

**BME-Migrant Advisory Group (B-MAG);  
Safeguarding Children and Young People**

**Annual Report 2018**



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## **Introduction: B-MAG in 2018**

When launching the BME-Migrant Advisory Group (B-MAG) in January 2017 we identified the effects of negative narratives about migration as a key factor that needed to be challenged. This is a difficult task in a year when the 'hostile environment', the Windrush scandal, and the Channel migrant crossings, alongside the divisiveness of the Brexit debates. Both in the UK and internationally, the climate suggests a persistent - indeed growing - crisis about how to overcome fear and hatred in relating to others, and across differences; recognising therefore our common humanity.

Children, Young People and Families are particularly vulnerable to these negative narratives; B-MAG has the important role of identifying and finding responses to their needs through promoting best practice; practice is frequently caught up in tangled contradictory policies. During 2018 we have been heartened by our engagement with individuals, groups and organisations who are providing high quality, innovative and committed support for BME and migrant children and young people. Our understanding and knowledge has been increased by research and new projects. We have been able to bring this work to the attention of practitioners through our seminar series, and our networks. Highlights include a symposium on FGM held at UEL in April, and a public seminar on young people in migration in October. These are described in more detail later in this report. A key theme that emerges from our work is the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge in this area; strong advocacy of individual rights, and the capacity to contest outcomes for individuals in legal contexts exist alongside understanding the psychological and therapeutic needs of individuals and applying these skilfully in different settings to make sense of experiences and provide effective help

As a result of our work this year we have been able to consolidate and expand our Advisory Group, drawing on and benefiting from the knowledge and commitment of individuals working in this area. We welcome our new members and are grateful to the continuing contributions of all. Our dedicated website is now live; this is a landmark, indicating our growth as a group; it will enable us to reach more people more effectively and thus enhance our communication with individuals and groups. To offset negative narratives, B-MAG aims to bring people together, to create links across organisations, opportunities for joint working and making strategic alliances, and thus to influence practice and policy. We are looking forward to building on our progress through the last year, and to achieve our strategic objectives for 2019. This second annual report describes work undertaken by the group during 2018 and the group's strategic planning for the year ahead.

## **What is B-MAG? Why is it important?**

B-MAG is a multidisciplinary working group which aims to promote good practice for BME and migrant children, young people and families. B-MAG recognises and aims to ensure that the rights to care and protection of children and young people are met, to the accepted standards of best practice. These children and young people may have experiences of asylum seeking, having irregular legal status, being victims of child trafficking, sexual exploitation, modern slavery and torture. They can also be subject to harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), and attributions of witchcraft and spirit possession. Some are vulnerable through having disabilities and many have difficulties in being understood by organisations because of language barriers and gaps in knowledge when working across cultures.

B-MAG also recognises that the needs for care and protection are crucial, not only in the immediate and short-term, but also through long-term support and investment. Longer term needs are to ensure that children, young people and families are helped to alleviate the effects of experiencing adverse circumstances, materially, emotionally and socially, so that they do not have to endure the effects of external and internal poverty, and cultural and political misunderstanding and discrimination.

Therefore B-MAG has identified a role that is vital, and not currently undertaken by other existing groups of focusing on the safeguarding needs of these children, young people and families, with regard to migration experiences, issues of faith and culture, and politically, especially in relation to the security question of radicalisation.

### **Strategic objectives for 2019**

1. To make an effective contribution to changing negative narratives and thus increase recognition of the needs of these children, young people and families in policy and practice
2. To increase practitioners' awareness of these issues and thus to contribute to improving practice
3. To meet the objectives as described in each of the work streams below
4. To continue to present key issues in B-MAG public seminar series
5. To expand communication of B-MAG activities through the website and social media

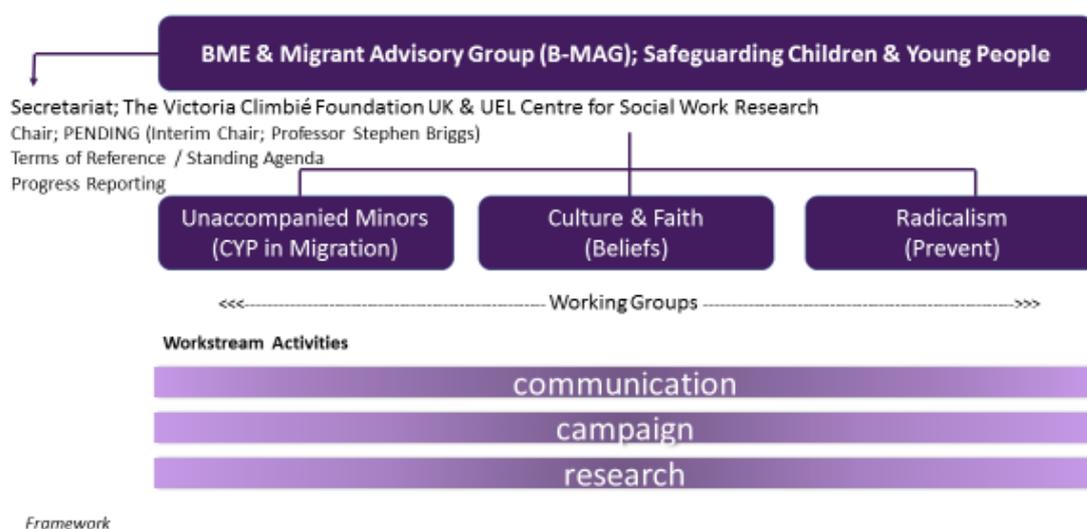
## B-MAG Structure, Membership and Working Groups

The Advisory Group identified three key Work Streams. These use similar working methods, based on three activities - research, communication and campaign. Each Work Stream is convened by a member of the Advisory Group, and members of the group express allegiances to one or more, based on expertise and current practice. It is recognised that there are important overlaps and cross-references between the themes, which are coordinated in the Advisory Group.

### Work Streams

- (1) Children, families and young people in migration**, including unaccompanied minors;
- (2) Culture & Faith:** the impact of beliefs and faith practices on children and young people;
- (3) Radicalisation;** the impacts of the implementation of the Prevent programme

These themes were identified to provide focus and organise activities, using the working methods described below.



### Working Methods

Within each Work Theme, B-MAG aims to use three working methods: communication, campaign and research.

**Communications:** The B-MAG website [www.bmagsafeguardingcyp.com](http://www.bmagsafeguardingcyp.com) includes news, events, a blog page and contacts. Communication tools (twitter, email distribution lists) have been set up to engage with practitioners, statutory and voluntary sector organisations, academics and policy makers.

**Research:** B-MAG identifies research needs, undertakes research through its members, communicates and disseminates findings from research by its members and colleagues working in the field. A regular series of public seminars has been established and coordinated by CSWR to reach practitioners and policy makers, and to generate debate and discussion. Seminars are now communicated on the B-MAG website and through twitter feeds. These early evening seminars are publicised through EventBrite.

**Campaigns:** Campaigns seek to ensure that the rights, care and protection of BME and migrant children are adhered to, improved and upheld alongside the dominant community. Focused campaigns will be informed by contributions to and feedback from the public seminars.

## **Membership**

### **B-MAG Executive/Secretariat**

The Victoria Climbié Foundation UK  
University of East London Centre for Social Work Research

### **Member Organisations**

African Families Service | Barnardo's (The FGM Centre) | Children & Families Across Borders (CFAB) | Diocese of Canterbury (Refugee Officer) | FORWARD | Pasolo Project, The | Tavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust | Together with Migrant Children (TwMC) | UEL Centre for Social Work Research (CSWR) | Victoria Climbié Foundation UK, The (VCF)

### **Current Members**

Amma Anane-Agyei | Leethen Bartholomew | Professor Stephen Briggs | Dr Beverley Costa | Dr Mor Dioum | Dr Ana Draper | Dr Emiliós LEMONIATIS | Fatuma Farah | Dr Jo Finch | Laura Hamblin-Opaluwa | Carolyn Houseman | Sheila Leighton | Toks Okeniyi | Domenica Pecoraro | Meg Fassam Wright | Nick Watts | Dr Andrew Whittaker | Dr Stephanie Yorath

## Reports from the Workstreams

### Workstream 1: Children and Young People in Migration

**Convener: Professor Stephen Briggs**  
**CSWR Director**

For 2018 we had three key objectives; increasing membership of the advisory group to enhance the team in this workstream; bringing key stakeholders together to focus on ways of working together to safeguard children and young people and presenting the issues in a CSWR B-MAG public seminar. Pursuing these has led to an important strengthening of the advisory group members as we have welcomed new members who bring expertise in working with young people from a range of perspectives and disciplinary backgrounds. Thus we have developed over the year a strong, core membership for this work stream, embracing different approaches: including rights-based, therapeutic and arts-based methods.

- The expertise of CFAB for cross-border child safeguarding, with an emphasis on reuniting families; projects evaluating cross border assessments
- Nick Watts' Together with Migrant Children: provides casework, independent assessments and family support; working with the legal system to advocate individual rights; successful challenges to LA and HO decisions e.g. deportations
- Ana Draper's work with UASC Health in Kent, Coram and the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust on early intervention using a participatory action research methodology provides an innovative approach to working with individual trauma and its manifestations as disordered sleep patterns; semi-starvation and re-feeding symptoms.
- Domenica Pescara, in the Diocese of Canterbury, is undertaking work on building narratives of belonging for refugees; the 'Home' project

A strong focus in our networking has been on the South-East, especially Kent where many innovative projects, including the last two above, demonstrate innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to generate hope in the conflictual and often contradictory contexts of working with migrants. These were represented in the public seminar we held on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018, with contributions from Nick Watts (Together with Migrant Children), Ana Draper, and Oliver Briggs, whose Arts Education Exchange, Margate is generating achievement and enhancing identity for young people. The seminar thus attended to both the immediate needs of young people in migration, and the longer-term issues of constructing identity in the process of rebuilding 'home'.

We have connected with other groups within UEL who are focussing on aspects of working with refugees; it is clear from these discussions that there are opportunities for collaboration, whilst B-MAG holds a distinctive position and remit through our focus on children, young people and families.

During Refugee Week, 18-22 June 2018, B-MAG had a stall at a conference at UEL. Organised by Professor Rachel Tribe, that launched British Psychological Society Guidelines for working with refugees. This provided good opportunities for networking and informal discussions alongside the formal conference presentations.

Towards the end of 2018 we began work with the University of Kassel, Germany on an Erasmus project, working with social work students in Kassel and preparing for their visit to UEL in April. Sharing perspectives, knowledge and understanding is vital; the meeting in Kassel in December demonstrated the importance of reflective anti-discriminatory practice as an underpinning for working with contexts of conflict and difference.

### **Strategic objectives for 2019**

- Continuing to build networks
- Increasing communication including through the website of key issues and developments, including addressing negative narratives
- Building collaborations within UK and internationally
- Offering events and training for practitioners, including a further seminar
- Aiming to publish e.g. in Trade press
- Exploring research opportunities including funding applications

## Workstream 2: Culture & Faith (Beliefs)

**Convenor: Dr Mor Dioum**  
**VCF Director**

The focus of the **B-MAG Culture, Faith or Beliefs** work stream is the safeguarding of children and young people, including, though not limited to those impacted by mental health, language, domestic abuse, disabilities, exploitation, and trafficking, in addition to safeguarding priorities affecting BME and migrant communities such as FGM, witchcraft & spirit possession, and radicalism.

In 2018, we continued to explore the subject of Female Genital Mutilation, through research and presentations, including a public seminar we held on 24 April, to highlight additional challenges facing children from the relevant communities, open to a wider set of safeguarding concerns. Alongside presentations and related research from Toks Okeniyi (FORWARD) and Fatuma Farah (PhD student, UEL), a survey by year 12 pupil, Millie Patel, to explore the views of 100 young people sought to answer the question of whether to educate or prosecute a harmful practice that has yielded no successful prosecutions to-date despite legislation introduced in 1989, updated in 2003 and again in 2015.

There has been a strong body of work around issues of witchcraft and spirit possession since the inception of the Culture & Faith group within B-MAG, including national research; *Oakley, Kinmond, Dioum and Humphreys (2016) An Exploration of Knowledge about Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief*. This is augmented by latest research article published in British Journal of Social Work by Professor Stephen Briggs and Dr Andrew Whittaker, entitled 'Protecting children from faith-based abuse through accusations of witchcraft and spirit possession: understanding contexts and informing practice. Laura Hamblin-Opaluwa, PhD student at UEL, continues her research to investigate the abuse of children and young people arising from the practice of faith-based beliefs relating to witchcraft or spirit possession in the UK.

According to the latest Children in Need Census across England for 2017-2018, FGM was mentioned in 940 assessments, a 3% reduction from 970 in 2016-2017. Child abuse linked to faith or belief (CALFB) – defined by the government as witchcraft or spirit possession – has been mentioned in 1,630 assessments, an 11% increase from 1,460 in 2016-2017. The increase in CALFB mentions would suggest that practitioners have an improved understanding of, and able to identify faith-based abuse within child safeguarding. This workstream aims to explore how abuse linked to faith or belief is being addressed in practice, within the child in need process. See additional statistical information from the Children in Need 2017-18 report here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need-2017-to-2018>

Assessments linked to radicalism are not specifically recorded in the Children in Need Census, which would require an agreed definition, albeit may be included in the category for abuse linked to faith or beliefs. Such cases have been heavily influenced by political agendas, and increased media attention, with the impact of anti-radicalisation measures predominantly affecting mothers and children, where their involvement with children's services has continued well beyond normal safeguarding practice and procedures.

A number of such cases are now being considered through the prism of advocacy and children's rights, in addition to the anxieties and ongoing trauma for affected parent and child.

In 2019, we are keen to develop an in-depth view into some of the lesser recognised risks facing children and young people within child safeguarding policies and practices, and particularly for BME or migrant children, who may be disproportionately impacted by language.

### **Strategic Objectives**

- Review and evaluate VCF cases, which include Prevent processes, and assess the implications for practice with BME families
- Promote current knowledge and understanding of FGM and Witchcraft and spirit possession together and separately, in order to improve awareness in practice
- Communicate the impact of current legislation and policy on FGM to improve understanding of the issues in practice
- Explore the recent census of cases of witchcraft and spirit possession data to explore implications for practice, including the prevalence across ethnicities

## Workstream 3: Radicalisation (Prevent)

Convenor: Jo Finch  
University of East London (UEL)

### Key outcomes in 2018 include:

- 1) Leverhulme/BA Small grants award (6K) to explore parents experiences of social service involvement following a PREVENT referral.
- 2) Two visits to Mid Sweden University by Jo Finch (Jan 2018 and Sept 2018) to undertake teaching sessions with MA Social Work students on the issues of radicalisation and social work
- 3) Book chapter (Finch, J. and McKendrick, D. (2019) Securitising Social Work: Counter Terrorism, Extremism and Radicalisation in Webb, S. (ed) Routledge Handbook of Critical Social Work, Routledge, London)
- 4) Previous published article, McKendrick, D. and Finch, J. (2016) "Under Heavy Manners: Social Work, Radicalisation, Troubled Families and Non-linear War, *British Journal of Social Work*. 47 (2): 308-324) now has growing citations from across disciplines (currently 22).  
<https://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?oi=bibs&hl=en&cites=15254142918898828608>
- 5) *Article* in review (McKendrick, D. and Finch, J. PREVENT, Safeguarding and the Common-Sensing of Social Work in the UK, Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work Journal
- 6) Article in review: Finch, J., Jönsson, J. Kamali, M. and McKendrick, D. Social Work and Countering Violent Extremism in Sweden and the UK, *European Journal of Social Work*
- 7) Nordforsk round 1 grant application submitted in November 2018, UEL part of a consortium with academics from UEL ,Scotland, Sweden and Norway, (1 million euros bid)

### Plans for the coming year

- 1) Undertake the Leverhulme funded research project and disseminate findings to increase knowledge and understanding of the experiences of families subject to Prevent processes
- 2) Continuing to apply for research funding
- 3) Jo Finch attendance at a day two consultation event held at St Georges House, Windsor Castle. This is an invite only conference with around 30 attendees from a range of disciplines and backgrounds

### Summary

As it can be seen the focus on the work stream has been on research, networking and research dissemination, rather than on campaigning and wider communication. There is a clear need to expand the activities of this work stream and include practitioners directly or indirectly involved with working with those at risk from radicalisation.

## **B-MAG Seminar Series: seminars in 2018**

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the life of a child – a symposium**

**24 April 2018**

Discussions on how to end the practice of Female Genital Mutilation have been happening in Britain for the last 30 years. The UK government passed its first law on FGM in 1985 and since then there has not been one single prosecution.

The three speakers and the title of their talks;

Toks Okeniyi, Head of Programmes and Operations at FORWARD

**Is the FGM legislation in the best interest of the child?**

Millie Patel, Year 12 Student, Higher Project Qualification (HPQ)

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – To prosecute or education as a way forward?**

Fatuma Farah, PhD student at UEL Centre for Social Work Research

**A different lens to look at Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

### **Working with children, young people and families in migration**

**2 October 2018**

The challenges and conflicts facing migrant and refugee children and young people are immense. Whilst the urgency of the issue in current contexts is often stated, practitioners working in this area are often involved in highly conflictual and contradictory situations. However, a significant number of practitioners, and organisations are involved in delivering services to meet the needs of migrant children and young people, both at the point of migration and in the longer term. These focus on practical, educational and safeguarding and promoting health and wellbeing.

The speakers and the title of their talks;

Dr Ana Draper, Clinical Lead & Consultant Psychotherapist at Coram and The Tavistock

**The need for an early intervention framework that supports the emotional health and wellbeing of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the UK**

Nick Watts, Co-Founder and Director, Together with Migrant Children

**Papers please? Supporting migrant children and their families to challenge oppressive legislation, policy and practice using a rights-based radical approach**

Oliver Briggs, Director of Arts Education Exchange

**Exploring identity through art education**

### **Seminars planned for 2019**

Seminars being planned for 2019, will include Culture & Faith; discussions around faith or belief figures for children in need, the impact of language on BME and migrant children, young people and families and a further seminar on Children and Young People in migration. Seminar details will appear on the B-MAG website.

## Keeping in touch with B-MAG

B-MAG published its dedicated website for online news and updates in December 2018. News and announcements posted on our website are distributed through social media channels and email networks.

We welcome contributions from all our members and followers



B-MAG website: <https://bmagsafeguardingcyp.com/>



Follow B-MAG on Twitter: @safeguardingBME



Group chat (B-MAG members)

## Acknowledgements

Sir Keir Starmer, MP for Holborn and St Pancras and Shadow Brexit Minister  
**Parliamentary Roundtable, Jan 2017** Toks Okeniyi, Millie Patel and Fatuma Farah  
**FGM Symposium, April 2018** Dr Ana Draper, Nick Watts and Oliver Briggs  
**CYP in Migration seminar, October 2018** Carolyn Housman, Ben Archer and Domenica Pecoraro  
**B-MAG Meetings 2017/2018**