

MiCLU News release

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***Breaking the Chains* project challenges discrimination against Albanian children and young people in the asylum system**

Breaking the Chains, a partnership project run by the Migrant and Refugee Children's Legal Unit (MiCLU) at Islington Law Centre and Shpresa Programme, with the aim of fighting discrimination against young Albanians in the asylum system, has highlighted the difference that access to effective legal representation can make to the outcomes for young asylum seekers facing discrimination in the asylum system, a new interim evaluation report considering the project's successes and remaining challenges finds.

Seeking to address the injustices that Albanian children and young people encounter in the asylum system by providing high-quality legal representation and engendering widespread sectoral change, *Breaking the Chains* strives to amplify the voices of the children and young people involved to ensure that their experiences inform practices and decision-making.

The rate of positive outcomes for young Albanians in the asylum system improved in the first year of the project, but important challenges remain.

In the interim evaluation report several recommendations are made, highlighting in particular the need for more lawyers to take on the cases of Albanian children and young people and to further develop public awareness of the issues facing young Albanian asylum seekers in the United Kingdom.

The project is funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Esme Madill, Solicitor, *Breaking the Chains* Project:

"All young asylum seekers and especially Albanians struggle to obtain quality legal representation. This leaves young people from Albania vulnerable to exploitation and modern slavery. Breaking the Chains has demonstrated how effective legal representation can be provided to Albanian young asylum seekers but far more is needed – demand exceeds supply. Further, the young people need to be listened to and respected if we are to achieve change. They need holistic wrap around support – legal representation cannot be delivered in a vacuum."

Immigration Champion, *Breaking the Chains* Project (as cited in report):

"I go to college and people say 'Where you from?' I say 'Albania,' and they say 'All you guys are drug dealers, killers,' and the Home Office comes in and says, they say to us, 'You are drug dealers and killers' and then 'Oh Albania is very nice, safe.'"

Caseworker, *Breaking the Chains* Project (as cited in report):

"I think every day there should be stuff in the press around what happens to children in tribunals and what children are expected to do in tribunals because when that girl said 'Your papers really make my eyes hurt' I thought if I was doing this to a British citizen child they would say I was being abusive. Basically I was saying to her: 'You've got to work with me otherwise or you'll get sent back,' which is just a ridiculous situation. You have to be constantly telling children that they might get sent back to their deaths."

Partner Organisation (as cited in report):

"It seems to me that the way these young people are treated is a really grotesque injustice. I think it would be good if there was more public awareness and insight into the way in which the system affects them. It seems either unintentionally or deliberately an extremely cruel way to treat children and young adults. It causes really awful damage. They should think about how to make knowledge of that more widespread."

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. The Migrant and Refugee Children's Legal Unit (MiCLU) is a specialist legal and policy hub based at Islington Law Centre in London. Established in 2012, MiCLU works on the development of specialist legal services aimed at upholding and improving the rights of young people.
2. [Breaking the Chains](#) is a unique and ground-breaking project designed to meet the specific needs of Albanian asylum-seeking children and young people by providing a holistic legal representation and advice service that is child-centred and child-friendly. It aims to improve the outcomes, both legally and socially, for asylum-seeking children and young people, especially those who are most vulnerable or from marginalised communities.