

Halton Virtual School for care  
experienced young children & young  
people

Guidance on supporting Separated  
Migrant Young Children (SMCs)

Post 16 educational settings

Including:

Effects of trauma

Prior education

Learning English

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Walking in the shoes

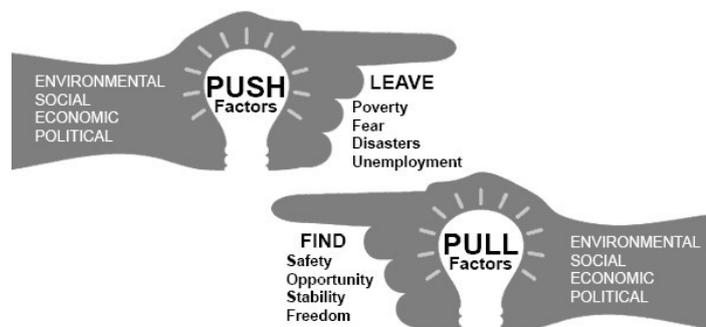


Before going on to read the guidance and suggested support strategies, please take a moment to think and reflect on the possible life journey of the migrant young person.

Where have they come from? Is it a country ravaged by war/poverty/famine/torture/natural disaster? What might the family have experienced? What do you know about the history, culture and current situation of this country?

What might be the 'push' factors that caused them to leave all they know and love and set off on an uncertain journey? Real life examples: family blown up by a bomb, belonging to a persecuted minority group, extreme poverty resulting in a need to work and send money home to feed siblings. We do not need to know what caused them to leave but we need to acknowledge there will have been something.

What might be the 'pull' factors that caused them to journey as far as the UK? Real life examples: a cousin murdered for attending University & the young person desperate to get an education, friends/family already living here, UK's historical & current involvement with country of origin, UK's reputation for welcoming people from other countries, the role of English in the global economy, the young person can speak more English than any other European language. Again, we don't need to know the motivator but should recognise that there will be logical reasons why the UK has been their destination.



## Prior education

A young person's attainment and progress in the UK education system will be affected by their prior experiences. If they are already literate and numerate in their first language, the rate of progress in English will be accelerated.

If concepts have been learned in the first language (e.g., telling the time), the young person merely needs to learn the English vocabulary and sentence structure in order to communicate competence. If the concept has never been learned, the task is much more difficult. The young person is learning a new concept in a language they are not proficient in. The educator has to teach the concept AND the English alongside each other.

Many of our migrant young people have limited and/or interrupted education. Understanding their prior education experience is tricky to unpick, especially in the early days. Too many questions can be traumatic for a separated migrant young person. However, a few simple questions can provide educators with an overview.

Most migrant young people do not have English as their first language, so they are usually enrolled into ESOL courses (English for Speakers of Other Languages). Their English is assessed, and they are placed into the appropriate course (Pre-entry, Entry Levels 1,2, 3 or Levels 1, 2). ESOL courses are designed for adults and focus almost exclusively on English languages skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing). Some Local Authorities are widening the scope of their ESOL provision to include some Maths, IT, Sports and taster vocational days. Cambridgeshire is exploring this option at the moment. It may be called Vocational ESOL or ESOL Plus.

Migrant young people who enter the UK education system at statutory school age are immersed into the standard curriculum offer with some adaptations where appropriate and available. Research shows that this accelerates the acquisition of English and integration. Young people learn most of their English from their peers (certainly the early conversational language). Attending ESOL classes does not give the young person the opportunity to mix with English speakers and learn from them. Post 16 providers should try to find creative ways to integrate migrant young people into wider college life. This may not be easy or straightforward when the young person is suffering from culture shock and trauma.

Once the young person has a Level 1 ESOL qualification they are able to access the normal, vocational courses available to all students. Extra support and careers guidance should be given to these young people as they are unlikely to be aware of the wide diversity of opportunities available in the UK.

## Effects of trauma

When a young person feels intensely threatened by an event he or she is involved in or witnesses, we call that event a trauma. Trauma comes in many

different forms. NCTSN (National Young person Traumatic Stress Network) has the following list (not definitive):

- Bullying
- Community violence (committed in public areas on those not related)
- Complex trauma (multiple events, often invasive & personal)
- Disasters
- Early developmental trauma (in utero & early young personhood from mother's addiction and/or domestic violence, neglect etc)
- Intimate partner violence
- Medical trauma
- Physical abuse
- Refugee trauma (related to war or persecution & often the journey to safety)
- Sexual abuse
- Sex trafficking
- Terrorism & violence
- Traumatic grief

Its effects can be mitigated by the support of caring supportive adults and communities.

MIND ([www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)) has lots of helpful information about the effects of trauma. The following information has been taken from their website.

Trauma affects the physical body. When stressed or threatened, the body releases hormones called cortisol and adrenaline. This is the body's automatic way of preparing to respond to danger, and we have no control over it.

This can have a range of effects, which are sometimes called:

- Fight – fighting, struggling or protesting.
- Flight – hiding or moving away.
- Freeze – feeling paralysed or unable to move.
- Fawn – trying to please someone who harms you.

Studies have shown that stress signals can continue long after the trauma is over.

Trauma affects mental health. Some common effects are:

- Flashbacks
- Panic attacks
- Dissociation
- Grief
- Self-harm
- Suicidal feelings
- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Problems with sleep

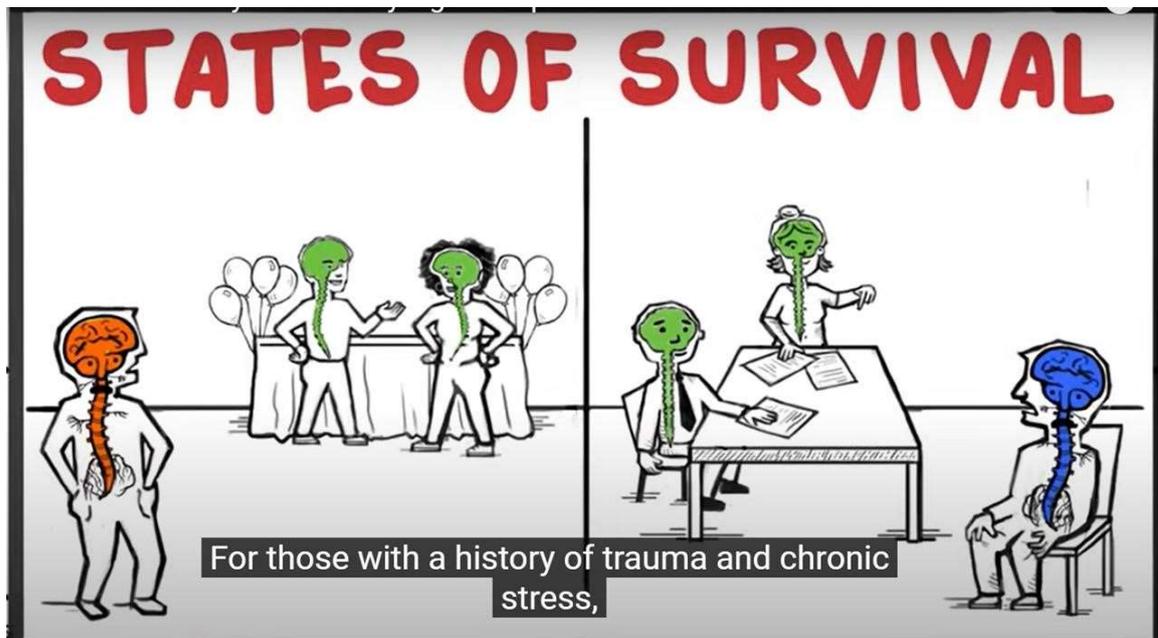
Suggestions for looking after or supporting those struggling with the effects of trauma:

- Listen to them
- Learn their triggers
- Try not to judge
- Don't take over
- Respect their privacy
- Help them find support
- Look after your own mental health

The migrant young people in our educational settings are likely to have experienced trauma. Those who made the journey to the UK as unaccompanied minors will have left all that they have known (including family, community, culture, language and religion), travelled across countries alone or with strangers, put themselves in danger (boat crossings, people trafficking, working in unsafe environments) and lost months/years of their young lives on the way.

All those working with migrant young people should be trauma informed and understand the effects on the body's stress response system and brain. Please watch this 9-minute video for an overview of the latest research and scientific understanding of trauma:

[Trauma and the Nervous System: A Polyvagal Perspective - YouTube](#)



English Additional Language (EAL)  
students

# New to English

Key points:

- Bilingualism is an asset & improves cognitive development.
- Students vary tremendously - don't make assumptions, find out as much as you can.
- Learning a new language can take many years. 'New to English' students are those who are still learning conversational (everyday) language (takes approximately two years).
- Students need to feel safe and secure in order to learn successfully. A warm, welcoming environment where their background is valued is essential.
- Students initially learn by listening. It is normal for newly arrived students not to talk for several months. This is known as the 'Silent Period'.
- It is very tiring learning a new language as it requires good concentration. Expect the young person to get bored and restless; give them time out when this happens.

# Advanced Bilingual Learners

Key Points:

- Once a young person has mastered conversational English their language acquisition is still not complete. In order to succeed academically they need to acquire the more formal, curriculum-based language (both vocabulary and grammatical structures). This can take an additional 5-7 years.
- They will tend to stay within a narrow range of familiar vocabulary. They need planned intervention to introduce new vocabulary and grammatical forms.
- Research shows that what works for EAL learners, works for all students; particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds as they often do not have the academic language either.

# Equality, Diversity & Inclusion



The Equality Act 2010 lists 9 protected characteristics (including race, religion & belief, sexual orientation and disability).

It places a duty on all public bodies (which includes further and higher educational settings) to:

- **Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation**
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- **Foster good relations** between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The Equalities Act 2010 requires educational providers to have at least one equality objective that should be reviewed every four years.

Our migrant young people are likely to have at least one protected characteristic in addition to probable trauma. The barriers they face are likely to be multi-faceted and varied.

As these young people often come from countries with different cultural norms, faith systems and/or access to education, they may occasionally make missteps as they attempt to navigate this new world in which they are now living. Since 2014 schools have had a duty to promote British Values:

- Democracy
  - Rule of law
  - Individual liberty
  - Mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Our separated migrant children need to assimilate and learn how the UK functions whilst also managing culture shock, learning a new language and a new education system. Educational settings will need to be empathetic and sensitive in their teaching and modelling of British Values.

Key points:

- This is an extremely diverse group of students whose ethnicity is not 'White British'.
- Some BME students (including migrant young people) have EAL, others do not.
- Although each individual young person is unique and it is important not to stereotype, there are extra challenges and barriers that some minority ethnic students face (particularly those who are not 'White').



- [EAL Programme - The Bell Foundation \(bell-foundation.org.uk\)](http://bell-foundation.org.uk)
- [NALDIC | EAL National Subject Association](#)
- [Refugee Education UK | Home | London \(reuk.org\)](http://reuk.org)
- [Homepage - Refugee Council](#)
- [About Us – UASC Health](#)
- [ESOL Resources | Skillsworkshop](#)
- [Teachers | ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES \(excellencegateway.org.uk\)](#)
- [Home | Learn My Way](#)
- [The Official Shop | Official Life in the UK Learning Zone](#)
- [Online Training Courses & Qualifications | learndirect](#)
- [Post-16 Information for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children | BELS](#)

Free websites for learning English:

- [Learn English - Free Online Course for Beginners \(esolcourses.com\)](http://esolcourses.com)
- [Activities for ESL/EFL Students \(English Study\) \(a4esl.org\)](http://a4esl.org)
- [Learn English Online | Linguanaut](#)
- [British Council LearnEnglish Teens | Free resources for teens to help improve your English](#)
- [English Grammar Online - free exercises, explanations, vocabulary, dictionary and teaching materials \(ego4u.com\)](http://ego4u.com)
- [EnglishClub - Learn or Teach English Today](#)
- [Games Zone - online English language games \(learn English through games\) \(english-online.org.uk\)](http://english-online.org.uk)
- [Learn English Online free \(ESL\): Visit Kinglishschool to Learn English Online in a fun and effective way](#)
- [English for learners - Grammar, Vocabulary, Idioms, Proverbs, Business | Learn English Today \(learn-english-today.com\)](http://learn-english-today.com)
- [Headway Student's Site | Learning Resources | Oxford University Press \(oup.com\)](http://oup.com)
- [Learners | ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES \(excellencegateway.org.uk\)](#)