

## Supporting Refugee and Asylum Seeker Children and Families Guidance for Schools and Early Years Settings

Note: This document contains links – please use the most up-to-date version which you can download from [Inclusion Hub - EAL - Refugees and Asylum Seekers](#).

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### 1.INTRODUCTION

Refugee and Asylum-Seeking children and young people come from a variety of national, ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and can bring with them a variety of experiences and needs:

- The learners may be experiencing cultural disorientation as well as feelings of loss, grief and isolation;
- Families may be separated by events in the home country;
- The education system in their country is likely to be different from the Scottish system;
- The learners may have had an interrupted education or no previous schooling at all;
- Learners may not be literate in their home language;
- Learners and their families may be new to English.



Learners and their families may have experienced trauma and human rights violations before arriving in Scotland. The greater the duration and intensity of the traumatic and stressful experiences, the greater the implications for their mental health. Those that have lost close family, especially the main carer, or who arrive unaccompanied, are most emotionally vulnerable. However, it should not automatically be assumed that all refugees have emotional and psychological challenges. Indeed, many of these children and young people have considerable inner resources to cope well with all the changes to which they are subjected and are very resilient despite their experiences. All teaching and support staff can play a vital role in settling and supporting refugee students in schools.

Education is key to new and hopefully better lives for refugees. Refugee **children and young people** may arrive in the classroom anytime during the school year, not speaking English and having suffered disruption to their education so will benefit from:

- Following a 'normal' routine of attending school regularly
- Receiving the support of other pupils such as their buddies (who may have same first language, or be first language English speakers) and teachers that offer encouragement and praise
- Making friends and being able to achieve
- Regaining hope through engaging with education and having the chance to restore their wellbeing
- Beginning to overcome their feelings of alienation, to recover their self-esteem among their peers and to become children again
- Having the opportunity to talk about stressful events in a safe and supportive environment
- Being able to ask for help when things go wrong



- Feeling that they are valued and making a contribution to the community
- Exploring difference and diversity in a safe space and understanding their new environment

Furthermore, schools can provide **families** with:

- Structure and stability by providing a routine and a point of contact
- Links with other agencies
- Support through seeing children safe, settled and secure in school

## 2.ENROLMENT

It is good practice to gather additional information for EAL learners at enrolment and this is particularly important for refugee and asylum seeker children, to enable teachers to support a positive transition into school. Good practice guidelines for enrolment can be downloaded from the Inclusion Hub here:

[EAL learners - enrolment.](#)



Refugee and Asylum-Seeking families may have had negative experiences of formal meetings, so questions need to be asked with particular care and sensitivity, with a focus on the basics in the initial meeting. Giving further opportunities for families to tell you more in their own time will help to build a more complete picture of previous experiences and needs. EAL Teachers can advise and support.

**Interpreters:** it is important to offer interpreter support for the enrolment meeting if parents are not yet confident speakers of English. Interpreters can be booked by contacting the Council's Interpretation and Translation Service (ITS) at [ITS@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:ITS@edinburgh.gov.uk). There is no charge to schools for using this service. Further guidance on effective communication can be downloaded here: [Effective communication with parents \(EAL\)](#)  
NB: children and families may speak and understand several different languages or dialects, so it is important to use the language/dialect in which the family communicates best. If no interpreters are available, <http://newarrivals.segfl.org.uk/index.html> is a multilingual tool to support information gathering in 14 languages.

### Some key considerations for enrolment meetings:

- Make all parents-carers feel that they are valued and have a positive role to play
- Show parents-carers how they can raise their concerns, and that these will be dealt with respectfully and seriously
- Demonstrate that parents-carers' linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds are valued and respected
- Show that the school is part of the community it serves
- It is good practice to plan a catch-up meeting around 3 weeks after the learner starts so that the school/setting and parents can share how things are going and to allow for further questions and/or additional information to be shared.

### Parent-carer expectations

Refugee and Asylum-Seeking families often have high expectations of schooling. Some are likely to come from educated backgrounds themselves and can provide support to their children to enable them to achieve success.



They will need to know about:

- Their entitlement to financial support e.g. free school meals, travel and uniform grants
- The availability of free uniform
- Key dates in the school year
- The student's timetable and school day
- School rules, policies
- the Scottish education system [Education in Scotland \(info. for parents-carers\)](#)

- Extra-curricular clubs and activities
- School library and public library
- Bus timetable (if appropriate)
- Map of journey from home to school
- Key contact who will maintain home/school liaison links after the initial welcoming phase
- How best to help their child with schoolwork [Parents as Partners \(info. for parents-carers\)](#)

**In addition to the information suggested in the good practice guidelines for enrolment (see link above), it can be helpful to find out:**

- If the learner is looked after by a carer, who is the carer?
- Where was the learner born?
- How long has the learner been living in the UK?
- What languages are spoken, read and written by the parents, carers, and siblings? How well?
- Does the learner have experience of other types of education? (e.g. Madrasa, Saturday School). Has the student attended any other school in the UK?
- Where are the family housed now? Is this temporary/long-term accommodation?
- Is the learner registered with a GP? Are there any medical matters that we need to know about?
- Are there any other family circumstances that we need to know about?

**Names:** Names are a very significant part of our identity and getting names of children and their parents-carers correct (pronunciation and spelling) is an important part of helping them feel welcomed and valued. Naming practices are different in different cultures. A guide to names and naming practices:

[https://www.fbiic.gov/public/2008/nov/Naming\\_practice\\_guide\\_UK\\_2006.pdf](https://www.fbiic.gov/public/2008/nov/Naming_practice_guide_UK_2006.pdf)

What's your name?

### 3.KEY PARTNERS

#### **CEC English as an Additional Language Team (ASL Service)**

**EAL teachers** can advise and support with: enrolment; induction and settling in; health and wellbeing; learning, teaching and assessment; individualised support (where appropriate).



**Bilingual Support Assistants:** Languages commonly spoken by refugees and asylum seekers for which we have bilingual support: **Arabic; Kurdish; Urdu**. Recruitment for additional languages (Dari/Farsi; Romanian; Ukrainian - with Russian) is in progress. The target group for bilingual support is Stage 1 (New to English) and Stage 2 (Early Acquisition) EAL learners. BSA support can also be requested for EAL learners at Stages 3 and 4 where there are health and wellbeing or other concerns. To request BSA support for individual learners, please discuss with your EAL teacher.

Professionals' leaflet: [English as an Additional Language - info. for professionals](#)

Working effectively with BSAs: [Working with Bilingual Support Assistants - guidance for schools](#)

#### **CEC ASL Service and Psychological Services**

Advice and support for children and young people who require support at Pathways 3 and 4. Note that the EAL Teacher should continue to be involved in planning at all Pathways. Where children and young people have known additional support needs when they enrol and may require support from Pathway 3 services, please involve your ASL Service Leader and/or Educational Psychologist from the outset.

## CEC Refugee and Migration Team

Some refugees and asylum seekers, mainly those arriving through a government resettlement programme, receive support from the CEC Refugee and Migration Team. These families are allocated a support worker who supports the family to access their entitlements – e.g. housing, healthcare, education, financial supports - and settle in to their new environment and navigate the Scottish system.

## CEC CLD/ Lifelong Learning

ESOL Family Learning (parents-carers and young children)  
ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) - adults

## Third sector partners

There are several Edinburgh-based third sector organisations that work with children and families from minority ethnic backgrounds, including refugees and asylum seekers. See [Black and Minority Ethnic Support Services](#).

## 4.SUPPORTING TRAUMA

Difficult experiences from both the past and the present can lead to emotional or behavioural problems for some learners. For example, some children and young people may be nervous, jumpy and fearful. They may be afraid of loud sounds or dislike being alone. Some learners may appear withdrawn and sad. They may cry easily and may not seem interested in interacting / mixing with others. Some learners may become very worried or anxious; others may become irritable and lose their temper quickly. They may have problems sleeping and suffer from nightmares. Some learners may look tired in the classroom and have trouble concentrating. If a learner appears to fit any of the above descriptions, it is possible that they may be experiencing emotional distress. However, it should be remembered that these behaviours might also be normal reactions to difficult experiences. Therefore, any support should be appropriate and proportionate, taking into account what is known about the child / young person.

The key principles of trauma-informed practice will be important:  
safety – trustworthiness – choice – collaboration – empowerment.

**“Feeling safe, having shelter and food are the most important needs in their lives. Being allowed to settle down and have a predictable routine (like school) will gradually help them believe they are now safe.”**

From NHS Lothian ‘Supporting Trauma - Children and Adolescents who are Refugees’. Download here: [Supporting Trauma - Refugee Children and Young People](#)



## [CELCIS protecting and supporting child refugees and their families](#)

Information, resources, organisations, guidance and the international frameworks to understand the rights of children and what needs to be considered when supporting children in care and children who have been displaced from the war and have been separated from their families and may have arrived in the UK on their own.

## 5.WELCOMING NEW ARRIVALS TO YOUR CLASS (Primary and Secondary)

[Welcoming Refugee New Arrivals to your Class \(PRI-SEC\)](#)



## 6. WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACHES

Schools of Sanctuary <https://cityofsanctuary.org/>



**The Bell Foundation: Welcoming Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Learners** - useful guidance for schools welcoming newly arrived learners who speak English as an Additional Language, as well as links to a variety of relevant teaching strategies and resources: <https://bit.ly/3D9Mp0A>

### NEU Welcoming Refugee Children to Your School

[Welcoming refugee children to your school | NEU](#) Here you will find resources which have been developed and shared by teachers to help schools support refugees. Find out more about their experiences and how they make new connections in their communities: Welcoming Refugee Children to Your School (guide); Refugee Voices Videos; Refugee quiz; Refugee week assembly; Paddington – should Paddington be allowed to stay in the UK?

Refugee Week (20-26 June 2022) ideas and resources: <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/>

## 7. CAREER-LONG PROFESSIONAL LEARNING / TRAINING

MyLearning Hub e-learning and follow-up webinar:

[Working with Refugee and Asylum Seeker children and families](#)

### Refugee Kids film (14 minutes)

Powerful insights from 9 refugee children and young people from Afghanistan, Somalia, Turkey (Kurdish), Zanzibar and Angola speaking about their experiences before and after arrival in the UK. Intro. Leaving Home; Coming to Britain; Finding a School; First Days; Learning English; Fitting In; School and Beyond.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N3ndNyuU2k>



Refugee Education UK and City of Sanctuary webinar on supporting Afghan Pupils

(a couple of points specific to England context, otherwise all very relevant)

[Supporting Afghan Students in School](#)

Blogpost: [From Kabul to a school in Basingstoke](#)

Immigrant Students at School: Easing the Journey towards Integration

[Immigrant Students at School: Easing the Journey towards Integration | en | OECD](#)

**Our Migration Story:** This website presents the - often untold - stories of the generations of migrants who came to and shaped the British Isles. [Home / Our Migration Story](#)

## 8. Appendix A Induction - step-by-step

This step-by-step guidance can be used alongside the regular [enrolment guidance for EAL learners](#). EAL Teachers can advise and support.

<p><b>Initial contact</b> Parent-carer contacts school re. admission. If place available, appointment is given for a suitable time and day.</p>	<p>Allows a named member of staff to be timetabled who is aware of and sensitive to refugees' possible past experiences and specific needs. Gives time to arrange for EAL Teacher and interpreter to be present. <a href="http://newarrivals.segfl.org.uk/index.html">http://newarrivals.segfl.org.uk/index.html</a> contains a multilingual tool in 14 languages to support information gathering in the absence of an interpreter.</p>
<p><b>Enrolment meeting</b> Complete school forms through discussion with parents Provides a list of uniform suppliers / uniform Provides new arrival 'Welcome Pack'. This might contain: EIS Welcome Pack, pen, pencil, paper, homework booklet etc.</p>	<p>School obtains information about the student's background (see below) Parents/ carers will have time to complete forms and obtain uniform before starting. Arrange for a buddy /buddies to take new arrivals on a tour of the school – this will help them to begin to get to know their new environment, so that they know what to expect when they start. Find out how best to communicate with the parents-carers: text, email, phone and note preferred language for meetings. Siblings: does the learner have any younger or older siblings? Do they / will they attend same school / school in the same learning community?</p>
<p>Find out levels / grades achieved in previous school, if applicable. Does the learner have any particular talent or skill?</p>	<p>This information should be used to place students in appropriate sets/groups LINK Note: students should be placed according to their overall cognitive ability, and not according to their English language level.</p>
<p>Find out about the learner's literacy skills in their home language / other languages.</p>	<p>Learners who have age-appropriate literacy in their home language / language or prior education can be expected to acquire literacy in English, supported by appropriate strategies. Learners whose first language is written in a different script will need some initial support to learn a new sound-symbol correspondence. If older learners (P5 upwards) haven't yet learned to read or write in any language, they will need intensive support such as ELPOL (Early Literacy Programme for Older Learners) – discuss with EAL Teacher. <b>1 plus 2 languages:</b> schools are encouraged to enter older students for SQA or other exam board qualifications in the home language, if available.</p>
<p>Find out broad Stage of English language acquisition (1-5) using <a href="#">Stage of English - general descriptors</a>. (More detailed information can be gathered during settling-in period, using the <a href="#">EAL Tracker</a>.)</p>	<p>A general assessment of Stage of English and sharing this information with class / subject teachers will enable them to successfully include the learner.</p>

<p>Agree start date, allowing a few days after enrolment meeting for planning and sharing of information. Consider phased induction.</p>	<p>A mid-week start can ease pressure on staff and student. Consider part-time for the first week or two, if appropriate. Allows time to induct buddies / prepare classes and let staff including support staff know about the new arrival(s). <b><i>How will information be shared with all relevant staff, including Support for Learning Teacher / CL and wider team?</i></b></p>
<p><b>Induction and first few weeks</b>  Key contact welcomes new arrival.  Provide additional information not provided at enrolment, e.g. plan of the school, name of class teacher / subject teachers and timetable, other useful information. Ensure information in an accessible format for students who are new to English and/or schooling.</p> <p>Teachers monitor closely and feedback at the end of each lesson/day for the first week, then weekly and highlights any issues to designated contact.</p>	<p>Make clear where there is a quiet space/room/area for newly arrived students at break and lunch times until they feel more confident about staying in the playground. Have non-verbal games such as Connect 4 and chess available.</p> <p>Arrange for staff in playground to monitor / support peer interactions, e.g. semi-structured games to support friendships and inclusion, and to avoid social isolation.</p> <p>Information can be gathered as to how well students can access the curriculum and on social / emotional aspects of learning. Having procedures in place to monitor new arrivals' progress after a specified time which would alert staff to potential difficulties.</p>
<p>Assess Stage of English and Numeracy/Maths baseline (non-verbal)  Maths: <a href="#">Initial maths assessments in multiple languages</a> (this site is in French and assessments are based on French school years but it's easy to select relevant assessments).  Assessment information is disseminated to all teachers</p>	<p>Over first 2-3 weeks, as learner settles in, assess Stage of English using the <a href="#">EAL Tracker</a>. EAL teachers can advise and support.</p> <p>Teacher have a baseline to track progress in English language acquisition and to inform planning and strategies to support learning across the curriculum.</p>
<p>For groups of new arrivals: a short, blended induction programme can be designed, if appropriate.</p>	<p>EAL learners develop English language skills best in the classroom, learning alongside English first language speakers. Any induction programme should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be a blend of in-class and small group learning</li> <li>• be focused on accessing the mainstream curriculum</li> <li>• last no longer than 2 weeks</li> </ul>
<p><b>Settling-in review</b>  Parent-carer follow-up meeting: school gathers feedback from the learner and their teacher(s) on the settling-in period; school seeks views from parents / carers on how their child is settling in</p>	<p>Enables school to respond to needs or confirms effectiveness of provision. Allows parents to ask questions or raise any concerns about their child's learning or wellbeing.</p>