

## Introduction

Young people migrating to the UK on their own face uncertain futures as they turn 18. Some gain secure legal status, while for others becoming 'adult' involves a transition to 'illegality' and invisibility. They may go 'missing' (in institutional terms), engage in secondary migration or, if returned to a country of origin, re-migrate back to Europe or elsewhere in the world. Our research sheds light on the reality of young people's outcomes and considers the implications for policies governing their lives.

# BECOMING ADULT

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Researching  
young migrants'  
uncertain futures

BECOMING  
ADULT



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

## The project

Becoming Adult: conceptions of futures and wellbeing among migrant young people in the UK is a three-year ESRC-funded project (October 2014–September 2017). The study will enhance understanding about:

- The lived experiences of young men and women who migrated alone to the UK as children as they make the transition to ‘adulthood’.
- How young people in this situation conceptualise and seek to realise their futures and maintain a sense of wellbeing.
- The extent to which there is a fit between young people’s conceptualisations of their futures and the immigration and social care policies governing their lives.

The study involves young people from Albania, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Vietnam.

**“A key challenge is keeping hope and not giving up... keeping going now is like building the future”**

Peter, aged 20 from Eritrea

## Research design

The research consists of three work packages:

Young people’s conceptions of futures and wellbeing

In-depth longitudinal work; biographical narrative interviews; social network mapping; monitoring wellbeing outcomes.

Cultural conceptions of futures and wellbeing

Analysis of different cultural media (including poetry, music, soap operas, fictional literature, social media and oral histories) and how (if at all) they influence young people’s decisions and actions.

Policy conceptions of futures and wellbeing

Analysis of policies; interviews with international, national and local stakeholders; documentary analysis of ‘pathway plans’; generating a national profile of outcomes for former independent migrant children transitioning to ‘adulthood’.

## Research team

Dr Elaine Chase (Principal Investigator)  
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Dr Nando Sigona (Co-Investigator)  
Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham

Professor Dawn Chatty  
Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford

Dr Francesca Meloni  
Post-doctoral researcher, University of Oxford

Jenny Allsopp  
DPhil candidate, University of Oxford

Project assistants  
Maranata Geday, Semhar Haile, Shafiq Hussaini, Daniel Muhr, Habib Rezaie, Gull Zada, Mohammed Zameree.

Advisors

The team is supported by an advisory group made up of national and international experts in the field including young people who have direct experience of the issues investigated through the research.