delay to interaction/support may result in substantial adverse impact in relation to educational attainment and trauma</p>	<p>For all mitigating actions, please refer to the <a href="#">Ethnicity section</a> of this table.</p>
<p>Data published by the British Red Cross estimated that approx. 30% of applications for asylum in the UK were related to women and girls.</p> <p>Furthermore, it estimated that 42% of the asylum applications were from women and children (i.e. also including all children under the age of 18).</p>			

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	<p>Males, particularly young men, may also face challenges, especially in terms of integration, where they might encounter higher rates of discrimination or pressure to find work rather than pursue education.</p> <p>There are tailored programs that enable women, especially those who may have missed out on education and these programmes which enable flexible learning are provided by other organisations which IES signpost to (e.g. EOL courses, further education colleges, etc).</p>	<p>recovery as well as general emotional/physical health, well-being and development.</p>	
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## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

<p><b>4. Consider the <a href="#">SEXUAL ORIENTATION</a> breakdown of the stakeholders affected:</b></p> <p>In 2023, 2% of asylum claims in the UK (1,377 claims) included sexual orientation as part of the basis for the claim (LGB asylum applications).</p> <p><b>Source:</b> <a href="#">Home Office</a></p> <p>Whilst this is the official statistic, it is believed that the total number of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers is likely to be higher, due to underreporting because of stigma and fear.</p>	<p>Asylum seekers and refugees who are LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers may face significant additional discrimination, particularly if they come from countries where sexual orientation is heavily stigmatised.</p> <p>Those that are from countries where LGBTQ+ rights are limited or non-existent could benefit from access to educational materials and services that support their identity, offering a pathway to self-acceptance and community support.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the changes in both processes (<i>Support arrangements for Asylum Seeker children and young people within MEARS IA hotel accommodation and Support arrangements for children living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation</i>) will have significant impact upon Asylum Seeker and Refugee children, young people and families.</p> <p>Whilst IES involvement is limited to educational access, it should have a positive impact upon impact upon all children, young people and families. It should also be noted that any delay to interaction/support may result in substantial adverse impact in relation to educational attainment and trauma recovery as well as general</p>	<p>For all mitigating actions, please refer to the <a href="#">Ethnicity section</a> of this table.</p>	
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		emotional/physical health, well-being and development.		

DEPENDANTS

<p><b>5. Consider whether stakeholders have/likely have <a href="#">DEPENDANTS</a></b></p> <p>UK wide statistics, published by the Home Office, indicates:</p> <table><tr><td colspan="4">Asylum seekers in receipt of section 95 support, by group type.</td></tr><tr><td>As at end of...</td><td>As at the end of Jun 2024 (Note 5)</td><td>Change in the latest year</td><td>% change in the latest year</td></tr><tr><td>Total in receipt of section 95 support</td><td>95,479</td><td>+42,615</td><td>+76%</td></tr><tr><td>Single applicants</td><td>44,981</td><td>+22,716</td><td>+87%</td></tr><tr><td>Members of family group (Note 6)</td><td>46,145</td><td>+16,269</td><td>+55%</td></tr><tr><td>Families (Note 7)</td><td>13,591</td><td>+4,739</td><td>+53%</td></tr></table> <p><b>Family Reunion Visas (UK-wide)</b> In the year ending December 2023, 9,764 family reunion visas were issued to partners and children of those granted asylum or humanitarian protection in the UK, an 137% increase compared to the previous year.</p>	Asylum seekers in receipt of section 95 support, by group type.				As at end of...	As at the end of Jun 2024 (Note 5)	Change in the latest year	% change in the latest year	Total in receipt of section 95 support	95,479	+42,615	+76%	Single applicants	44,981	+22,716	+87%	Members of family group (Note 6)	46,145	+16,269	+55%	Families (Note 7)	13,591	+4,739	+53%	<p>Asylum seekers and refugees with Dependents (e.g. children, older family members, or people with disabilities) may struggle to balance education with caregiving responsibilities.</p> <p>Often, families struggle to find appropriate services due to financial or language barriers.</p> <p>The needs of people with dependents (sometimes children and young people who have care giving responsibilities) will find it increasingly difficult to obtain an education and as a result integrate into society and their community.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the changes in both processes (<i>Support arrangements for Asylum Seeker children and young people within MEARS IA hotel accommodation and Support arrangements for children living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation</i>) will have significant impact upon Asylum Seeker and Refugee children, young people and families.</p> <p>Whilst IES involvement is limited to educational access, it should have a positive impact upon impact upon all children, young people and families. It should also be noted that any delay to interaction/support may result in substantial adverse impact in relation to educational attainment and trauma recovery as well as general emotional/physical health, well-being and development.</p>	<p>For all mitigating actions, please refer to the <a href="#">Ethnicity section</a> of this table.</p>
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## MARITAL STATUS

<p><b>6. Consider the <a href="#">MARITAL STATUS</a> breakdown of the stakeholders affected:</b></p>																							
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## ETHNICITY

<p><b>7. Consider the <a href="#">ETHNICITY</a> breakdown of the stakeholders affected:</b></p>	<p>Frequently, refugees and asylum seekers are from ethnic minority backgrounds.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the changes in both processes (<i>Support arrangements for Asylum Seeker children and young people</i></p>	<p><b>Mitigating actions:</b></p>
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<p>At present, there are in excess of 20,000 Newcomer pupils (pupils who do not have English as their first Language) in NI. Within this, there in excess of 2,000 Asylum Seekers and Refugees (ASRs). Of the current school population of NI, Newcomer pupils represent approximately 5% of all NI children.</p> <p>Since 2016, 900 Syrians have been assisted, however there have 900 Ukrainians assisted in the last two years alone. In addition, there have been 800+ Asylum Seekers and 300+ Refugee families, including family reunification cases and SUAS (separated and unaccompanied asylum seeker) alongside, Health and Social Care Trust partners.</p> <p>The PSNI estimate (due to Operational figures) that the number of reported race hate crimes has increased by one third, in comparison to the previous twelve months. This would amount to an increase of over 400, additional, incidents. (Source: <a href="#">BBC</a>)</p>	<p>As a result, families and individuals often experience issues with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racial integration.</li> <li>• Inclusion and acceptance.</li> <li>• Racial tensions.</li> </ul> <p>Without family support structures in place, this can (and will) lead to increased stress, anxiety and mental health issues.</p> <p>Accessing education can pave the way to combating racial prejudice, by fostering multicultural understanding.</p> <p>Racial discrimination, islamophobia and xenophobia are key issues for many refugees and asylum seekers. Whilst NI is seeing increased diversity, racism remains a significant issue, particularly toward African, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian migrants. Furthermore, asylum seekers and refugees (and their accommodation) are often the subject hate crimes incidents, racial profiling, or social exclusion.</p>	<p><i>within MEARS IA hotel accommodation and Support arrangements for children living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation</i>) will have significant impact upon Asylum Seker and Refugee children, young people and families.</p> <p>Whilst IES involvement is limited to educational access, it should have a positive impact upon impact upon all children, young people and families. It should also be noted that any delay to interaction/support may result in substantial adverse impact in relation to educational attainment and trauma recovery as well as general emotional/physical health, well-being and development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Interpreters</b> are utilised by all EA staff, however due to the nature of the current situation these interpreters are not always available on a face-to-face basis for the initial introduction meeting. Where interpreters are not available (face-to-face), IES will endeavour to ensure they are available on either video call or by telephone call.</li> <li>• Whilst it is noted that many asylum seekers and refugees may face hate crimes, racial profiling and/or social exclusion, IES interacts with these families offering support to accessing education for children/young people, as well as signposting to other services which may offer help.</li> <li>• The IES team offer a stable, reassuring and consistent communication pathway for each family they deal with, as well offering advice on the educational/SEN process they face. In addition, this regular communication channel should</li> </ul>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Following placement in more permanent accommodation, mitigations include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Flexibility in terms of meeting places.</li><li>○ Commencing enrolment procedures.</li></ul></li><li>• Exceptional arrangements in place for those who may be expected to remain longer in IA hotel accommodation than the average 5/6 weeks.</li></ul> <p>Actions relating to <b>Arrangement 2:</b> People living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintaining contact with families.</li><li>• For families with children enrolled in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, explaining the present situation fully.</li><li>• For families who have access to devices such as a laptop or tablet, assisting them with requesting some level of remote learning activities from the base school (if enrolled).</li></ul>
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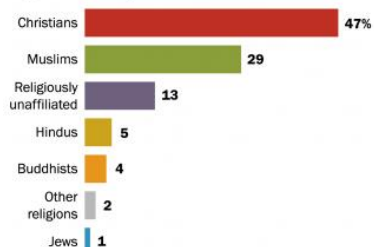
## RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

### 8. Consider the **RELIGIOUS** breakdown of the stakeholders affected:

It is difficult to ascertain the number of claims for asylum made on the grounds of religious persecution.

The PEW Research Centre, [in research published in August 2024](#), estimated that largest migrant groups globally are:

% of the world's migrants who are ...



Note: Migrants are all adults and children living outside their country of birth, as of 2020, no matter when they moved. Shares do not sum to 100% due to rounding. "Other religions" includes Baha'is, Sikhs and many other religious groups that cannot be analyzed separately because of insufficient data.

Source: Data based on migrant counts from the United Nations' "International Migrant Stock 2020" report and religious composition estimates from Pew Research Center analyses of 270 censuses and surveys.

"The Religious Composition of the World's Migrants"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Many asylum seekers and refugees come from countries with different religious backgrounds than those predominantly practiced in Northern Ireland.

Whilst the vast majority of schools in Northern Ireland follow a specific Christian ethos, which may differ to the religion of some ASR families, education in Northern Ireland is open to those of all religious beliefs and none.

Providing educational access to children from asylum seeking and refugee backgrounds encourages greater understanding, tolerance, inclusion and \*\*cross-cultural dialogue.

In addition, in many aspects schools can provide safe spaces for pupils to express themselves (including their religious beliefs). Schools within NI should provide spaces that are inclusive of various religious practices (e.g., prayer spaces, religious holidays) can create an environment of respect and understanding for students of all faiths.

It is anticipated that the changes in both processes (*Support arrangements for Asylum Seeker children and young people within MEARS IA hotel accommodation and Support arrangements for children living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation*) will have significant impact upon Asylum Seeker and Refugee children, young people and families.

Whilst IES involvement is limited to educational access, it should have a positive impact upon impact upon all children, young people and families. It should also be noted that any delay to interaction/support may result in substantial adverse impact in relation to educational attainment and trauma recovery as well as general emotional/physical health, well-being and development.

For all mitigating actions, please refer to the [Ethnicity section](#) of this table.

Further mitigations in terms of religious Beliefs, include:

- Whilst it is noted that many asylum seekers and refugees may face hate crimes, racial profiling and/or social exclusion, IES interacts with these families offering support to accessing education for children/young people, as well as signposting to other services which may offer help.
- The IES team offer a stable, reassuring and consistent communication pathway for each family they deal with, as well offering advice on the educational/SEN process they face. In addition, this regular communication channel should help families to settle into their new surroundings/communities.

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## POLITICAL OPINION

<p><b>9. Consider the <a href="#">POLITICAL</a> breakdown of the stakeholders affected:</b></p>	<p>Refugees and asylum seekers often come from countries where political conflict has led to their displacement.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the changes in both processes (<i>Support arrangements for Asylum Seeker children and young people within MEARS IA hotel accommodation and Support arrangements for children living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation</i>) will have significant impact upon Asylum Seeker and Refugee children, young people and families.</p>	<p>For all mitigating actions, please refer to the <a href="#">Ethnicity section</a> of this table.</p>
<p>The current political opinion of NI (based on the most recent NI Assembly elections) is included within Appendix 1 of this document.</p> <p>The PSNI estimate (due to Operational figures) that the number of reported race hate crimes has increased by one third, in comparison to the previous twelve months. This would amount to an increase of over 400, additional, incidents. (Source: <a href="#">BBC</a>)</p>	<p>Through civic education and participation, asylum seekers can better understand the political structures of NI, which may encourage more engagement in democratic processes when they become eligible.</p> <p>Given the current political sphere, in relation to the aforementioned attacks and ever-increasing and hate crime incidents, asylum seekers and refugees are in need of great support.</p>	<p>Whilst IES involvement is limited to educational access, it should have a positive impact upon impact upon all children, young people and families. It should also be noted that any delay to interaction/support may result in substantial adverse impact in relation to educational attainment and trauma recovery as well as general emotional/physical health, well-being and development.</p>	<p>Further mitigations in terms of Political Opinion, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst it is noted that many asylum seekers and refugees may face hate crimes, racial profiling and/or social exclusion, IES interacts with these families offering support to accessing education for children/young people, as well as signposting to other services which may offer help.</li> <li>• The IES team offer a stable, reassuring and consistent communication pathway for each family they deal with, as well offering advice on the educational/SEN process they face. In addition, this regular communication channel should help families to settle into their new surroundings/communities.</li> </ul>



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## MULTIPLE S75 GROUPS

<p><b>10. Consider the cumulative impact for those who fall into multiple s75 categories:</b></p>	<p>ASR individuals and families often arrive with complex needs. Being a member of several Section 75 only exacerbates, or amplifies, the challenges facing them when attempting to access education or interact with Services.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the changes in both processes (<i>Support arrangements for Asylum Seeker children and young people within MEARS IA hotel accommodation and Support arrangements for children living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation</i>) will have significant impact upon Asylum Seeker and Refugee children, young people and families, particularly those who fall into multiple Section 75 categories.</p>	<p>For all mitigating actions, please refer to the <a href="#">Ethnicity section</a> of this table.</p>
<p>While specific statistics on the cumulative impact of multiple Section 75 categories on ASRs is challenging to define and collect, the following is generally accepted:</p> <p><b>Education:</b> Only 15% (approx.) of young refugees access higher education in the UK, compared to 38% of UK-born peers (this is often attributed to language barriers and cultural factors).</p> <p><b>Employment:</b> Refugees face an unemployment rate of around 18%, higher among women and those from minority ethnic backgrounds.</p> <p><b>Mental Health:</b> Up to 61% of refugees experience severe mental health issues, such as PTSD or depression, often exacerbated by experiences of racism, trauma, and lack of access to culturally appropriate care.</p> <p><b>Homelessness:</b> ASRs are approximately three times more likely to experience homelessness compared to the general population. Factors like language</p>	<p>For example:</p> <p><b>Gender and Ethnicity</b> Women ASRs from certain ethnic backgrounds may face both gender-based violence and racial discrimination, limiting their access to support and services.</p> <p><b>Age and disability</b> Children from refugee backgrounds with disabilities may struggle with both language barriers and a lack of culturally sensitive educational support, impacting their development and integration.</p> <p><b>Age and Religion</b> Older ASRs from religious minorities may struggle with age-related health issues while also facing religious discrimination or exclusion from culturally appropriate care.</p> <p><b>Sexual Orientation and Ethnicity</b> LGBTQIA+ ASRs from conservative ethnic backgrounds may face hostility both within their community and from the wider NI society. This could lead to social isolation and mental health challenges.</p>	<p>Whilst IES involvement is limited to educational access, it should have a positive impact upon impact upon all children, young people and families. It should also be noted that any delay to interaction/support may result in substantial adverse impact in relation to educational attainment and trauma recovery as well as general emotional/physical health, well-being and development.</p>	

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<p>barriers, discrimination, and lack of social networks playing significant roles.</p> <p><b>Employment:</b> Refugee women are 40% less likely to find employment than refugee men, often due to cultural expectations, childcare responsibilities, and discrimination.</p> <p><b>Poverty:</b> An estimated 50% of refugees live in poverty in the UK, with those from minority ethnic backgrounds and single-parent households being disproportionately affected.</p>			
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## Part 4 Good Relations

### S75(2) requires EA to have regard to promoting GOOD RELATIONS - 'tackling prejudice and promoting understanding'

**In addition to having due regard for Equality of Opportunity for all nine s75 categories, EA is required to have regard to promoting good relations for Ethnicity, Religious Beliefs, and Political Opinions of its stakeholders. Are there any changes you would make to the policy/decision that would better promote Good Relations? What are the changes, and how would they positively impact on Good Relations?**

Providing services to ASRs can, and should, help promote good relations by fostering understanding and inclusion within communities. When in receipt of services, it helps reduce misconceptions and build trust between them and their new community. Specifically, it can:

- Encourage cultural exchange and mutual understanding.
- Reduce prejudice and help dispel stereotypes and biases (conscious and unconscious).
- Build community cohesion, by including ASRs supports social inclusion and demonstrates shared values and goals.

These efforts aim to create a more integrated society, reducing conflict and enhancing social harmony.

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## Part 5 Disability Duties

### **S49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination NI Order 2006) requires EA to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life**

**Now that you have considered the disability profile of your stakeholders above:**

#### **1. How the policy/decision promotes positive attitudes towards disabled people or is there anything further that can be done in this regard?**

The process, as noted above, promotes positive attitudes towards people with disabilities when providing services to ASRs, as it includes:

- Awareness raising: Educating communities about the challenges faced by disabled ASRs to foster empathy and understanding.
- Inclusiveness: Ensuring that services are accessible to disabled ASRs.
- Representation: Highlighting the contributions of disabled individuals within ASR communities, and this can help change perceptions and reduce stigma amongst the ASR community as well as the new host community.

These actions can help shift societal attitudes toward greater acceptance and support for disabled people.

#### **2. How the policy/decision encourages the participation of disabled people in public life (eg focus groups, reference groups, citizens panels etc) or is there anything further that can be done in this regard?**

The process promotes the participation of disabled people, including disabled asylum seekers and refugees), in public life by ensuring the following:

- Accessibility: Ensuring places, services, and activities are accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- Empowerment: Providing support and resources to disabled ASRs to engage in community activities, civic events, and decision-making processes. In EA's case, this is signposting to other agencies and organisations.
- Representation: Encouraging the active involvement of disabled ASRs in leadership roles within their communities to highlight their perspectives and contributions.

These steps help create a more inclusive and participatory society for everyone.

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## Part 6 Child's Rights & Human Rights Assessment of Impact

### Does the policy/decision have an impact on or interference with the Human Rights of stakeholders?

*"The child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection."*

Step 1: Consider the Child's Rights and/or Human Rights relevant to your stakeholders and your Policy/Decision	Step 2: Consider the needs, views and experiences of these stakeholders.  Often Policies/Decisions will have a differential impact based on inequalities already present in society and you can refer to those identified above in the s75 Groups e.g. disability, newcomer/ethnicity, gender.	Step 3: Consider whether the policy/decision could have a possible positive or negative impact on the Child's Rights and/or Human Rights.	Step 4: Consider how you might implement your policy/decision differently to mitigate any negative impact.
<p>A list of the relevant Human Rights Articles, is included below. However, the major impact upon these processes is on the Right to Education as it is noted within all three Conventions highlighted below.</p> <p><b>European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR):</b></p> <p>Article 2: Right to life.</p> <p>Article 3: Prohibition of torture.</p> <p>Article 5: Right to liberty and security.</p> <p>Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life.</p> <p>Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.</p> <p>Article 10: Freedom of expression.</p>	<p>The major need for ASRs is the need to access services without discrimination, protection from violence, support for social inclusion, education, employment opportunities, and community engagement. However, other needs which are paramount to this community include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection: Safeguarding from discrimination, abuse, and exploitation.</li> <li>• Inclusion: Opportunities for meaningful participation in community and decision-making processes.</li> </ul>	<p>It is anticipated that the changes in both processes (<i>Support arrangements for Asylum Seeker children and young people within MEARS IA hotel accommodation and Support arrangements for children living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation</i>) will have significant impact upon Asylum Seeker and Refugee children, young people and families, particularly in relation to Human Rights and Childs Rights.</p> <p>Whilst IES involvement is limited to educational access, it should have a positive impact upon impact upon all children, young people and families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Interpreters</b> are utilised by all EA staff, however due to the nature of the current situation these interpreters are not always available on a face-to-face basis for the initial introduction meeting. Where interpreters are not available (face-to-face), IES will endeavour to ensure they are available on either video call or by telephone call.</li> <li>• Whilst it is noted that many asylum seekers and refugees may face hate crimes, racial</li> </ul>

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<p>Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association. Article 14: Prohibition of discrimination. Article 2 of Protocol No.1: Right to Education</p> <p><b>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD):</b> Article 5: Equality and non-discrimination. Article 9: Accessibility. Article 19: Living independently and being included in the community. Article 24: Education. Article 27: Work and employment. Article 28: Adequate standard of living and social protection. Article 29: Participation in political and public life.</p> <p><b>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)</b> Article 2: Non-discrimination. Article 3: Best interests of the child. Article 6: Right to life, survival, and development. Article 12: Right to be heard. Article 22: Protection of refugee children. Article 23: Rights of children with disabilities. Article 28: Right to education. Article 30: Cultural identity and language. Article 39: Rehabilitation of child victims.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness and Training: Cultural competency and understanding of rights for service providers.</li> </ul>	<p>However, it should also be noted that any delay to interaction/support may result in substantial adverse impact in relation to educational attainment and trauma recovery as well as general emotional/physical health, well-being and development.</p> <p>Whilst the delays in the asylum and refugee process are outside of IES and EA control, it can limit the interaction of IES and the provision of full IES services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Well-being: Enhanced physical and mental health outcomes.</li> <li>• Social Cohesion: Stronger community relations and reduced tensions.</li> <li>• Empowerment: Increased confidence and independence among vulnerable groups.</li> <li>• Equality of Opportunity: Reduction in discrimination and inequality</li> </ul>	<p>profiling and/or social exclusion, IES interacts with these families offering support to accessing education for children/young people, as well as signposting to other services which may offer help.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IES team offer a stable, reassuring and consistent communication pathway for each family they deal with, as well offering advice on the educational/SEN process they face. In addition, this regular communication channel should help families to settle into their new surroundings/communities.</li> <li>• IES team has drawn down external funds to assist asylum seekers to receive initial uniform supplies, laptops and wi-fi dongles, as well as free school meals on humanitarian grounds for up to 12 weeks until the paperwork is provided to the Authority demonstrating that the family is entitled to free school meals and free transport support (if applicable).</li> </ul>
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<a href="#">International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</a> [Article 13.2(a)]			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• IES works with external organisations/services (such as Barnardo's, Sure Start and EA Youth Service) to explore the potential for hotel-based activity sessions during this wait time.</li><li>• IES makes a conscious effort to engage MEARS and lobby relevant organisation to resist the urge to relocate families around exam time, for those who have pupils facing key exams.</li><li>• IES will be reviewing its current support services at the end of October 2024 and as part of that review we will be consulting those families currently experiencing frequent accommodation moves. IES remains available to receive first hand or written requests for support and to have early notice of any complaints families are making to third parties.</li></ul> <p>Actions relating to <b>Arrangement 1:</b> People with MEARS IA Hotel Accommodation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintaining contact with the Mears Welfare Support Link Officer in each hotel who will</li></ul>
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			<p>inform of new school age arrivals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Informing families of the process and the benefits of waiting to make an application for school when in their more permanent MEARS dispersal housing - as this is likely to be a longer-term school for their child.</li><li>• Share the contact information such as Help Desk Information and Staff Mobile Numbers with families as they arrive.</li><li>• Commencing SARS referral pathways immediately.</li><li>• Following placement in more permanent accommodation, mitigations include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Flexibility in terms of meeting places.</li><li>○ Commencing enrolment procedures.</li></ul></li><li>• Exceptional arrangements in place for those who may be expected to remain longer in IA hotel accommodation than the average 5/6 weeks.</li></ul> <p>Actions relating to <b>Arrangement 2:</b> People living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation</p>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining contact with families.</li> <li>• For families with children enrolled in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, explaining the present situation fully.</li> <li>• For families who have access to devices such as a laptop or tablet, assisting them with requesting some level of remote learning activities from the base school (if enrolled).</li> </ul>
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## Part 7 Rural Needs Impact Assessment

Does the policy/decision impact on stakeholders in rural areas differently to how it impacts on those in urban areas?			
Step 1: Consider whether stakeholders affected are in rural/urban areas.	Step 2: Consider the needs and experiences of these rural stakeholders.	Step 3: Consider whether the policy/decision could have a possible negative impact on their needs and experiences.	Step 4: Consider how you might implement your policy/decision differently to mitigate any negative impact.
<p>Whilst the current location of Contingency Accommodation is noted, further Contingency locations could be 'stood up' at any time without EA (or IES) input or forewarning.</p> <p>Despite, the location of Contingency Accommodation being hotels in urban settings, Dispersal Accommodation is</p>	<p>Whilst Contingency Accommodation is in largely urban areas, the fact that Dispersal Accommodation can be in isolated rural areas does create challenges for the ASR families.</p> <p>Firstly, placement in Dispersal Accommodation is driven by the availability of homes and not on the</p>		<p>Whilst many of the issues identified in terms of rurality is outside the control of EA, and IES, it is felt that some of the mitigating actions identified within this Screening document and IES process will assist with lessening the adverse impacts.</p>



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made available across NI, some of which are in remote and isolated rural communities.	<p>suitability of location. Families, when placed in Dispersal Accommodation, are done so on a 'non-refusal' basis and if the local school is at capacity and unable to accept new applicants, families in many instances can be left with difficult commutes to other schools which may be situated a significant distance away.</p> <p>Transport options in rural areas are limited (i.e. public bus routes), and if children are unable to be placed in the nearest school they are often left without transport options.</p> <p>Accessibility of other services is also often limited in rural areas – also impacting upon integration into communities and social inclusion.</p> <p>Furthermore, rural areas in NI (namely all areas outside of Belfast) will struggle to provide the religious infrastructure needed to support some ethnic minority families from particular religious backgrounds or faiths.</p>		In addition, IES makes a conscious effort to engage MEARS and lobby relevant organisation to resist the urge to relocate families around exam time, for those who have pupils facing key exams.
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## Part 8 Shared Education & Sectoral Support

### Shared Education

S2(1) of the [Shared Education Act 2016](#) provides that EA has a duty to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education.

### Integrated Education

S4(2) of the [Integrated Education Act \(NI\) 2022](#) provides that EA has a duty to encourage, facilitate and support integrated education.

### Irish Medium Education

Under Art89 of the [Education \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1998](#) EA, as a body grant funded by DE, supports DE in its duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education.

Part 1 of the [Identity and Language \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2022](#) provides EA must, as a public authority, in carrying out functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the National and Cultural Identity Principles set out in the legislation.

**Where you have identified stakeholders within the Integrated & Irish Medium Education Sectors and across Shared Education Partnerships set out how the policy/decision:**

A) Encourages, Facilitates and Supports Integrated Education?	B) Supports DE to encourage and facilitate Irish-Medium Education?	C) Encourages, facilitates, and promotes Shared Education?
Whilst the IES service acknowledges the importance of Integrated, Irish Medium and Shared Education, the Service actively encourages families to avail of placements in the closest school, with availability. This will ensure that the education process is commenced for children at the earliest opportunity as well as allowing the family to obtain an understanding of the education sector in NI. In turn this will allow each family to obtain a better understanding of the Integrated, Irish-Medium and Shared Education Sectors and to ultimately allow them to make a decision that best suits their children-, young people and family.		

### Have you considered any translation requirements?

As stated, translation and interpretation forms a key part of this process, undertaken by IES – from the start of the process right through to school placement.

\*Complete this template following the Equality Screening & Engagement Guidance

\*\* For ease of reference turn on the navigation pane by clicking 'View' and 'Navigation Pane'

## Part 9 Screening Decision

**Based on the steps above, choose one of the following three outcomes:**

**1. Screened Out without Mitigation**

**2. Screened Out with Mitigation**

- Implementing measures to mitigate negative impact
- An alternative policy/decision developed

**3. Screened in for deeper level of analysis and EQIA**

**No Impact** ☐

**Minor Impact** ☒

**Major Impact** ☐

Give reasons for your screening decision:

The Screening decision reflects the issues faces, as well as the mitigating processes undertaken by IES during the initial stages of the asylum and refugee process.

These mitigations, as outlined above, are:

- **Interpreters** are utilised by all EA staff, however due to the nature of the current situation these interpreters are not always available on a face-to-face basis for the initial introduction meeting. Where interpreters are not available (face-to-face), IES will endeavour to ensure they are available on either video call or by telephone call.
- Whilst it is noted that many asylum seekers and refugees may face hate crimes, racial profiling and/or social exclusion, IES interacts with these families offering support to accessing education for children/young people, as well as signposting to other services which may offer help.
- The IES team offer a stable, reassuring and consistent communication pathway for each family they deal with, as well offering advice on the educational/SEN process they face. In addition, this regular communication channel should help families to settle into their new surroundings/communities.
- IES team has drawn down external funds to assist asylum seekers to receive initial uniform supplies, laptops and wi-fi dongles, as well as free school meals on humanitarian grounds for up to 12 weeks until the paperwork is provided to the Authority demonstrating that the family is entitled to free school meals and free transport support (if applicable).
- IES works with external organisations/services (such as Barnardo's, Sure Start and EA Youth Service) to explore the potential for hotel-based activity sessions during this wait time.
- IES makes a conscious effort to engage MEARS and lobby relevant organisation to resist the urge to relocate families around exam time, for those who have pupils facing key exams.

\*Complete this template following the Equality Screening & Engagement Guidance

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- IES will be reviewing its current support services at the end of October 2024 and as part of that review we will be consulting those families currently experiencing frequent accommodation moves. IES remains available to receive first hand or written requests for support and to have early notice of any complaints families are making to third parties.

Actions relating to **Arrangement 1:** People with MEARS IA Hotel Accommodation

- Maintaining contact with the Mears Welfare Support Link Officer in each hotel who will inform of new school age arrivals.
- Informing families of the process and the benefits of waiting to make an application for school when in their more permanent MEARS dispersal housing - as this is likely to be a longer-term school for their child.
- Share the contact information such as Help Desk Information and Staff Mobile Numbers with families as they arrive.
- Commencing SARS referral pathways immediately.
- Following placement in more permanent accommodation, mitigations include:
  - Flexibility in terms of meeting places.
  - Commencing enrolment procedures.
- Exceptional arrangements in place for those who may be expected to remain longer in IA hotel accommodation than the average 5/6 weeks.

Actions relating to **Arrangement 2:** People living in NIHE Non-Standard Accommodation

- Maintaining contact with families.
- For families with children enrolled in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, explaining the present situation fully.
- For families who have access to devices such as a laptop or tablet, assisting them with requesting some level of remote learning activities from the base school (if enrolled).

In addition, the ongoing review and monitoring of the process is noted above, and will take place if there are any changes (indicated by MEARS) in the average length of stays in IA Accommodation.

Finally, an overall review of IES support services will take place towards the end of October 2024.

\*Complete this template following the Equality Screening & Engagement Guidance

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## Part 10 Monitoring

Monitoring & Review of the Policy/Decision	
Estimated date for implementation of the policy/decision:	<i>31 October 2024</i>
Have you included data in this screening that was not already available in appendix 1?	<i>Yes – data related to each section 75 category as outlined in the above tables.</i>
Future Data Collection/Engagement	

\*Complete this template following the Equality Screening & Engagement Guidance

\*\* For ease of reference turn on the navigation pane by clicking 'View' and 'Navigation Pane'

## Part 11 Approval

Head of Service APPROVAL	
LEAD OFFICER (HoS/Policy Lead)	Dr Kieran Shields
SCREENED BY (Policy Lead/Team Member)	Karen Turner
Date Submitted to Equality Unit	21 <sup>st</sup> October 2024

Equality Unit Use Only	
Equality Team Member	Finbar Maguire
Date Closed	21 October 2024
Estimated monitoring date:	31 October 2024

### What's next?

1. Email the completed screening form to [equality.unit@eani.org.uk](mailto:equality.unit@eani.org.uk) with the screening reference in the subject title.
2. Once the screening is submitted to the Equality Unit, it will be logged and monitored according to the Equality Unit's Monitoring & Review Plan. Monitoring of and frequency of review of screenings depend on the gravity of the policy/decision. The Equality Unit will advise, depending on the screening outcome.
3. A member of the Equality Unit will review the screening and may advise on amendments. When the screening is complete, you will receive confirmation from the Equality Unit that the screening has been closed off.
4. Please be mindful the screening is published on EA's website and is released into the public domain. It is important however that this does not impact on the ability to freely set out sensitive information for the purposes of internal decision-making. The name and title of the screening will be published on EA's website [here](#) and a copy can be requested from the Equality Unit. Before a copy is provided, you will be asked to review it for release into the public domain and there will be an opportunity to redact any sensitive information.

# Intercultural Education Service

**Dr Kieran Shields**

Head Of Service

**Karen Turner**

Assistant Advisory Officer

# Aims

- To have knowledge of the Intercultural Education Service;
- To be aware of IES advice and guidance for schools on helping them to meet the needs of their Traveller, Newcomer and Asylum Seeker and Refugee children.





**A small team who impact greatly the lives of Newcomer families and guide and reassure schools.**



# Diversity within NI schools at present

**Newcomer pupils total approximately 20,000 about 5% of the NI school population.**

**Top 5 foreign languages:**

- Polish,
- Lithuanian,
- Romanian,
- Portuguese and
- Arabic.

**The children experiencing significant educational disadvantage include Roma, Traveller and all recently arrived Asylum Seekers & Refugees including Afghan, African, Syrian and Ukrainian pupils.**

**Newcomers are:**

“pupils for whom English is not the home language, who do not have a language in common with their teacher and who need extra support in school for this reason”.

# Overview of IES

**The IES team responds to emergency needs in relation to Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

**Government processes sets the context and constraints for our work e.g. immigration rules, housing, health and benefits.**

**IES appreciates the support of VCS partners who assist us and other public sector bodies in meeting the needs of these highly vulnerable families.**

**There are over 20,000 Newcomer pupils (pupils who do not have English as their first Language) within which there are over 2,000 Asylum Seekers and Refugees.**

**In 5 years from 2016 to 2021 900 Syrians were assisted but 900 Ukrainians were assisted in the last 2 years alone. 800+ Asylum Seeker and 300+ Refugee families supported (including family reunification cases and Separated and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker - SUAS minors).**

# Overview of IES

## Newcomer Support

- Primary and Post Primary Across NI
  - Support schools with curriculum/teaching of children with EAL.
  - Support Schools to gain School of Sanctuary award.
  - Teaching on and marking QUB course
  - Response to Help Desk Enquiries
  - Developing online materials and resources for schools.
- 
- Admin staff manage the Translation & Interpreting Service
  - Finance support including managing significant sums of external funding
  - Data recording, collation and reporting
  - Partnership working including the Schools of Sanctuary programme.

# Overview of IES – Roma & Traveller

- ▶ Family support to ensure access to education.
- ▶ Applying for school places,
- ▶ Support through SEN processes
- ▶ Parent/teacher meetings,
- ▶ Transitions support,
- ▶ Meals/uniform/transport applications,
- ▶ Multi-disciplinary meetings and case conferences,
- ▶ Referrals to external support agencies,
- ▶ Involvement in planning and strategic groups with other agency partners.

# Overview of IES

## Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support:

- Early intervention child and family support to ensure access to education for both contingency accommodation and dispersal accommodation families,
- Support for arrivals under the various resettlement schemes,
- Involvement in strategic and operational planning with agencies and schools,
- Development of resources for schools,
- Support through SEN processes
- Parent/teacher meetings,
- Transitions support,
- Meals/uniform/transport applications,
- Multi-disciplinary meetings and case conferences,
- Referrals to external support agencies.



# What we do...

- **Help schools to meet the additional educational needs of pupils from our target communities: Traveller; Newcomer; Asylum-Seekers; Refugees and Roma**
- **Provide advice, guidance and focused support to schools, families and other EA services**
- **Build the capacity of schools to meet the intercultural development needs of children and young people;**
- **Facilitate equality of access from pre-school to post- primary education, promote full inclusion and integration across all areas of education**
- **Help-Desk for immediate answers to questions**
- **Emergency support for schools who are working with Newcomer pupils for the first time or where there is an urgent issue**
- **On-going school-based support for schools wishing to access more in-depth support and training for staff**
- **Interpreting Service to help teachers communicate with families**
- **On-line courses for teachers developed by IES to support teachers and other staff in mainstream classrooms**
- **A website with translated documents and other resources for schools to support intercultural awareness, welcome, curriculum access, assessment and planning.**

# What we do...

- ▶ Meeting families and children face to face as soon as possible.
- ▶ Addressing their hierarchy of needs including safety, shelter and food/clothing as soon as possible with key partner agencies.
- ▶ Building positive school-home relationships inside and outside school
- ▶ Building trustful relationships with families over time as our support is different to many open and then close 'case-work' approaches.
- ▶ Addressing the impact of poverty and financial issues which may impinge upon school engagement e.g. free school meals, uniform grants and bus passes.
- ▶ Work with community organisations to support families access education.
- ▶ Work with families to help them navigate the online systems at key transition points:  
pre-school to nursery, Primary 1 entry application, Primary to Secondary transitions as well as existing formal education at 16.



# What we do ...

- ▶ **Helping more schools to become Schools of Sanctuary to broaden the sense of safety and security ASR and other new arrivals feel at school.**
- ▶ **Support and guidance for schools on how to engage children who English is not their first language.**
- ▶ **Development of Resources to teach newcomer students.**
- ▶ **School support meetings with families that are known to IES workers.**
- ▶ **Support clinics and 'drop-in' advice sessions around free school meals and uniform grant applications and initial school enrolments.**
- ▶ **Presentations to newcomer communities on the NI education system.**
- ▶ **Offering with an email and telephone help desk for immediate and urgent enquiries from schools, families, politicians, rights bodies and partner agencies.**

# Interpreting service

The interpreting service is free for schools.

## **Phone Interpreting can be used for:**

- Critical incidents where the school needs to contact parents/ guardians urgently
- Follow up from initial interview to clarify / request additional information
- Clarification where information has been misunderstood
- Checking on the wellbeing of pupils who haven't attended school



## **Face to face interpreting can be used for:**

- Initial parent / teacher interviews for new arrivals
- Two parent / teacher meetings per pupil per year
- An additional meeting to discuss concerns
- Meetings about transition to primary or post-primary



Parents can request an interpreter for meetings in the school.

# Schools of Sanctuary

We want to live in a world where every child feels safe and accepted regardless of what they believe, where they are from or what they look like, a world where cultural diversity is valued and celebrated.

Schools of Sanctuary is a programme aiming to make this vision a reality.

There are currently 74 Schools of Sanctuary in the Urban Villages Areas of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry so far. Plans to expand in Mid-Ulster and ABC Councils areas in the next two years.



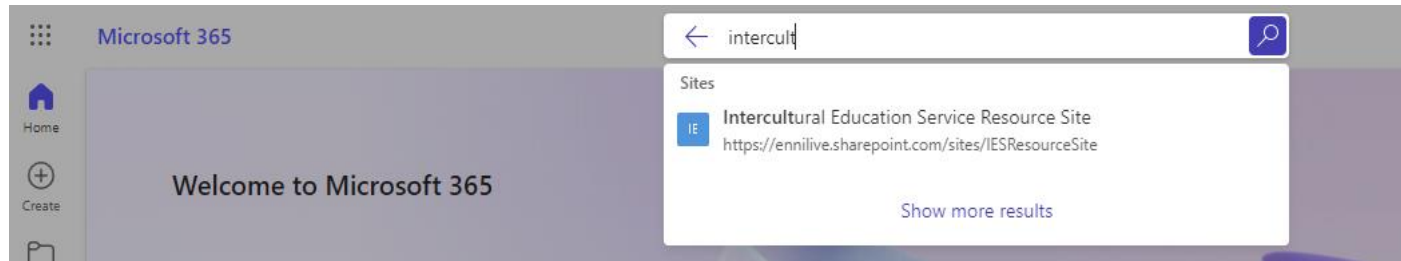
[Schools of Sanctuary 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Resource](#)

[Schools of Sanctuary IES link](#)

# IES Online Resources

The IES team have developed a range of resources which can be found on the [Intercultural Resources](#) webpage.

IES school resources have been transferred onto a new SharePoint site to support staff working in schools. We have given all teachers access to the IES Resource SharePoint Site by searching in their Microsoft 365 portal.



These resources can be accessed by schools who need ideas or supports in progressing the learning of Newcomer Pupils



# Intercultural Course via QUB

The Intercultural Service has written and run an accredited course in partnership with Queens University Belfast.

Queens course running 8 years, Approx 350 school staff have completed with another cohort of 50 beginning this year.

Teachers and classroom assistants have completed the course and in turn brought the knowledge back into their schools which should improve the cultural competency of staff when welcoming and educating children arriving from across the globe.

# Terminology Check!

**Asylum Seeker** refers to a person who has fled their country due to persecution or fear of persecution, has made a request for sanctuary and is waiting for it to be processed. They ...

- Have fled their homeland;
- Have arrived in another country, whichever way they can;
- Have made themselves known to the authorities;
- Have submitted an asylum application; and
- Have a legal right to stay in country while awaiting a decision
- They have no recourse to public funds;
- They usually have no right to work (some are permitted after 12 months if approved).

**Refugee** refers to a person who has left their country due to persecution or fear of persecution, has been granted 'leave to remain' and has the right to work and/or claim benefits. They ...

- Have proven to the authorities that they would be at risk if returned to their home country;
- Have had their claim for asylum accepted by the government; and
- Can now stay here either long-term or indefinitely;
- Are entitled to same rights as a citizen;
- Have recourse to public funds;
- Have the right to work



# The Asylum Process



Asylum Seeker presents at HO in Belfast or Police Station



Initial assessment carried out by HO (Section 98)



Mears transports service user to initial/contingency accommodation



HO Oks service user to be moved to Dispersed Accommodation after checks (Section 95)



Mears supports service users introducing them to their new home and community and signposting to additional services and activities



HO continues with processing of assessment

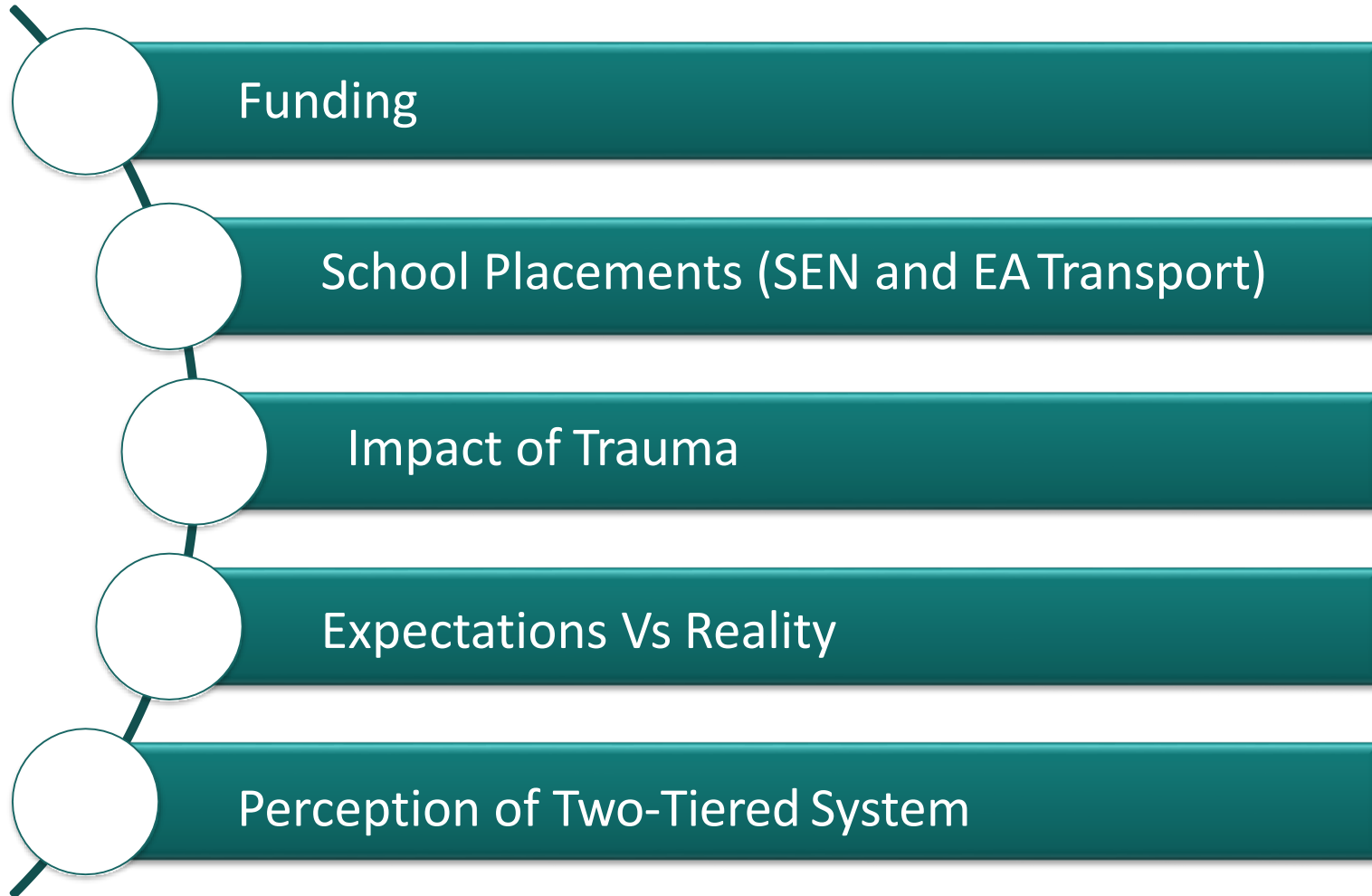


HO reaches decision on application



If successful status changes to Refugee status and under NIHE provision

# Challenges in supporting ASR pupils





# School Placements

- ▶ Schools are at capacity in many areas of NI particularly in the post primary sector. ( Limitations of practical sets, high SEN numbers and older buildings with no space to expand).
- ▶ New arrivals must follow the systems designed for the NI population. ( Applications 9mths ahead are difficult to do)
- ▶ Those arriving at 15/16 with limited English are going to find it difficult to fit into the GCSE pathway.
- ▶ Children with SEN have never been previously known to services.
- ▶ The application of the Transport Policy is difficult for families who have no support structures and limited money.

# Impact of Trauma

- ▶ Many young people arriving have fled their home countries due to war, persecution or threat and have witnessed horrors.
- ▶ Their journey before arrival is usually at the hands of traffickers and can be long and frightening.
- ▶ Uncertainty in relation to safety, food and shelter can be part of the journey.
- ▶ Separating from parents/carers to go to school can be difficult. Language
- ▶ The multiple moves of housing during the Asylum process can add to the trauma experienced by the children.

# Expectations Vs Reality

- ▶ Arriving families do not understand our education system and often get their initial information by word of mouth. This does not always give an accurate picture to the families.
- ▶ Wanting the very best for your child is a natural instinct for parents, but these wishes (e.g Grammar School placements) are often not available.
- ▶ Nursery places are limited and if you arrive outside the application timeframe or move during this time it will be very difficult to get a place.
- ▶ There are long waiting lists for services, if you are a parent of a child with complex SEND needs, it will take time to put things in place before your child can go to school.
- ▶ It will not always be possible to secure places for all children from one family in the same school as places are limited.
- ▶ The EA transport policy applies to all families in the same way. Post Primary children will often have to travel (sometimes on more than one bus) to secure a place.
- ▶ Children may not be able to secure school places quickly after arrival, it can very much depend on the area they live in or the year group they need to be placed in.
- ▶ The IES team is very small, we work as fairly as possible to support all families, we communicate as soon as we have any new information for families and those who call daily seeking updates take up limited resources.

# Perceptions of a Two-Tiered System

- Families arriving as Asylum Seekers, Refugees or Migrant workers must follow all the processes NI families go through to access education.
- They complete the same enrolment forms.
- Must meet the same deadlines in relation to transition years.
- Must show evidence to meet Free School Meals thresholds.
- The EA transport policy applies in the same way.
- SEND needs are assessed and processed in the same way.
- The only extra they receive is support from IES to navigate these systems they don't understand to ensure the rights of their children like all others to a place in education.

# Questions?

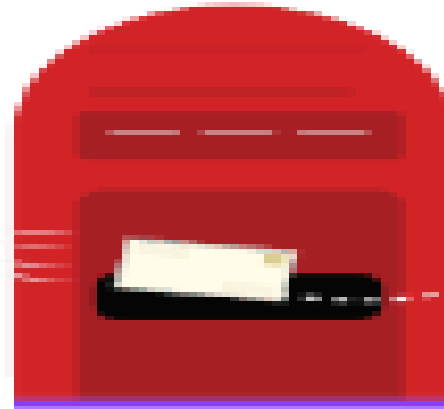


# Contact us

IES can be [contacted](#) by using any of the below methods



[ies@eani.org.uk](mailto:ies@eani.org.uk)



Intercultural Education Service,  
Blythefield Centre  
Blythe Street, Belfast BT12 5HX.