

# **Inclusive and Sustainable Promising Practices in Refugee Education in High-Income Contexts (InSPPIRE)**

Synthesis Report

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# Foreword from REUK's Chief Executive



At Refugee Education UK, we have had the privilege of working alongside refugee and asylum-seeking young people for more than a decade, supporting them to access and thrive in education in the UK. Through our direct education support programmes for young people, our training programmes for educators and other practitioners, and our research and policy work, we are reminded, day-in day-out, that education is critical to the building of more hopeful futures.

In the last few years, we have been contacted by more schools and local authorities than ever before – and there has been a common theme to their questions. They've enrolled or are looking after refugee children, either for the first time or in greater numbers than before, often rapidly with little notice, and are asking; 'What should we do next?', 'What works?', 'How can we most effectively support their education and psychosocial wellbeing?'

As we rapidly scaled up and delivered our training package on 'Supporting Refugee Children in Schools', we realised that, whilst there was rich (and often under-utilised) learning from education systems and initiatives in the low-income countries who host the vast majority of the world's refugees, promising practices from a range of high-income countries were harder to find.

This learning project is our initial, early stage work in beginning to identify, document and learn from the (occasionally well-known but oftentimes quiet or only nationally visible) promising practices emerging from high-income countries.

We're grateful to each of the 29 initiatives that have shared elements of their work with us: we have been encouraged and inspired as we've learnt from the experiences of practitioners and young refugees living and working in 12 different countries, and look forward to continuing the conversation as we each contribute to the work of ensuring inclusive, high quality education is available to all.

# Acknowledgements

InSPPIRE was led by [Refugee Education UK](#) (REUK). REUK would like to thank all the initiatives that took the time to submit a case study, and allow REUK to learn from a range of truly inspiring practice in the refugee education space. REUK would also like to thank the steering group composed of Sarah Dryden-Peterson from Refugee REACH at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Carine Allaf from Qatar Foundation International, Emma Wagner from Save the Children, Mialy Dermish from Sirius, Frederik Smets and Fareeda Miah from UNHCR and Joanna McIntyre from the University of Nottingham for their technical input and guidance on this project.

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# Introduction

# Background and rationale

Every year millions of refugees are forced to leave their countries and seek safety and protection across borders. At the end of 2022, there were 108.4 million forcibly displaced people worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order (UNHCR, 2023). Of this number, 43.3 million (almost 40%) were children (UNHCR, 2023). The journey to a country of asylum is often a long and arduous one and moving to a new country comes with its own set of challenges and barriers on arrival. Education can be critical in providing tools that enable a sense of belonging and help build strong futures in a new country (INEE, 2023).

While the majority of refugees are hosted in low- and middle-income countries, significant numbers of refugee children reach or are resettled to high-income countries (HICs) (Fazel, 2015). Estimates from the World Bank in 2022 suggest that approximately 22% of the world's refugees are currently hosted in HICs (World Bank, 2022).

Refugee children consistently prioritise their right to education, as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Gladwell and Tanner, 2014; Burde et al., 2017). Education is central to refugee children's experiences of resettlement and adjustment; it can provide a stabilising routine that helps refugee children process their experiences, find purpose in their new environments and prepare for the multiple potential futures they may face (Bennouna et al., 2019; Dryden-Peterson, 2017). HICs have the potential to offer safe, long-term, inclusive models of education that include refugee children in national education systems, provide access to high quality educational opportunities and facilitate belonging, integration and lifelong learning (McIntyre and Abrams, 2021).

Despite a growing body of research that details good practice in HICs (McIntyre and Abrams, 2021), knowledge remains largely single-country focused and there is limited learning facilitated across borders. As a result, Refugee Education UK (REUK) established this learning initiative to document and learn from promising practice case studies across HICs, with the ultimate aim of informing refugee education policy and practice across a range of contexts.

## About this report

Against this backdrop, this report aims to:

- Document promising practices in education for refugee children in HICs;
- Present synthesised learnings from these case studies on a number of themes related to refugee education; and
- Initiate knowledge-sharing on promising practices across a range of contexts.

This learning initiative was advised by a steering group of refugee education academics and practitioners from Refugee REACH at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Qatar Foundation International, Save the Children, Sirius, UNHCR and the University of Nottingham. With support from Save the Children and UNHCR, the project builds on a 2017 project called

[Promising Practices in Refugee Education](#) (PPiRE), which focused on low- and middle-income countries.

### Box 1: Key terms

- The use of **high-income contexts (or HICs)** mirrors terminology widely used and understood across the sector and draws on the World Bank classifications of countries by income groups.<sup>1</sup>
- **Refugees** refers to those who have been forcibly displaced from their home countries. It does not only denote those with refugee status, but includes asylum seekers and displaced children with a range of immigration statuses.
- The term **initiative** is used to cover any project, intervention and strategy that supports the education of refugee children.
- The term **college** refers to education institutions providing pre-tertiary education programmes to children and young people aged 16+.

## How case studies were identified and reviewed

This report presents findings from a learning initiative carried out from 29 case studies of initiatives supporting refugee education across 13 high-income settings. Case studies – a form of evidence used in educational research to contribute to a rich understanding of an initiative, event, or entity (Menter et al., 2011) – were chosen to enable learning across refugee education initiatives in a range of contexts.

Refugee education initiatives were identified in one of two ways:

- through an open call for case study submissions shared widely by REUK and the steering group that advised the initiative
- through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling

Information on these case studies was primarily obtained through written submissions and semi-structured interviews. Initiatives provided an overview of the work they do to support refugee education, the outcomes achieved, the approach taken and lessons learned. A brief case study of each of the 29 case studies are available on REUK’s website at [reuk.org/insppire](http://reuk.org/insppire).

Following the identification of case studies, analysis was undertaken to identify thematic areas and promising practices in the field of refugee education. This process led to the identification of four thematic areas from which 11 promising practices emerged:

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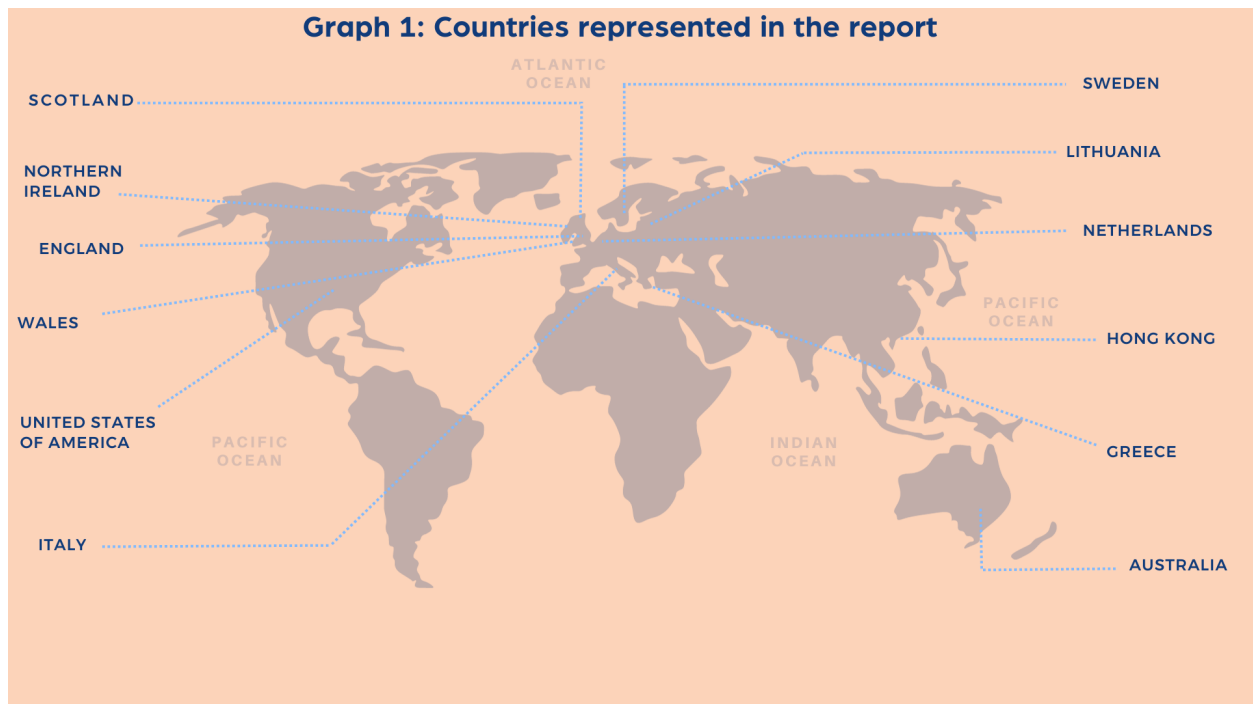
<sup>1</sup> See World Bank: [blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/new-world-bank-country-classifications-income-level-2021-2022](https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/new-world-bank-country-classifications-income-level-2021-2022)

- Access to education in the national education system
- Psychosocial wellbeing and inclusive practices
- Educator training and support
- Partnerships for sustainable outcomes

On occasion, insights from REUK’s work in the UK supplement learnings from reviewed case studies, but did not factor into the development of themes.

## Case study overview

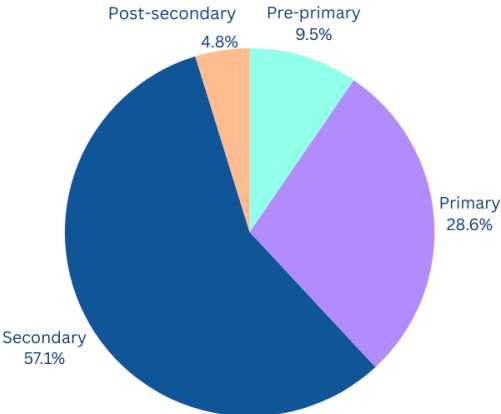
The 29 case studies included in this report cover a wide geography, and span 12 high-income settings: Australia, England, Greece, Hong Kong, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, the United States and Wales. It should be noted that while the call for case studies was open to all HICs, over half of case studies (55%) came from the UK context, where REUK is based (see Graph 1).



While case studies cover a range of age groups, from pre-primary through to compulsory and post-compulsory (16+) education, they are weighted towards refugee adolescents at the secondary level (see Graph 2). For the purposes of this report, and to ensure consistency across country contexts, secondary includes further education (post 16 education), but not university education.

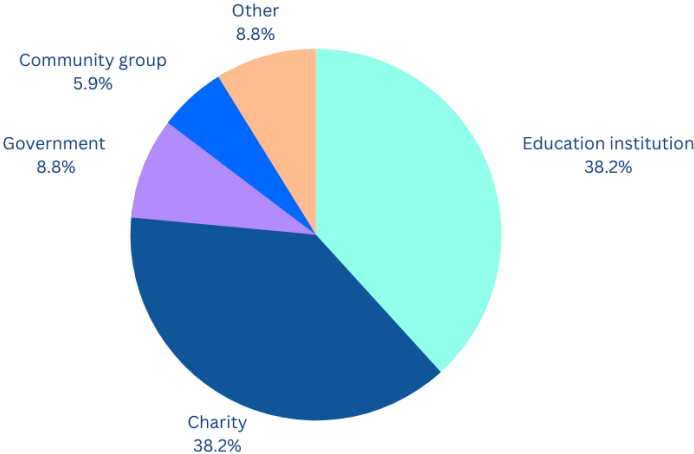


**Graph 2: Age-groups covered by initiatives**



Case studies were submitted by a variety of different types of organisations using a diverse range of approaches (see Graph 3).

**Graph 3: Type of organisation**





**Promising practices in  
refugee education: learnings  
from case studies**

**This section presents detailed learnings from the 29 case studies identified for this learning initiative. The section is divided into four themes, under which 11 promising practices are included:**

- [Theme 1: Access to education in the national education system](#)
- [Theme 2: Psychosocial wellbeing and inclusive practices](#)
- [Theme 3: Educator training and support](#)
- [Theme 4: Partnerships for sustainable outcomes](#)

## Theme 1: Access to education in the national education system

It is globally recognised as good practice to support refugee children to access education in the national education system of a host country (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019). This theme outlines promising practices and learnings from case studies on how this can be supported and achieved. Three promising practices and associated learning points emerged:

<p>Promising Practice 1: <a href="#">Enhancing language learning opportunities for new arrivals</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive host country language learning can enable education integration and progression</li> <li>• Investment in mother tongue language can enhance learning and smooth transitions into education systems</li> <li>• Providing accessible opportunities for parent language acquisition supports refugee children's education</li> </ul>
<p>Promising Practice 2: <a href="#">Adapting assessment and enrolment to accelerate access to appropriate mainstream learning</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing ability over qualifications can lead to more appropriate education placements</li> <li>• Continuous enrolment reduces lost learning</li> </ul>
<p>Promising Practice 3: <a href="#">Providing specialist interim provision to bridge delays</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A nurturing initial education environment builds a sense of safety</li> <li>• Cultural orientation and welcome can grow belonging</li> <li>• Links between interim provision and schools/colleges can facilitate onward access to mainstream provision</li> </ul>

### Promising Practice 1: Enhancing language learning opportunities for new arrivals

The role of language in enhancing and enabling access to quality education for refugee children is well documented, as are the educational challenges that ensue when language

acquisition is delayed or interrupted (Reddick and Dryden-Peterson, 2021; Hutchinson and Reader, 2021). Specifically, host country language learning and mother tongue language support and development are known to facilitate and enhance learning (Thomas and Collier, 2002), and yet can be overlooked for refugee children. Language barriers, when they exist, may hinder parents' or carers' engagement in their children's education and learning (Rah et al., 2009), and require children to act as translators with sometimes negative consequences on psychosocial well being and education outcomes (d'Abreu et al., 2019). Both host country and mother tongue language learning featured prominently in case studies of promising refugee education initiatives reviewed. The learnings illustrate the key role language learning plays in supporting new arrivals to integrate into the education system.

## Intensive host country language learning can enable integration and progression

Insights from case studies confirm that limited host country language skills of newly arrived refugee children can hinder their educational integration, both restricting students' ability to learn in the classroom, and constraining their ability to participate confidently in extra-curricular and social activities. Many of the initiatives reviewed are working in contexts where state-funded host country language learning opportunities have become increasingly limited (Hanemann, 2019). Against this backdrop, several initiatives found that limited or infrequent access to language support has left significant numbers of new arrivals – particularly those participating in post-primary education – struggling academically several years after arrival.

In response, multiple initiatives have invested substantially in intensive host-country language support – both immediately on arrival, and sustained through children's educational journeys. Promising initiatives included the approach adopted by UK NGO Springboard, whose structured weekend, half-term and summer supplementary programmes for new arrivals are grounded in participatory and experiential English language learning. On graduation, programme participants demonstrate improved language skills and report feeling better prepared to enter or thrive in mainstream education. Once in mainstream education, REUK's Educational Mentoring programme provides new arrivals with sustained weekly 1:1 language support for an average of two years per learner. The programme, which operates across multiple UK cities, matches newly arrived refugee learners with trained volunteer educational mentors who support their language acquisition through a blend of personalised tutoring and wellbeing support. The initiative reported that each year more than 85% of the participants make concrete progress towards their stated educational goals.

Initiatives in other host countries have had to navigate perceptions that the language is too hard to acquire. In Lithuania, the 'Easy Lithuanian' project has piloted a model of introducing non-mother tongue speakers of the language into the classroom to teach newly arrived Ukrainian children. This led to significant confidence gains in previously reluctant learners, as new arrivals see – through the example of their teachers – that the language can indeed be mastered. In one public secondary school in Sweden, an initiative called Språkintröduktionsprogrammet (Language Introduction Programme) has supported new

arrivals to acquire host country language skills in a context where they had previously had to continue using online translation tools for up to five years after arrival. The initiative works collaboratively with school staff to develop individualised learning plans with a particular emphasis on Swedish language learning. The initiative reported outcomes including smoother progression through education and enhanced feelings of safety and belonging in school environments and beyond as a result of language acquisition.

Across these initiatives, the investment in refugee children's host language skills – both immediately on arrival, and sustained as they progress through education – was reported to both enhance learning and increase confidence.

## Investment in mother tongue language can enhance learning and smooth transitions into education systems

Several initiatives reviewed highlighted the value of employing mother tongue education in integrating refugees into the national school system. Learnings suggest that investment in and engagement with mother tongue languages leads to positive results for refugee children in their learning, wellbeing, confidence and progression through education.

A pertinent example came from Sweden, where the national policy states that children whose mother tongue is not Swedish have a right to receive an education in their mother tongue (Karnemo and Segerhammar, n.d.). The case study of Språkintröduktionsprogrammet (Language Introduction Programme) provided insights into how this policy is implemented in one school in Sweden. It demonstrated how, through providing a few hours of curriculum learning in their mother tongue each week, refugee students are able to more rapidly adapt to and thrive in the mainstream classroom. Another example came from the Netherlands where NGO The Language Friendly School works with schools across the country to create an inclusive and language-friendly learning environment, with two schools focusing specifically on refugee learners. In their case study, the Language Friendly School reported that when mother tongue languages are encouraged in the classroom, students are motivated to learn and, generally, are able to progress more quickly to the next year. They also described the positive impact of mother tongue education on families and communities; by having teachers from different countries represented in the classroom who share languages with refugee families, parents have felt more confident engaging with teachers and participating in their child's education.

Case studies in the UK identified particularly promising practices in supporting Arabic, one of the main languages spoken by children and young people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds in the country (Fassetta et al., 2023). One school in England with a significant Arabic-speaking community among its refugee student body has responded by introducing Arabic as a GCSE subject. This has enabled refugee background students to harness their existing skills into a qualification, thus placing them on a pathway to attain higher levels of education, including at university, and enhancing their confidence and self-esteem. In Scotland, the Welcoming Languages project, a collaboration between the School of Education of the University of Glasgow and the Arabic Center of the Islamic University of Gaza, teaches a beginner's Arabic course to teachers working in Scottish primary schools. An evaluation revealed that the project yielded significant benefits to children's learning and

engagement with the curriculum as a result of changes to teachers' classroom practices. Additionally, the evaluation found that children's confidence benefited from the recognition of their expertise when teachers who were learning Arabic undertook speaking practice with them.

## Providing accessible opportunities for parent language acquisition supports refugee children's education

Case studies emphasised the role of parents' or carers' host country language skills in their child's education. Specifically, learnings suggest that host country language skills can enable or hinder parent's or carer's engagement with their child's school and affect the help they could provide their child with their homework.

Several refugee education initiatives reviewed have provided English language classes and support to refugee parents in response to this, and reported indirect benefits for refugee children's education. For example, Learn Ealing (in England) provides remote and flexible language support to adults who would otherwise be unable to access education because of work and family commitments. In their case study, Learn Ealing reported that parents who were enrolled in an English language course felt better able to help their children with their homework and be more involved in their education. They also observed that, as a result of language acquisition, parents became more independent and, consequently, the 'burden' of translation and interpretation often placed on children's shoulders was eased. This, in turn, was reported to minimise the disruption to schooling that may occur when children are required to translate for their parents at external appointments or meetings.

## Promising Practice 2: Adapting assessment and enrolment to accelerate access to appropriate mainstream learning

Evidence across a range of high-income contexts, including the UK and other countries in Europe, establishes the challenges facing refugee children and young people seeking to access education at the post-compulsory school age (Cerna, 2019; Ashlee and Gladwell, 2020). Challenges include refugee children waiting significant periods of time once in a new country before enrolling in and accessing education, particularly if they arrive in the middle of an academic year, and inappropriate education placements (Gladwell and Chetwynd, 2018; O'Higgins, 2019). Learnings from case studies illuminate institutional-level promising practices to adapt assessment and enrolment for refugee students in order to facilitate access to appropriate mainstream learning.

## Assessing ability over qualifications can lead to more appropriate education placements

Several UK-based case studies reviewed expressed concern about the lack of individualised assessments and placements for refugee children. At the upper-secondary and further education level, concern was raised about how refugee students' ability and potential is often overlooked, with admissions focusing on their previous qualifications (or lack thereof). This was reported by several initiatives to lead to inappropriate education placements (for

example, only being able to access basic numeracy or language classes) which can stifle students' academic potential and ability to progress to university by the age of 19, after which age competing priorities may make accessing education difficult.

Rich examples of innovative admissions processes came from two college settings in England. Sir George Monoux Sixth Form College – which provides GCSEs, A Levels and Vocational Courses to 15-19 year olds – has established an Accelerated Learning Programme for students who are newly arrived in the UK, with pathways for 15-16 year-olds (described in the [proceeding sub-section](#)), and 16-19 year-olds. The 16-19 pathway aims to ensure that students make swift progress with English literacy and oracy, are able to achieve high academic outcomes, and make excellent progression to post-18 destinations. In their case study, Sir George Monoux described an intentional and innovative approach to assessment and admission into the post-16 pathway. Citing an “endemic failure to recognise the academic potential of newly arrived students affected by migration”, their assessments prioritise knowledge, written ability, Maths and oracy over prior qualifications. This admissions process has allowed them to place students on higher programmes of study than previously, with positive outcomes for students' academic results and progression.

Wirral Met college also described carrying out rapid and rigorous assessment processes for refugee young people. They thoroughly assess each area of a young person's English language skills to determine the most appropriate placement for them within a blended English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and study programme for newly arrived 16-19 year-olds. Similar to Sir George Monoux, Wirral Met college's primary objective is to ensure that young people on this programme are able to transition into wider college courses once they make meaningful progress in ESOL, so that they can pursue career and future aspirations in their chosen field. Reflecting on how their assessment and placement process enables this, they described seeing young people thriving and rapidly progressing through the levels, able to move on to wider college courses more quickly than previously expected.

Both colleges suggested that promising practice in assessment and placement of refugee young people involves the recognition of refugee students' ability and potential (over and above their educational history or qualifications to date), and demonstrated that this can lead to excellent academic outcomes and progression.

## Continuous enrolment reduces lost learning

There was a recognition among case studies reviewed that limited enrolment dates for school and college can leave refugee children out of education for months, with negative impacts on their psychosocial wellbeing and future education progression.

Wirral Met college and Sir George Monoux college provided insights on how this can be addressed through enrolment processes. Wirral Met college has adapted its enrolment processes for its 15-19 blended ESOL and study programme in response to a pressing need in their local area for in-year placements for refugee youth, often unaccompanied minors. The college took a decision to prioritise providing education places to these young people throughout the academic year in order to minimise the time they spend idle and out of education. They do this by providing regular enrolment windows spread throughout the

academic year, as well as providing an intensive summer programme – ensuring there are year-round opportunities for refugee young people to access education provision. Similarly, Sir George Monoux Sixth Form College in England described how they adopted an intentional policy of enrolling newly arrived students into the Accelerated Learning Programme throughout the academic year so that they can continue their education as soon as possible after arrival. Their 15-16 pathway – established to ensure 15-16 year-old newly arrived students achieve GCSE qualifications alongside peers of a similar age – assesses and enrolls students within 48 hours of a referral being made, following which they are set up with a personalised education plan to help them achieve their education goals.

Both initiatives demonstrate providing continuous enrolment is possible, and has long-lasting benefits for young people who would otherwise be out of education for prolonged periods of time, but requires an intentional, institutional-level decision and commitment to doing so.

### **Promising Practice 3: Providing specialist interim provision to bridge delays**

Specialist interim provision (sometimes referred to internationally as 'bridging programmes') for refugee students who are waiting to access mainstream education has the potential to bridge educational delays and build confidence, ensuring young people build needed skills whilst awaiting a school place (Gladwell and Chetwynd, 2018; Gladwell 2019). Whilst the benefits of specialist interim and bridging provision for refugee children are recognised at the international level (UNHCR, 2002), implementation and evidence within HICs remains limited. Case studies contributed valuable insights into some key promising practices in interim provision, and the ways in which these programmes can contribute to safety, belonging and progression into mainstream education.

#### **A nurturing environment builds a sense of safety**

Learnings from case studies of interim provision emphasise how a nurturing environment can build a sense of safety among learners from refugee backgrounds. NEST – an interim provision for 15-19 year-old refugees in Nottingham, England, who would otherwise be out of education – aims to address psychosocial needs of refugee learners while also providing them with an English language and diverse education. In their case study, they described how these psychosocial needs are largely addressed through the welcoming and nurturing environment created by teachers. Specifically, by employing a nurturing and therapeutic approach where empathy, unconditional positive regard, genuineness and non-judgemental attitudes were modelled by teachers, students feel safe and secure with knock-on benefits for their learning.

Similar descriptions of teachers and educators creating and instilling a sense of safety in young people emerged from the Stepping Stones initiative in Belfast, Northern Ireland. In response to a growing number of refugee young people who were not in receipt of a secondary school place locally, Stepping Stones (a programme implemented through a partnership between a local university, an adult education centre and local NGOs) was established to provide a 24-week structured education, wellbeing and language programme



for out of school refugee young people aged 16-19. In their case study, Stepping Stones reported monitoring data that demonstrated the value placed by refugee learners on the daily routine, familiarity and security of the programme. This contributed to a feeling of safety which, in turn, enabled refugee young people to learn.

## Cultural orientation and welcome grow belonging

Alongside a nurturing environment, insights from case studies demonstrate the role of embedding a local and cultural orientation into interim provision. In Oxford, England, the Orientation Programme – run by Refugee Education UK and contracted by Oxford County Council – is a four-week programme for newly arrived unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the area that provides an informal, warm and highly supportive introduction to education for new arrivals, focusing on welcome and wellbeing. Each morning of the week, participants are provided with English lessons followed by informational sessions about life, culture and rules in the UK, as is relevant to young people seeking asylum. Topics covered include the law, the asylum system, the British education system, respectful relationships, sexual health, wellbeing, money, and housing. In their case study, the Orientation Programme reflected that the integrated approach grows belonging among young people who are very recently arrived to the UK: those who are unaccompanied tend to be more isolated, and so this approach allows them to make friends with others in similar circumstances and understand more about the new country they are in.

The Orientation Programme, NEST and Stepping Stones all reported providing a local welcome and community activities for participants. This includes trips to local museums, parks and key community spaces, alongside engaging in arts and sports activities in partnership with local organisations. Learnings from these initiatives show such a local welcome can help young people feel more 'at home' in their new city or town, and feel accepted and included in their new community.

## Links between interim provision and schools/colleges facilitate onward education progression

Interim or bridging provision is not intended to set up a parallel education system – conversely, these programmes aim to speed and facilitate transitions into mainstream education. To this end, case studies of interim provision described the importance of establishing strong links with the local education institutions into which their students aim to transition. The sharing of assessment and progress information, and persistent advocacy for school places was reported to lead to faster and more successful school placements.

For example, the REUK Orientation Programme builds partnerships with local schools and colleges in Oxfordshire in order to help young people find places in mainstream education after they have completed the four week programme. In their case study, the Orientation Programme suggested that this approach also benefits the receiving institution, who can receive advanced information about the progress and support needs of the children that they are admitting. As a result, receiving institution teachers are able to plan a better informed programme of support for the new arrivals they admit.

## Theme 2: Psychosocial wellbeing and inclusive practices

The steps education settings take to respond to psychosocial wellbeing and promote inclusion and welcome are vital for the quality of education that refugee children access. This theme outlines three promising practices and associated learning points:

<p>Promising Practice 4: <b><u>Prioritising the provision of psychosocial support for new arrivals within and around education systems and settings</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education setting-based wellbeing provision supports refugee children within and beyond the classroom</li> <li>• Specialist partnerships can support refugee children’s complex mental health needs</li> </ul>
<p>Promising Practice 5: <b><u>Investing in a trauma-informed education workforce</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trauma-informed training for staff can benefit refugee children and have a ripple effect</li> </ul>
<p>Promising Practice 6: <b><u>Ensuring welcome and representation</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a clear culture of welcome fosters feelings of inclusion and belonging</li> <li>• Cultural representation in curriculum and among staff can have a positive impact</li> </ul>

### Promising Practice 4: Prioritising the provision of psychosocial support for new arrivals within and around education systems and settings

Refugee children are likely to have experienced challenges affecting their psychosocial wellbeing, including war and conflict, loss of loved ones, and dangerous journeys. They may also experience adversity in their new environments, including complex and hostile refugee policies, discrimination, a loss of identity and separation from friends and family (Marley and Mauki, 2019). Existing evidence suggests that school-based mental health interventions are an effective way of reaching and supporting refugee children who have experienced such challenges (Fazel et al., 2009). Several case studies provided insights to support this.

#### Education setting-based wellbeing provision supports refugee children within and beyond the classroom

A number of case studies described how education setting-based wellbeing provision can have a positive impact on refugee children within and beyond the classroom. For example, the Australian-based NGO STARTTS runs a trauma intervention specifically tailored to refugee students, aged 16-19, in a public secondary school setting. The intervention involves a four-hour group session run weekly over the course of 15 weeks. It aims to develop a shared mental health safety language among refugee students and teachers, provide

psychoeducation to refugee students, and facilitate self-regulation among refugee students. In their case study, STARTTs reported improvements in refugee children’s psychosocial wellbeing, self-regulation, self-awareness, and trust of others as a result of this school-based wellbeing intervention – with wide-ranging benefits for refugee children’s education and lives.

Initiatives in the UK also provided education setting-based wellbeing interventions. Sir George Monoux college described how, in response to recurring behavioural issues amongst refugee students from a particular country of origin who had experienced recent displacement-related trauma, they implemented a range of wellbeing initiatives. This included professional, on-site well being counselling provided in mother tongue languages; group sessions on emotional awareness and conflict; and peer support from an alumni of the college from the same country of origin. Sir George Monoux reported improvements in the emotional wellbeing of students as a result of these college-based interventions and, consequently, a reduction in behavioural issues. NEST also provided setting-based individual and group counselling. In their case study, they described they hired a psychotherapist with expertise in providing mental health support to refugees to set up the initiative ‘Space to Talk’ and provide students with on-site individual and group counselling. NEST described how this initiative has been successful in dispelling taboos around mental health and counselling; they reported that the majority of students in their provision access the programme and are happy to talk openly about mental health with their peers.

## Specialist partnerships can support refugee children’s complex mental health needs

While case studies emphasised the role of teachers and staff in promoting psychosocial wellbeing and establishing mental health interventions in education settings, they highlighted the importance of sometimes engaging external specialist organisations or services. This was particularly highlighted in relation to moments where refugee students experience complex or overwhelming mental health or wellbeing support needs.

For example, Wirral Met College has established a partnership with a local mental health organisation that provides counselling and other therapeutic services in a range of languages, including common refugee languages. Through this partnership, Wirral Met College is able to refer young people who present with complex mental health support needs to receive specialist and accessible mental health support. In their case study, Wirral Met College reported noticeable wellbeing benefits for young people as a result of this partnership. They reflected that an education setting is uniquely positioned to establish a strong understanding of a young person’s wellbeing needs and make appropriate referrals.

## Promising Practice 5: Investing in a trauma-informed education workforce

For the refugee population, witnessing or experiencing traumatic events is likely, and this can affect students in the classroom and wider school settings in various ways (Tweedie et al., 2017). Having refugee students in the classroom requires teachers and educators to adapt

their practices to appropriately and sensitively respond to the impacts of trauma (Brunzell et al., 2019; Jacobsen, 2021).

## Trauma-informed approaches can benefit refugee children

Insights from case studies confirm the importance of trauma-informed approaches when teaching and engaging with refugee children. At the individual practice level, several initiatives reviewed emphasised the importance of teachers and educators adopting trauma-informed approaches in their teaching practice. In their case studies, Stepping Stones, NEST, the group trauma intervention run by STARTTs, and Acorn nursery in the UK described how trauma-informed training and, consequently, teaching has potentially transformative impacts for refugee children. Key tenets of trauma-informed teaching, as identified across case studies, included: empathy and compassion towards students and their circumstances; making learners feel safe in the classroom; remaining consistent and predictable; adapting to distinct and unique backgrounds and needs of students, including their country of origin, family situation and more; remaining non-judgemental and open; and providing young people a voice in their education.

At the systems level, initiatives reviewed across a range of contexts provided training and support to teachers to engage with trauma-informed teaching practices. For example, in their case study, Teach for Sweden reflected that schools with the highest need for trauma-informed teachers (including those that have refugee children in their classroom) often have the least trained teachers. Since 2013, the initiative has trained and placed trained and qualified teachers in over 100 such schools, with benefits for refugee learners in these settings. Other examples of initiatives providing trauma-informed training for teachers included: the Healing Classrooms Initiative run by the International Rescue Committee – originally developed for emergency contexts and adapted for high-income contexts, including the UK – which provides free training for teachers to equip them to engage with refugee and asylum-seeking learners and prioritise their emotional wellbeing; and Childhood Education International, which provides learning resources and support for teachers across the US to support refugee children in their classroom, including through trauma-informed approaches.

Across case studies, the benefits of trauma-informed approaches for children were clear. Learnings suggest that trauma-informed approaches make children feel safe in situations where their recent past (in their country of origin) or present (in their new environment) may feel unsafe. This can lead to positive psychosocial outcomes for refugee children which, in turn, leads to positive academic outcomes and motivation to learn.

## Trauma-informed approaches for staff can have a ripple effect

A smaller number of case studies illuminated the ripple effect of trauma-informed approaches within education settings, suggesting knock-on benefits for teachers and educators. For example, Acorn nursery – a nursery in England – described the unexpected benefits of providing trauma-informed training to their staff; they observed shifting attitudes in the classroom and beyond. Staff who underwent the training provided Acorn nursery with feedback that it helped them identify their own prejudices, made them more empathetic to

the circumstances of refugees and their families, and instigated their involvement with refugee support initiatives in their local area. NEST also described a ripple effect for teachers. In their case study, NEST described how an unexpected outcome of creating a trauma-informed interim provision for 15-19 year old refugee students was the way in which teachers described learning from the refugee students. Specifically, teachers reported feelings of 'vicarious resilience', through working with resilient refugee young people, with benefits for their own lives – in a way that was not ordinarily developed when teaching in mainstream schools.

## **Promising Practice 6: Ensuring welcome and representation**

A school culture that creates an inclusive and welcoming environment is crucial for supporting refugee children's access to education, learning, wellbeing and progression (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012). Evidence suggests that a school culture and ethos that intentionally welcomes refugee students, and recognises their strengths and contributions to the school environment is key (McBride, 2018). It also suggests that ensuring cultural representation in curriculum, extra-curricular events and among staff is valuable (McBride, 2018). Case studies confirmed this, and provided insights into how welcome and representation is implemented in education settings.

### **Establishing a clear culture of welcome fosters feelings of inclusion and belonging**

Insights from case studies suggest the importance of schools setting an intentional and clear culture of welcome for refugee students. Promising practice in this area includes the Schools of Sanctuary network, part of the charity Cities of Sanctuary based in the UK, which encourages schools to review and improve their provision and practice to better support students with refugee backgrounds. Part of their work is overseeing an award scheme whereby schools can receive recognition for meeting minimum criteria in fostering a culture of welcome, belonging and solidarity for refugees. One of the key criteria is embedding policies and practices of welcome and belonging into school culture and ethos. More than 390 schools – from pre-primary level up to secondary – across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland have received the Schools of Sanctuary award, at the time of writing. Reflecting on the importance of creating a culture of welcome in their case study, Schools of Sanctuary stated that schools are often the first institution that refugee children will come into contact with when arriving in the UK, and so play a significant role in letting children know that they are welcome and included.

A Day of Welcome initiative – a collaboration between the Norfolk Schools of Sanctuary network and a local university which coordinates an annual day of action and awareness raising in local schools – highlighted how creating a culture of welcome in schools can have benefits beyond the school setting, and positively impact local communities of refugees. In their case study, they reported examples of children in schools creating welcome cards and fundraising for local refugees and asylum seekers which, in A Day of Welcome's words, sent "a clear message of love and solidarity".

In the US, Childhood Education International – an organisation that has developed a foundational professional development curriculum for educators working in resettlement contexts across the US with refugee and other immigrant students and families – observed the knock-on effects of teacher training for the welcoming environment of schools. Examples provided in their case study included a group of educators creating a safe and inclusive space for refugee children to eat their lunch and access informal support in their school's library, and a teacher creating welcoming signage across their school in mother tongue languages to help newly arrived students feel welcomed and more at ease. The local council in North Somerset, England, also emphasised the role of teachers in fostering a culture of welcome. Their case study detailed the council's approach of employing an Advisory Teacher who provides support to other teachers and school leadership working in local primary and secondary schools with resettled refugee children. This included children from Ukraine and Afghanistan. Reflecting on the outcome of this work, the case study described rural schools who were unfamiliar with having refugee children in their settings putting in place tangible steps to make their settings more welcoming for refugees.

Across initiatives, it is evident that creating a culture of welcome starts with small and tangible actions instigated by teachers, but can have a significant impact on the ways in which children feel included and welcomed in their new school.

## Cultural representation in curriculum and among staff has a positive impact

Case studies emphasised the importance of representation in school environments for refugee children and their families. Firstly, language representation emerged as a promising practice. For example, a school in London who provided an Arabic GCSE option for refugee students reported that this helped make their school feel more genuinely inclusive for children who attend, while also helping parents feel seen and welcomed. Similarly, the Welcoming Languages project in Scotland described positive effects of language representation for refugee children's wellbeing. The evaluation of Welcoming Languages highlighted children's happiness and joy when hearing Arabic spoken and celebrated in their school environment.

Additionally, representation in the curriculum was highlighted as important. One of the minimum criteria for the Schools of Sanctuary award is building a school-wide awareness of forced displacement (among teachers, staff and students) through teaching about refugees' experiences. In their case study, Schools of Sanctuary suggested that this benefits refugee children who arrive in schools where an understanding of and empathy towards refugees already exists amongst students. They also stated that, because of this awareness, teachers and school staff are able to better understand refugees' holistic needs and provide appropriate support for them and their families from the start.

Finally, representation among school staff and educators also emerged as key. Several initiatives reported efforts to ensure this. For example, the Teach for Sweden initiative shared that their partnership with a university enabled them to enrol refugee graduates into a Masters in Education course, and then employ them as teachers in their programme upon graduation. This ensured that there was more cultural representation in the classroom and

helped facilitate a culture of welcome. Acorn nursery in the UK also shared the value of employing educators who were from similar backgrounds to refugee children and their families, highlighting that this extends welcome and a feeling of belonging to refugee communities.

## Theme 3: Educator training and support

The importance of teacher professional development in refugee education is well-recognised (Richardson, 2019). Case studies confirmed the importance of such training and the support that is provided to teachers who teach refugee students. Two promising practices and associated learning points emerged:

<p>Promising Practice 7: <a href="#"><u>Providing mainstream teachers and schools with targeted training and support</u></a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers need both support to teach about forced migration and to improve outcomes for the new arrivals in their classrooms</li> <li>• Partnerships and blended learning may improve accessibility and reach of training</li> </ul>
<p>Promising Practice 8: <a href="#"><u>Recognising hubs of excellence and good practice</u></a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Much existing good practice is not made visible - amplifying excellence encourages staff and enables others to learn</li> <li>• Peer support and learning circles can offer sustainable ongoing opportunities to improve practice</li> </ul>

### Promising Practice 7: Providing mainstream teachers and schools with targeted training and support

It is well documented that high quality teacher training focusing on the support needs of refugee children is a key factor in the mainstream educational thriving of displaced children – and yet it is often neglected (Daltry et al, 2023; Gladwell et al, 2023). The practices, approaches and strategies adopted by teachers and other school or educational staff are critical to refugee children’s educational outcomes, and so training and support to ensure these are appropriate, compassionate and contextually appropriate is needed (Cerna, 2019; Fazel et al., 2015). Whilst in many countries initial and continuing teacher education programmes include components related to supporting diverse student populations, the specific support needs of displaced learners are rarely concretely addressed, with a leading UK Teachers’ Union recently calling for an urgent investment in training for mainstream school teachers supporting refugee children (NASUWT, 2023).

## Teachers need both support to teach about forced migration and to improve outcomes for new arrivals in their classrooms

Case studies highlighted the need for training and support for teachers who engage with and support refugees. One key aspect of this was support for teachers to teach non-refugee students about refugees' experiences. For example, A Day of Welcome facilitates training and support for teachers and educators in the surrounding Norfolk region in England to talk about forced migration and its effects within the classroom. The initiative described its partnership with UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Agency) to utilise the agency's 10-week continuing professional development (CPD) course 'Teaching about Refugees'.<sup>2</sup> The programme provides teachers with a rigorous and practical training programme to effectively, accurately and appropriately teach children about refugees. The course is engaging and interactive, and provides participating teachers with the knowledge, strategies, resources and confidence needed to teach about refugee students in their specific teaching context – with benefits for children and the wider community highlighted in [promising practice 5](#).

Initiatives also emphasised the importance of supporting teachers to improve outcomes for newly arrived refugee young people in their classrooms. Insights from case studies centred around trauma-informed training which, as previously mentioned [promising practice 5](#), has benefits for refugee children's education outcomes. As well as training programmes, promising practice in this area also included providing teachers with accessible resources and information on trauma-informed practice. In Australia, the Department for Education in New South Wales has created a website called Hints for Healing to provide educators and school counsellors access to professional learning resources to support them in their work with refugee children who had experienced or were experiencing trauma. The website is a curation of relevant articles, podcasts, training videos and resources that help better understand the issues facing refugee and asylum-seeking young people while providing guidance on how best to support their recovery, wellbeing and development. In their case study, Hints of Healing reflected that having these resources easily accessible digitally has increased the reach of the material, with close to 5,000 individual users accessing the website since its inception.

Another promising practice in supporting teachers of refugees is equipping them with the knowledge and skills to adapt and tailor their teaching and approach in response to a refugee child's distinct educational experience. For example, the Healing Classrooms training programme run by the International Rescue Committee for teachers encourages teachers to reflect on the education system in a child's country of origin, and the likely educational experiences children will have had before their forced displacement. Healing Classrooms has done this with two common refugee countries of origin in recent years – Afghanistan and Ukraine – and, in doing so, enables teachers to reflect and tailor their teaching practices rather than adopting a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

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<sup>2</sup> Information about UNHCR's Teaching about Refugees course can be found at: [www.unhcr.org/uk/what-we-do/build-better-futures/education/teaching-about-refugees](http://www.unhcr.org/uk/what-we-do/build-better-futures/education/teaching-about-refugees)



Encouraging teachers to take an asset-based approach also emerged as a promising practice. Refugee Education UK's Education Welcome programme offers training to education practitioners on positively engaging with newly arrived refugee and asylum-seeking students. In their case study, the programme suggests that this training helps educators think about how they can leverage the existing skills and strengths of newly arrived students brought into the classroom, to help them feel confident in their ability to learn.

## Partnerships and blended learning may improve accessibility and reach of training

The value of partnerships in the dissemination of teacher training was emphasised by initiatives reviewed. For example, Amala – an international NGO – described its initiative to train organisations and shelters across Greece to deliver high quality, transformational education programmes for out-of-school unaccompanied refugee children. In their case study, they reflected that their partnership with a national government body supported the development of the programme, alongside enabling connections with organisations across Greece who signed up to receive the training – and so widening the reach of their training programme. Similarly, Healing Classrooms reported that their collaboration with local authorities across England has facilitated and supported the reach of their training programme.

Additionally, case studies suggested that blended learning can expand the reach of teacher training programmes. In their case study, Amala reflected that many organisations and shelters trained were located in low-resourced areas, and educators welcomed the opportunity for professional development. The blended approach to learning helped these educators with time constraints access the material and complete the training, opening it up to participants who would otherwise not have been able to access similar training.

## Promising Practice 8: Recognising hubs of excellence and good practice

As highlighted by this report, there is ample promising practice in refugee education across high-income countries. However, the reality is that much of this is invisible beyond its immediate location, and opportunities for peer learning and support are missed. In this context, several initiatives reviewed purposefully aim to provide contexts and frameworks in which good practice can be recognised, celebrated, shared and built upon.

## Much existing good practice is not made visible - amplifying excellence encourages staff and enables others to learn

A prominent example of amplifying excellence came from the Schools of Sanctuary network whose minimum criteria for the Schools of Sanctuary award is for schools to share their efforts and what they have learned more widely. At the time of writing, 394 education institutions including nurseries, primary and secondary schools and sixth form colleges have been awarded the School of Sanctuary award, with another 350 schools working towards being recognised as a School of Sanctuary. In their case study, Schools of Sanctuary

suggested that their work has created a rich and supportive network of schools across the country that can share and learn from each other at different stages of their journey with welcoming refugee students. They reflected that the award scheme ensures that schools that truly seek to support refugee students are recognised and celebrated for their efforts – and continues to encourage other education institutions to participate and work towards this award.

Another example came from the Language Friendly school initiative, a quality label and a network of schools that welcome and value all languages. While this initiative operates at a multi-country level, in the Netherlands two schools are particularly focused on supporting refugee and asylum-seeking learners. In its case study, the Language Friendly School described how participating schools receive access to an active network of schools across the globe. This network has provided teachers with the opportunity to showcase promising strategies in language support and receive feedback from their peers which, in turn encourages a greater sense of community amongst teachers across the Netherlands and other countries who are supporting newly arrived young people.

### Peer support and learning circles offer sustainable ongoing opportunities to improve practice

Initiatives reviewed confirmed the importance of building on training received and creating peer support and learning circles, where educators can share both challenges and emerging good practices. For example, in their case study, Childhood Education International in the US has created learning circles and communities as part of their teacher training initiative. In their case study, they reported that these learning circles are active, thriving and sustainable spaces where teachers continually share ideas and learn from each other, and feel seen and celebrated. They also suggested that participating teachers benefit from having a space where they feel able to try new and inclusive approaches suggested by others, and ask questions to a supportive community of practice.

## Theme 4: Partnerships for sustainable outcomes

Supporting refugee education requires a multi-stakeholder approach, and partnerships are key to facilitating meaningful and quality refugee education initiatives. Case studies reviewed revealed three promising practices and associated learning points in this area:

<p>Promising Practice 9:  <a href="#"><b>Collaborating with partners to increase scale and improve sustainability</b></a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-stakeholder initiatives can ease budget and capacity constraints</li> <li>• Collaboration takes time and needs dedicated capacity – and local government plays a key role</li> <li>• Partnerships between practitioners and academics can build evidence for scaling and impact</li> </ul>
<p>Promising Practice 10:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service design, delivery and leadership</li> </ul>

<p><a href="#"><u>Incorporating lived experience expertise and leadership</u></a></p>	<p>partnerships with young experts by experience strengthen programmes and build skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugee teachers are an under-utilised resource</li> </ul>
<p>Promising Practice 11: <a href="#"><u>Education settings as hubs of community support</u></a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendship and belonging for entire newly arrived families can be found within school communities</li> </ul>

## Promising Practice 9: Collaborating with partners to increase scale and improve sustainability

Partnerships in refugee education comprise a complex web of global, national, and local actors (Zakharia et al, 2022). Significant research has recently been carried on on promising partnership models for refugee education in emergency contexts (Menashy et al, 2022), yet less is understood about the benefits and complexities of refugee education partnerships in HICs. Whilst the scale of the data under this practice is not strong enough to draw any direct causal links, the case-studies reviewed often drew on partnership models to maximise their impact, finding ways to increase capacity, improve sustainability and amplify expertise and evidence.

### Multi-stakeholder initiatives can ease budget and capacity constraints

Initiatives reviewed repeatedly cited experiencing budget and capacity constraints, and – when done well – partnerships were reported as a means to mitigate this challenge. A multi-stakeholder network approach was reported to facilitate the geographical scaling up of interventions for both the Amala project in Greece, and Donate Creative Activities for Ukraine. Amala’s partnership with both national government and local networks enabled them to increase their capacity-building work, providing high quality educational resources for refugee children across multiple partner organisations. The Learning Together initiative in Hong Kong reported improved visibility and viability as a result of an endorsement from UNHCR, as well as partnering with the private sector for onward internships and with other NGOs for specific advice and guidance for young people.

Engaging volunteers as partners and stakeholders also emerged as a promising practice in this area. For example, Refugee Education UK’s Educational Mentoring Programme matches young refugees with a volunteer from the community who provides them with bespoke educational support. The volunteer-centred model both facilitates mutual learning, understanding and relationship building, whilst also extending the reach of the programme at an achievable cost.

## Collaboration takes time and needs dedicated capacity – and local government plays a key role

Despite the reported benefits of adopting partnership approaches to meet the educational needs of refugee children, it was well noted by participating initiatives that the time and dedicated capacity required to ensure partnerships work well in itself needs budget commitments. One UK secondary school which demonstrates multiple good practices in their support to refugee learners, and partners with multiple external agencies – both local government, national charities and community groups – has needed to employ a dedicated post-holder to coordinate their refugee support partnerships within and outside of the school. Whilst the investment in the collaboration-focused post has required ring-fenced financing, the school reported that having the ability to partner and collaborate well with stakeholders at all levels of the school and within external organisations has led to more inclusive and welcoming practices.

In a number of instances, examples of positive partnerships with local government were provided, with non-government partners ascribing their government counterparts with a key role in the success of the collaboration – particularly in contexts where the local authority has a duty of care or other responsibilities towards the children concerned. In North Somerset, UK, the local authority has dedicated funding to employing an Advisory Teacher, coordinating with with refugee and asylum-seeking students and their families, classroom staff, family support workers, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) teams, and senior leadership teams in schools across the authority, to ensure the students are well supported as they begin their education journeys in a new country. In London, Sir George Monoux college reported that their partnership with the local council was not just a source of funding, but a valuable source of guidance to improve the quality and future direction of their programme. In Italy, the Casa Hejmo project – also run in partnership with the local government – hosts unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors and provides them with integrated support, including education inclusion. The local council works with a network of different local partner organisations to provide learning experiences for the young people including language learning and other connected activities.

## Partnerships between practitioners and academics can build evidence for scaling and impact

Collaborating with universities gave initiatives access to resources that helped both improve their service design and delivery and evidence their outcomes. The Study of Adolescent Lives after Migration to America (SALaMA) is an initiative of Washington University and Qatar Foundation International in partnership with a number of school districts and local refugee resettlement agencies in the USA. Through its multi-stakeholder partnership, the study has examined communities' needs and priorities around mental health and psychosocial wellbeing in order to strengthen direct support for newly arrived migrant adolescents. The findings from the initial stage of the study led to the implementation of two research-informed practical programmes in partnership with the Global Educational

Excellence charter school system in Michigan to provide welcome and personal development opportunities to newly arrived adolescents.

The Stepping Stones initiative in Northern Ireland is a collaboration between a community education centre and a local university, to provide language and personal development skills to refugee and asylum-seeking new arrivals. This initiative reported that the partnership with the university was imperative to providing evidence of learner progression from commencement to completion of the programme, which also helped to access further funding for continued delivery of the programme.

Whilst universities can be a legitimising partner for building evidence of programme impact, practitioner-academic partnerships can also be critical for advocacy towards education policy change. Oftentimes, NGOs, community based organisations and the experts by experience they serve hold critical data – both qualitative and quantitative – that can be used to advance a more inclusive policy agenda. The REUK and University of Nottingham partnership in the UK enables co-produced, academically rigorous and practice-informed research and policy products, authored by a team comprising individuals from both the university and charity, to reach policy-makers, practitioners and other academics alike.

## **Promising Practice 10: Incorporating lived experience expertise and leadership**

It is well documented that involving those with lived experience expertise in the design, delivery and leadership of programmes supporting refugees is essential. It has been found to improve the quality of services, generate innovative solutions to at times entrenched challenges, improve cultural competence, build trust, and foster inclusivity (Bradley et al, 2019; Crutchfield, 2018; Easton-Calabria et al, 2020). Across the case studies reviewed, it was clear that, when it comes to education, young refugees and refugee educators in particular have a critical role to play, but remain under-utilised.

### **Service design, delivery and leadership partnerships with young experts by experience strengthen programmes and build skills**

Initiatives that partnered with refugee youth, centering their expertise and voice as enablers of change, reported positive impact. A prominent example came from Learning Together, a Hong Kong-based charity that works to improve access to education for refugee and asylum-seeking young people. It adopts a peer leadership, learning and support model by giving refugee and asylum-seeking young people an opportunity to identify ways they can support their community. Their language learning programme that was both designed and delivered by refugee and asylum-seeking young people at once improved their own command of the language as well as instilling confidence and activating their aspirations to pursue higher education.

In the UK, REUK's strategic youth advisory board and youth advocates directly inform the development, delivery and review of the organisation's education support programmes and

training initiatives across the country – leading to changes that have, in turn, lead to better outcomes for young people and more relevant training for education practitioners. Springboard Youth Academy have launched a formal peer leadership programme which enables initiative alumni to shape the iterative design of the programme and take on practical leadership roles at the point of delivery. The Day of Welcome project lived experience advisory board has ensured the activities organised by the initiative reflect the needs of the community and led to strengthened relationships between the host and refugee communities.

Across these initiatives, it was consistently reported that – alongside improved programming and strategies for organisations and projects – many participating young people have become leaders in their wider communities, reporting personal development increases in confidence, assertiveness and empathy.

## Refugee educators are an under-utilised resource

Whilst much has been written about the importance of and need for investment in refugee teachers in low income contexts (Daltry et al, 2023, Gladwell et al, 2023), several case studies alluded to the under utilisation of this group in HICs. Where refugee background educators were engaged – including in the Teach First Lithuania programme – students experienced culturally coherent welcome, in this case as Ukrainian educators worked alongside Lithuanian writers to create educational resources. For the Ukrainian educators, this experience proved critical in enabling them to then find permanent employment. In the UK, The Refugee Council's Refugees Into Teaching programme, which supported refugee teachers to requalify and take on paid teaching positions through mentoring and placements, closed in 2011 after three years due to funding cuts. However, it nonetheless provided a model for a programme that – with sustained financial support – could both provide employment for refugees and supplement a workforce gap present in several HICs.

## Promising practice 11: Education settings as hubs of community support

Families and communities play an important role in supporting refugee children's educational experiences (Kaplan et al., 2016; Carlson, 2012). However, there are multiple factors that may hinder families and communities from taking up this role, including the stress of adapting to a new environment and mental health conditions experienced by refugee parents or caregivers (Kaplan et al., 2016; Hart, 2009). In addition to the parental language support outlined in [promising practice 1](#), case studies illuminated the role of education institutions in extending broader friendship, belonging and community support to entire families.

## Friendship and belonging for entire families can be found within education communities

Case studies reported that when education providers incorporate activities promoting the wellbeing of entire families into their package of support for young people, this can transform

newly arrived families' experience of their host community. In Vilnius, Lithuania, for example, the creative activities that brought teachers, children and families to come together were reported to enable families – particularly parents or carers – to meet others from similar backgrounds, grow a sense of belonging and integrate into their new environment. In the formal education sector, the UK Schools of Sanctuary initiative reported that participating schools were better equipped to understand the needs of refugee and asylum-seeking students and their families both inside and outside of school. A number of affiliated schools have been able to connect families with community resources, services and external organisations – hosting immigration advice sessions, workshops to assist with navigating state support and benefits systems and offering food banks. As a result the school becomes a central community hub for asylum seeking families, bolstering connections, friendships and belonging as well as providing practical support.

# Conclusion

The case studies submitted for this learning exercise have demonstrated that promising practices – ranging from small scale community projects to nationwide services – are indeed present across HICs, albeit at times invisible to the local practitioners who would most benefit from understanding them. This learning initiative identified four broad thematic areas of promising practice:

- Access to education in the national education system
- Psychosocial wellbeing and inclusive practices
- Educator training and support
- Partnerships for sustainable outcomes

Each of the themes and promising practices identified through this initiative merits further examination. Moving forward this broad learning exercise should be utilised to transition into a second phase of in depth research into each theme, including with a greater focus on evaluative activities that will enhance outcomes data.



# Annex

Initiatives that submitted case studies included in this report:

Initiative	Organisation	Education level	Country
Acorn Nursery	Acorn Nursery	Pre-primary	England
Transform: Enabling organisations to provide transformational learning to displaced youth in Greece	Amala	Secondary	Greece
A Day of Welcome	Anglia Ruskin University	Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary	England
Refugee Educator Foundations of Practice Course	Childhood Education International	Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary	United States of America
Schools of Sanctuary	City of Sanctuary UK	Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary	United Kingdom
Casa Hejmo: Hosting Unaccompanied Minors	Cooperativa Sociale Terremondo arl	Secondary	Italy
Stepping Stone Programme: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) course for 16+ refugee and asylum seekers in Northern Ireland	Health and Social Care Trust - Belfast, Conway Adult Education Centre, Extern: Belfast, University of Ulster (Linguistics Department), Belfast	Secondary	Northern Ireland
Integration in society/municipality/community	Individual resources - Individual support (IRIS)	Secondary,	Sweden
Healing Classrooms UK	International Rescue Committee	Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary	United Kingdom
Pre Entry/ Beginners' English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) lessons (Family Learning) online	Learn Ealing	Adult learning (but pertains to adults of refugee children at the primary and secondary age)	England

Peer-led language learning project	Learning Together	Secondary	Hong Kong
A holistic and therapeutic approach to education for refugees and asylum seeking children aged 15-19	Nottingham Education Sanctuary Team (NEST)	Secondary	England
"Språkintröduktionsprogrammet" (The Language Introduction Program)	Polhemskolan Lund	Secondary	Sweden
Arabic Language Initiative	Public School	Secondary	England
„PADOVANOK KŪRYBINES VEIKLAS UKRAINOS VAIKAMS!“ (Donate creative activities to Ukrainian children!)	Renkuosi mokyti! (Teach First Lithuania)	Primary	Lithuania
Refugee Welcome Project	Refugee Education UK	Secondary	United Kingdom
REUK Orientation program	Refugee Education UK	Secondary	United Kingdom
Refugee Mentoring Project	Refugee Education UK	Secondary	United Kingdom
Language Learning Schools	Rutu Foundation	Primary, Secondary	Netherlands
Accelerated Learning Pathway	Sir George Monoux	Secondary	England
Springboard Youth Academy Saturday Supplementary Programme & Workbooks	Springboard Youth Academy	Secondary	England
Hints for Healing Website	STARTTS - Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors	Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary	Australia

First phase group trauma intervention for learners with refugee trauma in collaboration with a secondary school English as Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) department.	STARTTS - Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors	Secondary	Australia
Teach for Sweden - Teachers leading the future	Teach for Sweden	Secondary	Sweden
The Study of Adolescent Lives after Migration to America (SALaMA)	The Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis	Secondary	United States of America
Advisory Teacher Support for Refugee Children	The Refugee Team, North Somerset Council	Primary, Secondary	England
Welcoming Languages	University of Glasgow and Islamic University of Gaza	Primary	Scotland
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programmes for refugee and asylum-seeking learners	Wirral Met college	Secondary	England
"Easy Lithuanian": Learning Lithuanian language from foreigners for foreigners	Žygimanto Augusto progimnazija	Primary	Lithuania

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