

Joint inspection of services for children of asylum seekers in the Glasgow City Council area – Summary report

In May 2006, the Minister for Education and Young People requested that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) lead an inspection of services for the children of asylum seekers in the Glasgow City Council area.

1. Context and background

In 2000, Glasgow City Council agreed a contract with the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to accommodate people seeking asylum. The first families with children arrived in May 2000. At the time of the inspection there were 2,026 asylum-seeking families with 1,411 children of school age in Glasgow.

2. Key Strengths

- The positive impact of local services on children and their parents in promoting well-being and inclusion.
- The work of schools in promoting inclusion and integration, and supporting children's learning, particularly in English language.
- The provision of services by the voluntary sector, including local initiatives and groups.
- The work of specialist services, particularly the Glasgow Asylum Seekers Support Project and the jointly funded and managed Glasgow Translation and Interpreting Service.
- The high level of innovation, dedication and enthusiasm for working with children demonstrated by staff across services.

3. How well do services in Glasgow meet the needs of children of asylum seekers and their parents?

Overall, services in Glasgow were good, with some very good features, at meeting the needs of children of asylum seekers. Universal and specialist services worked well in supporting children to feel safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected and responsible, and included. Services were very good at meeting the needs of parents. While children and parents had good experiences of using services, they reported that their daily lives were affected by racial harassment, and that their opportunities for education and employment were restricted.

4. How good is the delivery of services for children and young people?

The delivery of services for children of asylum seekers was good. Glasgow City Council, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board, Strathclyde Police, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and the voluntary services had developed a broad range of services. Staff knew children and communicated their needs well. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children did not always have an assessment or care plan or enough contact with a named professional. Services had improved considerably since the beginning of the contract with NASS, but had not yet developed a sufficiently rigorous partnership approach to improvement.

5. How good is the management of services for children of asylum seekers?

Staff across services worked well together to meet the needs of children of asylum seekers. There was not always sufficient planning between partners to ensure that successful initiatives continued when initial funding ended. Staff were deployed effectively and teams worked well together. While staff had built up a good knowledge of working with children of asylum seekers through experience, there was a need for improved training and development. The use of management information to support the staff to deliver services was limited. There were some good opportunities for children to participate in policy development and planning but this was not yet consistent across services.

6. How good is the leadership of services for children of asylum seekers?

Leaders of services had a shared vision of improved partnership working which had enhanced outcomes for children in Glasgow. They had a strong commitment to promoting diversity and meeting the needs of children of asylum seekers.

7. Main points for action

Glasgow City Council, Strathclyde Police, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board and voluntary sector organisations were well placed to take forward improvements in services. In doing so they should:

- take steps to ensure that all eligible children are provided with a part-time pre-school placement;
- ensure that all unaccompanied children are matched to a safe, nurturing placement and have an appropriate level of contact with professionals;
- improve the involvement of children and parents in the development of services, policy and strategy;
- ensure that all staff, across services, are appropriately trained and supported for their roles and responsibilities; and
- build on the work already in place to address racial harassment in communities to achieve improved relationships for asylum seekers in communities in Glasgow.

The Scottish Executive should:

- consider the feasibility of responding to aspirations among asylum seeker children to undertake degree level study.

Full copies of the report may be obtained free of charge from the HMIE website at www.hmie.gov.uk. or by telephoning 01506 600262.