



Settling in Britain

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Every year on June the 20th the world celebrates the ultimate courage and resilience of those who have had to flee their home of origin to escape war and conflict. This day is an opportunity to support the lives of refugees in education, health, and care so that they are able to resettle or return home once safe to do so.

NCFE has created a useful resource for those working with children and their families settling in Britain, [Contemporary issues and debates | NCFE](#) . Here you will find our **Settling in Britain** resource that provides an informed insight into the trajectory of children, young people, and families as they settle in Britain. It explores how their resettlement journey may have impacted their mental health and wellbeing and looks at ways to offer support.



Quality provision provides opportunities to children and their families to help overcome traumatic events they have experienced. Although it will not erase the scars of trauma, it will enable time for reflection and offer tailored support to overcome adversity.

Children and young people have a right to access education. This has been encapsulated within various legislations, frameworks, agendas, and policies. These include: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Equality Act 2010 which outlines nine specific protected characteristics, one of which is race. Education is a human right and a strength for sustainable development and peace.



Aspirations for education have been captured within Sustainable Development Goal 4 (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4> SDG4 (Sustainable Development Goal 4)) of the 2030 agenda, aiming to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide suitable full-time education for all children, regardless of their immigration status. Evidentially, education plays a significant role in supporting children who are displaced and experiencing adversity through creating safe and nurturing environments that help to reduce anxiety and offer opportunity to progress.

Since 2010, major conflicts have tripled around the world leaving over 400 million children living in war zones. Sadly, many of these children have grown up not knowing any different, living in continual fear, experiencing immense violation of their human rights. As a result, many children are left with profound physical and emotional traumas due to horrendous conditions they have experienced.

Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe and has been in conflict with Russia for over eight years. More recently, at the time of writing, the conflict has become more intense causing over 13 million people to be displaced, leaving their homes and seeking refuge, 8 million across Europe and over 5 million internally displaced. Government data from July 2022 states that ‘more than 1000,000 people from Ukraine have arrived in the UK under the Ukraine Family Scheme. [100,000 Ukrainians welcomed to safety in the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/100000-ukrainians-welcomed-to-safety-in-the-uk)



Marie Kartashova, who lives with her host in Surrey said ‘I want to send my gratitude to all the British people and my sponsors personally. What you are doing for the Ukrainian people is more than help. You support us at every stage, spend your time and energy, pay attention and give care. I cannot put into words how grateful I am.’

Presently the crisis in Syria accounts for the world’s largest displacement of our time. Since 2011, 13.5 million Syrian people have been forcibly displaced. Approximately 6.8 million are refugees seeking asylum and 6.7 million are displaced within Syria. Those needing humanitarian assistance stands at 11.1 million and over half of these are children.

Ismail’s journey – age 16

" Luckily, the sea condition was good; we sailed for 12 hours until the motor broke down. We couldn't see anyone. I felt very sad because it was a very dangerous boat. Because the boat was made of wood it was like a boat, but it was not a boat. And when the engine stopped all the people began to cry. They were thinking that they will die but God helped us. Luckily, a boat with Tunisian fishermen arrived and they tugged us for three hours until we reached the boat belonging to the Italian Coast Guard."

Many children and their families who have been subjected to war, violence, torture, or other traumas may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is the diagnostic name given to describe a specific profile of symptoms that individuals develop after experiencing a traumatic event or events. These experiences may lead to increased fears and anxieties or even cause children and young people to re-live their traumatic events through nightmares or dreams. These traumas may be divided into three areas:

- Pre-flight - Direct physical and emotional trauma from witnessing horrific scenes as well as the social upheaval of fleeing their home.
- Flight - Emotional anxiety from the journey and the arduous travelling. Staying in refugee camps and separation from families.
- Resettlement – Challenges may include the sense of a lost culture and community, language barriers and adapting to change.

Through an awareness of the stresses children and families may be experiencing it is possible to develop an enhanced understanding of their behaviour following experiences of adversity. Practitioners' roles are significant in offering encouragement through building positive and trusted relationships to apply appropriate intervention strategies to support mental health and wellbeing with the aim of promoting hope and resilience.

Resilience is the capability to maintain reasonable stability and wellbeing in the face of traumatic events. Addressing mental health issues is essential however it is also important to be respectful of an individual's capacity for resilience. A well-known Kurdish saying is that: ***'I have crossed so many rivers, I no longer get wet'*** which identifies the persistent traumatic experiences and the resilience that refugees display. Therefore, it is essential that we foster positive adaptation through supporting them to obtain and protect internal and environmental resources. Numerous factors have been identified as influences towards a person being resilient, these include:



- Psychological needs being met.
- Sense of belonging
- Empathetic
- Learn from mistakes.

A poll carried out by Info Migrants (2019) looked at whether host country language or mother tongue was more important. The results showed that those that took part thought that children should learn both. One Arabic respondent stated, "it was valuable for children to learn the new language as they would use it more than their mother tongue." On the other side of the discussion one person who responded in English stated that "the mother tongue is ineffective for communicating" and yet another commented that it was vital in staying true to their roots. Overall, the results showed that knowing both languages was useful. The schools census 2021 recorded 975,238 children in primary schools

in England as speaking English as an additional language (EAL (English as an Additional Language)).

Children and young people arriving in a new school or setting should not be placed in either a low ability group or offered special education provision unless assessment has suggested otherwise. Children and young people tend to learn best when learning alongside their peers who can provide suitable linguistic and behavioural models. Creating a whole school ethos in the understanding that children and families settling in Britain are beneficial to the community and bring a range of strengths through their cultural knowledge into the learning environment.

Be compassionate!

The theme for 2023 Refugee Week is Compassion. An opportunity to come together to create a shared understanding of compassion for all.

“Our task must be to free ourselves – by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

Albert Einstein

Refugee Week is designed to raise awareness of challenges refugee children, young people and their families face. Being compassionate, not just to ourselves and those close to us but to all humankind- our human neighbours in one shared home – planet earth.

Signposting and Further reading:

<https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get> (Accessed March 2023)

Information includes:

- Money
- Health
- Education support

<https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/communities/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/refugees-and-unaccompanied-children> (Accessed March 2023)

Local government information site that offers ways support is being delivered through various programmes for refugees and asylum seekers.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/helping-ukrainian-students-in-schools> (Accessed March 2023)

Information includes support on:

- Learning English as additional language
- Using creativity
- Supporting mental health

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/article/children-on-the-move/>
(Accessed March 2023)

Useful resources about children on the move.

<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/> (Accessed March 2023)

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>
(Accessed March 2023)

Information on welcoming new arrivals.

References:

<https://www.unicef.org/migrant-refugee-internally-displaced-children> (Accessed March 2023)

<https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/vulnerable-children/refugee-asylum-seeker-children/> (Accessed March 2023)

<https://refugeehealthta.org/physical-mental-health/mental-health/adult-mental-health/resilience-and-coping/> (Accessed March 2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/helping-ukrainian-students-in-schools/resources-to-help-support-children-and-young-people-arriving-from-ukraine> (Accessed March 2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-families-2021-to-2022-and-beyond> (Accessed March 2023)

[Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\) and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) (Accessed March 2023)

[100,000 Ukrainians welcomed to safety in the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) (Accessed March 2023)

<https://refugeeweek.org.uk/theme-of-refugee-week-2023-compassion/> (Accessed March 2023)

