

FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

HOW THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT IMPACTS
SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN'S WELLBEING

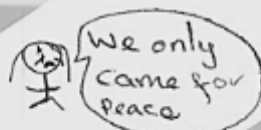
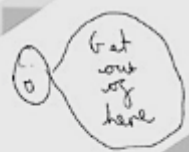


citizensUK

**ACTION
RESEARCH
PRELIMINARY
REPORT**
JUNE 2019

Feeling left out is a sad thing Why am I muted when I have so much to say

People who move into hostile environments feel like they are an unwanted feature to the environment making them feel sad and upset.



Why am the one suffering

I try so hard, but every time I feel safe it's like you find a way to isolate me

How long would it take before I can be treated equal?

You push me out but you make it seem like I left willingly

So because I'm not a citizen I can't learn?

Ignorance is the reason for assumptions because people have no knowledge on the support for immigrants so they base their judgement on rumours, and as they're the ruling majority so their opinion is raised above the minority. (put yourself in someone else's shoes eg. an immigrant) ☺
(AMVAH)

many are speaking about people in situations they haven't experienced.

the 'Rich' argue the 'poor' problems.

devastatingly sad

Stop treating kids this way!

No matter where you come from here every child has rights

I have right to have an education because I'm a child.

I have a right to have a shelter to live in. Since I am a child.

Everyone needs to be taken care of.

Children have the right to be treated equally.



Even I can make your country BETTER



Dear minister, Some people do not have the same opportunities as others and I personally feel like this should change by generosity is key

You make the change!

Hope for a better future! Immigrants travel from parts of the world where they are affected by war, poverty, etc. They travel here in hope for a better future. We as citizens should come together and hope for everyone to have a better future.

I kindly request you to make the immigration policy more reliable for every people in the UK. So they can fulfill their basic need of living life in UK.

If I were prime minister I would care about everybody and give them a home and take care for the environment there will be enough housing.



FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

This report investigates how the hostile environment policy is impacting upon the everyday lives of schools, families and children without citizenship living in the UK.

The hostile environment immigration policy was first introduced by Home Secretary Theresa May in 2012, aiming to make lives of people without the “right documentation” unbearable until they decided to leave the UK. This was done by fining landlords renting out their properties out to undocumented migrants, asking medical personnel to report migrants without documents to the Home Office and threatening employers who hired migrants without documents with fines. The hostile environment policy, however, does not just impact undocumented migrants living in the UK, but all migrants, as well as many individuals and families,

particularly those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, who have lived in the UK for their entire lives.

Since January 2019, undergraduate students from the UCL Institute of Education have been working with Citizens UK, the national community organizing group, along with staff and student in six primary and secondary schools and sixth form colleges across London to conduct an action research project on the impact of the hostile environment on these schools, their students, parents and staff. Action research combines education (developing workshops to learn together about the hostile environment policy), research (listening to the experiences and opinions of children, teachers and parents), and action (collectively developing ideas to address the harmful impact of the hostile environment policy).

As the following pages show, our action research finds that the hostile environment is having a significant and negative impact in schools, not just for children and families without citizenship, but for teachers and school leadership teams as well.

Based on this research and reports produced by other individuals and organisations, we believe that the hostile environment migration policy is undermining the right of all children to an equal, high quality education in schools across the UK.

We therefore call on the UK Department for Education to:

Make the Pupil Premium and Free School Meal funding available for all children in need, regardless of their citizenship status.

Investigate and redress the harmful impacts of the hostile environment policy on children's academic and emotional wellbeing in the UK.



HEADTEACHER SURVEY ON THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT AND SCHOOLS

As part of our action research, we sent a headteacher survey on the impact of the hostile environment on schools, that was designed in collaboration with school headteachers, to schools across England and Wales. From the initial set of 14 responses received back so far, these are some of the survey's findings:

The proportion of children from families without citizenship varies considerably across schools. Some schools estimate this to be as low as 2%, while for others it is estimated to be 30-40% of all children attending their school.

“Children are feeling disenfranchised and that they don't belong. They feel excluded from the community due to maybe not being British citizens.”

Every school responding is providing extra support to children in need who come from families without UK citizenship. This includes: breakfast clubs, free school lunches, food bank vouchers, subsidized school uniforms, subsidized field trips, extra curricular activities, extra school tuition, English language lessons, assistance with citizenship applications, and writing letters of support to stop housing evictions.

“We spend £30,000 a year on mental health provision in the school to support the trauma of children without citizenship.”

As Pupil Premium and Free School Meal funds are only made available by the government to support children from families who have UK citizenship, schools are bearing the cost of this extra support themselves. **On average, this is costing schools an extra £36K annually; for some schools, the extra cost is as high as £100K annually.**

“Many families cannot access the full range of opportunities in school as they do not have a secure income. This can impact on the child's mental health and wellbeing because their parents can't afford the cost of many basic items. This places a significant financial burden on the school as we will always ensure equal opportunity of access for all children to the wider curriculum.”

Over 90% of schools responding agree or strongly agree that **the hostile environment policy has a negative impact on the housing situation and financial security of pupils** without citizenship at their school.

“This policy has a negative effect on the mental health and wellbeing of our families.”

“Children are aware that their families are different and they do not have the rights and access to state support that other families do.”

Close to two thirds of schools responding strongly agree that **the hostile environment policy has a negative impact on the emotional wellbeing and academic achievement of pupils** without citizenship at their school.

**WHAT WE
DISCOVERED WHILE
WORKING WITH
LONDON SCHOOLS**

FOXFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL WOOLWICH

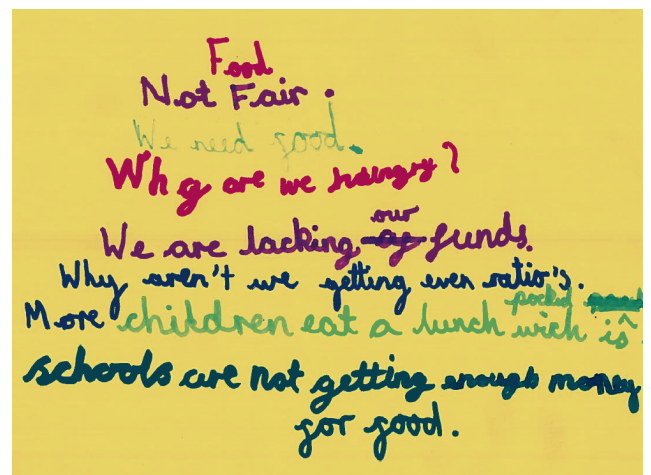
Like other schools around London, Foxfield Primary School has been severely impacted by the government's hostile environment migration policy. One challenge in understanding the full effects of the hostile environment on children at Foxfield is that many families are not only suffering financially and psychologically from the hostile environment policy but are also fearful and ashamed about their situation. **Some parents are scared to tell the school about their immigration status**, for fear of being outed to the Home Office or other possible negative implications.

It is not just children and families at Foxfield who are being affected by the hostile environment but teachers as well. The role of teachers has shifted more and more, as they are involved and affected by the personal stories of the children and their families in their care. At times, decisions have to be made by teachers and the rest of the executive school body that have a major psychological and emotional impact on teachers in relation to their performance at work, at home and their relationship to some children and their families. Mental health has started to become a problematic issue with its effects limiting the enjoyment of some of the role as a teacher.

THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT AND FREE SCHOOL MEALS

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One of the struggles is free school meals. So, the government had allowed all Key Stage One children to have free school meals, but as soon as they hit Year 3 parents then have to pay for their school meals unless they have 'Pupil Premium' and are entitled to free school meals. And you're only entitled to free school meals if you're receiving the benefits. So, the families that have no access to any kind of benefits, they get rejected by the new course to funds as well, they have to provide basically packed lunch for their children or pay for school dinner. So, we've got a lot of families who end up going in debt.



Education budgets have been completely cut. So we have had the immigration hub phone to say, "Look, this is the situation the family is in so can you at least provide them with one hot meal a day?"

We've said, yes, it's fine, don't worry we'll find the money from somewhere. But we're now in so much deficit and I'm talking thousands, thousands, that we can no longer afford to do it.

And I had to get in touch with the immigration hub and I said, unless you can give us the money, we no longer can provide free meals for the family. And I hate it. It's awful for me.

When it was one hot meal for one family, we were okay, but we've now got about 15 to 20 families in this situation. If you think how much money that is all together in long term, we're just not in a position now that we can afford to do it. And it breaks our heart, really does but our budget has been more than halved.

THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

Two years ago, we found out from a boy, who very casually kind of said 'oh yeah, last night we slept on a bus. I was like, 'what do you mean you slept on the bus?' and he said, 'we haven't got a home, the landlord changed the locks and all our stuff was outside in bin bags'. So, landlords then who knew that they had private tenants who were undocumented, were then sort of evicting families.

The family would have to beg for somewhere to stay the night.

If they couldn't, they would sleep on buses, basically wherever the bus would terminate and jump off and get onto another bus. They would go into McDonald's in the morning and just kind of ate people's leftover food. He would have a wash and brush his teeth in the toilets there.

I mean his clothes, I don't know how, they were always clean. He was very smart and naturally he would come to school.

That was the first time I actually got involved with housing. But they were not entitled to any kind of housing or benefits. And I said, look there's a child involved. And they were like, well if the mother refuses to go back to her home country, the child will end up in care.

I live with my
mum and brother, and I
prefer this house to my
previous. I do my homework
in my room! My room isn't
the biggest, but it is very
nice and personalised.



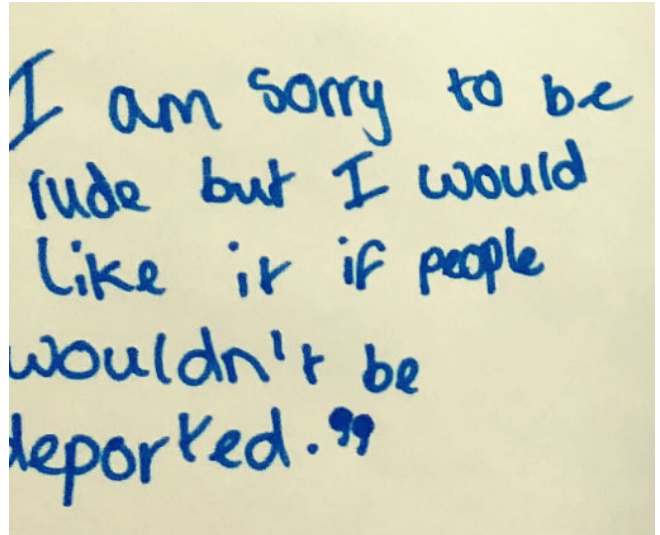
THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT AND DEPORTATION

“ This week, ‘Immigration’ got in touch with us and it’s the social worker about a child whose parents come from [another country] and they’re being sent back. So, the government’s more than happy to pay for their ticket to go back but the child knows nothing about [the other country]. The child was born here. She’s amazing, she’s one of our top students who is doing so well here. Mum and dad are so interested in her education, very much part of school. The social worker rang me up and said, how would you feel if this little girl was sent back?

So, I wrote a big statement. Normally, we can only really write that the child attends this school. This is their attendance. Academically, this is what they’re doing. But with this little girl, I really felt for the family as they said “we haven’t gotten anything back in [the other country]” and they had to go through a lot of things in order to come over here and then have their child here, they just really want the best for their child. And the child is really confused. It’s an unknown country to her, this is her home, this is what she knows.

Another one of our children in year six that had to go into court to fight for that her dad and when she was first telling me, her friends knew nothing about this, so children aren’t sharing this with other people.

When I’ve spoken to some of these children, they say coming into school, this is their home, and this is where they feel safe and they know that no one can hurt them.



THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

“ There were children coming up to other children and saying, “you need to go back to your own country.” Even though those children were born in this country. So, we had lots of children really upset. But naturally, these kids were hearing it from their parents and to them what Brexit means is you go get rid of everybody and they all go back to their own countries. So, we did a lot work in school and that’s now stopped. We don’t have any of those issues anymore.

All quotations are from teachers at Foxfield Primary School.

NEWMAN CATHOLIC COLLEGE BRENT

Newman Catholic College (NCC) is an extraordinary school that seeks to fully abide by the UNICEF Rights Convention providing a safe and supportive environment for all students regardless of background. It is already a Refugee Welcome School and has recently applied to become a School of Sanctuary. NCC is fighting a battle, with many other schools in the area not taking in immigrant children due to considerations regarding league tables and children's numbers. With a large body of immigrant and refugee students, NCC is acutely aware of how the hostile environment immigration policy is affecting families and children in the area despite using their best efforts to protect students while they are at school. However, the hostile environment still profoundly impacts the school and its students notably in terms of housing, language, leaving school, free school meals and pupil premium. As one teacher described:

"It's heart-breaking when you see children living way below the poverty line. Not so much neglect. It's a form of neglect because obviously they don't earn enough rent. And they don't have health care. They don't have support."

A mother described these families who are so profoundly affected by the hostile environment as 'the forgotten people'.

However, one thing the staff and students at NCC have realised is that "we are better people and better students and better educators where we're all together."

HOUSING

Many of the students affected by the hostile environment do not have a permanent home. As available and affordable housing is scarce, families are often moved by the council. This means that many children have a much longer travel time to get to school, which affects their energy and concentration in class and once they arrive home. Others are relocated to other cities despite wanting to remain in the area. Some students also find themselves in situations of overcrowding with multiple families living in one house, each sharing a bedroom. This means that completing schoolwork is difficult, with some students doing so on the floor for lack of an adequate space. These issues surrounding housing are something that the whole school is aware of. One teacher expressed the issue in the following manner:

”

Housing is a problem because there aren't enough houses to go around. That's a real issue. We've lost some good families to areas outside London.

Another teacher told the story of a student who had often been relocated yet did not want to leave the school as it had become a safe haven:

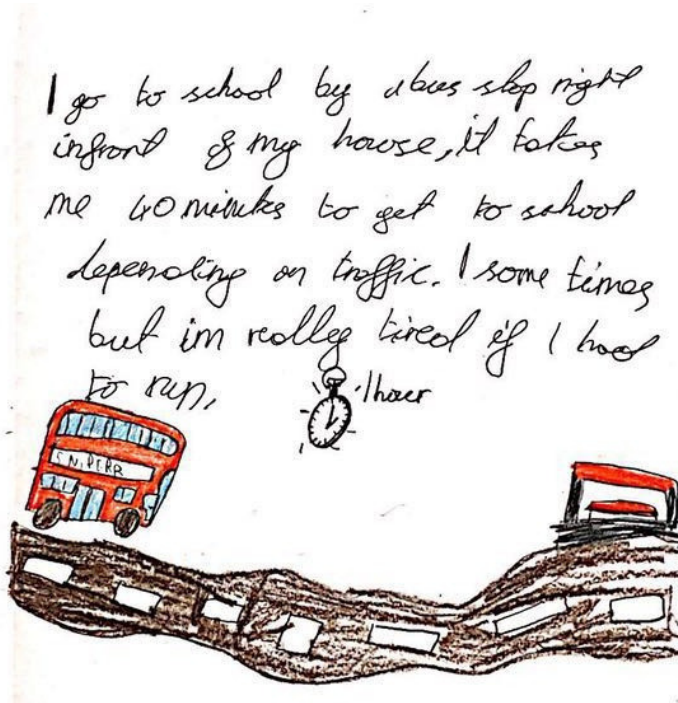
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There is a boy in year 8. He actually lived next door to me and he was living here in

Brent, which is 5-minute walk from school. Over Christmas, they suddenly moved and when I was told this I felt this was really weird. The Home Office moved them into a hostel in Croydon. The mother was getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning to bring him to school here. They were told that they would be relocated to Birmingham. He doesn't want to go to Birmingham. So, they wrote a letter of appeal to the Home Office and then now they are in Tilbury Town. He doesn't want to leave our school because that's become his- you know that he came from overseas, this is his safe haven.

LANGUAGE

With many newly arrived immigrants, one of the main focuses of NCC is to provide English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes not only for students but also for parents. When seeking to provide support for disadvantaged students, one of the first things students require is extra tuition in their English speaking. It is only once this is up to a standard that other issues of disadvantage, such as a lack of hygiene products, come to light. Students are also taken out on trips to provide them with experiences of London and to further integrate them into the society. One of the reasons that the school provides parents with English classes three or four times per week, is that it believes that it is lucky to have immigrant students and needs to give something back to ensure that the immigrants are able to really contribute to society. Furthermore, language also affects other things such as the ability to fill in forms for pupil premium or free school meals. This is why NCC sees EAL as such an important intervention to alleviate disadvantage amongst immigrant families.



Most of the people can't afford to pay for house rent.



Because of his financial constraint and too expensive price of the house, he had never got the opportunity to rent a house in his area, not even far distance away. Still his case is pending in council court to get some financial support from the council. It has been over 6 months.

LEAVING SCHOOL

The hostile environment presents a particular challenge for older students in the school who may not have the right to remain or a temporary leave to remain. When they become adults, they no longer have carers and find themselves on their own, without any support network or financial support. This means that they must leave the school to get jobs.

Moreover, if they are not able to get citizenship as a child, all support and the possibility to gain citizenship stops. One teacher gave some further insight into the lives of some students after school:

“ *That's also when you get a number of them go underground. So, then they become illegal in a sense since they haven't gotten the right to remain, but they take on menial jobs like cleaning. They do things to keep up their hidden lives.*

Many of the students also cannot attend university after school, and if they do apply they would have to pay overseas students' fees, far beyond their means, due to their lack of citizenship. When they leave school where they were protected, that is when they are really impacted by the hostile environment, making life next to impossible:

“ *They can't even create a bank account. You can't do this, you can't do that. It is all down to you.*

THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT AND FREE SCHOOL MEALS

“ *I definitely know that most of the immigrants in the school don't eat*

Although always seeking to increase the number of children on the Free School Meal (FSM) register many students at NCC still go hungry. Despite the desire being there the school cannot give students who are not on the register the official FSM yet they do try to make some allowances because “the last thing[they] want is for someone to go hungry”. Despite these valiant efforts, many students become accustomed to not eating at school, as a teacher describes:

“ *I think they become so used to live so small amount of food that it becomes natural for them to live like this.*

Housing also affects access to free school meals as multiple families often live in a house this boosts household and benefit income meaning that these students cannot apply for FSM. Another issue surrounding FSM is the attached stigma. Students who are eligible for FSM often do not make use of them, because they do not want to feel different or to be labelled as disadvantaged. One parent explained:

“ *It is quite embarrassing to get FSM. There is a stigma attached to it. Some children don't want to eat FSM. They*

In my experiences of free school meal is good beause I was takeing free school meal in my own country and in London I don't because I don't live school

think that it is embarrassing. I was on low-income, I was eligible and my son was eligible for it but he didn't want it because of the stigma.

Students also expressed the issue of seeing classmates go hungry a lunchtime:



I think everyone in school should have free school meals.

THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT AND PUPIL PREMIUM

Although the support provided through pupil premium is incredibly important, its scope remains rather limited:



I feel like the idea behind it is so positive and such a huge thing, but it misses out a huge chunk of people. Yes, it gets

the poorest of the poor, so they're brought up slightly, but also... who decides the cutting point? If your household income is seventeen thousand pounds per year, you're not eligible for this but you've not got enough to live.

Another issue is the accessibility of such support. As many students are from abroad and don't know their rights, many are not aware that they are eligible for pupil premium. At NCC, 30 percent of students are on pupil premium yet in reality it should be around 50 percent as Brent is one of the poorest boroughs in London. Other reasons behind this are misconceptions of potentially being relocated or suffering due to receiving such financial help from the school, and also the stigma associated with receiving

pupil premium. Furthermore, pupil premium funding stops at 16 despite students still being in education, meaning that many students who still need support no longer have access to it.

Despite these issues, NCC has implemented some incredible interventions to utilise pupil premium to support as many disadvantaged pupils

in the school as possible. They have developed three 'pillars of disadvantage'. The first group is made up of the core pupil premium students who are registered and receive full funding.

The second group are legacy pupil premium students who have stopped receiving funding as they are over 16. These pupils are part of a scheme to support core pupils, helping them with revision techniques or resilience for instance. This also benefits the legacy pupils enabling them to learn key leadership and mentoring skills. The third group are shadow pupil premium students, those who have been identified as belonging to the list but are not on it for various reasons such as a lack of citizenship, language issues, or parents' fear of legal issues due to working cash-in-hand jobs. Legacy pupils also support this group, using their language skills to help parents complete the necessary forms to get on the register. Finally, the school is seeking to rebrand pupil premium as 'premium pupil' to alleviate stigma around the financial support. These changes could be put into place in other schools in the borough and beyond in order to provide support for as many disadvantaged pupils as possible.

NOTRE DAME ROMAN CATHOLIC SECONDARY GIRL'S COLLEGE SOUTHWARK

Notre Dame RC Girls' School, founded in 1855, by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, is home to almost 650 young ladies. A key initiative the school has is the school's incorporation of culture and language, which enables the school to help students who speak English as a second language develop and enhance their abilities amid the ongoing cuts to ESOL funding. This practice done by the school is something that could not be missed; dedicating a safe space for students to learn and improve their language skills, selecting student translators to help at parents' evenings, and allowing peer translation in classes is one of the strong elements of the school, which aids in framing the school's core values of the gospel and ensuring every girl is given equal opportunity to reach their maximum potential spiritually, academically and socially.

The students at Notre Dame believe firmly that we as young people can change the negative perception of immigrants and foster a community of equal opportunities. They believe that offering help and assistance to migrants and those in need; educating them, offering multiple workshops, providing a

welcoming environment where they can receive help from local communities, schools and charities, making them eligible for adequate, secure and sustainable housing can go a long way in helping them feel welcome. They also want the government to have more control on media. The students say that schools need to educate them more about understanding media coverage about migration. They believe that the media links immigrants and asylum-seekers with socio-cultural threat, insecurity, or negative economic impact.

The students encourage the government to increase more high-quality citizenship lessons as they feel that it is more important than ever to engage them in political life, as well as helping all young people to learn about

- H** HOUSING
- Why do I have to put in harms way
 - Why am I muted when I have so much to say
 - Why, oh why am I the one without a place to stay
- O** Oppression
- Why am the one suffering
 - I'm the one in need but you're not helping
 - 'You're are your brothers keeper' but why have you become my oppressor
- S** SMILES
- I see you smiling, a feeling I feel to guilty to ~~express~~ express
- T** TRYING
- Every day I tell myself it will get better
 - If only I stay stronger
 - So I keep trying
- I** I (me)
- I try so hard, but every time I feel safe
 - It's like you find a way to isolate me
- L** LONELY
- You leave me feeling lonely
 - You push me out but you make it seem like I left willingly
- E** Endless
- It's like you ~~love~~ love me, but you welcome me into your home with hostility? Why, oh why?

How long would it take
before I can be treated equal?

Ohh, is it because I don't
fit in?

So because I'm not a citizen
I can't learn?

Tell me, are you scared that
I might take your jobs?

I can't even study, so how will
I be good enough for a job?

Let me in! PLZ

Even I can make your
country **BETTER**

democratic society. The students at Notre Dame believe that every young person has a right to the opportunities to develop the skills, the knowledge and the confidence to take part in society as an active citizen.

The students want to help local decision makers, the government, charities, religious institutions, and multiple service providers better understand and assess the needs of vulnerable migrant communities, and to address the apparent inequalities between citizens and migrants. The students are convinced that we should all strive to build a strong, united country with a shared future requires solidarity and unity.

~ we understand why the government may feel the need to be hostile towards immigrants however we don't agree with it.

To realise the dream of equality, it is imperative to draw on the vision and strength of all those involved. We should strengthen our dialogue, draw on best practices, explore new ways of thinking. And most importantly, through effective action and organising communities for social justice and power.

While the students who attended our workshops at the school were not knowingly directly affected by the hostile environment policy, we observed an increase of empathy and understanding as the sessions progressed.

I think the government ⁽¹⁾
are ~~worried~~ worried
about the increasing
population and
because they are
worried that the
country will begin
to run out of
resources and
the financial problems
it might cause 😊

The students' understanding of the hostile environment and the effects it has on those directly affected allowed them to see more critically and relate to the inequalities and oppression that it brings, linking it to their own experiences. We found that the media played a key role in shaping the students' negative perceptions of people of colour, which has also been reinforced by the hostile environment policy.

ST MARY'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL LEWISHAM

STUDENTS' VIEWS

At St Mary's Lewisham Church of England Primary School we worked with 24 year-5 students. Our work focused on the connection between Children's Rights and the Hostile Environment. After learning to recognise their rights as protected by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 24 students were invited to reflect on their own lived experiences with the issue of the Hostile Environment. The reflection resulted in 24 drawings depicting either children's rights being taken away by the Hostile Environment, or ways in which these rights can be defended. Our findings flow from the critical engagement of the students with 4 rights:

THE RIGHT TO A GOOD QUALITY EDUCATION

All students agreed that every child should have the right to a good quality education and many of them considered that the Hostile Environment takes away this right. In their drawings, students depicted that when a children's right to education was taken away, they are no longer able to live as happily as others and to achieve their dreams. Thinking about the fact that children without citizenship do not have recourse to public funds, they insisted in their work that education

should be free for all.

Students suggested that teachers, the school, local authorities and the government should protect children's right to education. Their drawings showed that they also saw themselves as having an active role in helping each other to deal with the struggles deriving from the Hostile Environment policies. Their art demonstrates that they are willing to work together with the government to protect everyone's right to education. Solidarity, care and empowerment were all present in their reflections.

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*I have the right to education
because I'm a child.*



THE RIGHT TO THE BEST HEALTH CARE POSSIBLE

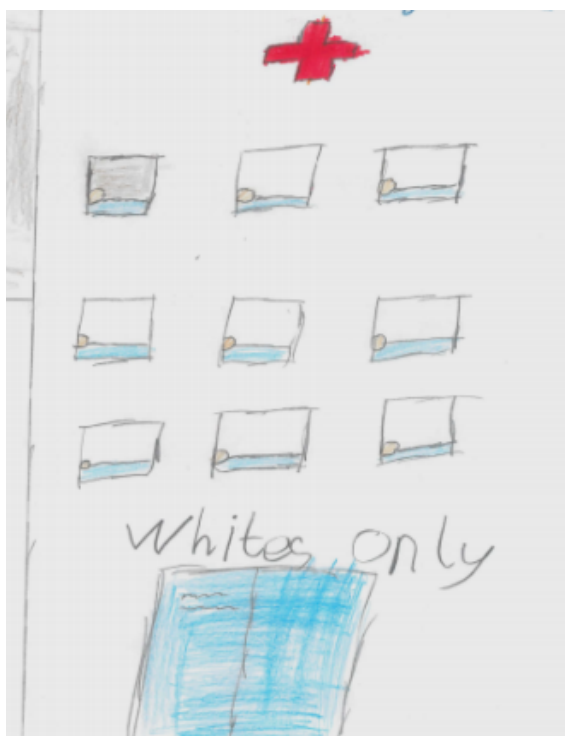
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*Everyone needs to be taken
care of.*

In relation to their right to healthcare, it was surprising to notice that a lot of the students we were aware of how the hostile environment affected especially the most vulnerable children. In many of their drawings, students showed how due to the hostile environment children's access to hospital care is

restricted. Worryingly, one of the pieces speaks loud and clear about institutional racism, as the students which authored it chose to write above the entrance of the hospital 'whites only'.

Students suggested that adults like parents, teachers, and the social services have a duty to protect their right to health. One of the ways forward imagined by the students is organising a collective action where children can invite the government to read their letter in which they explain how all children have the right to the best health care possible, no matter where they come from or where they were born.



THE RIGHT TO A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE

In students' views, the hostile environment puts in danger children's right to a safe place to live. Their work speaks about children without shelter kindly asking for help. Importantly,

most of the students illustrated a sense of loneliness and isolation they feel, and also about indifference of others. Their fears are reflected in the portrayal of an image they see on a daily basis in London – that of a homeless person.



Students' sense of solidarity strikes in the pieces that show what can be done so that children's right to shelter is respected. The images show children accepting to host their peers in need in their own homes and also working together to let their teachers and the social services know that they have friends at risk of not having shelter. Other drawings speak of 'grand openings' of new shelters for children without citizenship and their families.

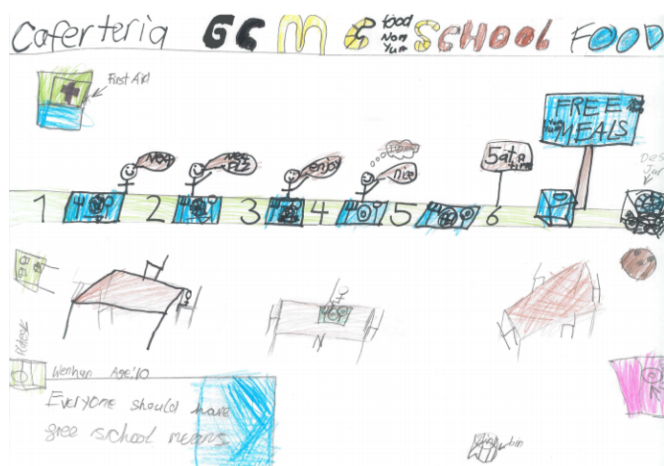
He can live with me!

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THE RIGHT TO FOOD

Some of the students at St Mary's are directly affected by the Hostile Environment policies as they are not entitled to free school meals. Even though the school finds solutions by spending its own budget on protecting the right of every child to food, teachers spoke about many situations

in which children arrive at school without having had breakfast. This is reflected in students' reflections as many of the drawings depicted the struggles of their families with providing nutritious food on a daily basis.



Everyone should receive free school meals.

All of the students understood that food is essential for everyone and that children should have the right to free school meals. They mentioned that without food, children are not able to learn well because they are starving. In their drawings they imagined school cafeterias where all children can eat and restaurants for people who do not have enough to eat. The majority of students suggested that the school and the government should work together because free school meals will have a positive effect on the child and their ability to learn.

PARENTS' STRUGGLES

From our interview with the school staff we learned about how the parents are affected by the Hostile Environment policies. Here is an illustrative story:

D's mother

Before being diagnosed with autism, D used to be a student at St Mary's Lewisham. D and his two siblings who are also suffering from medical conditions are raised by a single mother who cannot receive public payments due to her citizenship status. D himself is not entitled to pupil premium. His mother is entirely dependent on irregular payments from the father, on the goodwill of her friends and on the Church. Even though the school offered her specialised support in dealing with her family housing problems, the mother has been treated aggressively and undermined by local authorities, while her request for help was rejected. In the mother's words, the experience of seeking support from the local council felt 'like being raped'.

The parents' stories we analysed speak about how:

- Parents are confused about the ever-tightening citizenship bracket and often feel ashamed and their self-esteem plummets.
- Because of the stigma associated with not being a citizen, parents hesitate to come forward and ask for help, and they only open up when they are at the breaking point, which sometimes is too late.
- Minority ethnic parents struggle with issues of citizenship are stigmatised based not only on the colour of their skin, but also because they are perceived as failing parents.
- For the kids, when it comes to the issue of racism, the challenge is to balance what they learn in school and what they observe their parents have to

deal with. For example, while one of the core values of their school is respect, in their everyday lives they observe that respect is not important in Lewisham offices or the hospital.

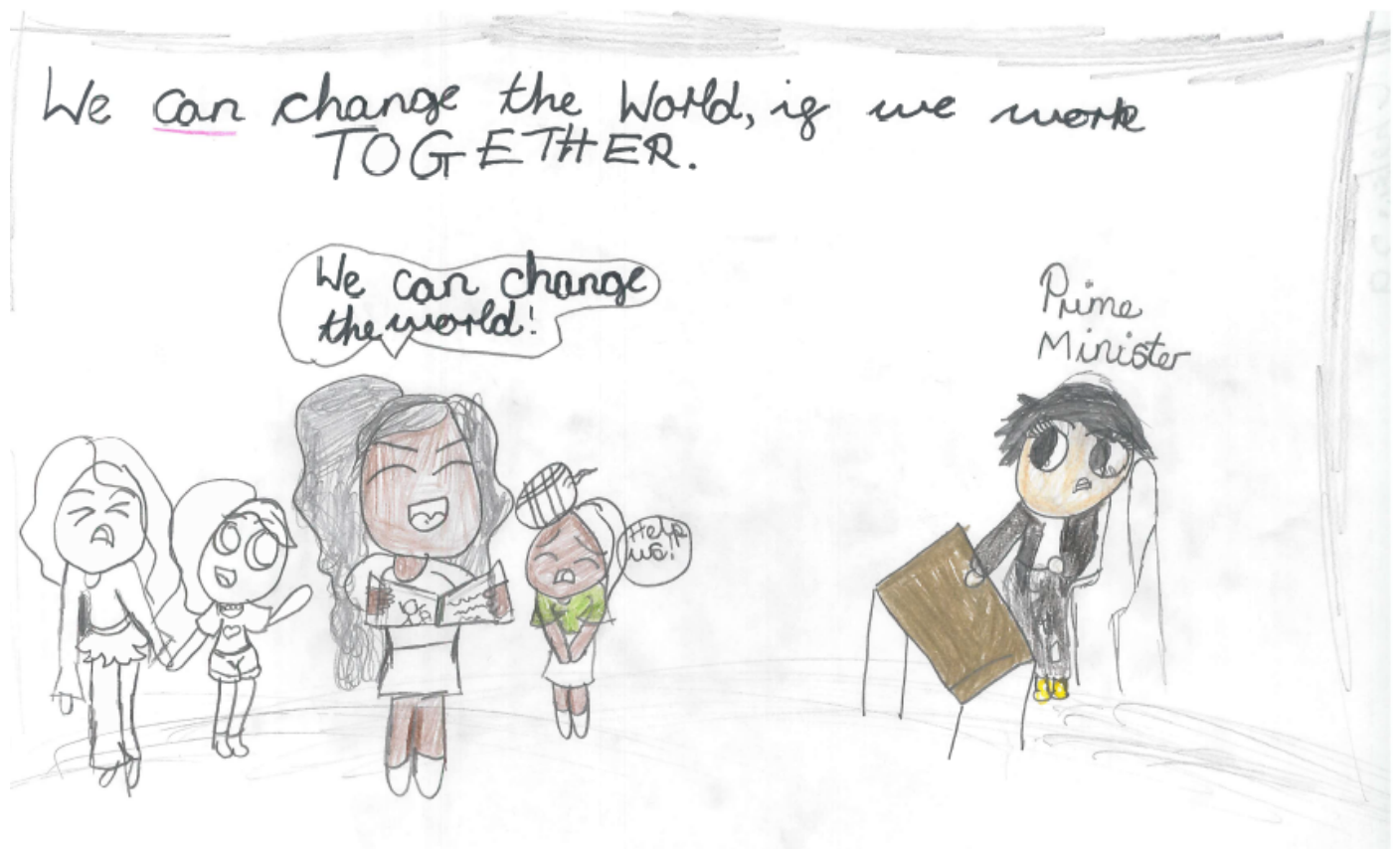
THE SCHOOL'S CHALLENGES

The massive strain and turmoil of parents and children are visible to the school staff at the school gates. As the threshold for social services got higher and higher the role of the school changed dramatically. St Mary's Lewisham Primary School extended its role in the community to become almost a provider of social services in order to make up for the challenges the Hostile Environment inflicts on children and their families.

For example, the school employed specialised staff who supports through 1:1

meetings and school wide events parents to deal with issues deriving from the fact that they and their children do not have citizenship. Similarly, the school uses its own funds to make up for the fact that children without citizenship are not entitled to pupil premium or free school meals.

The school became the epicentre of a support network where the local community, the local Church, and specialised NGOs work together to protect the rights of the children. However, given the roots of the challenges and their wide spread negative implications that surpass the schools gates, it is necessary and urgent that local authorities, and most importantly the government commit to respecting the dignity and rights of the most vulnerable people in society who are most often then not negatively affected by the Hostile Environment.



SURREY SQUARE PRIMARY SCHOOL SOUTHWARK

In May 2019, a team of UCL undergraduate students ran a series of action research workshops on the hostile environment at Surrey Square Primary School in Southwark. Southwark is an ethnically and culturally diverse inner London Borough and with a young and growing population, it is one the most densely populated Boroughs in the United Kingdom. The aim of our action research was to gain an insight into how staff, students and their families are impacted by the government's Hostile Environment Policy.

To attain this information we were fortunate enough to work with around ten students and liaise with the school's Family and Community Coordinator. Throughout our work at the school the topic of No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and the implications this has came up most frequently. We divided these implications into four themes, which are presented in detail below: Impact on Families (Financial Burden, Stress, Domestic Abuse), Housing and Homelessness, Psychological Impact, and Treatment by Local Authorities. We also managed to get an insight into what Surrey Square Primary School is currently doing to compensate for the government's inaction with regards to the impacts the Hostile Environment

Policy has and what changes the school's children demand from their government

IMPACT ON FAMILIES (STRESS, FINANCIAL BURDEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE)

The impacts on families due to the Hostile Environment Policy which are reported by Surrey Square include severe stress due to constantly living in uncertainty about their immigration status. As the school's Family and Community Coordinator states "I had a family recently who had no access to recourse for years and they were under deportation orders... she [the mother] would have to go to the home office in Croydon every two weeks (...). As you risk detention you go along there and you're just wondering every fortnight, is this the day I'm going to be detained because they're going to try and deport me?".

The stress that stems from this constant uncertainty and cycle of applications to the Home Office is worsened by the immense costs of Citizenship applications. The school reports that many of its parents do not have permission to work due to their immigration status or are forced to work in low paid jobs. Therefore, having to save thousands of pounds for family members to apply for Citizenship constitutes a huge financial burden on families, who may already be struggling financially as it is.

Kids have equal rights
Immigration!
Decrease the amount to pay!
Stop treating kids this way!

Lastly, the school has reported some cases of domestic abuse in which women were trapped in abusive relationships due to their immigration status. In all these cases, the husbands either had Citizenship or Indefinite Leave to Remain, while wives had Leave to Remain on the spousal route. This resulted in husbands threatening their wives that they would lose their right to remain in the UK if they spoke up about the domestic abuse. In some of these cases, the school managed to get the police or an MP involved and connect the mother with a lawyer to apply for Leave to Remain in their own right and divorce their husbands. Yet, as the school's Family and Community Coordinator states: "I think this really highlights the impact that immigration status can have on women in particular, and consequently their children. If women feel they have no rights or agency in a relationship due to their immigration status, they are impotent and very vulnerable. I'm sure there are more examples of this that haven't been disclosed yet."

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Findings also showed that families who have NRPF due to their immigration status do not have access to social housing which has multiple implications. Firstly, families with NRPF will therefore either be renting privately, sharing housing with other families or be homeless. This often results in families with three or more children living in one single room. Secondly, the school reports several cases in which families were allocated housing outside the locality, resulting in children either having to move schools or having to spend hours travelling to school. Furthermore, often times families are moved to unsafe housing. In one case the school managed to have an environmental health officer assess a family's living situation. The property was subsequently condemned and the landlord was told to make changes. Yet, local authorities failed to find the family an alternative property. Surrey Square's Family and Community Coordinator highlights that these aspects are extremely stressful for families and can have severe impacts on student's academic performance and psychological well-being.

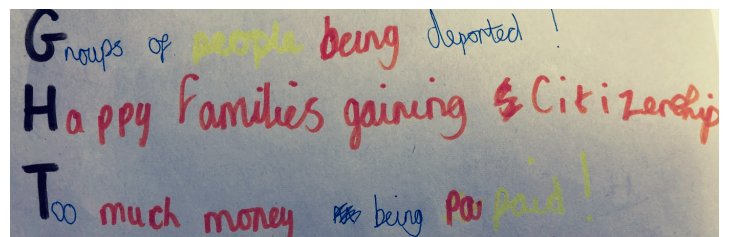
PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON STUDENTS AND STAFF

The Hostile Environment Policy appears to severely impact children's psychological well-being. Based on our experiences in the workshops it became evident that children are extremely aware of their differential treatment and rights as a result of not having Citizenship. According to the school's Family and Community Coordinator children's psychological well-being can be particularly impacted during the application process for Citizenship, "When someone is applying for Citizenship (...) children's behaviour worsens because they're feeling anxious, (...) they're aware that there are pressures on the family at home... we've had a couple of children who have really found it really challenging to contain their emotions and anxiety".

Furthermore, it appears that the anxiety and stress that children experience is accompanied by children being explicitly made aware that they are "different" from children with Citizenship, especially with regards to their sense of belonging in the country. In this regard the school's Family and Community Coordinator states that the children "talk quite explicitly about how they feel, that they feel excluded and isolated, that they don't belong". The school's parents also report that younger siblings experience a different level of belonging in the country they were born in when the oldest sibling's

Citizenship application is successful, as they are not yet old enough to apply for Citizenship.

Findings also showed that the implications of the Hostile Environment Policy can impact school staff's psychological well-being. They report feelings of helplessness and distress with regards to the impacts of the Hostile Environment Policy on Families. For instance the school's Family and Community Coordinator states: "I do home visits and (...) I think, my goodness I couldn't spend one night in this flat (...) and you have to leave them there and they have to live there until someone, in some office decides to move them... and so sometimes the helplessness can be hard to deal with".



TREATMENT BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Parents at Surrey Square report experiencing a culture of disbelief and suspicion in their interaction with the Home Office and local authorities (e.g. NRPF Team). For instance, the school reports cases in which the Home Office refused to believe parents that the photo they were using to apply for a passport was of themselves. Thus, this default position of disbelief that parents experience in their interaction with local authorities leads to immense stress and is extremely difficult for children's parents. Surrey Square's Family and Community Coordinator

states “it was horrendous, people were coming away crying because they have been shouted at, quizzed about why they were here, what do you think this country would give you, why did you leave your own country”.

COMPENSATING FOR THE GOVERNMENT’S INACTION – WHAT SURREY SQUARE PRIMARY SCHOOL IS DOING

The school provides a great amount of support to their students, families and staff members to compensate for the government’s inactions. This support ranges from material and educational resources to psychological support. It is clear that there is a strong rapport between the school staff and students and their families, which is extremely admirable and inspirational. Every parent who is new to the school receives a copy of the Family and Community Coordinator’s leaflet, which informs parents about how they can reach out for help, especially with regards to NRPF, immigration and Citizenship issues.

An example that illustrates this, is of a family who had recently moved out of temporary accommodation and was moved nearby the school. However, they had no furniture in their new home. Therefore, the school helped spread the word to staff members to ask if they had any unwanted furniture. The school’s Family and Community

Coordinator then picked up the furniture and delivered it to the family’s home. This is just one example of how Surrey Square Primary School goes the extra mile to support their families.

Furthermore, the support from Surrey Square staff goes over and beyond both inside and outside the classroom. For children who have only recently moved to England the school provides support for their transition, particularly language support. To prevent their young children from feeling isolated and segregated in their community the school takes additional measures for children with NRPF. Every child who does not receive access to public funds has the opportunity to join one free club a year, for instance singing or dancing clubs which allows children to cultivate their interests.

The support mentioned above is provided merely through the staff’s own connections and efforts, as the school does not receive support from the local council or the government, apart from Pupil Premium. As Pupil Premium is only available for children on benefits and as many of the school’s families have NRPF they fail to fall under this bracket. This is especially problematic in the school’s nursery as these are not covered by the Borough’s universal Free School Meal policy. Therefore, there have been cases in which parents were unable to pay the weekly fee which was subsequently supplemented by the school.

Lastly, the school has started tracking the progress of students on NRPF,

which could shed light on the severe impact the Hostile Environment Policy and its implications have on students' academic achievement.

WHAT DO THE CHILDREN FROM SURREY SQUARE DEMAND FROM THE GOVERNMENT?

Throughout the workshops, the children at Surrey Square Primary School had the opportunity to voice what they demand from the government. One of the most prominent demands is to reduce the Citizenship fee. Some children want to see a "decreases in Citizenship fee", whereas others wanted to remove the Citizenship fee completely. The children believe that "you shouldn't have to pay to be a British Citizen".

The children also demand Free School Meals for everyone, better quality of housing and a "proper place to call home". This ties in with the fact that the children are very aware of how the impacts of the Hostile Environment Policy severely undermine their ability to learn, which they see as their basic Human Right. Beyond the classroom, the children demand equal opportunities in terms of jobs and universal access to Health Care, regardless of their immigration status



THE WILLOW PRIMARY SCHOOL HARINGEY

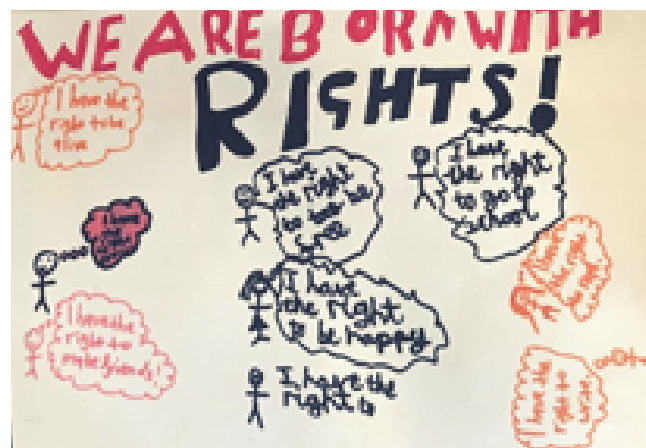
ACTION RESEARCH WORKSHOPS IN THE WILLOW

UCL students conducted three workshops with a year 4 class in May 2019. The three workshops focused on different themes related to Hostile Environment Policy, including children's rights, children without rights, and the Hostile Environment Policy. With support from CitizensUK, UCL, and teachers from The Willow, the workshops were successful and students were able to gain a more thorough idea of children's rights and how they can be protected. The students were active participants, empowered to learn about rights and make changes to the society, which were reflected in creative posters and reflective pieces produced throughout the workshops.

CHILDREN'S REACTIONS TO ACTIVITIES

Overall, there was a positive reaction from the pupils to the workshop activities. This was fuelled by the inspirational character, Greta, who they relate to more because she is a child, like them, who stands up for her beliefs. This was then used to make up solutions to the problems that a non-citizen character such as Joel faces in education. Collectively, the children were appalled by the conditions and mistreatment Joel the non-citizen faces, and agreed that the hostile environment is not humane, nor should it be accepted in Britain. To challenge the current policies, they wrote what they would do if they were prime minister – the main ideas centring

around giving Joel and his family food, safe housing and a passport; in order for Joel to achieve a fulfilling education. This was heavily influenced by their understanding of what human rights means to them. Yet some of their reactions were confused as they had limited awareness of how the citizenship scheme works, and the importance of staying in the country for non-citizens. Nevertheless, the pupils showed strong support towards non-citizens and were enthusiastic to help in any way they can to ensure that all children remain safe and well looked-after.



CHILDREN'S PROGRESS (HOW THEIR UNDERSTANDING CHANGED)

At the start of the workshops, most students in the class knew concepts such as “human rights”. However, many of them were not aware that violations of rights are happening everyday around them. When the students were asked how did the citizenship fee influence them or people around them, they said it was all fine.

It was observed that one student had behavioural problems. After asking the school, it was found that the student's father was deported because of immigration issues. Every day, the student misses his father, and could not concentrate.

Slowly, it developed into disturbing feelings and sorrows.



Will I ever be able to meet my father again? How can someone just take my father away?

But the child had not learned how to voice out and take action, so he turned his thoughts and feelings into problematic behaviours.

During the workshops, the children were taught how to identify inequalities around them by a photo analysis exercise, so they started to understand that there are systematic causes of inequalities, so that individuals who face similar problems and people who want a more equal society should unite. Children were also shown how other children had taken actions to make political changes, so they started to be aware that they as children also have the power to make changes. When more and more students can link their everyday experience to the learned concepts and techniques, they will unite and become a powerful force of change. Because children care about each other no matter of each other's citizenship status, and many of their classmates are directly affected by their lack of citizenship.

FAMILY EXPERIENCES OF THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Mr S.

Mr S. moved to the UK in 1990 with his wife, together they have two children aged 12 and 14. Mr S. and his wife are not British Citizens. In 2007 they applied for British citizenship paying all of the necessary fees and completing all of the required documents. After 9 years, Mr and Mrs S. were granted two and a half years of leave to remain

status. However, during this 9 year period he and his family were made homeless as Mr S. was unable to secure full time employment due to his residency status, despite having qualifications and work experience from his home country. For two years, Mr S., his wife and their two children slept together on the floor of a friend's living room. Mr S. could not afford to pay for his children's school lunches, so their school paid for these so that his children could eat once a day, an act of financial generosity that was unknown to Mr S.

Mr S. told us of the difficulty of those years of his life, feeling as if he could not support his family, could not give them what they wanted or adequately provide for them. Furthermore, his wife suffers from debilitating mental illness which is the result of 12 years of uncertainty, homelessness, and anxiety, further increasing Mr S.'s sense of responsibility to provide for his family. This has resulted in a difficult childhood for his two children, who were very aware of the situation, and chose to hide the reality of their lives from their peers, leaving them feeling isolated and as if they didn't belong despite being British citizens.

In 2015 Mr S. and his wife were granted leave to remain status for two and a half years, this allowed him to work, apply for social housing, and enable his wife to access healthcare through the NHS. This was a life changing moment for the family, allowing them to feel security for the first time in 25 years.

However, the feeling did not last. In 2017 Mr and Mrs S. applied for permanent leave to remain status, paying a total amount of £2500 for the both of them, money which they had

saved for many years. Over two years later, they are still waiting to hear from the government about their application. They have contacted local support groups and their MP alike, nobody is able to understand why they have not received an answer, and none are able to get a response from the government. Mr S. and his family are in limbo, feeling robbed and forgotten by the system. He is once again unable to work or support his family due to this unknown status, and feels like he cannot go on living in this hardship for much longer.

Ms. H

Ms. H. is a mother of three and currently takes care of them alone without her husband J. He was deported in 2015 after he served a brief amount of time in prison for a crime Ms. H. believes he didn't commit. Although J. lived in the UK for 23 years straight, only a year before the crime took place he applied for the Settled Status which he wasn't granted. There was not enough time to appeal and the 2014 Immigration Act resulted in his removal from the UK to [another country]. Despite the fact J. never visited [this other country] and he didn't hold citizenship there, the British immigration authorities arranged him a passport based on the heritage of his parents and this way he was deported effectively, leaving his wife and three children in London alone.

Ms. H.'s health quickly deteriorated and she had to quit her job. Their three children - two of them twins with diagnosed autism - started underperforming in an academy they attended and misbehaved due to the stress and loss of their father. According to the testimony, the academy wasn't

towards the situation the incomplete family was going through and made use of repressive policies in a bid to "handle" the behaviour. Because of the deportation, one of the children developed defiance against authorities, as he perceived them as those who are responsible for his father's disappearance. Only when Ms. H. moved her children to the inclusive Willow school, they started to engage more with their peers and their life stabilised, though it is nowhere ideal.

In terms of safety and security, Ms. H. is worried about sending her children alone to the school and so she drives them there and back every day. Her children call their father daily, however there is little chance the family will be reunited. J. is unable to appeal due to the consequences of the hostile environment policy, Ms. H. told us, and seeing him is financially hard. The ongoing separation of the family has strong detrimental effect on all involved and influences the well-being of the children.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL OF THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

- The Willow has to work with children who are influenced by the breakdown of their family caused by the hostile environment policy with limited help from other social agencies
- The Willow is providing support to families and children impacted by the hostile environment policy in ways that are outside of what can reasonably be expected from a school
- The Willow is subsidising children without citizenship whose parents cannot afford their children's' school meals, bearing this financial burden without state support

FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS BY UCL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION STUDENT RESEARCHERS

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The current government's hostile environment policies have created a very cold and challenging environment for children who are born here, have grown up here but don't have citizenship or their parents don't have citizenship. I think that we have a duty to build a hospitable rather than a hostile environment for them. I really think that the hostile environment takes away children's rights.

I think these children have experienced major injustice. Because they live in a system where apparently we place such a big emphasis on what you are allowed to do as a person and what rights you have just because of a piece of paper which we call a 'passport'.

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We did a workshop where we talked quite a lot about child rights. It seems that the government doesn't really care that much that some of these children's basic human rights are being undermined. An ideal childhood for me here would be one where it doesn't matter where you come from, you'll have the same chances to succeed and same access to education regardless of your parents' background, your race and gender.

I had an interview with a parent from the school that I was working with, where she explained her situation and how the hostile environment policy had an impact to her. One of her children was in the class that I worked with and when we were talking about different policies and different ways that the hostile environment was impacting people in that class, that child removed himself from the class. It was quite difficult to see how impacted that child was by the discussion, but he really felt he couldn't share which was completely fair enough. But it was so sensitive hearing that he couldn't be involved with his peers. He felt quite isolated from the class because of his background and his non-citizenship status.

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I think about the children’s loneliness. They have experienced loneliness in many different ways. Loneliness as we say in the title of the report ‘the forgotten people’. That makes you feel lonely like being misunderstood and being left out in education and having policies that literally leave you out. That’s what produces loneliness.

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Something that really struck me was that the children we worked with were around ten years old and they knew so much more about not only social justice but just like political issues. They were so engaged and involved with these topics and then you look at some 20 years olds and kind of feel like they know much less and I think that could have to do with the fact that they are the people experiencing this situation.

HAPPY

SAFE

PLAYFUL

**THE IDEAL
CHILDHOOD**

EDUCATION

FREE

JUST

KIND

”

I think everyone should have a childhood that allows you to do what you want to do and dream and follow the path that you want. A story that comes to mind is with a little girl that I met very first day of our workshops. We asked all of them to write down their dreams, no matter how impossible they may seem to be, just what they wanted to do with their lives. She wrote something and crossed it out because she said that its was unrealistic so it didn't apply. And it was just becoming a nurse, which is not an unrealistic dream it's actually very tangible and most people would take it for granted if I want to do this I'll do it. But for her it seems impossible because she would never have the money to afford higher education, and that really shocked me.

I think that something that is really incredible for me was that when we learned about all these issues, I mean the UK is the first-world country but nevertheless, all these things are going on and children who've lived here for years cannot apply for citizenship because the families cannot afford which then hugely impact their whole education and then essentially their whole life pathway.

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The reason I did this action research project was that I always had an interest in political matters and international relations or politics in general. But I felt like I never had the time to dedicate my time for it. I thought this is now the time to do what I'm actually passionate about. I've learned so much from this project. I've learned how to get meetings with politicians, how to demand things from the government in a peaceful and kind way instead of being the angry and the citizen who is radically trying to demand things. I've learned how to use certain strategies in organising communities to actually use that power to get politicians to enact regulations and laws that they've passed that are affecting people's lives. And I think I've become more aware of the country that I'm living in, the things that are going wrong but being kept in the dark.

OUR CALL TO ACTION

Make the Pupil Premium and Free School Meal funding available for all children in need, regardless of their citizenship status.

Investigate and redress the harmful impacts of the hostile environment policy on children's academic and emotional wellbeing in the UK.

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Foxfield Primary School, Woolwich
Newman Catholic College, Brent
Notre Dame Roman Catholic Secondary Girls' School, Southwark
St Gabriel's College, Lambeth
St Mary's Lewisham Church of England Primary School
Surrey Square Primary School, Southwark
The Willow Primary School, Haringey

THANK YOU!

CITIZENSUK

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