

Article 26

Evaluation

Report

July 2012

Article 26 Evaluation Report

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1. Introduction

Article 26 is a project of the Helena Kennedy Foundation focusing specifically on enabling people seeking sanctuary in the UK to access higher education. The term 'sanctuary' is used to avoid the negative connotations that have become associated with the term 'asylum-seeker.'

The Helena Kennedy Foundation was established in 1998 and has a long track record of providing support to people who have to overcome significant social and economic barriers to access and succeed in higher education. They have developed procedures working within higher education and further education settings to recruit and select students to receive bursaries. They also provide support to ensure that students have the best chance of completing their studies successfully and developing the skills, experience and networks to enhance their chances of success after graduation.

The Foundation became aware of the specific challenges facing students seeking sanctuary and of Save the Children's Brighter Futures Project which was already working on this issue. Brighter Futures had highlighted access to higher education as a major campaign issue and had been successful in engaging several Universities in providing places for the target group. This relationship formed the basis for the development of the Article 26 project designed to support young people seeking sanctuary in obtaining University placements. The adoption of Article 26 as a Helena Kennedy Foundation project in June 2010 resulted in the development of a model of support based on established processes, experience and knowledge and tailored to meet the specific needs of students seeking sanctuary.

The Helena Kennedy Foundation obtained funding from the Diana Memorial Fund to develop the project and run a pilot programme. The funding period was originally from February 2011 up to August 2012 but additional finance has been granted to extend the project to the end of December 2012.

2. Scope and Purpose of the Report

This report has been commissioned by the Article 26 project in order to provide an external assessment of progress and achievement during the period of development funded by the Diana Memorial Fund (February 2011 to August 2012). The evaluation will be used to inform the final reporting process to the Diana Memorial Fund and to provide feedback on the performance of Article 26 to other interested parties.

In addition the evaluation process and in particular the views of participating Universities and partner agencies will be used to inform the development of the future strategy of the project and identify key priorities.

3. Sources of information

In carrying out the evaluation several sources of information were accessed including the existing monitoring information collected by the project. The Helena Kennedy Foundation is committed to the effective monitoring and evaluation of its projects and programmes and a comprehensive and robust monitoring framework was put in place for Article 26 at the beginning of its operation. This included:

- Records of all advice and support given to individuals seeking guidance on accessing higher education opportunities
- Details and records of all students obtaining a supported placement including case history information
- Records of all negotiations with Universities on the development of sponsored placements and fee waiving arrangements
- Feedback mechanisms for all students accessing support

In addition an email / telephone survey was carried out with representatives of participating Universities and partner agencies. Interviews were conducted with the Project Director and reviews of project procedures and project reports to funders were undertaken.

The views of participating students were gathered during a two day residential held on June 2012.

4. Project Description

Article 26's aim is to promote and uphold the right for young refugees and people seeking sanctuary in the UK to access higher education. The target group of beneficiaries included people who had sought asylum in the UK and were awaiting a decision or the result of an appeal and the partners or dependants of individuals seeking asylum. In addition the project would also aim to support individuals who had been granted temporary status and the right to remain in the UK but who did not qualify for home tuition fees nor could they access student finance. The main focus of the project was to address some of the existing barriers to access in terms of fees and associated costs and to instigate changes in practice and policy within individual Universities which would open up access for the target group. The project also had the longer term aim of working towards a change in government policy regarding funding for students seeking sanctuary.

In addressing these aims the project undertook three strands of work:

- The provision of advice and guidance to individuals within the target group wishing to access higher education.
- Work with individual Universities to negotiate full tuition fee bursaries followed by the provision of support in the recruitment and selection of students to receive bursaries and the ongoing support of the students during their period of study.

- Wider advocacy work to promote access to higher education generally for the target group.

The project is staffed by a part-time Project Director and is supported by members of the Helena Kennedy Foundation staff team. In addition the project has commissioned some part-time administrative support, some external consultancy capacity for policy work and the provision of monitoring and evaluation support. The Project Director is line managed by the Helena Kennedy Chair of Trustees

5. Summary of Project Activity

The project receives requests from individuals seeking support in relation to higher education primarily through email and telephone. Typically individuals will contact the project seeking information about the UCAS application process, their possible entitlement to student finance in relation to their asylum status as well as more general information about further and higher education opportunities. Enquiries are received and responded to by the Project Director.

The availability of this range of advice and support is promoted through the Helena Kennedy Foundation website, facebook page and twitter account as well as through community based networks. The service is not actively promoted through other forums due to the limited capacity of the project.

Prior to the receipt of the Diana Memorial Fund grant Article 26 ran a small pilot project with three Universities from the Cathedral Group. The Project Director built upon these initial access and support schemes to establish the current programme. Utilising the goodwill and contacts created by the pilot she has negotiated a range of tuition fee bursaries with Universities primarily from the Cathedral Group but also other institutions. The Project works with the Universities to promote the opportunities and to recruit and select candidates and the Universities contribute a small fee towards the overall cost of the programme. There is a clear procedure governing this process developed in keeping with the Helen Kennedy Foundation's practice established through similar bursary programmes.

Partner Universities advise on potential contacts within colleges, schools and community groups within their region and the Article 26 Project Director liaises with these organisations to ensure that the programme is adequately promoted. The programme is also promoted through facebook, the Helena Kennedy Foundation's website and those of partner organisations including, Local Authorities responsible for the care of unaccompanied minors, STAR and the Refugee Support Network.

In making an application students must be supported by an organisation, such as a school, college or community group. Potential applicants (or their representatives within their supporting organisation) contact the Article 26 Project Director to discuss their application and to ensure the student's eligibility for the programme.

The eligibility criteria are:

- The student has applied through UCAS to the University in question.
- The student is an asylum-seeker, or the partner / dependent of an asylum-seeker; or

- A person or the partner / dependent of someone of someone who sought asylum in the UK and has been granted temporary status, e.g. DLR (discretionary leave to remain) awarded on the basis of a claim for asylum.
- The student is able to provide verification of their status within the UK (provide relevant documentation) and is prepared to undertake further assessment of their suitability to undertake a degree programme.

Students making an application must complete an application form, including a personal statement, and obtain a suitable reference form from their supporting agency.

Applications are assessed to ensure that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria; that they have secure and sustainable living arrangements whilst at University and live within reasonable travelling of the University. Shortlisted candidates are invited to interview and the interview panel usually consists of a representative of the University and the Project Director. In making judgements about the applications the panel consider:

- The fit of the applicant to the Article 26 project's aims and objectives
- The student's chance of success in higher education given the support that is available
- The student's commitment to their course and to studying at the University they have chosen
- The likelihood of the student being able to support themselves whilst at University
- Following the selection interview the list of successful applicants is agreed by the Helena Kennedy Foundation trustees.

At each stage of the process unsuccessful candidates are offered advice and support and possible referral to other support agencies.

The work of Brighter Futures and the experience gained during the implementation of the pilot programme indicated that students would also benefit from additional financial support and be more likely to complete their studies should this be available. The Project obtained additional funding principally from the Schwab Westheimer Trust to enable it to provide additional financial support. Typically this consists of up to £600 per year travel costs and £100 per year for books and essential equipment costs. To avoid this additional support impacting negatively on other sources of support, payments may take the form of vouchers or be paid directly to suppliers.

Consistent with the approach of the Helena Kennedy Foundation is the notion that Article 26 would continue to provide continued support and group support opportunities to programme participants for the length of their studies. Students are in regular contact with the Project Director and the project organises at least one group support residential per year.

The project has undertaken a range of activities in relation to the wider advocacy objective of opening access more generally to higher education for students seeking sanctuary. Article 26 was a founder member of the Access to Higher Education Working Group (AHEWG), a coalition of agencies set up to achieve policy change in this area and has continued its membership during the development of the operational aspects of the project. The project has also been active in promoting awareness of the issue within Universities and has taken the opportunity to work with specific Universities to promote the issue to a wider external audience.

6. Outcomes and Outputs

The project has provided advice and guidance through email and telephone contact to a total of 188 individuals from February 2011 to August 2012.

Of these enquiries 56.4% were from women and 43.6% were received from men. The majority of people who contacted Article 26 were 'asylum seekers'. 55% of contacts were actively claiming or appealing a decision on a claim for asylum. The second largest category consists of people awarded discretionary leave to remain (DLR) (27%) including people awarded DLR for reasons other than a claim for asylum. 7% of contacts had been granted indefinite leave to remain (ILR) with or without refugee status and the remaining 11% were trafficked, or did not want to or were unable to inform the project of their status.

Immigration status of Article 26 Contacts Feb 2011 – August 2012		
Status	Number	%
Asylum Seeker (Active claim or appeal)	104	55%
Discretionary Leave to Remain	50	27%
Indefinite Leave to Remain	13	7%
Other / Not recorded	21	11%
Totals	188	100%

Article 26 dealt with enquiries from a total of 31 different countries from across Asia, Africa and South America. There have been a high level of enquiries from Zimbabwean nationals which might reflect the large size of the 'status less' Zimbabwean population in the UK. Many have English as their first language and may have obtained qualifications recognised in the UK making it easier to access and do well in the education system. The high number of enquiries from this group also reflects the successful dissemination and promotion of Article 26 within Zimbabwean UK networks.

Country of Origin of Article 26 Contacts Feb 2011 August 2012 (Where number of contacts exceeds 5)		
Country of origin	Number	%
Zimbabwe	77	41%
Nigeria	11	6%
Afghanistan	9	5%
Pakistan	8	4%
Democratic Republic of Congo	5	3%
Uganda	5	3%

The enquiries cover a wide range of issues with the more common themes being:

- Access to undergraduate degree programmes at Article 26 Universities
- General access to undergraduate and foundation degree programmes
- Access to post graduate degree programmes
- Funding requests / information
- Access to further education
- Technical questions about qualifications / student finance

In addition to the detailed information, advice and guidance provided to the recorded contacts the project regularly responds to initial expressions of interest and general enquiries. These requests receive either an email outlining the eligibility criteria for Article 26 or are directed to other sources of funding if they don't meet the program specification. They are not recorded for monitoring purposes, and are not included in the figures above.

Since February 2011 Article 26 has worked in partnership with 14 Universities across England to generate supported placements for 17 students. Another 10 students are scheduled to start courses in September 2012 making 27 in all. Article 26 has negotiated fee bursaries and a formal relationship with 10 Universities providing 3 placements in 2010; 11 in 2011 and a further 10 in 2012. Students receive the full Article 26 support package and are recognised formally within the agreement Article 26 has with their Universities. Four students are supported in Universities where there is no formal agreement but receive one-to one support from the Project Director, access to the group support sessions and some limited financial support.

Universities and Student Placements 2010-2012				
Universities providing fee bursaries and Article 26 support				
	Start 2010	Start 2011	Start 2012	Total students
Newman University College			1	1
Canterbury Christ Church University		1	1	2
Chester University	1	1	1	3
Salford University			3	3
Liverpool Hope University	1			1
Manchester University			1	1
Leeds Trinity University College		1		1
St Mary's University College		7	1	8
Winchester University	1	1	1	3
University of Cumbria			1	1
Universities with Article 26 Affiliated Students				
Southampton University	1			1
London Metropolitan University		1		1
London Southbank University		1		1
Royal Holloway University of London		1		1
Total number of Universities =14		Total number of students supported = 28		

The 28 students who have been directly supported by Article 26 are drawn from a wide range of countries including Pakistan, Iran, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Zambia, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Rwanda, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq and Afghanistan. The project has supported 13 men and 15 women spanning an age range from 19 to 53. About a third of Article 26 students have spent time in the care of a local authority as a result of seeking asylum in the UK as an unaccompanied minor.

Many of the students have experienced periods of poor emotional health due to the uncertainty around their future in the UK. The project has provided individual support covering a range of issues such as:

- Supporting applications to NASS for housing transfers
- Liaising with and at times challenging Local authorities on support arrangements
- Negotiating UKBA reporting times to fit around University timetables
- Immigration issues
- Personal / relationship issues

One of the initial project objectives was to provide evidence for the Access to Higher Education Working Group (AHEWG) to use in campaigning for change around HEFCE subsidies for people seeking sanctuary. Due to the rapidly changing external climate in the higher education sector this objective became more problematic.

In the view of the project the increase in home tuition fees to approximately £9,000 per year from September 2012 meant that Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funding was no longer a priority in obtaining places at University for students seeking asylum. In addition in February 2011 the Government enacted changes in entitlement for people granted DLR (Discretionary Leave to Remain), which meant they would no longer be treated as home students or entitled to access student finance. Individuals granted ILR (Indefinite Leave to Remain) through the Case Resolution Directorate also face difficulties in demonstrating their eligibility for student finance.

As a consequence of these changes it was decided to focus project activity largely on the development of fee bursaries and the establishment of supported placements at Universities and then to work with these institutions to develop a wider awareness of the issues. The long term goal is for students seeking sanctuary to be classified as a 'bona fide' group that can be supported through the provision of Access Agreements.

Building upon the support of the Universities taking part in the programme and in partnership with other refugee support agencies, the project has undertaken a range of advocacy activity in order to gain support for such a campaign.

Examples of such activity include:

- In January 2012 the Refugee Support Network produced a report ('I Just Want to Study') which effectively evidenced and highlighted the needs of students seeking asylum who want to access higher education. The project Director provided a key-note speech at the launch event and also co facilitated a seminar for the Churches Refugee Network.
- In July 2012 the Project Director delivered a joint workshop at the AMOSSHE conference (student services body) with the Director of Student Services and an Article 26 student from St Marys University College.

In order to underpin decision making regarding future advocacy targets the project obtained additional funding from the Scurrah Wainwright Charitable Trust to undertake research into four possible areas of development identified through the project's current work.

- Scoping a possible campaign regarding changing the classification of individuals with Discretionary Leave to Remain as overseas students not entitled to access student finance
- The possibility of Article 26 being able to support a quota of students on NHS funded degree programmes
- The possibility of expanding the current programme to include migrants and undocumented migrants
- The potential of improving access through campaigning to influence the policy of the Office of Fair Access to include students seeking sanctuary as a recognised category.

This research will be used to inform the future development priorities of the project.

7. Experience of Participating Students

The views of participating students were gathered at a student residential held on the 6th and 7th of June at St Mary’s University College in London. Thirteen of the supported students attended.

The first exercise was designed primarily as an ice-breaker and the students were asked to think of Article 26 and identify it with a kind of animal. The results were interesting in drawing from the participants their thoughts and general view of the project.

Article 26-Residential Evaluation	
If Article 26 was an animal, what would it be and why?	
Animal	Why?
Eagle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has great vision • Represents freedom and possibilities
Chicken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It’s a provider- of eggs, of meat • It reproduces and keeps providing • It’s a mother hen and looks after its young
Dove	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signifies freedom, peace and hope • Brings messages, advice and information
Horse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps with an uphill struggle by carrying the load and giving students a lift
Horse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly • You tell a horse where you want to go and it transports you where you want to go • It helps you achieve your destiny
Lioness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It’s a go-getter • Takes care of its cubs (students) • Its protective • Its determined for its cubs (students) to succeed • It respects that it’s your journey and your degree and helps you to do the work you need to do to complete it

After the ice-breaker session the students were worked in pairs and individually to undertake participatory appraisal exercises to assess aspects of the programme.

The students were asked to comment on the various aspects of support provided by Article 26 and to score them of a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 high. They were also asked to provide any additional comments or observations.

The Tuition Fee Bursary- Student Scores (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (4) (4)

The high scores reflect the importance of the fee waiver to the students and highlight the projects role in negotiating such arrangements with the Universities. Without this financial element the students would be unable to attend University. The importance of this support is underlined by the students’ comments.

'I am privileged to have my tuition fee waived. This motivates me to keep working harder in my studies to make you proud and to show the world the work you are doing in disadvantaged people's lives.'

'This is the best help and support I have ever received. Many thanks to A26 for supporting us. Without this project I could not be where I am.'

Financial Support for Books and Travel- Student Scores (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (4) (4) (4) (3)

Whilst a relatively modest amount of money (£700 maximum) the financial support for books and travel is highly valued by the students and can make a considerable impact on their ability to complete their programme of learning. The support can ease particular financial stresses and tide the students over some difficult times.

'The financial support from HKF ensures I have enough funds to buy my needed resources'

'It takes away a lot of the stress and worries, allowing us to continue our education'

'The bursary for books and travel was very useful and helped me a lot as I was living far away from Uni'

Group support days- Student scores (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (4) (4) (4) (4)

The students valued the opportunity to meet together as a group and share experiences. They were able to gain support from each other and learn from other people's experience. There is a clear sense that they are part of a group and a project and feel supported in that situation.

'This was very useful for meeting other A26 students and sharing our feelings and useful advice.'

'Very informative and motivational. You get to know so many other students facing the same situations but you get brilliant ideas and information from each other's experiences'

'I thought it was incredibly valuable to meet other people in similar situations'

'It reminds me we have support and highlights other supports around us'

'I have really loved seeing the A26 group. I have made some good friends and I will miss them all.'

On-to-one support- Student scores (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (5) (4) (4) (3)

The scores reflect a high level of satisfaction and recognition of the one-to-one support they have been able to access from the Project Director and / or from the relevant University's student support system.

'Rebecca (Project Director) has been very helpful and supportive and always just a phone call away if I need any help.'

'You get a feeling of being heard and listened to kindly and get given solutions to many problems'

'It is very helpful- I love it!'

'I have the best support ever. Most of the time my issues have been sorted with A26 and I say a big thank you.'

'I have got all the answers and advice, which has been great'

Students were encouraged to think about their time at University and to consider their achievements and the challenges they have faced. The students seem to be genuinely excited and very positive about their success in gaining a University place and are keen to do well.

'Being at University is an amazing experience. Successfully finishing 2 years has to be the main achievement so far. In addition, taking part in activities/ societies/ student union is also something I am proud of.'

'Wonderful experience, feels like a dream coming true, learning new skills, information and most of all, knowledge. Got really good results- very pleased.'

'My experience of being at University was overwhelming and was motivating. I feel that I have gained confidence and new skills and personality. I now think and reason differently and talk professionally.'

'Being in University I have experienced lots of things I like. I have improved my learning and my understanding. I love to study and want to be educated, live a happy life and have a good future.'

Some of the challenges they identify would apply to many students such as making the adjustment to a University style of study but in addition they have had to overcome a range of other issues to do with;

- Ongoing concerns regarding money and finance for living and placement costs
- UK Border Agency reporting requirements conflicting with studies and attendance requirements at University
- Ongoing uncertainty and stress caused by unresolved claims for asylum

In dealing with these issues the students have been able to draw upon the support of the project and crucially staff at the Universities concerned have been sympathetic to the issues as a result of the wider understanding developed through the partnership with Article 26.

'The whole 1st year experience was overwhelming and my main achievement was being able to go through the 1st year, regardless of the challenges that I was facing (social-family commitments and accommodation).'

'The tutors have been very supportive with regards to the challenges of reporting on lecture days. I am so blessed to be starting my final year this September. I feel really proud of myself for reaching this stage.'

'I had to submit further submissions, which was a painful process because the UKBA staff were not sure of the procedure and I had to submit in person, in Liverpool. Unfortunately this was exam and assignment time.'

'There were some language barriers but I could manage to deal with it, by getting help from lecturers and Article 26.'

'As English is not my first language, my main challenges are that I have to work extra hard in achieving good grades.'

Students were asked to reflect upon the impact of the Article 26 programme and what, if any, difference it had made to them so far. All the responses were positive and clearly illustrate the benefits the programme has had for this cohort of students. Without this or a similar intervention many of the students would not have been able to embark upon their courses or would have dropped out at an early stage. Perhaps even more important is the impact that the opportunity has had upon them in terms of building confidence, self-respect and creating a feeling of worth and value.

'A26 has changed my life. I did not know I could go to University in my asylum status pending decision. I am proud to be a beneficiary of this project. The project has made me feel like a human, valued and appreciated in society. I am motivated and will work hard to achieve my dream of getting a degree in the UK. I pray that God will reward both the funders and the founders of A26 due to the work they do to change people's lives. Thank you and God Bless.'

'I have regained my confidence that I can actually be someone productive in society in the future. I had lost hope and always stressed but since I was able to meet A26 I have gained

confidence that I can obtain a degree and provide for my family. I have found home, that when I am in the group I don't feel like I am alone in the UK.'

'It's hard to explain to anyone how it is to be an asylum seeker- what most people consider to be a normal life is the ultimate achievement for me. For example, travelling, working, driving and of course, studying at Uni. I can never, ever thanks HKF enough for all the hard work and effort they put into realising my dreams and those of fellow A26 students. It is amazing to know that there are still people and organisations out there that care and help people like me. They have literally changed my life.'

8. Participant Student Case Studies

Student Case Study 1 – Tordil

Article 26 Associate Student

Tordil arrived in the UK as an asylum seeker from Afghanistan and is currently studying for a degree in Mathematics and Actuarial Sciences at the University of Southampton. He was awarded Indefinite Leave to Remain in September 2010, shortly after commencing his degree programme, despite this he was ineligible for student finance and classified as an overseas student.

Tordil received support from the Students Union who negotiated a £2,000 scholarship and a fee bursary for the first year of study and the University re-classified him as a home student. However they were unable to assist him further in years two and three and he faced the prospect of having to drop out of University after successfully completing his first year.

Article 26 was able to support Tordil with a series of appeals to Student Finance England and in negotiations with the University. Eventually a fee bursary was agreed with the University to cover the two remaining years and a he was able to obtain a Professional and Careers Development Loan to cover his living costs.

Tordil has continued to receive individual support from the Project Director and has attended group support sessions.

Despite being motivated and very capable he would certainly have been unable to continue his studies without the help of Article 26. As an Affiliated Student he has been able to access group support and advice from the Project Director. This has included putting him in touch with an Article 26 graduate who is acting as a career mentor.

With Article 26's support he has been able to make a significant contribution to University life. He has been Vice President of the Actuarial Society, the producer of a play by the University's theatre group for fresher's week 2012 and the international representative for the Pakistani society.

He has now received British Citizenship and is on track to graduate with a good degree. Whilst recognising that within the current economic climate securing a job will not be easy his ambition is to become an Investment Banker or an Actuary.

**Case Study 2 - Aarif
Article 26 Student**

Aarif is an ethnic Hazara from Central Afghanistan who arrived in the UK as an asylum-seeker in 2004. Shortly afterwards his father died and he has been living in the UK without the support of parents or family. His asylum claim is still unresolved; in 2010 he was detained by the UK Border Agency and released after two weeks whilst a further appeal for asylum was considered.

His lack of immigration status means that he is categorised as being liable for overseas student fees and is not entitled to access any form of student finance. The uncertainty regarding his future has had an impact upon his confidence and self-esteem and can affect his concentration and ability to study. Despite this he has been successful at school and has taken an active role in his community. He is passionate about sports and a member of the Dulwich Cricket Club for which he both plays and coaches.

Article 26 has opened the door to higher education for Aarif and he was successful in obtaining an Article 26 supported placement at St Mary's University College to undertake a degree in Sports Science. The placement includes a full fee bursary without which access to Higher Education would have been impossible. Article 26 has also been able to help with travel expense and equipment he needs for the course.

Aarif highlights the essential role played by the Project Director in providing ongoing support and advice and in brokering key relationships with student services and other University staff.

He also believes that the group support facilitated by the project has been helpful in being able to identify with other people in similar positions and drawing upon these relationships to overcome challenges and problems. The group has helped with self-confidence, self-esteem and provided a sense of identity.

Aarif is on track to complete his programme of study and to gain his degree in Sports Science. If successful he will be the first member of his family ever to gain a Higher Education qualification. His aim is to become a coach and teacher working with children from disadvantaged backgrounds to become talented athletes. His long term ambition is to return to Afghanistan, should it become safe for him to do so, and to establish sports programmes in rural areas to help stabilise the country and secure the future of its children.

9. Experience of Participating Universities

As part of the evaluation process all ten participating Universities were contacted to gather their views and experiences of working with Article 26. Detailed feedback was obtained from 8 Universities, one University working with Article 26 for the first time felt unable to comment and one University failed to respond.

Respondents were asked to comment on the impact Article 26 has had on their institution and the benefits of involvement. Feedback from the Universities was generally positive with staff recognising the equality of the inputs provided by Article 26 and having a positive view of the partnership arrangements. Respondents could identify positive impacts on their operational response to the issue of students seeking sanctuary through their participation in the programme.

Comments included:

'Article 26 has had a positive impact on the teaching staff at the University, promoting a higher level of awareness of issues in relation to asylum and contributing towards changing attitudes.'

'Our involvement with Article 26 meant that we could pick up on this issue really quickly and accelerated the process of putting a meaningful intervention in place.'

'Article 26 has worked with the University to bring us on board and encourage us to take students seeking sanctuary on a 'no fee' basis to secure their access to HE when this would otherwise not have been possible. Prior to our engagement with Article 26, this wasn't even on our radar and we didn't have an approach to this issue.'

'The presentation to our Management Group had a very positive impact and support for the project was given.'

'The project has raised our institutional understanding of the needs of students seeking sanctuary, and therefore enables us to offer more accurate and helpful advice.'

'The students who have come through the project to date are studying successfully and make valuable contributions to their degree programmes.'

'Increased awareness of issues around students seeking sanctuary has enabled us to network with organisations which campaign on their behalf, such as the Refugee Support Network.'

Respondents were asked to comment on the various aspects of support provided to the University and the individual students by Article 26 and to score them of a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 high. Respondents were also asked to provide any additional comments or observations.

Depending on their experience of working with the project not all the Universities felt able to respond to this part of the questionnaire.

The areas of support identified for comment were;

Promoting the availability of bursaries to students seeking sanctuary- Scores provided by respondents (5) (5) (4) (4) (3)

The scores given indicate a high level of satisfaction with this aspect of the relationship and this is supported by the additional comments.

'Article 26 has been making inroads into promoting the support and fee waiver to local FE colleges – but it is early days in this area.'

'It is difficult for us to do these ourselves – partly because we are not located in an area where there are significant numbers of asylum seekers and partly because of the current media furore over tuition fees.'

Managing the application and selection process- Scores provided by respondents (5) (5) (5) (4)

Respondents were keen to identify this area as a specific strength of the project. Generally they felt that the project offered excellent support to the Universities and that the process was appropriate and well handled. Universities valued the expertise of the Project Director and the ability of the project to carry out the process.

'Done quickly and meeting the needs of the students. The project Director is great at keeping in contact and communication is good.'

'All went excellently and very smoothly.'

'I was very happy to be involved in interviewing potential students.'

Whilst recognising the quality of the service one respondent felt that as the process was very labour intensive and tailored to the requirements of each University it might be difficult to sustain should the project expand significantly.

'With a small number of institutions the project is able to do things on a one to one basis; this would be difficult to scale up and possibly not sustainable.'

From a project perspective the Universities receive a very similar package of support and has been replicated across the current participating institutions. The approach is capable of being rolled out across more universities depending upon the overall capacity of the project.

Providing support to individual students and advice to the Student Support Service- Scores provided by respondents (5) (5) (4) (3)

Again the high scores are reflected in the additional comments provided by the respondents.

'Project maintains regular contact with students and the student support service.'

'Article 26 has worked out with us how best to support the students and use our rooms for tutorials for the student group.'

'Students are well motivated and have thrived on the support provided by Article 26.'

The main area of improvement identified was for possible greater involvement of the student support service in supporting Article 26 students and the potential for this to be facilitated by Article 26 providing training and producing guidance material.

'More involvement of Student services team in the day to day advice for the Article 26 students. Also a widening of all our horizons on a mission related endeavour.'

'There is possible room for improvement here – perhaps a guide for designated staff in Student Services?'

Providing annual group support and training to promote peer support and help mitigate the impact of the asylum process on students- Scores provided by respondents (4) (2)

The provision of the group support activities is an area which the respondents felt less able to comment on. Most were aware that it took place and some actively cooperated in its delivery but felt that they were not in a position to comment on the effectiveness of the intervention.

'I know this is offered but I'm not sure what the outcomes have been. It would be useful to have an evaluation of this, perhaps.'

'I am unsure about answering this but I note that the 2 day residential is organised for June and take place on our campus.'

In relation to the achievement of its operational aims the Universities that work with Article 26 were positive about its progress over the last eighteen months of operation. Respondents were asked to comment on to what extent Article 26 had met its objectives and what improvements might be made.

Comments included:

'From my contact with them I think that it has been very successful in achieving these objectives in a personalised and involved way.'

'The Project Director has been an excellent advocate in this respect and worked well and effectively with the University to help achieve the objectives of Article 26. The personal contact and effective communication from Article 26 has been essential in this process.'

'The programme has been very successful.'

In operational terms one of the challenges identified was the issue of supporting students at Universities outside large cities where there is less of a concentration of potential students.

'I think there is a challenge in working with areas outside the major conurbations in attracting potential suitable students who are local enough to the University and who would be financially viable enough to be able to take up the opportunities available and who would be applying to the University in any case – there is probably work to do with local FE and schools to raise aspirations amongst those with the potential to benefit from the HE with support from Article 26, to get information out to them and encourage them to apply and secure a University place.'

One respondent also highlighted the need to address access issues through wider campaigning work particularly aimed at the Office for Fair Access.

'I think the Project is developing in the light of the changing landscape of Higher Education. One area discussed with the Director is how to link this support with Access Agreements (through the Office for Fair Access) to make it "countable" for Higher Education institutions.'

10. Views of partner agencies

As part of the evaluation process representatives of ten agencies which attend the Access to Higher Education Working Group were contacted by email and asked to take part in an email / telephone survey. Completed responses were received or telephone interviews conducted with four agencies, two agencies felt that their contact with Article 26 was insufficient to enable them to respond adequately and the remaining four agencies did not respond.

All the agencies that responded were positive about the direct work Article 26 undertakes in dealing with individual enquires. Agencies were positive about the quality of the advice and the main reservation concerned the capacity of the project to adequately deal with the volume of requests received.

'I wonder if capacity can at times be problematic for Article 26. Personalised advice can require substantial time-input in terms of research and conversation. I am aware that the project has been stretched to capacity (and perhaps beyond) in the amount of advice it can provide to individuals approaching them.'

'Capacity is a problem – it is difficult for the project to deal with the high level of demand. There is a massive need for increased advice to young refugees who want to go to University.'

It was suggested that one course of action which would mitigate this restriction would be work with partner organisation to increase their capacity to provide such information and guidance and allow more of Article 26's resources to be focused on the negotiation and support of University placements. It was also suggested by one respondent that Article 26 could usefully provide expertise to the sector in a training capacity.

'We think training partner organisations to do this (provide information and guidance) to a high level is important – and are looking forward to partnering with Article 26 in our autumn training programme.'

'The process would be improved by greater clarity – for referral agencies so they can advise and support people in the application process and afterwards.'

Partner agencies were positive about the quality of the placement and opportunities afforded to students who were successful in gaining Article 26 University placements.

'It's a gold plated boutique service – absolutely amazing for the individuals concerned'

'Through my networks I have also heard that the ongoing support offered to young people once they are at University with an Article 26 place has been of very high quality.'

Similarly to the advice and guidance aspect of Article 26's programme the main concerns expressed related to capacity issues. It was recognised that the number of placements negotiated by Article 26 is relatively limited compared to the size of the issue and the demand for placements. Similarly it was also felt that the project itself was limited in terms of the number of placements it could support.

'Increased capacity would have enabled a more robust outreach project securing strategic relationships with more Universities.'

There issues and concerns link into the wider advocacy role of the project which has largely been concentrated on working with individual Universities to create awareness of the issue and to negotiate fee bursaries and create Article 26 placements.

'The project has made excellent progress over a short time in negotiating fee waiver places, and this has been the right strategy for access with the changes in the rates for home fees for entry in 2012.'

The project has also worked with Universities through joint events and presentations to broaden the understanding of the issue amongst academic institutions and the aim in the future would be to develop this approach to influence access programmes and to create a situation where the specialist Article 26 provision was not required. This approach is something which partner agencies would generally support in principle although opinions vary as to the best tactical approach.

'Future development would be building the portfolio of Universities Article 26 has worked with to provide fee waivers. I believe publicity around this could be a useful tool. I understand Article 26's relational approach works well, and think this could be maintained whilst also using positive media interest (in Universities offering places) to raise pressure on other institutions to do the same. A supporting development, which I know the Project Director has been considering, would be linking support for students seeking sanctuary to Access Agreements.'

'The article 26 approach should be a springboard to inform good practice elsewhere'

One respondent felt that the project was in a good position to collect evidence about the level of need and what happens to applicants who are unsuccessful and that this information and research could be used to develop the argument for the inclusion of asylum seekers as a category within access agreements.

Overall the agencies which responded to the survey felt that Article 26 provided a good service and had been successful in raising awareness of the issue amongst Universities and in the development of fee bursaries and assisted placements.

'It creates hope and the possibility to access University for young people who would otherwise have nowhere to turn.'

'Article 26 is the single charity working to meet the needs of people seeking sanctuary accessing Higher Education. Its holistic support that it provides to individuals is very impressive and an approach that should be encouraged more widely. Those seeking sanctuary who are accessing University are often faced with uncertainties about their asylum claims, and the wrap around support services on top of the financial support, are essential for students to be able to complete their studies.'

11. Conclusions

- i. The project has established a good service providing advice and support to individuals seeking guidance in applying for Higher Education courses. The project has exceeded the number of anticipated contacts and has responded in providing information via email and telephone and makes onward referrals as appropriate. This is an area where capacity has been tested and the possibility of supporting other agencies to undertake similar work has been explored.
- ii. The project has succeeded on building upon its initial success in negotiating fee bursaries with Universities and developing Article 26 supported placements. The project is actively supporting 24 undergraduates in completing their studies in formally agreed placements with 10 Universities. In addition the project is supporting four other students as affiliates without formal agreements being in place with the host Universities.
- iii. Article 26 is highly regarded by the Universities it works with. They value the role the project provides in recruitment and selection and the ongoing support of the students. Engagement with the project has made Universities more aware of the issues and barriers to higher education that individuals seeking sanctuary face and has facilitated them in making a positive response.
- iv. The students hold the support provided by the project in high regard and it is highly unlikely that any of them would have been able to commence and complete their courses without Article 26's ongoing financial and pastoral support. Whilst the fee bursaries are key to the success of the project the financial assistance provided for travel and books is also highly valued. The individual and group support is an essential aspect of the project assisting with issues specific to the students experience of the asylum process and in engendering a sense of mutual support and community.
- v. Students supported by Article 26 have generally been able to retain their place on their courses and look set to complete them successfully. The students benefit enormously at a personal level not just in terms of educational achievement but also in terms of self confidence, social skills and improved mental health.
- vi. The relationship with the Helena Kennedy Foundation was clarified and formalised during the course of the project. The Foundation has enabled the project to learn from its considerable experience in operating bursary programmes and has provided access to infrastructural support including financial systems and the website. The Trustees have provided operational oversight and considerable support to the project.
- vii. Article 26 is a relatively small project operating on less than a full-time equivalent in terms of staff time. It has worked across the country with a range of Universities on a one-to-one basis. Whilst highly successful its limited capacity means there are operational restrictions upon further expansion and continued growth.
- viii. Article 26 is supported by key partner agencies recognising the strengths of the initiative in terms of opening up access to higher education for the individuals concerned and widening awareness of the access issues for students seeking sanctuary more widely.

- ix. The project has continued to work towards a wider awareness of the issues and has sought to assess and respond to changing legislation governing the rules regarding asylum claims and their impact upon the eligibility of individuals to access student finance and higher education opportunities. It has undertaken research and scoping exercises and has amended its operational practice accordingly. Any future developments will be based on evidence and detailed scoping of the operational environment.

- x. Changes in legislation and the lack of a coherent and agreed campaign strategy with partner agencies meant that Article 26 has not collaborated on a national campaign in relation to access issues for the target group. The project has focused on developing links with Universities and gaining their support and engagement in piloting fee bursaries and the Article 26 model of support. It is anticipated that this experience and support will facilitate the dissemination of the approach as a model of good practise and in informing any future campaign directed at shaping access agreements in higher education.

12. Recommendations

- i. Article 26 has proved to be a successful project reaching its projected outcomes and performing well. It has clearly demonstrated the need to continue the work both in terms of the direct support to individuals and in relation to advocacy. It is recommended that the Helena Kennedy Foundation continue the project beyond the currently funded period and seek resources from appropriate funding bodies to do so.
- ii. As a very specific and targeted project within the Helena Kennedy Foundation it is recommended that consideration be given to establishing a reference group for the project to provide guidance on the formulation of advocacy targets and on operational performance. Membership could be drawn from trustees of the Helena Kennedy Foundation, representatives of partner agencies and individuals with relevant knowledge and skills.
- iii. Feedback from Universities suggests that the quality of support they and other institutions could provide to students seeking sanctuary would be improved if they had access to a specific guide for student support services covering asylum and related issues. This view was reinforced by discussion with the students at the group support residential in 2012. Consideration should be given to the production of a guide to be made available to Universities taking part in the Article 26 programme and other institutions.
- iv. Article 26 is and is likely to remain, a relatively small project with limited staff capacity to undertake the direct work with students and Universities and the wider advocacy and campaigning elements. In order to make best and most effective use of these resources it is important that the agency has a clear strategic planning process and targets its interventions where they will have the most impact. It is important to recognise the roles of other agencies and to work in collaboration where possible.
- v. Article 26 should explore the potential of Universities to make a larger contribution to the support costs of students beyond the provision of the fee bursary. In the current funding climate it will be increasingly difficult for Article 26 to generate funding to cover student support costs and the possibility of Universities contributing in the region of £1,000 per student per year offers the prospect of a more sustainable approach to funding.
- vi. In developing future new partnerships with Universities the project should focus on those geographical areas where there is likely to be higher concentrations of potential students. Areas can be identified through the level of enquires to Article 26's advice and information function. A focus on these areas is likely to facilitate student recruitment, make the supported placement more likely to succeed and provide a more sustainable and longer term partnership.