Welcoming and Supporting Refugee Children and Young People

Guidance to schools

Introduction

These notes have been prepared as a quick guide for those schools who are about to accept a child or young person who has come to Ceredigion to escape the war in Ukraine. The notes are a synopsis of the information which is contained within the document 'Welcoming refugee children to your school: A National Education Union teaching resource' (https://neu.org.uk/refugee).

The refugee children are likely to have made harrowing journeys to arrive at a place of safety and may well have left close family members behind in very uncertain and dangerous circumstances. It is likely that they will have faced trauma, seen things which could cause post-traumatic stress, will certainly be feeling a sense of loss for the life left behind and could be bereaved of close family and friends.

Although Ceredigion may not have received as many refugees as other areas of the UK in the past, as a school you will have received training in the strategies which will be needed to address some of the psychological and emotional response behaviours which these children and young people may display. Consider the training which you have received for trauma and attachment, anxiety, bereavement and loss. Although the circumstances and source of the trauma, loss and bereavement are different from those we may previously have encountered, our strategies for supporting these children will be similar. References to those support strategies have been included in this paper.

The primary thing to remember is that the relationships that children foster with you and their peers will be so important to their ability to feel safe whilst away from home.



Top Tips

- Offer a welcoming, safe, predictable and nurturing environment.
- Identify a nurturing member of staff to ‘check in’ with the child at regular intervals during the day.
- Identify a peer ‘buddy’. Ensure that the buddy is prepared before hand and is happy with the responsibility. Perhaps more than one buddy could be identified.
- Encourage friendships. Where possible allow the children to be primarily with their peers. Encourage lots of play/games, physical activities, craft sessions where children can play and get to know their peers without too much language.
- Ensure staff and children can pronounce the child’s name accurately.
- Encourage staff and children to learn some basic greetings in Ukrainian.
- Encourage a sense of belonging to the school community. Ask parents if they have any uniform items that their own children have outgrown and would be happy to donate if necessary.
- Take photographs of the children in the class and staff. Create a class book which the child can take home to show their family.
- Provide the children with the equipment they will need for school and homework
- Provide essential vocabulary cards, e.g., toilet, play, lunch etc in Ukrainian, English and Welsh.
- Provide a visual timetable to ensure that the child/ young person understands what to expect and to provide structure.

- Keep a watchful eye on the child for signs that they may be overwhelmed by busyness, noise or language overload. Check in and offer time out – a walk/ craft activity/ game or a quiet space. Take the child's lead about when they want to return to the group.
- Give the children an opportunity to talk but don't question them about their experiences for fear of re-traumatising. If they ask questions or want to share something, listen with compassion. Answer as honestly as you can but don't be afraid to say 'I don't know' if you don't have an answer.

- Keep the language of instruction short and clear.

- Find out about the child's strengths and attributes. Encourage a strong sense of self-esteem. Celebrate the contribution they make to your school.

- Be aware of any topics of study/ activities which might potentially cause distress, e.g., relationship studies, Father's Day, War studies in History.

- Establish links with the parents and foster a sense of trust that their children are safe at school.

- Make it known to the child or young person that ELSA intervention is available but that they don't have to go if they would prefer to be with the other children. Don't assume that ELSA will be required for all of the refugees.

- The refugees may want to share harrowing information. Ensure that your staff have someone to talk to and to support them with the emotional impact that they may also be experiencing.



Possible Emotional Responses and Behaviours Associated with Trauma, Anxiety, Bereavement and Loss and Strategies to Support

	Typical Behaviours/ Emotional Responses	**Strategies**
Trauma	Fight Flight Freeze	• Use a calm response style • Show compassion • Give the message 'you are safe here' - security • Show empathy • Reassure See specific approaches to responding to trauma in *What survival looks like …in School,* Inner World. Primary schools: (https://hwbwave15.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/MDPhIechydaLles/Shared%20Documents/ADY%20-%20ALN/Attachment/FREE-School-Survival-Download-1.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=2jIJkR) Secondary Settings: (https://hwbwave15.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/MDPhIechydaLles/Shared%20Documents/ADY%20-%20ALN/Attachment/Survival-In-Secondary-School.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=kineuo) Additional information can be found in: TEAMS: MDPh Iechyd a Lles/ADY/ Folder: Attachment TEAMS: MDPh Iechyd a Lles/ADY/ Folder: Emotional Literacy in the Classroom a Guide to teachers (Module 2)

Bereavement and Loss	Increased emotionality Withdrawal Sleep difficulties Headaches/ stomach aches Reduced concentration Fear of being away from the parent Behaviours of a developmentally younger age Anxiety	TEAMS: MDPh Iechyd a Lles/ADY/ Folder: Emotional Literacy in the Classroom a Guide to teachers (Module 5) Ceredigion Information on responding to bereavement:  Responding to CYP who are bereaved CC  Cymorth i blant sy'n galaru CG.docx Ceredigion video on responding to and supporting bereavement: Welsh: https://youtu.be/sxivxOPziFk English: https://youtu.be/op50Fe1qKmQ
Anxiety	Worry Stress Inability to relax Nervousness Fatigue Physical aches Dizziness Fast breathing Nausea Panic attacks	Anxiety Resources:  Activities to support children who are anxi  Gweithgareddau er mwyn cefnogi plant s Playlist: what is anxiety and how can I support an anxious pupil in my classroom? https://hwb.gov.wales/go/92ngki Additional information can be found in:

		TEAMS: MDPh Iechyd a Lles/ADY/ Folder: Anxiety Gorbryder
Post-Traumatic Stress	Intense flashbacks Intrusive thoughts Numbing of feelings Refusal to think or talk about events Sense of hopelessness Tiredness (lack of sleep) Volatility/ irritability Aggression Poor concentration Hyper-vigilance	These are responses to complex bereavement and usually require more specialist input via a counsellor or specialist mental health professional. However, the strategies for bereavement and loss above are all appropriate in supporting children until more specialist support is available.

