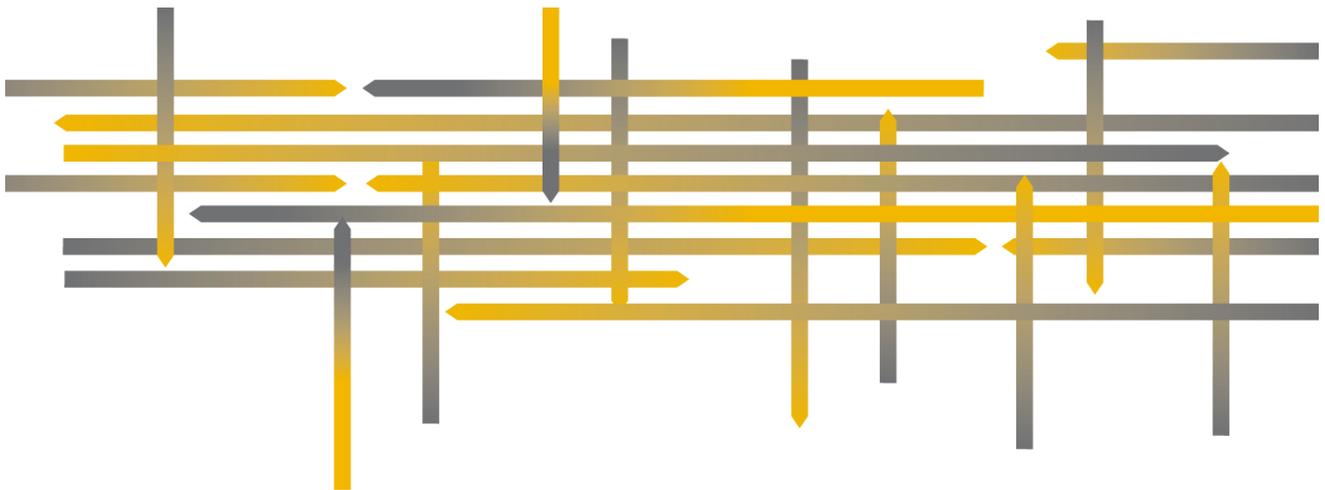


**Supplementary education in London: Impact,
Challenges and Sustainability**

**An evaluation of the education services of Afghan
Association Paiwand**

Magdolna Lőrinc, Alessio D'Angelo and Prof Louise Ryan

Research Report – February 2013



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The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), Middlesex University

The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) was established in 1990 to provide a focus for research in the social sciences at Middlesex University and support high quality research of national and international standing. Members of staff are involved in a wide range of projects funded by research councils, the EU, government departments and the major charities. The Centre supports postgraduate research students, including students funded by research councils, and a number of well-established masters programmes. The Centre runs events, including conferences, seminars and short courses. Main areas of interest include: migration, refugees and citizenship; welfare restructuring; service provision and third sector organisations; urban policy, regeneration and communities; drug and alcohol policy; human security and human rights. For further information and to view reports from our recent research projects visit our webpage: www.sprc.info.

Afghan Association Paiwand

Paiwand was founded in 2002 by members of the Afghan community. The organisation is located in North West London where the majority of Afghans in the UK are concentrated. Paiwand offers a wide range of support services, including counselling, social and welfare services, advice and support in health care and legal issues, career advice, translation and interpretation, ESOL classes, mentoring and youth activities, women's club, as well as supplementary educational services. In addition, Paiwand aims to promote Afghan art, culture and languages in London and the UK. While initially the organisation aimed to meet the needs of the Afghan community, from 2009, it widened its scope to reach out to refugees and asylum seekers of all backgrounds. For further information, please visit www.paiwand.com.

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1. Introduction

This project was developed in collaboration with Afghan Association Paiwand and emerged from previous work undertaken by the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) in the field of migration, more specifically, the educational needs of migrant children and communities (Ryan, et al, 2010; D'Angelo, Paniagua and Ozdemir, 2011). The Centre had previous links with Paiwand through the Barnet Muslim Engagement Partnership Board with whom the SPRC had been working between 2007 and 2010.

This project was made possible by funding made available through the Third Sector Research Centre Social Enterprise Capacity Building Cluster.

Aims of the Research Project

The research project aimed to evaluate:

- the effectiveness of the education services offered by Afghan Association Paiwand;
- key challenges and sustainability of supplementary education;
- opportunities and ways forward.

These issues were studied from the perspective of Afghan students, their parents, and mainstream and community teachers.

Research Methods

Fieldwork was conducted between July and November 2012.

A combination of research methods was used. A series of interviews were conducted with a range of key informants: 2 Paiwand staff members; 7 community teachers from Paiwand; 2 mainstream school teachers and 2 other staff members from mainstream school. In total, 13 in-depth interviews were undertaken.

In addition, two focus groups were conducted: one with Afghan parents whose children attend Paiwand classes, and one with Afghan students from Paiwand. 8 parents and 7 students took part in the two focus groups.

Altogether, 28 people participated in this research. They were recruited through Afghan Association Paiwand. The interviews and focus groups were negotiated in conjunction with the parents, children and the supplementary school.

We also endeavoured to identify the demographic patterns of Afghans in the UK using Census data and other statistical sources.

2. Afghans in the United Kingdom

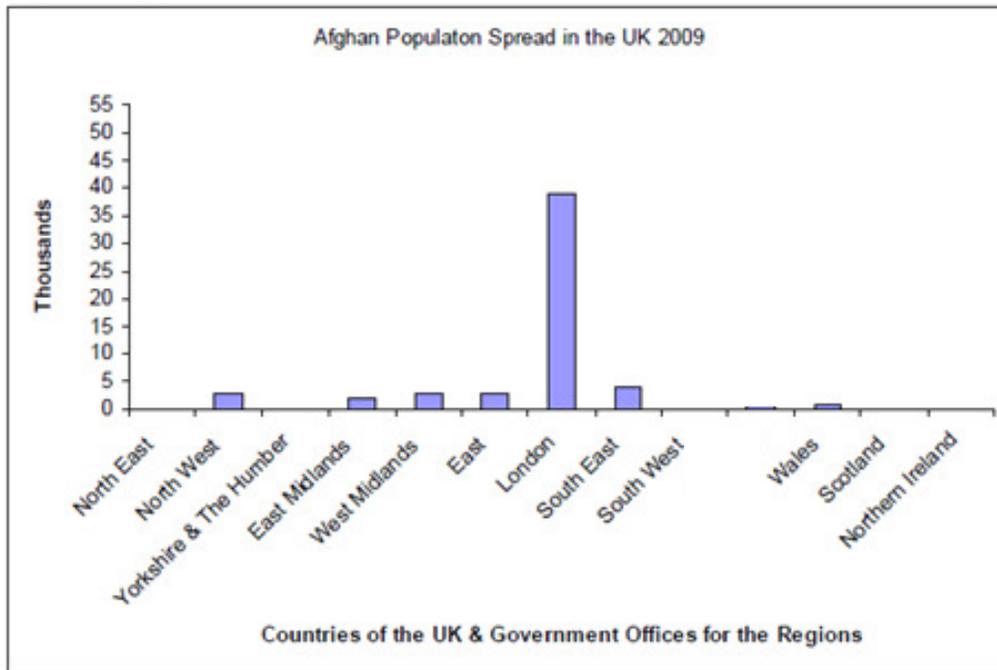
While news coverage from Afghanistan has been a constant feature in the media for more than a decade now, relatively little is known about Afghans living in this country (Furlong, 2010). More than thirty years of conflict, political instability and impoverishment has caused the displacement of large numbers of people, resulting in increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in neighbouring and Western countries, including the United Kingdom. However, the size of the Afghan population in the UK, their demographic profile and socio-economic characteristics are largely unknown. This can be explained by a number of factors: the relatively small size of the Afghan community compared to other UK minorities; high proportion of unreported individuals; and difficulties of capturing their numbers in official statistics due to the fact that 'Afghan' is not one of the standard ethnic categories.

In Afghan migration to the UK a number of distinct waves can be distinguished (Communities and Local Government, 2009; IOM, 2007). The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 prompted the first wave of migrants. The second wave left in the 1990's, after the downfall of the communist regime and renewal of conflict. The capture of Kabul by the Taliban in 1996 was followed by 'a large exodus' of Afghans to Western countries (Communities and Local Government, 2009), about 15% of refugees came to the UK in this time. This proportion grew further between 2000 and 2004 when the UK was the second most popular destination (after Austria) (UNHCR, 2005). Asylum applications have been high ever since (ibid).

The latest estimate from the Office for National Statistics puts the number of UK residents born in Afghanistan to around 54,000. With this figure, Afghans constitute the 37th largest minority group in the UK (ONS, 2012). This number is significantly higher than the one estimated by the 2001 Census, which recorded 14,875 UK residents born in Afghanistan (Jones, 2010), and is in line with an ONS report that the majority of Afghanistan-born UK residents have arrived after 2007 (ONS, 2010). It is estimated that the largest subset of Afghans in the UK are males between 30 and 34 years old (Jones, 2010).

According to the 2001 Census, around 70% of Afghans in the UK lived in London (ibid), being concentrated in West and North-West of the city in the following boroughs: Ealing, Hounslow, Harrow, Brent, Barnet and Hillingdon, with an emerging community in Lewisham (Communities and Local Government, 2009). The majority of them were still concentrated in the capital a few years ago (ONS, 2009). Graph 1 shows the estimated geographical dispersion of Afghans in the UK:

Graph 1: Afghan born nationals in the UK



Source: Statistics provided to Sophie Jones by the Home Office Migration Statistics Unit, 2010 (Jones, 2010)

Most commentators agree that the Afghan community in the UK is diverse and fragmented along ethnic, linguistic, regional, religious and political lines (Communities and Local Government, 2009; IOM, 2007).

The main languages spoken in Afghanistan are Pashto and Dari¹. The country is very diverse ethnically, having Pashtuns (42%), Tajiks (27%), Hazaras (9%), Uzbeks (9%), and Aimaqs (4%), and a number of smaller groups (Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook, 2010). Ethnicity being markedly interlinked with political affiliation further complicates this ethnic puzzle (Communities and Local Government, 2009). The overwhelming majority of Afghans are Muslim, mostly Sunni Muslim; minority religious groups include Hindus and Sikhs (UKBA 2009).

This diversity is reflected in the UK diaspora as well. Many papers (Communities and Local Government, 2009; Jones, 2010) argue that the Afghan population in the UK lacks cohesion and communal structure because of this fragmentation along various criteria, the country's violent politics in the near past and a highly stratified society within the home country. It seems that the common experience of immigration could not transcend this fragmentation entirely (Communities and Local Government, 2009). Afghan community organisations appear to map these fragmented sub-communities, without having one umbrella organisation that would represent the whole community (ibid).

¹ A local dialect of the Persian or Farsi language.

3. Afghan Association Paiwand

Afghan Association Paiwand² was founded in 2002 by members of the Afghan community. Their prime concern was maintaining families' cultural identity. Many parents felt that their children were getting alienated from their culture and not learning their mother tongues sufficiently. In addition, parents experienced difficulties with helping children in their studies due to a lack of English language skills and familiarity with the British education system. Therefore Paiwand was set up primarily to offer assistance with these issues. Accordingly, their first project in October 2002 was setting up supplementary classes.

The organisation is located in North West London where the majority of Afghans in the UK are concentrated. As described before, this community consists predominantly of migrants who arrived in the last few decades. Therefore, the organisation aims to provide help and assistance with the linguistic, cultural, educational and legal challenges faced by new migrants and facilitate a smoother integration into British society. Initially, Paiwand aimed to meet the needs of the Afghan community - providing help and support to an estimated ten thousand Afghan refugees and asylum seekers at that time (Afghan Association Paiwand, 2012). From 2009, the organisation widened its scope to reach out to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants of all backgrounds. Their mission statement declares that: '*Paiwand is a multicultural organisation which aims towards improving and enhancing the quality of life of the Afghan, refugee and migrant communities in London and throughout the UK*' (Trustees rep, p. 26). Ahmad Farid Mall, Director of the organisation emphasized: '*we need to realise where we live. (...) We live in this country. Any changes will affect this community too.*'

Paiwand offers a wide range of support services, including education, community advocacy, mental health advocacy, youth work, supported accommodation for unaccompanied minors and interpreting. In addition, Paiwand aims to promote Afghan art, culture and languages – Pashto and Dari³ – in London and the UK. The organisation is open to people from all age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, religious, spiritual or political beliefs.

3.1. Education Services

The organisation has a large team of paid staff, volunteers and trustees. Last year, over 85 volunteers dedicated their time to working for Paiwand, 60 of them teaching in the Supplementary School (Afghan Association Paiwand, 2012).

During the period that our research was conducted, Paiwand secured a substantial funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (October 2012) for the introduction and development of a new innovative supplementary education model. Hence our field work took place at a time of transition within the organisation. Throughout this report we endeavour to explain this

² The information in this chapter was gathered from interviews with Mr Ahmad Farid Mall, Director of Paiwand Afghan Association and Ms Emily Beckwith, Education Project Manager. The organisation's website (available at <http://www.paiwand.com>) was also consulted.

³ Often Dari is referred to as Farsi.

transitional stage by highlighting how current provision may change with the introduction of the new model. Before October 2012, two types of Saturday schools were offered.

- **Supplementary School** for Afghan children and young people at two locations: Whitefield School in Cricklewood and London Academy from Edgware. Here, students studied Maths and Science in the morning, and home languages (Pashto and Dari) and religious education in the afternoon. From these two schools, 198 students graduated in July 2012.
- The **Weekend School** offered Maths and English classes to Key Stage 1 and 2 children from all ethnic backgrounds referred by their mainstream schools. This project had been delivered in a partnership led by Harrow Borough Ethnic Minority Achievement Service with other statutory and voluntary organisations.

In 2011/12, Paiwand was awarded a number of recognitions for the quality of their services: for example it achieved the Investor in People Quality Mark. Also, Paiwand's Supplementary School based at Whitefield School received Special Distinction Quality Mark from ContinYou - one of the leading education charities in the UK – which puts it among the only five supplementary schools achieving this quality mark in the country.

Following the successful bid to Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Paiwand is now introducing a new innovative supplementary school model, which combines the best qualities of the previous two models:

- Mathematics and English classes will be open to children of any background who are entitled to free school meals and are underachieving in their mainstream schools⁴. Mainstream schools will identify those pupils who are likely to benefit from additional tuition and refer them to the programme.
- In addition, 140 self-referred Afghan children will continue to attend both curriculum and cultural subjects at Whitefield School.

The new scheme involves a much larger number of schools than before, which are organised into three 'clusters'. Each cluster includes a host school and five 'feeder schools'. Host schools offer their premises and open up their teacher training programmes to the Saturday school; while feeder schools have to contribute financially to running the classes⁵. In exchange, host schools can send 30 pupils, feeder schools 20 pupils each. The three host schools are Whitefield; Norbury and the Stag Lane and Cannons High School partnership⁶.

This new model is based on close collaboration with mainstream schools and represents a complex approach to support, involving the whole family, which will benefit all parties involved. Mainstream schools will get additional help for their most in need students. In exchange, Paiwand benefits from the model by:

- getting access to the host schools' premises and equipment;

⁴ The exact criteria: 'within two educational sublevels behind expected progress'.

⁵ Apart from Barnet this year, where funding was secured for this purpose.

⁶ These are all schools that Paiwand has been working together with for years.

- having a mixture of volunteer community teachers working together with UK qualified mainstream teachers to learn how to prepare lessons, manage classes, prepare and assess students; share data, targets and work out together what is best for students;
- volunteer teachers will work in mainstream schools for one day per week, gaining further recognized work experience;
- they will also get access to the mainstream school's continuing professional development programmes free of charge;
- mainstream teachers will come to observe supplementary classes;
- the three clusters will share experience through regular meetings each term.
- a Steering Group of professionals, including: John Paxton, Secondary Strategy Manager at London Borough of Barnet; Joy Collins, Team Leader at Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, Harrow Council; Pascale Vassie, Executive Director at the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education; Elaine Willey, SEN specialist; and the host schools' head teachers monitor the quality of support provided.

These measures will help raise the standard of Saturday schooling, its credibility, professionalism and reputation.

Emily Beckwith, Education Project Manager from the Whitefield cluster highlighted the project's importance and the difference it can make: *'In terms of social return on investment it's extremely important to support children who are underachieving. (...) Helping a child get a C instead of a D; the difference that can make in terms of a young person's life chances is absolutely monumental. I've worked with NEETs⁷ before and if a young person doesn't have a C in Maths and English, life is extremely difficult.'*

Paiwand's strategic aim is to build an *'environment of trust between the third sector and schools'*, as expressed by Mr Ahmad Farid Mall, where schools and community organisations work closely together. For this, supplementary schools need to improve the quality of their educational services and be willing to work closely with mainstream schools.

⁷ Not in Education, Employment or Training

5. Research Findings

5.1. Supplementary school teachers' view

Seven interviews were conducted in July 2012 with Afghan community teachers from the Supplementary School (2 male, 5 female), teaching various subjects⁸. One of them was a UK qualified Mathematics teacher, another had teaching assistance qualification, and one had prior teaching experience from Afghanistan. The majority were working on a voluntary basis, but some of the Maths teachers received payment for their services⁹. Teachers have been with Paiwand between 2 and 4 years.

Description of Paiwand Supplementary School classes and pupils

- Teachers reported that the average number of pupils per class was between 10 and 20.
- They did not identify any noticeable difference in attendance according to gender; it seems that the number of girls and boys is fairly equal at Paiwand.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are Afghan; however, other migrants had been occasionally attending.
- Teachers suggested that Paiwand tends to attract Afghans who are already settled in Britain. They explained this in terms of, for example, distribution of information: one of the main ways of finding out about the services offered by Paiwand is by word of mouth. Therefore the information spreads more among people who already know each other because they have similar background. Another reason why it is hard to target more recently arrived migrants is because - as one teacher remarked - newly arrived migrants and refugees, unaccompanied minors in particular, might have more pressing issues to deal with before they can afford time, energy and money spent on improving academic performance:

'Those families who came here a while ago are more settled; they can have a view of the future and can see the opportunities for their children and use it. The refugees haven't settled and have quite a lot of other problems that are more important for them to resolve before thinking about extra lessons for their children.' (Male teacher)

Reasons for becoming a Paiwand teacher:

The interviewees gave a range of reasons why they became involved with Paiwand's education project.

- To be in touch with the Afghan community and culture:

'I love the idea of this community school, that it's so in touch with the Afghan community, where you can meet lots of other Afghans.' (Female teacher)

⁸ 4 were teaching Mathematics, 2 Dari, 1 Pashto; 2 of the language teachers were also teaching religious studies.

⁹ Paiwand received funding for teaching Maths.

- Volunteers and paid teachers alike expressed a strong ethos of giving back to the community:

'Just wanted to give back. Before being a teacher I also studied here Maths and Science and it helped me a lot, so I wanted to give back something to them, be able to help others who came here.' (Male teacher)

Benefits and impacts of Paiwand supplementary classes

While many teachers – mainly those teaching Maths and Science – highlighted the academic gains, improving students' mainstream academic performance, the main emphasis seemed to be on language, cultural and religious studies.

- Stronger identity and improved confidence level due to cultural awareness:

'Children become a lot more sure of themselves identity-wise... Coming here and being in touch with that side of where you are originally from and being in touch with that culture, I think that definitely gives more confidence' (Female teacher)

- Belonging to a community:

Several teachers reported that children enjoyed attending Saturday classes and other cultural activities and events. This provided an opportunity to develop new friendships:

'Because they are from the same background and culture, they tend to make friends, very close friendships more than in regular school.' (Female teacher)

- Learning their native languages: to speak, read and write Dari or Pashto

'Mostly they come for the language. They already know their language, they can speak it. They will learn here to read and write.' (Female teacher)

- Improving their academic performance

Maths and Science classes were considered a very useful and effective help for Afghan students, which contributes to raising their grades in mainstream education and at GCSEs.

'The other thing is Maths and Science. Most of families have trouble with helping their children with Maths because they don't know English very well and they don't know the terms in English, in our language is very different. Most mums are not educated so they can't help their children.' (Female teacher)

'(Children come) to get that extra help with mainstream subjects and improve their grades. It's hard getting into colleges and high schools and is getting harder, so that's one of the reasons: to improve academically.' (Male teacher)

- Improved behaviour

Teachers reported better behaviour at supplementary classes than experienced - as a teacher or student - in mainstream schools. They attributed this to stricter behavioural norms among Afghans compared to what is accepted in Britain/ London in general:

'There's definitely more respect for the teacher than I've seen from other nationalities in mainstream schools. (...) In Afghanistan students are brought up in that way that they have a lot of respect for their elders, parents and teachers.' (Female teacher)

Another teacher described that switching from English to mother tongue during class improved students' behaviour because children associated home language with 'Afghan' behavioural codes. Several teachers thought that this better behavioural standard is not just confined to the Saturday school, but then is taken out to the students' wider social environment.

Teachers highlighted the strengths of Paiwand Afghan Association:

- Providing a centre for the Afghan community:

'They are always able to reach out to families all over London and attract them; they were able to get this community together and give them a focus here.' (Female teacher)

However, it seems that this community is held together mostly by the organisation. Teachers and families do not seem to socialise or keep in contact outside of school, which further highlights the important role that Paiwand plays in the Afghan community's life. As one teacher explained:

'I don't think it goes further than the school. (...) That's why it is really important; otherwise there wouldn't be that sort of interaction between them.' (Female teacher)

One possible explanation is the spatial dispersion of the children and their families across North-West London. For example the vast majority of the children who attend supplementary classes based at Whitefield School are not actually pupils of that particular school but rather travel from across several boroughs. This made the opportunities for socialising through Paiwand even more significant, especially for mothers, as several teachers noted.

- Offering a site of socialisation for the whole family:

Teachers highlighted that for some families, women in particular who have difficulties with English, these Saturday classes are the only means of socialising and going out. Saturday school involves the whole family because parents can join some of the many activities on offer: ESOL classes and women's groups, for instance. Therefore attending Paiwand classes improves family wellbeing in general:

'There are women, parents who can't communicate in English and feel isolated. This is the only place they can come and share their problems, get together; they have somewhere to go and that has big impact on the families and kids.' (Male teacher)

- Effective system of communication and contact with parents

Paiwand has in place a specific system for contact and communication between staff members and parents: there are parents meetings held at the end of each term; teachers are encouraged to keep in contact and feedback to parents, especially when they have issues with children's attendance, behaviour or academic development.

'We are encouraged to always stay in touch with the parents and have as much communication as possible with them.' (Female teacher)

Nonetheless teachers reported that some parents seemed to lack involvement in their children's education¹⁰. However, this was explained by cultural factors, namely that in Afghanistan the education of children is left mainly to the school and parents are not involved in it:

'I think it goes back to our culture, the Afghan culture where they trust the teacher and leave everything to the school and the teacher.' (Male teacher)

- Close working relationship between Paiwand staff members

'The closeness of everybody (is the main strength), all the staff; everybody seems to know each other, are friendly, teachers work closely with each other. (...) We share each other's skills; there's a meeting we hold. Every head of department holds a meeting with their department to discuss problems and get advice.' (Male teacher)

- Focus on continuous improvement:

Many teachers remarked that Paiwand has been improving its services and standards each year.

'They improved a lot from before. Providing the opportunity for the children was the first thing, to learn language; then Maths and Science also – there wasn't Maths and Science in the beginning, but it is very good now.' (Female teacher)

Issues and ways to improve Paiwand services

Although the teachers were very positive about many aspects of Paiwand's educational provisions, a number of areas for improvement were identified.

- More funding

All teachers agreed that in order to develop their educational services, Paiwand needs further funding to invest into teaching materials and books. In addition, paying teachers might resolve some of the quality and continuity problems faced by Paiwand: paying for their time and effort might help attract and retain qualified and experienced teachers.

¹⁰ For example, attendance at parents meetings was low; some parents did not ask questions and did not make sure that children arrived to school prepared.

'With the budget that Paiwand has I don't think they can do much more improvement because they are mainly relying on volunteer teachers and teacher assistants to run these classes – making their best to keep these schools running and the costs down.'

- Quality of teaching provision

Teachers acknowledged the difficulties of recruiting qualified and capable teachers. However, some interviewees suggested that more rigorous screening of the volunteers might raise the standard of teaching.

- Management and forward planning

'If you want to achieve something, you have to think ahead and plan for it – that's the one thing I would change: planning and thinking before you do something. Way before, like 4-5 months before. And evaluate everything, that's what we have to do.' (Female teacher)

- Contact and information sharing with mainstream schools

This was considered pivotal for raising the quality and efficiency of supplementary education. However it was considered hard to realise because of data protection regulations.

- Provide more subjects and activities: e.g. drama, music and sport, events and trips:

'Taking children on trips: going to the Olympic site; maybe going up North, towards Scotland or Wales seeing their schools, something like that, something different.' (Male teacher)

5.2. Parents' perspective

'Interviewer: Can you tell me any success stories?'

Parent: It would be too much if we started.'

The focus group was conducted with 8 participants (3 male, 5 female) recruited from parents attending the end of year Paiwand Parents Meeting (July 2012). These parents were probably among the most involved parents in the Supplementary School; therefore their views might not reflect the views of other parents.

The participants were all from Afghanistan originally, several from Kabul; however all had acquired British citizenship, while one was a Dutch citizen. The majority of their children started education in the United Kingdom. Most of these families had been attending Paiwand educational services for several years.

It was a highly educated group¹¹ whose members seemed to integrate well into British society. They were very involved in their children's education, expressing aspirations of upward social mobility.

The focus group was conducted at the time when the partnership between Paiwand and London Academy (where the Saturday classes were held) came to an end. Their views were likely affected by these specific circumstances, because parents did not know whether their children will have a Saturday School to attend from the next academic year.

Reasons for sending their children to Paiwand Supplementary School

All parents expressed very positive views on both the British education system and Paiwand Supplementary School. The main reasons identified for sending their children to Paiwand included:

- Learn to speak, read and write in Dari and/or Pashto:

'I'm very happy with Paiwand: my two sons speak Pashto at home, but now they started speaking Farsi as well.' (Mother)

- Culture and religion:

Parents also wanted children to know more about their culture, ancestral country and religion¹². They expressed high levels of satisfaction with Paiwand for shaping their children's Afghan identity.

'My son is more aware of our traditions, like the celebration of Ramadan. Before, he didn't understand why we fast and when I explained it, he found it boring. Since starting this school, he picked it up; he knows and is aware of all celebrations, Eid, New Year, Ramadan... This school has helped a lot.' (Mother)

A father emphasised the importance of understanding the specific Afghan way of conduct, defined by being polite, *'showing respect to elders, helping the community and being a good citizen'*.

- Improving children's academic performance at mainstream schools

While parents' main motivation for sending their children to the supplementary school was to learn culture, language and religion, it was acknowledged that the additional support with curriculum subjects was an unexpected but highly effective benefit to their children:

'It was not my aim to bring my child to learn these (Maths and Science); my aim was to keep them in touch with my country and language. (...) My daughter will have GCSEs next year. By being here, she was very good in Maths and Science and

¹¹ 1 parent completed postgraduate studies; 2 degree level and 2 vocational education; 2 were studying at university level, while 1 parent's highest qualification was from secondary school. Regarding their employment status, 3 parents were employed or self-employed; 3 were housewives and 2 students. However, this is not a representative sample of all parents whose children attend Paiwand Saturday School.

¹² This theme was discussed in Ryan, Banfi and Kofman (2010).

received a letter from her teacher because she improved a lot in Maths and English.'
(Father)

Parents acknowledged that they would not be able to afford this kind of tuition outside of Paiwand:

'This is very important for the kids, if we sent them to private tuition they would charge us £30 per hour – we can't afford that.' (Mother)

Main strengths of Paiwand Supplementary School

- Parents reported very good communication with Paiwand teachers:

'Anything we have problem with, just come straight to them and tell; and next week the problem is solved.' (Father)

- Overall, all parents expressed very high satisfaction level with the supplementary school:

'Apart from languages, they are progressing in Maths, English and Science; tuition would cost us a lot of money. This is a free tuition in other words. Definitely would like to come next year.' (Father)

Therefore they were very worried about losing this opportunity at London Academy:

'(If the Saturday School has to close because of lack of funding or access to school premises) it is such a waste for the parents but especially for the kids. For us is nothing to bring them here, but they learnt so much. They will be so disappointed!'
(Mother)

Threats and ways to improve supplementary education

- Parents identified lack of funding as the main obstacle of improving Saturday School services. They thought that having their own building and school premises would solve the difficulties that arise when a partnership with a mainstream school comes to an end¹³:

'Extra funding for them would help; an own building, where we don't have to fear being kicked out and don't have to pay the fees – we should have our own place.' (Father)

- Parents felt that the Afghan community has insufficient resources to support the Supplementary School:

'We looked at our resources, but we can't help them. We ourselves are too tight in our financial situation. Our aim is just to prevent this school shutting down.' (Father)

¹³ Given that this focus group took place at the time when the partnership with London Academy was ending, this is not surprising.

- Close communication and data sharing with mainstream schools was also considered highly desirable:

'They should have a communication link between the state schools, an exchange; they should know what has been happening here and Paiwand should know what children's level there is.' (Father)

5.3. Students' view

The student focus group was held at Whitefield School in November 2012 with the participation of 7 students (2 female, 5 male; all aged 14 to 15) from the GCSE class from Paiwand. Most of them had come to Britain at a young age and all but one started school in this country. At present, they all attend different mainstream schools and live in different parts of London. They have been attending Paiwand classes for between 2 and 4 years.

During the focus group, all students expressed a high value of education; with all 7 of them planning to progress to higher education¹⁴. They considered education a '*passport for life*', very essential for the future. Several students expressed the opinion that the grades they are getting now will determine their future life and career: what matters is to get to a '*university being in the top ranks, then getting the job will be easy*'.

Reasons for attending and impacts of Paiwand Supplementary School

- To maintain their language, culture, identity

It appears that students attend Paiwand classes primarily to maintain their cultural identity and '*studying your own language*', as one pupil said. While it seemed that parents play a significant role in sending them to Paiwand, students also expressed great satisfaction with the mother tongue and religious studies classes. They felt that they were improving significantly, were very engaged and the teachers were considered very capable in these classes.

Learning to speak, read and write their native languages not only solidifies their identities, it also makes easier keeping in contact with their relatives in Afghanistan and feeling more at home while visiting the country:

'When you study your own language you get more mature, you can relate to your cousins and uncles. Before, I couldn't talk to them, now I can, that makes me more comfortable' – explained a young man. *'When you get older (...) and you go back to your home town, you can talk to them. When I went about 4 years ago, I had to speak in English, or both, now I can speak Dari fluently'* – added another.

Several students expressed a desire to learn both Dari and Pashto, since both form their cultural heritage and some of them come from mixed families. However, the present setting does not allow for this, as language classes take place at the same time.

¹⁴ Their subjects of choice to study at university: Finance, Law, Computer Sciences, Architecture, Medicine, Science, Maths and Physics.

- Site of socialisation

Coming to Paiwand every Saturday, students developed close friendships. Since they are all from different mainstream schools scattered across different boroughs, Paiwand classes are their only means of socialisation:

'I think the main motivation is seeing your friends; that's what makes people come. As we all go to different schools and live in different parts of London, we can't see each other just talk on Facebook. Other than that, this is the only place we see each other.' (Male student)

They felt that here they are able to relate to each other more than in mainstream school because of their shared cultural heritage and identity. They also consider Paiwand a 'safe' site of socialisation, where they can speak without restraint knowing that they will not be misunderstood or misinterpreted:

'It is easier to make friends here. (...) We can relate to each other in this school, whereas in mainstream we can't really, we are from different backgrounds. Over here we are all from the same country, so can relate much more, feel safer...can share more... You understand each other more' (Female student)

The safety of the supplementary school was contrasted, by some pupils, with occasional negative hostility encountered in mainstream schools. Some male students reported being confronted with a negative Afghan stereotype in mainstream school, being called terrorists or asked about Osama Bin Laden. Students said this happened to them very rarely and was meant more of a joke. Nonetheless, it was considered offensive: *'People think they are just joking about but we take it in an offensive way.'*

This comment gave a new meaning to why students considered the supplementary school a 'safe' environment: as one student explained it provided the necessary background for them to fully experience and practice their cultural and religious heritage:

'I think coming here is like an escape from society, from school society, because the way how we mould ourselves there is a bit different to here. Here we can be how we are, we are all Afghan.' (Female student)

For this reason, all students agreed that they need longer breaks between classes, especially around lunchtime to comfortably finish their lunch and socialise with their friends. Without adequate breaks¹⁵, they feel tired and stressed. They suggested that this might increase misbehaviour and lack of concentration, which seems to be at its peak right after the lunch break.

(We need) 'longer breaks so we can communicate more; during lessons we can't so we need time for that too' (Male student).

A young man remarked that living in Britain created a new type of Afghan community:

¹⁵ Students reported that some teachers keep them in during break, either to finish lessons or as a punishment for misbehaving students (not only the culprits but the whole class).

'In Afghanistan we are divided, but here we are friends.' (Male student)

- Help with curriculum subjects

As a group of very motivated young people, they all expressed a strong desire to use all available help to progress academically:

'Most of us come to Maths and English because we want to revise and we want an extra boost' – stated a boy. *'What I like about the school is that if you study, it can affect your future, to get into a good university'* – finished another.

However, they expected some form of acknowledgement that they are *'sacrificing their Saturdays'*. The suggestions included: making the lessons and the school in general *'more fun'* and *'a bit more active'*; going on more trips – educational or other (but not on Sundays because then they lose their whole weekend and will not have chance to rest).

They would also like to have more time in class or additional sessions specifically for asking questions and getting help with homework.

Challenges and areas for improvement

- Quality and efficiency of lessons

Students' main concern focused on the quality and efficiency of the curriculum subject lessons. Focus group participants argued that these classes (Maths, English and Science) should be much more aligned with mainstream education. They should focus on assistance with mainstream school material and gaining practical, useful skills (such as how to write a letter or complaint, how to structure essays):

'They should find a way to copy the curriculum from mainstream and apply it here – so we could have an extra boost.' (Male student)

- Teaching methods should follow those applied at mainstream schools by:

- making marking system clearer;
- lesson structure and learning objectives stated in the beginning of class;
- explaining correct answers after an exam.

'Male student 1: Teachers never give feedback on our work – just give ticks, (...) just mark it in the middle of the lesson, going around the 20 students. Would be better to take them away and give them back next week. (...)

Male student 2: We don't know where and how to improve (...).

Male student 1: We want a mark; then we should be told what is the target and how the incorrect answers should be.

Female student: Yes, target would be important.

Male student 1: We don't have a level to achieve (...)

Female student: We are moved down and up according to our tests, but we don't know how to improve, so just wonder why that is our fault.

Male student 1: We could go through the test paper so we could see the correct answers – but we don't always, depends on the teacher.'

Some students considered this difference in topics and methods between mainstream and supplementary classes very confusing and hindering their mainstream performance. However, other students emphasized that they can learn more and understand the subject better by seeing it from different perspectives.

- Teaching skills

Students highlighted that the quality of classes varied according to the ability and skills of particular teachers. They listed a number of requirements for effective teaching:

- good control over class;
- control and knowledge over the topic/ subject;
- lessons well planned in advance;
- lessons related to mainstream curriculum.

'Interviewer: In what way you think you don't benefit from inexperienced teachers? What do you get from an experienced one?'

Male student 1: Can control the class much better.

Male student 2: They have a structure for the lesson.

Female student: They plan it up; they know what they are teaching.

Male student 3: They relate it to the mainstream school curriculum, which benefits us; an inexperienced teacher won't do that, just gives us a random sheet.

Male student 1: When you come to class, you don't have a learning objective, to know what we are doing, told in the beginning of the lesson.'

Some '*inexperienced teachers*' were considered less familiar with mainstream teaching methods and material, therefore less able to exert control over the class and maintain a good learning environment.

Students highlighted a lack of continuity in teaching caused by the frequent changes in teaching personnel (due to the school having mainly volunteer teachers).

- Communication between students and Paiwand staff members

Students reflected upon the lack of opportunity to express what they want and need in terms of education, lesson content and quality. It was reported that communication channels between students and Paiwand staff members were not adequate:

'They don't do anything to change. They say it's all down to you, if you behave, you learn.' (Male student)

However, it was recognised that the supplementary school is improving in this area, as additional means of feedback were put in place the previous academic year:

'End of last year it happened: we had to talk to our teacher, what we liked.' (Female student)

Although students complained about lack of feedback opportunities to teachers, they themselves seemed very reluctant to voluntarily express their academic and educational

needs to their teacher, as they assumed they will be ignored anyway¹⁶. Only two students claimed to have had raised an issue, and even those were years before:

'I tried about 2 years ago. I told the head teacher I wasn't learning anything, but nothing really happened.' (Female student)

- More freedom of choice regarding subjects and teaching methods:

'We should be able to pick subjects that we are interested in' – expressed a boy.

- Lack of help with homework

Students described that the Saturday school setting does not provide opportunity for asking questions since there is not enough time left after lessons and before teachers leave the school. This is especially problematic with the native language classes, since many students do not have any other means of support with these subjects:

'My mother can't help, she can't read or write Dari, my dad knows but he's at work most of the time, comes home tired – so I have no-one to go to' – explained a young man.

- Prayer time

All participants want to be given time for prayer during afternoon classes – that they had before with previous teachers.

- Organisation of classes

Several issues were mentioned – mainly regarding the organisation of classes - that students could not reach consensus on. They acknowledged the difficulties of providing ideal learning opportunities and satisfying all requests in a Saturday school setting.

- Paiwand classes are determined by children's ability. Some thought that this was not an ideal setting for learning because children of different ages find it difficult to learn together. Even though they have similar abilities in a particular subject, they might find hard to relate to each other and their motivation for studying is different:

'When you get older you realise what's important but some students are younger than us, so they really annoy and distract us' – explained a boy.

- Several students found it unproductive that classes are very big (25-30 students per class – in their year¹⁷).

¹⁶ They seemed reluctant to talk about these problems to their parents too, for the same reason: they did not expect their parents to take their opinion into consideration.

¹⁷ This estimate of their class size contrasts markedly with the estimates presented by teachers: 10 to 20 pupils per class (see page 11.) This inconsistency in data can be explained by the fact that teachers gave an average number, while students referred to the particular class they were attending, which might have been an exceptionally large class. It was outside of the scope of our research to investigate class size in general at the supplementary school.

- Some felt that Paiwand does not offer enough classes to cover all knowledge levels, placing them in classes which are either below or above their abilities.

Students acknowledged that Paiwand has been clearly improving over the years:

'The school is actually improving (...) now they start to be more like mainstream school' – they all agreed.

5.4. Mainstream schools' perspective

Four interviews were carried out with mainstream school staff members: a Deputy Head Teacher from a host school, a Deputy Head from a feeder school, the FSES (Full Service Extended School) Manager and Extended Services Officer from another host school. One interview was completed in July, before the introduction of the new model. The rest were completed in October and November 2012, around the start of the new model. Due to constraints of time and budget, it was not possible to interview a wider selection of mainstream school staff members.

The aim of these interviews was to reveal the main reasons of joining the scheme, the needs that supplementary education can better fulfil, the terms that mainstream schools require in order to enter into partnership with a supplementary school; and their perspective on Paiwand educational services specifically. Only schools participating in the project were included in the study, so the perspective of those schools who were not interested of taking part is not represented in this research.

The schools in question differed among each other regarding their involvement with community organisations: some have only been working with Paiwand; others were in partnership with many community groups and charities from the area. They have been working with Paiwand between 2 and 6 years.

Main areas where mainstream schools require assistance from community groups

All four interviews confirmed that there is a great need for supplementary classes and other services from community organisations.

- Retain migrant's mother tongue and cultural identity:

'For bilingual children it is very important to keep their mother tongue, and the best way is to send them to school – the school will have appropriate resources and skilled staff to teach the language. They need to be taught from scratch also about their culture and identity to be proud of whom they are. (...) It is very important to keep their heritage; that will make them more confident (...) Nurture in them to be confident about their background; not to be ashamed; take the best out of their background and this culture.'
(FSES Manager)

- Help newly arrived migrants in adjusting to their new country, including:

communication with families who cannot speak, read or understand English; translation; help with parents meetings; providing background information on specific communities and help understanding cultural differences, help with emotional and social accommodation.

'New arrivals are coming throughout the whole year – some without any prior education, having no idea about school, not able to read, especially from Afghan background. We would like to be able to offer our new arrivals some support.'
(Extended Services Officer)

The importance of being able to address the whole family was highlighted:

'Parents often adjust harder than students. (...) At times, young people pick up English quickly but their parent won't. So parents don't feel secure, it is hard for them to come to London, which is such a multiethnic place.' (Extended Services Officer)

- Extra support in curriculum subjects

This is especially important for those children who are at *'the bottom end of achievement, within the expected range'* but not performing to their full potential, since mainstream schools cannot provide additional help due to a lack of resources:

'Things that most schools need are literacy and numeracy, so English and Maths teaching because that's what we are measured on at the end of the day, so that is what matters.' (Deputy Head Teacher)

- Extracurricular activities

Art classes and cultural events for improving the emotional and social wellbeing of children and their families, better understanding of each other, stronger integration in the school and wider community:

'Apart from the grades – which are important – we have to make sure that our students feel fine at school and give them as much support as possible.' (Extended Services Officer)

- Pastoral services were also mentioned (by Deputy Head Teacher).

Interviewees emphasized that supplementary education needs to be **flexible and adaptable**, as specific needs and their hierarchy can and do change very quickly in London's multicultural and ever changing environment: for instance, the number and percentage of newly arrived migrant children changes from one year to another, as does their linguistic and cultural background.

These teachers highlighted Paiwand's advantages over mainstream school provision:

- They can build upon their decade-long experience of teaching and involving newly arrived migrants;

- They teach native languages that students might choose for their GCSE exams – which gives the credit to the mainstream school without them having to invest into it;
- In the new model, all children in a class have similar abilities; therefore teachers can provide more concentrated help for them.
- Saturday classes involve the whole family with parallel programmes for parents (for example ESOL classes and women groups) and younger children running simultaneously; which helps to better integrate the whole family into the local and school community;
- They operate with smaller class size that helps children's progress.

Main criteria of entering into partnership with supplementary education service providers:

Participants highlighted the following criteria:

- reliability and professionalism expressed in communication with mainstream school and managing Saturday classes;
- evidence of effectiveness, of making a difference¹⁸;
- thorough knowledge of health and safety regulations;
- their services need to complement mainstream material: they have to adopt the same curriculum and teaching methods in order not to confuse students;
- their services must be cost effective and affordable.

Paiwand was highly appreciated on all of these measures. All four interviewees highlighted the ease of communication with Paiwand staff members and their reliability:

'Paiwand is one of the most effective community groups we work with, because they will always respond immediately. (...) Paiwand is very well organised as a community group, very efficient.' (Deputy Head Teacher)

Mainstream schools expect that children who are chosen to attend supplementary classes should achieve increased levels of confidence and two levels of academic progress.

Obstacles of long term success

The four interviewees listed a number of potential obstacles. However we have to take into account that these interviews were conducted during the transitional period between the two models of supplementary provision, therefore there was a degree of uncertainty about how provision would unfold.

- Financial

Schools have limited resources available to even partly fund these classes; some might only participate in the project if it is provided free of cost to the school, therefore substantial funding from outside sources was deemed necessary.

¹⁸ *'Evidence is important: The Evans report for Key Stage 1 and 2 shows clearly that compared to the borough data, supplementary school students almost always exceed the borough targets.'* (Evans, 2008)

'Everything is dictated by the school budget. So, at the end of the day we have a finite number of resources, we have to look at the cohort of children we have on the school at that particular time and then three times a year we analyse our data of which children are achieving, which are not, and we look at what has been provided for each of those groups that isn't performing.' (Deputy Head Teacher)

- Logistic

As one teacher explained, previous models worked very well because they were organised on a smaller scale, where both children and staff were in familiar surroundings. In the new model, children from several schools will attend classes held at one of three host schools, where many of them won't feel 'at home': they will be in a new environment with other children they don't know, which might affect their academic improvement.

'I was always very resistant to make it bigger because I think one of its successes is that we know the children so well.(...) I think sometimes when things are smaller they are more manageable and better.' (Deputy Head Teacher)

Also, the increase in the number of cooperating partners might increase the number of difficulties and problems in communication, organisation and school management.

Some mainstream staff members expressed caution, regarding this year as a 'test year' to see the results and impacts before they fully commit to the whole three years or longer; others were more optimistic about the project's prospects.

'That's what I am spending this year looking at: so I'm going to be open minded. (...) Maybe there's a better way and I am willing to look at it – this year is my research time.' (Deputy Head Teacher)

Asked about the future of supplementary education, one interviewee declared:

'The future is to work together with mainstream schools. But they have to give appropriate learning environment, and schools need to gain something in return. Especially in those areas where you have a high proportion of a certain minority and there is a group running supplementary school from that minority, that makes sense. It also supports community cohesion and does tick the schools' boxes as well – raising attainment . You just need to prove it.' (FSES Manager)

6. Discussion

One of the main conclusions of this research was that different stakeholder groups – Afghan students, parents, mainstream school and community teachers – had very similar views concerning supplementary school provision. In other words, this study did not find any major discrepancies between the perspectives of these different groups. They all agreed that Paiwand classes present invaluable service to young people and the Afghan community in general by teaching children their native languages, providing cultural and religious studies and help with curriculum subjects. This in turn strengthens their identity and improves their confidence levels. In addition, Paiwand provides a centre for Afghans in London and a sense of community for students and their families.

The areas for improvement identified by research participants were largely the same: need for more funding in order to provide more varied services and improve existing ones; improve quality of teaching; work in close collaboration with mainstream schools and share data about students' academic performance.

Participants had differing views on behaviours exhibited at the Saturday school. The majority of the community teachers reported better behavioural standards at Paiwand classes than in mainstream schools. As explained on page 11 and 12, they attributed this to different expectation and standards of behaviour for Afghans and the rest of the population. Parents who participated in our research study expressed similar views. It seemed that this notion of 'Afghan behaviour' is constructed in opposition to the 'British culture' which was perceived as impolite and lacking respect.

In contrast, some teachers and the majority of students described different experiences. According to them, the supplementary school did not have the same tools and power to keep control over pupils; therefore they thought that behaviour in general is better at mainstream schools than at Paiwand. While this seems a contradiction, it needs to be taken into account that all participating students came from different mainstream schools; and Paiwand's student cohort is from all around London. In addition, our study did not cover all age groups at school, which might influence the findings about behavioural issues. Even research participants emphasized that student behaviour differs not only from mainstream to supplementary school, but from one class to another at the same school. Therefore, research participants could have been referring to different incidents depending on their specific experiences in various mainstream schools. Since this was a qualitative study aiming to explore various perspectives regarding supplementary education, the objective was not to provide a representative picture of diverse perspectives, but more to capture and highlight emerging issues.

Related to behavioural problems, some teachers reflected on the different expectations and cultural norms that Afghan children and young people have to conform to compared to their non-Afghan British peers. The confusion caused by differing expectations and cultural norms was then blamed for some Afghan children and young people exhibiting forms of antisocial behaviour.

While it seems that children have made many friends at Paiwand , and some families have been attending for many years, their contact with each other is restricted to Paiwand classes and events. It does not seem that 'a community' has been formed around Paiwand outside the Saturday school. All participant groups confirmed this: community teachers, parents and students, although the latter seem to be in contact with their peers from Paiwand through social media, particularly Facebook. As described earlier, for many families - women who do not speak English in particular -, the Saturday school provides the main (sometimes the only) site of socialization. Therefore it is crucially important for London's Afghans to keep this service as a focus point for community building.

As mentioned earlier, our research was carried out during a transitory period at Paiwand, when the two types of educational models - supplementary classes for Afghan children, on one hand; and weekend school for children of any background referred by their mainstream schools, on the other – were merged into a new cooperative model of supplementary education. While the new model was introduced in October 2012, our research findings reflect on the previous models, as not enough time has passed to meaningfully evaluate the new educational model. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that the new model was envisaged to address many of the issues raised by interview and focus group participants:

- Provides extra support with curriculum material, taught and assessed with the same methods as in mainstream school.
- Where possible, the same mainstream school teachers will work with pupils on Saturdays, as these teachers are already familiar with the children and are aware of their educational needs.
- The quality of teaching provision is being improved by ensuring that UK qualified teachers will work together with community teachers, and will assess the classes held by community teachers.

The additional help with mainstream curriculum was highly appreciated by members of the Afghan community: voluntary teachers, students and parents. However, their primary objective for attending Paiwand classes was to keep in touch with Afghan culture, languages and community. Mainstream school teachers and staff members too emphasized the importance of native language and cultural service provision, which helps migrants to integrate easier into the larger community. Therefore, it is vital for all parties involved to continue providing these services: language and religious classes, cultural events, translation services, ESOL classes for parents, etc.

It was found that one of the crucial challenges of supplementary education is finding a sustainable balance between the needs of the community that they cater for and the expectations of funders and potential mainstream school partners. Paiwand seems to respond quickly and effectively to the ever changing needs of various stakeholders, demonstrated by this new educational model being introduced, which – as demonstrated above – addresses the majority of issues raised by students and teachers alike.

In addition, this new educational provision gives a great example and paves the way for other minority organisations to not only provide services for their own cultural, ethnic or religious communities, but share their resources with mainstream schools and give back to the larger community.

7. Recommendations

Based on the research findings, some practical recommendations can be made:

1. **Retain Afghan language and culture provision** – Research participant emphasized uniformly the importance of language classes and cultural events. Therefore we recommend continuing, improving and diversifying these services.
2. **Ensure that students can learn both Dari and Pashto** – At the moment, native language classes, Dari and Pashto, are held at the same time. Students expressed a desire to learn both languages; however this is not possible in the current system. Our recommendation for Paiwand is to complete a survey among students and their parents to gain a clear picture of the extent of this need. In case that there is substantial demand for this service, additional language classes should be provided.
3. **Increase student involvement in education** - Our data shows the need for student voices to be heard. Therefore we recommend a teacher - student forum to be held once a term where class representatives and teachers can meet to share feedback and ideas. This would provide Paiwand invaluable information about the students' needs and expectations in terms of their studies; in addition, could potentially raise student involvement in education.
4. **Question time** – Students raised the issue of not having enough opportunity for asking questions about their homework and difficulties with their mainstream school studies. While some teachers allocate time for questions to be asked, we recommend that all community teachers be encouraged to do so at the end of each class.
5. **Adequate breaks** – Students need sufficient time for relaxation, eating and socialising with their friends on Saturdays. Teachers should finish classes on time to ensure that students get the full break between classes.
6. **More 'fun' programmes for children and young people** – Both students and community teachers highlighted the need for more diverse activities such as visits to more museums, trips and excursions, not necessarily related to their studies but catering for their need to socialise with their Afghan friends.
7. **Opportunities to family socialising** - All participants highlighted the importance of supplementary school as a site of socialisation, therefore we recommend that opportunities are found to develop new means for family socialising, for example family fun days.

As discussed in the previous section, Afghan Association Paiwand has already started addressing many of the issues that were mentioned by research participants. Since these were considered essential by many interviewees and focus group participants, Paiwand should continue to further improve these provisions:

- 8. Continue close cooperation with mainstream schools** in terms of mainstream school curriculum, teaching and assessment methods: all groups of research participants emphasized the importance of raising students' mainstream school academic achievement. This can be done most effectively by sharing teaching material and methods, where the supplementary school provides additional help with the exact topics covered in mainstream education, following the same methods (in order to avoid confusing pupils).
- 9. Sharing data about pupil progress with mainstream schools** – Following from the previous point, mainstream and supplementary schools need to share data about students' academic progress. This way, the supplementary school can target their services more effectively to the specific needs of each student.
- 10. Qualified and experienced teachers** – As explained by many participants, the quality of teaching is largely dependent on the abilities, skills and experience of teachers. Therefore, Paiwand has to ensure to provide quality teachers for their students.
- 11. Closer cooperation between Paiwand staff members and the three clusters** – It has already been recognised by Paiwand that the various clusters need to work more closely together and share their experience and knowledge. The new education model introduced in October 2012 is addressing this issue on multiple levels: by merging the two different types of educational provisions and introducing regular cluster meetings for staff members from the three different sites. Closer cooperation between teachers from different clusters should also be encouraged.

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