

From mountain to sea

Education Guidance on supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

March 2023



Contents

1.1	Who is this guidance for?	3
1.2	Purpose	3
1.3	Context	3
1.4	Who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children?	3
1.5	How/when do young people arrive?	4
1.6	School's role	4
1.7	Possible Curriculum	5
	Children with almost complete educational experience	5
	Children with little or no educational experience	5
	Children with some educational experience but with gaps of several years	6
	Curricular and extra-curricular options	7
1.8	What support is available?	9
1.9	Pathway into positive destinations	11
1.10	Training	11
1.11	Further links and resources	11

1.1 Who is this guidance for?

Schools and education staff working with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

1.2 Purpose

For reference to support understanding of the journey that UASC will have gone through and the different options available to support them.

1.3 Context

Like all local authorities across the UK, Aberdeenshire has a responsibility to support UASC as part of the [National Transfer Scheme](#). The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) protocol for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC, also referred to as unaccompanied children) has been established to enable the safe transfer of unaccompanied children in the UK from one local authority to another local authority. More information can be found here:

[Unaccompanied asylum seeking children: national transfer scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-national-transfer-scheme)

Every local authority across the UK will be mandated to accept unaccompanied children until their population reaches 0.1% of general child population. Unaccompanied children are referred on a rota. Aberdeenshire skips every second rota and takes two unaccompanied children at a time. As of 17th of January 2023, 24 unaccompanied children have been transferred to Aberdeenshire through the scheme.

1.4 Who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children?

- Young people have made journeys from a range of countries and for a range of reasons.
- The majority are male and aged 16+.
- Aberdeenshire are typically resettling two young people at a time but while they may be housed together, they may not know each other or may have only met on the way to Aberdeenshire.
- Like all young people, they have a range of interests and experiences, but all will have gone through some form of trauma.
- English is an additional language for all young people and their first languages include an increasing range including Pashto, Amharic, Arabic, Tigray, Tigrinya, Kurdish, Farsi and Dari.
- Experience of education and work varies greatly, with some having had up to 11+yrs of previous education and others no education. The majority have had something in between.
- Their experience of education may be very different from the Scottish education system in terms of school environment, curriculum, pedagogy, language, etc, not to mention the differences in culture.
- Some unaccompanied children have arrived ready for college, while others have arrived without literacy skills in any language.

1.5 How/when do young people arrive?

Aberdeenshire are notified of transfers and have five days in which to accept unaccompanied children. The cross service UASC working group meets to plan for the unaccompanied children's arrival.

When unaccompanied children arrive, the school is informed of their arrival (on some occasions young people pull out/do not come and so schools are not given details until young people are confirmed as having arrived). The children's allocated social worker will initiate discussions with the school and EAL teacher to arrange enrolment. The EAL teacher with UASC remit assesses the young people and tutors them twice per week until they are enrolled at school. At enrolment, information is gathered about the young person's interests, aspirations, prior experiences of language etc.

An EAL teacher with remit to support UASC enrolment then meets young people and assesses their level of language summatively and formatively over several sessions while beginning language classes while the young people wait to enrol in school. At enrolment, information is gathered about the young person's interests, aspirations, prior experiences of language etc.

1.6 School's role

It is important that young people are enrolled in school as soon as possible even if it is likely to take time to put the right education package in place. This will not necessarily entail full-time school attendance (although that may be a possibility for some young people who have near complete experience of education). However, it does ensure that the young person has a named person within the school and a sense of being "claimed".

The normal school processes and procedures for enrolling and supporting any young person should apply. EAL resources can be found [here](#). There are some things specific to UASC which should be considered.

LAC

Young people are Looked After Children and normal processes should apply, but it should be noted that

- young people living in supported lodgings will not have an adult at home to wake them and get them organised in the mornings.
- it is important to clarify which social work colleague to contact in event of illness, absence, school closure, emergency.

Trauma

All young people have shown great resilience to make the journey to the UK but will be processing trauma. Guidance on supporting trauma and wellbeing is included later, but it is important to be aware that young people will be processing trauma, intersecting with the stress of being in a new culture, immersed in a new language, where everything is different. They will go through a range of emotions which may influence their ability to engage with education as enthusiastically as they want to.

Subject choice/Curriculum

For all young people it is important to find out as much as possible about their experiences of education and work, and levels of literacy and numeracy in first language. The EAL teacher will support the school in establishing this. Whatever their experiences, the young people should be offered as full a package of meaningful learning opportunities as possible. The following information on curriculum will support schools in identifying suitable learning options.

1.7 Possible Curriculum

Please note that young people will all have individual experiences and needs and that this is a guide only. It may be that some young people come with only two or three years experience of education but may cope well with a range of subjects in school, whereas a young person with nine or ten years previous education may find it more difficult. This underlines the importance of the initial process of getting to know the young person, their experiences, aspirations and needs.

Children with almost complete educational experience

- All young people will have missed some schooling as they made the journey to the UK, but some have said they were in school for 10, 11+ years.
- While the curriculum in their home country would likely have been different, this should mean that they can access subjects of which they have prior experience.
- They can also study the appropriate level of ESOL.
- As for any pupil for whom English is an Additional Language, Level of English alone should not be a barrier to entering subjects if they can be made accessible through EAL strategies (use of visuals, first language dictionaries, electronic resources, graphic organisers etc).
- Please see the [EAL CLPL on ALDO](#) for more advice on supporting bilingual learners. The video '*When a multilingual pupil arrives*' has advice on subject choices.

Children with little or no educational experience

- Some young people arrive having had little or no previous schooling.
- For these pupils it is important to consider their levels of literacy and numeracy in first language.
- Any skills already acquired in first language will transfer to English which will make it that bit easier to learn English.
- Where young people have had little or no experience of education and are not literate in any language, they will need to start at the beginning of English literacy through SQA ESOL National 2 literacies. This will usually be offered by the allocated EAL teacher unless the school has in house provision.
- These young people will also likely not have prior curricular knowledge of many of the subjects offered at senior phase.
- Practical subjects such as metalwork, woodwork, PE, food technology (practical elements) will be helpful for young people.
- If there is not a numeracy class at a suitable level, it would be appropriate for ASL staff to support development of numeracy skills.
- A range of other opportunities outlined below are available for young people to ensure they can have access to a full timetable of meaningful learning experiences and experience English language being used in context.

Children with some educational experience but with gaps of several years

- The majority of unaccompanied children who have arrived in Aberdeenshire have had some educational experience but have had several years out of school.
 - The EAL initial assessment will support understanding of the child's experiences and abilities, but it will often take several weeks or longer to build an accurate picture of the child's experiences, skills and learning.
 - Depending on their experiences, young people may be able to access some or many senior phase subjects, or they may need to access a more flexible pathway as outlined for those with little or no previous educational experiences. Some young people with only a few years of previous schooling have coped well with a timetable of subjects and some with many years of educational experience have found it more difficult, so schools should work with EAL and the UASC social work team to identify what is best for each young person.
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Curricular and extra-curricular options

In addition to the normal curriculum, the following options are available:

Setting	Option	Days/Times	How to access	Details
Out of school Community	Mosque	Fridays	Several young people already attending Mosque on a Friday and organising themselves. They would need to confirm with school and social worker if they plan to go.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Muslim young people they may wish to visit a Mosque in Aberdeen (https://www.aberdeenmosque.org/ https://masjidalhikmah.org.uk/ Some on full timetable have chosen to stay in school. Prayer space should also be made available in school. Prayer times can be found here.
College Curriculum & Vocational skills	College Schools link course Supported Learning for UASC	Currently Thursdays. 9.30-3.30 with a lunch break	<p>EAL and Social Work will work with the young person and school to complete form with young people which will then be sent to college once pupils enrol at school.</p> <p>First course started 9th February 2023 and finishes April 20th (further arrivals will need to wait for future courses).</p>	<p>Session focusing on language and sports, wellbeing, leadership and team building.</p> <p>Future iterations/options at college to be informed by evaluation feedback from young people.</p>
Out of school Vocational skills	Work Experience	Preferably Mon/Tues/Wed to fit around school timetable	Schools should follow normal protocol for setting up work placements .	Should be in a welcoming environment where as well as vocational skills, social English can be practised with subject specific vocabulary related to the role e.g. charity shops, community café etc. Young people have to be able to understand the health and safety expectations of a work placement

Out of school Community	Links with Aberdeen FC - Match days	Occasional trips	Attending match day – AFC will arrange travel and food/drink voucher for young people.	
Out of school Community	Local sports clubs	Extra curricular	Social work team to identify young people with interest in specific sports and link them to local clubs.	Cricket has proved popular for many young people. Some have also had an interest in football and swimming.
In school Positive destinations	Skills Development Scotland (SDS)	Meetings throughout school year		SDS Career advisor will liaise with pupils in school through interpreters, small bursts of 1:1 sessions, link to work experience opportunities, support visits to college, offer group sessions at Peterhead centre
In school and out of school?	Duke of Edinburgh	Both within and outwith school time		Liaise with school DofE coordinator. Again, Young people have to be able to understand the health and safety expectations.

1.8 What support is available?

	Options available within normal school support Universal Support	Additional support but still within school Targeted Support	Additional options available outside school Targeted Support and Specialist Services
Learning/Curriculum	Accessing subjects in school appropriate to previous schooling experience	SQA ESOL (EAL ESOL Guidelines)	
	EAL advice, strategies and resources to support accessing curriculum	Additional teaching to support numeracy and other skills not offered through normal senior phase curriculum	
		EAL Teacher targeted support	
Wellbeing	Guidance support	School Counsellor (within wellbeing team)	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) (girfec-aberdeenshire.org)
	Scottish Guardianship Service (Aberlour) – All young people have access to this service signposted through their social worker). Check with the relevant social worker if young people are accessing this service before referring to the school counsellor.		
	Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and Trauma-Informed Practice (girfec-aberdeenshire.org)		

Mentoring	<p>Buddies in school</p> <p><u>MCR have a nationwide mentoring programme in schools</u></p> <p>If the young people are attending any of the secondary schools in which the programme is currently running and won't be leaving this summer, they can be referred to the programme via the school coordinator to benefit from mentoring</p> <p>In order to progress this, referrals can be made directly via the DHT or our school based MCR Pathways Coordinator</p>		
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1.9 Pathway into positive destinations

- Skills Development Scotland (SDS) will arrange to meet the young people with an interpreter to establish needs and help young people to understand their options. PT EAL to share information with SDS colleagues on UASC arrivals as they arrive.
- The young people will not be allowed to enter paid employment until they are granted asylum status. However, they can access voluntary/unpaid work experience (see above).
- College
 - o Schools Link course will build language skills alongside other learning and give young people an introduction to college life
 - o Young people can apply for part time ESOL courses which run in the evening.
 - o Full time options (starting at beginning of academic year). Currently only for those who are beyond New to English:
 - Elementary National 3 ESOL (Common European Framework A2)
 - Pre intermediate National 4 (B1)
 - Intermediate National 5 (B2)
- Foundation apprenticeships
 - o Work is ongoing to identify options which will be accessible and meet the needs of young people.

1.10 Training

- EAL **Secondary Teachers ALDO Course**
- **Education Scotland online training module**

Education Scotland has developed an online training module in partnership with Scotland's National Centre for Languages and Glasgow City Council to support the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy.

- Learners with Limited First Language Literacy - The Bell Foundation (bell-foundation.org.uk)

1.11 Further links and resources

- Lots of further advice and further information:
<https://www.devon.gov.uk/support-schools-settings/inclusion/ethnic-minority-and-traveller-support/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-uasc-advice-guidance-and-resources/>
- How to support refugee and asylum-seeking children and young people who have experienced trauma - UKTC (uktraumacouncil.org)

Date	Version	Status	Reason
March 2023	1.0	Guidelines	New draft