R: So, we're here today to discuss the things that make you feel like you belong and you fit in at school or college. It might be things that have been helpful and things that made it harder. It will be useful to try and use examples where we can. So, the first sort of area that I wanted to think about is if you had any schooling before you came to the UK, was there anything that you really liked about it?

OMAR: I can answer?  
R: Yeah, of course.

OMAR: In my school, I like respect to the teacher, but there is no respect the teacher. Because whatever you say for the teacher, like I said, ‘Hi teacher’, They no like the teacher name. They said ‘Why? No, tell me in my name’ because it one day in my school in my class and said the teacher and the student like a fight the teacher say, ‘Why you say teacher?’ students say, ‘Why I no say teacher? Because you teacher, your job teacher, I have respect for teacher’. But teacher say, ‘No, in UK, the teacher name no trouble then you can respect. But everyone say, I say it for respect, not trouble. You are my teacher, I can’t say you name, because I have respect for teacher.  
R: So, the teacher said they wanted their name used?

OMAR: Yeah

JOHN: Yes, this is true

OMAR: They say use for use my name, no teacher, no say teacher. When you say for me ‘Teacher’, you say like rubbish or you say like table, ‘come here’ this here.

R: Ohh, I see so is that in the UK?

OMAR: yeah, yes. In Afghanistan is more respect for teacher.

R: Okay, you liked that there was that respect towards the teachers in Afghanistan. Thank you. Does anybody else have anything that they liked about school in Afghanistan?  
S and JOHN: [mumbling]  
R: It’s okay if not. Think about the people in the school, what you learned, or any other things at school.  
SAM: About the UK or Afghanistan?

R: The main focus for out discussion is to talk about the UK, but first I would like to know about your time in school in Afghanistan.  
SAM: In our country and here we love to study, you know, anywhere, everywhere in the UK, in Afghanistan. So, we would like to go to school. We want to learn our language, second language. And now we live in the UK, so, our first focus, umm, to learn English because there is the first language was the UK is English, so, I would like to learn about this thing. Uh, also I have big respect for the teachers, for everything. The teacher who, who work very hard with us because, you know, we are Asian people, so, when teacher learn about English so that's quite different, difficult for us because we don't read English in our country, our country, our first language is Pashto. So, we learn Pashto books, our Holy Quran in our schools, these thing let's– these type of things. So, when I come, when I arrive in UK is so since September, so I don't know, I don't know about the English language, so every time interpreter help me.

R: Okay, so the interpreter is useful in school?

SAM: The interpreter help me, yeah. Because I’m Asylum, you know. So when, when I attend college also I work really hard because, so, I need to learn English.

R: Yeah.

SAM: Yeah. So after half an hour, no, half a year, regularly I going to college and I speak with the another, another country boys and also I live with Sudan boy and the name is \*\*\*, JOHN know him. So our language different, he speak Arabic and I speak Pashto so when we see each other normally which everyday so we talk English with these things so now, I'm better with everything, that's right.

R: Yeah. So, you feel that your English has really improved?

SAM: Yes, thank you.

R: So, I noticed that you talked the English being a barrier when you first came to the UK. Could you tell me a little bit about how that impacted you when you went to college?  
SAM: So, when I first came here, the government move, the government send me to a hotel, \*\*\* Hotel. So, after months, some of the council people came and they give me a flat. Yeah. So. the flat is on \*\*\* [area]. Also, \*\*\* [ charity] I have big support of \*\*\*[charity], so I appreciate for \*\*\*[charity] and they admitted to college. Yeah, because my age was under 16 so they help me to attend the college.

R: When you first started at college, what was it like trying to learn English at the same time as trying to learn lessons?  
SAM: I've my big problem of an English is conversation, some of British people is speak very quickly, so I can't understand. So, when I when I take my first class is into two. So I I give, erm, exams so I passed and the college give me into two classes. So, my teacher is from here. My teacher is British, her name \*\*\*. So, he also from England. She, sorry. Some teacher is from another country. So, our teacher is British so she can be really hard. So ,she tell me about how to live in the UK. How is the rule, [unintelligible], respect for her, and these things. So now I study with teacher \*\*\* [new teacher name] in entry two, so she's also good teacher. Yeah, she also to work with hard with us. Now we done our exams, yeah, so hopefully I've passed it.

R: I hope so. Okay, so, it sounds like although it was difficult, for you it was overall quite a positive experience with lots of support. Does anybody else have anything to add about starting college when you're still learning English?  
OMAR: At time I start college my English is very bad. I know understand English, but no, I'm good talk English, not like more people. But I want to try and I want to learn formal education, and everyday I go college because now I have 100 percent attendance at my college, and the college give me next week, umm next month, one trip to London because they say as your, uh, attendance is very good in your class.

R: Ohh lovely.

OMAR: And you want to give the like a gift, this trip like a gift I have been give and go to London.

R: Okay, so there's been a nice reward for going in every day? Very nice. And how about for you, Jon?

JON: So, now you learn everyone have a same problem. You know you don't have– the English is not our first language. So, I came here [to charity] because I also can't speak English, so. I lived in the town was after months or two months I could move to accommodation in \*\*\* [suburb] so after that I attended College in also appreciate to teacher. I have a big, err, respect for the whole college because they're doing very hard for us. Yeah, and that’s fine. And appreciate \*\*\*[charity] because it is very supportive. Yeah, for me.  
R: Thank you.  
JON: And the moment I don’t feel comfortable because my English is not good so but I try to my best. Yeah.

R: Thank you for sharing that, I am understanding you really well, but it is helpful to know. If you would like a break or to leave, that is okay.

JON: Thank you, I okay.

R: Do you have anything you would like to share John Wek?  
JOHN: Yeah. So, OK. Yeah, it's same like, yeah, it's same like me. It's 50:50. I understand English, but I speak– my speaking is not good.

R: I think it is better than you think.

JOHN: Thank you, yeah.

JC And is there anything that school or college could have done at the beginning that might have made it easier for you?  
SAM: In our country?

R: When you first came to England and started college? Is there anything that your college could have done differently that would have helped you feel like you fit in?  
SAM: Yeah, the college did very better because that's not only one thing we study in the college to speak better, but to learn some lessons or these things so they have give us some experience as we went outside and did some volunteer. Now summer start the teacher say we have; we have some volunteer to go outside to clean the beach.  
R: You will go to clean the beach?

SAM: Yeah. So, we go to some another, another city, \*\*\*. So, it's has very, yeah, good to see the museums and that historical things.

R: Yeah. So, lots of sub opportunities to be outside of the school.  
SAM: Yeah.

R: Okay, that sounds really lovely. And what are everybody else's thoughts? Is there anything that college could, could have done better?  
OMAR: And like he say, one time they give me like a option to meet more people like when they go to \*\*\* [charity] and when they go to the another college and another student the meeting even more people is better. You can speak a bit and then meeting the more people are- they learning more words, learning more English. Yeah, I have people are going to the London, maybe I learn a lot more things because see there is new people and everything is new then for me.

R: Yeah. So, it seems like they gave you lots of chances to do new things and new experiences.

OMAR: Yes.

R: Great. So, it sounds like it's been quite positive with college in terms of the teachers that's come across as a theme that everybody's mentioned teacher that have been quite helpful. What about the other young people in college? Anything good or bad?  
SAM: Our time been very, very good in the college, because we all friends, we all, umm, talk friendly. Some of another country be by example Syrian, Kurdish, Iraq. A lot of asylum-seekers in the college. We did really better talk to each other and English, so, try to our best.

R: Yeah. Okay, so you have built some good relationships with other asylum seekers from across the world?

SAM: Yeah.

R: Lovely. And what about everybody else’s experiences?  
JOHN: Everyone has same situation, same college.  
R: Oh right, okay. What about the other young people in college that aren't asylum seekers, do you spend a lot of time with them?

SAM: No, no. We have a separate, uh, how do you say in English? Separate hub.

R: A separate area? Okay.  
SAM: Yeah, for asylum seeker in the college. Yeah. So, the British students and some other foreign students, for example French or Italian, they come to learn something for example take a engineering classes, take, umm, chef classes, but they have separately. We are Asian students. So yeah, we have another hub for asylum to go there.

R: Is it just asylum seekers? Or are there also people from other countries learning English?

JOHN: Yeah.

OMAR: Yeah.

SAM: Yeah. But some British people have get some, get some degree, yeah, like IT, engineering, or mathematics, or these things they have another hub they have downstairs. They get another study.

R: And do you think that's quite helpful?

JOHN: Yeah.

SAM: Yeah, we are Asian students, yeah. Our focus is to learn English, not to gets some degrees. Yeah.

R: Okay, so you start with the learning English. Do you learn other lessons at college, like maths, or only English language?  
OMAR: Maths and Computers too.

SAM: Yeah, Maths.  
R: Thank you. And do you think it's helpful having your separate space for asylum seeking students?

SAM: Yeah, we are happy. Yeah, because our accent is quite difficult, so some British people so we can’t understand what, what they said. So, when, when we feel comfortable when go to college. So, we also we have we also have a chance to move through to get a class from British people. So first we need to learn English, so we need to get 100% comfortable in English. So, you said I understand English, I can speak, I can write, I can read. So, after that, we need to focus on our future, you know. So, the college said we will promote you, we will provide you everything. What do you want? Yeah. Now I want to be a chef in the future.

R: Ohh, lovely!

SAM: Yeah. So, teachers say just, umm, just study hard this year and next year will be moved to a some food hygiene, we will give you some food hygiene. So also the food hygiene class in the college, so in the kitchen, in the canteen, in the kitchen. Have some British people also.

So, maybe I will try our best next year, I hope so.

R: Yeah, okay, that sounds positive. It's nice that you've got that flexibility to say this is what I want to do and to choose what to learn. And everyone else, what are your experiences with the other young people and also with what you are learning?  
JON: I speaking now is little bit better, but the problem is I no understand as much. The speaking English lesson good, but in reading sometimes I little bit reading as speaking little bit know too much, I think.

R: Thank you, so you are currently learning to speak English and to read English as well?

JON: Yes, is correct.

R: Great, thank you. And what is your experience of the other people in college?

JON: Yes, everyone is good, but everyone is coming for study. Yes and we speaking some English. Yeah, it's really good.

R: Thank you, and how do you feel about what you're learning? Happy or not happy?

JON: Good my English and my Maths as well, yeah. Is good, maths I study is now, yeah, for two three weeks. But is good, I like.

R: Okay, lovely. That's helpful. I’m happy it is going well so far.

JON: Thank you. And John Wek and Omar Khan, was there anything around the other young people that you would like to share?  
OMAR: Yeah, very good.

JOHN: Very good.  
R: Okay, it sounds like you've all built up some nice friendships.  
OMAR: We go to the college, like, for like a home. For everyone is just one, like, one home. Everyone is very friendly and happy for everyone to speak happy for everyone, and the same as in the family.

R: That is lovely, it sounds very positive, thank you for sharing that. Did anyone have anything to add about the lessons before we move on?  
JOHN: Yeah, we like it.

OMAR: Yeah, I have four lessons in college, like, [unintelligible], English, Maths and Computers. Yeah, but I really happy, I like the digital, using computer. Umm, I go to for every one on time and don't miss no Maths, no [unintelligible], no English. I go to for every one but I really like computer.

R: Yeah, that's nice. It's good to have a favourite subject.

JOHN: Yeah, for me English is good.

R: English is your favourite?

JOHN: Yeah, I don't. I don't like, I don't like Maths. I don't like but I passed my exam.  
R: You passed it? Well done, that’s excellent! So Maths is okay, but English is better.

JOHN: English is better, yeah.  
R: It might be useful to think a little bit as well about how you feel that you can be yourself at school. Is there anything that comes to mind?

SAM: Yeah. Yeah, because that’s why I love the UK, because, you know, we, we see everything on the same way. We don't say that's he from Afghanistan, he's from here, or everyone. The, the rule of law is democracy, and democracy is that we don't feel outstanding [outcast/different] or uncomfortable, so when come to college so we feel comfortable and

no one said to us, ‘You aren’t from this country, why you come here?’, yeah, or, ‘Why don't go back to your country?’. So when I come to college I feel about myself, so I’m from Afghanistan and I come to learn English. So talk to each other friendly.  
R: Yeah, thank you. And Jon Wek, what is your experience of feeling you feel like you can be yourself at college?

JOHN: Yeah. But sometimes I am shy. Sometimes, and yeah, I do not speak with too much people, yeah. Just my like, some, like, Arabic friends and some like Albania, no English people. Because I am shy so that's why I don’t speak to much.

R: Does how people treat you at college make you feel shy or is it that you're naturally shy?

JOHN: [Laughing] I don't know, I don't know.  
SAM: He naturally shy.

JOHN: [laughing]

JON: [Laughing]

OMAR: [Laughing]

R: Thank you, and for you, Jon?  
JON: Is the same

R: The same? Okay, so you feel that you can be yourself at school?

JON: So, I came by myself so didn’t speak to each other and was not comfortable, but I feel very brave because English is not my first language. So, when with some friends from another country and talk to English so I feel very brave. I say, ‘I can do it. I can speak English, so I'm I'm perfect, yeah’.  
SAM: He's very good now, yeah.

R: That is really helpful, thank you. And I think you are right, it is very brave. And I think your English is better than you think it is. And Omar, is there anything you would like to share?  
OMAR: It's like you're in there is a respect for everyone. Respect for religion. Respect for yourself. Respect for your skin. Not like they say, ‘you black, I white’, nothing like this. ‘You're Muslim, I'm Christian’, not like this. ‘I no Like your friend’, No. No. Like everyone have respect for everyone. Like, have respect.

R: Yeah.

OMAR: One time I go for pray. Then no people will say, ‘Why you pray here? Why you Muslim? Go to your country, Why you from Afghanistan? Why you come?’ they, they have respect for you coming in UK and that you live in the UK, and they have like a big hope for you.

R: Yeah. And how do you think that impacts you?

OMAR: Yeah, it good.

JOHN: In France maybe not space Muslim, not in France, but here is more respect.  
R: We are over halfway through now, so let’s pause for a break. We have done a lot of talking, and it will be good to pause for a moment.

R: Okay, welcome back everyone. So, we've have been talking about how people understand you and how you feel you can be yourself in college. Are there any times that you have felt misunderstood, or that people haven't been very respectful?  
SAM: So no, I haven't.  
OMAR: I don’t have any complaint.  
JOHN: Okay, for me same, yeah.  
JON: No, it’s not.

JOHN: [Laughing].  
R: Well, that makes me feel very happy.

JOHN: Sorry for the laugh, yeah, really sorry.

R: That is okay, as long as you're not laughing at people and are being respectful.

JOHN: Yeah, I am. It’s just, I’m sorry.

R: That's okay, thank you. So, we've talked a bit about what you're learning in school. How do you find the lessons? Do you think the lessons are easy, hard, or in the middle?  
SAM: So, first time when I went to college because the accent quite different from US country and UK English. Yeah English and it's called different for example. We know the English is, is a world country or something that and they used everywhere, but in our country, some, some books we use and English, so the English accent is uses an accent. So it's quite difficult so, I, I understand that everything this spring, I came here, umm, when teacher said the things in English, so I feel very difficult. And was I thinking that was it like that, for example aeroplane in US English they say AIR, in UK English say AER, so that's quite different. This is very difficult. And now when he said when say something, teacher, they give us three example. How I can give you that example? Say for past and present tense we use past for example. So, on the past use ‘I was worried’, these things, so teacher, with this sentence teacher gave us 3 examples. So now you understand. Its different in US English and UK.

R: So there really helpful thing is that the teachers have given you examples the like aeroplane and airplane, they point them out.  
SAM: And that's, they give us example in English, not in our language. Sometimes teachers say translate it. So, when the translator on Google so first thing teacher say, ‘please translate on the English not in your language because so you come here to learn English, not your language’. Because some, umm, some language, some words is quite different though difficult for example ‘disgusting’, or these things, so I translate it in our language I understand, but I can't say to teach that what disgusting is in English, English meaning is done. So, teacher said, please translate in English then you learn better.  
R: Okay. So, something around having all of the knowledge but having to learn how to say it the right way so that people understand that you've got that knowledge?

SAM: Yeah.

R: Okay, that's really helpful. Thank you. And for anybody else, anything around whether the lessons are good or anything that college could do better?  
OMAR: I have one. About what’s in the, like a class. And here in the class, like in same class six or seven Kurdish, four or three Afghans. Like in my clasSam: seven Kurdish, four Afghan, and two Brazilian, and two Sudanese, and three in Arabic language. But this one is not good because the four Afghan they speak Pashto and the same time and Kurdish they speak Kurdish at same time, they can't try English this one is not good for you like the subject yeah. One Afghan, one Kurdish, one Arabic, will every time try English, they can speak English is better, I don't think speaking the same language they can learn English.  
R: So, you like it better when there's more mix?

OMAR: Yeah, more mix.

R: Then you're not tempted to speak in Pashto.

JOHN: If you don’t mind, I can give you a solution to solve the problem.

R: Of course.

Omar: Yes

JOHN: Because in our class some Afghani, some of Kurdish, some of Venezuela, some of Ecuador. So, different people from different country. So, our teacher have a rule in our class. You have a rule in our class. So, that rule is that, for example, in our class we have twelve students, the class is very big, so teacher make 4 tables in the corner of the class, for example tables is here, here, here, and here [using hand to gesture around the room].

R: Mhmm. So far away from each other?

JOHN: Yes, far away from each other. So, when I come and see my Afghani friend we speak in our language. So, teacher say, ‘you can understand his language’, teacher say, ‘you can't sit here, you can sit with Venezuela’. For example, he's from Venezuela, so he can't understand your language, you can, you can speak in English language. So ohh, I have this room for the teacher, so give us the big solution for these things. Because my friend is very far from me, so if I say in my language ‘give me that’, or, ‘what is that answer this question?’, so teacher said, teacher says teacher says it’s not good excuse. Need to speak in English. So maybe that's good solution.

R: Yeah, to split everyone up?

OMAR: Just I said this, and here in this class is to English for Afghan. But how can English? And I have 4 Afghan in my class, they no understand. They want to, I translate for them, this one, this one is not good, like, if you are alone in one class you can try every time your English.

R: Yeah.

OMAR: Not looking for help from more people, but yeah.

R: Yeah. So it’s good to be with the people from other countries so that you have to speak in English. Jon, was there anything you wanted to add at all?  
JON: The sentences are quite difficult, but the teacher is telling to us in an easy way, so if I'm trying to understand the teacher I show the picture on the Google.

SAM: For example avocado, the fruit. So, I kind of, I don't know what they were Avocado. So, teacher say can give pictures so they work hard with these things for us, so then try to learn on the best easy way. So that's good. So every teacher is same.

R: So it's, it's coming back to those teachers actually breaking it down and giving you examples okay. I think that's really helpful, thank you. And it's sounds like there's a lot of things they're doing very well at the moment, which is really good to hear. Let’s discuss now the things that you like to do in your free time both in and out of college?  
SAM: I don’t have any big hobbies, so for the lunchtime, break and lunch, so we get a lunch, sometimes take a call, or go to beach side to get fresh air.

JOHN: Yeah, yeah, we both. We got together and see the beach view. It was really good, everywhere is green.

SAM: Yeah, after lessons and after college just been out and, umm, meet with friends. Been to like a park or these things, yes  
JOHN: Yes.  
SAM: Take a dinner together and also take some fun, that is our record of our time.

R: Nice, it’s nice to go out and see your friends. Are the people that you meet after school the same friends from school as well, or they from different places?

SAM: They are from different places. Yeah, we have 4 of asylum-seekers so they have, they don’t come to college, they just came new here like 1 months. They tried to get the college, but now the college is full and it is last term, last term of studies. So that’s not in college.  
R: Ohh OK. And are there any groups that you go to or anything that helps you feel like you fit in outside of college?  
SAM: First is cricket, and also I will do the gym to feel fit, yeah, so. Yeah, but the college and the cricket been finish, no not really start  
JOHN: Yeah, matches.

SAM: Yeah, matches stuff, but I don't want to play again.

R: You don’t want to?

JOHN: Because he is scaring.  
SAM: Yeah. Because I'm not a good player, so I will try to my best. You know, boiling and, yeah. But I don’t want to go to cricket or go to cricket club.  
R: But you might go and watch some of the matches.

SAM: Yeah, because he [JOHN] want to start again. Yeah, so when he have a match definitely I will go to watch.  
R: And John Wek, was there anything else you like to do in your free time that helps you feel like you belong?  
SAM: So, he is every time with me, so.  
R: Oh lovely, you spend lots of time together?  
JOHN: Yeah. Outside of college I like cricket. I'm good in cricket.

R: Oh are you? I don't know much about cricket. Do you like to bat or to bowl?  
JOHN: Yeah, bowler. I’m batting and bowling, but bowling is quite nice. Bowling is good. Bowling is very good. My coach told me, ‘focus on your bowling’, because my bowl is very fast, yeah.

R: Very nice. Well, good. I'm glad cricket starting up again then so you can go back soon. And what about for you, Omar Khan?  
OMAR: Things outside of college. I don’t have something. I finish college, go home, and for one hour relax and go back just alone my work. I don’t, like, meeting more people. I just go alone to the beach and sometimes the park and sometimes go back and one hour or two reading and computer using computer.

R: So, for you it's important to have some relaxed time and some downtime outside.

OMAR: Yes.

R: Sometimes a break is really useful. I'm the same. When I go home, I like to sit down for a little bit first. So we have had a lovely discussion today, but was there anything else that you wanted to share?  
Like in holiday times. And there's activities that sometimes \*\*\* [charity] and other organisations put on. And also that the college class on a Wednesday.  
SAM: So the month of Ramadan starts. So yeah, you know, yeah, you have to do normally I woke up at 9:00 o'clock with this times I sleep till maybe 11 or 12, because just wake up early in the morning or to take breakfast, so after 16 or 15 hours we don't eat anything so that if we if we take a rest, then maybe that time is going really good [fast], you know. Yes, I know, now is the holiday so we sleep later. And I know \*\*\*[charity] have activities we can do.  
R: Thank you for sharing that. And thank you everybody so much for coming and for sharing your experiences with me today.