

# **The child in context**

The ecological approach to  
the assessment of asylum  
seeking and refugee children  
and young people

# Key principles of the assessment framework

- Ecological in their approach

What does *ecological* mean?

- Understanding the children's needs and behaviours in the context of the environment in which they live

# What is the child's environment?

- Child's family
- Community
- Culture

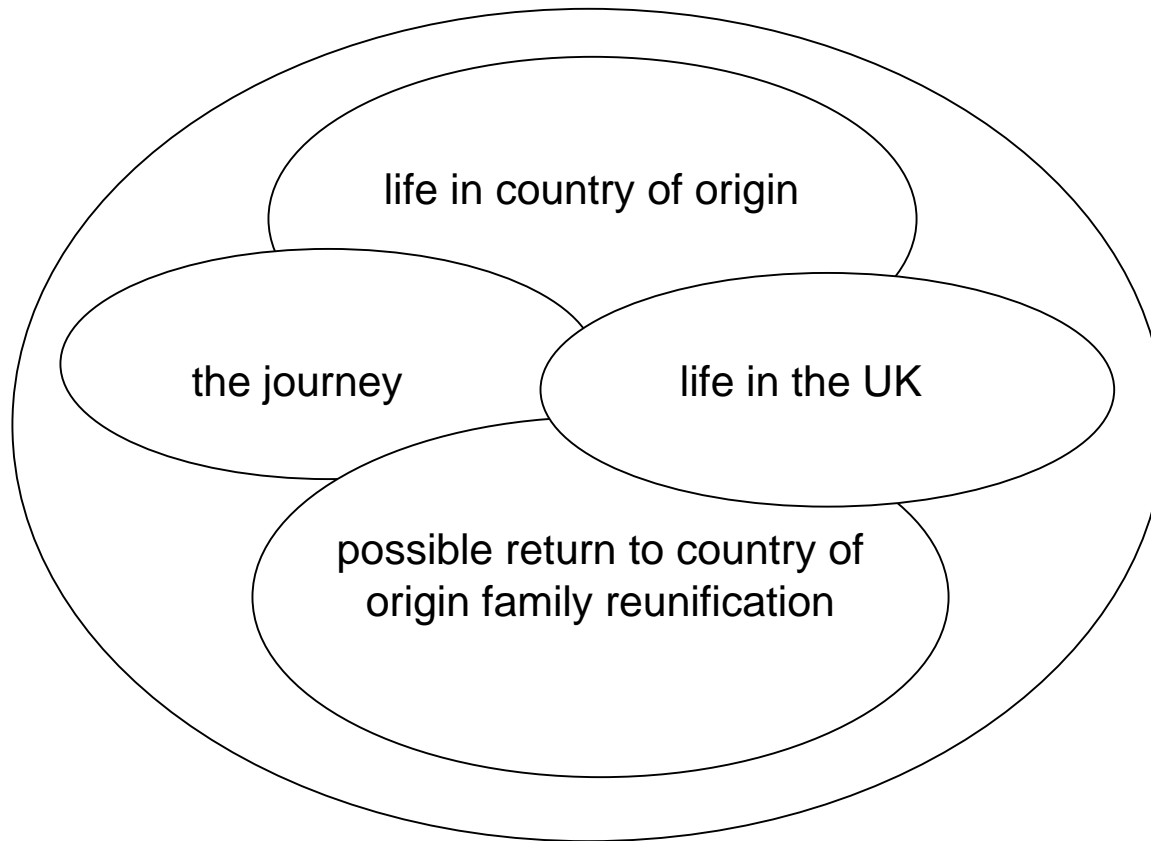
# What does it mean when we assess asylum seeking and refugee children?

- Assessments are usually done within the context of the child's life in the UK
- Looking at a separated child's needs within the context of living in the UK only provides part of the picture

## What does it mean (continued)

- It would not take into consideration their life experiences prior to the UK nor the impact of the environment on their current developmental needs
- Nor the impact of immigration and the uncertainty of whether they can remain in the UK in the long term

# Context for looking at the children's holistic needs



# **Life in the country of origin**

– the child's life experiences

- Family, family background, significant adults, friendships, attachments
- Education, work history
- Health
- Community
- Culture, practices, customs, religion
- Child and family expectations, aspirations

## – the environment

- Events and chronology of the child's and family's life prior to fleeing country of origin
- The country, district, immediate environment
- Climate, terrain
- Politics, religion, culture, customs, practices, laws



## – the environment (continued)

- Education and health provisions
- Housing, local resources
- Events taking place in the country and immediate environment
- War, conflict, violence, restrictions
- Internal factors affecting the country
- External factors affecting the country

# Relevance of knowing about child's life and context

*Both the child's immediate environment, where they grew up, their family, their community and the wider context of the country that they have lived in, would have an impact and influence on the child's development. (Kane 2006)*

# The journey

- Can be a harrowing experience (Richman 1998)
- Can be dangerous
- Is sometimes done using illegal means
- Health needs – physical, emotional, psychological – as result of experiences during journey/flight from country of origin
- Often children do not know where they are going to end up when they are forced to flee their country

# What will happen next?

- Life in the UK...
- Possible return to country of origin...
- Reunification with family...

# What next...in more detail

- Integration and settling into life in the UK
- Immigration – affects entitlements and services
- Uncertainty over their future in the UK
- Reunification with family – reminder of Children Act 1989 – duty to promote the upbringing of children in need by their families as far as is consistent with the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Preparing for possible return to country of origin

# Potential sources of info

- The child
- Friends and relatives in UK or abroad
- Solicitor
- Home Office, Immigration & Nationality Directorate
- DfES
- Interpreters...

## Potential sources (continued)

- Community groups
- Refugee organisations
- Refugee forums
- Information and research from, e.g. the internet, publications, journals, videos
- Consulting with, e.g., workers of same ethnicity, culture, religion or country of origin

# **In summary**

In order to make a holistic assessment of need, you have to understand both the context in which the child has grown up and their current circumstances...



## In summary (continued)

...this means looking at the child's needs resulting from:

- experiences & life in country of origin
- journey or 'flight' to the UK
- experiences & circumstances in the UK
- uncertainty and consequences of immigration controls
- possibility of return to country of origin
- possible reunification with family