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ELT Research Papers

‘Waiting for school’: English Language Teaching resilience for newly arrived children

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Language Teaching resilience
for newly arrived children

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About the author

Mary-Rose Puttick is a Research Fellow for the Institute for Community Research and Development at the University of Wolverhampton. She works with families from refugee and newly arrived backgrounds in teaching, research and advocacy roles across the adult education, schools and third sectors. Mary-Rose's research primarily uses co-creative approaches to explore the literacy practices of multilingual families in the third sector as a way to develop accessible routes into education, employment and healthcare.

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I would like to thank all the practitioners who were part of this participatory research, all of whom are doing inspiring work with newly arrived children and families under challenging conditions.

Abstract

The 'Waiting for School' 2022–2023 project explores English Language Teaching (ELT) provision for children from refugee and newly arrived backgrounds who are waiting for a school place, or who are newly arrived to school, in three areas of the West Midlands, UK. Underpinned by a social-practice perspective to language learning and teaching, the project expands understanding of wider interconnecting factors, such as conditions resulting from temporary accommodation, that shape the learning environments of children experiencing mobility. The project foregrounds the perspectives of 14 diverse practitioners including: primary and secondary school teachers; teachers in a Council-led transitory education provision; council professionals in English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher advisory roles; and refugee third sector practitioners working with newly arrived families in Birmingham, Sandwell, and Wolverhampton. The methodology drew on a participatory action research (PAR) approach, with the aim of supporting practitioners to shape and have some ownership of the research agenda and outputs. In this case, the participatory approach sought to foreground the experiences of professionals working across the schools' sector, third sector and local government, to establish a broad picture of ELT practices and to conceptualise 'newly arrived ELT resilience' across different spaces, which come together in a hybrid third space. Overall, the project collates cross-sector expertise and effective practice to address identified gaps in professional development for supporting newly arrived children, including a selection of key recommendations for ELT practice.

Glossary

EAL: English as an Additional Language

ELT: English language teaching

ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages

LEA: Local education authority (UK)

NALDIC: National Association for Language and Development in Communities

NRPF: No Recourse to Public Funds (UK)

PAR: Participatory Action Research

PHE: Public Health England

RQ: Research question

SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

TA: Teaching assistant



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1

Introduction

Aligned to Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) regarding a child's right to education, it is enshrined in UK legislation and policy that all children in the UK, whatever their migration status, are entitled to a school place. Local education authorities (LEAs) in the UK have a legal responsibility to ensure that every child of compulsory school age has access to education that is appropriate to their age, ability, and any special education needs, with a 20-day target to find children a school place (UNICEF, 2018). Although UK standards are regarded as high in the international context, improving on the global target of three months recommended to governments by the Global Compact on Refugees (UNICEF, 2018), in reality, the situation is highly complex and many children experience lengthy delays with a lack of consistency across regions of the UK. Children experience barriers to educational access at systemic, institutional and contextual levels (Gladwell and Chetwynd, 2018).

This project centred on children from 'newly arrived' backgrounds, including refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as those whose parents are in the UK for work or study purposes (The Bell Foundation, 2023). Many newly arrived families have 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF), which means they cannot work or apply for benefits and are allocated a small weekly allowance for subsistence. People on NRPF live in precarious accommodation, such as hotels, where they are placed after arriving as a refugee or asylum-seeker, or in hostels or multi-occupancy housing. Due to the temporary nature of their accommodation, families can be told to move with little notice, which often results in children having to move school. The nature of temporary accommodation also means that children are often living in poor conditions that are not conducive to supporting their mental and physical wellbeing.

School practitioners at times feel unequipped to respond effectively to the specific needs of newly arrived children (Kendall and Puttick, 2020). Specific issues concern the highly transient nature of newly arrived children, with many having been out of school for lengthy periods or having had little prior school experience. Such factors, combined with a lack of consistency in ELT/EAL support (in this project both terms are used synonymously) whilst waiting for a school place, leads to highly diverse levels of English language in the classroom and challenges for some children to adjust to the school environment (Kendall et al., 2021). Some school practitioners are also uncertain how to utilise the highly diverse multilingual classroom as an ELT resource (ibid, 2021).

The 'Waiting for School' project explored ELT provision for children who are either newly arrived to school or waiting for a school place in three metropolitan Council boroughs in the West Midlands, UK. This included ELT in multiple forms and settings, including schools, a transitory education partnership and temporary accommodation spaces. The project aimed to explore the nature of 'newly arrived ELT resilience', that is resilience for both teachers and children involved in language learning and teaching in complex situations, and to develop understanding of the ELT practices that occur in spaces of waiting and arrival as well as to identify gaps in ELT professional development.

2

Literature review

The literature review is interwoven throughout with a public health approach to ELT resilience to ensure that concerns around children's, and teachers', wellbeing remain at the forefront. The section starts with a focus on the complexities of the newly arrived context at societal and school levels, before moving into literature concerning professional development needs: all of which contribute to understandings of teacher resilience in this complex context.

2.1 'Newly arrived ELT resilience': societal context

Public Health England (PHE) refer to resilience as 'the capacity to 'bounce back' from adversity', and distinguish between 'protective factors' which increase resilience, and 'risk factors', that increase vulnerability, with an emphasis that adversity occurs along a gradient (2014, p. 4). When considering the relationship between resilience and people from refugee backgrounds, some warn of the tendency to focus on a homogenising trauma narrative that overshadows any focus on an individual's strengths, with the danger of reinforcing a Western deficit model that positions refugees as 'traumatised victims' (Hutchinson and Dorsett, 2012, p. 55). Others warn of the notion to 'bounce back' as implicating a simple binary in which some people are deemed resilient and some are not (Lenette et al., 2013, p. 637), masking the complex contextual and fluctuating nature of resilience.

PHE's (2014) reference to resilience and adversity as unequally distributed across the population sets an important societal context for considering individuals from newly arrived backgrounds. PHE problematise broad socio-economic inequalities caused by such factors as inequities in access to resources, finances, and power which in turn can detrimentally impact upon health equity and the ability for individuals to be able to build resilience (PHE, 2014). Access to education is one such resource for which inequities exist for newly arrived children. Systemic level barriers include, for example, long waiting lists for school places, particularly for secondary school and college-aged young people, as well as children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

(UNICEF, 2018). During periods of living in emergency temporary accommodation, there remains a problem of some children of families with NRPF not being able to access any education (UNICEF, 2018).

In terms of access, or lack of access, to additional support in the form of finances and subsistence, families who have NRPF face considerable restrictions and are reliant on schools to exercise discretion in relation to such things as free school meals and school uniform support. Sometimes this information is unknown to schools as parents do not have to disclose their migration status when registering their child at school (Coram Children's Legal Centre [CCLC], 2017). Additional support needs arise regarding transport costs, with LEAs having a legal obligation to provide transport to and from school for children (and not parents) only if school 'is beyond statutory walking distance' (two miles to primary and three miles to a secondary school) (CCLC, 2017, p. 4).

2.2 'Newly arrived ELT resilience': school context

PHE refer to the 'key opportunity' that schools have in building the resilience of children at multiple levels, emphasising that schools and wider society 'have a responsibility to ensure that all children and young people are equipped with the resources necessary to cope with these circumstances [future adversity]' (PHE, 2014, p. 38). PHE recognise the role of LEAs in supporting schools in this regard, including supporting the increased achievements of pupils, supporting young people through transitions, encouraging positive interpersonal relationships, and developing 'cohesive schools' that support pupils and the wider community (PHE, 2014, p. 4).

Regarding ELT, once newly arrived children join school in England, they are immediately immersed in the National Curriculum and there is no specific separate EAL curriculum. This has remained the policy in England since the mid-1980s and is seen to make access to education equal for all (NALDIC, 2023). Critiques of learning EAL solely through the National Curriculum focus on issues of language and pedagogy 'but also of rights and entitlements, social

integration and equality of access to education' (NALDIC, 2023). The approach in England differs considerably from that in other countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia. For example, some Australian states have developed an EAL curriculum and assessment frameworks which run in parallel to the mainstream curriculum (NALDIC, 2023).

To give some indication of the challenging context for newly arrived children accessing EAL in schools, the Bell Foundation (2023, para.1) emphasise that 'learners with EAL have a dual task at school: to learn English (language) and to learn *through* English'. As well as potentially having little English language when they join school, newly arrived children may also be unfamiliar with the pedagogical and cultural aspects of school life if they have not had any prior experience of school or have had disrupted education (Manzoni and Rolfe, 2019).

There is a need for pedagogies, and a whole-school approach, that welcome newly arrived children, and to provide admissions procedures that support them to settle in and progress, such as a meaningful individual assessment on their arrival, and an EAL induction programme which should then be used as a basis of tailored support through a variety of teaching strategies and resources (Manzoni and Rolfe, 2019; The Bell Foundation, 2023). Overall, a key underpinning principle for EAL pedagogy should be an asset-based approach towards bilingualism and multilingualism that values and recognises multiple language skills as a tool to learn English (ibid). Whilst the National Curriculum similarly places value on multilingualism, there is an emphasis on English as the preferred language for teaching and learning and as the medium for assessment and attainment (NALDIC, 2023). This approach varies quite considerably from some other countries, such as the commitment to plurilingualism in the Irish Primary Language Curriculum (Post-Primary Language Ireland [PPLI], 2023).

Considering the UK pedagogical context, The Bell Foundation (2023) recommends a set of effective practices for EAL learners to support their learning, including providing a rich context through additional contextual support, such as through realia and graphic organisers, as well as modelling and scaffolding language with the use of speaking and writing frames. Additional recommendations include developing independent learning skills; developing a child's knowledge of school cultural norms; and creating opportunities to extend vocabulary, such as through translation strategies from the first language(s) in combination with visual resources (ibid).

Barriers at an institutional level can impact upon the capacity of schools to adequately support the resilience of newly arrived children and, with

this, teachers. For example, widespread financial constraints across the schools' sector can result in a lack of EAL support for newly arrived children in schools, such as technological support, a challenge that is heightened when specialised support for SEND is also required in addition to EAL needs (Gladwell and Chetwynd, 2018). Additionally, the impact of churn can detrimentally effect schools' ability to adequately support children (Gladwell, 2019).

2.3 'Supporting ELT resilience: professional skills and partnerships'

PHE (2014) identify different spheres in which action to build the resilience of children can take place, including individual, interpersonal, and school and community. Ensuring appropriate professional development opportunities are available to ELT practitioners is a key element in this process, along with the development of accessible interventions to support resilience building for all children.

Recommendations from research call for continued training for school practitioners in the educational support needs of newly arrived children, with recognition that this requires specific skills that are not necessarily acquired through formal teacher education provision (Gladwell, 2019; Manzoni and Rolfe, 2019). Examples of this specific skillset include supporting children to develop good relationships with peers, managing different levels of prior learning and English proficiency within the classroom, and collaboration with language support staff (Manzoni and Rolfe, 2019). Indeed, building peer support was viewed as a key element in Khawaja et al's conceptualisation of resilience for linguistically and culturally diverse students; with resilience viewed as a facilitator process enhancing the relationship between social relatedness and mental wellbeing, contributing to an overall notion of 'school connectedness' (2017, p. 1).

Support in the form of mentoring, ambassador and peer support schemes, both in terms of curricular and extra-curricular contexts, have been shown to be particularly supportive to newly arrived children. Similarly, extra-curricular activities that bring together all children, such as art and drama, have been shown to be beneficial in helping children develop confidence and shared understandings (Manzoni and Rolfe, 2019). Further recommendations in this regard refer to schools' developing 'expert partnerships' with the third sector in order that they can implement interventions (Gladwell, 2019, p. 46), as well as close links with cultural organisations, social services, and health services (Manzoni and Rolfe, 2019). Important also in the development of ELT resilience is the building of partnerships with newly arrived parents and recognition of their language and wider needs (ibid).

3

Methodology

The overall aim of the Waiting for School project was to explore what ELT support and resilience look like for teachers and children across different spaces of waiting and arrival and to use this understanding to identify gaps in ELT professional development. An additional aim included working with diverse ELT practitioners to develop a set of context-specific, accessible ELT resources to respond to identified gaps and to share effective practice across, often disparate, ELT sectors/spaces. The project explores three politically pertinent, of-the-moment research questions (RQs):

1. What does 'newly arrived ELT resilience' look like in transient contexts?
2. How effectively are issues of transiency from migration status currently supported in and out of school?
3. What are the professional development needs of teachers working across these spaces?

3.1 Participatory approach

The project aligned to the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is an umbrella term covering a variety of approaches to action-oriented research (Kindon et al., 2007), involving an action researcher working with communities or organisations towards a shared goal of making positive change towards a particular situation through a circular process of collective decision-making, reflection and action (MacDonald, 2012). The stages of PAR can vary according to the specific research context and participants, with one example of common stages shown in the following image.



Source: An Introduction to Research Justice Toolkit

Aligned to one of the central principles of PAR, the co-production of knowledge, all the practitioners in this project were positioned as partners in the research. The process of identifying gaps in ELT professional development has consequently come from the bottom-up, that is from practitioners working directly with newly arrived children or teachers on a daily basis.

3.2 Participants and settings

The PAR approach drew on the expertise of 14 participants, across nine institutional settings and three sectors, schools, local government, and the third sector, in the localities of Birmingham, Sandwell, and Wolverhampton. Participants comprised four distinct ELT practitioner groups: schools; education transition partnership; third sector; and school improvement team. All participants are referred to as 'ELT practitioners' as all play a key role in the experience of newly arrived children's transition into schools and inform understandings of 'newly arrived ELT resilience'.

Participant group 1: ELT practitioners – schools

Group 1 included three school practitioners: one primary teacher, and two secondary teachers across two cities. All three schools had over 30 languages and over 10 per cent of the student population comprised children from newly arrived backgrounds.

Individual pseudonym	Julia	Rebecca	Simon
Institution pseudonym	Magdalen Primary School	Cedar Secondary School	Cheetham Secondary School
Position	Teacher	EAL lead	Teacher and Pastoral Lead
PAR phases	Two visits to school for Phases 1 and 2 Online interview Phase 1 Phase 3	Two visits to school for Phases 1 and 2 Phase 3	 Phase 3

Table 1: Participant group 1

Participant group 2: ELT practitioners – school transition partnership

Group 2 included three practitioners from a transitory educational provision which gives newly arrived children aged five to sixteen three hours of education per day whilst waiting for a school place. One hundred per cent of the student population were from refugee and newly arrived backgrounds.

Individual pseudonym	Neela	Zuzanna	Cath
Institution pseudonym	LymEdu	LymEdu	LymEdu
Position	Teacher	Teacher	Centre Manager
PAR phases	One visit to school for Phases 1 and 2 Phase 3	One visit to school for Phases 1 and 2 Phase 3	Online interview Phase 1 Phase 3

Table 2: Participant group 2

Participant group 3: ELT practitioners – third sector

Group 3 included six participants from four third sector charities who work with newly arrived children and families, including: two Creative ESOL teachers, that is teachers approaching language learning from an arts-based approach, and a project leader at an arts charity that delivers language support in hotels; a family liaison worker at a refugee charity; a project leader at a refugee charity delivering family support in partnership with a primary school; and an advocacy support worker at a refugee charity.

Individual pseudonym	Fiona	Lauren	Lisa	Patrick	Agata	Francesca
Institution pseudonym	Refugee Support	Maple Arts	Maple Arts	Maple Arts	Our Lady's	Mission House
Position	Family liaison worker	Teacher	Teacher	Arts-health lead	Advocacy Support	Project Leader
PAR phases	One visit to charity and online Interview Phase 1 Phase 3	Two visits to school for Phases 1 and 2 Phase 3	Online interview Phase 1 Phase 3	Online interview Phase 1 Phase 3	Phase 3	Online interview Phase 1 Phase 3

Table 3: Participant group 3

Participant group 4: ELT practitioners – teacher education

Group 4 included two teacher advisors working in a city council's school improvement service who ran an EAL network across 60 schools.

Individual pseudonym	Claire (Rachel)	Helen (Kate)
Institution: type/ pseudonym	Council-led school improvement team (Eastside School Services)	Council-led school improvement team (Eastside School Services)
Position	Teacher advisor	Teacher advisor
PAR phases	In-person and online interview Phase 1 Phase 3	In-person and online interview Phase 1 Phase 3

Table 4: Participant group 4

3.3 Methods

The project drew on Kindon et al.'s (2007) PAR framework comprising ongoing and repeated stages of action and reflection. For example, the initial action phase is usually concerned with collaboratively establishing the research agenda, research aims and timeline, whilst an action phase at the end of a project usually identifies next steps for further participatory research (ibid). Each action phase is followed by a reflection stage, which could include reflections on research design, ethical processes and RQs, amongst others (ibid).

For the purposes of this report, a brief summary is given of the main methods and activities in the action and reflection phase over the 16 months of the research, between March 2022 and July 2023. The final PAR stage in this study was referred to as 'knowledge-production' to closely tie-in with one of the project's aims which was the production of a co-produced resource. Not all 14 participants took part in every stage, due to the time constraints they were under as part of their professional roles, but all were kept up-to-date with regular communication about the different stages. Given the time constraints of participants, the PAR stages were also adapted to correspond to a particular method in order to ensure the process was simple and easy to access for all participants. Whilst the distinct methods are outlined below with their corresponding RQ, this does not adequately capture the non-linear nature of the PAR approach, with activities often happening simultaneously over a period of 16 months, making it an evolving methodological approach that was responsive to the participants.

PAR STAGE: 'Reflection' through semi-structured interviews

In this study, the reflection phase aimed to understand the nature of ELT, in terms of challenges, support and resilience, in different transient contexts (RQs 1 and 2): asking practitioners to reflect on their experiences and perspectives through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants both in-person and online on Microsoft Teams. Interviews varied in lengths of timing, to suit the participants' availability, and were guided by a set of overarching question prompts under the following themes: newly arrived context; ELT support and gaps; and partnership and advocacy support. Additionally, practitioners were asked to reflect through email communication and/or Teams calls throughout the project when updates were sent.

PAR STAGE: 'Action' through 'mapping ELT spaces'

Whilst forms of action took place before and after reflection phases, aligned to Kindon et al. (2007), participants were also invited to map their ELT space as a distinct form of action to further address RQ2. Three participants from Magdalen Primary, Cedar Secondary, and LymEdu chose to take part in the visual mapping of the ELT spaces, teachers from the MapleArts did not feel that they could participate in this method due to security regulations at the hotel settings which prevented them from taking pictures and inviting guests to observe. Participants were given an open invitation to provide visual images of what they saw as key ELT practices/resources. The task was kept as open as possible in order that participants could interpret it according to their time and professional context. Consequently, at Magdalen Primary, an unplanned 'ELT intervention walk' was suggested to demonstrate support happening organically inside and outside the classrooms and to give the opportunity to take some photographs of the teacher's key resources which were then collated onto a presentation slide. At Cedar Secondary, the researcher was invited to the school twice to observe EAL interventions with small groups and the practitioner chose not to collate any visual images. At LymEdu, the researcher visited both classes (older children and younger CYP) to observe the ELT teaching and learning approaches in action. Subsequently, the two teachers sent photos of some of their key visual resources for that week which were collated onto a slide. Following each PAR visit, observation notes were prepared to accompany the visual contribution.

PAR STAGE: 'Knowledge-production' through the production of a professional development resource

As the action and reflection stages were ongoing throughout the data collection period, participants were updated on the evolving findings. Towards the end of the project, all participants were updated with the identified gaps and invited to contribute an effective practice piece, video, or presentation in response to the gaps for the final output. Thirteen of the 14 participants contributed to the resource.

3.4 Challenges and limitations

Not all participants were involved in every stage of the PAR process, and a flexible approach was maintained throughout to work within the time and working constraints of participants. Although this could be viewed as a limitation, it also reflected the realistic context of the highly pressured professional settings of the participants where they were stretched for time to participate or, for third sector participants, they were constrained by security regulations at the hotel in terms of taking photographs. Additionally, the knowledge production phase took place predominantly on an individual as opposed to collective basis due to the distinct school/third sector challenges and gaps emerging from the first two phases, with guidance for contributions for the resource output predominantly led by the researcher and therefore less collaborative than originally planned. Nonetheless, such challenges pose important learning for future PAR projects. Importantly, a gap remains in this project regarding the missing participation of two key groups, newly arrived parents and children: both key perspectives for which the research could be extended.

3.5 A framework for exploring ‘newly arrived ELT resilience’

The study drew on Braun and Clarke’s (2012) thematic analysis approach throughout the different phases of the project, in which data was coded data (interviews, observations, and visual data) by hand. Additionally, key theoretical concepts were used to organise and analyse themes. In order to consider the ‘everydayness’ of resilience and ELT support across transitory spaces. Lenette et al.’s work supported recognition of resilience as ‘a social process arising from mundane practices of everyday life ... situated in person-environment interactions’ (2013, p. 641). This idea aligned with a social practice approach to language learning and teaching, rooted in New Literacy Studies, that takes a more expansive and asset-based view of language use in diverse forms and everyday contexts. Additionally, ideas from spatial theory helped to conceptualise the findings of newly arrived ELT as a ‘hybrid third space’ (Bhabha, 1996), with pedagogic dimensions (Watkins, 2017).



4

Findings

This section presents the findings from the project, divided into two main sections. The first section focuses on ELT support and is divided into two ELT spatial contexts: transitory and school spaces, both with sub-themes. The second section explores ELT challenges and gaps, divided into three sub-themes based on poverty-related issues, supporting diversity, and communication and partnership building.

4.1 Newly arrived ELT: supporting learning across everyday spaces

This section comprises a narrative of ELT support for newly arrived children, addressing RQ1 regarding the nature of newly arrived ELT in transient contexts. This includes the period in which children are waiting for a school place and experiencing more informal/semi-formal forms of ELT, to their allocation of a school place and transition into formal ELT education. Spatial contexts are split into sub-themes representing the body of data.

Transitory spaces

For some children, their first experience of ELT begins in their temporary accommodation, such as hotels. However, this is dependent upon third sector funding and does not cover all accommodation settings across all areas due to resource constraints. At the time of this project, Maple Arts charity, were delivering weekly arts-based language classes to newly arrived families in eight hotels in Birmingham.

Mobilising learning through the body

The project leader from Maple Arts recognised the spatial confinements that living in a hotel for indefinite amounts of time brought to families and the importance of arts and music for disrupting this containment:

We deliver some sessions in Birmingham hotels as after-school clubs, and some in the daytime where parents can bring their children if they aren't yet in school. We're trying to create a welcoming environment for everyone to engage ... and the sooner the better really ... People in temporary accommodation don't know what will happen to them, and it's especially hard if you don't have English skills. Arts and music are universal, we all respond to them in some way on an emotional level and the need for language becomes secondary. It's an important way you can express yourself and let it out rather than containing emotion in a hotel room in what can be like a prison environment.
(Patrick, arts-health lead)

Lauren, one of the Creative ESOL teachers for the charity, who works primarily with teenage and college-aged young people, explained the importance of learning through movement and the body for building confidence.

I try to do lots of role plays and drama so that it still has a creative focus and helps to build their confidence. I choose a theme each week that's relevant to their lives, for example, body parts/medical role plays and we do games around actions, drawing around each other, drawing portraits and labelling them.

Similarly, Lisa, another teacher for the charity who mainly worked in the family-based hotels with children of all ages, discussed the importance of group tasks, ensuring that everyone has a role and a purpose.

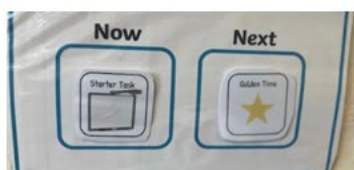
Children love arts activities and although it does involve language, too much of that can be overwhelming for them at the start. One of the most popular activities I've done with children of different ages is pizza making. Doing a creative activity with food means they can all get involved; the younger ones can make the dough, the older ones can chop the ingredients ... and everyone in the group feels really valued and like they've got a role to play.

On arrival at the setting, it had a sense of a small-scale school, comprising three classrooms and a reception office. I started in the older children's class and was struck by the calm atmosphere in the space as the children arrived, with Neela telling me they played calming nature-based music in each of the classes every morning as the children arrived to class. Before the children began to arrive, the teachers explained how they use the same topic across the whole setting and that the topic changes each week to accommodate the constant fluctuation of new children joining and leaving to ensure that none of the children miss too much. Any homework tasks consist of independent learning to allow for flexibility.

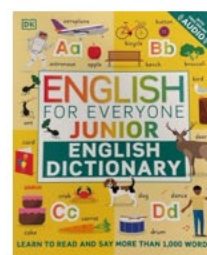
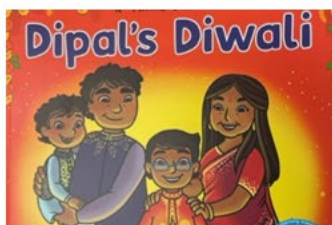
This week the topic was 'Diwali' and I saw lots of vocabulary-based ELT activities across the two classes: from dictionary work with synonyms taken from the story of Diwali, to building descriptive sentences with the older class using templates, to a group reading task and grammar activity based on instructional verbs for the younger class. Both teachers used words from other languages to aid understanding. It felt in some respects like a regular school environment but with more of a relaxed pace and atmosphere.
(Mary-Rose, journal notes, 19th October 2022)

Creating a calm, welcoming space that works with mobility

For children living in one area, more formal transitory ELT provision was available through LymEdu, which gives children three hours of education per day in a school-like setting. This is a safeguarding bridging provision that aims to replicate the school experience (following the National Curriculum) to support children to be ready for school, based on a three-week cohort. When visiting the setting to meet teachers Neela and Zuzanna for Phase 2 of the PAR, they invited the researcher to sit in the class to see the ELT in action, with observations captured in the following journal notes:



**Visually mapping the ELT space:
LymEdu**



Preparing children for British school culture

Cathy, the centre manager at LymEdu later spoke about a key part of their role as preparing children for British school culture:

A really important part of our work is to support children, and parents, to become socialised into British culture. A newly arrived child that hasn't come here might not necessarily know what appropriate behaviour is, what is expected in the everyday classroom routine, what you can and cannot wear. All these little things help a child's confidence and help them to integrate into society ... we have to upscale, we have to train, we have to acclimatise to customs to make sure those children have the best chance of being part of school life.

Similarly, Fiona, the family support worker at a refugee charity spoke of the support they give to families based on the practicalities of schooling.

In general, for us it's making sure that parents are aware of the UK education system and how it works with pre-school, nursery right up to college ... and also raising awareness of what it must feel like because it's quite daunting for a child to start a new school in the same country, but for a child to come to a completely new country which looks different, sounds different, smells different, it must just be such a shock to the system.

School spaces

For newly arrived children allocated a school space, support for language development was evident through such strategies as individual language profiles, language interventions, visual resources, and social support, such as buddy schemes for the child, and third-sector advocacy for parents.

Language learner profiles

An initial language assessment was viewed as a key early step by all the school teachers in establishing some background information about a child's prior learning and English language level as soon as they join the school and to inform appropriate ELT/EAL interventions.

Any child that's newly arrived comes in and is given an initial EAL assessment which shows where they're at on an EAL continuum. The assessment asks them questions about things like what colour things are, and what they can see in a picture. It gives teachers that kind of initial overview of their language and what kind of interventions they will need.
(Julia, Magdalen Primary)

Both secondary school teachers alluded to the importance of the initial assessment journey in getting to know the young people on a more personal level. This process was viewed as an important part of making education an accessible and inclusive approach.

The initial assessment journey for each new arrival acts as the starting point, it helps them find out what subjects the student enjoys, helps their approach towards inclusivity so that the teachers can know more about the student and support them appropriately, and helps develop careful communication with staff to ensure the student's needs are met in the best way.
(Rebecca, Cedar Secondary)

Importantly, both secondary teachers recognised this process as integral for getting a sense of the pastoral needs of young people. For example:

Every single child that arrives on our EAL programme has a one-page profile about them that goes out to any staff that come across them. It has additional information on there about what they've been through so that we're aware when planning topics if there's anything that could negatively impact on them.
(Simon, Cheetham Secondary)

One of the teacher advisors emphasised that this process required teachers taking time to sit and talk with the child, which could be viewed as going against the fast pace of everyday school life.

It's about getting to know the person, not just thinking of them as a new child. It's getting to know them and their journeys and then you can tailor their learning to support them accordingly in whatever areas they need. Obviously, that comes with time, experience...as well as adaptability, preparedness, and the patience to do it as well. (Rachel, teacher advisor)

EAL interventions

EAL intervention approaches differed at the two secondary schools. Simon, at Cheetham Secondary explained:

We have a separate EAL facility in which we have redesigned our EAL curriculum and provide bespoke support as part of a 6-week programme for newly arrived students before they enter mainstream classes.

Rebecca reported that EAL at Cedar Secondary was 'integrated as far as possible from the outset', with students going straight into mainstream classes and then 'taken out for timed interventions as deemed necessary', with a specialised Romanian-speaking EAL teacher.

A similar approach to Cedar was used at Magdalen Primary, with children going straight into classes. The following is a reflection following the researcher's visit to the primary school for PAR Phase 2:

We started off outside the Year 3 classroom where a young boy, Paulo (pseudonym) from Honduras, was having a five-minute phonics intervention; sounding out the single letter sounds and then listening to the teaching assistant (TA) sound out a three-letter word so that he could put the sounds in the correct order. The TA told me Paulo had only been at the school for two weeks and didn't have any English when he arrived and no prior school experience.

I walked through several of the classrooms and saw walls filled with visual aids, from topic-based displays to visual timetables of the order of activities for the day. Julia told me this was especially important for newly arrived children as it helps them feel more secure to know what's coming next.

Julia showed me the EAL intervention packages they use, one of which has picture vocabulary for all subjects, which you can print in symbol form. Another package focused on visual images of everyday communication and objects. Julia explained one of their school-wide strategies was to sit the children in mixed ability pairs as a form of peer support. As we reached the Year 1 classroom there was another phonics intervention happening with a group of three children from Bulgaria, Nigeria and India who were all new to the school within the last few weeks.

I noticed that some of the children in the classrooms were also wearing armbands and Julia told me that was for the children having EAL interventions to show their phonics level so that other staff could help them to practise as they walked around school. (Mary-Rose, journal notes, 7th February 2023)

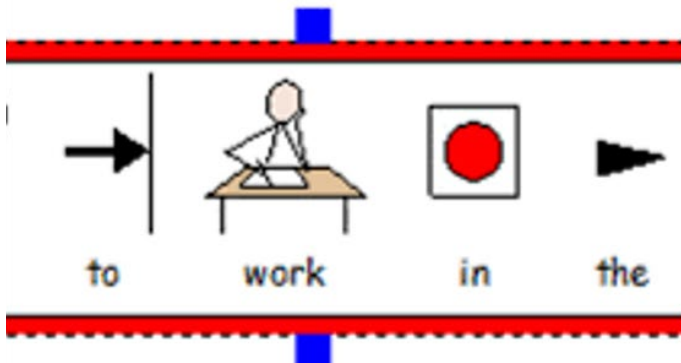
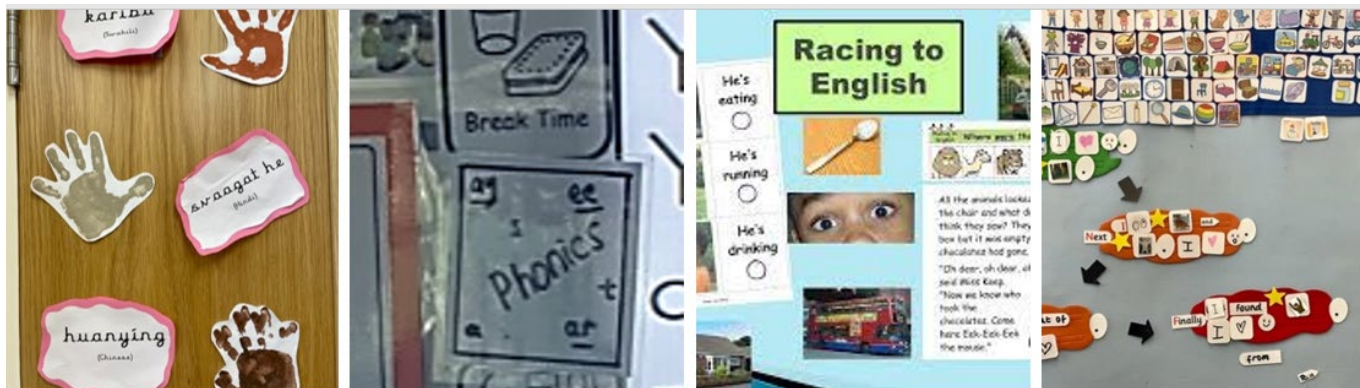
Visual aids were prominent in the visits to both the primary school and the transition education partnership. The importance of the visual in ELT acquisition was further emphasised by one of the teacher advisors.

Providing visual support needs to be there at the forefront of everything schools do. I encourage teachers to have a broad view of visuals, so not just pictures and photos, but to use their body language, gesture, and sound: a sensory meaning-making experience is key if you don't have the language. (Kate, Eastside School Services)

Social support

Support for social development was evident across all the schools, with all using some form of buddy scheme to pair newly arrived children with a student who had been in the school longer or shared a similar language.

We have a buddy system as well. For example, we've had a child arrive recently who speaks Tigrinya and because we had another child that spoke that same language they were able to translate during lessons and get them involved. (Julia, Magdalen Primary)



**Visually mapping the ELT space:
Magdalen Primary**

Indeed, in the Eastside School Services this had become a key part of their advice in supporting schools.

Secondly, Francesca explained that creating a space for connectedness is integral.

We've put in place an advice policy and it's up to the schools how they do the buddy, some use a national young interpreter scheme, whilst some schools have an ad-hoc system. For example, some schools use a buddy lanyard that gets assigned to somebody different each day.
(Rachel, teacher advisor)

What we've realised is the most important thing is having lots of ways in for people to connect ... It's about providing low barrier opportunities for the whole family to find a way into what everyone else is doing. I really think for the whole family to feel settled as quickly as possible it needs to be for the parents too so that they can support the children to feel more settled in their new environment as well.

Social support was also evident in an after-school space, with a partnership between Mission House charity and a local primary school: a space in which the whole family were welcomed. Francesca explained that underpinning the success of this family support were three key elements. The first part begins a step before the after-school spaces, by having an approachable, open-door policy in which parents feel comfortable to come and express their needs.

Thirdly, as discussed earlier in relation to Lisa from Maple Arts, Francesca explained that giving everyone in the group a role to play and a sense of purpose is key.

The school's the main port of call, so families come into the school and we try to open all the doors for them, so it might be signposting them to an English class, or helping them with housing, or giving them access to the internet, or helping them make a phone call, or supporting them with school uniform or food. And I work on the premise of being friendly to everybody and trying to make time to listen.

We now run whole family after-school clubs twice a week at the school and the numbers have rocketed. I now have a really good system set up so that when the children walk in they go and get the equipment out and I've taught them how to set up the different activities, and the parents set out the tea and coffee and help me in other ways. I really believe that people need to feel that they've got a purpose and to know that their help is genuinely valued and that everyone has something to contribute.

4.2 Newly arrived ELT: exploring everyday challenges and professional development gaps

This section builds on the first section of findings: giving insights into some of the key issues that arose from ELT practitioners and speaking to RQ2 and RQ3. In effect, the issues raised in this section give an indication of what practitioners view as happening behind the scenes in the everyday lives of newly arrived families outside of school, and their roles within this.

Conditions of temporary accommodation

Time/transiency

Time and transiency arose as challenges across the school, school improvement, and third sector participants. At the primary school, the teacher spoke of her frustrations emanating from the conditions of temporary accommodation.

If I'm being completely honest it's frustrating as a teacher because you do so much for them. You get them to a point where they're actually speaking a little bit of English...and then they move on because a lot of them are in temporary housing.
(Julia, Magdalen Primary)

One of the practitioners from the arts charity illuminated the impact temporality and mobility had on planning ELT sessions and constraints on space.

You never know who your group will be, one week there can be lots of people, the next week no one because they've all got a school space ... so there's no continuation and trying to plan around that is challenging. Some might have Home Office appointments, some might have been rehoused, you just never know ... And some hotels don't have a communal space and that's so challenging, and if the children don't see you they don't know you're there. You're not allowed to knock on doors yourself, and security won't tell families what's going on, so you have to get to know a few families and spread the word that way, then the regulars move on.
(Lisa, Maple Arts)

Another practitioner from the charity went on to explain the detrimental impact such factors had on building social connections and supporting wellbeing:

What we've had to get used to is the turnaround ... because you get used to a group that comes for three or four weeks and then they're gone and then you get a new influx of people and it's very hard to maintain those relationships ... it's such a traumatic experience for them and this is why the mental health provision is so important. (Patrick, Maple Arts)

The body/physical exhaustion

Practitioners from two charities raised further issues related to conditions of temporary accommodation that could potentially impact upon their experiences of ELT inside and outside of the school environment. Both aspects related to the combination of the financial restrictions placed on families with NRPF due to their migration status and the regulations of LEAs around transport support.

The other thing is if you want to take them out to the library you have to think about where the children are travelling from school because some of them have to get two buses or have walked miles back and aren't going to feel like going out again once they've made that journey ... and you have to consider the wellbeing benefits of taking them out of the hotels, there's lots to take into consideration and often it's trial and error. (Lisa, Maple Arts)

Issues around this appeared to have a direct impact on absenteeism and/or physical exhaustion.

The company who run the hotels have scratch-cards for bus tickets, valid for one person for one day ... when they run out it takes an awfully long time to get them replaced and families have been left either not taking their children to school or walking with them for an hour in really cold weather ... we had one parent who was walking a four-year old child in the freezing cold and he had to carry him and he was falling asleep in lessons ... things like that happen and they are so exhausted.
(Fiona, Refugee Support)

Wider issues of poverty related to families with NRPF were raised across all the charity practitioners and the education transition partnership, particularly with regards to supporting schools to understand what this status means in monetary terms and the challenging circumstances that families were

living in. One charity participant alluded to a gap in schools' understanding of housing conditions and suggested:

... a single page profile that every child or family fills out when a child joins the school that just says 'this is who I am' ... so some nice things but also with a question around 'what does your house look like?' so that schools develop an understanding of some of the places the children live in.
(Francesca, Mission House)

Points related to poverty were also strongly emphasised by the LymEdu setting.

The NRPF children are just forgotten, that's how I feel. So, I might tell a headteacher that when a child gets a school place but there's nowhere for that to be logged for wider school staff and they just think that child's ok ... but they are the ones that need the food banks, that need the support, they're the ones whose parents are probably leaving their children alone to go and work illegally or they're living in illegal dwellings just to make ends meet. We all see this ourselves when we do our outreach visits to families living in appalling conditions. (Cathy, Centre Manager)

Social isolation

Concerns around social isolation were raised by some of the charity practitioners, particularly in relation to older children. Specific evidence of the impact of this was raised by LymEdu.

At secondary school, if you've got no English it's traumatic for the children and they're grieving for the life that they have lost in their home country, their friends ... all of a sudden they are downgraded to where they were at five or six years old, they are lost ... and often if they aren't English speaking, you get some kickback, some resentment, and that's especially the case with children that are sent to live back with parents that they've been estranged from for a long time ... and that happened last year in about four cases we had.
(Cathy, Centre Manager)

Social isolation appeared to be exacerbated further when young people were stuck in hotel rooms waiting for a school place. In this example, particular problems are raised in relation to 16–18-year-olds.

I've had a couple of parents crying at my desk because they're desperate and their child is stuck in a hotel room, they've got no social opportunities to meet new people and it's taken months to get them a place in college ... and the parents are saying that their children are depressed because they have nothing to do ... it can't be allowed to happen that these children are going to be stuck in a hotel room with no social skills ... that's my biggest concern.
(Fiona, family liaison worker)

Supporting diversity in the classroom

Evidence of understanding the distinct EAL needs of children as separate from other needs such as SEND, was clear amongst the school and transitory education practitioners in this project. However, it was a challenge which was emphasised by the teacher advisers when talking about their experience in schools more widely. Both alluded to gaps in EAL/ELT teacher education in this regard, for example:

A big focus of our work in schools is to help them understand the importance of recognising the different needs associated with EAL and SEND and not to group them together as one thing. We support schools with early identification of SEND and advise that if there is a language need that needs to be addressed first.
(Rachel, teacher advisor)

Thinking beyond categories

One of the teacher advisors brought to the fore further gaps in teacher education, particularly regarding the way that there is a tendency to reinforce teachers' thinking in categories which is unrealistic and unhelpful for the modern multilingual British classroom.

A fundamental aspect that's missing in teacher training is an understanding that all teachers in the UK will be teaching to a diverse set of learners – culturally, linguistically, ethnically, SEND – and it's essential to develop a language-based pedagogy that accommodates diversity ... teaching all the groups separately isn't the way. The essential starting point is that all children are working towards the same outcome and can all achieve and you need to scaffold them in different ways in order to do so. (Kate, Eastside School Services)

Lack of communication and knowledge sharing

The final theme relates to gaps in knowledge sharing across sectors, further addressing RQ3. This arose across two strands. Firstly, in terms of both intra-sharing, within, for example, the charity/third sector:

There needs to be more knowledge sharing between charities as, at the moment, there's no coordination between charities going into the hotels, so support isn't evenly distributed. Also, it depends on the hotel but generally security won't help consistently to advertise to families. Someone in the hotel needs to coordinate all the activities and be a link for the charities that are going in. It needs to be someone who sees the value in the support. (Lisa, Maple Arts)

Secondly, there were gaps in inter-sector communication, for example, between schools and charities.

I think it would be so useful for us to be able to go into schools and have this discussion as to what to expect regarding the needs of newly arrived children. It would make a big difference ... so yes, I think working more closely together with schools is key as once I get a place for a child I have very little communication with the school after that. (Fiona, Refugee Support)

Where cross-sector communication was working well, it had helped to ensure newly arrived families were signposted to essential financial and social support. This was evident at LymEdu.

For our safeguarding work, especially around the poverty-led needs that are coming through, we're working a lot with external agencies. We have something called community navigators that help families apply for benefits ... It's a myriad of difficulties to claim Universal Credit [UK social support] now, so we need that external help to make sure financially that families have enough to sustain the children. (Cathy, Centre Manager)



5

Discussion

The discussion is framed around the spatial dimensions of ELT in transitory and school spaces, drawing together comparisons and addressing the three RQs: what ‘newly arrived ELT resilience’ looks like across these spaces, how newly arrived children can be supported, and identifying challenges or gaps in professional development. A set of recommendations and a link to the resource output follow this which are derived in response to the research.

5.1 ELT in transitory spaces

Language provision delivered by Maple Arts in the hotels showed that it was always synonymous with a state of flux and a sense of not knowing who would be there: reflecting the movement of children in and out of school places, which was also tied to families’ being moved in and out of temporary housing settings. This required teachers to have a flexible planning approach that accommodated unknown numbers of people and English levels. The charity practitioners also recognised the physical exhaustion that wider conditions of temporality brought to the body: awareness of this was vital for the teachers in how they adapted their sessions in-the-moment to accommodate this. In response to Watkins’ (2017) question of what and how spaces can teach: the very nature of teaching practice taking place within the living spaces of newly arrived families made it inextricable from the everyday conditions of life in the hotels. This required special levels of compassion, aligned to what Ravitch terms ‘a flux pedagogy approach’, to be able to adapt to such uncertainties whilst maintaining the wellbeing of children and families as central: foregrounding an ‘emergent design teaching and leadership mindset that is adaptive, generative, and compassionate’ (2020, p. 1).

ELT within these spaces appeared to work most effectively with the body and creativity, whether that be through arts or cooking activities, or role plays and drama. Non-verbal expression was shown to be integral and took priority over the spoken English priority of schools: forms of communication which have been shown to have an integral place in second

language communicative competence (Gregerson, 2007). ELT activities highlighted practitioners’ awareness and response to the everyday space and the constraints that this brought physically and mentally: responding by foregrounding language practice that started with freeing the body as opposed to constraining it, aspects which were less present from school-based practitioners.

5.2 ELT ‘in-between’ accommodation and school

LymEdu represented a place in-between the transitory accommodation space and the school space. Physically, it was almost identical to a school inside, albeit on much a smaller scale. Issues around accommodating a highly mobile student cohort did not arise within this setting, perhaps as supporting transiency was a key part of their purpose. Their entire student cohort comprised children with EAL and they had a structure in place that supported flux, including: using a one-week topic across the whole setting; setting independent learning tasks for homework; and developing confidence and familiarity with school routines, behaviours, and regulations, the latter two key recommendations from The Bell Foundation (2023). All practitioners were fully immersed in issues around safeguarding with all doing regular outreach visits to the children’s temporary accommodation settings: in this sense bringing what they saw outside the classroom into their interactions with the children inside the class. This perhaps gave them a different type of first-hand empathy compared to teachers in school spaces where they have a separate safeguarding team; perhaps also requiring a different degree of psychological resilience in carrying those eye-witness accounts with them and requiring them to adapt to the adversity of poverty in a different way (Ebersöhn, 2014).

Aspects that came across strongly across all third sector participants were deeply affecting first-hand accounts of ‘inequities in access to resources’ (PHE, 2014). This was evident from the centre manager at LymEdu referring to NRPF children ‘being forgotten’, to the family liaison worker at Refugee Support

saying, 'It can't be allowed to happen'. As well as reflecting many systemic barriers (UNICEF, 2018), the practitioners' highlighting of the consequences of spatial confinements, and the condition of being in limbo, teach important aspects about newly arrived ELT resilience: as stimuli for activism, both inside the classroom in terms of supporting children with hope and 'the best chance to be part of school life', to outside the classroom in speaking out about injustices more widely.

Evidence of the development of 'expert partnerships' (Gladwell, 2019) and addressing the support needs of newly arrived parents as a way to also support children (Manzoni and Rolfe, 2019) came out particularly strongly in Mission House's partnership with a primary school in their whole family after-school provision. Effective partnership working was also shown in LymEdu's cross-sector working to support families with financial and advocacy support as well as the practicalities of preparing for school. However, such examples of partnership working to develop a whole-family approach to support were considered unique and extraordinary when shared with the school-based participants, as such informing a proposed area for professional development.

5.3 ELT in school spaces

As in the transitory spaces, the three schools were also characterised by flux, although not to such an extreme extent. One of the main strategies for addressing flux was shown to be through EAL intervention. The ELT interventions at Magdalen Primary and Cedar Secondary aligned closely to advice from the Bell Foundation (2023), such as scaffolding language and providing tailored support. Cheetham Secondary's EAL induction programme was reminiscent of approaches used in some states of the US and Australia (NATECLA, 2018), albeit for a shorter time. All three of the schools also had a language assessment and profile process.

In the visits to both LymEdu and Magdalen Primary, there were also some clear similarities. The visual mapping of ELT spaces by the teachers across both settings crossed over in many respects, with an emphasis on visual literacies for everyday communication support, visual routines, visual access to the curriculum, scaffolding language, and print-rich walls in classrooms. Rowsell et al. (2012, p. 447) highlight that 'visuals have a starting point in people's everyday experience'; an aspect that was evident in the use of symbols at each setting that were rooted in the everydayness of schooling. Visual communication remained a constant and grounding presence in newly arrived ELT resilience for both teachers and children. At Magdalen Primary children

quite literally wore their language profile 'on their sleeve' in the form of an armband as they moved around the different school spaces: an 'embodied pedagogy', connecting 'body and mind in a physical and mental act of knowledge construction' (Nguyen and Larson, 2015, p. 331).

As an outsider going into school spaces, the fast pace of everyday school life, with bells ringing, bodies moving across spaces, rapid ELT interventions stood out. Returning to Khawaja et al's (2017) notion of 'school connectedness' seems evermore important in light of this fast pace, with all three schools having forms of buddy schemes in place that appeared important contributions to connectedness. Additionally, all three schools had 'UK School of Sanctuary' status: a recognition of ongoing good practice in 'fostering a culture of welcome, belonging and solidarity for those seeking safety' (Schools of Sanctuary, 2023). Such aspects appear to be integral ingredients in building 'newly arrived ELT resilience' in schools, of which connectedness is a key part, where external pressures in terms of accreditation, achievement, absenteeism, embody the school atmosphere. Whilst wider societal inequities are present in schools, they are perhaps less immediately visible than in transitory spaces.

Theorising ELT in school spaces

Bringing together the learning from the different spaces, newly arrived ELT can be conceptualised as a hybrid 'third space' (Bhabha, 1996) characterised by a state of limbo existing between migration statuses, accommodation settings, and educational provision. It is a space that is in constant flux, that is politically charged in different ways, and with ELT provision that is always responsive to both. It is a space where children experience both the slowness of waiting in hotel rooms, mixed with the fast pace of the school classroom. It is a space where inspiring ELT practice is happening under constrained resources, and where the cultivating of cross-sector partnerships is key in helping to develop connectedness and support, with the wellbeing of children, families, and teachers living and operating in complex conditions is paramount.

6

Recommendations

Finally, it is hoped that the following recommendations contribute to some of the challenges/gaps identified across the four participant groups. Further gaps are addressed through the co-produced resource output which includes presentations, effective practice examples from practitioners working across third space newly arrived ELT, key takeaways for practice, and professional development activities.

Recommendations for local policymakers:

- Develop a coordination tool to share across third sector charities and LEAs to ensure support is more evenly distributed across temporary accommodation settings.
- Communicate with a named representative in the temporary accommodation settings to ask them to promote charity provision with families.
- Fund creative educational provision for children whilst waiting for a school place, particularly for older children who are waiting longer, with a particular focus on language learning through arts and body activities.

Recommendations for third sector:

- Support practitioners working in temporary accommodation settings with additional tools for a 'flux pedagogy' approach, such as by learning from effective practice from transitory education partnerships.
- Consider how to support children to adjust to the fast pace of school after the slow pace of waiting in a confined space – through body/creative activities.

Recommendations for schools:

- Develop partnership with a local charity to implement after-school provision and advocacy for the whole family.
- Use staff training days to expand whole-school staff awareness of NRPF housing conditions/poverty, drawing on the expertise of the third sector.
- Draw on the expertise of arts-health charities to deliver wellbeing support for school.
- Continue to develop staff training on distinguishing EAL/SEND support and asking teachers to consider new ways of thinking 'beyond categories' in the classroom.

Resource for practitioners working with newly arrived children:

The co-produced collaborative resource can be downloaded for free on the following link:
<https://wlv.openrepository.com/handle/2436/625345>

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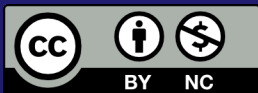
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