



Gateshead
Psychological
Service

SUPPORTING REFUGEE & ASYLUM SEEKING YOUNG PEOPLE

BEST PRACTICE FROM RESEARCH

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What is this document for?

Schools are considered as a protective factor and can support the development of resilience in refugee young people and their families (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017). Failure in school can have a disastrous impact on young people who are trying to reconstruct their lives and their self-esteem and develop hope for the future.

This is a supportive and practical document on how best to guide the transition and integration of asylum seeker and refugee young people and families into the school community, at both primary and secondary level. It is an evidence-based document compiled from the literature exploring asylum seekers and refugees' educational experiences. From the literature, strategies have been identified and split into three sections: whole school level, classroom level and individual level. Throughout the booklet there are links to relevant websites to support strategies and additional practical sources that can be found at the end of the document. For any additional support with asylum seekers and refugee families please get in touch with the relevant team from Education Gateshead Service.

Introduction to Asylum Seekers & Refugees

Almost every local authority has young people with refugee backgrounds. People seeking asylum are looking for a place of safety. Many come from unstable social situations and have a high level of anxiety. With threats to safety common, many young people find it difficult to adapt to life and feel safe in their environment, with some having limited or no schooling experience. Not only are they adapting to a new life but the pressures to fit into the school environment, make friends, adapt to rules and feel safe enough to learn, can be overwhelming. The definition of a refugee according to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is:

“A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

Some organisations do use different terminology and definitions. For example, The City of Sanctuary UK refers to asylum seekers and refugees as Sanctuary Seekers. It is important to be aware of different definitions used.

In the UK, a person becomes a refugee when the government agrees that an individual who has applied for asylum meets the definition in the Refugee Convention. The government will then 'recognise' that person as a refugee and issue them with refugee status documentation.



INTRODUCTION

Trauma Outline

Mohamed & Thomas (2017) stated that the refugee experience could be divided into three parts: pre-migration, migration and post-migration. All three of these parts come with heightened emotions, uncertainty and loss. Each part is outlined below, so that we might deepen our own understanding of the refugee experience.

Pre-Migration

Pre-migration refers to the period before an individual flees their home country, becoming a refugee. This time usually involves political violence, war and conflict, chaos and danger (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017). For young people this can mean limited or no access to education, with schools being destroyed or converted into shelters (Madzina & Thondhlana, 2017). UNICEF (2013) said that "Syrian children risk being 'a lost generation' whose dreams and opportunities for the future in their own country of birth have been eroded by the civil war." This is true of many young people from countries around the world.

Take some time to imagine what this experience might be like for the children, young people and their families.

Migration

Migration refers to the journey the individual takes when leaving their home country and arriving at their host country. This comes with great uncertainty, leaving their home and family behind, potential separation from loved ones, the fear of crossing waters and the experiences of refugee camps (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017).

Post-Migration

Post-migration refers to the settling period within the host country once an individual arrives. This time can be filled with hope and anticipation for some, whilst others may be grieving the loss of their homeland, possessions and loved ones (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017). Often, young refugees will say that starting school is a difficult experience where they feel isolated and scared (Hek, 2005). Stressors within post-migration can have a significant impact on young people's mood and wellbeing (Heptinstall, Sethna & Taylor, 2004).



INTRODUCTION



Psychological Theory

Hobfall et al. (2007) developed five key principles when supporting and caring for individuals who have experienced disaster, tragedy or loss. These principles are useful to consider with any change or transition in a person's life. All strategies identified throughout this booklet will come under at least one of the five key principles, helping you structure the support around a child and family so they can thrive in your school. Please go to source A to complete a reflective exercise on each principle.



Image from Google Images (2023)

Safety

A sense of safety can reduce stress responses. Safety not only includes health and personal wellbeing but protection from negative news, bullying and anything that extends the feeling of threat (Hobfall et al, 2007). This is particularly relevant for asylum seekers and refugees. It is therefore important that school is a safe and welcoming environment.

Calm

Being able to regulate our emotions is a key aspect of wellbeing. Individuals who have experienced adversity in their life may struggle to manage their emotions, struggling to self-regulate emotionally and physiologically. When people feel calm, they can learn, socialise and explore. It is important we provide calm and nurturing environments with co-regulatory support.



INTRODUCTION



Connectedness

Connectedness is essential to create feelings of belonging, building relationships and feeling part of a community. Being connected with others can lower feelings of anxiety and depression. It is important to provide young people and families with opportunities to interact and build connections.

Self and Community Efficacy

Self-efficacy is about believing you have choice and control within your environment. Many asylum seekers and refugees have very little control over their lives when they first enter the UK (Sobitan, 2022). Giving opportunities for families to feel they have a sense of control back and their voices are heard, can be powerful and lead to more positive outcomes, including feelings of empowerment and optimism.

Hope

Hope motivates people to keep going and believe in positive futures even during difficult times. Hope is something that needs to be actively cultivated, celebrating small successes and wins.

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES



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Whole school strategies involve sending clear communication that your school welcomes all young people and is refugee friendly, ensuring that pupils and families feel safe and supported.

Admission and Induction

- Gathering as much background and family information as possible at the first meeting is essential. This may include finding out about reasons for fleeing and the family's country of origin, languages spoken, educational experiences and religious or dietary requirements (e.g. Halal), keeping all information clear and factual (Reakes, 2007).
- It is important to ensure their names are pronounced and spelt properly by all staff.
- Creating a welcome pack, please see source B on a check list of what you may want to include within it (DfE, 2012). Research has found that having information on people, places and rules would help better with settling in (Hastings, 2012). Consider having a separate one for parents/carers and young people (Hastings, 2012).
- Initial meet and greet with new arrivals, this may involve showing parents/carers around the school. Explaining about the subjects their child will study and how young people are supported to learn English whilst at school. You may want to discuss the possible differences in teaching methods between the UK and the child's home country (DfE, 2012; Hasting, 2012).
- Support with language barriers and adapt resources where possible. If the family is new to English, adapt the resources to meet their needs. This can include producing dual language newsletters, as well as homework and books, so they can participate in home learning with the child. Research highlights the importance of this, "To work with the parents, it's verbal communication as well as visual. ...we also use our additional language resources to make sure that they're settled with what's required for children outside of school time" (Madzina & Thondhlana, 2017, p.16). The following website includes resources designed to support parents/carers where English is an additional language [International New Arrivals | EAL Support Resources | Twinkl](#)
- Consider essential arrangements such as uniforms, this may include a loan of uniforms or sourcing alternative ways of accessing the uniform. Other things to consider may include school transport and if the child is eligible to free school meals (DfE, 2012).

During the induction process and when speaking to young people and families, it is important to consider and respect that they may not want to share background information because of possible traumatic experiences (Rae, 2023). Any first meeting must be approached sensitively.



WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES



Family and Community Links

Young people will benefit from schools that promote good home and school links, higher levels of pastoral support, offering parents/carers the chance to access support, and promoting and recognising the importance of home language and cultural traditions. It is important to establish a preferred communication channel with the family and what they are most comfortable with.

- Consider working with refugee learners and their families in their home environments. Madzina & Thondhlana (2017) interviews with teachers highlight the benefits this can have “**mum has been brilliant. When I go round to mum, she's always got loads of questions for me, and I've always got loads of questions for her**” (p.17).
- Working together with multi-agency teams to support language development, research suggests that when parents/carers feel empowered and supported with their language capabilities this may lead to more positive outcomes (Madzina & Thondhlana, 2017). Research shows that siblings are often the ones providing educational support at home, consider providing support for extended family language development (Hastings, 2012).
- Create social gatherings like coffee mornings for families, invite parents/carers to attend assemblies and look at displays of work. This can help parents/carers to feel part of a school community where they're valued. It can also help them to meet other parents/carers of young people within their class (Madzina & Thondhlana, 2017).
- Set up regular check-ins with parents/carers and allow them to raise concerns or ask questions openly. This will ensure they are kept up to date with the young person's learning and how their young person is being supported. This can help foster a common understanding on the child's wellbeing and education (Madzina & Thondhlana, 2017).
- Consider assigning a mentor or a family support worker from the school as a key point of school contact (Madzina & Thondhlana, 2017).
- Have a translator available so that families can ask and answer relevant questions during meetings or have access to English as an Additional Language (EAL) technology such as a translator app.

Please note the above strategies need to be considered with care and advice, support from external agencies may need to be sought.

Partnership

Partnership with specialist colleagues and voluntary sectors can be beneficial, particularly those who will provide on-site guidance, advice, and support.

Consider implementing interventions such as peer-support schemes and expert partnerships with external refugee youth charities. (Gladwell, 2019).



WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES



Staff Development and Training

Opportunities for staff to have ongoing training in meeting and understanding the needs of asylum seeking and refugee young people should be considered (Reakes, 2007; Sobitan, 2022). Teachers play a fundamental and positive part in the lives of asylum seeking families. Having school staff who understand their needs is a protective factor for asylum seekers and refugee young people in school (Mohammad & Thomas, 2017). It is important sufficient training and support is made available.

EAL Pedagogies

- The Bell Foundation website [The Bell Foundation - Changing lives and overcoming exclusion through language education \(bell-foundation.org.uk\)](https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk)
- British Council website [School and teacher resources | British Council](https://www.britishcouncil.org/schools)
- Languages Connect website [Language Mats for the Classroom | Languages Connect](https://www.languagesconnect.org/)
- Middle Web website [Translanguaging Lets MLs Use Everything in Their Toolboxes \(middleweb.com\)](https://www.middleweb.com/)

Grief, Loss and Bereavement

Stress associated with being an asylum seeker can include bereavement and loss at any stage of the migration phases.

- Winston's Wish website [Winston's Wish - giving hope to grieving children \(winstonswish.org\)](https://www.winstonswish.org/)
- Child Bereavement website [Child Bereavement UK](https://www.childbereavementuk.org/)
- Strong Bonds website [Refugees - Trauma, Grief and Loss - Strong Bonds - Building Family Connections \(jss.org.au\)](https://www.strongbonds.org.au/)

Understanding Mental Health Needs

Various studies show that refugee and asylum-seeking young people are at higher risk of mental health problems, with higher rates of anxiety and depression being reported among those who have witnessed war. Whilst clinical mental health needs require support from a trained professional, it may be useful to have a basic understanding of the signs and symptoms of some of these mental health needs.

- Young Minds website [Resources For Professionals Working With Young People | YoungMinds](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/)
- Mentally Healthy Schools website (specific focus on refugee and asylum seekers) [Refugee and asylum seeker children: Mentally Healthy Schools](https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org/)



WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES

Staff Development and Training



Trauma-Informed Practice

Trauma informed practice approaches are useful to use with all young people and adults regardless of lived experiences. Some of these young people may have experienced trauma impacting their ability to regulate emotions. Focusing on training which supports an understanding on how young people may be affected can help create a more curious and open attitude workforce. Below are some recommendations for where to start:

- Beacon House website [Home \(beaconhouse.org.uk\)](http://beaconhouse.org.uk)
- Safe Hands Thinking Minds (Karen Triesman) [Safe Hands Thinking Minds | Relational and developmental trauma in children](#)
- Dan Siegel's website [Dr. Dan Siegel Home Page - Dr. Dan Siegel \(drdansiegel.com\)](http://drdansiegel.com)
- Edutopia website [5 Trauma-Informed Strategies for Supporting Refugee Students | Edutopia](#)
- Dr Tina Rae developing a support plan video [Refugee Support Plan by Dr Tina Rae - YouTube](#)
- Know Me to Teach Me (2020) and Inside I'm Hurting – Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in Schools (2007) by Louise Bomber

Reflective Approaches and Staff Wellbeing

Having the opportunity to share best practice and a safe space to reflect with colleagues can be beneficial (Reakes, 2007). Group or individual models can both be effective.

- Please find attached solution circle templates in source C, these can support reflexive conversations.
- Mentally Healthy Schools website (tips for staff wellbeing) [10 steps for school staff wellbeing | School staff wellbeing ideas | Supporting staff childrens mental health | Anna Freud Centre](#)

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES



Whole School Ethos and Policy

Schools need to consider their ethos and atmosphere, ensuring the school promotes an atmosphere of respect and trust for all.

Policies

School policies are a powerful tool for helping young people feel safe and that they belong, resulting in them being ready to learn. It is useful to consider restorative approaches as opposed to behavioural consequences to manage any challenging behaviour (Hek, 2005).

- School Policy Support The Bell Foundation [School Policies - The Bell Foundation \(bell-foundation.org.uk\)](https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk)

Welcoming Environment

Many young people report how unfamiliar and confusing the school environment can be when they first start.

- An audit of the setting environment can help to create feelings of safety and belonging. Sensory signals that are familiar to us could be very frightening or arousing to children who are new to the country. Consider busy times, lighting, smell and noise, put in adaptations if possible. The following links offer sensory audit templates [4. Environmental sensory audit and checklist for schools and classrooms.docx \(live.com\)](https://www.live.com) and [Sensory Audit for Schools and Classrooms \(buckshealthcare.nhs.uk\)](https://www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk)
- Displays are a good way of promoting a feeling of belonging in school for refugees and asylum seekers. "Where we come from" is often used and involves all young people within the school.



- Have multilingual signs around the school. Involve pupils in creating multilingual dictionaries, storybooks and other resources.

Images from Google Images (2023)

School Advertisement and Communication

Utilise the school website or any other online platforms to communicate that the school welcomes all families. Highlight the different cultures and backgrounds in the school and how these are celebrated (e.g. refugee week).



WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES

Whole School Ethos and Policy



Discrimination and Bullying

A key theme within the research was experiences of bullying and racial harassment (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017; Sobitan, 2022). Educating the whole school on celebrating and understanding differences and welcoming refugee and asylum seekers can be helpful. School belonging is enhanced when students perceive their characteristics to be accepted and there is a reported feeling of safety when respect and an interest in their culture is shown (Sobitan, 2022). The arrival of new young people provides opportunities for all ages to learn about empathy, sharing, caring, respect and kindness. Key Leaders website provides whole school anti racism information including a reflective auditing tool [Whole school anti-racism audit | The Key Leaders \(thekeysupport.com\)](https://www.thekeysupport.com/whole-school-anti-racism-audit).

- Working with other multi-disciplinary teams that support in challenging racism. This may include the police, youth groups, football clubs, local authority departments and others.
- Consider involving parents/carers in any projects and work on issues of race and justice (DfE, 2012). It is important to approach this with care, some young people and their families may not want to be involved in teaching opportunities and sharing their experiences. Recounting such experiences may reduce feelings of safety and be triggering for the individual (Hobfall et al., 2007).
- Teaching opportunities can challenge and breakdown racism and stereotyping, resulting in the development of positive attitudes. Research highlights the stereotyping these young people may experience, “They told me to go back to my country” (Sobitan, 2022, p. 268) and, “they do make jokes about us... the Taliban's arrived or something like that ... she's going to blow a bomb or something” (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017, p.255). The curriculum can be used to promote diversity and equality. Consider having discussions about asylum seekers and to support empathy, diversity, mutual respect and understanding of human rights (Rae, 2023).
- Many young people might be confused or have questions about asylum seekers and refugees and what they are seeing on television and social media. There are several websites which can support conversation around understanding conflict and war. Some of these include UNICEF [How to talk to your children about conflict and war | UNICEF Parenting](https://www.unicef.org/parenting/parenting-articles/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-conflict-and-war) or Teacher Vision [Talking With Children About War and Violence In the World - TeacherVision](https://www.teacher-vision.com/teaching-ideas/teaching-ideas-for-children-about-war-and-violence)



WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES

Whole School Ethos and Policy



Discrimination and Bullying

- Young people can experience further exclusion from their peers due to the language barrier and difficulties in communicating with one another. You may want to encourage the use of home languages where appropriate. Promoting all pupils to learn greetings and goodbyes in relevant languages.
- During the young person's induction process, it is important they fully understand exactly what bullying is and what procedures they should follow if they are bullied. By doing this it may avoid the young person underestimating the amount of bullying that they may experience (Hastings, 2012).
- Effective monitoring and guidelines for all staff on what falls under racial harassment and what does not. Consequences against pupils who partake in racial harassment are needed and these should be seen by all to be fair. These consequences should be understood by all pupils and staff and carried out consistently (DfE, 2012).
- Young people who have been victims of racial harassment will need support. Action should be taken, to ensure that the individual is not subject to further incidents. You may want to provide long-term support, including the use of peer support schemes and mentors. The Schools' Standards for Racial Equality in Schools is a document which can support this [school standard \(18/1/00\)](#) (DfE, 2012).

CLASSROOM APPROACHES



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CLASSROOM APPROACHES



The classroom strategies outlined below are divided into the key themes that appear within the literature. These strategies should be able to be implemented within a classroom setting, without incurring additional costs.

Supporting Classroom Induction

A key theme within research is the presence of a caring and committed adult (Gladwell, 2019): their presence is important for young people joining new classrooms. Alongside an adult who will support them for a long time, there are other things to consider when welcoming a new arrival to your classroom (Department for Education and Employment, 2012):

- Notify the class that they will be receiving a new arrival.
- Introduce yourself and write down your name for the child.
- Learn the correct pronunciation of the child's name.
- Try to greet the child at the start of every day or lesson.
- Ensure the child is sitting with sympathetic peers, ideally those who speak the same language.

For some young people, their prior education may have been interrupted or this could be their first experience of formal education (Rutter, 2006). Rutter (2006) shares the experience of one teacher; "I had to teach her to use a pencil, ruler and scissors when she first arrived" (p.165). If this is the case, then children will require additional support with learning the basic skills for being in a classroom.

Creating a Peer Group

New arrivals place high value on forming relationships with their peers. Research has highlighted that, to help young people settle, they like to have someone to talk to who shares their background, culture and race (Sobitan, 2022). There is also a benefit in mixing with other young people from a variety of backgrounds (Hek, 2005). To support newly arrived young people build peer relationships, consider the following:

- Create opportunities for social time outside of the classroom (e.g., social trips) (Sobitan, 2022).
- Creative workshops to increase self-esteem and feelings of popularity (Rousseau, 2005).
- Create peer support groups with young people of similar backgrounds.
- Befriending/buddy system.

Be mindful that some young people have previously not been in education or in education systems that are more formal than the UK. Collaborative learning activities could be very new to them; ensure that these are structured and modelled appropriately.

CLASSROOM APPROACHES



Celebrating Differences

Celebrating differences within any school or classroom creates a culture of acceptance and inclusion, allowing young people to feel safe and welcomed within the school environment. A few suggested activities to try when celebrating differences:

- Raise awareness of forced migration (Gladwell, 2019). Some suggested resources are below:
 - [\(18\) Home | an Aardman and Save the Children UK short film - YouTube](#)
 - My Name is Not Refugee by Kate Milner
- Use books and stories to raise awareness of the refugee experience. Some suggestions are below:
 - *The Journey by F Sanna*
 - *The Suitcase by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros*
 - *Migrants by Issa Watanabe*
 - *The Arabic Quilt: An Immigrant Story by Aya Khalil*
 - *The Boy at the Back of the Class by Onjali Rauf*
 - *When Stars are Scattered by Victoria Jamieson*
 - *Other Words for Home by Jasmine Warga*
 - *My Two Blankets by Irena Kobald*
- Use books and stories to understand and celebrate different cultures, faiths and religions. Some suggestions are below:
 - *In my Mosque by M. O. Yuksel*
 - *Hats of Faith by Medeia Cohan*
 - *Halal Hot Dog by Susannah Aziz*
 - *The Proudest Blue by Ibtihaj Muhammad*
 - *The Colours of Us by Karen Katz*
 - *The Best Diwali Ever by Sonali Shah*
 - *Everybody Cooks Rice by Norah Dooley*
 - *Welcome to Our World by Moira Butterfield*
 - *This is How We Do It: One Day in the Lives of 7 Kids from Around the World by Matt Lamothe*
 - [Ramadan Book-A-Day Resource | rabiakhokhar.com](#)
- Complete the 'Tree of life' intervention as a class (Sobitan, 2022). <https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/tree-of-life.pdf>



Differentiation

Engaging in learning where the content and curriculum are adapted to meet the individual child's needs is important in settling any new learner (Gladwell, 2019). Young people's progress should be assessed and reassessed following a specific period. To ensure the best progress is made, differentiation should take place.

- If possible, include or seek advice from EAL staff in planning literacy content.
- Choose texts that have clearly printed text and relevant illustrations.
- When introducing a new text, take time to give an overview to young people in their home language.
- Support introducing new texts or topics with visuals or artifacts from the story.
- Spend time discussing the meaning of words. Give particular focus to idioms, which will be specific to the English language.
- Where possible, use concrete resources.

Learning English

There are two commonly used approaches to promoting EAL; total immersion and partial immersion.

Total immersion: *Using only English within the classroom*

Partial immersion/Bilingual approach: *Using some home language alongside English within the classroom.*

A bilingual approach is argued to offer cognitive benefits which support the development of English. Using the home language provides a foundation for supporting the development of English and by using home language to support language, you in turn, support the development of English (Madzina & Thondhlana, 2017).

CLASSROOM APPROACHES



Learning English

Implementing a bilingual approach in your classroom:

- Access to books and stories in both their home language and English (Hek, 2005).
- Encourage the learning of equipment, symbols and terms of your subject using pictures or labels.
- If young people are literate in their home language, bilingual dictionaries can be used.
- Ask students for the equivalent of English words in their home language.
- Where possible, introduce reading books and subject specific books in the child's home language.
- Have signs and labels in multiple languages.

Additional strategies to support the learning of English:

- Initially, to build confidence, start with copying written words. Use simple sentences or labels for diagrams.
- Provide visual prompts and cues alongside verbal instructions (e.g., videos, slides, pictures and diagrams) (Khawaja & Howard, 2021).
- Provide word banks and/or glossaries (Khawaja & Howard, 2021).
- Allow lots of listening time.
- Teach basic English phrases; yes, no, please, thank you, I don't understand, please can I have...
- Reading aloud to the class, so words can be listened to as they are followed in the text.

Using young people's home language within the classroom does not impact on their likelihood of learning English. In fact, it can make them feel more confident in trying English, knowing that their home language is valued within the classroom.

INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES



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INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES

When looking at an individual level, a key theme and important factor in successful integration is the importance of feeling included and a part of the school community. McIntyre and Hall (2020) noted that refugee young people are increasingly becoming invisible and vulnerable within the UK. The role the school plays is therefore pivotal in changing this. School is in a great position to increase sense of belonging, which may have been lost. School belonging can be defined as 'the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment' (Goodenow, 1993).

Creating and Supporting a Sense of Belonging

According to Bronfenbrenner (2006) a person's belonging is influenced and informed by interactions from systems surrounding a child's life – the Bio-Ecological Systems Theory. According to this model, school belonging is influenced by students' interactions within a complex system. Sobitan (2022) completed research into understanding experiences of refugee young people in a school setting and demonstrated four key themes as shown in the illustration below.



Using these sub-themes and further research, we have broken down some helpful ideas, based on evidence, that could help promote best practice for supporting refugee young people on an individual basis, transitioning to school in terms of their sense of belonging.





INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES

Participation

- Being a part of a sports team or club/ out of curriculum activities – participants claimed that “it would make me feel more included in things” (Sobitan, 2022, p.268). Participating in broader school activities was the only time young people felt competent and celebrated (Sobitan, 2022). Making clubs a priority and publishing these after school activities in tutor groups as well as sending letters home so that students are fully aware of what is offered.
- Creative workshops in the classroom can have a beneficial effect on the self-esteem of young people from various cultures and backgrounds. It helps reconstruction of a meaningful personal world while simultaneously strengthening the link of the young person to the group, enabling them to integrate their experiences and background with those in the class. Rousseau (2005) completed research into the use of the creative arts as a way of communication and found that it was beneficial on self-esteem and helped them to talk about their experiences and background through the use of creative means. Kazzum Arts has resources for creative expression, <https://www.kazzum.org/resources>.
- Having an identified role in school, acting as a mentor to new arrivals increases a sense of purpose and belonging (Sobitan, 2022).
- Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) intervention is particularly useful when supporting young people with exams. PATH is a great way to support a young person whilst showing them that their goals and dreams matter. Please see the following link for more details: [PATH | Person Centred Planning | Person Centred Planning Tools \(inclusive-solutions.com\)](#).





INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES

Inclusion

So how can we show inclusion of our young refugee students? Hope (2008) completed research looking at the development of the refugee and asylum seeker identity in children's literature and its role in education. What came of this was the clear idea that new hybrid identities were developing. Readers needed to see themselves represented in books to affirm their place in the world, using story to highlight current situations. Hope highlights the story 'The Silver Sword' by Ian Selliver which gives us the refugee experience in the form of an imagined adventure story; children crossing borders to escape, travelling thousands of miles in dangerous conditions, and finally being reunited with their parents (Hope, 2008). Although this can be used with the individual young person in mind, stories can also be included in everyday reading and teaching to help inform others of the background of refugee young people.

- Books readily available in classrooms showing a range of experiences and that represent refugee and asylum-seeking young people with the purpose of sharing experiences and creating a sense of togetherness.
- Pairing with an English-speaking buddy to help address language difficulties and barriers, learning together and including each other in challenging tasks.
- Support with school rules and expectations, navigating school system. Some young people have expressed confusion over school rules, not understanding the language or what is expected of them. Including these young people in the making of class rules and demonstrating the rules of the school is very important in settling new students and including them (Sobitan, 2022).
- Recognising that asylum-seekers and refugees are not a homogeneous group. They are all individuals with differing nationalities, culture, languages, and educational abilities. Recognise and value these young people as individuals rather than as refugees. This will make it easier to deal with the challenges they face as a person and not as a category or label (Reakes, 2007).
- Be aware of individual strengths and weaknesses so teaching can be modified.





INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES

Supporting Mental Health

Many refugees have come from a background of loss, trauma, change and confusion. This all plays a large role in the mental health of these young people. Studies show that young people who are refugees or asylum seekers are at higher risk of mental and physical health problems (Fazel & Stein, 2003). A study by Yule et al. (2001), showed around half of child refugees showed serious psychological stress reactions. Equally, half did not show evidence of serious mental health problems. This is because although going through adverse experiences, these young people had developed high resilience which protected them from mental health stressors.

If we refer to Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory (2006), we can see that the systems of the young person include exposure to conflict and possible separation from parents/carers. Factors within the family system include parental stress, possible unemployment and loss/separation. If we look at the wider environment, this may include possible unemployment, housing issues and transitions, which will all affect child development and health. Being able to support this as a school is vital.

- Having a trusted adult/supportive teacher who understands is very important – one participant claimed that “He knows more of my story and is more careful what he says to me and stuff” (Sobitan, 2022, p.268). Being aware of the young person as an individual and aware of their individual story will help teachers to be more aware of some sensitive topics they may wish to cover and maybe pre-warn or support the young person in this. Positive relationships make refugees feel like they belong (*please see the staff development and training section in whole school level for more information*). Another element is that it enables teachers to manage and control content and classrooms better, adding to feelings of safety and increasing likelihood for learning.
- Include the young person in planning intervention and support for others that are in a similar position. Giving the young person a sense of importance and place, including these young people in planning interventions and support for others that feel similar or experience similar adversity, is a great way to increase self-esteem and a feeling of participation with their peers, creating a sense of giving back. Sobitan (2022) found that the young people he worked with had great ideas for support, including supporting peers. McIntyre and Hall (2020) also found similarities in their research “I know what (my friend) feels like and helped him to feel better. I then felt better too!”.





INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES

Supporting Mental Health

- Social support from refugee agencies and organisations are also very important in understanding and supporting the young person.
- Maintaining links with their own communities will help with mental health. Having relatability and being able to share struggles.
- Set specific goals only for them. Rather than having a whole class goal, set ones that they can easily achieve. This will boost their self-esteem and confidence and will mean they are more ready to try another challenge (Hudson et al., 2023).
- Having access to further support and guidance so that the child has someone to talk to or have quiet time with. Sobitan (2022) found this to be very beneficial when researching good practice in education. This allowed the child to talk but also increased their feeling of safety.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Mental Health Needs (BPS, 2018)

- Agencies should work together to monitor young people for mental health issues.
- Young people must never be asked to be an interpreter, especially when their parents/carers are being examined or seen by a psychologist.
- When assessing young people, interview them separately, as they may not want to upset their parents/carers with distressing detail.
- If relevant, think about delayed bereavement rituals in order to give young people a chance to grieve.
- For unaccompanied minors, be aware that turning 18 is a crucial age – both in terms of whether they have leave to remain, and the support they receive from social services if they stay.
- While many prove resilient in the light of their ordeal, you should be aware of the pressures upon them.





INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES

Special Educational Needs and Disability

Children with English as an additional language are not considered to have Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Rutter, 2006). However, some young people with English as an additional language experience long delays in SEN assessment, due to the assumption that their primary need is to learn English (Rutter, 2006).

- SEN sometimes can be difficult to identify if the young person is not fluent in English, has had a disrupted or diverse educational experiences and potential adverse lived experiences. The Bell Foundation website provides advice around this [Learners with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities - The Bell Foundation \(bell-foundation.org.uk\)](https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/learners-with-sen/).

Conversations around SEN must be approached sensitively, young people and families may not understand terminology or may have differing cultural perspectives. Be sure to respect culture views on SEN and the young people and families' choices (Jørgensen et al., 2021).

- Have culturally sensitive resources that support understanding around diagnoses (e.g., ADHD, ASD) (Oumar, 2022).
- Familiarise yourself with the families culture before meeting with them (Bankole, 2016). The National Autistic Society's article on involving African families in their young person's education raises some points to consider when working with other cultures [Involving African families in the education of their autistic children \(autism.org.uk\)](https://www.autism.org.uk/involving-african-families-in-the-education-of-their-autistic-children/).



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*WHERE THE
RESEARCH COMES
FROM*

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SOURCES



*ADDITIONAL
SUPPORTING
MATERIALS*



SOURCE A



Five Principles to Recovery Reflective Exercise

Consider Hobfall's five principles of recovery model and reflect on each principle thinking what as a setting you are doing well at and what else you may need to do.

Principle	What do we do well?	What else do we need to do?
Safety		
Calm		
Connectedness		
Hope		
Self and Community Efficacy		



Checklist for Welcome Pack

Consider whether it would be appropriate to translate the below for families.

- A list of local services such as healthcare, transport and local shops.
- A map of local area.
- School day timings and procedures (break, lunch time).
- School layout.
- Who to go to for help and pictures of key staff.
- Pictures of the school (classroom, canteen, playground).
- School rules.
- Visual cards for key concepts (hungry, thirsty, sick).
- Visual list of equipment required (stationary, P.E kit, winter and summer clothing).



Solution Circle Format

The facilitator should begin the session by explaining each of the stages of the solution circle and how the activity will work. Establish your ground rules.

#1 - Presenting the issue - 6 minutes

The presenter outlines their issue or problem to the group. No-one should interrupt or ask questions at this stage.

Allow the full 6 minutes even if this means there is some silent reflection time before the next step.

In the case of very complex problems, it might help to ask the presenter some clarification questions at this point if anything is unclear. Keep these questions simple and spend only 2/3 minutes.

#2 - Generating Ideas - 6 minutes

Everyone should have the chance to make a contribution and come up with an idea. At this stage the presenter should not respond or clarify. Phrases which might be useful are: 'You could...', 'You might want to try...', 'I wonder if ___ might help'.

#3 - Discussion - 6 minutes

The presenter picks one or two ideas they'd like to hear more about to discuss as a group. They lead the discussion. Focus on possible solutions, not what can't be done.

#4 - Next Steps - 6 minutes

The group decide on the first steps that can be achieved within the next three days. At least ONE step should be initiated within 24 hours. A person from the group volunteers to be the link colleague who checks in with the presenter to find out how things are going after a few days. It might be nice for the presenter or link colleague to feed back to the rest of the group after a few weeks, particularly if there has been positive progress.



Solution Circle Group Roles

Presenter

The person who brings the issue or problem to the group seeking colleagues' assistance.

Facilitator

This person explains the framework and establishes the ground rules. They keep the group on track at each stage and ensure they keep to time. You could have a different person in the role of timekeeper if you wanted.

Ideas team

This is the group of colleagues who listen to the presenter and generate ideas to help them solve the problem.

Note taker

This person documents each stage of the process. They might choose to take simple notes, use a template or a more creative approach.

What you need

- A pen and paper/laptop or other recording device for the note taker.
- A quiet comfortable space where any information shared can be kept confidential.
- A team of colleagues. Alternatively, use this approach with a multi-agency team around a child or young person.