Toxic Stress and Brain Development

The images below show the impact that toxic stress has on a child’s developing brain:

**Neurons in the brain**
There are neurons in different parts of the brain.

**Neurons form connections**
These neurons form connections as a child's brain develops, helping them to perform different functions like behavioural control, motor skills, language, visual, memory and emotion.

**Healthy development**
The brain develops in a healthy manner, strengthening the connections between neurons, when the following conditions are present:
- Safe, predictable and nurturing environment
- Supportive and consistent adult relationships

**Severe adversity**
When children experience severe adversity for a prolonged period, their brain development gets affected by this toxic stress, and the brain connections may start to break off.

**Toxic stress**
The stress created by exposure to prolonged adversity is called ‘toxic stress’. Childhood is a time of rapid brain development. When children face severe adversity, it can cause damage to their growing brains.

For more information visit Healing Classrooms UK | Refugees Bring More Than They Carry