



Multilingual Minds: the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Newcomer Children and Young People in Northern Ireland and the role of the Education Authority Youth Service.

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Executive Summary

In recent decades the population of Northern Ireland has become increasingly diverse, both culturally and linguistically, as we build on welcome years of relative peace since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. People from different parts of the world are choosing to move to our region and make it their home.

This relatively recent and rapid demographic change is notable among children and young people. Significant numbers of the young people living in our communities have moved to Northern Ireland from other parts of the world, have learned to speak more than one language and have experience of being part of more than one culture. Some are refugees and asylum seekers with experience of trauma. All have experienced disruption and change in their relationships and their everyday lives.

Childhood and adolescence are periods of learning, change, and development for everyone. For many people these years can see the development of positive mental health, but young people can be vulnerable to poor mental health, and the majority of problems relating to mental health emerge in adolescence or early adulthood.

Evidence suggests that current global concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of young people are reflected in Northern Ireland. The reasons for mental health difficulties in young people are complex, but some groups are considered to be particularly at risk, including members of ethnic minority communities. On the other hand, it has been argued that being bilingual brings cognitive benefits and resilience. Certainly, there is a paucity of research focusing on the mental health and wellbeing of ethnic minority groups, including young people, in our region.

It is in this context that the current study, commissioned by the Education Authority Children and Young People's Services was conducted. Its principal objectives were twofold. Firstly, it sought to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer children and young people in communities across Northern Ireland. Secondly, it sought to explore ways in which the EA Youth Service can contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people and make recommendations for future development.

The study adopted a mixed methods approach and garnered the views of EA Youth Service practitioners, key staff in schools and newcomer children and young people living in Northern Ireland, through questionnaire surveys, semi-structured interviews,

and focus group discussions. A detailed account of the research methods is included in Chapter 2. Key findings emerging from analysis of the data presented in Chapter 3 and discussed in Chapter 4 of this report are summarised below.

Key Findings

The Mental Health and Wellbeing of Newcomer Children and Young People in Northern Ireland

- Newcomer children and young people in Northern Ireland are a diverse group with different backgrounds, experiences and needs.
- Newcomer children and young people describe a number of opportunities associated with their experience of living in Northern Ireland. They enjoy school and value education, they appreciate the help of supportive teachers, they respond positively to learning new languages at school, and they sometimes feel safer and more secure in Northern Ireland than in their previous home regions.
- In addition to the usual challenges of adolescence, this study suggests that some newcomer children and young people living in Northern Ireland experience particular adversity. These include the lack of control over change in circumstances (particularly among refugees and asylum seekers), disruption of relationship networks, loss of a sense of belonging, loneliness, anxiety and lack of awareness due to linguistic difference and language competence, cultural barriers, a fear of not being accepted, the stigma of being a newcomer, lack of confidence/self-esteem, pre-existing experiences of trauma (particularly but not exclusively among refugees), mental ill health of parents, family problems including substance abuse, parentification and loss of childhood, instability and anxiety around political developments including Brexit, community hostility and racism, pressures to succeed academically in tandem with family responsibility, and limited support at home with school work. The newcomer children and young people in this study reported experiences of stress, loneliness and isolation, and difficulties establishing lasting friendships beyond their ethnic and linguistic group.

- For the children and young people in our sample, both self-report and teacher report indicated that symptoms of emotional problems, conduct problems and prosocial behaviour were in the average range. A number of the interviewees perceived mental health needs among newcomers to be largely similar to children and young people from NI. This may indicate resilience despite the difficult circumstances described above. Both youth worker and school staff interviews did highlight specific concerns in relation to supporting the mental health needs of refugee and asylum seekers.
- Linguistic and cultural factors specific to the newcomer experience may have an impact on the seeking and sourcing of support for newcomer children and young people who do experience poor mental health, including counselling and bereavement services. Extended and enhanced translation services will be needed to address this.
- The newcomer children and young people in this study prefer activities that help them develop their ability to communicate in English and gain confidence. They recommend activities such as sport, drama and art that do not initially require a high degree of English competence. Older children enjoy social interaction in a less formal setting. The children and young people suggested the development of a marketing strategy to improve access to information including posters in different languages to advertise activities, as well as the use of social media. The children and young people were keen to build networks within communities with information meetings for new arrivals to raise awareness of opportunities provided by the EA Youth Service.

EA Youth Service Provision

- The newcomer children and young people in this study attend extracurricular activities after school, but had limited engagement with EA Youth Service provision. Reasons for this include lack of awareness due to linguistic barriers and ineffective communication, a lack of awareness of provision among key staff in schools and families, and reticence among families, for a number of reasons outlined in the report, for children and young people to join.

- Current engagement with EA Youth Service provision among newcomer children and young people varies in nature and extent depending on the context. In some instances there is successful collaboration across sectors, and provision and expertise are being developed. Mostly this provision is targeted, but practitioners are questioning this and considering a more integrated approach in the longer term.
- Youth Service practitioners demonstrate an awareness of the mental health and wellbeing needs of newcomer children and young people but the majority do not feel adequately equipped to address these at present.
- Youth Service practitioners have a clear understanding of the opportunities that Youth Service provision can offer for newcomer children and young people such as offering a safe space and providing support, the possibility of friendships, a sense of belonging and access to other services.
- Youth Service practitioners encounter a range of challenges in relation to engaging with newcomer children and young people such as funding and resourcing concerns, ineffective communication, bureaucracy, linguistic and cultural barriers, distrust or lack of common understanding with newcomer families, a skills deficit and limited training opportunities.

Collaboration and Partnership

- In this study collaboration across sectors harnessing expertise and experience and promoting mutual learning and development emerged as a positive factor in the development of effective, high quality, evidence based and research informed provision for newcomer children and young people.
- The work of the EA Intercultural Education Service is valued by the key staff in schools participating in this study. Associated translation services will be required to be extended beyond schools to address the linguistic barriers experienced by Youth Service practitioners and to afford access to expert support for newcomer children and young people who need it in areas such bereavement services, counselling and behaviour management.

- Examples of partnership programmes between the EA Youth Service and schools, such as the Learning Together Programme, were viewed positively, and manage to achieve higher levels of attendance among newcomer pupils.
- Schools in areas with high percentages of newcomer enrolments have developed relationships with families and community groups over time and have gained the trust of parents. Parents and children view the school site in a positive light because of this and also because of the geographical convenience of the school location with respect to their homes. Activities held on the school site are thus more likely to gain higher attendance than those held in other locations, particularly outside the immediate vicinity of the local community.

Leadership, learning and development

- There is evidence of a desire among the Youth Service practitioners in this study to learn and develop together in order to improve provision. Specific funding, training and resource needs identified in this report will need to be addressed.
- Examples of good practice in Youth Service settings and in schools emerged in this study. In order to develop high quality provision it will be essential to share expertise, disseminate learning and develop leadership.

Recommendations

Based on the key findings of this study it is recommended that urgent consideration should be given to the following areas:

Strategic direction

- The commitment of sustainable funding for long term evidence based and research informed strategic development of high quality EA Youth Service provision, particularly in areas with significant immigrant populations, given the clear opportunities such provision offers for the flourishing of all young people in all of our communities in Northern Ireland.
- Given the challenges that Youth Service personnel encounter, develop and implement a strategy for staff care, development and support.
- The development and implementation of an effective communication strategy both internal and external. Internally this should aim to establish clarity regarding terminology and access to relevant information. Externally this should seek to address cultural and linguistic barriers, using effective marketing and translation services as necessary to ensure dissemination of key information, utilising social media and published documentation as appropriate.
- Utilise the school site as a local hub for engagement with all young people, including newcomer children, for the purpose of providing a safe and trusted space, fostering friendships between children and young people across linguistic and cultural divides, and for the collaborative delivery of effective informal education programmes
- The development of informal education programmes that incorporate support with the development of English language competence and with schoolwork, in collaboration with colleagues in schools and community groups, and delivered on the school site.

- Reaching out to parents: the utilisation of the school site as a focus for relationship building with families and parents in order to inform, build trust, equip, support and work together for the good of young people and communities
- The inclusion of bilingual volunteers recruited from the linguistic communities and the families to which newcomer children and young people belong, thus building trust and reflecting diversity within the work force.

Collaboration, learning and development

- Building on existing examples of successful collaboration by harnessing the expertise of EA Youth Service practitioners, key staff in schools and experts across other sectors, to foster mutual learning and the enhancement of high quality provision for newcomer children and young people in Northern Ireland.
- The development of evidence based, research informed guidance in the form of an online resource toolkit to support Youth Service practitioners.
- Identify an online platform to support learning, the collation and sharing of age-appropriate resources, relevant information and guidance; an online portal to support the development of relevant expertise and support.
- Provision of opportunities for face to face collaborative learning and dissemination of good practice amongst EA Youth Service practitioners and between sectors including education and health, such as a networking forum and regional, national and international conferences.

- The development and delivery in collaboration with key educational providers of funded specialist training modules for Youth Service practitioners, possibly accessed online, in the following 3 areas:
 - Mental health and wellbeing: awareness, assessment and support for children and young people, with clear relevance for the Youth Service context
 - Understanding and supporting the needs of refugee and trauma experienced children and young people
 - An introduction to linguistic diversity to include potential for basic up skilling in key languages represented in the communities of newcomer children and young people

Further research

- Further funded research to engage with parents of newcomer children and young people in a range of representative linguistic groups and backgrounds to learn more about their views and experiences, to understand their hopes and concerns with respect to their children and how the EA Youth Service can support their families as they settle into life in Northern Ireland, thus promoting mental health and wellbeing.
- Further funded research to scope the views of a wider sample of young people in ethnic communities across Northern Ireland to learn more about their experiences, wellbeing and needs and to ensure that efforts to develop Youth Service provision reflect their interests
- Further funded research to investigate the needs of children and young people in Northern Ireland who are refugees and asylum seekers in comparison to their newcomer and non-newcomer peers, and the role of schools and EA Youth Service professionals in meeting these needs.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Context

In light of the dramatic changes in Northern Ireland's demographic over recent years, with significant increases in the newcomer children and young people in our communities, together with growing public concerns with respect to the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people generally, this timely and important study was commissioned and funded by the EA Youth Service. The purpose of the study was twofold. Firstly it sought to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer children and young people in communities across Northern Ireland. Secondly, it sought to explore ways in which the EA Youth and Children's Services can contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people.

Introduction to mental health and wellbeing of children young people

It is estimated that mental health difficulties affect 10-20% of children and adolescents worldwide. Despite the explicit promotion of mental health and wellbeing in the United Nations' 2015–30 Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015) there is a vast gap between need and resource availability, especially in low and middle income countries (LMICs) and, the evidence base for affordable and effective interventions is limited (Keiling *et al.*, 2011; Patel *et al.*, 2008). While poor mental health in childhood is often associated with educational, health, social problems and other adverse outcomes into adulthood, interventions carried out in collaboration with families, schools and communities have demonstrated social, emotional and economic benefits (Weare and Nind, 2011). According to the recent Prince's Trust Macquarie Youth Index (2018, p.5), in the UK generally, 'Overall happiness with emotional health has dropped to its lowest level to date compared to findings in previous years, and there has also been a decline in how happy young people are about relationships with their family and their physical health. None of the areas attributed to wellbeing have increased Index scores this year'. In particular the report notes that 28% of young people do not feel in control of their lives, and this is more prevalent in young women than young men. Newcomer children and youth face a unique range of circumstances that act as negative determinants on mental health (Shakya, Khahlou and Gonsalves, 2015). These will be considered more fully below.

Promotion of mental health and wellbeing

Article 39 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that we have a duty to provide, ‘appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social integration...in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child’. School and community based interventions have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing psychological distress and promoting wellbeing among war-affected children and young people. Recovery must involve re-establishing human connections. The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely he/she will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Therefore the most important healing experiences often occur outside therapy and inside homes, schools and communities and youth groups. For all children, the link between mental health and wellbeing and attainment is now well documented (e.g. Public Health England, 2014). An 11% boost in results in standardised achievement tests has been linked to school programmes that directly improve pupils’ social and emotional learning (Durlak *et al.*, 2011). In addition, promoting mental health and wellbeing in schools and youth settings can improve attitudes towards self, school and others, enhance positive social behaviours and reduce conduct problems (Weare and Nind, 2011). A number of policy documents highlight mental health and related services in NI, including the draft Programme for Government 2016-2021; Making Life Better (DHSSPS, 2014) NIAR 412-16 Research Paper Northern Ireland Assembly, Research and Information Service 4 2012-2023 (NI Public Health Framework); Transforming Your Care (DHSSPS, 2011). The NI Protect Life Suicide Strategy was launched in 2006 and Protect Life Two was due in 2017. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is apportioned less than 8% of the mental health budget in NI (McCafferty, 2016).

Research has shown that 50% of mental health problems emerge by age 14 but that many of them are reversible (Sands, 2017). Promotion of mental health and wellbeing among young people, and with particular reference to newcomer youth, is therefore a strategic priority. Shakya, Khahlou and Gonslaves (2015) suggest that actions should include: proactively addressing the determinants of newcomer youth mental health; making support services more sensitive and accessible; implementing innovative mental health promotion programmes; promoting collaboration between settlement and health sectors; and implementing youth empowerment and community development programmes. However, it is important to avoid treating

newcomer children and young people as one homogenous group. As Kim et al. (2018) point out, for example, the children of undocumented immigrants, refugees or unaccompanied minors have a more elevated risk for mental health problems than other newcomers.

Newcomer children and young people in Northern Ireland

Since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement Northern Ireland has experienced remarkable demographic change with a doubling of people from ethnic minority groups over ten years prior to the 2011 Census (NISRA, 2012). In NI, the term 'newcomer' is used to describe a child or young person who does not have the level of language required to access the curriculum in English or Irish, or who does not share the language of instruction used by the teacher. The number of newcomer children and young people in schools has risen dramatically with a 72% increase between 2007 and 2012 (NISMP, 2014). In 2016 one quarter of children in 21 primary schools in NI did not speak English as their first language (BBC, 2016). According to DENI (2017) 'there are approximately 13,300 pupils in schools recorded as non-white. This is an increase of 3,800 compared to five years prior'. Moreover, 'In 2016/17 there are more than 80 first languages spoken by pupils with Polish and Lithuanian being the most common behind English...In 2016/17 there are approximately 14,000 newcomer pupils accounting for 4.1% of the school population'. Schools have been issued guidance and are allocated funding to address the needs of newcomer children and young people (DENI, 2009) and the Education Authority Intercultural Education Service provides support including translating and interpreting, staff development and resources.

Challenges for mental health and wellbeing in newcomer children and young people in Northern Ireland including those with experience of disruption and trauma

The term newcomer relates specifically to linguistic competence and takes no account of ethnic and cultural differences between diverse immigrant groups. Some newcomer children were settled in formal education prior to arrival and adapt with relative ease. Others arrive from situations marked by limited, interrupted or even non-existent exposure to schooling (NISMP, 2015). Murphy et al. (2017, p.27) point out that asylum seekers and refugees are vulnerable to suffering from mental health problems and note that prompt mental health care 'is vital for successful integration and community cohesion as it builds resilient individuals and subsequently, resilient

communities'. They acknowledge that literacy, language skills and translation have a role to play in diversification in Northern Ireland, and conclude that 'Northern Ireland's response to the challenges of mental health issues for asylum seekers and refugees should centre on building resilience and fostering wellness'. Rochford *et al.* (2018), in their evidence review of youth mental health in Ireland and Northern Ireland, highlight members of ethnic minority communities as an at risk group, but acknowledge that there is little evidence relating to the mental health of ethnic minority groups in Northern Ireland.

Adapting to a new linguistic context is a complex process. Bligh and Drury (2015) argue that specialist knowledge helps professionals understand behaviour and informs effective provision. Hue and Kennedy (2013) highlight the importance of seeing the child or young person not only in the context of school but of community. Getting to know newcomer children and seeking to raise their aspirations can have a real impact for good (Oikonomodoi, 2014). Newcomer children and young people are in the process acquiring English as a new language and thus of becoming bilingual or multilingual, and being able to communicate in more than one language has been associated with certain advantages. Bialystok (2015) posits cognitive advantages that stem from bilingualism. Kim *et al.* (2018) refer to this, also highlighting studies with adults (Schachter *et al.*, 2012), and suggest that being bilingual can bring physical and mental health benefits. Referring to Han and Huang (2010), Kim *et al.* (2018) suggest that being bilingual has mental health advantages in children also, but concludes that the exact way this occurs still needs to be identified.

The ability to communicate in a different language may be considered as a mixed blessing for immigrant children and young people. Rainey *et al.* (2014) found that child language 'brokering', acting as a language translator for family members in a range of contexts during childhood, can affect cognitive and emotional functions in both beneficial and detrimental ways. Pressure associated with this brokering role in childhood or adolescence may negatively affect mental health by causing stress, and distracting from other responsibilities such as studying at school. Rainey *et al.* (2014) found that child language brokers had higher levels of depression, and that those young adults who acted as language brokers as children had higher levels of anxiety than their bilingual non-brokering counterparts.

In terms of academic achievement, a recent study by Anguiano (2018) suggests that translating in high-stakes situations negatively affected academic achievement and

increased perceived stress, while everyday translating situations positively affected academic achievement and did not affect stress. Hooper (2007, p. 323) found that the process of ‘parentification’, defined as ‘as a disturbance in generational boundaries, such that evidence indicates a functional and/or emotional role reversal in which the child sacrifices his or her own needs for attention, comfort, and guidance in order to accommodate and care for the logistical and emotional needs of a parent and/or sibling’, can be experienced by some individuals as stressful.

It has been documented that newcomer children face challenges in post-conflict Northern Ireland including fear of their new situation; communication barriers and frustration due to limited language; fear and embarrassment due to the silent period; friendship issues; and bullying and child protection issues (Kernaghan, 2015). Reported incidents of racism have increased (Grady, 2014), and newcomer children and young people feel they face an uncertain future in light of Brexit (Irish News, 2017). Building friendships, especially across ethnic divides, aids psychological resilience, but linguistic variation makes this challenging (Bagci *et al.*, 2014; Jones, 2015).

There is a paucity of literature on the mental health of newcomer children and young people in Northern Ireland. However, knowledge of the issue can be drawn from research in other countries. In particular, Shakya, Khahlou and Gonsalves (2015) identified the key factors compounding mental health issues among newcomer youth in Canada as: settlement related stressors, discrimination/exclusion, and the strategies/barriers available to address mental health issues. Settlement related factors include linguistic barriers, challenges in adjusting to a new educational system, isolation, access to information and acculturation challenges. These barriers were found to have significant mental health implications, including stress, low self-esteem, anxiety, worry, sadness and depression. There is evidence that race-based discrimination results in negative psychological health outcomes. Further, Shakya, Khahlou and Gonsalves (2015) found that newcomer youth tended to rely on informal systems of support and had inadequate knowledge on how to access formal services, consequently limiting their use of available services and formal support mechanisms. Some of the newcomer children and young people presenting with mental health needs in NI have been affected by war and conflict in their country of origin. Evidence suggests that, while resilience and high functioning are common,

war-affected refugee children are at risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties (McMullen *et al.*, 2012).

Reflecting on the experiences of newcomer children and young people in Ireland, Skokauskas and Clarke (2009) argue that there is a strong likelihood for adolescent newcomers to experience family conflict due to a clash of western values which sit in opposition to those of their family. This can also be experienced on an intergenerational scale. Moreover a lack of acceptance by peers and teachers may cause newcomers to feel different, which can be exacerbated by discrimination or prejudice. School integration can be problematic if parents and teachers do not share common values. Psychiatric problems may not come to light in schools, and parents may not refer; cultural assumptions influence parents and parents may also deny the existence of any problem in favour of more traditional techniques of dealing with certain issues. Reviewing literature, Skokauskas and Clarke (2009) highlight that immigrant / newcomer children are at risk of academic difficulties, low self-esteem, behavioural disorders, depression, anorexia nervosa, and somatic symptoms.

However, refugees and asylum-seekers tend to have more traumatic exposures, and other migrants might have better resources and preparation for migration (Tai-Ann Cheng and Jung-Chen, 1999). There is also strong evidence that refugee children show higher levels of distress and psychiatric disorder attributable to adverse experiences. Particularly frequent are depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety.

Skokauskas and Clarke (2009) draw on Berry's (1980) four acculturation strategies of integration, assimilation, marginalisation and separation, which come with a number of behavioural traits he argues can be identified in young people who have migrated to another country. Skokauskas and Clarke (2009) also group the multitude of stressors migrant children experience into a three-part typology of (i) pre-immigration phase; (ii) immigration process and (iii) post immigration phase, detailing the most common problems associated with each phase. They conclude by calling for more research data on the mental health of immigrant children to be generated in Ireland; for greater attention to be paid to the cultural dimensions of mental disorders whilst identifying the need for the development of more culturally appropriate mental health services for ethnic populations; and for carefully researched and planned preventative and early intervention programmes to be

developed to deal with acculturation issues, psychological and family social difficulties.

Hilario *et al.* (2015) reviewed studies of migration and mental health in Canada. The studies reviewed highlight the issues of belonging and displacement. In Berman *et al.* (2009) newcomer girls described the need for safe spaces in their community to allow them to speak about their migration and resettlement experiences as they relate to belonging and marginalization. Traditionally, youth organisations have provided a safe space for young people to meet and discuss sensitive topics. ·

The experiences of migration and resettling were linked to notions of identity and space, articulated in themes described as uprooting, disconnection and displacement. Uprooting referred to migration from their countries of origin, which required the leaving behind of families, friends, and a familiar environment. Disconnection from community and culture often stemmed from a sense of “being different”. Displacement referred to newcomer spaces often marked by downward mobility, financial challenges, and a constant reminder of their marginal place in Canadian society. Hilario *et al.* (2015) described the need for newcomer girls to negotiate spaces of belonging through a sense of community, and for social conditions in Canada that would allow newcomers to achieve their hopes and dreams. Hilario *et al.* (2015) also note that parental mental health is a significant factor. In all five studies reviewed that examine the role of parental depression it was found to be associated with poorer mental health in children and youth.

In addition to adversity it is important to consider the concept of resilience. According to Ungar (2008, p. 225), resilience involves relationships in the individual’s culture and context: ‘In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual’s family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways’. For Rutter (2015, p. 341), resilience “can only be studied in individuals who have experienced significant adversity” and so resilience “research has to begin with a careful study of risk and protective influences” (Rutter, 2015, p. 342). However, Rutter (2015, p. 347) continues: “Although there have been programs designed to teach resilience (Ungar, 2012), these have a dubious validity because

resilience is not a characteristic that can be taught or measured; it is an interactive concept that can only be identified in terms of the response to some adversity.”

Models of Prevention and Intervention

Bullock *et al.* (2015) reviewed factors that negatively impact mental health, including migration, immigration and cultural factors. They considered a number of evidence based practices used to address this that include prevention measures provided for the entire student population; individual and small group interventions to support positive behaviour; and more intensive targeted interventions for young people who may or may not have a diagnosis. Support may be universal or selective, and aimed at students with emotional or behavioural concerns. Indicated or tertiary supports are put in place for young people with an emotional or behavioural disorder. These include family group meetings that address issues of parenting, family relations and involvement and investment in children’s schooling. Indicated interventions were considered also, such as Incredible Years, a five-tier ‘wraparound’ model (Eber *et al.*, 2002), in which day-care providers, schools, families, social workers, psychologists and therapists collaborate to meet the mental health needs of children and young people (Webster-Stratton, Reid, and Stoolmiller, 2008). Reconnecting Youth, reflecting the thinking of Brofenbrenner (1977) embodies a social network support model that incorporates the idea that any student’s maladaptive behaviour is maintained within a social context and that therefore, interventions must take into account and/ or occur within that context. Social and Emotional Learning research has shown that Social Emotional Learning programmes improved academic performance, social and emotional skills, attitudes (Durlak *et al.*, 2011), classroom behaviours and reduced conduct problems.

As mentioned earlier, war-affected refugees and asylum seekers may have particular mental health needs. They have frequently been subjected to multiple traumatic events, as well as on-going social difficulties and daily stressors. Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the most prevalent and most researched effect of war among children and young people (Jordans *et al.*, 2016). Other difficulties include depression and anxiety (McMullen *et al.*, 2013). However, not all war-affected refugees are traumatised, and often they are extremely resilient and resourceful despite their adversities. However, it is important to be mindful that their experiences do increase the risk of psychological distress and the development of psychiatric

disorders. Awareness of relevant risk and protective factors is vital as well as a phased model of intervention and holistic support (Ehntholt and Yule, 2006). A trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy intervention with war-affected children found significant reductions in posttraumatic stress, depression and anxiety symptoms, conduct problems as well as a significant increase in prosocial behaviour (McMullen *et al.*, 2013). Other promising treatments include narrative exposure therapy (NET) and eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR). Knowledge of the particular needs of refugee and asylum-seeking children and the cross-cultural differences is vital (Ehntholt and Yule, 2006).

According to Takanishi (2004), the achievement of children in kindergarten is a good predictor of future life prospects. Early intervention and learning programmes are understood to be helpful, but immigrant children are less likely to take part in them, and certain cultural groups are more likely to engage than others. The author found that family literacy programmes are a promising strategy for improving the language skills of children of immigrant families as well as their parents, but concludes that health and educational support in early years should be made a national priority for all young children as this will encourage and facilitate higher participation rates of all including immigrant children and their families. Takanishi (2004) identified several key characteristics of high quality early years programs for newcomer children: (I) extended exposure; (ii) alignment of educational services with the developmental characteristics of children; (iii) teachers who are degree level educated and reasonably well compensated; (iv) smaller class sizes and (v) parental involvement being made a priority. Takanishi (2004) also identified several positive aspects of being the child of an immigrant family. Significantly, newcomer children are more likely to live in a two-parent household and they score better on measures of school engagement including doing homework, caring about school and lower incidents of suspension and exclusion. Importantly, immigrant parents are no more likely to have poorer mental health than native parents.

In Takanishi's (2004) view, immigrant children may be placed at an economic advantage if they can progress in their English-speaking skills, as competitive global demands for bi-lingual or multi-lingual individuals can enable them to secure economic security. Although school related gains are important, these should be complemented by community resources that provide additional educational and health opportunities when children are out of school. Takanishi (2004) notes access issues in relation to these programmes, and argues that service providers should be

aware of the inequalities among ethnic minorities, ensuring they serve a cross section of immigrant children and young people in their communities. Takanishi (2004) advocates 2-tiered generational programmes wherein parents are offered language courses and courses in workforce skills while their children are offered quality pre-kindergarten support with the opportunity to develop English language skills. Like Kernaghan (2015), Takanishi (2004) highlights the lack of specificity and consistency in data concerning newcomer children's countries of origin and notes a lack of standard terminology.

Tatar (2012) carried out an Israeli study to investigate the experiences of school counsellors working with immigrants in schools and their views regarding the contributing factors to immigrants' adaptation to school and society; the most significant obstacles they face. The study also explored what the counsellors had learned about themselves, their roles and the school's work with immigrant pupils. The key findings of the study were that counsellors experienced emotional and work burn out, and that as well as a desire to help they experienced feelings of frustration and disappointment. In fact, they experienced some of the same feelings as those who identified immigrants as a problem, but by contrast stressed more positive solutions. They felt abandoned by other staff, but grew in feelings of competence over time.

Factors contributing to immigrants' adaptation identified in Tatar's study (Tatar, 2012) included the breaking down of language barriers, the provision of more resources and support to schools with higher percentages of immigrants, and the encouragement of academic success, which was viewed as an avenue towards social acceptance. Obstacles to immigrants' adjustment focused on social skills. In the view of counsellors, immigrants believed that their most important task was to be integrated, but this did not always fit well with the good intentions of education authorities. Tatar (2012) considered several models that schools might use to help them deal with cultural heterogeneity and frameworks for making their organisations more welcoming or culturally responsive to immigrant children. These included:

1) Holvino's Model of Multicultural Organisational Development (MCOD).

This model suggests that culturally plural organisations go through distinct stages, moving from 'monocultural' (where the values of one group are dominant), to 'non-discriminatory', to 'multicultural' (where the perspectives and styles of diverse people are valued and contribute to organisational goals and excellence).

2) Diversity in Organisations: Perceptions and Approaches (DOPA) (Horenczyk and Tater, 2011). This model allows for mapping perceived diversity in schools and for identifying the available or preferred ways of dealing with this type of diversity. There are two important elements in the institutions coping with diversity in general and cultural diversity in particular: (1) subjective perception of diversity and (2) approaches to diversity.

Fazel (2015) carried out a study based on a school based mental health service set up in eight centres across the UK for refugee and asylum seeking young people. Forty three young people who had been discharged from the program were interviewed across three centres in Glasgow, Cardiff and Oxford. Earlier research had emphasized the importance of working in the school environment, as a higher proportion of refugee and asylum children have clinically significant mental health problems than ethnic minority and indigenous young people, and such children and young people may face barriers in accessing support beyond the school. Fazel (2015) found that the school-based service had significantly improved peer problem scores and this raised the question as to whether or not working within the context of a school can specifically assist in addressing peer related psychological difficulties. Fazel (2015, p. 260) concludes by arguing that schools are the best placed institutions to address the psychosocial needs of children by creating opportunities to and should therefore adopt this enhanced role:

'Creating an environment where opportunities for students to engage with one another (Patel, 2013) and enabling social recognition can help those with negative self-beliefs to internalise a new perspective. Teachers are probably best placed to create these opportunities that might improve participation and help to make a shift in how these students are perceived by their peers.'

Nature and Role of EA Youth Service

The EA Youth Service provides an extensive range of services to young people through a diverse network of organisations including Controlled, Voluntary, Uniformed and Church Based, on the basis of voluntary participation. According to the Regional Assessment of Need (RAON) (EA, 2016) the statutory sector is comprised of 92 clubs and the voluntary sector incorporates around 1700 units. Collectively they engage 39% of the youth population aged 4-18; the most recent figures reveal that almost 180,000 young people participate. Priorities for Youth (DENI, 2013) emphasized the positive contribution Youth Services can play in

helping each young person to achieve their full potential. The Children's Service Co-Operation Act (NI) (2015) identified a framework within which a new strategy for Children and Young People should be developed, stating that wellbeing should be viewed in relation to 8 parameters, the first of which is Physical and Mental Health. The Regional Assessment of Need 2017-2020 by the Youth Service identified promoting positive mental health as a key area of action within the Regional Youth Development Plan 2017-2010. Section 6.5 of the Youth Service RAON highlights the need for additional support for newcomer children and young people in order to address barriers to inclusion. The Model for Effective Practice (DE, 2013) requires Youth Service personnel to plan and deliver programmes to ensure equality and inclusion of all young people, including newcomer children and young people and / or those suffering from mental health issues.

The Potential Impact of the Current Study

The impact of research, according to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2015, p.13) can be defined as: 'any effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia'. It is hoped that the findings of this study may encourage policy makers and providers to support the revision and improvement of provision for newcomer children and young people in Northern Ireland, thus addressing the needs from a specific evidence base, with a view to enhancing the lives of newcomer children and young people in our communities. The focus of this study is of particular current relevance to policy makers and providers in youth service and in education in Northern Ireland.

The findings of this project are also relevant to curriculum development and teaching in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Northern Ireland, and across undergraduate, postgraduate and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes in response to the regional and global context, specifically immigration trends and related issues. According to the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2014, p.7), 'the use of research-based knowledge, theoretical insights and involvement in research processes all feature strongly in the evidence about professional development and in the selection and use of tools to aid teachers' learning'. Curriculum development in ITE should benefit not only current and future generations of teachers, but all stakeholders in the wider education and youth service community in Northern Ireland.

Potential Outcomes and Beneficiaries of the Current Study

Newcomer children and young people stand to benefit from recommendations for improvement in provision.

Policy makers: the focus of this study is of current relevance to policy makers and practitioners in community and education provision within Northern Ireland.

Youth Service provision: the findings of this project could contribute to the professional development of Youth Service providers and inform developmental planning to improve the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people.

Education and Training: the findings could contribute to curriculum development across undergraduate, postgraduate and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes in response to demographic change in Northern Ireland. Specifically, findings could inform learning and teaching relating to immigration trends and associated issues, such as multilingualism, and their impact on wellbeing and mental health in children and young people, thus benefiting students and practitioners in community, youth service and education sectors and stakeholders in the wider community.

Further Research

The proposed study could lead to further investigations into the relationship between migration, multilingualism and the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people; methodology and resource development in youth service engagement with newcomer children and young people; the role of youth service provision in raising educational aspiration and achievement amongst newcomer children and young people; supporting refugee children and young people in schools and communities; comparative studies.

Focus of Study and Current Research Questions

In light of the literature reviewed, as well as the current policy context, and in order to fulfil the remit specified by EA as commissioning funding body, the current project aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of EA Youth Service engagement with newcomer children?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities that EA Youth Service personnel encounter in their engagement with newcomer children and young people?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities facing newcomer children and young people with respect to mental health and wellbeing?
4. Which recommendations could be made with a view to future development of the EA Youth Service in order to contribute effectively to improving the health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people?

Chapter 2 Methodology

Project Activities

The research was carried out by the research team between January and April 2018.

The research team comprised five members of academic faculty and two research assistants. The team met and communicated on a regular basis, taking decisions under the leadership of the Principal Investigator who acted as first point of contact for the funding body and who monitored and communicated progress. Adherence to college policies and procedures maintained quality assurance while support from the Research Office and Finance teams ensured budget control was maintained by adhering to college procedures and via proper use of timesheets, travel claim forms and invoices.

Research Methods

As the research was designed to gain insights from the views and experiences of key staff members in schools, EA Youth Service personnel, and newcomer children and young people themselves, thus highlighting their voices, the study adopted an interpretivist paradigm (Lapan *et al.*, 2012). As Silva *et al.* (2015, p. 64) explain, 'interpretive social science stands in direct opposition to positivism, aiming to describe meaningful social action that will allow us to understand social reality... Interpretive researchers therefore prefer qualitative designs, especially textual and narrative studies and field studies'. For the purposes of the study a mixed methods approach with a qualitative emphasis and triangulation of data was undertaken in order to gather rich and nuanced data and strengthen the study's findings (Creswell, 2009).

Research participants

In order to adopt as inclusive an approach as possible, information was sought from EA Youth Service personnel in rural and urban areas across Northern Ireland, including those involved in Controlled and Voluntary settings. The study also sought to engage with newcomer children and young people, and with key staff members in schools who work closely in a pastoral dimension with these children and young people, in order to gain insights into their mental health needs. It was hoped that this engagement would shed light on how schools and the EA Youth Service might work effectively together to address such needs.

The importance of the voice of children and young people has been emphasised in recent years since the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in particular Article 12, which recognises the child as a human being with the capacity to hold views and the right to express these freely (Noyes, 2005; Lundy, 2007). The importance of the voice of newcomer children and young people has also been emphasized in previous studies in Northern Ireland (Kernaghan, 2015). Therefore the views of a sample of newcomer children and young people were sought in this study.

Research activity

The research encompassed three main strands as follows:

Strand 1. Literature Review

The research team undertook a thorough desktop analysis of the literature, international and national, relating to the health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people and to the role of youth service provision. The literature review considered research findings concerning the experiences of newcomer children and young people and also strategies introduced in the UK and internationally to promote their mental health and wellbeing. This review served as the foundation underpinning the focus and processes of the project and informed the final recommendations made in this report. Current data relating to enrolment of newcomer children and young people in educational settings was analysed relating to the geographical locations of newcomer children and young people across Northern Ireland.

Strand 2: Design, Administration and Analysis of Questionnaire Surveys

Youth Service Personnel Online Survey Questionnaire

A questionnaire survey was designed by the team in close consultation with senior leaders in the commissioning body, the EA Youth Service. This questionnaire was then sent electronically to 1462 voluntary sector youth work practitioners, 39 Regional voluntary sector youth work practitioners and an unidentified number of controlled sector youth work practitioners across Northern Ireland, in order to explore their current degree and experience of engagement with newcomer children and young people and to seek their views about current practice and future development. EA Youth Service facilitated circulation of the link to the online questionnaire survey

by providing contact details of Voluntary representatives for circulation to Voluntary Youth Work Practitioners and by circulating internally among Controlled Youth Work Practitioners. Examples of good practice captured in the survey questionnaire were recorded with a view to dissemination and learning. The questionnaire itself comprised a range of question types, including a majority of open-ended questions, to elicit rich and detailed qualitative data (see Appendix E).

Responses were made to a number of email requests by participants to explain the definition of the term 'newcomer', and to explain why individuals had been contacted to participate in the study. A number of complaints were made with respect to recruitment of participants. Some requests were made for contact details to be taken off the database; several individuals reported that they had already requested their details to be removed yet had continued to be contacted. Approximately 30-40 individuals who stated that they would not complete the survey, as they did not work with newcomer children and young people, were encouraged to do so, in order to capture their views.

Newcomer Children and Young People and Key Staff Members in Schools Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires

The study sought to explore the experiences of newcomer children and young people with respect to the issues they face that may affect their mental health. This was achieved by the completion of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997). The SDQ is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire that includes 25 items asking about psychological attributes. These are then divided into 5 subscales: 1) Emotional Symptoms; 2) Conduct Problems; 3) Hyperactivity/Inattention; 4) Peer Relationship Problems; 5) Prosocial Behaviour. A Total Difficulties score can be generated based on adding subscales 1- 4 together.

There is a version of the SDQ for parents or teachers of 3-16 year olds. A separate version of the questionnaire can be given to young people to complete for self-rating. This asks about the same 25 traits, though the wording is slightly different. This self-report version is suitable for young people aged around 11-16, depending on their level of understanding and literacy (Goodman et al, 1998). Questionnaires, scoring and background information on the SDQ are available at <http://www.sdqinfo.com/> and copies of both questionnaires can be viewed in Appendix F.

Schools invited to participate were identified using current DENI school enrolment data. Sampling for the study was purposive. The selection of schools with high percentages of newcomer children was one means to ensure that we gathered data relating to communities with similarly high percentages of newcomer children and young people. Two urban primary schools in Belfast and two primary schools in provincial/rural populations participated, as well as two urban post-primary schools in Belfast, and two post-primary schools in provincial/rural populations. The participating primary and post-primary schools included Controlled and Maintained sector schools in both urban and provincial/rural settings. The Principals in the schools selected to participate were contacted initially by a telephone call and this was followed up by email and further telephone calls.

Information letters outlined the nature of the research, the voluntary nature of involvement with it, and the right of participants to withdraw at any time. The consent of principals and teachers was sought and obtained to carry out data collection in schools, and parental consent was also obtained. Cover letters were drawn up informing participants of the purpose of the study and seeking the consent of the school principal, relevant teachers, parents and young people. The EA Intercultural Education Service translated all information letters and consent forms for parents and newcomer children and young people into the languages required. The languages for translation were identified by the schools and were as follows: Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, and Spanish.

Schools were deemed to represent the best forum for this element of the study, given the safeguarding structures already in place should any issue arise requiring specialist support or action. The research team worked closely with staff in schools in this respect, following all relevant policies and procedures both in Stranmillis University College and in the schools involved. Where the SDQ highlighted major concern regarding social and emotional wellbeing this information could be passed to the Principal or designated teacher for pastoral care, drawing on the pastoral structures and expertise of the school.

39 children and young people completed the SDQ in paper form in English. They were specifically selected because they had met the criteria of a 'newcomer' but subsequently had developed or maintained sufficient English language ability to enable them to understand and complete the questionnaire. 33 key staff members in

schools also completed the SDQ with respect to the same children and young people that had completed the self-report form. 6 staff forms had not been returned at the time of analysis.

Strand 3: Semi-structured Interviews and Participatory Focus Groups

Focus Group Discussions with Newcomer Children and Young People

Focus groups were conducted with newcomer children and young people in the 8 schools participating in the project: 4 primary and 4 post primary, drawn from both urban and provincial settings. In the focus group discussions with the children and young people there were 4-6 participants and the researcher collecting the data used a semi-structured framework to guide the discussion (see Appendix B). The children and young people that participated represented the two age groups with which the EA Youth Service engages (9-13 and 14-18). The sampling was purposive; the children and young people were required to have recent experience of being a newcomer but were also required to have sufficient linguistic proficiency in English to engage with the discussion (B2 level Common European Framework of Reference CEFR). Each focus group discussion began with an icebreaker game. Permission of parents / guardians was sought for participation in the focus group discussions by issuing translated letters of introduction via the school principal, explaining the purpose of the study and the processes involved. Parents were made aware that pastoral support was available in school should any sensitive issues emerge and that participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any point. Translated consent forms were issued, and completed versions signed by parents / guardians were collected in hard copy by the researcher in liaison with the school. All of the interviews and focus group discussions in schools were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed prior to thematic analysis.

Semi-structured Interviews with Key Staff Members in Schools

Principals in the participating schools in the study (4 primary and 4 post primary) nominated one key staff member in their school to participate in a semi-structured interview. The role of each key staff member nominated by the school principals involved working closely in a pastoral dimension with newcomer children and young people. The aim of this strand of the study was to gain insights into the mental health of newcomer children and young people, and to come to understand how the EA Youth Service might help to improve this. The schedule of questions (see Appendix

C) derived from the project's four overarching research questions. The schools involved were given freedom of choice with respect to the nomination of the key staff member.

Focus Group Discussions with EA Youth Work Practitioners

Focus group discussions were also carried out with EA Youth Service personnel (Voluntary and Controlled), in communities with high percentages of newcomer children and young people (urban and rural), in order to explore the mental health needs of newcomer children and young people and the role of the EA Youth Service in improving this. EA provided contact lists for both the Controlled and Voluntary sectors, and the Youth Service personnel were then invited by the research team to participate. Two focus groups were held, in order to gather data around the delivery youth work programmes in both rural and urban contexts. Each of the two focus groups comprised 6- 8 participants from both Voluntary and Controlled sectors. The focus group discussions were held in geographical areas where high percentages of newcomer children and young people reside and where youth work provision was available for these individuals. In total 10 organisations were represented, 5 of which were Voluntary and/or faith-based organisations and 5 of which were Controlled sector organisations. All of the participants, bar one Voluntary sector youth work practitioner, had experience of interaction with newcomer children and young people in their current role or in a previous youth work capacity.

Participants were recruited using two techniques. First, all survey respondents were invited to express an interest to participate when completing the EA Youth Work Practitioner Survey. This method did not garner sufficient interest and led the research team to email all named youth workers from both EA Voluntary and Controlled sector contacts lists, explaining the purpose of the focus group discussions and inviting individuals to take part. Introductory letters of information and consent forms were drawn up to be distributed to participants. Following this, email invitations were issued to 1462 youth work practitioners, 39 Regional Voluntary sector youth work practitioners and an unidentified number of Controlled sector youth work practitioners. 45 phone call invitations were made to engage voluntary sector workers in collaboration with EA staff to ensure distribution was completed among Controlled sector workers. Those who expressed an interest were then followed up by phone calls. A number of participants were also invited to take part by request from EA officials. Two focus group venues were organised in collaboration

with the EA Youth Service Senior Team and group participants were successfully recruited for both focus group discussion events.

The focus group discussions lasted approximately one hour and forty minutes. The schedule of questions (see Appendix D) derived from the project's four overarching research questions, and sought to identify and understand: the nature of youth work engagement with newcomer children and young people (RQ1); the issues newcomer children and young people face that affect their mental health (RQ3); how youth workers might support the development of positive mental health and wellbeing amongst newcomer children and young people (RQ4); the key opportunities for newcomer children and young people in relation to their mental health and the youth work programmes that are available (RQ3); and the key challenges experienced in seeking to develop the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people (RQ2). A further two questions sought to establish the recommendations youth workers would make to assist the development of the EA Youth Service in order to promote positive mental health and wellbeing in newcomer children and young people (RQ4), and whether each organisation represented had a plan in place to help youth workers engage with newcomer children and young people more effectively (RQ4).

Data Analysis

The research team was responsible for the interpretation and reporting of key findings.

The semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed in full. Multiple readings of the transcripts ensured familiarity with the material. The transcripts were then analysed using simple coding and network analysis to elicit emerging themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013; Thomas, 2013).

Analysis of questionnaire data was also carried out alongside this. The majority of the questions in the EA Youth Practitioner Survey were open-ended and qualitative. The data gathered in this element of the study was collated question by question, using a Microsoft Excel document. Researchers familiarised themselves with the data by reading and reading the material. Then, using a system of simple coding, the answers were organized into categories summarising response types. The

occurrences of each response type were counted and presented using percentages of the total number of responses given.

Upon analysis of the results, relevant referrals emerging from the focus group discussions and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires with children and young people were made so that specialist support and provision could be put in place where necessary.

Ethical Considerations

The study conformed to the ethical principles of beneficence, respect and justice (Lapan et al, 2012). Staff Research Ethical approval was obtained from the Research and Ethics Committee of Stranmillis University College. The research complied with the BERA (2011) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, the College Code of Ethics (2015), and Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). The latter require respectively that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration and that children who are capable of forming their own views should be granted the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, commensurate with their age and maturity. Children were therefore facilitated to give fully informed consent and consent was obtained from their legal guardian. Legal requirements with regard to working with school children were complied with, and efforts were made to put young participants at ease. All information was held and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998), used for the sole purposes of the research study and subsequent research articles and/or presentations. All personal information was encoded or made anonymous as far as possible.

Chapter 3 Preliminary Findings

As outlined in the introduction, the purpose of the study was twofold. Firstly, the study sought to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer children and young people in communities across Northern Ireland. Secondly, it sought to explore ways in which the EA Youth Service can contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people, and make recommendations for future development.

The findings of the study, based on analysis of online and paper survey questionnaire data, and thematic content analysis of qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, are presented in the sections below. Section One relates the views of Youth Service personnel. Section Two relates the views of key staff in primary and post primary schools that work closely with newcomer pupils and their families, and presents the data from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire completed by newcomer children/young people and key staff members in schools. Section Three reports the views of newcomer children and young people themselves.

3.1 The Views of EA Youth Service Personnel

3.1.1. Focus Group Discussion Data

This section of the report presents a summary of the views of youth work practitioners, gathered in focus group discussions. The findings in this section are organised by research question. Responses have been grouped thematically by sub headings and each is supported by representative quotes from focus group participants.

What is the nature of EA Youth Service engagement with newcomer children? (RQ1)

The changing demography of Northern Ireland was highlighted in both focus groups, with participants noting that there are many complex issues which youth workers face when working with newcomer young people and their families.

Types of Engagement

All of the participants except one had some experience of engaging with newcomer children and young people, although the degree and nature of the engagement

varied widely. Those employed as Inclusion / Diversity workers across the two focus groups indicated a high level of engagement with newcomer young people, particularly through partnership working, particularly with NICRAS, the Northern Ireland Community for Refugee and Asylum Seekers; RRCANI, the Roma Community Association of Northern Ireland; and CIP, Community Intercultural Programme. The majority of participants indicated that they delivered specific or targeted programmes for newcomers or BME young people. A youth worker in the rural focus group shared:

“I run a programme for newcomer children...and in the last year engaged 62 young people...it ranges (in age) from six to...17. The majority are from India...a small number from Egypt and a small number from the Philippines”.

A youth worker in the urban focus group talked about an extensive programme they had run for 5 years for BME young people:

“I initiated a program specifically for BME young people... at that time there was very little, there was probably no provision at all and I suppose I wanted to jump in there...Its main target was about increasing the numbers of BME/Newcomer young people participating in the youth service [and] to increase the leadership skills of these young people...Then there was like things specifically for particular groups stuff for young women, stuff around the arts and travel”.

There was debate and discussion across both groups as to how youth workers, and the Youth Service more generally, should identify and engage with newcomer young people. Some felt that it is best to have a ‘targeted’ approach whereby young people identified as ‘newcomer’ are targeted for certain provision due to perceived lack of engagement from young people most in need:

“I think there are very few specific opportunities actually, and I do think that in terms of our youth service generally, apart from a few specific projects, that we really are not targeted enough at the young people who need it... so we should be targeted more and we aren’t for whatever reason, whether they’re [the] barrier or we are. Maybe we create the barriers, and may be without knowing that we are creating them”.

Similarly another participant felt it necessary to have a more targeted approach towards newcomer engagement so that barriers to accessing youth services might be removed:

"I think something you said about being proactive because I know obviously in Scouts it's open to anybody but we are not proactive at helping newcomer young people join so we are there in the community and if they live there they can come but obviously there are a lot of barriers around them being able to do that but we are not proactive about going out and doing that".

Another participant took a different perspective and talked about the targeted inclusion of newcomer young people as a preliminary step towards ensuring full inclusion/integration for all young people in the future;

"I think even the creation of the inclusion and diversity project where you know EA looked across what it was doing and thought we are meant to be an inclusive youth service but we are not, for a number of reasons, not that they are purposely exclusive, but they recognised that we need to be more proactive and actually target newcomer young people and other section 75 young people...so I think that's an opportunity where some of the strategists are kind of looking and saying, ok, we do need to be more proactive and more assertive and actually encouraging newcomers to be involved in different things we are doing here and become part of a fabric that you know, where we eventually won't have to be so assertive to engage them it will just become natural and normal for people of a wide range of diversities to be able to be part of our general population and the work and the youth work gained from the education we do".

Others felt it more appropriate to take a holistic approach and maintain an ethos of openness and inclusivity towards all young people:

"I wouldn't see us making, you know, making really massive differences for newcomer children in terms of when they are coming into our unit. We have tried homework clubs specifically to support them and we had schools involved in that as well, so that they were wanting you know all the young people to avail of that service, so it kind of became a bit diluted from what it was originally set up upon, but in terms of them coming in, I mean things like our youth committees and forums in the centre, they are as welcome and as encouraged as your child and mine, you know, coming in as well".

One individual felt strongly that youth services needed to change the nature of their engagement with all young people and should provide more integrated youth work provisions in order to breakdown stereotypes surrounding different cultures:

"the most racist people I've met in the last lot of months are the indigenous young people we work with because their families are very racist towards other cultures so we have to provide opportunities for them to engage with those from others cultures and to break down all those other myths and barriers as well as our young people breaking down the ones they have as well so there is opportunities there as well to mix and integrate with other young people who are different from them".

However, proponents of this approach also stressed how ‘targeted services’ can have unintended exclusionary effects on their beneficiaries. One participant illustrated how this can occur by providing the following example:

“We have heard of work before in the past where youth workers, or workers in have had to work with BEM young people in school. So they organised a meeting with young people in the school. They had first years through to sixth years all waiting in the same room, and, it’s class - this is a true story! It was like a glass-partitioned room between the corridor and class and the young people were in. So these young people are all told to meet in this room, so all the school was walking round past them and there was these like 10 young black people sitting in the room aged from 11 up to 17 or 18, and, I think they were looking at each other like, “why are we here?” And the only reason they were there was because they were black, no other reason! This is what’s going to happen in our agencies. We are just going to be working with these small groups of young people that we have been told to work with or to go and educate”.

At different times throughout the discussion a participant reinforced the need to be mindful of the issues youth workers faced when seeking to engage with newcomers and attempt integration with other indigenous young people. Twice, this individual drew attention towards the political climate, and how contentious events on a global scale can impact upon levels of acceptance and thus the viability or success of integrating initiatives in Northern Irish communities:

“...we just have to be very, very, careful because of the current kinda political climate that is happening...

Communities in Northern Ireland aren’t very tolerant towards newcomers as well and it depends on what’s happening globally. Nothing might not happen at that particular time but something might happen somewhere in the world and if you are a Muslim you are going to get blamed for it walking down the street and stuff you know? So that’s what we find ourselves as well. At times when we go to do activities and stuff as well we need to be kind of very aware of what’s going on in the world...

...we are trying to integrate them into a community that is accepting of them to start off with and educate them with other young people at the same time”.

The nature of youth work engagement with newcomers in rural areas also appeared to be mitigated by changing levels of community acceptance and hostility. One rural worker made reference to a community of newcomer children who themselves were initially reluctant to engage in integration:

"Like I'm going back 10 years ago to when I had just begun youth work and it relates to a point that was made about people being subjected to suffering racist abuse and stuff. When I got there they [newcomer young people] actually had formed like their own like vigilante group called "street soldiers!" They had gone and got themselves hoodies and all! But it was a particularly protective thing for themselves and that was very much Portuguese. Since that, they have now become integrated within the local community. But it's more now, I find it's pockets of Portuguese that are very much isolated. And stick to their own and don't like to kind of mix in".

Terminology and definitions

In addition to the points raised above, it would appear that the nature of youth work engagement is heavily influenced by each funder's definition/interpretation of the term 'newcomer':

"there is just a general lack of understanding, well maybe not a lack of understanding about what a newcomer is but a lack of understanding with regards to people who make up these definitions and in reality it's all related to funding anyway, so depending on who is funding us they will decide what they think a newcomer is - that can be really dangerous for the young people we are trying to work with because who is considered to be a newcomer and who isn't'

One participant mentioned that some funding schemes placed restrictions on the length of time a newcomer could be engaged in a project before reaching a stage when they were no longer considered to be a newcomer:

"...some of our schemes did specify that in the early days. I don't know if they still specify that now but there are certainly, like, that is where I got that definition from, it's from the first two years and then after that they're not are not a newcomer anymore".

This point generated emotive discussion amongst participants in the rural group who expressed objections to the use of the catch all term 'newcomer' and its implications with respect to young people's needs:

"Well I think that is ridiculous because I work with some young people who have been in this country for over 10 years and they are going to be 16 or 17 and 18 now, and they still have the same issues today, and barriers, and some of them are maybe only, now they may have good language and be able to articulate themselves, but there are still big barriers and they are big barriers for them to be able to say, "I have a problem can you help me?" But probably, my young people would struggle to say that to me".

"I think you're always a newcomer if English is your second language, where is the cut-off point? So do we only work with those kids that are newcomers

for two years, or what? And I think some of our schemes have a requirement like that".

Participants also problematized the definition amongst themselves and provided examples of anomalies to the DENI definition of what a newcomer is considered to be:

One participant said:

"...but then that is wrong according to other definitions given by example the education authority, sure a newcomer stops being a newcomer when they can speak the language".

Another participant stated:

"that's all wrong, I think if you are not indigenous to Northern Ireland or even if you are born here and you don't speak English as their first language then you are still a newcomer. Newcomers to me are young people or families who are not originally from Northern Ireland and who need help settling in and integrating".

One youth worker made reference to the stigmatising effects of the term 'newcomer' when recounting parents' concerns about the way their children were being identified in official terminology:

"We had an issue there, remember a couple of weeks ago when some of the parents were actually getting a wee bit annoyed that their children were being framed under the newcomer category in the sense that when do you not become a newcomer, or when do you become inclusive and be a fully inclusive member of society?"

In this instance the youth worker had sought official advice from an external body, yet there continued to be a lack of consensus outside of the EA as the advice was:

'...it's basically when English is an additional language or if they have English as their second language, then they are considered a newcomer whether they were born here or not because English is still additional to what their first language as it's their secondary language."

By contrast, there was no discussion on newcomer terminology amongst participants in the urban focus group. However, both groups tended to use the terms 'newcomer' and 'BME' interchangeably, reinforcing the lack of consistency and clarity across the sector in relation to the concept.

What are the challenges and opportunities for EA Youth Service personnel in relation to their engagement with newcomer children and young people? (RQ2)

Following data analysis, it was decided to examine the challenges within two broad categories: strategic and operational.

Strategic: Funding and Sustainability

A number of practitioners across both focus groups expressed concerns around the sustainability of the youth work service. This concern referred to a lack of funding for services in general, but more specifically in relation to longer term funding for projects aimed at newcomer young people. One practitioner explained how high levels of funding uncertainty made the continuation of a newcomer programme questionable, and how this could negatively impact upon the mental health of those currently availing of this service:

"If you take my post on the 31st of March, I don't know what is happening, so I have to tell my young people that come the 1st of April I don't know if I have the staff to sustain the programme which is also going to have a negative impact on young people's social and emotional health and social opportunities. So like that's a big barrier straight away is that until I know there is continued funding, so I can say to my young people here is the plan for the year, you could do that, but that's not the case it's all short term funding".

Other staff highlighted that in the absence of longer term funding newcomers are at risk of 'falling off the system completely' as they are reluctant to engage in new or different projects due to a fear of lack of acceptance from their peers. Another drew comparisons between educational provision and youth services stating that 'young people are not sent to school for 6-8 weeks so why do we expect them to avail or benefit from short term provision?'

Across both groups youth workers also drew attention to the negative effect short term funding had on staff care. Job security was highlighted as having a significant impact on youth workers' ability to deliver effective services, with many practitioners dealing with their own mental health issues due to the level of uncertainty they faced about their future:

"I've been employed as a temporary worker and I am in my 6th year now and it's coming to the end of the year and usually it's January we get our protective notices but we didn't get ours this year so we are sort of keeping our fingers crossed that we still have a job. So like, it does have an effect on you and the young people because you can't say yes definitely we will do that

in May or June you can't plan things for the summer this time a year because you don't know if you're going to be in the job".

"Obviously it has an impact on us as workers because you don't know what is going to happen and surely that impacts upon your own mental health and can make it difficult to do your job and deal with other young people, like youth workers might be experiencing mental health difficulties compounded by the likelihood or the surety as to whether or not their program is going to continue".

In order for youth work practitioners to support the development of the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer children it was suggested that more attention needs to be directed towards increased staff care and ensured job security as well as staff training regarding mental health:

"I think we need to target staff as well as target the young people. Like I do think that training and stuff around mental health for our staff teams and making sure people are able to stay in work and they are secure in their work and in the future of their jobs. It means we can provide a far better service for newcomer young people because a lot of staff are demotivated and stressed and don't know whether they are getting paid at the end of the month or still have a post or where that post might be".

Further concerns around funding were raised in relation to a lack of consistency in strategic delivery requirements, and this was identified as a barrier to effective youth work:

"There's no strategic direction and there should be! Like, the funding and the strategy should go hand in hand for me, and the strategy should not deviate because there is money coming in for whatever is flavour of the month. Right now, it's about paramilitaries and next month it might be erm, I don't know, it was CSE last year, mental health in general is this year. This means that all statutory youth workers have to avail, very often in these different directions depending on what is flavour of the month. So for me it's about strategy, communication, communicating the clear strategy that we are about youth work".

Repeated reference was made to 'outcomes based accountability' stipulated by funders. Participants agreed that such measures sat in contrast to effective youth work, with one practitioner stating that 'the Youth Service is moving away from meeting the needs of young people to meeting the needs of the funders.' Another felt that 'the fun' and 'the core aspect of youth work'- relationship building- had been removed in order to accommodate funding requirements:

"we actually really enjoy our young people and would like to be able to have fun with them without having to feel the pressure of all this outcome based stuff and accreditation and stuff. If we could go back to that reason of why we work with young people because- it's because we enjoy the relationships with them!"

Practitioners also felt that their ability to remain flexible in responding to the diverse needs of newcomer young people had been restricted due to bureaucracy, a number of financial constraints and strict funding requirements. One youth worker from the urban group gave the following example:

"if we have a group of young people we meet them on a Tuesday night and we think an activity would be the best thing for them to do, so we could have in the past said 'Thursday night we will meet you all in the bowling alley we will get everyone a round', play a round, and then we improve our relationships. We now need to book that all in advance, get it all signed off and all that stuff so it stops you from being reactive, and that's not just newcomers it's everything, its general but it really impacts on the newcomer ones as you really need to be able to be reactive for the needs of the newcomers as well".

Strategic: Collaboration

From a strategic perspective the notion of collaboration presents both opportunities and challenges to the development of the EA youth service in seeking to address the mental health and wellbeing needs of newcomer children and young people. Firstly, practitioners in both focus groups made specific reference to their strong collaborative efforts with various organisations working with children and young people on issues related to their mental health and wellbeing. When asked what they would recommend to develop the capacity of youth services further it was suggested that further collaborative efforts are supported and facilitated:

"I think more collaboration between services, so even for ourselves we do a program during the day but to know what's going on in the evening times for people or what's going on at the weekends to know what to link young people into. We work regionally so it would be really class to hear of all the services happening all over Northern Ireland and where we could signpost young people onto or even if they have younger brothers and sisters maybe what they could be accessing or I think definitely more collaboration between informal, formal, voluntary, statutory all services".

Others noted that the success of their interventions relied heavily on close working relationships and collaborative efforts with organisations external to the Controlled youth work sector:

"Well I suppose within this area we have a voluntary sector group that are part of an intercultural partnership which the program was part of and it is specifically for BME young people. So, we kind of take more of a supportive role in relation to you know, *not setting up our own individual groups but you*

know, working with program for anything they want and trying to signpost to mainstream stuff”.

Participants from both groups explained that they benefit from collaborating with different organisations in relationship to resource sharing and advocated for enhanced opportunities to learn more about different services and what is on offer:

“I have started to notice something over the past six months that is starting to happen at regional teams and team meetings where we’ve had an input from a person from the public health programs that has a new project based up in the West service, and it’s about working with young males in that area. And we’ve had an original presentation on the “Give Me Five” program and we recognise that is a great resource and is gone to the West. That resource is available now than when I originally started in the South. So ...I think there are fantastic resources and tools out there it’s just getting them shared and packaged properly and shared out”.

Participants identified one of the key advantages of collaborative work to be finding out about new ideas and sharing resources. Some suggested that collaborative practices between schools and youth workers should be replicated across the sector:

“Aye, because we are all very quick to have resources and share resources and have days where we share best practice of the Learning Together Programme, so it would be good if we could do it around different themes and stuff like that as well”.

Youth workers from the urban group explained that they had spent considerable time building strong professional relationships with organisations within the voluntary and community sectors. Doing this had enabled them to address issues of distrust and lack of understanding regarding the purpose of youth work, and thus access newcomer children and young people from otherwise closed immigrant communities:

“...we had gatekeepers, we partner with RICANNI, Nickola, Nickola, who was fantastic, got us into homes...”

“I remember whenever we first began working throughout NICRAS, which is the Northern Ireland Community for Refugee and Asylum Seekers, because that was kind of our lead in. You can imagine working with a lot of families that are newcomer young people, trust is a big thing and a lot of the countries of origin that these young people are coming from, do not have informal education, they don’t know what it is and it doesn’t exist. They have formal education but not informal, so youth worker? What’s a youth worker? You know, what’s an adult doing outside of education? So we kind of had those barriers to break down and thankfully we had those organisations like NICRAS that could help us to be able to break that down”.

However, despite the apparent developmental opportunities that stem from collaborative working across the sector, EA controlled sector workers understood that they had been advised to bring this form of partnership to a close in the new financial year. This not only poses a challenge but also a threat to the viability of current provision, as collaborative efforts ‘form the bulk of work done with newcomer children and young people.’ One practitioner, when asked to identify the main barrier to engaging newcomer young people in their service pointed to divisions between the voluntary and statutory sectors:

“[there are] bigger barriers now between the voluntary sector and the statutory sector, and I think we shouldn’t be building big peace walls there. We need to be making sure we can work much more effectively together... You know it wasn’t an issue there, whereas now we are directly instructed to work within our own EA service. For this work, that’s not a great idea, because we don’t gather newcomers together really in the same way that the voluntary sector does, and also you know, whilst the voluntary sector may gather these guys together in terms of their diverse kinda identities, they don’t always then become diverse with where they place them and I think that, you know, for future development, we also have to be looking to get newcomers alongside on board, but also not as just a newcomer group, you have to be kinda, be mixing them up with other identities and creating opportunities to break those barriers down, otherwise all you do is work with a bunch of newcomers. They don’t form any relationships really outside of their own group and so I don’t know how that’s actually taking barriers down, to me it’s just keeping barriers in place”.

One participant gave a succinct rationale for the perceived change in approach: ‘...they talk about double funding’.

Strategic: Addressing Barriers to Access

In this section a number of access challenges and opportunities identified by participants in the focus groups are presented. These are at the strategic level, particularly in relation to promotion of the EA Youth Service and awareness-raising among the newcomer community in Northern Ireland.

Participants highlighted a number of barriers to access with respect to EA Youth Service for young people and their families including a lack of awareness as to the nature and purpose of a youth service *per se*; difficulty in understanding promotional materials due to language barriers; fear and suspicion with respect to the youth work sector; and lack of community engagement. There is also evidence of a paucity of knowledge about the newcomer community as a whole within the Youth Service.

One practitioner highlighted the language barrier and its impact on effective communication:

"I've been saying, 'are the newcomer children and young people aware that they could go to a youth provision?' You know, how good are we at promoting what we do in a language that they understand and cultural way that they understand, because if you don't know and it's not your culture to have youth work, well then? A flier coming through might be in your language but its alien to your culture, so you know how? Do we promote what is on offer never mind what the barriers are to them coming to it to start with? Are they even aware of it and ... do we even know where they are to try and target them?"

Such concerns were echoed across the groups. Participants described inquisitive, sometimes suspicious parents, keen to find out more about the service:

"I've had some contact with parents when they are picking up and dropping off their children. Whenever they first come parents would be very keen to know what we do, what they [young people] do here and generally what's this all about. Some parents are coming and saying things like, "what do you run here?"

In addition to this, some youth workers shared concerns that parents did not appreciate the value of youth work and informal education:

"And a lot of the parents are coming in and saying things like, "I want my child, who is 13 or 14, volunteering", and I'm like, "no I have enough volunteers" and most of them are 16 so like, I could make, nearly make, or have a whole new program just for volunteers, but the problem is, I say, "you can come and volunteer when other clubs are on" and I say "I'll take you over and introduce you to the staff", but they won't do that so there are opportunities there if they want to volunteer but they just want to do it within their own community".

Such challenges also represent an opportunity to the Youth Service to engage in awareness raising and promotion of what youth work can offer young people. Some participants made suggestions as to how promotion and awareness raising could begin at strategic and operational level:

"I think promotion is a big thing. Like we're not into social media or anything but there are some other really diverse groups in Derry that I wouldn't have access to and they don't even know what we do or even that we exist! So then like, that's a big thing and we need to get the message onto social media stuff because that's the best way to do that".

"I think awareness too, it is important, the way you mentioned about the school, doing the awareness day, a worker did a cultural awareness event in the youth centre and it was a fantastic celebration and it was fantastic to see

all the food, the dance the dress that other young people brought, and the place was bunged and those young people presented their cultures to other young people".

A number of themes relating to operational issues emerged with respect to this question.

[Operational: Cultural Difference](#)

The youth workers identified significant challenges in relation to operational delivery due to cultural difference. The majority of youth workers felt newcomer young people and their families lacked any cultural reference points for youth work or Youth Service provision, so were suspicious or hesitant about engaging in youth work programmes.

"it's about being accepted by the community as well because they are very suspicious of who you are, as well and what you are there for and what information you are gathering about their young people."

"There is no understanding as to how our system works."

"Even the barrier of what is youth services across some cultures. They wonder is it social services or "are we in trouble why is the youth service bothering my child?" It is the understanding or lack of understanding about what it is we offer as a provision."

Challenges in relation to gender, timing of programmes, food and clothing were also highlighted as potential barriers to the participation of newcomer young people with EA Youth Service.

"We weren't allowed to work with girls at the start, especially in the Romanian communities."

"Chinese young people often they have responsibilities at home working."

"I know of certain communities that are very male dominant and if younger girls are seen to have a voice or are encouraged within youth groups it's not really taken well when they go home."

In respect of food, one comment captured both the challenge and the opportunity for youth work practitioners and highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity and integration in the delivery of youth work programmes:

"They went to a halal restaurant and he couldn't look around and he was just like, "when are we getting out of here? Get me out of here" because he was

the only white person in there and he felt exposed...the tables were turned completely...and it was such a learning curve for us as well as for him, it then made him realise what it's like for other young people who are newcomers."

Operational: Programme Delivery

Language was highlighted as having a significant impact on the mode of delivery with a number of youth workers stating that they had to focus on delivering activity based programmes due to lack of English:

"We found it was then the arts stuff or the activities stuff that is the ones that really engaged them."

This was seen as both a challenge and an opportunity, as these types of activities or methodology in terms of programme delivery are viewed as being a helpful introduction to youth work or informal education for newcomer children and young people. However, it was felt that the language barrier also limited the type of informal education that could be delivered. It was notable in the focus groups that there was no specific discussion amongst the youth workers about the use of the Northern Ireland Youth Work Curriculum with newcomer young people.

Another challenge raised in relation to delivery was the question as to whether youth work with newcomer young people should be delivered through single identity or targeted programmes versus fully inclusive programmes. One youth worker mentioned clear opportunities to embed the core youth work values of equity, diversity and interdependence by the inclusion of newcomer young people in existing Youth Service programmes:

"I would say the whole openness and inclusivity...we talk about inclusion and we talk about openness and we talk about equity and we talk about equality. I think it's about having those wider conversations so that it's just not all boxed in and it's not just putting people in boxes it's embedded."

Finally, in relation to programme delivery, it was felt by some of the participants, particularly those working in the rural context, that the timing and location of Youth Service provision need to be considered. It was noted that many newcomer parents work shift patterns, meaning that their children are often unable to access EA Youth Services:

"Parents aren't working the standard 9-to-5 they're working factory shifts... we were able to service their needs because we did a twilight...because Mum and Dad were still in the factory and so that twilight between 3:30 and 5:30 was actually a good window."

A number of participants also highlighted links with local schools and the opportunities for the EA Youth Service to deliver youth work through the Learning Together Programme and other school based programmes. It was felt that this was a good way of accessing newcomer children and young people who would otherwise not engage in any Youth Service provision.

Creating a Positive Environment

The importance of newcomer young people feeling safe and welcomed in EA Youth Centres was highlighted, with best practice in local primary schools being noted. The need to create welcoming spaces and ensure that the ethos of a youth centre is promoting or celebrating diversity was seen as being hugely important.

“A celebration of difference. I think it’s something we should try and it’s something that schools do really well. So, you know, we need to be more inclusive in the wider sense and visual sense and our communication and in the language we use.”

The location of youth centres and the reality that many newcomer young people are comfortable in their own groups or community areas but nervous about engaging outside their own community were also discussed:

“They won’t branch out into any of these things at this stage because of the fear - they are fearful!”

Building Relationships

Building relationships is central to youth work yet often this is difficult because of uncertainty about housing and the shifting nature of newcomer populations. This presents particular challenges to Youth Service personnel in terms of getting to know the young people, especially given the length of time it takes to establish a positive connection and for them to engage with the provision. Again the opportunity to link or partner with schools was highlighted:

“One model we are currently working on at the moment...is building and establishing a better relationship with the link teacher in schools and that teacher is bringing them down to one of our centres down in the area just as a taster session during the day, during the school day, because some taster sessions in the hope of building relationships with the youth worker.”

The importance of working with parents in relation to access and delivery of youth services was discussed at length in both focus groups. All agreed it was absolutely

vital to work with the parents if more newcomer young people are going to access youth services.

“the relationship with the parents is essential. Whilst it is the voluntary participation of young people that come into our youth services, it’s a different type of relationship with the parents because we have young people from Muslim communities.”

“We have to build the relationship with the parents.”

What are the challenges and opportunities facing newcomer children and young people with respect to mental health and wellbeing? (RQ3)

A number of challenges and opportunities emerged. These are discussed below.

Isolation

Isolation was felt to be a very significant challenge in relation to the mental health of newcomer children and young people. The following comments were made during the urban focus group:

“Isolation, leading to not going out of the house leading not to know where to go. So, that’s a big, big part about the integration but also from a mental health point of view.”

“Nearly isolate themselves based on that one experience that is a bit negative and I’d say that has a massive impact on the mental health.”

Youth work provides social and emotional support that can help address some of the challenges and make a positive impact on the mental health of young people. It was felt that Youth Forums could be a useful way of addressing isolation as they can bring groups of young people together to talk about the issues and design interventions to improve the lives of newcomer children and young people.

“peer education programs for newcomers so led by other newcomers, you know so somebody is leading your session for 6 months if you like, mentoring a newcomer for a year or whatever.”

Bullying and Racism

There was a clear sense in the discussions that racism was a very real challenge facing newcomer children and young people in Northern Ireland and that this impacts upon their mental health. A number of examples of this were discussed. One youth worker recalled the following incident:

"coming out of Oasis at night and people driving past in cars shouting insults you know shouting things like, "get home!" and you know calling them niggers and you know stuff like that there which was just, you can see that there was actual sort of things happening in and around.

Another added:

"Bullying certainly is an issue that is coming through massively, and racism."

Educational Pressure

There was a sense amongst the youth workers that some newcomer young people are under a lot of pressure to do well academically and that this also has an impact on their mental health. One participant said:

"Education would be a major focus from the family and there would be a certain amount of pressure there so you know, "you must study, you must do well!"

Another reflected on family pressures, linking this to success in school:

"there are family pressures that affect their mental health and wellbeing because again, some young people on my program did really well in their GCSEs they're now doing their A-levels."

Self Harm

One youth worker shared concern about self-harm and suicide, which operationally has implications for the type of youth work programmes that need to be delivered.

"we come across young people who have self-harmed. We also have young people who have actually written during a group work as an answer on flipchart paper to the question what's the consequences of being bullied and one of them said feeling suicidal."

Each challenge presents an opportunity for the Youth Service to respond to the needs of newcomer children and young people through the provision of high quality services and by signposting other professional support within the statutory and voluntary sectors. In particular participants highlighted the need to build relationships and identify resources to promote mental health and wellbeing amongst young people:

"We need to be making sure we can work much more effectively together."

"building a relationship and signposting..."

“I think we are making their passage way a wee bit easier which can only impact on a positive way for their mental health.”

Which Recommendations could be made with a view to future development of the EA Youth Service in order to contribute effectively to improving the health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people? (RQ4)

The following strategic recommendations were made by the participants in the EA Youth Service practitioner focus groups:

1. Clarify key terminology

The youth work practitioners differed in their understanding of the term ‘newcomer’ and some questioned its adequacy. A common, informed understanding of terminology could improve identification of and provision for young people’s needs and thus the quality of engagement. It is recommended that the EA Youth Service should revise and clarify its use of ‘newcomer’ and other key terms, and establish a clear communication strategy to ensure common understanding.

2. Foster valuable collaboration between sectors

Partnerships with schools and specialist voluntary sector organisations are valuable and should be developed. The Learning Together Programme was cited as an example of positive collaboration with schools with the potential to be replicated more widely.

3. Review approaches adopted: integrated or targeted?

The nature of existing youth work engagement with newcomer young people is varied and there is a lack of consensus as to how integrated or targeted provision should be. As one participant explained:

“...it’s getting that balance around the specialised projects for young people who maybe need bespoke projects whilst there are other ones who are very very happy to just go to the drop-in or to get involved in generic youth work provisions.”

There may be a case for the development of provision tailored specifically to the needs of newcomer children and young people in parallel with more holistic, integrated provision, in order to promote engagement between young people from a range of backgrounds including those indigenous to Northern Ireland. In order to

accommodate all young people it is recommended that a continuum of provision is made available accommodating young people who might benefit more from smaller, bespoke provision with a view to helping them transition into larger, more mainstreamed services. One participant put it like this:

"It's like when we talked about during the inclusion review you know inclusion should not be a bolt on. It should be about, that you want an inclusive approach to your group work and you know for me that the mental health and wellbeing as part of the holistic approach to working with young people and regardless of where they are from, if they are indigenous, or if they are BME or whatever, it's that mental health and wellbeing is ingrained in whatever we do. Because yes, work is about personal and social development, so more conversations with young people to know, it's just that if we know bits of information that we are constantly getting from the young people. I get that information to them, then you have the other more operational things for example if there is an issue with the group, so you explore deeper and then you're able to give the young people the correct information of where they could go for further support you know?"

It is also recommended that careful consideration be given to how young people are 'identified' or 'targeted' for youth work engagement. As some participants explained, efforts to promote and encourage inclusion can perpetrate exclusionary effects. Increased efforts are needed in work with indigenous young people to break down barriers of fear and suspicion towards others of non-indigenous backgrounds.

4. Address linguistic barriers, improve communication and work with parents

As linguistic difference is a barrier to communication with parents, translation services may be needed to ensure understanding of key documentation and clarity in terms of marketing and recruitment to provision. This would also help to address suspicion or mistrust. Moreover, winning the hearts and minds of parents is a key priority.

5. Share Resources; Develop Training; Disseminate Best Practice

The youth work practitioners highlighted a need for additional training on topics such as cultural awareness and promoting positive mental health. However, the participants in the focus groups all had experience working with newcomer children and young people and demonstrated a high level of awareness of their needs and appropriate resources. There is scope for evidence based, research informed

training incorporating dissemination of best practice by such youth work practitioners with enhanced experience and developed expertise in working with newcomer children and young people. It would be further recommended that the EA collate a resource tool kit designed specially to address the mental health needs of all young people, with additional resources/tools available to help youth workers tailor their provisions to the needs of newcomers. As one participant put it:

“we also have our [Gimme]-five programs that we run. We have brilliant resilience resources, so we do have, and our staff do cater good quality programs to meet the needs of specific groups and that would be, and it's not even the resources that we need, we need to know what the needs are, and from those needs, what are the issues in terms in relation to mental health and wellbeing? And, let's strip that back even further to have conversations around bullying, around self-harm, around relationships, and not having the ability to form positive relationships. And then we have the skill base and the quality of the staff to roll these conversations out to try and meet these outcomes”.

6. Promote diversity in the workplace

There was a consensus among participants about promoting greater diversity in the work place. Across both groups it was suggested that there needed to be more visual signs of cultural and racial diversity within the service. Youth workers indicated that increased efforts were needed to ensure youth service employees would be more representative of the changing demography of Northern Ireland. This would enable young people to ‘identify a familiar face’ upon accessing a Youth Service provision.

It was also recommended that apprentice opportunities be created to enable newcomer young people to become peer educators, mentors and eventually paid staff members of the EA youth service. The rationale behind this suggestion can be linked to practitioners’ concerns surrounding the sustainability of youth services and the need to move the service towards a multi-cultural workforce.

3.1.2. Online Questionnaire Survey Data

In this section the results of the online questionnaire survey completed by the EA Youth Service personnel is presented by question. A total of 116 Youth Service personnel completed the online survey, generating a comprehensive range of quantitative and qualitative answers.

Question 1 asked for participants to state their consent for taking part in the research.

Question 2 asked participants to select the description that best suited their organisation.

31.03% of the respondents described the organisation they belonged to and their role as Controlled (Full-Time), 3.45% as Controlled (Part-Time), 6.03% as Statutory (Full-time), 16.38% as Voluntary (Full-time), 42.24% as Voluntary (Part-time) and one person (0.86% as None of the Above).

Question 3 required those participants involved in voluntary organisations to describe them.

The majority of participants described their organisations as Uniformed (43.84%), while 21.92% described their organisation as Voluntary Church Based. 15.07% described their organisation as a Large Full Time Club, 5.48% described their organisation as a Part-time Club/Organisation, 5.48% described their organisation as Voluntary Non-Church Based, and another 5.48% described their organisation as a Regional Voluntary Youth Organisation. 2.74% (2 participants) described their organisation as other.

Question 4: How many members are currently registered with your club/group against the following (youth service) age ranges? [4-8yrs; 9-13yrs; 14-18yrs]

70% of respondents had members registered in the 4-8 years age range. 87% had members in the 9-13 years age range. 96% had members in the 14-18 years age range and 67% had members in the 19-25 years age range.

Question 5: What is your average weekly attendance?

Responses indicated average weekly attendance ranging from 4 to 800, with an overall average of 90. Due to this large range a more relevant indicator of attendance may be the Median of 48 and Interquartile Range of 25 - 90.

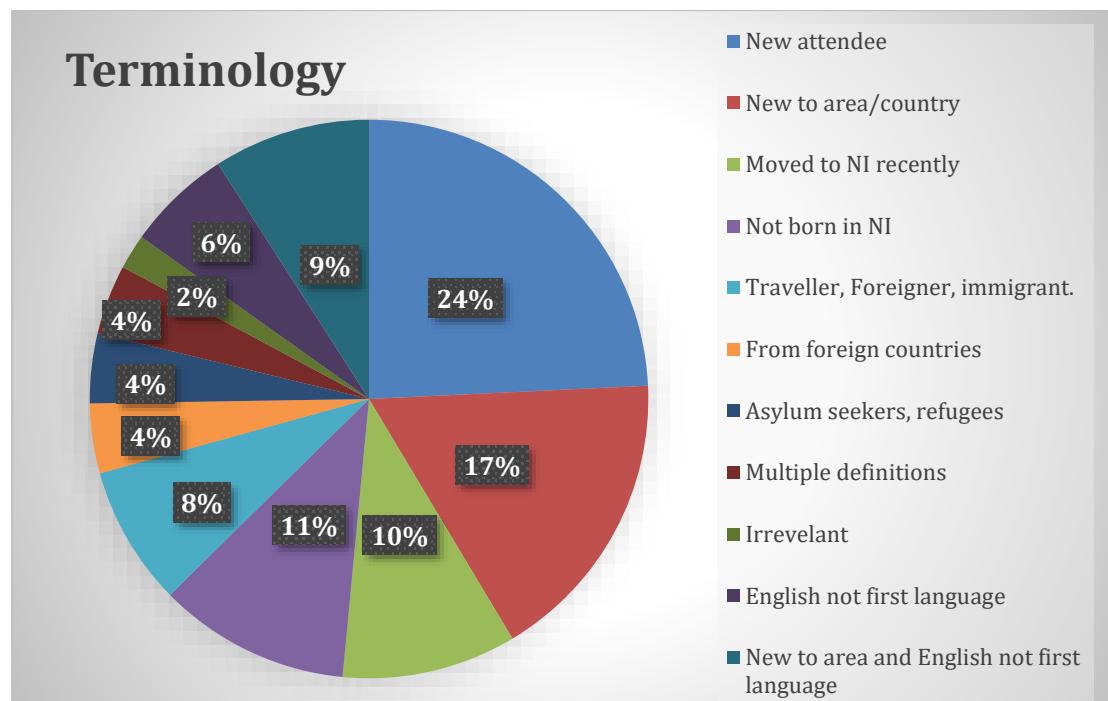
Question 6: What are the age groups of children and young people that you work with?

All of the participants that responded to the questionnaire survey work with children and young people between 5 and 20 years of age. When asked about the age groups of the children and young people that they worked with, 92.17% said 12-16

years, 75.65% said 16-18 years, 61.74% said 8-11 years, 39.13% said 5-7 years and 30.43% said 18-20 years.

Question 7 Please explain what you understand by the term ‘newcomer’?

Fig. 1: Terminology



When asked to define the term newcomer, the Youth Service practitioners offered a range of responses across 11 categories as shown in Figure One above. Only 15% of participants explicitly included a reference to English language proficiency in their answer: 6% described a newcomer as a person whose first language was not English and 9% described a newcomer as someone who was new to the area and whose language was not English.

Question 8: How many newcomer children live in the local area against the following (youth service) age ranges [4-8yrs; 9-13yrs; 14-18yrs]

84% of respondents stated that there were newcomer children living in their area in the 4-8 years age range. 89% were recognised in the 9-13 years age range, 92% in the 14-18 years age range and 72% had newcomer young people in the 19-25 years age range.

Question 9: How many children and young people use the centre/group per night?

According to participant responses, nightly attendance in the various centres/groups ranged from 3 to 134, with an overall average of 30. The overall Median was 30 with an Interquartile Range of 15 - 53.

Question 10: How many children participate in general activities and programs?

17 respondents stated 'all of them' or made reference to the same numbers as recorded in previous questions. As in Question 4, participation ranged from 4 to 800. There was an overall average of 99. Again, due to the large range a more relevant indicator of participation may be the Median of 40 and Interquartile Range of 20 - 81.

Question 11: How many children/young people participate in specific programs?

Referring to 'specific activities', 13 respondents stated 'all of them' and 5 stated 'none' or 'not applicable'. Of the remaining responses there was a range of 2 - 297, with an average of 50. Due to the large range, a more relevant indicator of participation may be the Median of 32 and Interquartile Range of 15 - 75.

Question 12: Do you offer any programmes specifically designed for newcomer children/young people?

When asked if their organisation provided programmes specifically designed for newcomer children and young people, 22.32% stated that they did, while 77.68% stated that they did not.

Question 13: Which of the programmes that you offer have the highest participation of newcomer children/young people?

When asked to say which of the programmes offered by the Youth Service practitioners had the highest participation of newcomer children and young people, participants gave 109 responses across 13 categories. 18% of responses stated that there were no specific programmes that gained a higher participation of newcomer children and young people. One respondent said: 'The organisation as a whole accepts children from all backgrounds and there would be no specific programmes devised for "newcomers"'. Another participant involved in Scouts, but who currently had no newcomer children or young people in his group said: 'The Equal Opportunities Policy outlines what we do to ensure the movement is open and accessible; and that people are treated equally and with respect. This policy is reflective of the ethos of Scouting, expressed by our fundamental values (integrity, care, co-operation, respect and belief) and our commitment to delivering Scouting for

all. By removing any real or perceived barriers to participation, we can ensure that even more young people can enjoy the adventure of Scouting and that Scouting will be as diverse as the communities in which we live. One participant noted that age was a factor: 'As the two newcomer children who Centre are under 8 years old they would only be involved in generic provision and enjoy playing team games, multi-sports, cookery, arts and crafts and general Centre activities'.

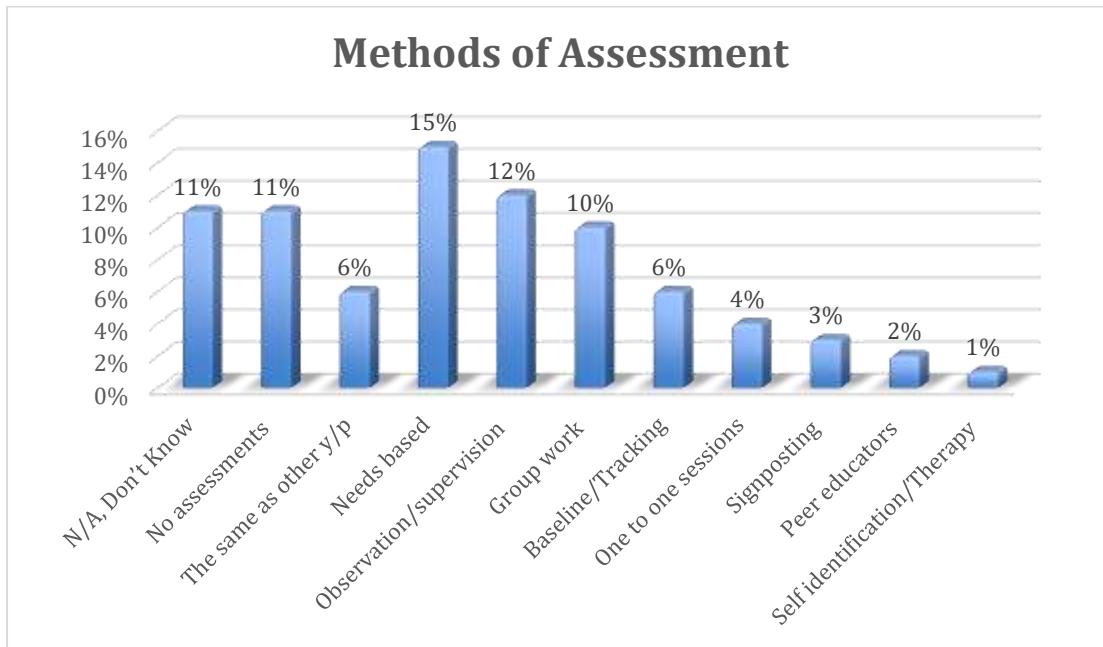
18% of responses mentioned social development/ cultural awareness activities and 11% highlighted sports/dance/games. Drop in programmes were represented in 4% of responses, and outdoor programmes and trips away in 2% of responses respectively. One response mentioned drama.

6% of responses pointed to extended schools provision / school based programmes including Learning Together at KS3 and KS4, and 2% mentioned after schools activities. One participant said: 'The Learning Together Program / Extended Provisions delivery in schools would have the highest participation at any one time or week with a large apportion of both classes worked with around 25% - 30% of all worked with being newcomer'.

3% mentioned uniformed organisations such as Scouts, Brownies, Rainbows and GB/BB. In addition a range of specific organisations and programmes were mentioned including Xtreme FM, Gimme 5, TBUC, Hadaya and Ameera, Discovery and Challenge Plus Badgework, Connect Youth Inclusion Programme, Youth Council, and Reach Out, Enrich Within.

Question 14: How do you assess the mental health needs of newcomer children and young people?

Fig. 2: Methods of Assessment



When asked about the ways in which they assessed the mental health needs of newcomer children and young people, the participants gave 126 responses over 15 categories. 11% of responses said they either did not have any newcomer children or young people in the group, that they did not know how mental health needs were assessed or that the question was not applicable. Another 11% of responses stated that no assessment processes were in place. One responded said: 'we are not mental health practitioners'.

6% of responses stated that the same assessment procedures were used for all children with no differences made. Assessment of need involving responding to referral information (from parents, school or medical staff) and relationship building were represented in 15% of the responses respectively. According to one respondent short term programmes were not effective, as they do not have the potential to build relationships and trust:

"Firstly, it's really important that you build up a relationship with the young people. It's important to outline your role as a statutory worker in terms of our protective safeguarding policy. When children feel protected they will discuss issues that are causing concern for themselves. When young people feel valued and respected they will discuss key mental health problems ...When

young people feel included and listened to they will discuss key mental health problems. All of this takes time. A programme that starts and finishes in 6 weeks is not [sufficient].”

Respondents demonstrated awareness of the need to address mental health needs in young people. One response put it like this:

“This is an area which we really have not expanded into, and one which I am very keen to do in our club. We run Gimme 5 programmes about health and wellbeing for both kids and young people but I would really like to do more in depth work with all our age groups. This is a big issue in our area and one which we need to focus on”.

Another respondent stated that 14-16 year olds seemed ‘most fragile’.

One response said that appropriately skilled practitioners were already in place in their setting:

“We have a team of qualified and experienced Counsellors and Therapists who assess children and young people aged 5-25 who have experienced bereavement, separation or loss”.

By contrast, however, a number of other respondents expressed a lack of confidence with respect to assessing mental health needs. One respondent said:

“We don't, we have signposted young people to alternative organisations if we feel they would benefit from them, but we don't assess them ourselves as we are not qualified to do so”.

The particular mental health needs of newcomer children and young people who are refugees and asylum seekers, and concerns regarding a lack of the associated knowledge and expertise were also highlighted:

“We don't have an expertise and we have a huge concern because most kids we work with are Asylum seekers and refugees who [have] traumatic experience. We are keen to contribute and research around this issue”.

Another respondent echoed such concerns in dealing with children and young people with experience of conflict, trauma and disruption:

“As young people experience living in a new community it may be difficult to establish what experiences they have had while on their travels to this country. Many young people may have had traumatic experiences on their journey. They may have also left a conflict situation in their country. Young

People would without a doubt feel worried, frightened, lonely and excluded. Young people may also fear rejection due to their nationality. Overall this would attribute to on-going anxiety stress attributing to mental health needs. The young people['s] inclusion in education and skills development through participation and wider curriculum would assist in helping to develop their future aspirations and achievements to include helping them overcome their social and emotional to include language barriers".

One respondent said 'we don't as a rule discuss mental health needs, we cover it as a programme once a year but unless something crops up as in a comment, or child is upset, then we will discuss it together as leaders'. On the other hand another participant said that Peer Educators delivered regular sessions in their setting such as 'Think Resilient' and 'Free Being Me'. One respondent reported involvement in promoting awareness of mental health issues and services for young people and their families:

"We recently completed a peer research document and supporting flyer with our youth forum around knowledge and services of mental health of young people for the Portadown and Craigavon area. Our centres are proactive in exploring mental health through various programs projects and the advertising of our materials and supporting agencies for the mental health guidance and wellbeing for the young people and their families".

Another detailed response outlined current procedures in one centre:

"Centre would start by ensuring that parents of the young person/ persons can read English so they can understand information we would send out to parents throughout the year and so they can fill in Centre registration form, if they could not Centre would seek support and or advice from E.A. ...Centre would then ensure young person is made to feel welcome ...would challenge any negative language or behaviour towards any young person and would use our member's code of conduct to address any concerns or issues if they raise. With all new children who attend our Centre staff will take the time to chat with them and work at building relationships and friendships with them so they know that we care and that we are here for them ..."

A further participant explained current practice in their setting and suggested ideas for future development:

"...we have a range of programmes that we deliver within the youth club setting which has an effect on social and emotional wellbeing, self-confidence and self-control in addition to reduction in conduct problems, violence and bullying. We also use posters and newsletters for young people to know we are available ... we use appropriate work with them to include talking to parents, referring them to other agencies or to one of our programmes to promote positive mental health. We also facilitate conferences on 'Mental Health/Wellbeing' for schools in our area ... A multi-agency programme could be developed to consider ways to reshape, remodel and refocus the

emotional and mental health services provided for children and young people in Northern Ireland”.

Question 15: What are the key opportunities for developing mental health and wellbeing programmes for newcomer children and young people?

A total of 108 responses were generated here across 17 categories. 11% of respondents stated that they did not know the answer to this question, that it was not applicable or that they had no newcomer children or young people in their group. However the remaining responses made suggestions regarding opportunities. One participant put it like this:

“Mental health is a major issue within our society. We are in a unique position and can provide many opportunities to focus on the issue of mental health and breakdown the stereotypes and stigma surrounding this issue”.

24% of participants said that informal Personal and Social Education Programmes offered opportunities for developing mental health and wellbeing programmes for newcomer children and young people while 8% stated the importance of providing a safe space. Awareness raising and providing access and links to other organisations/services represented 7% of the responses respectively. School based work linked with youth workers, more training, more group activities such as games, sport, drama, arts and crafts and equal treatment of newcomers/integration each represented 6% of the total responses. Providing someone to talk to, peer support and programmes designed to promote resilience/coping/mental health each represented 4%. 3% of responses mentioned working with parents and providing further funding and resources respectively. One response advocated a Strengths Based approach; one response advocated deploying consistent and committed staff and one response highlighted engaging with young people at key stages of their journey. One respondent noted the importance some parents place on schoolwork and the place of the school in newcomer children’s lives:

“Within the South Belfast Area, there are many Indian newcomer children. We find that parents are extremely strict around schoolwork, revision and homework, thus encouraging the young people to work up to 3-4 hours after school. As an initial contact, school would be the perfect forum for this to happen as this is where parents seem to invest most of their time. The social aspect of newcomer children lives can be limited and sometimes their social skills can be affected by this. Education is strongly encouraged putting pressure onto young people, especially around the Transfer Test, and highlighting the balance of educational studies and social life would be beneficial”.

Concerns around supporting children with respect to pressures related to schoolwork were shared by another respondent who highlighted the value of:

"Programmes engaging the schools with regards to exam periods. Opportunities to develop coping with stress skills, mindfulness. Looking at developing these skills on a long-term basis so they are perfected and useful during the most stressful times children face in the school year. I would like to see more emphasis put on ensuring teachers, youth workers etc. are not pressurising young people with regards to their schoolwork and/or participation in extracurricular programmes".

Another participant believed that Youth Service personnel could offer support to schools:

"Developing mental health and wellbeing programmes for newcomer children and young people will support schools and newcomer children directly and I already schools [are] lack capacity to provide specialised mental health and wellbeing for newcomers and the second opportunity it will provide early intervention for any newcomer who may suffer for a long time before diagnosed their conditions. In the long run, it will save costs involved [in] mental health treatment and in-need newcomer children and young people who otherwise suffer ultimately".

One respondent noted the importance of buy in from parents and of family involvement. This participant stressed that after schools programmes facilitated relationship building with families:

"Willingness to get involved...we have the buy in from the parents, we work with the whole family, through other parts of our organisation we have good relationships built with all family members, once we get the trust of the parents, they are willing to send their children along to our programmes. We have built a long lasting relationship with children and young people over a long period, working with some of the same children through our after schools programme into our youth programmes right into our volunteering opportunities once they turn 18".

Another respondent expressed a concern that those working to promote the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer young people should be appropriately trained:

"I would stress mental health matters this need to be undertake/addressed by trained practitioners. This is a very dangerous area for anyone else to be involved in - particularly those with a little knowledge (being a dangerous thing)".

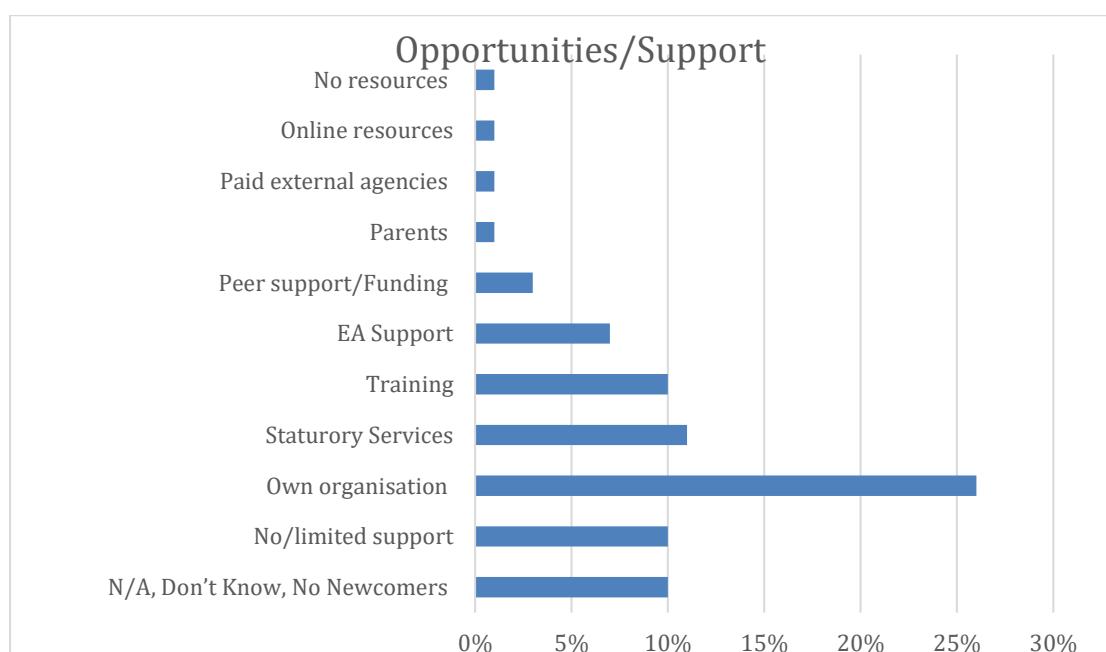
One participant outlined in detail the opportunities provided by their centre and their value for young people:

"Centre has delivered a mental health awareness programme looking at why people can develop mental health issues and how life experiences can play a big part in a person developing mental health issues. Some of the sessions in this programme look at coping and resilience and

provides information on the help and support that there is for a person with mental health issues. Centre delivers wellbeing programmes like Bullying awareness, Healthy lifestyle programme, Risk taking behaviour programme, Drugs awareness and Healthy eating and exercise. These programmes are age appropriate and challenge young people's values and views in a constructive way, while breaking down some of the myths that young people see as true. They provide information that young people can use to develop their own knowledge base and raise awareness on the issues that affect them in their life".

Question 16: What opportunities or support are available to you in relation to addressing the mental health issues of young people?

Fig. 3: Opportunities and Support



This question generated 140 responses across 13 categories. A number of specific organisations and sources of support were mentioned including the EA Youth Service team, church groups and church ministers, Social Workers, GPs, AWARE, Mental health charities, the PHA 5 steps of wellbeing, Action Mental Health, Youth Action's Life Maps, the Niamh Louise Foundation, CAMHS, Helpline, Childline, BB Headquarters, Girl Guiding Ulster training, Assist training, safeguarding training, EA courses, Love for Life, Peer Educators within Guiding, Young Men's Mental Health Project/ Education Authority, Ethnic Minority Forum, Borough Councils, Pastoral Care Teams, Gimme 5, Be Positive, PIPs and SHSCT.

One respondent expressed concerns regarding funding and support for dealing with children and young people struggling with emotional difficulties:

"We are turning away statutory referrals on a daily basis for CYP in urgent need, due to the fact that we have no funding in place to offer the level or consistency of support needed. Social Workers, GPs and parents tell us that they have literally nowhere else to turn to get help for children and young people struggling with emotional difficulties".

Similar concerns about lack of funding, resources and expertise in staff were reflected in the statement of another participant:

"In terms [of] newcomer children and young people, [the] staff and insufficient opportunities available [in] relation to addressing the mental health issues of young people except through GP referrals... I am aware [of] cases where a young person had the mental health condition and School staff and teachers were not able to identify early enough refer those cases specialise services due to language barriers and lack of resources".

Another respondent pointed to a lack of effective communication between parents and young people, and between staff across areas of practice:

"We have found however, that whilst we bring in professionals and have staff trained some young people are not mature enough to cope with the discussions that can arise; parents are not willing or confident to carry on conversations at home and there is little or no communication between professional staff within CAMHs for example, and staff on the ground to ensure open and positive communication and support".

Question 17: What are the key challenges that you encounter in terms of developing mental health and wellbeing among newcomer children and young people?

Respondents were asked to describe the key challenges they encountered in developing mental health and wellbeing among newcomer children and young people. This question generated a wide variety of answers with 153 responses across 28 categories. 6% of respondents said that they did not know how to answer, that the question was not applicable to them or that they had no newcomers in their group.

The most frequently mentioned challenge type involved linguistic barriers between Youth Service practitioners and the newcomer children and young people themselves or their parents that hindered effective communication. 14% of the total responses fell into this category. A lack of engagement with the service or a lack of participation in activities was mentioned in another 10% of the total responses. It was noted that sometimes the newcomer children and young people did not speak. One participant said: 'We see those that have difficulty with the English language as being

less likely to avail of our provision'. Another said that information got 'lost in translation'. Another respondent said:

"A lot of the newcomer young people speak English and in many instances are interpreters and or carers for siblings in certain instances. I think the main challenge is communication with parents and or legal guardians and a gap in that service of creating multi lingual approaches like our memberships to ensure parents understand and indeed feel a bigger connection and or welcome to the provision they may be reliant on".

Another participant noted the value of the work of parent volunteers who act as translators or interpreters:

"Sometimes language and terminology can be an issue but we work with a lot of parents who become volunteers within our programme and therefore have the help of our parent volunteers etc. to translate and perhaps explain things in their own language better than we could explain in English".

Trying to address such language barriers was the concern of another participant:

"Language barriers, resourcing interpreting costs, and thinking about how we deliver programmes using interpreting services. [It's] important to build trust and relationships first, particularly with parents; understanding and recognising cultural sensitivities".

A lack of funding and resources including counselling was mentioned in 9% of the total responses. Time constraints and lack of training opportunities were each mentioned in 7% of responses. Cultural barriers, low self-esteem among newcomer children and young people stemming from linguistic difference and communication barriers and the stigma of discussing mental health were represented in 6% of the responses respectively. 4% of the responses focused on the lack of acceptance of difference. Challenges involving lack of staff and space and a lack of staff confidence in delivering programmes were each mentioned in 3% of responses. Substance misuse and communication issues with parents each featured in 3% of the total responses respectively. Peer pressure, bullying, a lack of a sense of belonging/inclusion and mistrust among newcomer families each featured in 2% of the total responses. In addition, respondents mentioned bureaucracy and paperwork.

One participant mentioned the challenge of:

"Having to waste time filling in questionnaires and forms from EA, HMRC, CCNI etc. instead of concentrating on the young people and our programme".

Other key challenges mentioned by participants include the pressure to succeed at school, suicidal ideation, bereavement and stress, a lack of parental support, replication of issues at school, behaviour, domestic circumstances and the lack of

diversity programmes. One participant pointed out that newcomer children and young people face the same challenges as other young people of their age:

"Those that do access our provision engage well and face similar challenges that the remainder of our membership face, i.e. Bullying, peer pressure to misuse drugs/alcohol, pressure to do well at school, pressures to be accepted".

Another respondent noted the importance of parental perspectives and strong family cultures:

"Through our research it has been clearly identified that newcomer young people find themselves predominately in family arenas that encourage social situations of eating together and a more closeness with family".

A lack of background knowledge about newcomer children and young people and their home circumstances was a concern for one participant:

"There are many challenges. What environment do the young people live in? Is it [in] overcrowded houses? Are these young people also young carers?? [Are] there adequate levels of provision for these children at school? Are they at school? Are their needs being addressed at school? Do they have access to the NHS for basic health needs? How have they settled into life in the community? How are these young people included in the community? These are all risks and barriers that present themselves for newcomer young people. These are all factors that cause anxiety for children..."

One participant viewed the lack of clear policy or guidance together with stigma around mental health issues in communities and language barriers as key challenges:

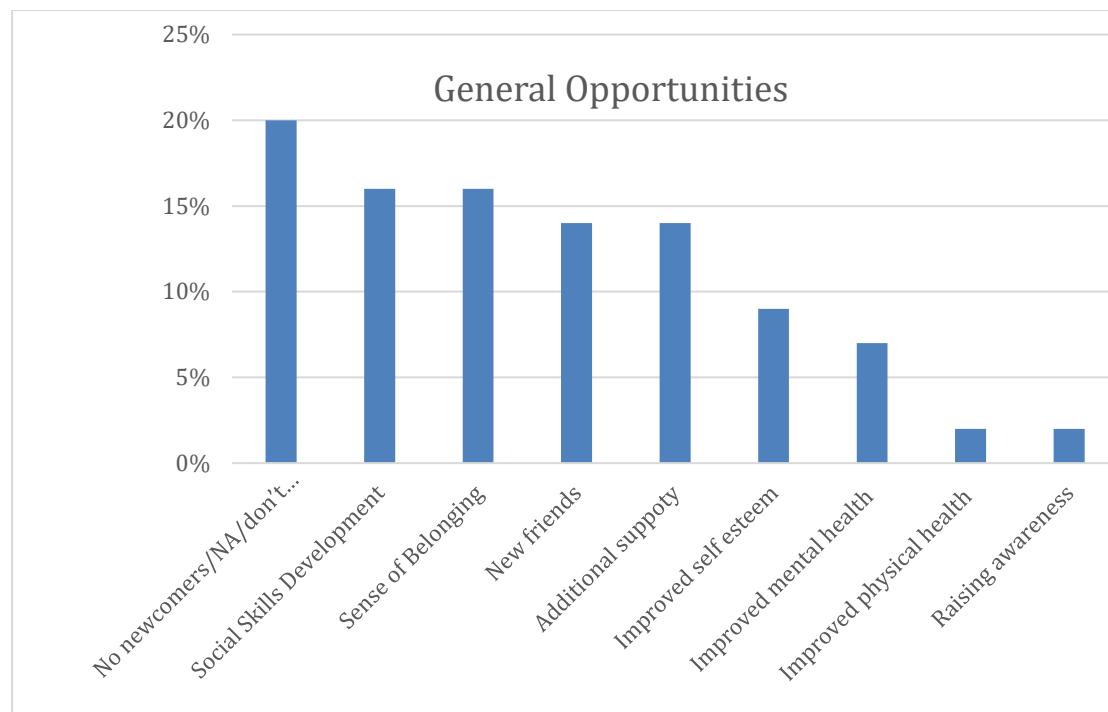
"Lacking a good model policy approach in this region and lack of resources needed by Schools and Health Sector, plus stigma of the newcomers children and young people communities regarding Mental health and again language and cultural barriers".

This reference to stigma was reflected in the view of another participant, as well as a possible lack of awareness regarding risk factors:

"The key challenge is the stigma surrounding mental health, added to this the young person moving to a new country, surroundings and school. These changes would have major impact on the mental health of young people even if they were unaware of it".

Question 18: What are the key opportunities for newcomer children and young people who access your programmes in terms of developing mental health and wellbeing?

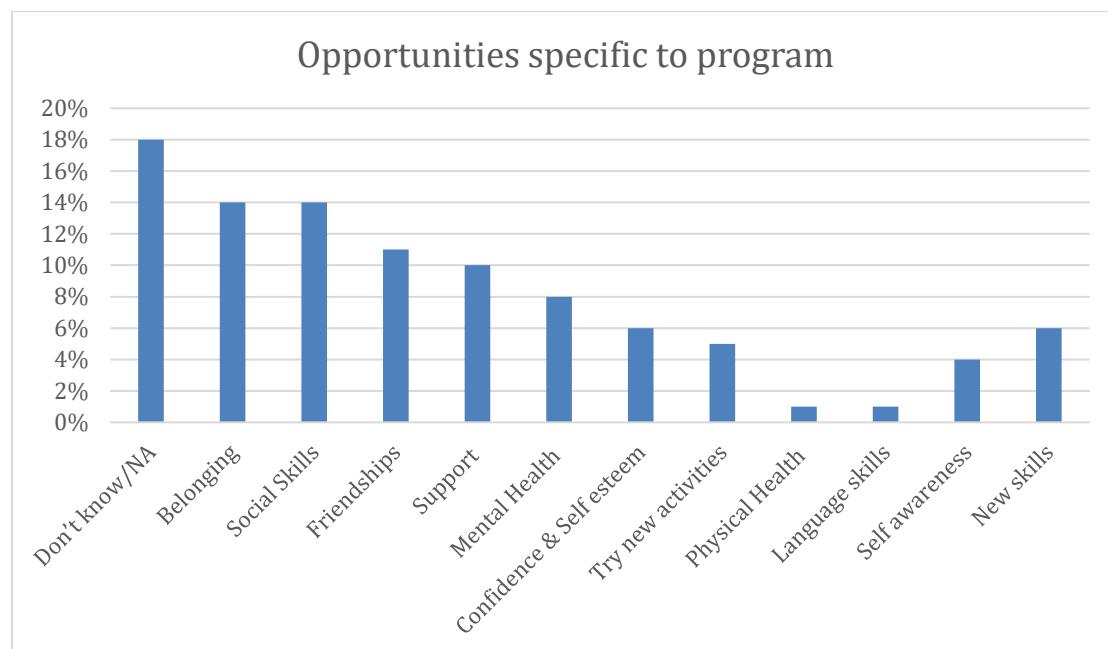
Fig. 4: General Opportunities



- a) Participants were asked firstly to outline the general opportunities for newcomer children and young people who access their programmes. Compared to other questions this generated a narrower range of responses. There were 90 responses in total across 9 categories. 20% of the total responses stated that they did not know how to answer, that the question was inapplicable or that no newcomer children or young people accessed their provision. One participant referred to a 'Feeling of support, resilience, and understand[ing] that there is someone in the community who is ready to listen to them'. Another participant mentioned the link with the school that the children and young people attend.

b) Participants were then asked to outline key opportunities specific to their particular program.

Fig. 5: Opportunities Specific to Program



One participant described the key opportunities offered in their setting like this:

"To make new friends, to socialise outside of the family circle and become part of the community, to learn about the culture and share their culture, to have someone to speak to other than family, to feel a sense of belonging".

The opportunity to be developed in Peer Leadership,, the Learning Together Programme in schools, Gimme 5, 'Facing Your Fears', anti-bullying programmes and the 'Reach Out, Enrich Within programmes were mentioned by individual respondents.

Question 19: What are the key challenges for newcomer children and young people who access your programmes in terms of developing mental health and wellbeing?

Participants were asked to outline the key challenges for newcomer children and young people accessing their programmes generally. This question generated 99

responses across 15 category types. 14% of responses stated that they could not answer the question, that it was inapplicable or that no newcomer children and young people accessed their provision.

19% of responses referred to linguistic difference and language competence as key challenges. One participant referred to the challenge of learning to:

“trust others and talk about any issues and feelings, being afraid that they wont be accepted, difficult to make friends, being afraid of moving into an area with people you don't know especially if your English is not very good”.

Another participant mentioned a potential lack of awareness due to language barriers: “language, lack of understanding of the potential to get involved in youth service”.

10% of responses mentioned the lack of friends or an inability to establish new friendships. 10% of responses mentioned a lack of awareness of or access to services. Fear and a lack of confidence were referred to in 9 % of total responses respectively. 7% of responses mentioned being isolated/excluded, while 5% of responses mentioned cultural barriers. A lack of commitment / participation was mentioned in 4% of responses. A stigma associated with being a newcomer was referred to in 3% of responses. 2% of responses mentioned a lack of parental support. One participant referred to ‘parental cultural control’. Another participant referred to ‘poor attendance due to busy parents’. A further 2% of responses suggested there were too many needs to be catered for adequately. Conflict with other young people was mentioned in 1% of responses and social media stress was also mentioned in 1% of responses. One participant referred to ‘stereotypical views from other young people’.

Participants were then asked to describe the key challenges specific to their programmes. 24% of responses stated that they didn't know how to answer the question, that the question was inapplicable or that no newcomer children or young people accessed their provision. 13% of responses referred to a lack of confidence or self-esteem. 11% mentioned lack of participation/access. 8% of responses mentioned language barriers and a further 8% mentioned a lack of funding. A lack of social skills and a lack of integration/isolation/ feeling like an outsider were referred to in 6% of the responses respectively. A lack of trust, cultural barriers, a lack of training and resources and a lack of understanding of youth work were mentioned in 4% of responses respectively. 2% of responses referred to either peer conflict or a lack of

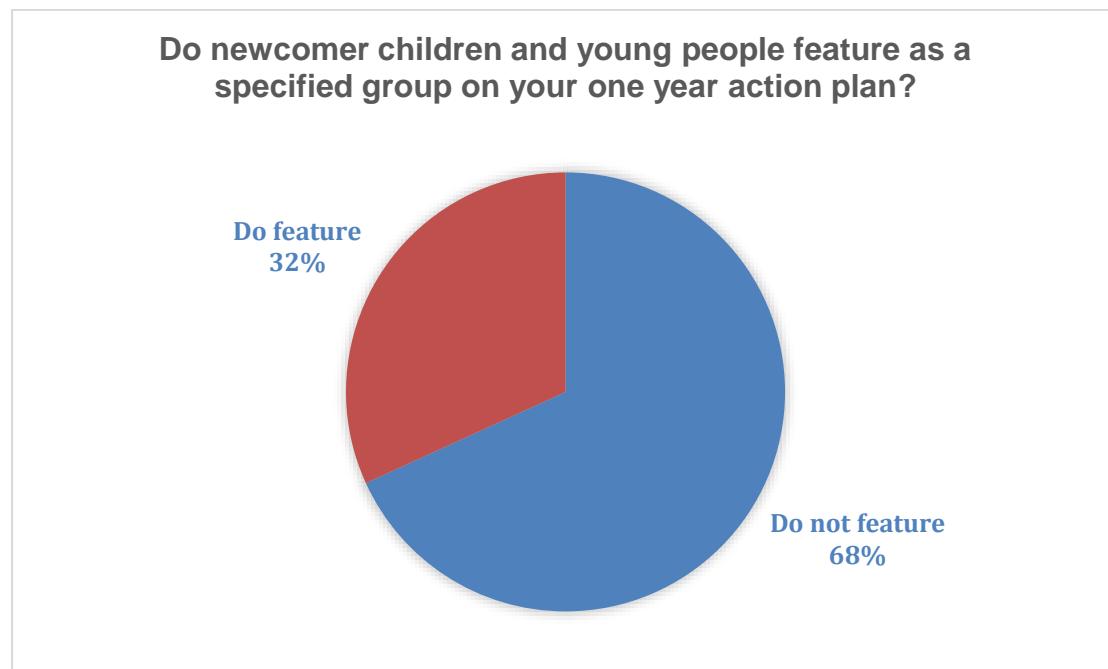
friends who attend. 1% of responses referred to a lack of signposting options, 1% mentioned fear and 1% mentioned a lack of parental support. One participant referred to the challenge of 'having the confidence to come to the centre on your own, especially if you are a teenager whose parents would not bring them'. Another mentioned 'Lack of engagement from parents i.e. completion of consent forms etc language barriers, absence of understanding'. One response referred to the challenge of 'no previous understanding or experience of youth work approaches'. Another participant said 'Due to action plans etc. there may not be a specific programme in relation to mental health'.

Question 20: In your view how can a youth worker support the development of the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer children?

This question generated 117 responses across 15 categories. Responses relating to listening and providing support were the most frequent representing 26% of the responses. Developing a sense of belonging and building relationships followed, each representing 11% of total responses. 10% of the total responses referred to cultural awareness, 9% to personal and social development and 7% to accessing other services. The remaining answers referred to treating the young people the same as their peers, working in partnership with schools, signposting, family involvement, self-care for youth workers, the use of interpretation, developing long term youth work provision, compiling a register of young people with mental health issues and tracking this, and scoping the level of need and mapping accordingly.

Question 21: Do newcomer children and young people feature as a specified group on your One Year Action Plan?

Fig. 6: One Year Action Plan



68.18% of respondents stated that newcomer children and young people do not feature as a specified group on their Year One Action Plan, while 31.82% stated that they do.

Several of the participants had featured newcomer children and young people as a specified group and explained that they had done so because the aims of their organisation made this a prerequisite. Others had been alerted by staff in schools, or youth workers attached to schools, of the needs of newcomer children and young people in the area. One participant put it like this:

"Because in the area I work the number of newcomers makes up a significant percentage of the total population. Furthermore if I did not include them in my Action Plan it could be deemed as a dereliction of duty".

The most frequently mentioned explanations given for not featuring newcomer children and young people as a specified group in action planning were:

- There were no or very few newcomer families in the project catchment area
- Addressing the needs of newcomer children and young people in the group was a recent development due to population change in the area

- The centre preferred to adopt an all inclusive approach thus avoiding singling out the newcomer children and young people as a separate group
- Newcomer children and young people had not presented issues requiring actions other than those relevant to all other children and young people in the group
- Although this was not the case currently, needs analysis and development work were on going and related future targets had been set.

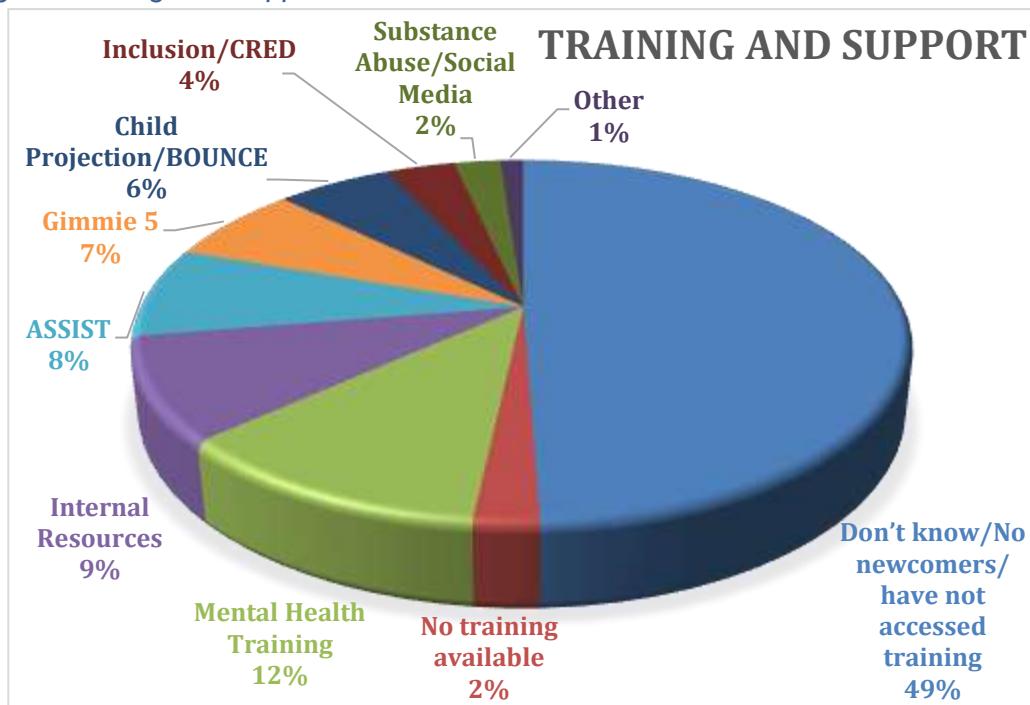
In addition, a lack of statutory funding was mentioned.

Another participant highlighted the need for collaboration across sectors to develop appropriate provision for newcomer children and young people who are refugees or asylum seekers:

“As the project moves into the 2nd full year of funding we have identified the need for bespoke approaches, and identifying ways to engage with young people, particularly who are refugees (or asylum seekers) around personal and social development; and mental health - given the complexities of the needs of these young people however, we recognise this will need to be progressed in partnership with others, including close involvement with others within the community”.

Question 22: Please outline any training or support that you have accessed to date to help you develop the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer young people.

Fig. 7: Training and Support



Participants were asked to outline training or support that they had access to help develop the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people. Over 50% of responses did not know or had not accessed training. One participant said:

“This is the first time that I have encountered newcomer children / young people as an issue, and have never heard colleagues refer to young people in this way. Indeed, I had to do some reading around this as I was generally unaware of policy around it”.

Another participant answered:

“None. My knowledge of newcomer children comes from my paid employment, not my voluntary roles”.

Another respondent said:

“I am unaware of specific training aimed at 'Newcomer' young people”.

Sources of training and support named in the responses were the PSNI and Public Health the Ethnic Minority Forum and EA (Young Men's Mental Health Project), the Romanian Consulate in Edinburgh and Dublin, the 'Roma community organisation in

Belfast', Church groups /headquarters, the Scout Association, the Boys Brigade, Lisburn YMCA, CAMHS, Housing First and Start 360, Be Positive programme and Top Activity.

Question 23: What resources /tools do you currently use to support the development of mental health and wellbeing in newcomer children and young people?

This question generated 120 answers across 24 categories. 23% of responses stated that they didn't know the answer, that the question was inapplicable or that no newcomer children and young people accessed their provision. One response stated: 'We have little or no resources and at times feel very overwhelmed'.

29% of responses stated that resources and tools were internally sourced from their organisation. 9% of responses referred to social skills programmes. 7% mentioned cost free external facilitators. 4% mentioned Gimme 5 training. Awareness raising, suicide awareness/ASSIST training, BOUNCE training, statutory services and the Learning Together Programme were each referred to in 3% of the responses respectively. Mental Health First training was mentioned in 2% of responses. Counselling, mentoring, Transactional Analysis training, motivational interviewing training, child protection training, life skills training and sexual health training were each referred to in 1% of the responses respectively. Online service, Rickter Assessment, EA Grants, Circle Time, Youth Action Life and Take 5 were each referred to in 1% of the total responses respectively. Participants described locating support and tools in the form of books, booklets, literature, completed evidence resource files worksheets on mental health sourced from the internet and help sheets published by regional specialists, as well as inter-agency discussion and mentioned adapting these to meet their needs. Several participants mentioned specific elements of the Learning Together Programme in schools. One participant referred also to the:

"LTP programme in schools in particular modules like, Personal identity, Improving Confidence and Self Esteem, Healthy Lifestyles but as a part of most modules".

Another participant mentioned that they were:

"Currently working in partnership with support teacher in school to include working in Partnership with E.A. Community Programme".

Question 24: What resources /tools would you like to use or need in future to support the development of mental health and wellbeing in newcomer children and young people?

Participants were asked to outline the resources or tools they would like to access in future to support the development of mental health and wellbeing in newcomer children and young people. This question generated 102 responses across 12 categories.

22% of responses stated that they did not know, that the question was inapplicable or that no newcomer children and young people accessed their provision.

The most frequently mentioned category was training, referred to in 32% of the responses. Suggestions included capacity building, workshop training relating to newcomer children and young people and their needs relevant to the youth work setting, training specific to mental health and wellbeing and up skilling in relevant languages and cultural diversity training. One participant advocated the development of:

“language building skills, even to be able to say hello to them in their native language would be a good opening”.

11% of responses mentioned that they would like to use or would need a published resource or toolkit. 8% of responses stated a need for further funding /more statutory support. One respondent said:

“Sustainable funding commitment from a statutory source such as Dept for Community, EANI or WHSCT”.

8% mentioned awareness of, information about and access to relevant services. 6% referred to translation services, for example to facilitate the translation of information documents for parents such as consent forms. 5% mentioned bilingual resources, and 4% mentioned online resources/apps/digital technology. 2% of responses referred to the promotion of youth work. Volunteer support, needs analysis and longer term provision were each mentioned in 1% of the total responses respectively.

One participant suggested the creation of a strategic network forum:

“Perhaps the opportunity to developing a strategic network (forum) consisting of external agencies/partners so that resources could be maximised, professional guidance/input offered. This would also help minimise duplication of services while focusing on outcomes/target indicators”.

Another participant suggest the convening of a conference:

"The possibility of a future conference in relation to Inclusion with the opportunity to highlight positive outcomes and achievements of young people (International)".

Another stressed the importance of a long term and collaborative professional approach:

"Time is the main resource and tool...the usual 6 week programmes will not suffice in the development of mental health and wellbeing; managers need to change the mind-set that short programmes are the best. In order to achieve results time has to be allowed in order to get the results. I also think that it would be useful to speak to professionals in the field of mental health who come across newcomer young people, as interventions that might work for indigenous young people may not work for newcomer young people".

Another respondent identified the need for further research:

"Further research [is] required, but with EA's emphasis on Fresh Start programmes, Learning Together school work model and Global Service Learning projects imminent, awareness rather than training would be appropriate".

Question 25 asked participants to state if they would be willing to take part in a focus group discussion about the mental health needs of newcomer children and young people in Northern Ireland and how the EA youth service might contribute to improving this. 65.7% stated that they were unwilling and 35.3% stated that they would be willing to do so.

3.2 The Views of Key Staff in Schools

3.2.1 Semi-structured Interview Data

This section of the report presents a summary of the views of key staff that work with newcomer children and young people gathered in interviews conducted in schools with high percentages of newcomer children and young people. In total, eight schools participated in the project including four primary and four post primary schools.

These represented urban and provincial settings (Belfast and Co. Armagh). Four of the schools were Controlled and four were Maintained. In this report the schools are referred to as Schools A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H. Schools A, C, E and G are Post primary, while Schools B, D, F and H are primary. The Principal in each of these schools nominated a key member of staff to participate in this strand of the study, a member of staff with an in depth knowledge of newcomer children and their families. These key staff nominated by Principals included a Head of Year, classroom teachers, EAL teachers (one of these is also a parent), bilingual classroom assistants

and a newcomer coordinator. The key staff participated in semi-structured interviews about their experiences of working with newcomer children and young people and their understanding of their needs. The schedule of questions (See Appendix C) was derived from the four research questions underpinning the study and explored the following: the nature of the staff members' engagement with newcomer children and young people in schools (RQ1); the issues faced by newcomer children and young people that may affect their mental health and wellbeing (RQ3); existing links between the EA Youth Service and the schools (RQ2); the challenges if any that newcomer children and young people engaging with EA Youth Service provision might encounter (RQ 2); and the ways in which the EA Youth Service might support the development of positive mental health and wellbeing among newcomer children and young people (RQ2).

Engagement with newcomer children and young people in schools (RQ1)

Variation in Roles and Background of Key Staff

It was noted that School Principals nominated key staff members with a range of roles to participate in this study. Some were qualified classroom teachers with pastoral whole school coordination responsibilities while others included bilingual translators (also a parent) and classroom assistants with no teaching background.

Variation in Backgrounds of newcomer Children and Young People

Participants were careful to distinguish between different cultural and linguistic groups of newcomer children and young people, and highlighted socio-political and economic groups also. These included children who are refugees and had experience of trauma.

Arriving and Settling In

Participants in all of the schools discussed the challenges and importance of the initial settling in period. In some cases starting school in Northern Ireland was the child's first experience of formal schooling and for many it involved total linguistic immersion. One participant mentioned that some Roma children arriving are illiterate in their first language. For all of the children it required acclimatisation to new routines, expectations and personnel as well as relating to a new group of peers. Participants described a wide variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds stressing that 'newcomer' is an umbrella term. Some of the children arrive as refugees and

may have experienced related trauma; four out of the eight participants mentioned working with children who were refugees and children from Syria and Iraq. In all of the schools some kind of assessment of language competence is carried out upon arrival.

Inclusive Approaches

Participants in all of the schools expressed a desire to be welcoming and inclusive and had implemented a range of strategies to achieve this. Initial meetings with families were held with the support of a translator to get to know the child's background and family situation. Welcome booklets, visual supports, Buddy Systems and Language Ambassador programmes had been set up to support settling in to new routines and to foster the establishing of new friendships. Schools mentioned working closely with the Intercultural Education Service at the settling in stage, collaborating with support staff, benefiting from translation services and drawing on helpful resources such as the Toolkit for Diversity.

Bilingual Classroom Assistants in some schools sought to establish friendships and attended classes with the pupils to support their learning. Some schools organised intensive work with children in small groups before introducing them to the larger classroom group. Some schools involved newcomer children mainly in 'practical' subjects at first, including technology, languages, Home Economics and Art, in order to minimise language barriers and build confidence. Some schools encouraged involvement in extracurricular clubs. One of the participants mentioned paperwork as a key aspect of the settling in process. One of the teachers noted that children were placed in age rather than stage related class groups and expected to survive. In one of the schools a staged phase-in period was established to ease children into school life gently.

English Language Development

Assessment of language competence emerged as a key feature of schools' initial engagement with newcomer children and young people. The Common European Framework was used in this. Participants made reference to children undergoing the 'Silent Period'. This refers to the time during language acquisition via immersion in an unknown language when learners are processing the language that they see and hear but when they do not produce language in the form of speech. This may last for

weeks or months. One participant, a classroom assistant and parent of a newcomer child described it like this:

"Yeah, she was quiet, for one month, they thought she was real tired because she wasn't talking. If someone was talking to her she was like, silence! And after the first month she started to talk with the [local] accent, and yes it was like so funny!"

Some participants mentioned the disorientation experienced by learners of a new language. One teacher said:

"Imagine I take you to China and I just put you in a class and I say 'right, next period you have religion'. If you can figure out what religion is in Chinese you are asked to sit there and listen and participate. But you don't understand anything. And if somebody demands that you need to do this, that or the other, and you know, it's ...I don't see why children need to go, at least the first year when they speak no English whatsoever".

Language development in English is supported by CEFR benchmarking, peripatetic teacher input on a weekly basis, bilingual classroom assistant support in lessons, small group withdrawal for literacy support, reading and phonetic work, digital resources such as Google Translate, extracurricular involvement, peer support, initial involvement in practical classes, play based learning, differentiated planning and learning and grouping. Resources are provided by the IES including the Toolkit for Diversity, Translation services and picture books and topic based vocabulary resources. Lack of specialist language staff to improve English skills was highlighted. One teacher said:

"I think it rather unfair, both the pupil and the school because we, we don't really have the staff to provide an intensive English language training".

Some participants mentioned that some children were illiterate in their mother tongue on arrival and that certain languages had different alphabets than English and this complicated language acquisition.

Mother Tongue

Participants in four out of the eight schools discussed the role of the mother tongue. One participant in school A expressed the view that the mother tongue and the culture of newcomer children and young people should be celebrated and sustained:

"...what would be really good for them is also to have somewhere they can celebrate their own culture ...I don't think they should lose their identity...or their language".

She went on to note that pupils in this school are encouraged to take a GCSE in their home language. In School B the participant mentioned that newcomer pupils appeared to be more confident when paired together in class with another child who speaks the same language, but also expressed the concern that working together in the mother tongue in class might in some way hold back academic progress. This participant also pointed out that parents of newcomer children sent them to school to learn English and so using the mother tongue in school may not be the parents' intention or wish. Two of the post primary schools and one of the primary schools mentioned the contribution of bilingual classroom assistants to support newcomer pupils, and in primary School F communication between school and home was translated using the Seesaw app. In School D newcomer children fulfilled the role of Language Ambassadors, using their mother tongue to help with practical tasks in the welcome process such as conducting a tour of the school or translating for a visiting parent. This teacher remarked; 'It has been great because they are proud of their language and it gives them extra responsibility'. This participant also understood using the mother tongue in public as a way of boosting confidence and self-esteem:

"We went out to a language event at Titanic, and John O'Dowd was there, he was the Education Minister at the time, they went and um took part in the presentation. They spoke in their own language and last year I invited all of the newcomer parents into school and delivered a presentation to them about how they could help their children at home and again the Language Ambassadors came to that and again introduced themselves in English and their home language and they stayed and helped".

In this school with a history of high percentages of newcomer pupils and notably of collaboration with external groups including charities and universities, there was a clear understanding that the development of the mother tongue was important:

"the number one thing that we would promote is that [parents] should not tell their child to stop speaking their home language and that from now on it should be English. That they must have their home language first and then build English on top of that...We had a lecturer from the University of Ulster come along and explain why it is important for the children to still have their home language, the advantages of being bilingual or trilingual or more".

Collaboration: Examples of Good Practice in Schools

Participants in the interviews discussed collaboration with a number of external organisations. The majority of schools mentioned collaboration with the EA

Intercultural Education Service for the purposes of support, development, translation, advice and resources.

Schools C, D and H had established clusters for development with a group of other local schools (see below). Post primary School A was working with NICRAS, the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers. The school was hoping to set up an afterschool's club for refugees and particularly wanted to pursue a writing project in which young people could tell their story: so they could tell their story. School A was also collaborating with a number of sports groups and the YMCA who contributed to citizenship education. A visiting counsellor visited the school each week and initial contact had been established with the Northern Ireland Mental Health Association but some difficulties around communication had hampered progress here. The teacher in this school was keen to see further collaboration develop but noted that external organisations would need to take the initiative to inquire and be advised by the school regarding translation services. In School C a church contributed each week and a mentoring or counselling programme called DAISY also visited the school regularly. DAISY is a Drug and Alcohol Intervention Service for Young People but the participant in School C showed no awareness of this apart from acknowledging that the service was available to all pupils and not tailored for newcomer children specifically. In School E the teacher mentioned collaboration with faith based and community groups and also alumni. In School G newcomer children and young people attend collaborative workshops with their non newcomer pupils addressing drugs education and anti-social behaviour but nothing specifically tailored for them. In Primary School B the teacher mentioned a link with a post primary school that had invited the P6 class to a multi-cultural event. This link was supported as part of a Shared Education initiative.

School D was engaged in various collaborative ventures. They worked with the Chinese Welfare Association in Belfast who managed to obtain funding for a project on mindfulness. The school was also involved in a five year collaborative project with a local university in partnership with a national charity. This school also participated in the Barnardo's PATHS project, an American programme that promoted alternative thinking strategies:

“through the PATHS programme they also learn about different feelings and emotions, That all feelings are ok it is just what you do with those feelings, that you can decide if it is an OK choice or not”.

The PATHS programme was deemed to be particularly suited to the needs of newcomer children and young people due to its use of visual cues. The teacher from School D mentioned ‘good links’ with a local hostel where a number of newcomer children and their families were housed. This school also worked with the local Gaelic club:

“some people from the club came in and presented to the school and encouraged them to come and them they sent coaches into our school and gave them some taster sessions so what would happen in the club and...so do I think it would help them? Yeah”.

School H also collaborated with Barnardo’s, the RISE team from EA and local churches ad Ministers who took assemblies several times per week.

[Leadership and Development](#)

In Post Primary School A the participant highlighted the School of Sanctuary Award and was keen to work towards this benchmark. However, addressing the mental health and wellbeing needs of newcomer children and young people was seen as a new area in which development of staff knowledge and expertise was required. In Post primary School A a development cluster was mentioned as a forum for sharing next practice ‘We have a cluster where actually teachers from other groups and schools could meet, how we do things, and what we gather from each other to get the parents on board, which is quite difficult’. Sharing of practice was also mentioned in Primary School D:

“Maybe I am wrong, but I think we are quite good at it and there have been teachers that have been here for a long time and are quite proficient at integrating the children so I think that you know...’. Later this teacher explained that opportunities and funding for training were very limited but that they and formed a development cluster: ‘maybe about four or five schools, we have just formed our own cluster group. We are getting together and talking about what is going on in our school. What is working for us, and just sort of bouncing ideas off each other. So that is the coordinators maybe in their own time after school doing that. But eh the opportunities don’t seem to be there for the average class teacher”.

In School B action planning and policy development were discussed: ‘this year in the action plan was that staff become more confident with the CEFR forms and there was training provided but that was from me getting support to help train our staff and leaflets and help and guidance and the second thing on our action plan this year which is a work in progress, it is not finalized, it is the newcomer policy, so how we

are supporting newcomers in school'. In several schools the EA IDS/IES was mentioned as a source of training and development support.

Challenges

Participants cited a number of challenges that they face in supporting the needs of newcomer children and young people. These included political deadlock, restricted budgets, pressures on teacher time, teacher workload, lack of specialist teacher expertise, curriculum pressures, paperwork, the significant numbers of newcomer children and young people in their schools, dealing with children with no previous experience of schooling, low levels of mother tongue literacy and little or no English.

In Primary School D the teacher

Differences in perspectives, values and levels of experience with respect to education in terms of parents were also highlighted. These could affect levels of attendance at school and also the degree of integration into wider school life. This was particularly apparent with respect to extracurricular activities and school trips, as some parents did not see these as valuable or necessary. The language barrier presented challenges in communication with parents although translation services and digital resources eased this to some extent. Some parents were considered hard to reach as they did not attend school appointments and events due to employment commitments. Behaviour issues were mentioned by a number of participants and in School F the participant mentioned the specific needs of very able children: 'if the children are particularly intelligent when they arrive we find that you know, that is when a lot of behavioural issues can actually arrive, because they have a language barrier there and until that is broken down they can show behavioural challenges. It can be very difficult in the classroom until the teacher realises, well this child is actually very intelligent and this is what the issues is, you know?' Translation and the language barrier appeared to be an issue with respect to behaviour support. The teacher in School H mentioned a lack of background information. This teacher felt that there were sometimes cultural differences in terms of how much information would be shared with the school by parents. The teacher in Post primary School G noted that linguistic disorientation and lack of familiarity with school routines could lead to disengagement and behaviour issues at school:

"you have children who are not used to school settings. Then you throw them from 9 to half three to sit in a room where they understand absolutely nothing. And on top of that you expect them to behave and not be bored....there are

behaviour issues and all sorts of things happen. I would say that is the biggest issue”.

One teacher expressed concern that stress could stand in the way of academic achievement: ‘...if somebody is here just 2 or 3 years and they are very stressed they won’t be very successful, that is another trouble, skipping them back, they really need a few months to settle down’. In School F the teacher expressed similar concerns with respect to the language barrier hampering access to counselling: ‘I think it’s all going to hinder their learning if they’re not happy or content or if they’re not feeling right then they’re not going to learn so it’s going to impact on everything really’. However, generally, the teachers interviewed in schools expressed a gap in awareness of mental health issues. In School D the teacher said:

“I am not specifically aware of maybe any children having mental health challenges, but I know that Roma...there has been a few comments that you know there might be some trauma with particularly the Syrian refugees or any children who have been through a refugee experience. Eh,...at our level at the minute we can listen and there is maybe not something that we have faced or are tooled or equipped to putting in place. If there was something that way particularly concerning we would treat them like any other child and follow the right procedure”.

This was also reflected in the comments of the teacher in Primary School H who, when asked to discuss issues around mental health said that there was a gap in relevant information for schools:

“This is a really hard one for me because it is probably something we don’t delve into a great deal. Over the last year or two we have had a number of children come from Iraq and Syria. Quite often you would look and think ‘what exactly have they come from?’ ...What they have seen, how have they even got here? Em, the children never talk about it, the parents never talk about it. The parents never tell us. So there could be huge issues there that we don’t know if...the safeguarding team haven’t passed any information on. ...It’s not so much child protection issues, it’s just a general background...beyond our PDMU, our whole class assemblies and things I don’t think that is a side that is really catered for. We are a very nurturing school...but when it comes to actually em you know tackling their mental health, we probably don’t. Because we don’t have that information we probably don’t cater”.

In light of this the teacher in Primary School H stated that training specific to the wellbeing and mental health issues of newcomer children and young people was required.

[Existing links between the EA Youth Service and the schools \(RQ2\)](#)

There was a striking lack of awareness/understanding/ knowledge in the participating schools with respect to the role and nature of the EA Youth Service. The teacher in School A stated that there were no links between her school and the EA Youth

Service. In School C the participant discussed the DAISY programme but showed no awareness of EA Youth Service Programmes. In School E the participant reported that the school had an open door policy but could not name a specific programme provided by the EA Youth Service. In School G when asked about links with the EA Youth Service the participant responded: 'No idea!'. She went on to mention 'different workshops that were done' but could not recall anything specific. She continued:

"I don't know what they have now. In one of the meetings that I attended, now, the Youth Service down here where are a large proportion of these children live, they are trying to do something. I don't know what they are doing, you know?...My personal opinion is that children are not attending any events or if they do it is very seldom...I am not aware of anything".

In Primary School B when asked about the EA Youth Service, the teacher talked about the Intercultural Education Service, although she was unaware of their new name:

"We have links with the IDS, the Inclusion and Diversity, that's with the lady from there but her link is more support to me...you know all of the paperwork that goes with newcomers".

In School D the participant stated that she was not aware of any links between the school and the EA Youth Service. In School F when asked about the links with the EA Youth Service, the teacher mentioned the 'ICS team' but did not explain her understanding of this. She then mentioned the Oasis Club, a multicultural club that took place each week. Children were collected and taken to this club from school to complete homework:

"Yeah, I think well, what does come every Tuesday, as it's called, an Oasis Club and it seems to be multicultural, and a lot of children get picked up from school and attend that and they can do the homework and they can go on trips and they play and they socialise and it's a lot of the children. They seem to enjoy it and there does seem to be a lot of newcomer children that attend that, so that is one thing that we have...That seems to be the only one you know, that will be associated with the school that the children will be talking about that the Education Authority has provided. ...it's very, very limited here".

The teacher in School D went on to mention English classes that had been organised for parents but she did not know who had provided these. In School H when asked about the links between the school and the EA Youth Service the teacher said:

"To be honest that is one I am not sure of. I don't know which Youth Services in particular you are talking about and I don't really want to get information

that wouldn't be right...with regards to the EA Youth Service in particular, I don't think we have any there".

Issues faced by newcomer children and young people that may affect their mental health and wellbeing (RQ3)

Several participants expressed the view that the mental health and wellbeing needs of newcomer children and young people were contiguous with their non-newcomer counterparts. For example, the teacher in School G said:

'We have a lot of support here with all the translator things. With some of the children here that are all in the same position, I don't normally find any sort of mental health or wellbeing issue other than I would if they lived in Northern Ireland anyway".

In School F the teacher said:

"I have never had an issue with newcomer children that I would never have had if they were born in Ireland and spoke English. So, I don't think, you know, there is the odd exception for every child, there could be some children who are involved in social services but they could be in any language or speak any language. There could be some children who went through bereavement you know but I don't feel like it is specific to newcomer children at all. I think sometimes there are a few issues over maybe dinner monies or maybe the uniform not being correct, but that is more down to the language barrier and once that is explained to them I find issues just iron themselves out".

There were indeed issues that were discussed that were relevant to all children and young people, including their digital lives for example. However, in addition, several themes relating to mental health and wellbeing emerged that were distinctive in the experience of newcomer children and young people. These were as follows:

Language

All participants discussed language learning and noted that language assessment was part of the initial settling in period for newcomer children and young people. Some participants made the point that the Silent Period may mask mental health and wellbeing issues. The teacher in School H reported a notable example:

"with the language barrier it is hard to know if they are just a child that finds it hard to settle or if it's because of their language you know? We had one wee girl recently in P1 who had ended up actually, she had a very, a lot of problems, but because of the language barrier between parents and staff, it took a wee while to get that information".

Participants mostly referred to language as presenting barriers and marking out difference, and discussed a number of ways that language barriers could negatively affect wellbeing. The language barrier was also seen to hamper effective communication and understanding between school and home. In School C the teacher said:

“You are just dropped in a country, you are very conscious of how well you can communicate, do people understand me? Do I understand them? Do they make fun of my accent? You know, that sort of thing”.

However, in Post Primary Schools the participants mentioned Modern Foreign Language classes in connection with practical subjects such as Technology and Home Economics, as areas of the curriculum in which the newcomer children and young people may feel more comfortable. In Post Primary School C the teacher said:

“But definitely not withdraw them from practical [subjects] like PE, technology, Art, Language, because it’s something they can engage in and it helps them build some friendships, it is obviously quite flexible”.

In Primary School D the teacher interviewed discussed multilingualism as an additional skill suggested that giving special responsibility in school to newcomer children who act as Language Ambassadors boosted self-esteem:

“It has been great, because they are proud of their language and it gives them extra responsibility”.

Lack of Control Over Change in Circumstances

Key staff in schools expressed an awareness of newcomer children experiencing change in their lives as something beyond their control. The teacher in School A put it like this:

“I would say in some cases they have a very negative viewpoint of being here. They didn’t want to come. It was against their will and they don’t want to learn the language and they don’t want to engage. I’m thinking of the student I have at the moment and he is five years down the line. He is doing his GCSEs and the pen is down and he’s looking and it’s ‘I don’t want to’”.

This lack of control was understood by this teacher to be the particular experience of children and young people who are refugees:

“The refugees...I don’t know how they get over that...I suppose it is just throwing yourself into a new way of life...I am thinking of that young fella who won’t engage and I do worry about his mental health...because his language engagement is so poor you know I can say to him ‘we have counselling

'services available', how is he going to...get on board with that or get anything out of it?"

The teacher in School C expressed similar concerns:

"It wasn't their choice. They were just told to come. And I'm sure it is not easy for their parents and it was not easily taken. `but for the children, from the children's point of view they suddenly leave everything they knew.. So that's hard. A new education system, new friends, new city...trying to find their way".

Pre-existing Experience of Trauma

The participants highlighted a number of cases of pre-existing trauma among the newcomer children and young people with whom they work. The experiences of refugees in Syria and Iraq were mentioned in this respect. However one teacher in School H pointed out that information about such issues was difficult to obtain:

"I would like to know at some point if a child is coming from a war, a war torn country. Like we are, we have a number of children from Syria, from Iraq, from...just that there is some help provided at some stage for them. Even on arrival. I am not sure what happens, where those parents, where those families go on arrival. So maybe there is some sort of counselling service or something there for them to talk to. It's awful you know. What they've been through...is the child ok? ...And not even from those countries but you know we would have a lot of poverty, we would have children from Somalia and children from Romania and stud that if they are coming from homes where there is a lot of poverty...are they being, is there really good assistance there? And not just a leaflet or a card going through the door, but to actually, proactive help, you know?"

An example was also given in Primary School F of a child from Eastern Europe who had been traumatically bereaved prior to coming to Northern Ireland. Language barriers were preventing this child from accessing required help:

"I had a wee girl who came from [named country] and we do not have very many [named nationality] children in our school so it was quite hard initially when she came over to get her settled in. But it was only through requested meetings with her parents that I realised that she actually experienced a great loss before she came here and her mother passed away and she was receiving counselling over in [country named] but none of the information was passed on to us and when I went to seek help for the child I met a lot of barriers in that until she has a certain level or standard of the English language she won't be able to take part in any form of counselling. She has now been sent to her own GP to see if there is any route that she can get through that because the child is feeling a lot of guilt and things over what happened and she really would be needing some help".

The teacher in School F explained that language was a barrier to helping this child in school:

"We can't help her apart from with pictures and music and you know, trying to overcompensate for what she has lost without her actually being able to speak to us, us being able to really fully understand it".

Networks: Disruption, Relationships and Belonging

The participants in the semi-structured interviews noted that newcomer children and young people were physically removed from their previous family and wider social networks and that this may cause early maturation and a sense of isolation. The teacher in Post Primary School E said:

"...they are isolated, they stay at home and have problems in the house and the child becomes a friend to the parents, when actually, from my point of view, those children are losing their childhood".

Loneliness and isolation were considered to be risk factors by the teachers interviewed. The teacher in Post Primary School E said:

"Loneliness, isolation...the main problem is that they think they are different you know, and sometimes they are taking this as a disadvantage, you know?"

In Post Primary School G the teacher said:

"These children have very complicated lives. Although they are here with families, it is not the whole family. There is always somebody missing. And they find it difficult to cope. A lot of these children actually, this is not the first country they are going to or have been. They have moved quite a bit. So they are already tired of starting all over again, making friends... this, that or the other".

However the teacher in Post Primary School C pointed out that in some cases the children arrived with or came in order to join a network of extended family and friends already settled in Northern Ireland:

"Some of our pupils they have their cousins here or relatives or friends who are in Northern Ireland and then when they arrived they have some sort of a contact. Maybe only the parents have a contact but the children don't, they can feel quite isolated within the school".

Family circumstances and Influences were discussed in relation to mental health and wellbeing. The teacher in Post Primary School E, who was also a parent of a newcomer child, noted that the mental health of parents could have an impact on that of the children:

"It can be like the depression is passed from the parents to children...change of lifestyle, lack of light, longer winter...They have to pay rent...maybe a young mother with the children, she is feeling post natal depression and they will not ask for help because they are too proud to ask about it and sometimes they can pass this on to the children".

The same participant discussed the issue of alcohol abuse and the example of one family with experience of suicide, when a:

"Polish man, killed his mother-in-law, wife and children, then he killed himself because he invests ...in some state and...I think this is a big issue (mental health, suicide and addictions,) but men, they are not taking this. But I think maybe if you will go through the statistics there are like a lot of you know [teacher makes a hand signal to imply suicide by hanging] because we have a lot of like, of different culture, and its just coming this problem also, addictions. You are drinking beer, but sometimes it depends on the drinking problem. You can be sick also...but sometimes this can be a problem...I think this culture of beer is more coming over people who are very quickly tired".

In Post Primary School E the staff member noted that some parents were isolated at home and depended on the friendship of their children and she expressed concern about this: 'from my point of view, those children are losing their childhood'.

Feeling different and a lack of a sense of belonging were highlighted as risk factors in Post Primary School E also:

"At some stages they don't want to accept it but they are different and they should accept it...the self esteem is very...low. You know, they don't believe they are... just normal. But some of them are very shy and insecure and that means we just need to keep an eye on them, you know?"

In Primary School B the teacher highlighted issues around friendship groups, noting that some children tended to find security within their own linguistic or cultural group:

"They will see at break time that the children flock to their own nationalities. In class you might see that they are more withdrawn because they are now back on their own, they have no children around them from their own nationalities and they are more vulnerable...you...the Education Authority cannot make judgements without seeing the children".

Instability and Brexit

Some teachers highlighted a degree of uncertainty among newcomer children and young people and their families, particularly in relationship to Brexit. In Post Primary School E the teacher said:

"Since the Brexit is in play you have a lot more issues and problems among the families dealing with this now, because they are worried. Some of them are moving back, some of them already did you know. Because they don't know what's going to happen with this...Brexit will definitely worry some people and borders here worry people you know, some people they already, they have a mortgage, they are in town house but they are worried".

Community Hostility

In Primary School D the teacher expressed an awareness of fear amongst newcomer families with respect to the communities in which they are living:

"...parents can be quite fearful of what is in the community...unfortunately not, maybe it is some of the families have been placed outside South Belfast in places they were not welcome, and talking about mental health, we did help one family whose house was attacked and they just couldn't settle, they ended up moving away. So there could be families that we're not hearing a lot about who may not feel welcome in their neighbourhood and communities so might not even want to leave the house to go to a local youth club etc. It could be money...I think what breaks it is when one family gets involved they tell another family who tells another family who tells another family. So once family does become established in the club and it's ok for that family to go then more families will try it".

In Post Primary School G the teacher reflected this view and put it like this:

"I believe that Northern Ireland was a rather closed country, you know, prior to Poland and the other countries joining the EU. They did not have immigrants., or if they did there were very few. There would just be a few Chinese and maybe Indians. And I think it was a shock to the system, the influx of people that initially came. So I do believe that local people, honestly I don't say all, but some are not very keen on foreigners if you like. So that is the first challenge that they have, just by coming here. Then in the school, I don't think the teachers are equipped to deal with them".

Parentification

Several participants noted that some newcomer children and young people had to adopt roles that were unusual for people of their age and more usual for adults. The teacher in Post Primary School C explained:

"The parents rely very much on the children's help. So even sometimes in attendance I would say 'well, you missed class on Tuesday, why was that?'...oh, because I had to go to the hospital with my Mum".

She continued:

"It was not the pupil that had the appointment, it was the Mom's appointment, but basically the pupil had to come as an interpreter, so that can be quite hard. In the case of some children, having to stay at home with parents also limited the establishment of friendships with children of their own age".

Academic Pressures

In Post primary School E the teacher noted that newcomer children and young people face the pressure to succeed at school, coupled with family responsibility at home:

"There is so much pressure on them, too much. Sometimes if you need to prepare for school work and learn, but then you need to stay with younger brother who is actually jumping and not listening to you – its actually very frustrating".

The teacher in Post Primary School G expressed similar concerns about workload, high expectations and coping with the pressure to succeed at school:

"They are not here that long and then they give up easily... on everything. So for them to be able to cope, there needs, everything needs, to be broken down into smaller chunks. I think some people have great expectations, including myself...and I think other teachers also expect probably more than what they are capable of. Probably the first thing is the workload itself. You know, cut down the subjects, and keep it simple, just for the first year. And slowly integrate them if you like".

In Primary School B the teacher interviewed highlighted the challenges of homework and related anxieties:

"Homework is a big challenge for them because Mummy or Daddy or whoever they live with, the guardians they live with, they can't speak English, it is just the child. That can stress them out sometimes, because they know that when they go home they don't have me or the other teaching assistant to help them. And they will always double check something because they don't want to be going home and being unsure of what's expected of them. That can be a challenge".

Challenges (if any) that newcomer children and young people engaging with EA Youth Service provision might encounter (RQ4)

Language Barriers

A number of participants mentioned that translation of information for parents would be important. The teacher in School F said:

"The thing that I would suggest would be that if they are trying to promote it with newcomer children, they need to think of that language barrier and getting things translated for initially so that they can understand what exactly it is that they are attending. You know, they need to know what they can expect, and even when the children get there, they don't even need to have someone there to translate for them because children are like sponges they will pick things up very, very quickly, But it is the parents who need to have

this information in order to be able to let their children go to these sorts of things”.

Parental Perspectives

A number of the key staff members noted the important influence of parents on the behaviours of children and young people in newcomer families and believed that outreach to parents by EA Youth Service, using translation services, given the language barriers, would be essential. Parental awareness of programmes available is crucial for successful engagement, as the teacher in Post Primary School C pointed out:

“how much the parents know about these programmes and what they can offer because we know that the parents influence children. ...if the parents are not familiar with the program or they don’t have enough knowledge that might hold the child back. The Mom might think ‘no, I don’t want my child to have this, I don’t know what it is, I can’t be bothered’”.

The Staff member interviewed in Primary School School F noted that translation of information in leaflet form would be required in order to overcome the language barrier:

“I do find that when leaflets and things are sent home about youth clubs, that don’t really come from school directly, or about maybe a ballet or football club starting, the parents really just leave it because they don’t understand what is being said. So, it’s you know, probably people who want to promote that to the children need to think about sending home maybe more translated things if possible. But obviously that’s going to be very hard”.

In Primary School B the staff member described several reasons why parents of newcomer children and young people, and sometimes the children and young people themselves, were less than enthusiastic about non-obligatory activities outside of school:

“we find that our parents ... are very protective over their children. I find that especially with newcomers...one of our parents doesn’t want their child going to afterschool clubs because she feels she should be going home at 3 o’clock to spend time with her, ...And then when it comes to the community they don’t have to do that, so they don’t want to engage with that, that’s what we can see. For example school trips, we do a residential overnight, they are the first parents to say ‘my child is not going’...because they can’t cope with letting them go. I don’t know why. It’s a cultural thing...we really have to persuade them...Yes, we are all trained to deal with them...but if for example they went to a football club, is the coach going to know how to...because they can’t speak fluent English, are they going to be able to communicate? Do the parents have that worry? Is the child comfortable? Because they are confident in the school setting, they know they feel safe”.

The teacher in Primary School F discussed similar views. She felt that neither the children nor the parents demonstrated high levels of motivation to attend activities outside of school:

"To be honest I haven't seen a willingness either. I find that unless the school provides it, the children don't seem to do anything outside of that...I just think they're very focused on getting to school, learning the, you know, surviving, finishing their work, you know, and if they get to the park and things in between, then so be it, but, to be honest, I don't think it's a major priority for them when they first arrive at settling into school about the English language, it's getting an education, and after that, if you happen to join something else, it's a bonus".

In Post Primary School E the teacher mentioned that computer games were more attractive to some young people than going out to a youth club.

On the other hand, in Primary School F the teacher advocated:

"Trying to focus on and bring the parents onsite, more so than the children themselves, because, you'll probably find that they are quite keen to do these things, but it is their parents who would have the reserves on obviously, a new culture, and, you know, the youth clubs and the things that are available, then I think they might allow their children to go".

Furthermore, a number of staff members interviewed expressed the view that parents of newcomer children and young people experience a lack of confidence and trust, especially during the settling in period, and that this could present a barrier to engagement with EA Youth Service provision. The school, however, was seen as a site of familiarity and trust. In Post Primary School C the teacher said:

"I think it takes time...to settle and have confidence and trust. I think this is probably one of the major things... that you start trusting people. ...So whatever happens in school it is always easier to get them engaged...or even after school clubs...Inside school it is first of all a known environment...and the practicality as well. They don't have to go anywhere else and travel. It is all on site. So onsite seems to be more popular, and it's not even the right word popular, but because of accessibility, I think, yeah".

The teacher in Primary School B noted a particular reticence among parents about involvement in the local community beyond the school:

"some, em, children, the parents are still settling in themselves and the parents can be quite fearful of what is out in the community".

The teacher in School C suggested that the EA should actively engage with parents perhaps offering them some kind of some training, in order to gain their trust:

"it would be very interesting to understand, to be somewhere and actually deal with parents. They are very concerned about the children and safety".

However, the teacher in Primary School F said that despite efforts made, some parents continue to be hard to reach. In this school, for example, English classes for parents had been organised, but not all parents chose to attend:

"They do come [the parents] but you find that not all of them will and that, you know, it is frustrating for us because obviously it would be in the benefit of the children if they all attend. But, with work commitments and that, it does not happen. But, maybe if it was promoted a wee bit more outside of school hours, it might encourage the parents to take part and learn English too".

Location, transport and access

According to the participants interviewed, many parents of newcomer children and young people work long hours or do not have access to private transport and so convenient locations in the local area of activities were deemed to be the most effective. The staff member in School E, highlighted this:

"Youth group...somewhere where they are living, you know? If it is an hour from where they live ...or if it is somewhere they can walk themselves, safely, but sometimes they actually, they will go to different places you know and sometimes...its very hard to go there alone. Walking through the door alone I think this for a child who is not feeling very secure and not sure, is very hard".

The teacher in Primary School F said that transport could prove to be a barrier to engagement with Youth Service provision:

"Today I think obviously, driving and things, is quite difficult for some parents because a lot of the children here maybe walk or get the bus to school, because its outside of the immediate perimeter, meaning they probably won't be able to attend it [youth club] either. Need to be facilitating the youth clubs in the school, after it, somewhere close by, you know?"

The teacher in Primary School H observed that activities held on the school site were more likely to be attended than activities held off site, and she gave an example to illustrate this:

"when Barnardo's did it offsite after school they found that hardly every any of the children attended, or didn't attend consistently. So then it was changed to coming into school em because it is the VP that organises all of that then he is the one that kind of keeps track of that and stuff. So I think it's fairly well attended because the children go during class time at the end of, it's like the last hour, the last half and hour once a week I think. Then they're here, so they just leave whatever class they are in and go down to that session".

Financial Pressures

A number of participants mentioned financial constraints that may act as a barrier to engagement. One teacher had provided personally for the physical needs of some refugee children (purchasing school equipment and school shoes), and several teachers mentioned that parents of newcomer children and young people were often working long hours to earn money to afford to buy a car for example.

Cultural Differences

Some teachers interviewed noted that certain activities were not deemed by certain groups of newcomer families to be appropriate for cultural reasons or due to a clash in views or values between those of the family and the local community, for example, with respect to gender.

Ways in which the EA Youth Service might support the development of positive mental health and wellbeing among newcomer children and young people (RQ5)

Offer a Safe Space to Establish Friendships Particularly with Non-newcomer Peers

The staff members interviewed in schools showed awareness of the importance of newcomer children and young people establishing networks of friendships with other children and young people outside the boundaries of their own linguistic or ethnic group. The teacher in Post Primary School A said:

"And encouraging them to participate, join in, whether it's something in school, we do a lot of after school stuff. Or if it's something outside of school. Outside of school would probably be better because you know they would be making friends from, you know, they tend to stay within either language group or class group, and you know we just had our school show there last term in terms of bringing lots of people together...they just they have thrown themselves in. And yet they're all shy, you know?"

She went on to suggest that funding for further extracurricular opportunities and resources would be helpful:

"if we could have additional funding for after schools clubs for example. And maybe for resources that...whether it be games, or you know, some kind of social interaction, games ...they would need to be Access NI approved, but people who come out and would do youth groups in the school".

The teacher in Post Primary School C stressed the benefits of friendships with 'native speaker' (non-newcomer children):

"We would organize a trip; so one newcomer probably brings a native speaker friend. So it's again trying to build relationships, Sometimes they meet somebody from the same class...we would do a lot of trips to the City Hall and McDonalds of course! ... We do one around November so we would get out, so it's an ice breaker to build relationships as well as learn more about the country where they are".

The teacher in Post Primary School E was keen that provision would not be segregated by language or ethnicity:

"it's very good if you have activities where actually you can take one child from newcomer and Northern Irish child with the same problems, not like because you are a newcomer, but because you have become something. You know, something that is keeping us together and I think this is what will help a child to open up or just realise 'I am not alone, and it is not about me being here from a different country".

[Help with Preparation for School and Support with Schoolwork](#)

The teacher in Post Primary School C stressed the value of providing preparation provision for newcomer children and young people, to help them cope with the school system:

"Yes, instructions and how, what school is. What we do. Just the whole school system. Rather than being just dropped in and getting so overwhelmed. And they can get themselves in trouble because they don't know how to interact with other pupils; they don't know where the boundaries are. It can be cultural as well as the lack of education, particularly in some of the African countries where they've never been to school before. So it's completely new... the pastoral care, which should not be underestimated...we have a large number of newcomers in our school. They need somebody like me full time to do it just as at a special school".

The teacher in Post Primary School C noted that time dedicated to helping individual pupils with preparation of schoolwork in advance of their classes was helpful. The teacher in Post Primary School A also stressed the need for help with schoolwork:

"You know, I know that NICRAS they run a homework club for primary and post primary. That's great, but maybe ...if we could have people who are there who could support the children in doing their homework...to iron out problems because parents they just don't have the linguistic ability".

In Post Primary School C the teacher emphasised the value of tailoring extracurricular activities to the interests of the children and young people themselves and of carrying out research to understand their views and preferences:

"...specifically to check what they are interested in. You know, first what it is they'd like to do.I can't design a program, we could design a program if

they wanted us to. You know, what the children, what they would be interested in and so on...so that is maybe something we could look into. You know, have a wee survey or questionnaire in a fun way to learn...more about these kids, their needs and then trying to work at that".

Engagement with Newcomer Families

A number of participants recommended the creation of a family programme for newcomers. Suggestions for elements of this included training for parents, parental support, and family activities organised at a time outside working hours rather than during the day. The teacher in Post Primary School C noted that the location of such activities needed to be convenient and local to the vicinity of the school, while others specifically advocated activities convened on the school site itself. The teacher in Post Primary School E suggested that the opportunity to talk about 'the triangle between school, parents and child' would be valuable. The teacher in School E suggested that training for youth work personnel could be beneficial, including specific training in dealing with newcomer families and parents.

Sport, Music and the Arts

Several participants highlighted the benefits of the arts, and mentioned in particular drama, the writing and publishing of stories and poems, and music. One teacher in School G said:

"the other thing is most children like music. And actually quite a lot of Bulgarian children are making music and are singing. So imagine if there is, maybe not at school, but if it is a youth centre of wherever, it is where they can go and just sing and record a wee song, or something like that. This is going to be a big thing. ...they have never been to a museum. They have never been to a gallery. ...but that needs money that we don't have unfortunately".

Sports were also mentioned, although the teacher in School E believed that some sports such as rugby and Gaelic football were too 'national' with non-newcomer children having an advantage. On the other hand the teacher in Primary School D discussed a successful example of involvement and collaboration with a local Gaelic club.

3.2.2. Data from Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: Newcomer Children/Young People and Key Staff Members in Schools

As outlined in the methodology, the SDQ includes 25 items asking about emotional symptoms, conduct, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship and prosocial behaviour. A ‘total difficulties’ score can be generated by summing all of these except for prosocial behaviour.

The SDQ was completed as a self-report by 39 newcomer students who were also participating in our focus groups. To provide the perspective of key adults the ‘teacher’ version of the SDQ was also completed for the same children and young people by key members of school staff. A total of 33 staff forms had been returned at the time of analysis.

The newcomer students who completed the SDQ ranged in age from 10-17 with an average age of 13. There were 30 females and 9 males. 15 different countries of origin were represented including Poland (n = 11), Bulgaria/Roma (n=4), Syria (n = 3), Romania (n=2), Philippines (n = 2), Slovakia (n =2), Hungary (n = 2), Somalia (n = 1), China (n = 1), Thailand (n=1), Portugal (n = 1), India (n = 1), Lithuania (n = 1), Bangladesh (n=1) and Russia (n=1). 5 young people did not specify this.

Table 1: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Overall Mean Scores and Categorisation

Student Self-Rating (n = 39)			Key Staff Member (n = 33)		
SDQ subscale	Overall Mean Score	Category	SDQ subscale	Overall Mean Score	Category
Emotional Problems Scale	3.6	Average	Emotional Problems Scale	1.5	Average
Conduct Problems Scale	1.8	Average	Conduct Problems Scale	0.7	Average
Hyperactivity Scale	4.0	Average	Hyperactivity Scale	2.0	Average
Peer Problems Scale	2.5	Slightly raised	Peer Problems Scale	1.0	Average
Prosocial Scale	8.1	Average	Prosocial Scale	8.1	Average
Total Difficulties Score	12.0	Average	Total Difficulties Score	5.3	Average

SDQ subscale	Overall Mean Score	Category	SDQ subscale	Overall Mean Score	Category
Emotional Problems Scale	3.6	Average	Emotional Problems Scale	1.5	Average
Conduct Problems Scale	1.8	Average	Conduct Problems Scale	0.7	Average
Hyperactivity Scale	4.0	Average	Hyperactivity Scale	2.0	Average
Peer Problems Scale	2.5	Slightly raised	Peer Problems Scale	1.0	Average
Prosocial Scale	8.1	Average	Prosocial Scale	8.1	Average
Total Difficulties Score	12.0	Average	Total Difficulties Score	5.3	Average

As presented in Table 1, all of the individual scores were collated and the overall mean score for each of the scales was determined. The SDQ guidelines provide categorisation for each range of scores (<http://www.sdqinfo.com/>). The categories are ‘Average’, ‘Slightly raised’, ‘High’ or ‘Very high’. Scoring is based on UK norms which serve as a useful comparison.

Only the students’ overall score for ‘Peer Problems’ was slightly raised. All other overall mean scores from students and staff were in the average range. Individual questionnaire scores indicated that the vast majority of student and staff participants did not currently perceive difficulties in the areas that are screened by the SDQ.

None of the individual staff questionnaires scored the pupils in the ‘high’ or ‘very high’ range for total difficulties. 3 of the young people’s self-report questionnaires did score in the ‘high’ or ‘very high’ range and this information was provided to the school in accordance with our ethical procedures.

3.3 The Views and Experiences of Newcomer Children and Young People

Data from Focus Group Discussions

This section of the report presents a summary of the views of newcomer children and young people gathered in focus group discussions conducted in schools. The children were purposively selected for the study based on their experiences as newcomer children in Northern Ireland and they were invited to participate in the focus group interviews. The schedule of questions (See Appendix B) was derived from the four research questions underpinning the study and explored the following: what children and young people liked best about being a young person living in Northern Ireland and how this makes them feel (RQ3); what the children and young people liked least about being a young person living in Northern Ireland and the challenges they face (RQ3); their attendance at youth clubs or organisations outside school (RQ1); what are their experiences of attending youth clubs or organisations outside school (RQ 2); and the barriers they face regarding their attendance at youth clubs or organisations outside of school (RQ4).

What is the nature of EA Youth Service engagement with newcomer children and young people in schools? (RQ1)

Summary of response from primary school children

The majority of the children in the primary sector had limited engagement with clubs or organisations run by the EA Youth Service. One child in School F was a member of the Girl Guides. However, the majority of children did participate in activities after school with a range of sporting activities being the most popular. A small number of children from Schools B, H and F attended after school clubs. Some children attended activities run by religious organisations (School B, F and H) and art and music activities run by private organisations. Overall it appeared that children who attended school in the city had the opportunity to attend a wider variety of clubs compared to those children who attended school in a rural setting.

Summary of response from post-primary children

The findings from the post primary sector reflect those of the primary sector with children reporting limited engagement with organisations run by the EA Youth Services. One child in School C was a member of the Cadets and a child from School A had attended a Polish Community Youth Club. Again reflecting the primary sector responses the most popular organised activities reported were participation in sporting activities. However, in contrast with the primary sector a large number of children did not take part in any organised activities after school and instead chose to spend their time with friends and family or alone at home. A child from School A had a part time job.

What are the challenges and opportunities that the EA Youth Service personnel encounter in their engagement with newcomer children and young people? (RQ2)

Access to information

Access to information was a challenge to children's engagement with organisations after school and this theme emerged from the responses of children in both the primary and post primary schools. Many of the children suggested that initially a lack of understanding and knowledge about what was available impacted upon their

decisions to engage with activities after school. “I think it is different, like when you change the country you are in a different world” (Pupil 1, Post Primary School G - rural). Most children found out about clubs through word of mouth from family already established in Northern Ireland and/or from information provided by their school. A small number of children had used social media and internet searches such as Google to source available activities:

“I just looked at the internet and I say like ‘I need any swimming’ and you put in the town.” (Pupil 3, Primary School H – urban)

“In Google you can just search what is in the community or what is around here.” (Pupil 2, Post Primary School A – urban)

Peer group influences

The influence of friends upon their willingness to join a club was reported by a large number of children and particularly those in post primary schools. For children in post primary schools this was both a challenge and an opportunity to their engagement in a club or activity. If a club was attended by friends and therefore deemed to be ‘cool’, then children reported that they would be willing to attend. For example, “If my friends go then I will go too” (Pupil 2, Pupil Post Primary School C - urban) and “Yeah I want to (go), maybe with my friend because if my friends go then I will” (Pupil 3, Post Primary School G - rural). This view is ratified by Pupil 1, Post Primary School C - urban:

“Maybe because they find it boring or not interesting at all or maybe like a waste of time . . . or maybe because they are too cool to go to a youth club or whatever club it is, you know?” . . . Maybe because none of your friends want to go so you’re like, I really don’t want to go by myself, you know? So you have that wee voice in the back of your head saying ‘no you don’t want to go, don’t go’. People won’t want to hang out with you . . . so if your friend doesn’t want to go you won’t either”.

However, if their friends did not attend then this appeared to be a challenge to their engagement in the clubs or activities. Although more prevalent in the post primary sector, primary pupils commented that their willingness to go to a club after school depended upon their peers participation because, “If their friends go there (they would go), but if their friends didn’t tell them about it then they can’t participate” (Pupil 4, Primary School D - urban).

Transportation

For a small number of children transportation appeared to be a barrier to their engagement in clubs and activities run outside school. The proximity of the club and also their parents work commitments and schedules appeared to have an impact.

The comments below reflect these views:

“So, like she never has like time to, she would never really have time to like sign me up. But like since my dad has a new work and he comes back earlier than he did in his old job then he might pick me up and that’s why I really want to go.” (Pupil 6, Primary School F - rural)

“My parents have work. OK, I am not a baby but I still need someone to look after me so most of the time I have a babysitter so then I can’t go to the youth clubs and stuff like that.” (Pupil 3, Post Primary School E - rural)

Difficulties with language and lack of confidence

Children from both primary and post primary schools felt strongly that one of the main challenges to their initial engagement in clubs and organisations outside school was a lack of confidence when they initially arrived in NI. The main reason cited for this lack of confidence was their inability to speak English: “I think the language barrier is the thing that people can struggle with most. Because it takes time before you can fully engage with the language” (Pupil 1, Post Primary School A - urban). This initial difficulty communicating made it hard to make friends and also understand the opportunities available to them. One child commented that the things they found challenging about joining a club were “being afraid in the first day... what’s going to happen? Who’s going to come? How are you going to talk to them? Are you going to be struggling with talking?” (Pupil 2 Post Primary School A - urban). The result was that most children reported a lack of confidence and therefore chose to either not engage with activities outside school or to stay within their own communities and family/friends circle. Pupils commented:

“I was trying to be friends with them but I don’t know how to speak English . . . when I came here I don’t actually have friends and I feel a bit lonely.” (Pupil 1, Primary School D - urban)

“I have my group of friends that are from the same country as me, that go to the same school as me. So I always hang out with them . . . I don’t have any friends outside of my school besides the people from my country.” (Pupil 1, Post Primary School C - urban)

Experiences of bullying and racist behaviour

The majority of children had experienced some form of bullying or racist behaviour and they felt these experiences further contributed to their lack of engagement in clubs:

"Honestly, since the start of this year, the school year, people are being really racist with me. I didn't have any good experiences." (Pupil 1, Post Primary School C - urban)

"I just think maybe they are shy of other people. Like, just bullying people, bullies. Like when you go to clubs and they just like bully you and call you names . . . then the next day you are not coming to the club." (Pupil 6, Primary School H - urban)

A number of children stated that being a newcomer child or young person in NI had made them a target for bullying, aggressive behaviour and verbal abuse. Often this caused them to avoid situations where it may happen:

"After school I go home, no talk to these children because they (say) 'come here, you want to fight?' . . . (she replies to them) 'no, I don't want fight'." (Pupil 3, Post Primary School G - rural)

"We are not friends with the Irish people . . . some of them are like really racist . . . we don't know why they don't like us . . . (they) swearing at us, like they say to us 'go back to your own country'." (Pupil 1, Post Primary School G – rural)

Further, a number of children expressed a desire to fit in. It is notable that some children from School E who were invited to take part chose not to as they did not want to appear different to their peers. Before the focus group began the principal of the school explained to the researcher that a number of the newcomer children were keen to 'blend in' and integrate as much as possible with their peers and therefore they did not feel that they could participate in the focus group discussions.

What are the challenges and opportunities facing newcomer children and young people with respect to mental health and wellbeing? (RQ3)

Most of the children who took part in the focus group discussions had been living in NI for a number of months and to facilitate the discussion they had a good level of English language. Reflecting upon their initial arrival and how they have settled in NI

the children felt that there were both positive and negative impacts of their experiences as newcomer children in NI.

Positive experiences and the impact upon children's mental wellbeing

The development of friendships and the subsequent relationships the children had developed with children from their own and other backgrounds (including children from NI) was viewed as a positive result of their experiences in NI. The majority of the children felt they had developed a positive attitude to seeking out and developing friendships with new people. This was closely linked to their levels of confidence. Whereas initially a lack of confidence was seen as a negative aspect of their experience, reflecting upon their development and the development of confidence the majority of children reported this change to be a positive one. Some children also reported that they felt the experience of being a newcomer child in NI had made them more resilient and this was also a positive development. Most children when commenting on their increased confidence and resilience did so with a sense of pride of how they had managed their experiences and developed as a result of their experiences. There was also a sense of achievement for many of the children as they acknowledged that moving to NI was not an easy process:

"I would say I am in a good stage right now because I went through the bad stage . . . I was at that stage and no-one really helped me. I was alone. So I think because I started to realise that no-one is going to be by my side, I am alone and I have to find myself. I think that shaped me into who I am today and I would not change my experience at all. So I am just really proud of myself and everything that I have been through." (Pupil 1, Post Primary School C – urban)

"I remember whenever we were having geography, it was a few years ago, the teacher was asking me a question and I know the answer but in my own language... I was like 'OK... I am just going to say it, whatever it's going to be' and then I was so proud of myself because I did it. I was trying!" (Pupil 2, Post Primary School A – Urban)

The circumstances for coming to NI (for some children it was not their choice to come to NI) and the circumstances that they moved to (for example some children came with little support whereas some moved to be with an extended family of support) influenced how difficult the experience was. Yet all acknowledged that, as previously mentioned, a lack of confidence was the most significant challenge they faced upon arrival in NI. Having friends and feeling a sense of belonging to a group of children was very important to the majority of children and their sense of feeling

accepted and secure. Children talked about feeling safer and more secure in NI than in their country of origin, "I like the way us kids we get protected more than I would get protected in my own country I would say. I like the way we are seen as kids . . . like we need to protect kids, this is our priority" (Pupil 1, Post Primary School C - urban). This sense of security was enhanced if there was an extended family network, "If you have more family than just your mum and dad or your brother and sister, maybe like an uncle and more family I think that is really good because you can go out more" (Pupil 1, Post Primary School C - urban).

A large number of children commented that the schools and education they received in NI was a very positive experience. There were also some challenges that will be discussed in the next section but the teaching, the knowledge developed and the support of the schools were all acknowledged as providing opportunities for the children that they may otherwise not have experienced had they not moved to NI.

"We come here for education. The English education is really good . . . you can get all the kinds of jobs. It helps you in your life . . . we didn't come here just to play, we come here like to educated yourself." (Pupil 1, Post Primary School G - rural)

The majority of children praised the schools and particularly the support they received from individual teachers. Some children referenced individual teachers and strategies that they used to help them with their school work but also in more general aspects of settling in.

"The first teacher was so important because if I would ask a question, she would come over and help me over. One time I was stuck in maths and she always tells us to put traffic lights..... Orange mean you understand a little bit, green means you are ok with it, and red means you need more help. One time I put the red and she helped me.... She helped me so much." (Pupil 2, Primary School B – rural)

"Maybe because here the school is very good people. And help for everything. And learn new language." (Pupil 3, Post Primary School A - urban)

Children also commented upon how their school experience was a positive opportunity for them to develop and the potential benefits this may afford them in the future. Some children expressed an opinion that the diversity and geography of living in NI was an opportunity to extend their knowledge and understanding beyond their country of origin and this was viewed as being very positive. The majority of

children also felt that learning a new language, whilst challenging, was a positive attribute that could have the potential to influence their future careers, for example one child (Pupil 4, Primary School B – rural) aspired to pursue a career as a translator. Others saw it as an opportunity for themselves and their siblings to pursue future careers as described by Pupil 2 (Post Primary A – urban)

“It’s very important for people to learn a new language. My sister is only six and she speaks 3 languages! So that is going to help her when she gets older. She could be a translator but she wants to be a dentist. I want to be a doctor.” (Pupil 2, Post Primary A – urban)

Negative experiences and the impact upon children’s mental wellbeing

A large number of children reported experiencing periods of stress. A number of reasons were put forward to explain why this was the case. For example, children commented that they acquired spoken English relatively quickly but there were unrealistic expectations regarding the time required to develop reading and writing skills.

“They have to understand we don’t speak very good English. Like we speak English but it is hard for us to do (school) work . . . The teachers they give you work and it’s like ‘I don’t understand this’. Speaking is OK but I don’t understand this (written work).” (Pupil 1, Post Primary School G - rural)

“Teachers are saying . . . ‘just write the answer’. But you’re like ‘I don’t know any English so how am I going to do it? And you’re just sitting there reading the questions like ‘OK I am just going to try my best’.” (Pupil 4, Post Primary School A - urban)

Feeling stressed was also linked to concerns regarding their academic achievement and fears about falling behind in their school work. Although many of the children were complimentary of the support they received from individual teachers and assigned support teachers they did feel that expectations were perhaps at times too high. Also once a level of English was observed this support appeared to be withdrawn. This was in the view of the children too soon and further support would have been beneficial. “When I was first here I went to Mr. X (peripatetic teacher) the whole day but then last year I only got two periods and then this year he said ‘no you can’t come any more’.” (Pupil 2, Post Primary School A - urban)

Another stressor for the children was the pressure to act as a translator. Parental pressure to translate attributed to feelings of stress particularly when the child was the only person within the family able to speak English.

"Maybe your parent rely on you because you (they) cannot speak English and you have to help them all the time because you got to the point you are OK, you don't have to learn any more English. I can have a conversation without actually like having problems. And there is your parents and they are like 'oh can you help me with this, can you help me with this? And you're just like 'oh just leave me alone I don't want to help you! It gets a wee bit annoying."

(Pupil 1, Post Primary School C - urban)

The majority of children also recalled periods of loneliness and a sense of isolation. Again many of these feelings were strongest during their initial settling in period however some children still reported feeling lonely and withdrawing to their room.

"I was crying like a lot. But no one knows because I just lock myself in my room . . . Too many times I was thinking that I want to, you know, end myself, but I didn't. I have my little sister . . . so yeah I try to continue like to make it better with reading or watching TV and try to listen to music that is English language. That helps. It is better than before so I can just understand everything that people are saying. So I try my best to show that I can do it. . . From that time I was feeling like a loser . . . then I think I can make it better. I can do more than this." (Pupil 3, Post Primary School A - urban)

Often children linked these episodes with their friendship experiences. For example, some children explained that initially they felt children made friends with them and invited them to join their existing friendship groups because they were new and different. However, once the novelty wore off these friendships were sometimes withdrawn and children experienced feeling of isolation. Developing friendships was very important to children but some of the children commented that making lasting friends was a difficult process that took time.

"They are going to be like 'oh I'm going to be her friend but then I am just going to leave her because she doesn't speak English, she doesn't know what I am going to do'. So . . . but over time I kind of lose the contact with them because I started to see their real faces, their true colours and um I kind of just took myself out of there because I thought it was not for me." (Pupil 1, Post Primary School C - urban)

A large number of the children who took part in the focus group discussions talked about the cultural and religious differences they experienced in NI compared to their country of origin. Coping with these differences, learning a new language whilst trying to engage with the required school work all contributed to children feeling

isolated, stressed and lacking confidence during the initial period of transition into life in NI.

“The boys laugh at me and keep asking ‘Why do you wear this? Why do you wear this? (head scarf) and I still tell them it is part of my religion.” (Pupil 3, Primary School B – rural)

“I don’t like the discrimination. I go home sad and my mom tell ‘what happened, why you sad?’ and I tell ‘because in this school (some pupils) have discrimination. Mrs E (teacher) is here and I am happy because she help me. I come and tell Mrs E about the discrimination and she tell me (making hand motion to calm down) . . .” (Pupil 3, Post Primary School G – rural)

Some children suggested that in order to protect themselves they stuck with children from their own or other countries rather than children from NI as they were better able to understand the difficulties they faced being a newcomer child in NI.

Which recommendations could be made with a view to future development of the EA Youth Service in order to contribute effectively to improving the health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people? (RQ4)

Recommendations from children

Children felt the most beneficial initiatives were those that allowed the children to develop their ability to communicate in English, enabling them gain confidence. Listed are a range of suggestions that emerged from the focus group discussions with the children:

- Children commented on the use of technology to support their learning. Using smart phones and tablets were suggestions that could be used to further support their use of English.
- Having a range of activities suited to the needs and interests of children, for example sport, drama and art based activities were considered popular as they were not considered to initially require a high level of English. Older children enjoyed opportunities for social interaction in a less formal setting.
- Development of a marketing strategy would enable better access to information. Children suggested wider distribution of posters using different languages to advertise activities and clubs would have an immediate impact.

Developing a social media strategy that could be accessed by the children was also suggested.

- Other suggestions included building networks within communities and having meetings that provide information for new arrivals may improve awareness and access to clubs and activities.
- Develop an ambassador role for children who can provide a link between the clubs and activities provided by the EA Youth Services and newcomer children.
- School interventions that provided additional support for the acquisition of the English language were valued by the children but were often reduced and gradually withdrawn. This is an area that the EA Youth Services could build into future programmes with newcomer children.
- Review availability, proximity and access to clubs for children, particularly those living in rural areas.
- Raising awareness of the challenges newcomer children face to reduce discrimination and improve tolerance and integration into the local community.

Chapter 4 Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion

This research study investigated the mental health needs of newcomer children and young people in communities across Northern Ireland and sought to explore ways in which the EA Youth and Children's Services can contribute to improving their wellbeing. This Chapter will discuss the findings according to the four research questions that underpinned the study, and make recommendations based on these for policy, practice and future research.

1. What is the nature of EA Youth Service engagement with newcomer children?

Although the majority of the newcomer children and young people participating in this study take part in extracurricular activities after school, including sport, music, arts and religious organisations, most had limited engagement with the EA Youth Service. There appeared to be more opportunities available in terms of clubs in the city than in provincial areas, and young people in post primary school attended fewer activities than their counterparts in primary schools, choosing to spend time at home with family or friends instead.

Key staff members in schools reported a lack of awareness and understanding of the role of the EA Youth Service and limited knowledge or experience of its programmes other than the Intercultural Education Service.

All of the EA Youth Service personnel participating in the focus group discussions had experience of engaging with newcomer children and young people, although the nature and extent of this varied. Over 70% of respondents in the EA Youth Service practitioner survey stated that there were newcomer children living in their area in each of the 4-8 years, 9-13 years, 14-18 years age 19-25 years age ranges. The majority (77.68%) of Youth Service practitioners in the survey stated that their organisation did not provide programmes specifically designed for newcomer children and young people. Moreover, the majority of the participants in the EA Youth Service practitioner questionnaire stated that they had not included newcomer children and young people as a specified group on their Year One Action Plan. Those who had done so explained that the aims of their organisation made it a prerequisite, while others had been alerted to the needs of newcomer children and

young people in their area by teachers or attached youth workers in schools. The reasons given as to why newcomer children and young people had not been included as a specified group were that there were very few newcomer families in the project catchment area; that population change in the area and the arrival of newcomer families was recent; that the centre preferred an inclusive approach; that newcomer children and young people had not presented particular issues requiring different to those of other children and young people in the group; or that needs analysis and development were on going and related future targets had been set. In addition, a lack of statutory funding was mentioned.

The need for collaboration across sectors to develop appropriate provision for newcomer children and young people who are refugees or asylum seekers was emphasised in the focus group discussions with EA Youth Service practitioners. Those reporting the highest levels of engagement worked in partnership with specialist organisations such as NICRAS, RRCANI, and CIP.

The majority of participants indicated that they currently delivered targeted programmes for newcomer children and young people, although opinion was divided as to how tailored future provision should be. Some argued that more integrated provision was preferable in the long term. It was noted that newcomer children and young people were not always willing to engage with provision due to community hostility.

Concerns were expressed around terminology and the link between the term 'newcomer' and funding. There was particular concern that funded provision for newcomer children and young people could be withdrawn depending on language competence in English, and, among Youth Service practitioners in rural areas, that the label 'newcomer' could be stigmatising. There was a similar lack of clarity about the definition of the term 'newcomer' among participants in the EA Youth Service practitioners' survey. A minority of responses (15%) explicitly referred to English language proficiency, with 6% describing a newcomer as a person whose first language was not English and 9% as someone who was new to the area and whose language was not English.

In terms of activities, 18% of respondents to the survey stated that there were no specific programmes that gained a higher participation of newcomer children and young people. According to the survey results, the most popular activities that

newcomer children and young people take part in currently are social development/cultural awareness activities (18%) and sports/dance/games (11%). Other activities mentioned were drop-in programmes, outdoor programmes and trips away, extended schools provision / school based programmes including Learning Together at KS3 and KS4, and other after schools activities. According to one practitioner: 'The Learning Together Program / Extended Provisions delivery in schools would have the highest participation at any one time or week with a large apportion of both classes worked with around 25% - 30% of all worked with being newcomer'. Uniformed organisations such as Scouts, Brownies, Rainbows and GB/BB and drama were mentioned as well as specific programmes including Xtreme FM, Gimme 5, TBUC, Hadaya and Ameera, Discovery and Challenge Plus Badgework, Connect Youth Inclusion Programme, Youth Council, and Reach Out, Enrich Within.

The Youth Service practitioners surveyed demonstrated awareness of the need to address mental health needs in young people, particularly among refugees and asylum seekers with experience of trauma. One respondent stated that 14-16 year olds seemed 'most fragile'. However, 30% of Youth Service practitioners did not know how assessment of newcomer children's and young peoples' mental health needs is carried out, that it was inapplicable to them or that no assessment processes were in place. Only one response said that appropriately skilled practitioners were already in place in their setting. One survey respondent said: 'we are not mental health practitioners'. A further 6% of responses stated that the same assessment procedures were used for all children with no differences made to accommodate newcomer children and young people. Assessment of need involving responding to referral information (from parents, school or medical staff) and relationship building was represented in 15% of the responses respectively. According to one respondent short term programmes were not effective, as they do not have the potential to build relationships and trust. Other methods of assessment mentioned were varied and included observation and supervision, group work or group discussion, baseline assessment and tracking, signposting, peer educator sessions or reports, self-identification, therapists and councillors and a suggestion box. Generally, respondents highlighted a lack of confidence and lack of knowledge with respect to assessing and addressing mental health needs, especially in children and young people with experience of conflict, trauma and disruption. In a minority of centres procedures were clear and were explained in detail.

When Youth Service practitioners were asked about opportunities and support available to them for addressing the mental health issues of young people, 20% of responses stated that they did not know the answer; that the question was inapplicable; that there was very little support available, or that access to support was limited. 26% of responses pointed to support being sourced within their own organisation, while another 20% pointed to external voluntary agencies and charities. 11% said that support and opportunities were provided by statutory services and only 7% mentioned Education Authority support specifically. A number of sources of support were mentioned including the EA Youth Service team, church groups and church ministers, Social Workers, GPs, AWARE, Mental health charities, the PHA 5 steps of wellbeing, Action Mental Health, Youth Action's Life Maps, the Niamh Louise Foundation, CAMHS, Helpline, Childline, BB Headquarters, Girl Guiding Ulster training, Assist training, safeguarding training, EA courses, Love for Life, Peer Educators within Guiding, Young Men's Mental Health Project/ Education Authority, Ethnic Minority Forum, Borough Councils, Pastoral Care Teams, Gimme 5, Be Positive, PIPs and SHSCT.

In terms of training or support accessed to help develop the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people, 45% of the Youth Service practitioners' responses stated that they did not know; had not accessed any training; that no newcomer children and young people accessed their provision; or that there was no training available. One participant said: This is the first time that I have encountered newcomer children / young people as an issue, and have never heard colleagues refer to young people in this way. Indeed, I had to do some reading around this as I was generally unaware of policy around it'. Another said: 'knowledge of newcomer children comes from my paid employment, not my voluntary roles'. Another said: 'I am unaware of specific training aimed at 'Newcomer' young people'.

10% of the total responses specified training or support accessed relating to mental health. These included internally sourced resources, suicide awareness training (ASSIST), Gimme 5, child protection training, BOUNCE, inclusion/CRED training, substance abuse training and social media training. Motivational training, transactional analysis, cultural awareness, sexual health, bereavement/loss/trauma, quality assurance, leadership training, support from the Ethnic Minority Forum and EA training support (Young Men's Mental Health Project) were also mentioned One participant mentioned obtaining 'Support from [the] Romanian Consulate in Edinburgh and Dublin [and the] Roma community organisation in Belfast'. The PSNI,

Public Health, church groups /headquarters, the Scout Association, the Boys Brigade, Lisburn YMCA, CAMHS, Housing First and Start 360, Be Positive programme and Top Activity were named as sources of training or support.

When asked about resources one response said: 'We have little or no resources and at times feel very overwhelmed'. Almost one third of resources and tools currently in use were internally sourced within organisations. Social skills programmes, cost free external facilitators, Gimme 5 training, awareness raising, suicide awareness/ASSIST training, BOUNCE training, statutory services and the Learning Together Programme were referred to, as well as Mental Health First training, counselling, mentoring, Transactional Analysis training, motivational interviewing training, child protection training, life skills training and sexual health training. Online services, Rickter Assessment, EA Grants, Circle Time, Youth Action Life and Take 5 were mentioned also. Several participants highlighted specific elements of the Learning Together Programme in schools, for example: 'LTP programme in schools in particular modules like, Personal identity, Improving Confidence and Self Esteem, Healthy Lifestyles but as a part of most modules', and 'Currently working in partnership with support teacher in school to include working in Partnership with E.A. Community Programme'. However, practitioners described locating support and tools independently and adapting these to meet their needs.

2. What are the challenges and opportunities that EA Youth Service personnel encounter in their engagement with newcomer children and young people?

Opportunities

Key staff members in schools described various ways in which the EA Youth Service might support the development of positive mental health and wellbeing among newcomer children and young people. These included providing safe spaces to establish friendships with peers beyond their linguistic or ethnic group, particularly by offering extracurricular clubs and activities after school. Some key staff members advocated that such activities should be integrated rather than segregated by language or ethnicity. Provisions of support with settling in to school life and routines, and also with help with schoolwork itself, were seen as valuable. Key staff members in schools recommended inclusive sports, music and the arts (particularly creative writing and storytelling) but noted the importance of tailoring activities to the interests of children and young people and of finding this out by asking them for their views.

Engagement with families was viewed as very important, and some staff members suggested the development of family programmes, training for parents, and family activities held outside working hours. The school site was viewed as the most suitable location for such provision due to ease of access and trust built up with families.

The EA Youth Service personnel were similarly aware of the opportunities their role afforded for engagement with newcomer children and young people in order to contribute positively to their mental health and wellbeing. As one participant put it, 'Mental health is a major issue within our society. We are in a unique position and can provide many opportunities to focus on the issue of mental health and breakdown the stereotypes and stigma surrounding this issue'. Opportunities for positive contributions by youth work practitioners included being a supportive listening ear and someone to talk to, helping to develop a sense of belonging, and providing a safe space for building relationships and accessing peer support. Developing cultural awareness, providing informal Personal and Social Education Programmes, awareness raising and providing access and links to other organisations/services were also highlighted, in addition to partnership work with schools, the organisation of group activities such as games, sport, drama, arts and crafts, programmes designed to promote resilience/coping/mental health, and work with parents. Also referred to were the development of long term youth work provision, the compilation of a register of young people with mental health issues, scoping the level of need in terms of mental health and mapping accordingly.

In light of concerns around children and young people coping with pressures related to schoolwork one respondent in the online survey highlighted the value of 'Programmes engaging the schools with regards to exam periods. Opportunities to develop coping with stress skills eg mindfulness. Looking at developing these skills on a long-term basis so they are perfected and useful during the most stressful times children face in the school year'. Another participant believed Youth Service personnel could offer support to schools: 'Developing mental health and wellbeing programmes for newcomer children and young people will support schools and newcomer children directly and I already schools [are] lack capacity to provide specialised mental health and wellbeing for newcomers...In the long run, it will save costs involved [in] mental health treatment...'. One participant in the survey noted that after schools programmes facilitated opportunities for relationship building with families. The teachers in schools participating in this study did highlight a gap in

awareness of and information about mental health issues particularly in terms of refugee children or children with pre-existing trauma or experience of war and conflict. .

'this is a really hard one for me because it is probably something we don't delve into a great deal. Over the last year or two we have had a number of children come from Iraq and Syria. Quite often you would look and think 'what exactly have they come from?' ...What they have seen, how have they even got here? Em, the children never talk about it, the parents never talk about it. The parents never tell us. So there could be huge issues there that we don't know if...the safeguarding team haven't passed any information on. ..It's not so much child protection issues, it's just a general background...beyond our PDMU, our whole class assemblies and things I don't think that is a side that is really catered for. We are a very nurturing school...but when it comes to actually em you know tackling their mental health, we probably don't. Because we don't have that information we probably don't cater.

In light of this the teacher believed that training specific to the wellbeing and mental health issues of newcomer children and young people was required.

The opportunities for the newcomer children and young people who engage with EA Youth Service provision highlighted by EA Youth Service practitioners were development of social skills, the development of a sense of belonging, and the opportunity to make new friendships including those beyond their cultural or linguistic peer group: 'To make new friends, to socialise outside of the family circle and become part of the community, to learn about the culture and share their culture, to have someone to speak to other than family, to feel a sense of belonging'. Also mentioned were the opportunity to try new activities and gain language skills, access to additional support or other services, enhanced self-esteem and confidence, and improved physical and mental health. One participant referred to a 'Feeling of support, resilience, and understand[ing] that there is someone in the community who is ready to listen to them'. Participants referred specifically to the Learning Together Programme in schools, Gimme 5, 'Facing Your Fears', anti-bullying programmes and the 'Reach Out, Enrich Within' programmes.

Challenges

According to the children and young people participating in this study, access to information was a challenge to engagement with organisations after school in both the primary and post primary school age groups. Peer influence was a key factor in decisions relating to attendance, particularly in post primary school years.

Transportation and parents' schedules emerged as limiting factors in relation to

attendance. Children from both primary and post primary schools felt strongly that an initial lack of confidence mainly due to language barriers affected their degree of engagement with youth clubs also. Initial language difficulties and associated lack of confidence made it hard for them to make friends beyond their language groups and some children's friendships remained within these boundaries. The children and young people involved in the study expressed a strong desire to blend in rather than appearing as different. The majority of the children and young people in the study had experienced bullying or hostility and this discouraged engagement also.

Key staff members in schools participating in the project outlined a number of challenges in schools that EA Youth Service personnel may also encounter. These included language barriers, especially in terms of communication with parents. However, in schools, translation services and digital resources eased this to some extent. Some parents remain hard to reach and do not attend school appointments and events due to employment commitments. Parental attitudes were seen to be very important. Differences in perspectives and values and differences in levels of previous educational experience among pupils and parents were highlighted. Such differences could affect levels of attendance at school and also the degree of integration into wider school and community life. This was particularly apparent with respect to extracurricular activities and school trips; some parents did not see informal educational opportunities as valuable. It was therefore considered vital that parents gain a clear understanding of the rationale and nature of Youth Service activities. Some staff reported fear, a lack of confidence and trust, and low levels of enthusiasm and commitment among parents with respect to community involvement by their children and towards activities beyond formal education. Key staff members in schools referred to the work schedules of parents, financial constraints and a lack of access to private transport as potential challenges also. Because of this, they recommended that the school site was the best location for activities. Differences in cultural values and perspectives, with respect to gender for example, were also mentioned.

Behaviour management issues due to linguistic disorientation and lack of familiarity with routines were mentioned by a number of participants in schools. Moreover, translation and language barriers appeared to be an issue in terms of accessing appropriate support. In some schools staff referred to cultural differences that may determine much information would be shared with them by parents.

Various key challenges involved in developing the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people were identified by EA Youth Service practitioners. There were concerns about funding, accessing support for dealing with emotional difficulties, and a lack of effective communication. The most frequently mentioned challenges related to linguistic barriers between the practitioners and children and young people, or their parents. A lack of engagement with the service and a lack of participation in activities were mentioned. There were concerns regarding resources and support services including counselling, time constraints, and training opportunities. Cultural barriers, low self-esteem among newcomer children and young people stemming from linguistic difference and communication issues, the stigma of discussing mental health, a lack of acceptance of difference, a lack of staff and space, a lack of staff confidence in delivering programmes, substance misuse and communication issues with parents were highlighted as further challenges. Also mentioned were peer pressure, bullying, a lack of a sense of belonging/inclusion and mistrust among newcomer families, and bureaucracy and paperwork. Parental perspectives and strong family cultures, as well as cultural stigmas concerning mental health were viewed as significant and challenging. Some respondents pointed to a deficit of background knowledge about newcomer children and young people and their home circumstances, as well as a lack of clear policy and guidance. In some cases a lack of parental support and understanding was noted: 'Lack of engagement from parents i.e. completion of consent forms etc language barriers, absence of understanding'. One response referred to the challenge of 'no previous understanding or experience of youth work approaches'.

3. What are the challenges and opportunities facing newcomer children and young people with respect to mental health and wellbeing?

Opportunities

In this study 30 newcomer children and young people and their teachers completed individual Strengths and Difficulties questionnaires. The results indicated that the vast majority of student and staff participants did not currently perceive difficulties in the areas relating to mental health and wellbeing that are screened by the SDQ. Only the students' overall score for 'Peer Problems' was slightly raised and all other overall mean scores from students and staff were in the average range. Whereas none of the individual staff questionnaires scored the pupils in the 'high' or 'very high'

range for total difficulties, 3 of the young people's self-report questionnaires did score in the 'high' or 'very high' range.

The children and young people involved in the focus group discussions in this study described a number of aspects of their experience of being a newcomer in Northern Ireland that may contribute positively to mental health and wellbeing. These included the development of friendships with children and young people from their own and other backgrounds (including children from NI) and successfully coping with the challenges they faced in a situation that was not a result of personal choice. As a result they felt more confident and resilient. Some children felt safer and more secure in NI than in their country of origin, especially if there was an extended family network. Many of the children and young people in the study viewed school and education as very positive. They valued the support received from individual teachers who helped them settle in and succeed with schoolwork. Learning a new language in school was seen as very positive, and some highlighted languages as a potential career path.

Several key staff members in schools expressed the view that the mental health and wellbeing needs of newcomer children and young people were largely similar to those of their non-newcomer counterparts, and that they were aware of few mental health issues evident among their newcomer pupils. For example, some of the issues relating to digital lives that emerged in the study reflect the experiences of many children and young people in Northern Ireland more generally. Moreover, some of the key staff in schools highlighted language learning as an accessible and positive experience for newcomer children and young people in school. They also noted that in some cases the children arrived with or came in order to join a network of extended family and friends already settled in Northern Ireland and saw this as an advantage. However, the experiences described by some participants suggested that the Silent Period, linguistic barriers, ineffective home school communication and cultural reticence might mask mental health and wellbeing issues.

Challenges

Notwithstanding, key staff in schools raised a number of issues that could affect the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people in an adverse way. These included the challenge of acquiring of a new language and dealing with language barriers, home school communication problems, the lack of control over

change in circumstances (particularly among refugees), pre-existing experiences of trauma (also particularly but not exclusively among refugees), language barriers impeding access to counselling and expert support, disruption of relationship networks and isolation from family and friends, loneliness, mental ill health of parents, family problems including substance abuse, parentification and loss of childhood, loss of a sense of belonging, instability and anxiety around political developments including Brexit, community hostility and racism, pressures to succeed academically in tandem with family responsibility, and limited support at home with school work.

The children and young people also described negative experiences that may affect mental wellbeing adversely. A large number of children reported periods of stress due to unrealistic expectations regarding language acquisition in parallel with the pressure to achieve academically. Carrying out the role of translator, particularly for parents, was viewed as stressful. The majority of children had experienced loneliness and isolation, especially, but not solely, during the settling-in period. Developing friendships was very important, but some children found that making lasting friendships was difficult and took time. Coping with linguistic, religious and cultural differences were considered stressful, and as a result, some children chose to form friendship within rather than beyond their own ethnic and linguistic groups.

Reflecting the views of some key staff in schools, one EA Youth Service practitioner pointed out that newcomer children and young people face the same challenges as other young people of their age: 'Those that do access our provision engage well and face similar challenges that the remainder of our membership face, i.e. Bullying, peer pressure to misuse drugs/alcohol, pressure to do well at school, pressures to be accepted'. However multiple challenges relating to mental health and wellbeing encountered by newcomer children and young people were mentioned by EA Youth Service survey participants such as the pressure to succeed at school, bereavement and stress, anxiety and lack of awareness due to linguistic difference and language competence, cultural barriers, a fear of not being accepted, the stigma of being a newcomer, lack of confidence/self-esteem, the lack of friends or an inability to establish new friendships, feeling isolated/excluded, suicidal ideation

4. Which recommendations could be made with a view to future development of the EA Youth Service in order to contribute effectively to improving the health and wellbeing of newcomer children and young people?

What do the children and young people think?

The children and young people in the study preferred initiatives that allowed them to develop their ability to communicate in English, thus gaining confidence. They also recommended activities such as sport, drama and art that did not initially require a high degree of English competence. Older children enjoyed opportunities for social interaction in a less formal setting. The children and young people suggested the development of a marketing strategy to improve access to information including posters in different languages to advertise activities. In keeping with the children's emphasis on their digital lives they also recommended the use of social media. The children and young people were keen to build networks within communities with information meetings for new arrivals to raise awareness.

Good Practice Examples: Schools

There were a number of examples of good practice in schools with high percentages of newcomer children and young people that emerged in this study with scope for application in the context of developing Youth Service provision.

Awareness of Variation in Backgrounds of Newcomer Children and Young People

Key staff members in schools were careful to distinguish between different cultural and linguistic groups of newcomer children and young people, different levels of previous experience of education among children and young people, different socio-political and economic groups, and levels of education of parents. The development of provision must take this variety into account.

Settling in: Scaffolding and Support

Participants in all of the schools recognised that for all of the children starting school in Northern Ireland involved acclimatisation to new routines, expectations and personnel as well as relating to a new group of peers and that thoughtful, appropriate support was needed for this. In all of the schools, welcoming and inclusion strategies

had been put in place. Welcome booklets, visual supports, Buddy Systems and Language Ambassador programmes helped children and young people settle in to new routines and with establishing new friendships. Schools value the work of the Intercultural Education Service, and benefit from collaboration with support staff and translation services in order to get to know pupils and their backgrounds, as well drawing on helpful resources such as the Toolkit for Diversity. In some schools, bilingual teaching assistants help children and young people to establish friendships and support academic progress. Some schools organise intensive work with children in small groups before introducing them to the larger class group. Other schools involve newcomer children mainly in practical subjects at first such as technology, Home Economics, languages and Art, in order to build confidence. In one of the schools a staged phase-in period was established to ease children into school life gently.

[**Minding Our Languages...and Cultures**](#)

Staff in schools work hard to overcome linguistic barriers and support the development of English language competence in newcomer children and young people. Alongside this, the importance of respecting ‘mother tongues’, valuing multilingualism and celebrating the cultures of newcomer children and young people was acknowledged in several schools with high percentages of newcomer pupils. In some schools bilingual classroom assistants support newcomer pupils, and in one school communication between school and home was translated into the mother tongue using the Seesaw app.

[**Collaboration**](#)

Those schools with very high percentages of newcomer children and young people, and developed relevant expertise, work in collaboration with a range of external organisations to enhance and develop their provision. The majority of participating schools mentioned collaboration with the EA Intercultural Education Service for the purposes of support, development, translation, advice and resources. Several schools have established clusters for development with other local schools and specialist organisations such as NICRAS, the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers; counselling, community and church groups; sports and arts groups, and the YMCA who contribute to citizenship education. The Barnardo’s PATHS programme was considered to be particularly suited to the needs

of newcomer children and young people due to its use of visual cues. Teachers value such collaboration and were keen to see it develop.

Leadership, Learning and Development

Development clusters act as a forum for sharing next practice between schools: 'We have a cluster where actually teachers from other groups and schools could meet, how we do things, and what we gather from each other to get the parents on board, which is quite difficult'. One teacher in a school with a very high percentage of newcomer children said: 'Maybe I am wrong, but I think we are quite good at it and there have been teachers that have been here for a long time and are quite proficient at integrating the children so I think that you know...'. Despite limited funding this school formed a development cluster: 'maybe about four or five schools, we have just formed our own cluster group. We are getting together and talking about what is going on in our school. What is working for us, and just sort of bouncing ideas off each other'.

Good Practice Examples: Current EA Youth Service Provision

A number of EA Youth Service practitioners participating in this study described in detail examples of developed practice in engagement with newcomer children and young people.

Development and collaboration

One practitioner pointed to existing good practice in their setting:

'To me as [a] professional, young people's mental health difficulties may range from stress, transition issues, loss, depression, and anxiety through to drink and/or drug problems, domestic life and home life. Mental health is also about mental wellbeing and what protects and builds a positive sense of self –mental health promotion. With this in mind we have a range of programmes that we deliver within the youth club setting which has an effect on social and emotional wellbeing, self confidence and self control in addition to reduction in conduct problems, violence and bullying. We also use posters and newsletters for young people to know we are available to provide individual work with those who present themselves to us for whatever reason and we use appropriate work with them to include talking to parents, referring them to other agencies or to one of our programmes to promote positive mental health'.

This practitioner went on to describe the importance of sharing this learning, and of collaboration and networking for developmental purposes. This practitioner suggested that collaboration across sectors offered a promising route to the development of expertise and thus of effective, high quality provision in future:

'We also facilitate conferences on 'Mental Health/Wellbeing' for schools in our area and use youth work methods as a model of work to put messages across for positive mental health and also have agencies available for referral if needed. A multi-agency programme could be developed to consider ways to reshape, remodel and refocus the emotional and mental health services provided for children and young people in Northern Ireland'.

In particular the Learning Together Programme was referred to by participants throughout this study as a successful example of partnership with between the EA Youth Service and schools. It is worthy of note that this programme attracts healthy numbers of newcomer children and young people.

Sharing and Growing

This emphasis on learning, sharing and developing was reflected in the comments of other participants in the study. One EA Youth Service practitioner suggested the creation of a strategic network forum:

'Perhaps the opportunity to developing a strategic network (forum) consisting of external agencies/partners so that resources could be maximised, professional guidance/input offered. This would also help minimise duplication of services while focusing on outcomes/target indicators'.

Another participant suggested the convening of an international conference:

'The possibility of a future conference in relation to inclusion with the opportunity to highlight positive outcomes and achievements of young people (International)'.

Youth Service practitioners suggested a number of related initiatives to promote learning and the development of effective provision in future. These included capacity building, workshop training relating to newcomer children and young people and their needs with clear relevance for the youth work setting, training specific to mental health and wellbeing, cultural diversity training and up skilling in relevant languages: 'language building skills, even to be able to say hello to them in their native language would be a good opening'.

The value of a published resource or toolkit was also emphasised, as well as further funding and enhanced statutory support. As one respondent put it, a: 'Sustainable funding commitment from a statutory source such as Dept. for Community, EANI or WHSCT'. The need for clear communication of information about and access to relevant services was also raised. Of particular relevance were translation services for the translation of information documents for parents such as consent forms and for the production of bilingual resources. Online resources, apps and digital technology were also suggested.

Youth Service practitioners stressed the need for collaboration and strategic development across the longer term. One participant summed it up like this:

'Time is the main resource and tool...the usual 6 week programmes will not suffice in the development of mental health and wellbeing; managers need to change the mind-set that short programmes are the best. In order to achieve results time has to be allowed in order to get the results. I also think that it would be useful to speak to professionals in the field of mental health who come across newcomer young people, as interventions that might work for indigenous young people may not work for newcomer young people'.

Another respondent highlighted the need for further research to underpin such development:

'Further research [is] required, but with EA's emphasis on Fresh Start programmes, Learning Together school work model and Global Service Learning projects imminent, awareness rather than training would be appropriate'.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research study as presented in this report, it is recommended that urgent consideration should be given to the following areas:

Strategic direction

- The commitment of sustainable funding for long term evidence based and research informed strategic development of high quality EA Youth Service provision, particularly in areas with significant immigrant populations, given the clear opportunities such provision offers for the flourishing of all young people in all of our communities in Northern Ireland.

- Given the challenges that Youth Service personnel encounter, develop and implement a strategy for staff care, development and support.
- The development and implementation of an effective communication strategy both internal and external. Internally this should aim to establish clarity regarding terminology and access to relevant information. Externally this should seek to address cultural and linguistic barriers, using effective marketing and translation services as necessary to ensure dissemination of key information, utilising social media and published documentation as appropriate.
- Utilising the school site as a local hub for engagement with all young people, including newcomer children, for the purpose of providing a safe and trusted space, fostering friendships between children and young people across linguistic and cultural divides, and for the collaborative delivery of effective informal education programmes.
- The development of informal education programmes that incorporate support with the development of English language competence and with schoolwork, in collaboration with colleagues in schools and community groups, and delivered on the school site.
- Reaching out to parents: the utilisation of the school site as a locus for relationship building with families and parents in order to inform, build trust, equip, support and work together for the good of young people and communities
- The inclusion of bilingual volunteers recruited from the linguistic communities and the families to which newcomer children and young people belong, thus building trust and reflecting diversity within the work force.

Collaboration, learning and development

- Building on and strengthening existing examples of successful collaboration by harnessing the expertise of EA Youth Service practitioners, key staff in schools and experts across other sectors, to foster mutual learning and the enhancement of high quality provision for newcomer children and young people in Northern Ireland.
- The development of evidence based, research informed guidance in the form of an online resource toolkit to support Youth Service practitioners.
- Identify an online platform for learning, collation and sharing of age-appropriate resources, relevant information and guidance; an online portal to support the development of relevant expertise and support.
- Provision of opportunities for face to face collaborative learning and dissemination of good practice amongst EA Youth Service practitioners and between sectors including education and health, such as a networking forum and regional, national and international conferences.
- The development and delivery in collaboration with key educational providers of funded specialist training modules for Youth Service practitioners, possibly accessed online, in the following 3 areas:
 - Mental health and wellbeing: awareness, assessment and support for children and young people, with clear relevance for the Youth Service context
 - Understanding and supporting the needs of refugee and trauma experienced children and young people
 - An introduction to linguistic diversity to include potential for basic up skilling in key languages represented in the communities of newcomer children and young people

Further research

- Further funded research to engage with parents of newcomer children and young people in a range of representative linguistic groups and backgrounds to learn more about their views and experiences, to understand their hopes and concerns with respect to their children and how the EA Youth Service can support their families as they settle into life in Northern Ireland, thus promoting mental health and wellbeing.
- Further funded research to scope the views of a wider sample of young people in communities across Northern Ireland to learn more about their experiences and needs and match Youth Service provision to their interests
- Further funded research to investigate the needs of children and young people in Northern Ireland who are refugees and asylum seekers and the role of schools and EA Youth Service professionals in meeting these needs.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Letters of Introduction, Information and Consent

Letter of Introduction for Schools

Dear Principal,

We are conducting a research study commissioned and funded by the Northern Ireland Education Authority Children's and Young Peoples' Services. The core aim of the study is to improve the lives and outcomes of newcomer children and young people in Northern Ireland.

To this end the study will investigate:

1. The mental health needs of newcomer children and young people across Northern Ireland.
2. How the EA youth service can contribute to improving their health and wellbeing.

We are writing to request your consent for your school to participate. The requirements for each school's involvement are outlined below.

School Involvement:

1. Pupils Focus Groups

Given the importance of the voice of the child and young person in light of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, we wish to engage with the newcomer children and young people themselves. Therefore we seek your permission to carry out a small (4-6 students) focus group discussion with pupils in your school. We need to speak to children in [Key Stage 2 / Key Stage 3 / Key Stage 4] with recent experience of being a newcomer pupil but with sufficient linguistic proficiency to engage with us in English.

2. Staff Interview

We seek your permission to conduct a semi-structured interview with one key member of your teaching staff who works closely on a pastoral level with newcomer children and young people in your school. This may be the Principal, SENCO, Coordinator or Designated Teacher. Each interview should last approximately 35 minutes and will be conducted by an experienced researcher at a mutually agreed date and time between 5th of February and 2nd of March.

3. Pupil Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

To explore the mental health and wellbeing needs of newcomer children and young people we seek your permission to ask students in the focus group and their class teachers to complete a short paper Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire survey (please see attached). This can be administered by the research assistant and should take approximately 10 minutes.

Procedures

The research team will closely follow all safeguarding policies and procedures of both Stranmillis University College and your school throughout the study. An experienced member of our research team will conduct interviews and focus group discussions. Pupil focus group discussions will be carried out adjacent to the presence of a member of your teaching staff. The interviews and focus group discussions will be digitally recorded and transcribed. After transcription, the digital recording will be deleted. All electronic data will be held on a secure PC in a secure room at Stranmillis University College, accessible only to the research team.

All information will be processed in accordance with data protection legislation. All information gathered will be treated as confidential, will be used for the purposes of research only and that no school, teacher or pupil will be named in any research findings without sought written permission. *You can let us know, without explanation, if you wish to withdraw your school's involvement from the study at any time. If you wish to withdraw, please contact Catherine Glen using the email provided below.*

This study is subject to the highest standards of ethical approval granted by the Research and Ethics

Committee of Stranmillis University College. In order to comply with these standards and to ensure the well-being of all involved, we would be grateful if you could return the attached form to indicate your consent for the school to participate in this research within the next ten working days.

Thank you in anticipation for your valued participation.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions:

(Research Assistant) or

(Project Lead)

Yours faithfully,

Dr Sharon Jones (on behalf of the Research Team)

Letter of Information for Key Staff in Schools

Dear Colleague,

We are conducting a research study commissioned and funded by the Northern Ireland Education Authority Children's and Young Peoples' Services. The core aim of the study is to improve the lives and outcomes of newcomer children and young people in Northern Ireland.

The study will investigate:

1. The mental health needs of newcomer children and young people across Northern Ireland.
2. How the EA youth service can contribute to improving their health and wellbeing.

Your Involvement:

As a vital member of staff and one who has specific insights into the needs of newcomer students, we would request that you part in a short interview. This interview will last approximately 35 minutes and will be conducted by an experienced trained researcher at a time and place that is convenient for you. Questions in the interview will surround your involvement with newcomer children, the challenges faced by these students, and how the EA Youth Service might support the development of positive mental health and wellbeing among newcomer children and young people.

Confidentiality and Data Security:

The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed. After transcription, the digital recording will be deleted. All electronic data will be held on a secure PC in a secure room at Stranmillis University College, accessible only to the research team. All information will be processed in accordance with data protection legislation. All information gathered will be treated as confidential, will be used for the purposes of research only and that no school, teacher or pupil will be named in any research findings without sought written permission.

You can let us know, without explanation, if you wish to withdraw from the study at any time. If you wish to withdraw, please contact Catherine Glen using the email/phone number provided below.

This study is subject to the highest standards of ethical approval granted by the Research and Ethics Committee of Stranmillis University College. In order to comply with these standards and to ensure the well-being of all involved, we would be grateful if you could return the attached form to indicate your consent for the school to participate in this research within the next ten working days.

Thank you in anticipation for your valued participation.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions:
(Research Assistant) or (Project Lead)

Yours faithfully,
Dr Sharon Jones (on behalf of the Research Team)

Key Staff in Schools Consent Form

[] YES. I have received the Information Letter attached. I have read it and I wish to participate in this study. I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time, without explanation.

[] NO. I have read and understand the attached information, and I do not wish to participate in this study.

School's Name

Staff Name

Staff Signature

Date _____

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions:
(Research Assistant) or (Project Lead)

Letter of Information for Children and Young People

Dear Student,

We would like you ask you to take part in our research project. We are asking children who moved to Northern Ireland from another country, and who learned English, about their thoughts, feelings and experiences. We would like to understand how schools and communities can better help students who move to Northern Ireland.

What will happen to me in the study?

You will take part in a small discussion group with other children who have moved to Northern Ireland from another country. An experienced researcher will lead the discussion group and ask questions about your lives. For example:

What do you like best about being a young person living in Northern Ireland?

What do you like least?

How do you find going to clubs and groups outside of school?

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions and you cannot get into trouble for anything that you say. This will be a safe place where all views are respected. After the focus group, we will ask you to fill out a short "strengths and difficulties" questionnaire about your feelings about school and peer interactions.

Where will the study take place?

The discussion group will be at your school either during school hours or right after school. The discussion will last about 45 minutes. Your principal will decide a time for the group and make sure that you do not miss anything important in school.

Who will know what I say in the discussion group?

We will not tell anyone outside of our research team what you have said during the discussion (for example, we will not talk to your teachers or parents about what you have said). We will use the information that you give, but we will not tell anyone your name or the name of your school. However, if you or someone you know is in danger we may have to talk to your parent or teacher about it to make sure everyone stays safe. The researcher will record the discussion then write down everything that is said on the computer. After everything is written down, the recording will be deleted.

Do I have to take part?

No, you don't. It is your choice whether you want to take part and you can always change your mind. You do not have to answer any questions you don't want to and can stop taking part whenever you want.

What do I do if I want to take part?

If you want to take part, please can you sign the "Student Consent Form" attached.

If you have any questions you can ask your parent to give us a call and we can discuss it with you and your parent.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Sharon Jones (on behalf of the Research Team)

Consent Form Children and Young People

[] YES. I want to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about, why it is being done and what it I am being asked to do. I understand that I may stop taking part at any time for any reason and that I do not have to give a reason for stopping. I understand that if I have any questions or concerns I can talk to my parent or teacher.

[] NO. I do not want to participate in this study.

Your School's Name

Your Name

Your Signature

Today's date

Letter of Introduction EA Youth Service Personnel

Dear youth work professionals,

As part of a research project commissioned by the Education Authority I am inviting you to take part in a focused group discussion on the mental health needs of newcomer children in Northern Ireland. The discussion will last no longer than 1 hour and will center on how the youth service can contribute to the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer young people (i.e. those young people who do not have a satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum and who do not have a language in common with the teacher).

You have been asked to take part as you are a youth work professional. All conversations will be kept strictly confidential and no one will be identified in the research report.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on the details provide below. If you are interested in taking part, please contact me via email or phone with the following information, (i) your name; (ii) contact number; (iii) geographic area you work in (e.g. Belfast).

Many thanks

Research Assistant

Stranmillis University College, Belfast.

Youth Work Personnel Consent Form

YES. I have received the Information Letter attached. I have read it and I wish to participate in this study. I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time, without explanation.

NO. I have read and understand the attached information, and I do not wish to participate in this study.

Youth Practitioners Name

Staff Name

Staff Signature _____ Date _____

Please return this form to ...

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions:
(Research Assistant) or (Project Lead)

Appendix B: Newcomer Children and Young People Focus Group Schedule

Questions	Possible follow up Questions	RQ reference d
What do you like best about being a young person living in Northern Ireland?	What are some of the good things? What makes you feel happy and positive here? What helps you feel confident? What is good about speaking more than one language?	3
What do you like least about being a young person living in Northern Ireland?	What are some of the challenges or difficulties here? Is speaking more than one language difficult sometimes? How have you found making friends outside of school?	3
Do you attend any youth clubs or organisations outside of school?	E.g. a) Local Youth Club b) Church Youth Club c) Mosque Youth Club d) Youth Club in School e) Community Group Youth Club f) Girls' Brigade/Boys' Brigade g) Scouts /Guides h) Sports / Arts / Music Club Apart from being at home or school, what are some of the things that you enjoy doing?	1
How do you find going to these clubs/groups?	What do you like most about these? What are some of the difficulties, if any?	2
If you do not attend a youth club please explain why?	If you do not attend a Youth Group would you like to in future? What might help you to be able to attend a Youth Group in future?	4

Appendix C: Key Staff Members in Schools Interview Schedule

Questions	Possible follow up Questions	RQ reference d
How do you engage with newcomer children/young people in your school?	Approximately what percentage of your pupils are newcomers? Do you offer any programmes specifically designed for newcomer children/young people?	1
What are some of the issues faced by newcomer children and young people that affect their mental health and wellbeing?	How can resilience and copings skills be promoted in newcomer children and young people?"	3
What links does the school have with the EA Youth Service?	What links does the school have with other community groups that work with newcomer children and young people? (Faith Based/Uniformed Organisations/ Other local and community groups)	2
What do you believe to be the challenges (if any) for newcomer children and young people engaging with such groups?	a) generally? b) specific to your programmes? c) related to their mental health?	2
How do you believe the EA Youth Service might support the development of positive mental health and wellbeing among newcomer children and young people?	What steps/resources/tools/training might be helpful?	4

Appendix D: Youth Service Personnel Focus Group Schedule

Questions	Possible follow up Questions	RQ reference d
What is the nature of your engagement with newcomer children and young people?	<p>What are the age groups of children and young people that you work with?</p> <p>Approximately what percentage of the children/young people that access your programmes are newcomers?</p> <p>Do you offer any programmes specifically designed for newcomer children/young people?</p> <p>Which of the programmes that you offer are most popular for newcomer children/young people?</p>	1
What are some of the issues faced by newcomer children and young people that affect their mental health?		3
In your view how can a youth worker support the development of the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer children?		3
What are some of the key opportunities for newcomer children and young people?	a) generally? b) specific to your programmes? c) related to their mental health?	3
What are the key challenges in encouraging <u>newcomer children and young people</u> to access youth programmes?	a) generally? b) specific to your programmes? c) related to their mental health?	2
What recommendations would you make for future development of the EA Youth Service in order to promote positive mental health and wellbeing in newcomer children and young people?	What resources /tools do you currently use to support the development of mental health and wellbeing in newcomer children and young people?	4

	What resources /tools would you like to use in future to support the development of mental health and wellbeing in newcomer children and young people?	
Do you have a plan to help you engage with more newcomer children and young people?	Do you have a plan to help you engage with newcomer children and young people more effectively?	4

Appendix E: EA Youth Service Survey Questionnaire

1. By completing this survey I understand that I am consenting to take part in this research. (Y/N).

2. Please select those that describe your organisation

Controlled (Full-time)

Controlled (Part-time)

Statutory (Full-time)

Voluntary (Full-Time)

Voluntary (Part-time)

None of the above

3. If your organisation is a voluntary provision please select below that which best describes it

Large full time club

Part time club/organisation

Voluntary Church based

Uniformed organisation

Regional Voluntary Youth Organisation

Voluntary non-church based

Other (Please specify)

4. How many members are currently registered with your club/group against the following (youth service) age ranges 4-8; 9-13; 14-18; 19-25.

5. What is your average weekly attendance?

6. What are the age groups of children and young people that you work with? 5-7; 8-11; 12-16; 16-18; 18-20.

7. Please explain what you understand by the term 'newcomer'.

8. How many newcomer children live in the local area against the following (youth service) age ranges; 4-9; 10-13; 14-18; 19-25.

9. How many children and young people use the centre/group per night?

10. How many children participate in general activities and programs?

11. How many children/young people participate in specific programs?

12. Do you offer any programmes specifically designed for newcomer children/young people?

13. Which of the programmes that you offer have the highest participation of newcomer children/young people?

14. How do you assess them mental health needs of newcomer children and young people?

15. What are the key opportunities for developing mental health and wellbeing programmes for newcomer children and young people?

16. What opportunities or support is available to you in relation to addressing the mental health issues of young people?
17. What are the key challenges that you encounter in terms of developing mental health and wellbeing among newcomer children and young people?
18. What are the key opportunities for newcomer children and young people who access your programmes in terms of developing mental health and wellbeing?
(a) generally; (b) specific to your programmes.
19. What are the key challenges for newcomer children and young people who access your programmes in terms of developing mental health and wellbeing?
(a) generally; (b) specific to your programmes.
20. In your view how can a youth worker support the development of the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer children?
21. Do newcomer children and young people feature as a specified group on your One Year Action Plan?
22. Please outline any training or support that you have accessed to date to help you develop the mental health and wellbeing of newcomer young people.
23. What resources /tools do you currently use to support the development of mental health and wellbeing in newcomer children and young people?
24. What resources /tools would you like to use or need in future to support the development of mental health and wellbeing in newcomer children and young people?
25. Please indicate if you would be willing to take part in a focus group discussing the mental health needs of newcomer children and young people in Northern Ireland and how the EA youth service can contribute to improving their health and wellbeing. If you would like to take part, please email or call Patricia O'Lynn on
P.O.Lyn@stran.ac.uk or 028 9038 4468

Appendix F: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour over the last six months or this school year.

Child's Name

Male/Female

Date of Birth.....

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
Considerate of other people's feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Many worries, often seems worried	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has at least one good friend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often fights with other children or bullies them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Generally liked by other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kind to younger children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often lies or cheats	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Picked on or bullied by other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thinks things out before acting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Steals from home, school or elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gets on better with adults than with other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Many fears, easily scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature

Date

Parent/Teacher/Other (please specify):

Thank you very much for your help

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Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of how things have been for you over the last six months.

Your Name

Male/Female

Date of Birth.....

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I try to be nice to other people. I care about their feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am restless, I cannot stay still for long	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually share with others (food, games, pens etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get very angry and often lose my temper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am usually on my own. I generally play alone or keep to myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually do as I am told	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I worry a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am constantly fidgeting or squirming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have one good friend or more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other people my age generally like me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am easily distracted, I find it difficult to concentrate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am kind to younger children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often accused of lying or cheating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other children or young people pick on me or bully me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often volunteer to help others (parents, teachers, children)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think before I do things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get on better with adults than with people my own age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have many fears, I am easily scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I finish the work I'm doing. My attention is good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your signature

Today's date

Thank you very much for your help

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