

RECOMMENDATIONS

Placing children at the centre of policy-making has the potential to create a cohesive, coordinated, and comprehensive system; one in which the youngest refugee and asylum-seeking children have access to quality ECEC services in England. Achieving this requires action by a range of actors outlined below.

The UK Government should support this by:

1. Removing the systemic barriers facing parents:

- Widen the 30-hour ECEC entitlement to the parents of all refugee and asylum-seeking children, including those with No Recourse to Public Funds.
- Remove the right to work restrictions placed on asylum seeking parents waiting on their claim, thereby providing the means for children to attend the additional ECEC hours, while also enabling families to escape enforced poverty.
- Work with stakeholders such as Strategic Migration Partnerships and local authorities to ensure young children seeking sanctuary in the UK are housed in accommodation that facilitates consistent access to mainstream ECEC, promotes and maintains a high standard of physical and mental health, and provides highly nutritional food.

2. Removing the funding barriers facing local authorities

- Provide additional funding to local authorities for each 'placed individual', to increase provision and capacity, and to support the varied and unique needs of refugee and asylum-seeking children.
- Set a viable per-hour funding rate for ECEC settings to ensure all entitlement hours are free at the point of access for families.
- Increase Pupil Premium funding to bring it in line with school levels of funding.

3. Supporting ECEC providers to meet the needs of refugee and asylum-seeking children

- Work with academics, providers, practitioners and beneficiaries to surface and share best practice in supporting refugee and asylum-seeker children, including those experiencing trauma and those with English as an additional language.

4. Improving data and information flow

- Improve mechanisms for timely sharing of information between the Home Office, Department for Levelling Up, Department for Education, and Local Authorities, to enable planning and preparation before the arrival of children in each jurisdiction.
- Collect data and/or disaggregate data for all children from birth to five years entering England.

Local Government can support this by:

5. Removing the practical barriers facing parents

- Compile information in the most common languages for refugee and asylum-seeking families in England, including information about their rights and entitlements.
- Simplify and streamline the application process for the disadvantaged two-year-old offer, and provide application guidelines and forms in the most common languages for refugee and asylum-seeking families in England.
- Coordinate with other local authorities to secure ECEC places for families who are being moved to different locations, ensuring they do not need to reapply.

Researchers and academics can support this by:

6. Continuing to build the evidence-base and addressing gaps in knowledge on:

- The impact of the Illegal Immigration Act on early years experiences and access to ECEC for refugee and asylum-seeking children.
- The experiences of refugee and asylum-seeking children in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland and other parts of England to build on the qualitative primary research in this report.
- Good practice in systematic support for refugee and asylum-seeking children domestically and internationally.