



COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME

A handbook for **Communities for Afghans (CfA)** groups as part of the International Rescue Committee UK's Community Sponsorship Programme

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Acronyms

IRC	<i>International Rescue Committee</i>
HO	<i>Home Office</i>
MHCLG	<i>Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government</i>
CSG	<i>Community Sponsorship Group</i>
CfA	<i>Communities for Afghans</i>
IOM	<i>International Organisation for Migration</i>
UNHCR	<i>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</i>
UKRS	<i>UK Resettlement Scheme</i>
MoD	<i>Ministry of Defense</i>
LA	<i>Local Authority</i>
LHA	<i>Local Housing Allowance</i>
ARP	<i>Afghan Resettlement Programme</i>
DWP	<i>Department for Work and Pensions</i>
JCP	<i>Jobcentre Plus</i>
UC	<i>Universal Credit</i>
ESOL	<i>English for Speakers of Other Languages</i>
PSAP	<i>Principle Sponsor Application Process</i>
DBS	<i>Disclosure and Barring Service</i>
CiC	<i>Community Interest Company</i>
FGM	<i>Female Genital Mutilation</i>
CCE	<i>Child Criminal Exploitation</i>
CSE	<i>Child Sexual Exploitation</i>
PTSD	<i>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</i>
NRPF	<i>No Recourse to Public Funds</i>
GDPR	<i>General Data Protection Regulation</i>
DfE	<i>Department for Education</i>
MASH	<i>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub</i>
NSPCC	<i>National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children</i>
MHD	<i>Migrant Health Document</i>
CAMHS	<i>Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services</i>
A&E	<i>Accident & Emergency</i>
TB	<i>Tuberculosis</i>
BRP	<i>Biometric Residence Permit</i>
UKVI	<i>UK Visas and Immigration</i>
UC	<i>Universal Credit</i>
PSHE	<i>Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education</i>
RSHP	<i>Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood education</i>
STAR	<i>Student Action for Refugees</i>
ENIC	<i>UK National Information Centre</i>
GBV	<i>Gender-Based Violence</i>
PSS	<i>Psychosocial Support</i>
NI	<i>Northern Ireland</i>

Welcome Aboard!

Welcome, and thank you for choosing to become a sponsor!

This handbook is designed to guide you through your sponsorship journey, offering practical advice, resources, and support to help you confidently welcome and support a family. Inside, you will find guidance on your roles and responsibilities, tips for emotional and practical support, and tools to navigate challenges along the way.

To help you put this guidance into practice, the handbook includes practical checklists. These offer step-by-step guidance on key tasks, from preparing the home to supporting the family long term. They help you stay organised, maintain safety and wellbeing, and ensure nothing important is missed, while remaining adaptable to each family's needs.

Being a sponsor is a rewarding and inspiring experience. It allows you to make a meaningful difference in a family's life, create lasting connections, and strengthen your local community.

We are grateful for your generosity and care. Remember, you are not alone on this journey - your local sponsorship coordinator and supporting organisations are here to guide you every step of the way.

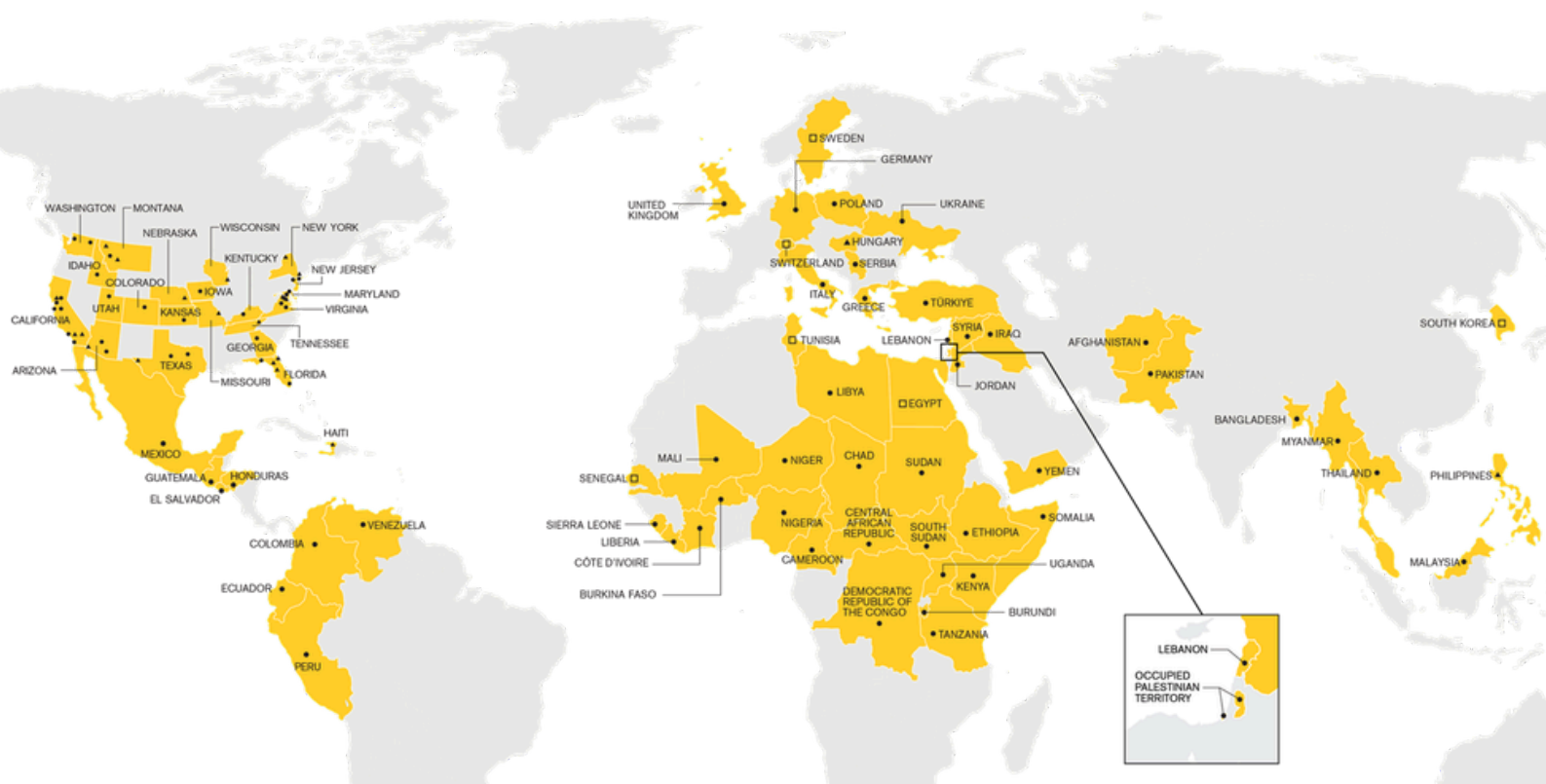
IRC UK Team

About The International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover, and gain control of their future.

Founded at the suggestion of Albert Einstein in 1933, the IRC's roots are firmly planted in Europe. At the end of World War II, the IRC was one of the few organisations ready and able to assist the millions of refugees in need of sanctuary. The IRC has since become a global humanitarian organisation with programming in 52 countries. In 2022, the IRC reached 32.9 million clients in countries affected by conflict or humanitarian crisis. This includes treating more than 450,000 children for malnutrition and providing cash assistance to over 1.4 million people facing humanitarian crises. Additionally, the IRC served more than 300,000 clients in the U.S. and Europe with asylum and protection services.

The IRC's work on the refugee crisis in Europe began in 2015 as an emergency response in Greece and subsequently expanded to Germany and Serbia. We strive to make an active contribution to the world by applying the findings of IRC's 80 years of international experience with refugees worldwide, as well as results from our current research projects.



The IRC in the UK

IRC opened its UK office in 1997 to support its global work with refugees. Since then, the IRC has developed a broad range of resettlement, integration, education, and employability programmes across the country. In 2021, the IRC began delivering integration support to resettled Syrian refugees aged 18 and above through the Refugee Integration in Southeast England (RISE) project. This work later expanded to Afghan and Ukrainian clients, offering programmes such as Orientation for Newcomers, Job Readiness Training, Peer Mentorship, and Leadership to help individuals build confidence, skills, and independence.

In 2022, the IRC began delivering its evidence-based Healing Classrooms work in the UK. This programme supports schools in creating safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments where refugee and asylum-seeking students can develop the linguistic, academic, social, and emotional skills necessary to thrive and participate fully in society.

The IRC has successfully delivered the Home Office-funded Refugee Employability Programme (REP) in the South West of England, equipping clients with job-readiness skills and tailored pathways into sustainable employment through holistic integration support. Building on this expertise, the IRC has recently expanded its resettlement and integration services to Hampshire, providing resettled refugees with comprehensive support spanning employment, housing, language, and community integration.

For more information, visit our website: <https://rescue.org/uk>.

The Community Sponsorship Programme at a Glance

Community Sponsorship is a UK government scheme that enables local groups to directly welcome and support a resettled family into their community. Working alongside local organisations, it fosters positive outcomes for both the families and the volunteers who open their hearts and their communities.

Through sponsorship, communities- including charities, faith groups, and volunteer networks - offer practical and emotional support to help families rebuild their lives in safety, and become confident, self-sufficient members of their new community.

Being a sponsor also enriches the local area, creating new friendships, celebrating generosity, and strengthening the bonds that make a community thrive.

MODULE 1: DATA PROTECTION

WHAT IS DATA PROTECTION AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Disclaimer: This document is provided for general informational purposes only and does not constitute and should not be construed or relied upon as legal advice. It is not a substitute for obtaining legal advice specific to your circumstances. Detailed guidance can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/>

In the UK, there are laws ('legislation') with rules about how people's personal information ('data') can be used. The two main laws are the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

These laws set rules for how organisations collect, store, use, share and protect personal data. They apply to any organisations - large or small - that processes personal data in the UK, including Community Sponsorship Groups processing the personal data of newly arrived families.

Why does it matter?

Data protection matters because :



It keeps people safe

Data subjects face risks if their personal information is shared inappropriately (e.g., information about their location or family).



It builds trust

When people know their data is handled responsibly, they are more comfortable engaging with your services.



It is a legal requirement

All organisations, regardless of size, must follow the rules and take responsibility for the data they process. Non-compliance can result in high penalties for the organisations.

WHAT IS PERSONAL DATA?

Personal Data

Personal data is any information relating to a living person who can be directly or indirectly identified by that information. Personal data is defined very broadly; examples of personal data are:

- A person's name
- Case notes or support history
- Phone number
- Photographs
- Email address



Special Category Data

Some personal data is more sensitive and needs extra protection. This is referred to as "special category data". You will very likely come across this data whilst supporting your resettled family. Special category data includes information about:

- Racial or ethnic background
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Political opinions
- Health
- Biometric data (e.g., fingerprints)

PRINCIPLES OF DATA PROTECTION

The law called the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) sets out seven key principles which should guide your group's approach to processing personal data:

1. Lawfulness, fairness, transparency

- Only collect data which you have a lawful basis to process, such as the consent of the individual.
- You must use personal data in a way which is fair to the individual, not unexpected or misleading.
- Be open and clear with people about how and why you use their data, such as by providing a privacy notice.

2. Purpose limitation

- Only use data for the specific reason(s) you collected it.

3. Data minimisation

- Collect only what you need to achieve the specific purpose, nothing more.

4. Accuracy

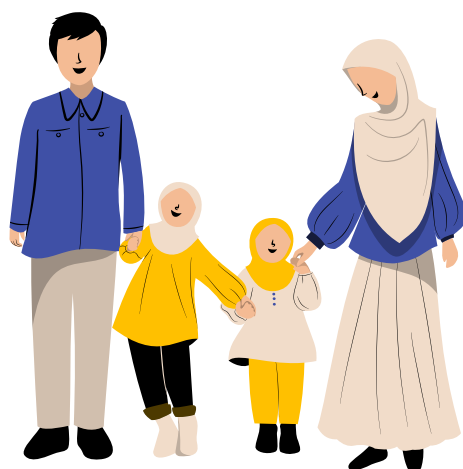
- Keep information correct and up to date.

WHAT RIGHTS DO PEOPLE HAVE OVER THEIR PERSONAL DATA ?

Rights of the people you support ("Data Subjects")

Individuals have rights over their personal data, including the right to:

- Be informed about the details of your use of their personal data
- Object to certain uses of their data
- Access their data (known as a "Data Subject Access Request")
- Restrict how their data is used
- Correct inaccurate information
- Portability – allowing them to obtain and reuse their data across different services
- Delete their data (in some situations)
- Not be subject to solely automated decisions that have significant effects



Your group must respond to rights requests from data subjects, usually within one month. Refer to ICO guidance on how to respond to these requests when received.

WHAT IF THERE'S A DATA BREACH?



Data breaches and reporting obligations

A data breach is “A breach of security leading to accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure or, or access to personal data transmitted, stored or otherwise processed.” Breaches can occur through human error, hacking or a failure to implement security measures.

Common examples

- Emailing personal details to the wrong email address.
- Losing a laptop or phone containing case notes or other personal data of data subjects.

If a breach occurs

If a breach occurs, your group needs to consider whether it poses **a risk to the data subject**. If risk is likely, you must report it to the **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)** within **72 hours** and, in higher-risk cases, also notify the affected individual.

The ICO has a **self-assessment tool** to help determine whether it should be reported at <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/report-a-breach/personal-data-breach-assessment/>

Volunteers should raise any suspected breach immediately with the person responsible for data protection in your organisation.

Further resources

- [Eversheds Sutherland Data Protection Training for Community Sponsorship Groups](#)
- Information Commissioner's Office website: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/>



MODULE 2 - INTRODUCTION

WHY JOIN A COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP GROUP?

“ I’ve got a huge amount out of volunteering. Having had my head so firmly stuck in education, I think I needed to reset myself. And when you do good things for others, it really does give you a warm glow. You also get to meet like-minded people from different walks of life that you might not have had the chance to meet otherwise. I’m quite driven by the concept of doing good. I’m not particularly religious but I think there’s a lot of good in people – and Community Sponsorship is a real opportunity to bring it out.

Falmouth Community Sponsorship Group Volunteer

“ The Community Sponsorship initiative exemplifies the transformative power of local, grassroots efforts. By bringing together volunteers, families, friends and neighbours, we’ve created a microcosm of solidarity where each individual’s well-being and liberation are interconnected. This community is a powerful reminder that, even amidst systemic challenges, tangible change is possible when people unite with a shared purpose as well as respect for each other’s humanity.

Edinburgh Community Sponsorship Group Volunteer

“ I am from one of the families that came to Scotland through the efforts of the Edinburgh Refugee Sponsorship Circle. Their reception was very wonderful. Since our arrival we felt very safe. Even though there was an outbreak of Corona, we were quarantined for ten days, but we never felt lonely. They were always by our side. On our special holidays, they celebrate with us and we throw some wonderful parties together. As a popular proverb says, it is not one big step that achieves happiness and success, but rather many small steps. We stood side by side with small steps to achieve a life that shines in lights full of hope.

Family member resettled in Scotland



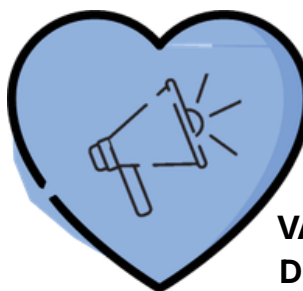
FIND MORE VOLUNTEERS

You will need a big group of fabulous people like you to join the support group, with different skillsets, time availabilities, and useful perspectives.

Here are some reasons why people get involved that you might want to think about when promoting the group.



**SOCIAL
CONNECTION**



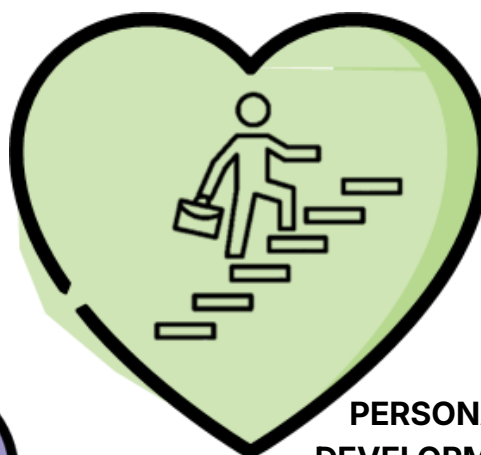
**VALUES
DRIVEN**



**SPIRITUAL
BELIEFS**



**MAKING A
DIFFERENCE**



**PERSONAL
DEVELOPMENT**



**PERSONAL
LIVED
EXPERIENCE**

WHAT IS REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT ?

A refugee is someone with a 'well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.'

1951 UN Refugee Convention

ASYLUM SEEKER

Travels to UK
↓
Applies for asylum
to the Home Office, may
be refused
↓
If accepted
↓

REFUGEE

Granted right to work and
access other benefits
including education and
healthcare

RESETTLED REFUGEE

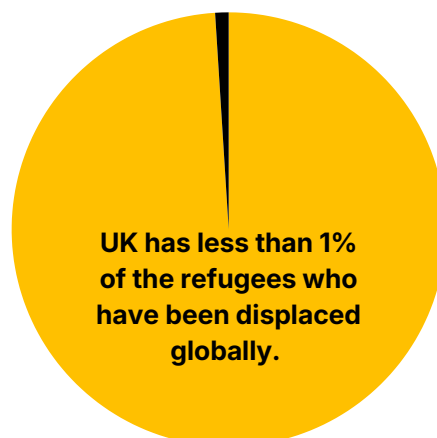
Assessed by UNHCR, MOD
or others as being in
especially precarious
situation
↓

Accepted through scheme
such as UKRS (UK
Resettlement Scheme) or
ARP (Afghan Resettlement
Programme) and granted
refugee status or other
(e.g. Indefinite Leave to
Remain) pre-arrival
↓

Arrives in UK, granted right
to work and access to
benefits



There are 122.6 million forcibly displaced people worldwide - many who just move to another part of their own country. 42 million are refugees.



WHICH ORGANISATIONS ARE INVOLVED?



International organisations



Central government



Principal sponsors



Your local council



Your community sponsorship group



Others in the community

WHAT DO THESE ORGANISATIONS DO?

International organisations

UNHCR works at various sites worldwide to identify displaced people who are in particular need, according to criteria of UK schemes. IOM gathers information, such as medical background, and IOM staff also accompany people directly on flights until the final arrival airport.



Central government

The Ministry of Defence works closely with the Home Office to do security screenings for new arrivals, and also directly provides transitional accommodation. The Home Office leads many resettlement schemes, whilst the MHCLG leads the Communities for Afghans scheme.



Principal sponsors

You may or may not be supported by an organisation. All Communities for Afghans groups will have a Principal Sponsor who will support them with extra advice and guidance, possibly including things like finding an appropriate property or navigating long-term integration needs.



Your local council

Your local council will be a key partner and maintaining a close relationship is important. Your council may wish to see the property before the family moves in, carry out welfare check after arrival, and support you with school admissions, information about local services, and much more.



Your community sponsorship group

This is you! Your group can help a new family find the practical help it needs to settle into a new place, including support with housing, language, accessing services, and finding work and education opportunities. You can also offer a warm welcome and support network.



Others in the community

Each family member will have different interests, strengths and needs. It's a good idea to connect them with other organisations, from statutory services like Jobcentre Plus to community and informal groups that offer things like English classes or social activities for children.

FINDING A PROPERTY

There's no single magic way to find a property for the family. Your group will likely have to draw on its connections, persistence, teamwork, and a bit of luck.

If you find a property, it then might not be quite right, but don't give up - it can be done! Here are some ideas to get you started.



Networks and ideas
of Principal Sponsors



Online platforms like
Zoopla, Rightmove,
SpareRoom and
OpenRent



Letting companies
and estate agents



Local newspaper
adverts and
noticeboards



Private
landlords



Local faith
groups



Networks of
other charities



Empty
homes



Housing
associations



Buy a house
together !!!

Start by exploring online property platforms such as [Rightmove](#), [Zoopla](#), [OpenRent](#) and [SpareRoom](#). These can be useful for understanding what is available in your area, typical rent levels, and how quickly properties are being let.



Online platforms like
Zoopla, Rightmove,
SpareRoom and
OpenRent



Private landlords
& letting agents

Don't underestimate private landlords and letting agents. Once they understand what Community Sponsorship involves, many are supportive. Some landlords are willing to offer rent below market rate for social reasons, particularly when they know families will be well supported and rent payments will be reliable.

Your community connections can be just as important. Faith groups, community organisations, and local networks often know of unused or congregation-owned properties, or individuals who may be open to renting. Word of mouth, social media, and local refugee support networks can also be effective.



Local faith
groups



Networks of
other charities

Some charities maintain links with private landlords who are open to renting to sponsored families, e.g., Refugees at Home or local refugee support groups. These can also offer short-term options while you secure longer-term housing.

Many councils have an Empty Homes Officer who can provide information about vacant properties. National organisations like Action on Empty Homes or the Empty Homes Network can offer guidance on approaching owners and understanding legal or safety requirements.



Empty
homes



Housing
associations

Some housing associations partner with Community Sponsorship groups when tenancy support and rent guarantees are provided. Contact your local housing association to explore available properties, which can offer affordable and secure housing options.

APPROACHING LANDLORDS AND LETTING AGENTS

When approaching landlords or agents, be ready to clearly explain:

- What Community Sponsorship is
- The practical support your group will provide to the family
- How rent will be paid and sustained

Clear, confident explanations help build trust. Many landlords respond positively once they understand that families will not be left on their own. You can use the [Landlord Engagement Template](#) on our website to help explain the scheme and answer common questions.

UNDERSTANDING AFFORDABILITY

Before committing to a property, it's important to check whether it will be affordable for the family in the long term.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) sets the maximum housing benefit a household can usually receive, depending on property size and location. Checking the LHA rate for your area early on will help you understand what rent levels are realistic.

The Benefit Cap limits the total amount of benefits a household can receive. If rent is high, this may reduce the money available for everyday living costs such as food, utilities and transport. Your group should check for any gap between rent and the LHA and plan how it will be managed so the family is not placed under financial pressure.

HOLDING AGREEMENT

Once you have identified a suitable property, consider a holding agreement with the landlord before signing the tenancy. This simple written agreement confirms the property is reserved for the family and allows you to:

- Complete safety and compliance checks
- Prepare and clean the property
- Ensure the home is ready and welcoming

It also helps protect both your group and the landlord while final arrangements are completed.

WHAT DO GROUP MEMBERS DO?

Your community sponsorship group may be large or small. Whatever the size, it helps to have a variety of volunteers with different skill sets and time availability. To ensure clear communication and accountability, you should have a named lead in key areas such as those listed below. There may be other areas, such as health or ESOL. You could also split the communication channels used for core group members who regularly contact the family, and members with limited time.



Holds regular meetings, facilitates effective internal and external communication. Might lead any fundraising efforts. Makes sure all volunteers work cohesively for the benefit of new family.

GROUP LEAD



Helps group find property, liaises with landlord for tenancy agreement. May invite council to inspect the property. Coordinates any necessary adaptations if additional needs.

HOUSING LEAD



First point of contact for safeguarding concerns. Creates safeguarding policy, and complaints/feedback policy, and ensures all volunteers understand and follow both policies.

SAFEGUARDING LEAD



Arranges early benefits appointments with DWP and ensures each family member receives full statutory entitlement. Supports family with budgeting, bills, etc.

MONEY LEAD



Liaises with council school admissions team so children attend schools appropriate to their needs. May support English language (ESOL) but given importance, can be led by additional team member.

EDUCATION LEAD



Offers adult family members support and guidance to transition to UK job market, e.g. helping connect with volunteer or employment opportunities, CV and interview support.

EMPLOYMENT LEAD

VOLUNTEER BOUNDARIES

Your group will need a Code of Conduct to guide volunteers' behaviour and keep everyone, including you, safe. Review it as a group regularly to keep in line with the family's integration journey. Here are some rules you might want to consider including:

- If there is an immediate risk of serious harm, information cannot be confidential.
- Don't take photos without consent! Avoid posting identifiable faces online.
- Regular meetings between volunteers are essential.
- Not everyone should visit the family's home.
- No volunteer should be alone with a child unless in agreed circumstances.
- Every volunteer should understand the group's safeguarding reporting process.
- No one should give or receive gifts of personal cash, even small amounts.

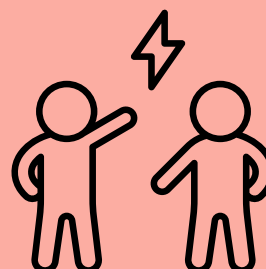
You may want to help a lot

but no one needs a superhero to save them. Independence is the goal. Encourage careful risk-taking to reduce dependency.



You may want friendship

with family members, but this is not your goal. Boundaries prevent oversteps and misunderstandings.



DON'T FORGET SELF CARE

Look after yourself.

Have boundaries around hours/ duties.



Write accurate records to share the load.

Say no sometimes.

Rest when needed.

You may feel like the expert

because you understand the UK. Remember: family members know their own needs best. Put them at the centre of all decisions.



BROKEN RECORD PRINCIPLES

During your training journey with IRC, you're going to hear some terms repeated A LOT.

You will hear us talk about thinking in a **strengths-based** way, with a **trauma-informed** approach, and a **person-centred** attitude.

You'll also hear about the need to **do no harm**.

That's because these ideas are so important we will say them again and again and again! You will hear these very important core principles so much that it's like a broken record!



STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

Refugees are not passive victims or problems to 'fix'. They are people with resources, resilience, skills, values, communities and **strengths**. This is not just a nice way to think. It's backed by hard evidence that shows that building on capabilities first, and actively involving people most affected by decisions, produces measurably better outcomes.

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

You don't have to be a clinically-trained specialist to appreciate that many refugees have traumatic experiences and memories, or to support in a **careful and considerate** way. Avoid causing further harm (and increase engagement) by being calm, consistent, predictable and trustworthy. Ask consent to take action, give clear explanations, and be accountable.

DO NO HARM

This is the most important principle. No one should be worse off because of your intervention. Harm can be unintentional. For example, not reporting a safeguarding concern, or helping a family so much that it doesn't feel capable of doing anything without you. You might accidentally create conflict within a household, or identify a someone in public. **Act with caution.** If in doubt, talk to someone.

PERSON-CENTRED

People do not make the most of support offered if they feel disrespected, misunderstood or that they do not have control. You can and should offer clear and accurate information for people to make **informed choices**. Ultimately each person is the expert of their own experiences and decides for themselves. The person you support should always be at centre of any decision affecting them.



MODULE 3 - THE APPLICATION

STEPS TO BECOMING A SPONSORSHIP GROUP

1

CONTACT A PRINCIPAL SPONSOR

Reach out to a recognised Principal Sponsor who will guide your group through the application process and submit it on your on your behalf.

2

FORM YOUR SPONSOR GROUP

Find at least 5 other people who can commit time as a volunteer, including a safeguarding lead. Give each person a role e.g. housing, health, education, etc.

3

COMPLETE CHECKS

All members undergo DBS/criminal record checks and provide references as required.

4

SIGN DOCUMENTS

Sign Sponsor declaration, data sharing agreements, and your Code of Conduct

5

ATTEND IRC'S EXCELLENT TRAINING

At least 6 core members should attend

6

APPLICATION APPROVED

Principal Sponsor confirms your group is ready to proceed

7

PROPERTY APPROVED

You will need to submit a Police Consultation Form and evidence you've invited the council to inspect the property.

8

GET MATCHED WITH A FAMILY

Review and accept the match in coordination with the Principal Sponsor and local authority.

9

PREPARE FOR ARRIVAL

Set up the home, plan support, and ensure safeguarding and complaints procedures are in place.

10

CELEBRATE AND GET READY !

Congratulations!
Now the real work begins.

RESETTLEMENT PLANNING

Once your application is approved, it's time to start your resettlement plan. Consider how you'll support the family in each of these key areas:

- **Benefits**
Estimate likely welfare income and plan how you'll help set up a bank account
- **School**
Understand local admissions and think about which schools could welcome the children
- **ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)**
You will need to ensure the family can access both formal and informal English language provision, including a minimum of 8 hours per week for first year
- **Interpretation**
For the first week, you'll be expected to ensure there is interpretation available every day. Generally you'll also have to consider confidentiality and gender needs.
- **GP**
You'll need to help the family register with a GP, and consider dentists, opticians, and other health service registration as needed, including support for mental health.
- **Employment**
Start planning how adults can take up employment or volunteering opportunities based on skills, experience, and interests. You may also want to consider how volunteering could be a valuable option for them to boost their employability.
- **Accommodation**
Plan how you'll secure safe, suitable, and affordable housing for the family for at least 3 years, and ensure it meets council and police requirements.

MODULE 4 - SAFEGUARDING



This module will help you:

1. **RECOGNISE** common safeguarding risks and warning signs.
2. **RECORD** safeguarding concerns and actions taken.
3. **REFER** safeguarding concerns to appropriate support.

1. RECOGNISE: What is Safeguarding?

A safeguarding concern is any worry about a person's safety or wellbeing based on something seen, heard, or reported.

This can relate to their welfare, safety at home or in the community.

This includes concerns about harmful or risky behaviour by Community Sponsorship Group members or volunteers.

As community sponsors, it's important not to assume families are more likely to present safeguarding concerns.

However, many may have experienced, or be experiencing, significant stress, disruption, or uncertainty. This can contribute to behaviours that may place themselves or others at risk. It is essential that you avoid judgment, even when a family's behaviour feels unfamiliar or difficult to understand.

Your role is to meet families where they are, offering support that promotes safety, stability, and overall wellbeing, whatever their circumstances. This support may include signposting them to specialist services and, in some situations, making referrals directly to statutory agencies for additional help.

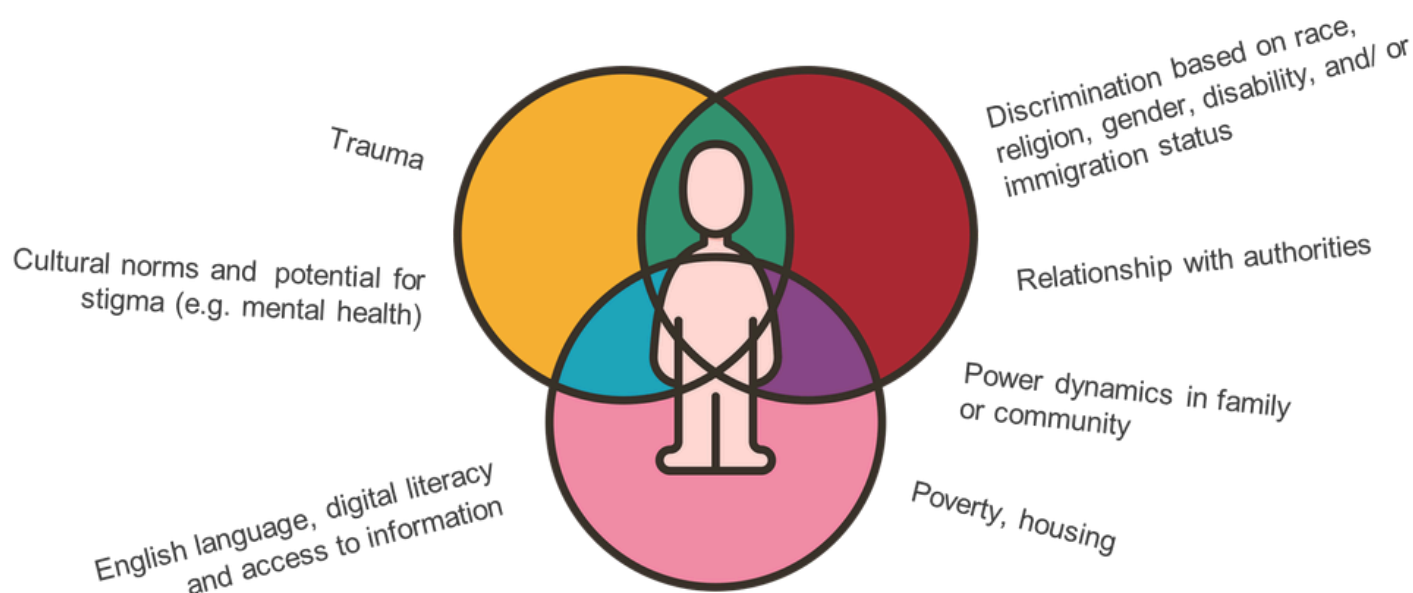
It's not your responsibility to solve safeguarding concerns, but **RECOGNISE, RECORD, and REFER.**



1.RECOGNISE: Key Definitions

Child	Anyone under the age of 18
Adult with care and support needs	Person over 18 who needs care and support and may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation
Mental capacity	Ability to make a specific decision at a specific time. Capacity can change and must be assessed as needed.
Consent	Giving permission for something to happen
Duty of care	Our legal and moral responsibility to act
Local authority	Responsible for child and adult safeguarding
Referral	The process of passing on concerns to the appropriate person or authority
Disclosure	Sharing information about experience of abuse or neglect with another person

1.RECOGNISE: Experiences and identities



1. RECOGNISE: Types of Risks & Warning Signs

Exploitation

Under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, exploitation includes obtaining services (such as labour or sexual services) through force, threats, deception, or the abuse of a person's vulnerability.

- **Child labour:** The employment of a child in work that is harmful to their physical or mental development or that interferes with their education, including any work performed below the legally permitted working age.
- **Modern slavery:** A legal framework covering slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, and human trafficking. It involves coercion, threats, or deception to exploit a person for gain.

Discrimination:

As defined by the Equality Act 2010, treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic (e.g., age, race, sex, disability).

Hate crime:

A criminal offence motivated by hostility or prejudice towards a person's protected characteristic (e.g., race, religion, sexual orientation, disability).

Substance use:

Misuse, dependency, or harmful use of alcohol or drugs that negatively affects a person's health, behaviour, safety, or social functioning.

Mental health concerns:

A clinically significant disturbance in thinking, emotion, or behaviour that impairs daily functioning or wellbeing (as recognised in mental health legislation).

Neglect and Self-neglect:

- **Neglect:** the failure of a caregiver, organisation, or system to meet a person's essential needs.
- **Self-neglect:** when a person is unable or unwilling to care for their basic needs, leading to risks to their health, safety, or wellbeing.

Abuse:

- **Physical abuse:** The intentional or reckless use of physical force or restraint that causes injury, pain, or impairment.
- **Sexual abuse:** Engaging in any sexual act with a person without their consent, or exploiting someone sexually through manipulation, coercion, or pressure.
- **Emotional abuse:** Persistent emotional maltreatment - such as threats, humiliation, belittling, intimidation, or controlling behaviour - that damages a person's mental health or dignity.
- **Financial abuse:** Under the Care Act 2014, this includes theft, fraud, coercion regarding money or property, or the misuse or exploitation of someone's financial resources.
- **Institutional abuse:** When an organisation's systems, practices, or culture lead to neglect, poor care, or violations of individuals' rights.

FGM (Female Genital Mutilation):

The non-medical, intentional alteration or removal of external female genitalia.

Bullying

Repeated verbal, physical, or psychological behaviour intended to intimidate, degrade, or cause harm.

Homelessness / insecure housing

Lack of access to safe, stable, and adequate accommodation, or living in housing that is precarious, temporary, or at risk (as recognised in homelessness legislation)

Radicalisation/ Grooming:

- **Radicalisation:** the process through which someone adopts extremist ideologies and may come to support violence.
- **Grooming:** developing a manipulative relationship to exploit someone, including for sexual, criminal, or extremist purposes.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is not always physical. It can take many forms, including emotional, financial, sexual, or coercive and controlling behaviour.

In refugee contexts, there may be additional barriers that make it harder for someone to seek help, such as:

- Fear of losing housing, immigration status, or custody of their children
- Cultural stigma or pressure to stay silent or keep family matters private
- Limited understanding of their rights and the support available in the UK
- Isolation from family networks, friends, or community support systems

Domestic abuse

A pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening, or violent behaviour between family members or partners. It can be physical, emotional, sexual, financial, or psychological – and always involves a misuse of power.

Possible signs:

- One partner always speaks for the other
- Expressions of fear, or extreme anxiety about making mistakes
- Unexplained injuries or vague explanations
- Financial control – e.g. no access to money or documents
- Victim/survivor or children avoiding going home

When is it a safeguarding concern?

- Any abuse is disclosed or suspected – even without physical violence
- Children are witnessing or affected by abuse in the home (this is harm in itself)
- Person wants to leave but is afraid to ask for help



Exploitation

Exploitation

When someone is taken advantage of through manipulation, coercion, or abuse of power – often for financial, criminal, sexual, or ideological gain. This includes grooming, trafficking, forced labour, and radicalisation.

Possible signs:

- Unexplained money, new clothes, or tech
- Going missing or being picked up by unknown adults
- Withdrawn, secretive, or fearful behaviour
- Talk of “owing someone” or not being able to say no
- No control over ID, travel, or schedule
- Changes in beliefs, dress, or language that seem sudden and extreme

When is it a safeguarding concern?

- You suspect coercion, grooming, or loss of freedom
- A child is working, missing education, or showing signs of fear/ control
- An adult seems under someone else's control or can't leave a situation



Mental Health

Refugee families may face mental health challenges because of trauma, moving to a new country, feeling isolated, or worrying about the future.

This can include:

- Symptoms of PTSD, depression, or anxiety related to past experiences
- Reluctance to seek help due to cultural stigma or mistrust
- Barriers to accessing services, such as language difficulties or concerns about immigration status

Mental health concerns

A situation where a person's mental or emotional wellbeing is significantly affected – including conditions like depression, anxiety, trauma or suicidal thoughts – and this may impact their safety, daily life, or ability to care for others.

Possible signs in adults:

- Withdrawal or emotional detachment
- Panic attacks or signs of severe anxiety
- Expressions of hopelessness, suicidal thoughts
- Difficulty caring for children or maintaining routines

Possible signs in children:

- Low mood, sleep problems, lack of appetite
- Aggression, anxiety, clinginess
- Self-harm or talk of not wanting to be here
- Sudden changes in school behaviour



When is it a safeguarding concern?

- Mental health is impacting ability to parent or self-care
- Person is at risk of self-harm or suicide
- Mental illness is linked to neglect, abuse, or risk of harm to others

Warning signs of safeguarding concerns:

Physical Signs

- Bruises
- Broken or fractured bones
- Burns or scalds
- Bite marks
- Cuts on wrists or arms
- Pregnancy
- Unexplained access to gifts/ money
- Intoxication



Behavioural Signs

- Seem unconfident or lack self-assurance
- Struggle to control emotions
- Have difficulty making or maintaining relationships
- Act in a way that's inappropriate
- Alcohol/ drug misuse
- Self-harm
- Changes in eating habits
- Changes in mood
- Being angry, aggressive or violent
- Frequent unexplained absences

1.RECOGNISE: Barriers to Reporting

People may be reluctant to report abuse due to:

- Fear of not being believed or of making things worse
- Not understanding what constitutes abuse
- Wanting to protect someone close, including the perpetrator
- Language barriers or disability/dependency
- Lack of privacy or being monitored (e.g., phone watched)
- Feelings of guilt or self-blame
- Preferring to ignore or deny the abuse
- Fear of stigma
- Not knowing who to tell or how to tell them

Limited access to support services and low chances of legal outcomes can prevent refugees and migrants from disclosing abuse. As Community Sponsors, you play a vital role in recognising harm and helping survivors trust that support is available.

2. RECORD: Handling Disclosures



If someone discloses a safeguarding concern, you must act to prevent further harm. Create a safe, supportive space, listen carefully, and respond appropriately. Do not promise confidentiality; explain that you may need to share information to get help.

Afterward, record accurate notes using the person's own words where possible. Your safeguarding policy should set out what to record, how it's stored, and how it's securely deleted.

The steps below provide guidance on responding to a disclosure:

Step 1 – Always ensure the person disclosing is not in immediate danger. If they are, call emergency services first.



Step 2 – Do not promise to keep secrets. Let them know you may need to tell someone who can help.



Step 3 – Listen without interruption or judgement.



Step 4 – AFTER speaking, record notes confidentially.

2. RECORD: Record Keeping

Why keep records?

- Group member absence
- Accuracy of information
- In case a statutory service wants to use them
- In case we want to use them
- Checking our actions
- Learning



Follow the safeguarding reporting process set by your Principal Sponsor, who coordinates responses and may have a designated safeguarding lead, reporting form, or escalation route. This ensures a joined-up approach and avoids duplication or confusion with local services.

If you are unsure who your Principal Sponsor is or their process, arrange to meet them as soon as possible. In cases of immediate risk, contact emergency services - safety comes first.

2. RECORD: Managing Confidentiality

Confidentiality means protecting personal information shared in trust and only sharing it when it is **necessary and lawful**. It is essential for safeguarding the dignity and safety of the families we support. Families have the right to have their private matters respected as far as possible.

Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR allows lawful sharing where there's a safeguarding risk:

"You can share confidential information without consent if there is a good reason to do so, such as to safeguard a child or adult at risk."



When is Sharing Information Necessary and Lawful?

Information should be shared without consent when it is necessary to protect someone from harm or when required by law. This includes situations where:

- **A child or adult is at risk of significant harm:** Including abuse, neglect, exploitation, self-harm, or risk of suicide.
- **There is a legal duty to report:** For example, in cases of sexual abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), risk of radicalisation, or other safeguarding concerns.
- **It is in the public interest:** To prevent serious crime, protect others from harm, or safeguard children or adults.
- **The person lacks capacity to make decisions:** Under the Mental Capacity Act, information may be shared to act in their best interests.
- **A court or legal process requires it:** Information may be shared under a court order or as part of a legal investigation.

Legal Duties to Report:

Situation	Report to	Legislation
Child discloses sexual abuse	The police or local authority	<i>Mandatory reporting law (IICSA recommendations)</i>
Known case of FGM	The police	<i>Serious Crime Act 2015</i>
Risk of radicalisation or terrorism	Local authority Prevent or safeguarding teams	<i>Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015</i>
Child at risk of significant harm	Local Authority	<i>Children Act 1989 / 2004</i>

Guidance and legislation:

- *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)*
- *Care Act 2014 Statutory Guidance*
- *Mental Capacity Act 2005*
- *Information Sharing Advice for Practitioners (DfE 2018)*
- *UK GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018 (vital interests/ public interest)*

Sharing personal information should follow our “broken record” principles: avoid promising to keep secrets and act transparently so confidentiality isn’t “broken.”

Families should know from the outset what to expect if they disclose a safeguarding concern, including that information may be shared to support their safety. Explain early that concerns about safety or wellbeing may require sharing information, while respecting autonomy, involving individuals, and seeking consent wherever possible. When there is immediate risk, safety takes priority, with consent sought where possible but not delaying necessary action.

3. REFER:

Safeguarding Reporting Flowchart

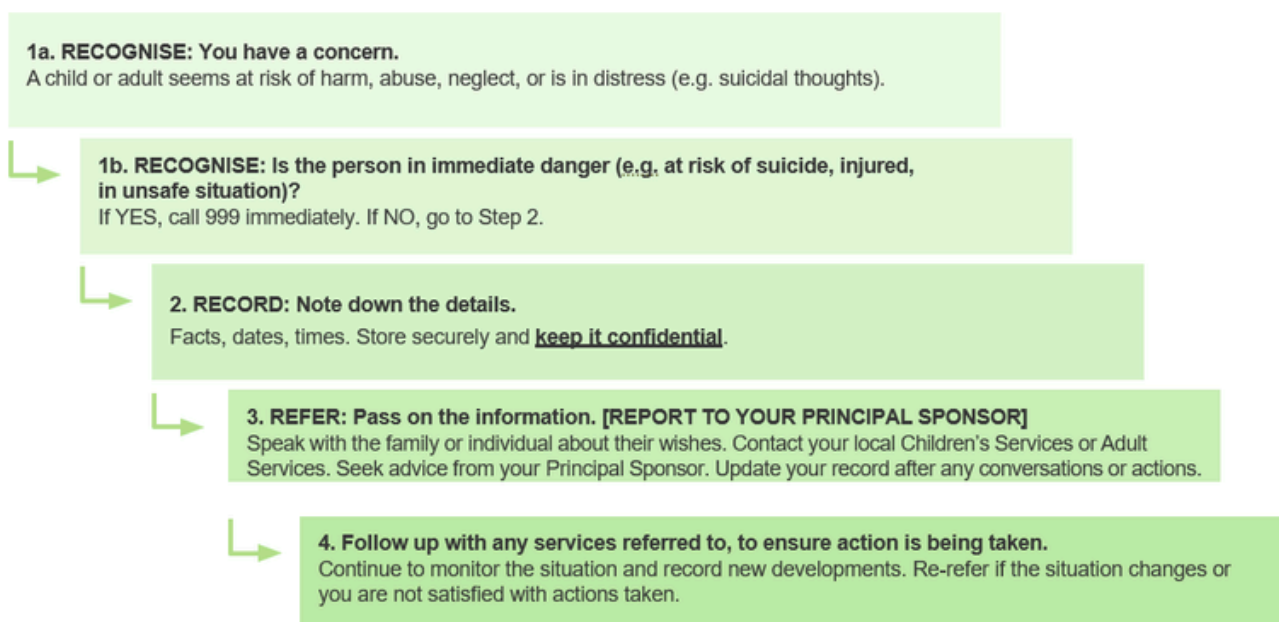
3Rs
RECOGNISE
RECORD
REFER

Having explored when information may need to be shared and the principles that guide this, we can look at how the safeguarding process works in practice.

The steps below outline the actions that must be taken by your **Safeguarding Lead**. If you are not the Safeguarding Lead, your responsibility is to notice concerns and pass them on immediately, so they can be recorded and referred appropriately.

Keep in mind:

- You do not need evidence - a concern or instinct is enough.
- Your role is not to investigate, but to alert professionals.
- The welfare and safety of the person at risk is always the priority.



3. REFER: Who should I refer to?

Many people feel anxious about involving social services, particularly parents and carers. This section provides clarity by addressing common myths and explaining their role in safeguarding.

Your safeguarding policy should include a list of local support services that families can access independently, such as mental health groups, Citizens Advice, and other community resources. Keeping this information up to date ensures you can offer timely guidance or make a referral when concerns arise.

MYTH	FACT
"Social workers just take your children away."	Removing a child from their family is always a last resort. Social workers work first and foremost to keep families together, by offering support, services, and early help.
"If I ask for help, I'll get into trouble."	Asking for help shows strength, not failure. Support is there to help families overcome challenges, not to punish them.
"Once social services are involved, they never leave."	Involvement ends when it's safe and stable to do so. Support is proportionate, and many cases close after brief support or advice.
"Social services don't listen to parents or children."	Children's voices and family views are central. Professionals are trained to listen, build trust, and work with families to find solutions.
"If I tell you something, it will be used against me."	Safeguarding is not about blame, it's about safety. Concerns are shared to protect, not to punish.

Step-by-Step Safeguarding Referral and Response

Area	Children Under 18	Adults (18+)
Who to Refer To	Children's Services / MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub)	Adult Social Care / Safeguarding Adults Team
Legal Framework	Children Act 1989 & 2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)	Care Act 2014, Mental Capacity Act 2005
Threshold for Referral	ANY concern about abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harm.	Adult must: • Have (or appear to have) care & support needs • Be at risk of abuse/neglect/self-neglect • Be unable to protect themselves
Consent Required?	No. We have a duty to report concerns even without consent.	Yes , where possible. Adults have the right to make unwise decisions unless they lack capacity or others are at risk.
Purpose behind the Process	Child protection. The child's welfare is paramount.	Support the adult to live safely, independently, and with dignity; personal autonomy is respected; process is person-centred and rights-based.
Involvement in Decisions	Children are consulted where appropriate, but professionals make safeguarding decisions.	Adults are fully involved unless they lack capacity. Their outcomes and wishes guide the process.
Initial Responses	Social care screens the concern, decides on early help, assessment, or immediate protection if child is at risk. Police or emergency services involved if immediate danger.	Safeguarding/duty worker screens concerns, may start assessment or Section 42 enquiry. Police, crisis team, or hospital involved if immediate danger.
Assessment & Eligibility	Children's Social Care decides level of need (Child in Need, Child Protection Plan, Early help Plan).	Local authority assesses needs, explores what matters to the adult, and determines eligibility for support.
Support Planning & Provision	Plans put in place with the family to keep child safe; may include early help, Child Protection Plan, or multi-agency support.	Co-produced care plan including outcomes, support, providers, funding, direct payments, and reviews. Adults receive support to live safely, independently, and well.

Other Specialised Concerns:**Service to Refer to:**

Immediate risk to life (e.g. suicide plan, violence)	Adult Social Care / Safeguarding Adults Team
Domestic abuse	National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247
Female Genital Mutilation(FGM)in under-18s	Police (mandatory reporting)
Radicalisation / extremism	Prevent team via your local authority. More info at: gov.uk → <u>"Get help if you're worried about someone being radicalised"</u>
Pregnant woman or new baby at risk	Midwife/ Health Visitor and Children's Services
Mental health crisis	Local Crisis Team, NHS 111/GP, Samaritans
Unsure or borderline concerns	Ask advice from your Principal Sponsor, local Social Care, or <u>NSPCC</u>

Finally.... Our Responsibilities



Behaviour expectations

When supporting resettled families, you hold a position of trust.

Your actions reflect on your group and the sponsorship scheme, so always prioritise dignity, safety, and respectful communication.

These expectations help maintain strong safeguarding standards and positive relationships. When unsure, seek guidance: safeguarding is a shared responsibility.

Respect privacy and consent	• Don't take photos or videos without clear consent • Never share photos or family details on social media • Respect the family's right to say no
Maintain safe boundaries with children	• Never be alone with a child • Don't offer lifts to children alone • Let the child/ family initiate physical contact – never force it • Don't shout, touch, or discipline a child
Act respectfully and professionally	• Be reliable, punctual, and respectful • Don't give money or personal gifts • Be clear about your role as a volunteer - keep personal and emotional boundaries
Communicate transparently	• Clearly explain your role – don't assume they will know • Don't promise confidentiality – you may need to report concerns • Ask your Safeguarding Lead if you're unsure • Always prioritise safety
Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility	• Report any concerns to your Safeguarding Lead • Trust your instincts – you don't need proof • Don't try to handle safeguarding issues alone

Reminder of safeguarding responsibilities:

Role	Responsibility
All CSG volunteers	• Follow Volunteer Behaviour Expectations and do no harm • RECOGNISE warning signs of safeguarding harm • Where harm is observed, inform the group Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible • Take care of your mental health – seek support and take breaks when needed
CSG Safeguarding Lead	• Own the group Safeguarding Policy • Follow the 3Rs safeguarding flowchart • Look after safeguarding records • Know where to access support – keep details of your local children's and adult's services, refuges, Citizen's Advice and mental health services
Principal Sponsor	• Co-own the group Safeguarding Policy • Provide specialist advice and guidance • Support with decision-making where concerns arise • Inform Home Office/ MHCLG where necessary
Children's/ Adult Services	• Fulfil duty of care to those experiencing safeguarding harm in their local authority

You should now know how to:

1. **RECOGNISE** common safeguarding risks and warning signs.
2. **RECORD** safeguarding concerns and actions taken.
3. **REFER** safeguarding concerns to appropriate support.

3Rs
RECOGNISE
RECORD
REFER

Remember, you don't need to know everything, you can always ask for help!

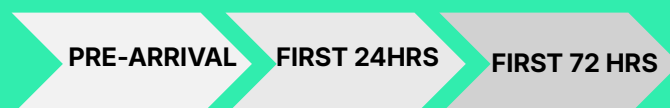


We look forward to seeing you at future safeguarding training sessions.

Your Principal Sponsor can help you make decisions and find the right support.

Your local authority can provide advice and support.

MODULE 5: THE FIRST 72 HOURS



Our broken record principles provide a framework for all support delivered before, during, and after a family's arrival. They are especially important in the first 72 hours, when initial interactions and interventions shape the family's overall experience and set the tone for their resettlement experience.

STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

Recognise and build on the skills, knowledge, and resilience families already bring. Treat adults as capable partners, communicate processes transparently, and foster self-sufficiency. Focus on enhancing existing strengths rather than creating unnecessary dependency.

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

Recognising that many families arrive from challenging or traumatic circumstances, all engagement should be calm, focused, and purposeful - especially within the first 24-72 hours. Avoid overwhelming families with multiple visitors, lengthy explanations, or immediate requests for complex decisions. Instead, provide space and time for adjustment while maintaining a supportive presence.

DO NO HARM

All actions should prioritise the family's safety, wellbeing, and autonomy. Ensure immediate health and safety needs are met, the home is secure, and privacy is respected, while avoiding anything that could cause risk, stress, or loss of autonomy.



PERSON-CENTRED

Families are the primary active decision-makers. While pre-arrival planning may be led by your group, upon arrival families should take a central role in decisions regarding their home, daily routines, services, and priorities. Early involvement promotes confidence, independence, and dignity from the outset.



Identifying key tasks to do before family's arrival

Preparing the Home

Before your supported family arrives, your group's role is to make sure their new home is safe, compliant with local authority (LA) standards, and ready for immediate occupancy. This is a crucial part of early planning.

A well-prepared home helps the family feel secure from the moment they arrive. Many families may have spent long periods in temporary or overcrowded accommodation, or endured long journeys from their home country or third countries, so providing a clean, calm, and safe space can make their arrival reassuring rather than overwhelming.

As part of preparation, it is important to engage with your local authority before the family arrives. This can help you:

- Ensure the property meets LA safety and housing standards.
- Develop good working relationships with the LA and key local services.
- Organise a welfare check and discuss how to access the £136 per person per month payment.

Proper preparation not only safeguards the family's wellbeing and reduces avoidable risks, it also ensures all legal and safety requirements are met. The home should feel welcoming, but not over-decorated or overly personalised - families need space to make it their own and settle at their own pace.

Checklist: Preparing the Home

A. Safety and Compliance

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | Home meets the Decent Homes Standard and has been approved by the LA |
| ☐ | Heating works in every room |
| ☐ | Gas, electricity, and water are functioning safely |
| ☐ | Hot and cold running water checked |
| ☐ | Heating switched on before arrival if the weather is cold |
| ☐ | Internet working or temporary access arranged (e.g., data dongle) |

Fire and Carbon Monoxide Safety

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | Smoke alarms tested |
| ☐ | Fire alarm tested (if applicable) |
| ☐ | Carbon monoxide alarm installed and tested |

Electrical Safety

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | Hob/oven fully working |
| ☐ | Fridge/freezer working |
| ☐ | All donated or second-hand electrical items visually checked for damage |
| ☐ | PAT testing suggested |

General Home Safety

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | No loose floorboards |
| ☐ | No broken stairs or handrails |
| ☐ | No exposed wiring or dangerous sockets |
| ☐ | Damp, mould, leaks, or infestations addressed |
| ☐ | Windows and doors open, close, and lock securely |

B. Furniture and Bedding

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | All upholstered furniture has a UK fire safety label |
| ☐ | Any non-compliant items documented and reported (photos + dates) |
| ☐ | Property owner informed of items needing replacement |
| ☐ | Correct number of beds for adults and children |
| ☐ | Bedding is new and still in original packaging |

C. Comfort and Practical Setup

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | Rooms are clean, bright, and well-ventilated |
| ☐ | Curtains/blinds installed and working |
| ☐ | Washing machine available, or nearest launderette identified |
| ☐ | Indoor or outdoor clothes-drying space available |
| ☐ | Basic kitchen essentials provided (pots, pans, utensils, plates) |
| ☐ | Basic cleaning supplies available |
| ☐ | No personal décor added - leave space for the family to personalise |

D. Tenancy Agreement

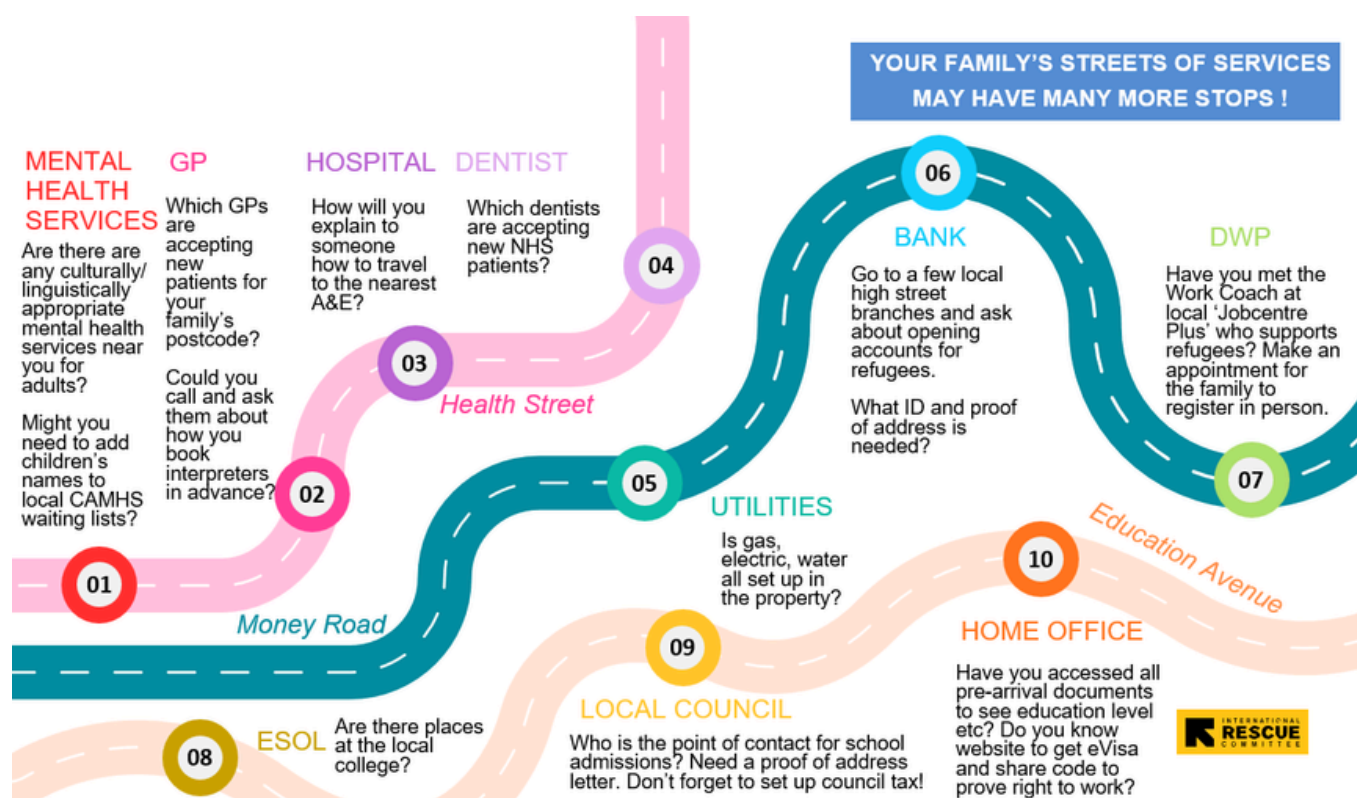
- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | Tenancy agreement ready for review |
| ☐ | Translated copy prepared where possible |
| ☐ | Key points ready to explain clearly once the family has settled |

Streets of Services

Before a family arrives, one of the most important steps is knowing who they will need to connect with - and making sure those connections are ready. The Streets of Services framework is a simple way to map out the key contacts that will support a family's first days in their new community.

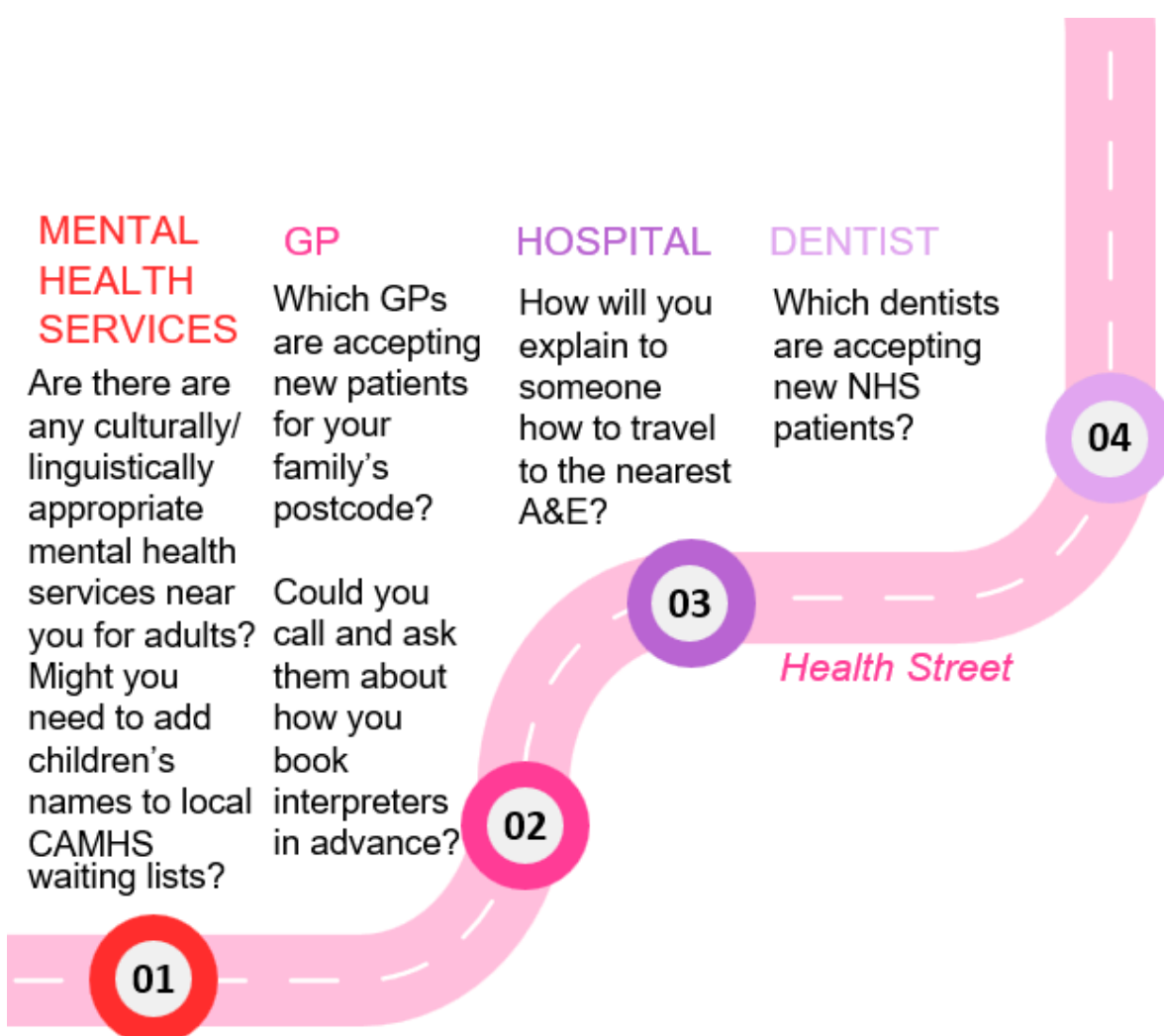
The Three Streets

- **Health Street:** medical care, mental health support, and wellbeing services
- **Money Road:** benefits, banking, financial assistance
- **Education Avenue:** schools, adult education, and language and skills programmes



1: Streets of Services – Health Street

Health Street covers all the services that support a family's physical and mental wellbeing. By identifying and arranging these contacts before arrival, you can help the family access care quickly, feel supported, and reduce unnecessary stress. This includes connecting with mental health and wellbeing support, registering with a GP, arranging access to a dentist, and ensuring awareness of hospital services if needed. Preparing Health Street in advance ensures the family's health needs are met from day one, giving you confidence that essential support is in place and helping the family feel safe, cared for, and ready to settle into their new home.



Using Pre-Arrival Health Documents

Before your supported family arrives, your group lead may receive several confidential documents through the Home Office's secure MOVEit system. These documents give background about the family's health needs, medical history, and any conditions requiring follow-up care. Detailed health or medical information is not always provided, and where it is shared, it may be brief, incomplete, or not fully reflective of the family's actual needs.

If any information is received, it should be used as a guide for early planning only. This might include considering potential mobility needs, arranging initial GP registration, preparing the home, or prioritising immediate safety. It should not be treated as a comprehensive assessment of the family's health needs.

As a group lead, carefully consider whether it is necessary to share any personal or medical information with the wider group. Only share what is essential. For example, if a family member has mobility issues, this should be communicated promptly to the group to ensure safety and support. However, most other medical details do not need to be shared.

Health needs often become clearer after arrival. Initial information supports early planning, but UK GPs will carry out more detailed assessments once the family is registered. Support plans should therefore remain flexible and responsive as needs emerge over time.

A. Documents You Will Receive

- **Resettlement Registration Form (RRF)**
 - Basic family information
 - May contain outdated details
- **Migrant Health Document (MHD)**
 - Most reliable pre-arrival medical information
 - Includes Section B17: recommendations for follow-up care
 - Mental health is self-reported
- **Significant Medical Conditions Form**
 - Flags complex needs (e.g., mobility issues, chronic illness). Use this to assess whether additional planning or adaptations are needed
- **Pre-Departure Medical Screening (PDMS)**
 - Recent screening for TB or other conditions before travel

B. Your Group's Responsibilities

- ✓ The group lead accesses the documents and shares only relevant information with the group
- ✓ Plan for any urgent needs flagged in the documents e.g. diabetes
- ✓ Arrange home adaptations or equipment if mobility needs are identified
- ✓ Note any required follow-up healthcare and plan early GP visits
- ✓ Keep all documents securely stored

C. Planning Using the Documents

- ✓ Identify if the family has:
 - long-term health conditions
 - mobility limitations
 - medication needs
 - mental health concerns
 - urgent follow-up recommendations
- ✓ Cross-check needs with local services on Health Street
- ✓ Adjust arrival-day plans if needed (e.g., allow rest, avoid long welcome visits)
- ✓ Prepare the home in accordance with health needs (e.g., ground-floor room if mobility issues exist)

CHECKLIST: Health Street

1. Mental Health Services

☐	Review the Mental Health Assessment (from the Home Office/your Principal Sponsor) for any needs flagged before arrival
☐	Identify and make contact with local adult mental health services
☐	For children, find the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) team (if needed)
☐	Check interpreter or multilingual staff availability
☐	Identify any refugee-supporting voluntary or community mental health organisations
☐	Note any staff or services experienced with trauma or displacement

Useful tips:

- Some families may need an early referral if any concerns are flagged, such as anxiety, PTSD, or other risk indicators.
- Pre-arrival documents usually provide only brief information; a more detailed assessment will take place after the family is registered with a GP

2. GP (General Practice)

☐	Identify GP practices in the family's postcode that are accepting new patients
☐	Call to confirm they are open to registrations
☐	Ask about interpreter booking processes (phone/face-to-face). Remember it is the GPs responsibility to provide the interpreter.
☐	Check what documents or information are required for registration
☐	Save all practice details (address, contact numbers, opening hours)

Useful tips:

- Use the relevant NHS search tools to find practices accepting new patients:
 - England: [NHS "Find a GP"](#)
 - Wales: [NHS Wales service directory](#)
 - Scotland: [NHS Inform – "Find a GP"](#)
 - Northern Ireland: [nidirect GP Practices search](#)
- Some GP practices allow advance booking of interpreters for initial appointments, so it's worth checking in advance.

3. Hospital and Accidents & Emergency (A&E)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | Identify the nearest hospital with an Emergency Department |
| ☐ | Know the fastest route: bus, walking, or driving |
| ☐ | Prepare simple directions (consider a translation later if needed) |
| ☐ | Have a clear explanation ready of what to expect at A&E (triage, waiting times, and order of priority) |

Useful tips:

- Ensure families know they can walk into an Emergency Department at any time or call 999 in an emergency.
- Explain how the UK emergency system works to help families minimise confusion and anxiety.

4. Dentist

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | Identify NHS dentists accepting new patients |
| ☐ | Call practices to confirm (websites are not always updated) |
| ☐ | Ask about interpreter availability |
| ☐ | Record waiting lists or requirements for emergency treatment |

Useful tips:

Contact NHS dentists as early as possible to check availability, and ask about options for urgent or emergency treatment - waiting lists can often be long.

5. Additional Health Considerations

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | Review pre-arrival documents to see if TB screening or other follow-up checks are required |
| ☐ | Identify local clinics for TB testing, immunisations, or specific conditions |
| ☐ | Note community pharmacies with helpful services such as medicine reviews, emergency prescriptions |

2: Streets of Services – Money Road

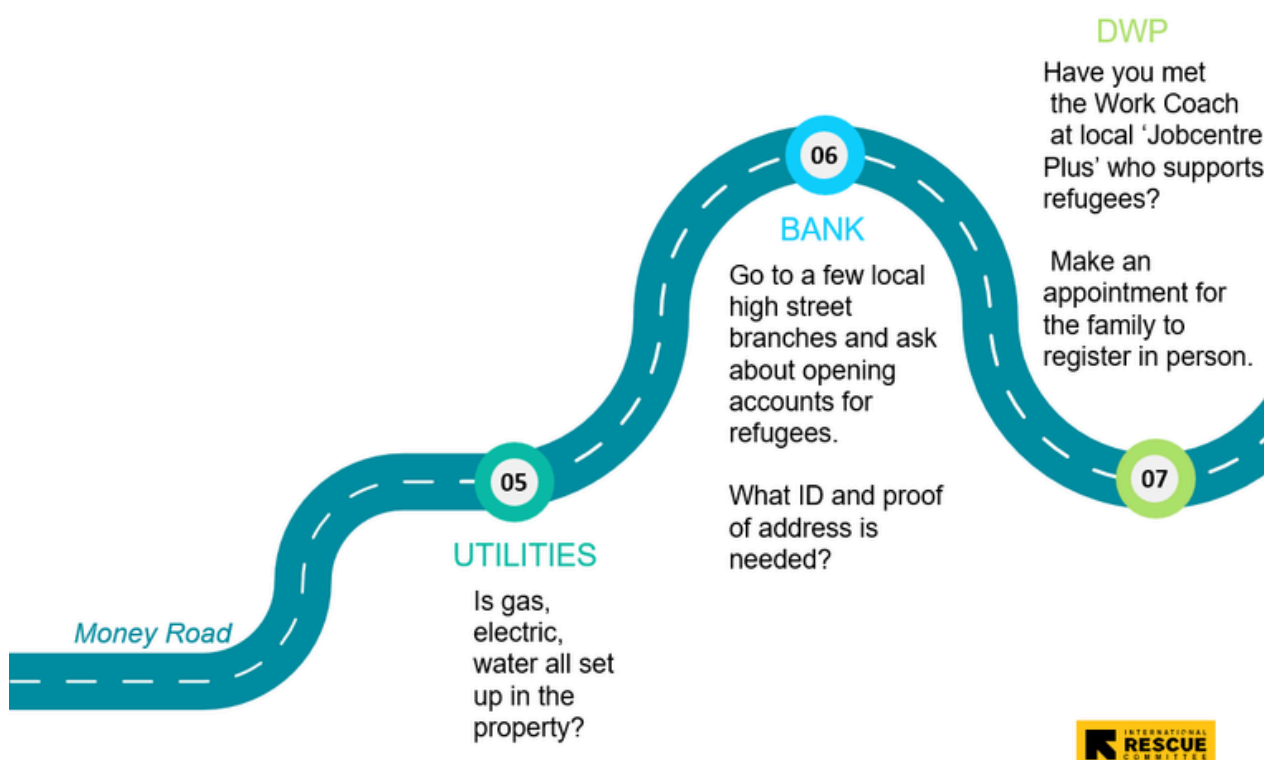
On Money Road, your role is to help families access essential financial and household services immediately after arrival, including setting up utilities, establishing banking, and connecting with relevant government services, such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) or Jobcentre Plus.

Early support in these areas reduces delays, avoids unnecessary stress, and helps families manage their household safely and independently.

Your guidance is vital in helping families navigate unfamiliar systems and access support programmes designed for refugees.

It is important to be clear that you cannot provide financial advice, as only regulated professionals are qualified to do this, and giving incorrect guidance could put the family at risk or affect their entitlement to support.

Your role is to provide practical information, outline available options, and connect families with the right services. This ensures they have what they need to make safe, informed decisions while maintaining control over their finances.



CHECKLIST: Money Road

5. Utilities

☐	Confirm that gas, electricity, and water accounts are active
☐	If not, contact local suppliers to set up accounts prior to arrival
☐	Identify what ID or documents are required (usually tenancy agreement + ID)
☐	Record metre readings on day one to prevent disputes
☐	Note contact details for each utility company for future reference

6. Banking

☐	Identify local banks where the family can open an account
☐	Check requirements for opening an account (passport/ID, proof of address such as tenancy agreement)
☐	Note banks that offer basic accounts for refugees or those without a credit history (e.g., Barclays, Lloyds, NatWest, Monzo)
☐	Confirm interpreter availability in-branch or online (if necessary)
☐	Prepare guidance on different types of accounts (current vs. savings)
☐	Flag potential financial risks: high-interest loans, credit card misuse, online scams
☐	Use reputable sources for guidance (e.g., Money Saving Expert)

7. Department for Work and Pensions / Jobcentre Plus

- ☐ Determine whether benefits must be applied for immediately (if arriving from abroad) or if updating the address is sufficient (if coming from transitional accommodation and already receiving benefits)
- ☐ Locate the local JCP/ Work Coach who supports refugees
- ☐ Schedule an appointment for the family to register with Jobcentre Plus
- ☐ Note required documents for registration (ID, proof of address, etc.)
- ☐ Check availability of interpreters for appointments if needed
- ☐ Be prepared to refer to official guidance and local support organisations for accurate information
- ☐ Ask about refugee-specific support programmes or schemes

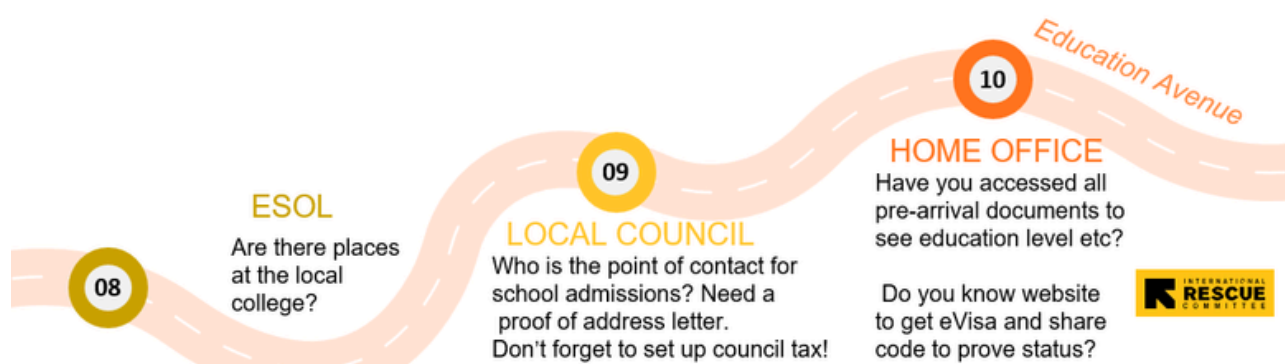
Planning and Preparation

- ☐ Compile all contact details (utilities, banks, Jobcentre Plus, Work Coach) in one accessible document
- ☐ Review pre-arrival documents to flag any urgent financial needs
- ☐ Prepare to guide the family through processes without giving legal or financial advice
- ☐ Ensure all instructions are clear, simple, and, where possible, provided in a language the family understands

3: Streets of Services – Education Avenue

Education Avenue covers everything related to learning and education, from school places for children to English classes and adult skills programmes. Before the family arrives, your role is to understand what options are available locally, make the right early contacts, and prepare for any needs flagged in the pre-arrival documents.

Many parts of the education system may be unfamiliar to newly arrived families, so clear guidance can make their transition easier. While you don't need to be an expert, you can help by explaining processes, connecting with schools or colleges, and making sure the family knows what opportunities are available to them. Early preparation helps children get into school as quickly as possible and supports adults to start building confidence, language skills, and independence.



CHECKLIST: Education Avenue

8. ESOL / Adult English Classes

☐	Identify local colleges or adult education centres offering ESOL classes
☐	Confirm availability and waiting lists; note that immediate placement may not always be possible
☐	Explore alternatives such as informal conversation classes at libraries or community centres
☐	Check whether DWP or other local programs can provide referrals or support
☐	Record contacts, schedules, and any documents required for registration

9. Schools

- ☐ Identify the local council contact for school admissions (officer or team)
- ☐ Confirm available school places for school-age children
- ☐ Collect required registration documents (e.g., proof of address, ID, previous school records)
- ☐ Start the admissions process before arrival where possible to avoid gaps in education
- ☐ Remember statutory duty: local authorities must ensure children are enrolled in school within six weeks of arrival
- ☐ Liaise with the council if adjustments or school changes are needed later

10. Pre-Arrival Education Information

- ☐ Review Home Office pre-arrival documents for:
 - Children's prior education and literacy
 - Adults' qualifications or educational background
 - Language proficiency in first language and English
- ☐ Familiarise yourself with the [Home Office View and Prove service \(eVisa\)](#) to confirm immigration status and generate share codes

Additional Educational Support

- ☒ Assess literacy in the family's first language; consider supplementary support alongside English learning
- ☒ Identify free numeracy or IT courses through local colleges or community programs
- ☒ For highly qualified adults, be prepared to contact UK ENIC (formerly NARIC) to obtain a Statement of Comparability for UK employment or study recognition
- ☒ Be prepared to provide clear guidance on how the family can access these opportunities

Useful Tips:

- Start school and ESOL enquiries early - waiting lists are common, and early action prevents long delays in accessing education.
- Local councils play a key role in school admissions; having a named contact makes the process faster and clearer.
- Be prepared for limited ESOL availability. Add the family to waiting lists and explore alternatives (e.g., council-run adult learning, community classes, or library conversation groups).
- For school-age children, aim to complete registration before arrival if possible - this reduces time out of education and helps the family settle more quickly.
- Use the "View and Prove" Home Office service to confirm immigration status in advance; this can speed up school and college enrolments.

PRE-ARRIVAL

FIRST 24HRS

FIRST 72HRS

Ensuring family's safety in their first 24 hours

The first 24 hours after arrival are critical for both the physical and emotional safety of the family. From the moment they arrive - whether at the airport or another transport hub - every step of the journey should be calm, organised, and reassuring. Safe, reliable transport to their new home helps set a positive tone, and clear explanations along the way can reduce stress and uncertainty.

Once at the home, ensuring the environment is secure, free of hazards, and fully functional - heat, water, and electricity working - is essential. Any urgent medical or medication needs should be addressed promptly, and it's important to know the nearest emergency contacts. Introductions to your group and the local community should be gradual to avoid overwhelming the family, while clear explanations of household routines, emergency procedures, and local safety contacts provide reassurance.

Above all, creating a calm and predictable environment helps the family feel safe, supported, and ready to begin settling into their new home.

Pre-Arrival and Arrival Checklist

Part 1 – Airport Pick-Up / Transport

Arrivals are often overwhelming for families, so careful planning and a calm, organised approach can help create a safe and reassuring first impression.

Checklist: Airport Pick-Up (if applicable)

☐	Confirm the family's travel itinerary and expected arrival time.
☐	Track the flight to stay updated on delays or schedule changes.
☐	Ensure that only DBS-checked group members attend the pick-up
☐	Do not overwhelm the family, only send a couple of members for the pick up.
☐	Clearly explain (and have translated) who you are. Do not assume they will know.
☐	Prepare seasonally appropriate clothing and immediate essentials in case the family needs them upon arrival
☐	Arrange interpretation support, either in person or by phone
☐	Carry a discreet, legible placard with the family's name in English and their language
☐	Identify and address any urgent medical concerns immediately upon the family's arrival
☐	Report any lost luggage promptly and keep the family informed.
☐	Request consent before taking any photos.

Checklist: Transport (if applicable)

☐	Ensure the vehicle is safe, reliable, and appropriate for the family's needs (seat belts, car seats for children, enough space for luggage)
☐	Ensure interpretation is available support if needed during the journey

Part 2 – Home Safety Orientation

As soon as the family arrives, the first priority is their safety in the home. A home safety orientation ensures they understand how to navigate their new environment safely, reduces the risk of accidents, and provides reassurance. A clear, gentle introduction helps the family feel secure, especially as UK housing features may be unfamiliar. A more detailed orientation can be provided later during the first formal home visit, allowing for deeper guidance once the family has settled in.

Checklist: Home Safety Orientation

Fire Safety

- ☐ Show smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and emergency exits.
- ☐ Explain how to call 999 and provide translated key words (“fire,” “police,” “ambulance”).

Kitchen & Appliances

- ☐ Demonstrate how to use the stove, microwave, kettle, oven, and other key appliances.
- ☐ Point out safety features or unfamiliar controls.
- ☐ Encourage the family to take their time while learning the appliances.

Bathroom & Water

- ☐ Show how to use taps, adjust water temperature, and operate the shower.
- ☐ Explain any quirks, such as slow-warming hot water or stiff handles.

Doors, Windows & Locks, General Safety

- ☐ Demonstrate how doors and windows lock and unlock, including any security features.
- ☐ Highlight potential hazards: stairs, radiators, heaters, electrical outlets, uneven floors.

Part 3 – Tenancy Agreement

Signing the tenancy agreement early helps the family understand their rights and responsibilities, while also providing the proof of address they need to register for services such as schools, healthcare, and benefits.

Checklist: Tenancy agreement

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | Provide a translated version so the family can review it fully. |
| ☐ | Go through the agreement with interpretation support as needed. |
| ☐ | Arrange for it to be signed within the first 72 hours of arrival. |
| ☐ | Clarify that meeting the landlord can happen later and is not required immediately. |

Part 4 – Welcome Pack

A well-prepared welcome pack helps the family settle quickly, reduces stress after travel, and ensures they have what they need for their first days at home. Below, we will unpack each item in the welcome pack and explain its purpose and use. This list is not prescriptive and can be adapted to include any additional essential items the family might need.



Hot Meal & Grocery Pack

Why it matters

Providing a hot meal and grocery pack is an important way to support families in settling into their new home. Many families arrive fatigued, jet-lagged, and without immediate access to shops or kitchen facilities, so having food available on arrival can significantly ease this transition. The hot meal should be culturally appropriate, reflecting the family's religious or dietary requirements, such as halal, vegetarian, or other specific preferences, to ensure they feel respected and cared for.

The grocery pack should contain essential culturally appropriate food items to cover the first few days, enabling families to meet immediate needs and establish a sense of stability. Delivering a thoughtfully prepared food welcome pack in this manner helps reduce stress and facilitates a smoother adjustment.

Checklist

- ☐ Provide a culturally appropriate hot meal that reflects the family's dietary or religious preferences.
- ☐ Include essential food items in a grocery pack to cover the first few days and support immediate needs

Household Essentials

Why it matters

Providing household essentials is an important part of supporting families as they settle into their new home. Families should have access to toiletries and personal hygiene items, along with clean towels for each household member. The kitchen should be equipped with basic items necessary for preparing meals, such as plates, cutlery, pans, and utensils. Bedding should be fresh, newly purchased, and kept in its original packaging to ensure it is hygienic and ready for use.

Ensuring these items are in place from the outset helps the home feel welcoming and functional, supports daily routines, and reduces the stress associated with moving into a new environment.

Checklist

- ☐ Provide toiletries and personal hygiene items for each family member
- ☐ Supply clean towels and basic kitchen items, including plates, cutlery, pans, and utensils
- ☐ Ensure bedding is fresh, newly purchased, and kept in its original packaging

Example Welcome Pack

Groceries	Household Essentials
Tea, Coffee Sugar, Jam, Honey, Biscuits Fruit juice concentrate Eggs Tortilla wraps/flat bread Tinned tuna Tinned tomato chopped Tomato paste Green olives Pasta, Rice Cooking oil, Salt Ground Black Pepper, Ground Cinnamon Ground Cumin, Cardamom Paprika, Turmeric Yeast Lentils Bread Flour Chickpeas Kidney beans Chopped tomatoes Curry powder Fruit and vegetables: Apples Oranges Bananas Lemons Grapes Tomatoes Lettuce Onions Potatoes Garlic Spinach Broccoli Carrots Mushrooms Mixed Peppers Cabbage Green beans Leeks Dairy and meat: Milk, Feta cheese, Yoghurt, Butter	Toiletries: Shampoo (adult and/or baby) Shower gel (adult and/or baby) Soap bar Hand wash liquid Toothpaste Toothbrush(es) Deodorant(s) Household: Toilet rolls Bin bags Scouring sponges Dish cloths Cleaning: Kitchen cleaner Bleach Bathroom cleaner Washing-up liquid Washing powder Freezer: Mixed vegetables Oven chips Peas Personal: Sanitary towels Tampons Disposable razors (men and women) Nappies/diapers

Cash Allowance

Why it matters

The cash allowance is a discretionary, one-time payment for newly arrived families who are not yet receiving benefits. It is intended to help cover immediate essentials such as food, clothing, and other basic items during the first few days after arrival. Many families may wait several weeks for their first benefits payment and may have limited familiarity with the UK banking system. Providing a cash allowance can help bridge this gap and support families to meet essential needs and feel more secure from the outset.

For CfA sponsor groups, the provision and amount of any cash allowance is discretionary and should be based on the group's available budget. This should be discussed and agreed with the principal sponsor.

Cash should be given to the adult(s) in the household, with records kept according to the group's financial procedures. Provide guidance on UK currency, safe cash handling, and basic budgeting, and make clear this is temporary until benefits start. Distribution should be managed only by the designated money lead for accountability and safety.

Checklist

- ☐ Decide whether to provide a cash allowance and agree the amount. Confirm with your principal sponsor, taking into account the group's budget and whether UC or a UC advance is already in place.
- ☐ Give the cash directly to the adult(s) in the household
- ☐ Record the transaction according to your group's financial procedures
- ☐ Explain UK currency, safe cash handling, and introduce basic budgeting and money management
- ☐ Ensure only designated money lead or volunteers authorised by the group handle and distribute the cash

Emergency, Health, and Additional Items

Why it matters

A welcome pack should address families' immediate safety, health, and comfort needs. This can include a basic first aid kit. Additional items, such as warm clothing or vouchers in winter, or culturally appropriate and personalised items, can further support families' comfort and help them feel safe and welcomed in their new home.

Checklist

- ☐ Include a basic first aid kit.
- ☐ Add warm clothing or vouchers if arriving in winter
- ☐ Include culturally appropriate or personalised items as relevant

Welcome Booklet

Why it matters

A welcome booklet is an essential resource for families arriving in a new home, providing clear, accessible information that can be referred to at any time. The first days can be overwhelming, and while much will be learned gradually, having written guidance helps families feel supported, safe, and confident in their new surroundings.

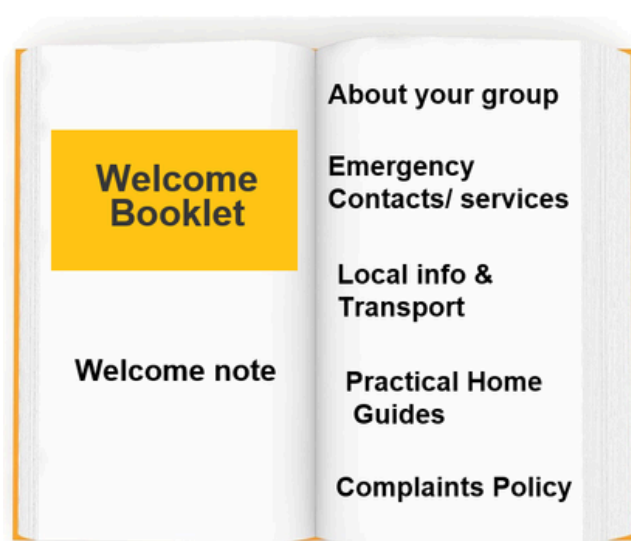
The booklet can act as a comprehensive reference, covering practical details about the home, local services, and emergency procedures. It also serves as a tool to help families integrate into the local community, understand routines, and access essential services independently. For families who are not literate in their first language, incorporating pictures, diagrams, or symbols can make the information more understandable and user-friendly.

The content should be flexible, reflecting the practical needs of each family and the resources available in your local area.

Checklist

Key elements include:

- **Welcome message** from your group, including photos, contact details, and information about each member (e.g., languages spoken, hobbies, family) to help build strong relationships
- **Emergency information:** how to call 999, and key words such as “fire,” “police,” and “ambulance,” with translations if needed
- **Local essentials:** supermarkets, pharmacies, parks, and other important amenities.
- **Transport guidance:** local bus, train, or other public transport timetables and instructions
- **Household guidance:** using heating, hot water, appliances, and waste/recycling routines.
- **Complaints and feedback:** your group’s complaints form or policy
- **Visual aids:** pictures, diagrams, or symbols for families not literate in their first language.



Interpretation

Providing interpretation ensures families can understand information clearly, express their needs, and make informed decisions. It supports accuracy, safety, and dignity during every stage of resettlement. To support this effectively, the following good practices outline what should - and should not - be done when arranging or using interpretation.

✓ Dos

Arrange Interpretation in Advance

- Plan interpreting support before any important interaction
- Identify the exact language and dialect
- Choose the format that suits the situation: in-person, telephone, or video
- Ensure 24-hour telephone interpreting is available during the first few days

Use Qualified Interpreters

- For health, housing, legal issues, safeguarding, benefits and school matters, always use a professional interpreter
- Book through accredited services (e.g., NRPSI, LanguageLine Solutions)
- Provide full details and confirm the booking - date, time, purpose, context, and any specific needs

Create a Safe and Respectful Environment

- Ask about preferences: male or female interpreter, or whether they prefer someone not from their own community
- Maintain confidentiality at all times

Communicate Effectively

- Speak directly to the family; the interpreter translates - they don't lead the conversation
- Use short, clear sentences
- Brief the interpreter beforehand when possible

Support the Family's Access

- Remind families that public services must provide interpreters by law
- Encourage them to request interpreting whenever needed

Use Informal Support Appropriately

- Translation apps are fine for simple, everyday tasks (directions, shopping).
- Bilingual volunteers can support informal communication and help build trust

✗ Don'ts

Don't Use Children as Interpreters

- Children should not interpret for official or sensitive conversations - it can cause emotional strain and expose them to inappropriate information.

Don't Use Volunteers for Critical Information

1. Bilingual volunteers should not interpret for medical, legal, housing, school or safeguarding appointments unless they are trained professionals
- These situations require specialist training and adherence to strict confidentiality standards to ensure the family's safety, privacy, and accurate communication.

Don't Assume Apps Are Enough

- Apps cannot replace professional interpreters for anything important, complex, or sensitive

Don't Guess or "Get By"

- Never rely on partial understanding.
- If communication isn't clear, stop and arrange interpreting - accuracy matters for safety and rights.

Interpretation Resources

Resource	What it is	When to use	Website
NRPSI (National Register of Public Service Interpreters)	Directory of accredited, professional and trained interpreters	Pre-booked in-person or scheduled sessions for critical conversations	nrpsi.org.uk
LanguageLine Solutions	24/7 access to interpreters in 240+ languages via phone or video.	Immediate support or out-of-hours access during the family's first days; urgent questions or unplanned needs.	languageLine.com
Translation Apps Google Translate, Microsoft Translator, SayHi, iTranslate	Apps for everyday, low-risk communication	Informal support: giving directions, explaining appliances, shopping, simple day-to-day instructions. Not for critical or sensitive conversations. Confirm family's language and dialect are supported	Check App Stores

PRE-ARRIVAL

FIRST 24HRS

FIRST 72 HRS

Completing essential registrations

First Formal Home Visit

After the family has had time to rest following their arrival, the first formal home visit offers an important opportunity to check in, provide reassurance, and understand any immediate needs. In the early days, visits may happen frequently and can be reduced gradually as the family becomes more settled. Always agree a time in advance, and keep in mind that families may still be tired and adjusting.

Approach this visit gently. Simple questions such as “How was your first night?” or “Is there anything you need right now?” can help identify early needs that may not have been obvious on arrival - for example, an extra blanket, medication, or help using appliances. Revisiting home safety is also useful at this stage, as families may have new questions after spending their first night in the property.

It is also helpful to ensure the family has enough food and essentials for the coming days. Going through the kitchen together can provide reassurance and help them feel more confident managing day-to-day tasks in their new environment.

Local council will conduct a welfare check within four weeks of arrival. This routine visit ensures the family is in a safe living situation, their basic needs are being met, and they are linked with any required services. Normal safeguarding responsibilities for children and vulnerable adults remain in place throughout.

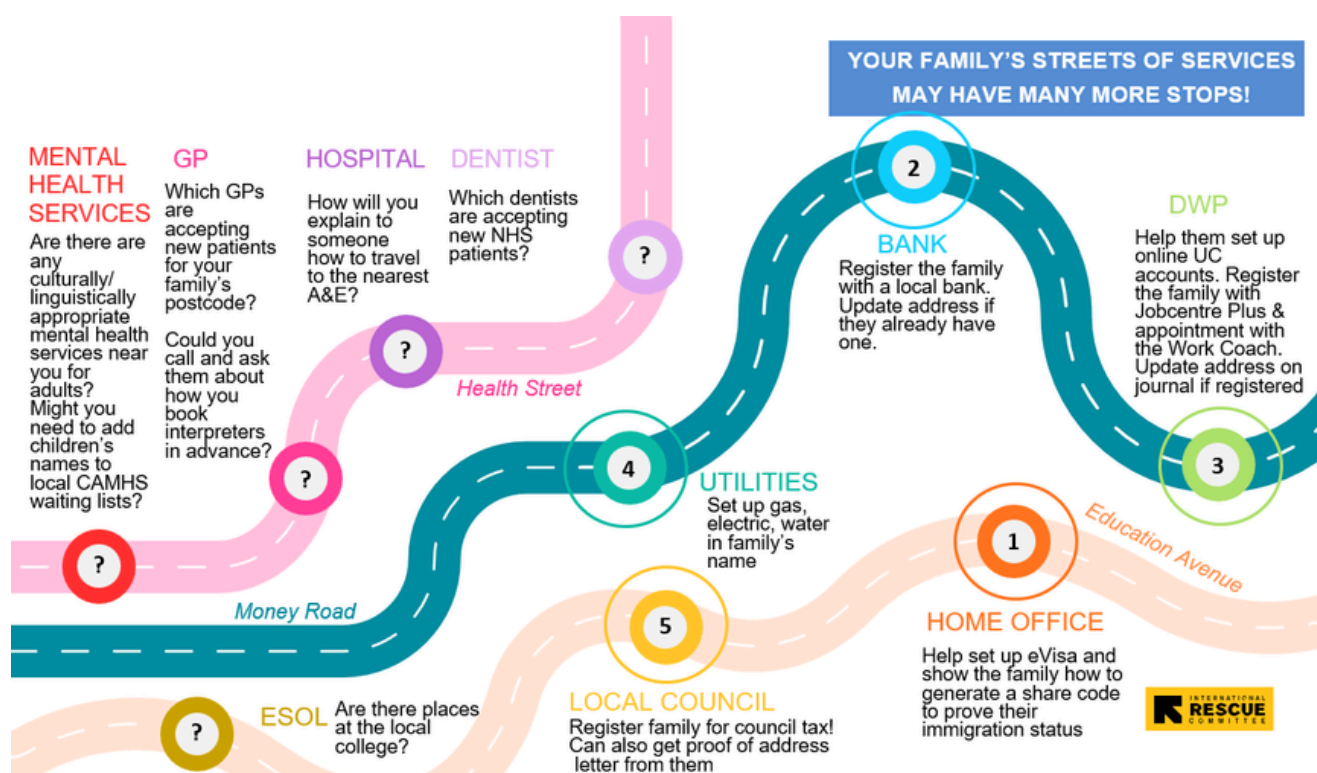
- ✓ Agree the visit time in advance and be mindful of the family's need for rest
- ✓ Begin with gentle check-in questions about the first night and immediate needs
- ✓ Revisit key home safety points (fire alarms, heating, locks) and answer new questions
- ✓ Confirm there is adequate food and essential supplies for the next few days
- ✓ Provide reassurance about upcoming support, including the council's welfare check



Home Visit Do's	Home Visit Don'ts
• Provide an overview at the start of the visit: why you are there, what will happen, and how long it will take. • Always conduct a home walk through to observe for any safety concerns or needed maintenance requests. • If multiple adults are in the household and are present during the visit, ensure all individuals, regardless of gender, are included in the conversation. When only one adult is participating, direct questions to other adults as appropriate to make the discussion as inclusive and engaging as possible. • Ask follow-up questions for clarity. Stay on topic and redirect the family member if needed • Be mindful of both your time and theirs. Some households may have commitments they need to attend to but may not feel comfortable asking you to leave, especially if doing so is considered impolite in their culture. When arranging the home visit - and again at the start - clearly communicate how long the visit is expected to take so everyone knows what to expect and can plan accordingly. • Trust your instincts - if you feel unsafe at any time during a home visit, leave and connect with your supervisor for support. Your safety is as important as our supported individuals'. • Respect every home as a private space by being mindful of household routines and cultural norms (e.g., removing shoes, using culturally appropriate greetings)	• Do not make assumptions on the family's responses to your questions. Ask for clarification if a response is vague. • Do not promise any service or item that falls outside the scope of your support. Instead, review what services are available, make referrals where appropriate, or agree to revisit specific issues at a later time. Home visits are an opportunity to build trust between you and the household, and offering support you cannot deliver can damage that relationship. Be clear and transparent about what your group can reliably provide so expectations remain realistic and respectful. • Do not ignore any pressing concerns or needs identified in the home. For example, if there is a pressing safety concern or maintenance request needed, address it immediately. • Do not accept gifts from the household wherever possible. While small gestures, such as a cup of tea, may sometimes be acceptable, use your judgment and always aim to avoid offending the family. Generally, it is recommended not to accept gifts, and if you are unsure, refer to your group's code of conduct for guidance.

The first few days after arrival are a critical period for helping families access the services and entitlements they need. Several registrations are time-sensitive and should ideally be completed within the first 72 hours, unless they have already been initiated during transitional accommodation. In some cases, you may be updating information rather than starting a new process, so it is important to begin by checking what has already been completed.

While this handbook outlines a standard sequence of urgent registrations, each family's situation will be different. The order of tasks should always be adjusted to reflect the family's immediate needs. For example, if there is a health concern or an urgent medical requirement, GP registration becomes a priority and should be completed as soon as possible. Where no urgent health issues exist, GP registration can take place during the first week. This flexible, needs-led approach ensures that support remains responsive and appropriate.



The following are essential registrations and practical tasks that should be completed within the first 72 hours of a family moving into their new home. Completing them promptly ensures clients have access to basic services, proof of residence, and financial support, which are critical for their safety, stability, and independent living.

While these tasks are practical, they should always be approached using a strengths-based approach. Support should empower the family, building their knowledge and confidence so they can navigate these processes independently in the future.

1 - Accessing eVisa

What it is

An eVisa is a digital record that shows a person's identity, immigration status, and rights in the UK. It is especially important for refugees, who may not have other forms of identification, as it confirms legal status and eligibility to work, study, rent, or access services - ensuring that support can be provided appropriately.

The UK has moved away from physical documents, replacing Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs), Biometric Residence Cards, and visa stickers in passports with eVisas.

How to help access it:

Accessing an eVisa is a two-step process:

Step 1: UKVI account

The family must have a UKVI account. Some may already have one. For arrivals from abroad from November 2024, the HO creates an account for each adult using the email provided. If no email is available, support the family to create one and share it with the HO when the flight is confirmed. Account creation can take up to 14 days.

Step 2: View eVisa and generate a share code

Once the account is set up, the family can log in to the [View and Prove service](#) to access their eVisa, check their details, and generate a share code. Share codes are valid for 90 days and can be generated again at any time.

For additional guidance, see the [Home Office eVisa videos](#). Citizens Advice can help if there are any technical problems.

2 - Opening a Bank Account

What it is

A UK bank account allows the family to receive Universal Credit, make payments, manage money, and demonstrate financial independence.

Banks usually require:

- Identification, such as an eVisa share code
- Proof of address, for example a tenancy agreement, council letter, or Jobcentre Plus letter

How to help access it:

- Identify which documents the bank requires (usually eVisa share code and proof of address)
- Support the family in opening an account, either in-branch or with an online bank (e.g., Monzo, Starling)
- Show them how to use online banking, cards, and PINs
- Ensure the account reflects the current address
- If a bank account already exists, help update address details

3 - Universal Credit (DWP / Jobcentre Plus)

What it is

Accessing benefits is essential for financial stability and meeting basic needs in the UK.

Universal Credit (UC) is the primary benefit, providing a single monthly payment to people on low income, not working, or with limited ability to work. UC and other benefits are administered through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and claimed via Jobcentre Plus (JCP).

How to help access it:

- Guide the family to submit an online claim: [Apply for Universal Credit](#). Where appropriate, refer families to [Citizens Advice](#) for additional support and guidance
- Help identify their local JCP and understand that they may be asked to attend an initial appointment after submitting their Universal Credit claim. Support in preparing any required documents for the application, such as ID or proof of address
- Explain the purpose of the [Claimant Commitment](#), what responsibilities it includes, and the importance of reporting income or any changes in circumstances
- If the family is already receiving benefits, support them to report changes - such as a new address - through their Universal Credit journal.
- Introduce the [Turn2us Benefits Calculator](#) to help identify additional entitlements

4 - Setting up Utilities & Council Tax

What it is

Having active utilities and a registered Council Tax account is essential for families to live safely, comfortably, and independently in the UK. Utilities such as electricity, gas, water, and internet are vital for daily routines, and ensuring these accounts are correctly set up helps families take ownership of their new home.

Registering for Council Tax establishes proof of residence and helps families meet their legal responsibilities. Refugees and households on low incomes may be eligible for discounts or exemptions, which can reduce financial pressure. Having both utilities and Council Tax accounts in the family's name also helps build a clear record of residence and provides reliable proof of address when accessing other services.

How to help access it

- Support the family to set up or transfer their electricity, gas, water, and internet accounts
- Review any existing utility accounts together to confirm they are active and understandable
- Provide guidance on payment methods (e.g., direct debit or standing order) to help with consistent and manageable billing
- Assist with the registration of Council Tax and explain how payments, discounts, and exemptions work
- Check eligibility for [Council Tax reductions](#), including low-income or refugee-related discounts
- Ensure both utilities and Council Tax accounts are set up in the family's name to build a clear and reliable record of residence

Essential Registrations Do's	Essential Registrations Don'ts
• Prioritise health-related registrations, especially when there is an urgent medical need or when referrals may be required. Explain key services such as NHS 111, walk-in centres, A&E, dental care, and sexual health clinics. • Offer translated copies of important documents or use reliable translation tools. Check understanding and clarify anything that is confusing. • Keep secure copies of key documents. Follow your group's code of conduct and GDPR. Maintain one secure online folder (with limited access) and encourage the family to keep their own documents organised in one place. • Explain processes clearly and patiently. Use simple, trauma-informed, person-centred language. Focus first on what they need immediately (e.g., how to pay bills), and introduce more complex topics later. Provide written summaries so they can revisit information in their own time. • Expect to repeat things - culture shock and stress affect memory. Be patient and consistent. • Encourage independence: Guide the family through forms rather than completing everything for them. Walk with them around the neighbourhood to help them learn key routes and services. • Keep admin and social activities separate. Have practical discussions in calm, private places. Save larger social gatherings for later, when the family is more settled. • Pace the registrations: Spread tasks over several days to avoid overwhelming the family and burning out volunteers.	• Don't try to complete all registrations in one day. Too much information at once increases confusion and stress. • Don't use your personal phone or email for registrations. This can blur boundaries and limits the family's control over their own accounts. • Don't assume understanding. Ask follow-up questions and check clarity without putting pressure on the family. • Don't overwhelm with unnecessary detail. Focus on immediate essentials; leave topics like tariff switching or complex systems for later. • Don't bring large groups to early admin tasks. Crowds can feel intrusive and make it harder for the family to ask questions freely. • Don't post identifiable details or photos of the family on social media, even with consent if avoidable. Always prioritise the family's privacy and safety, and refer to your group's code of conduct for guidance on what is acceptable to share.

MODULE 6 - POST ARRIVAL: ONGOING SUPPORT

Understanding Integration

As your supported family moves beyond their first few days in the community, their needs shift from immediate settling and safety toward longer-term integration. While this phase can feel complex, integration can be approached strategically by focusing on meaningful connections that support the family's adjustment, confidence, and independence.

The IRC's decades of global experience supporting displaced people show that integration is most effective when guided by key outcome areas - Health, Safety, Education, Money, and Power. These areas provide a practical framework for ongoing support, helping refugees navigate daily life, make informed decisions, and fully engage with their new community.

SAFETY**HEALTH****MONEY****EDUCATION****POWER**

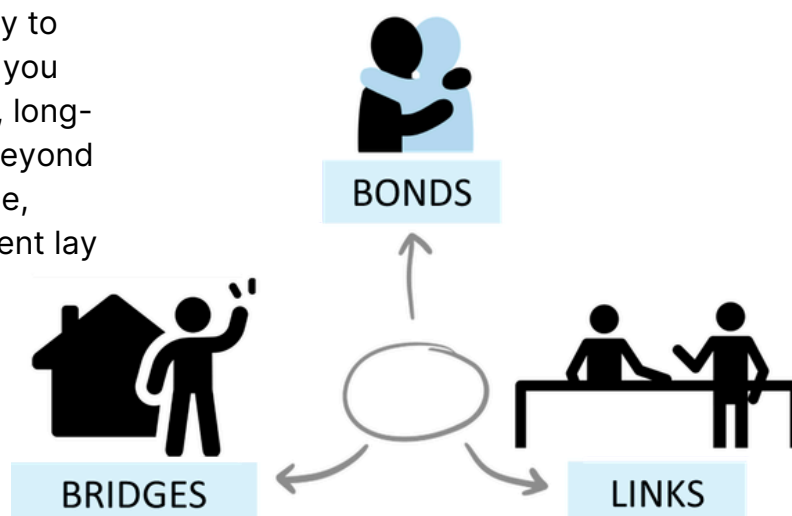
Bonds, Bridges, and Links

A practical way to approach integration is through the Bonds, Bridges, and Links framework.

This framework, used in government integration indicators and informed by global practice, highlights the types of connections you can help families build to thrive in their new community.

- **Bonds** are the connections the family maintains within their own cultural or community network - people who share their language, faith, traditions, or customs. As a sponsor, you can support these bonds by helping the family maintain familiar practices and connect with local networks from their own community. Bonds provide emotional support, reinforce identity, and foster a sense of belonging.
- **Bridges** are connections to the wider local community, including neighbours, co-workers, school contacts, and everyday interactions in shops or community spaces. You can help the family build bridges by introducing them to local spaces, activities, and people who expand their social networks, open doors to opportunities, and help them feel part of everyday life.
- **Links** are the formal connections to essential services - schools, healthcare providers, councils, and welfare systems. Your role is to ensure the family knows which services exist, understands how to access them, and develops the confidence to navigate these systems independently.

By actively supporting the family to build bonds, bridges, and links, you help them establish meaningful, long-term connections that extend beyond immediate needs. Your guidance, introductions, and encouragement lay the foundation for independence, social participation, and successful integration in their new community.



Supporting families to build bonds, bridges, and links is central to their integration and sense of belonging. At the same time, every connection you facilitate must be delivered safely, respectfully, and thoughtfully. This is where the Broken Record Principles guide your practice. The first and most fundamental principle is **Do No Harm**, which underpins all other aspects of your work.

Here are practical ways to put it into practice:



★ HEALTH

Case Study

You visit 35-year-old Roshina, who arrived 9 weeks ago from Khost, a rural province in the Southeast of Afghanistan. She is 3 months pregnant. She never leaves the house unless someone is with her, usually her 14-year-old son who interprets for her. She cries, telling you about her nightmares. She says she has had enough. When you ask what she means she pauses and says she just wants to go home to be with her mother.



Building Bonds - Key Considerations

Offering comfort or physical gestures

- Compassion is natural, but always check consent before physical contact.
- Physical touch from someone outside the family may not be welcome.
- Alternative ways to show care include offering a seat, making tea, or simply listening.

Key idea: Compassion with caution.

Introducing her to other families

- While it may seem helpful to connect Roshina with other Afghan families, always ask first.
- She may have personal, cultural, or traumatic reasons to decline.
- If she agrees, arrange the first meeting in a neutral, safe environment.

Key idea: Give choice and control.

Discussing mental health or wellbeing

- Avoid clinical language unless you are a professional, as mental health can be highly stigmatised in some cultures. Use normalising, supportive language such as:
 - *"It sounds like you've had some really tough days."*
 - *"Many people feel wobbly after big life changes."*
- Your role is to notice ongoing distress and, with consent, gently suggest contacting a GP or wellbeing service - always with her consent. If you have serious concerns about her safety or believe she may be at risk of harming herself, escalate immediately to your safeguarding lead.

Key idea: Observe, support, and respect boundaries.

Responding to wishes to return to Afghanistan

- It may be natural to want to act on her expressed desire, but encouraging this could endanger her.
- Validate her feelings without endorsing unsafe actions. For example:
 - *"It sounds really difficult. I can hear how much you miss your mother."*
- Reassure her that feelings of grief and culture shock are normal, and that adjustment takes time.

Key idea: Validate emotion, not action.

Introducing her to other British mothers

- Asking first is essential. Do not assume she wants to meet others simply because they share a similar role.
- A gentle approach works best:
 - *"Would you like me to introduce you to a few local mums? They've got young families too."*
- Avoid using your own friends as a default; maintain some separation to protect your own wellbeing.

Key Idea: Don't pour from an empty cup - healthy boundaries allow you to support others effectively.

Adding her to personal chats or social media

- Personal platforms, such as family WhatsApp or social media, are not neutral spaces. Including her here could blur boundaries and affect emotional safety.
- Instead, connect her to community groups, such as local parenting networks, women's circles, or refugee support forums, where the relationship is balanced and healthy.

Key Idea: Boundaries protect both you and the family.

Offering a "private space" to open up

- Do not promise confidentiality; you are not a therapist. Safeguarding responsibilities always take priority.
- If she shares distressing thoughts or risks, this must be reported to your safeguarding lead.
- Focus on listening without probing:
 - *"I'm really sorry you're feeling this way, thank you for telling me."*

Key Idea: Compassion with caution - support without taking on therapeutic responsibility.

Sharing helpful support resources

- Providing information about support services can be valuable.
- Present options sensitively:
 - *"Here are some places you can talk to if you're having a really tough day. We can even look them up together."*
- Avoid language that may feel alarming, such as "mental health crisis." Frame it in everyday, supportive terms.

Key Idea: Empower with access to help, while respecting comfort and cultural context.

Supporting healthcare access

- Avoid putting children in adult or distressing roles, e.g., asking her son to request antidepressants.
- Encourage Roshina to visit her GP herself, ensuring a professional interpreter is arranged in advance.
- Ask her who she would like to accompany her and respect her choice about who joins the appointment.
- If children are taking on adult responsibilities or witnessing trauma, consider discussing a possible CAMHS referral with your safeguarding lead.

Key principle: Protect both the family and children, and respect professional boundaries.

Sharing information about statutory services

- Families have the right to know about services like NHS maternity care and the Family Health Package (e.g., Healthy Start vouchers, Sure Start Maternity Grant).
- Share information gradually to avoid overwhelming her, highlighting practical and emotional support.
- Understanding the system helps her feel safer, more empowered, and confident in accessing support.

Key principle: Information is empowering when delivered sensitively

Handling confidential health information

- Not every member of your group needs to read all confidential documents. Key information (triggers, health needs, risks) should be shared responsibly within the group.
- Regular communication among sponsors ensures no one carries the full burden.
- Maintain healthy boundaries - your wellbeing supports her safety.

Key principle: Share what is necessary, maintain boundaries, and work as a coordinated team.

Connecting to therapy or mental health support

- If Roshina wishes, help her access a culturally and linguistically appropriate therapist.
- Offer guidance, not therapy:
 - *"There are people who speak Pashto and understand what it's like to adjust to a new place - would you like me to help you find someone?"*
- Support her in booking appointments or exploring services like Hub of Hope.

Key principle: Facilitate access to professional support without taking on the role yourself.

Reflections:

- How can you show care and compassion in ways that are safe, respectful, and sensitive to past experiences?

- How can you provide choice and control when connecting family members with others or helping them engage with the community?

- How can you guide them to access healthcare, wellbeing, or other support services safely, while maintaining boundaries and protecting children?

- How can you share practical information in a way that is culturally sensitive, understandable, and empowering for the family?

HEALTH RESOURCES

Resource

Eligibility

Website

NHS Services	NHS primary care, A&E, urgent treatment, and maternity services are free for everyone living in the UK regardless of status or income.	England: • NHS UK • NHS App Wales: • NHS Wales • NHS Wales App Scotland: • NHS Scotland • NHS Inform Northern Ireland (NI): • nidirect
Prescriptions	England: Prescriptions cost £9.90 per item (2025/26). Free for refugees on Universal Credit if earnings are ≤£435, or ≤£935 with a child element/limited capability for work. Others can apply for help through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Wales: Free for refugees registered with a GP in Wales; cross-border patients can get a free Entitlement Card. Scotland & NI: Free for everyone including refugees.	England: • Standard Prescription Charge • Free NHS Prescriptions • NHS Low Income Scheme / info Wales: • Free Entitlement Card • Email to get a new or replacement Entitlement Card Scotland: • Free Prescriptions NI: • Free Prescriptions
Other NHS Costs (dental, optical, travel)	England, Scotland & NI: Low-income refugees can apply via NHS Low Income Scheme (HC1 form) for full (HC2) or partial (HC3) help. Wales: Low-income refugees can apply through Low Income Scheme Wales (HC1W form) for partial or full help.	England: NHS Low Income Scheme Wales: Low Income Scheme - Wales NI: Help with Health Costs Scotland: • NHS Low Income Scheme - Scotland • Call 0300 330 1343

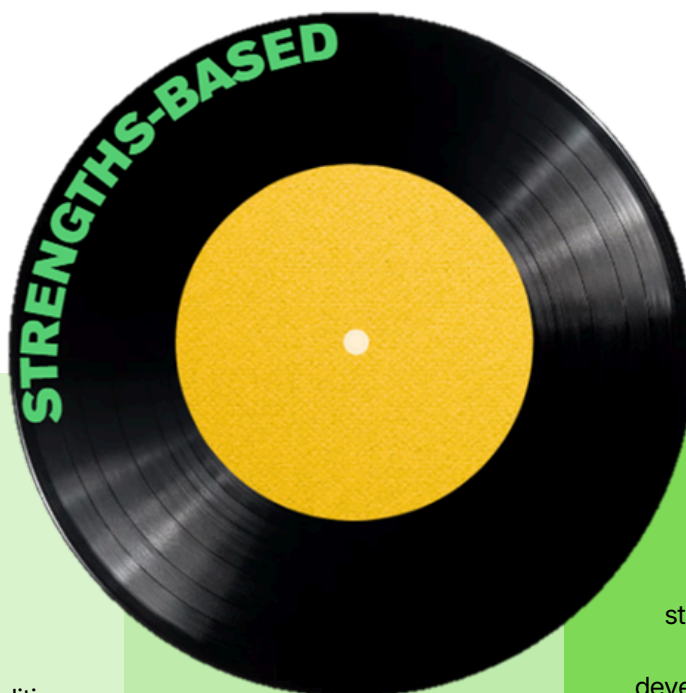
Resource

Eligibility

Website

Mental Health	24/7 emotional support and crisis help via phone, text, and online services, plus directories to find local mental health support. Immediate help available at any A&E department for those at risk of harm. Eligibility: Available to anyone living in the UK, including refugees and people seeking asylum	• Samaritans England • Samaritans Cymru • Samaritans Scotland • Samaritans NI • SHOUT: Text SHOUT to 85258 • Hub of Hope: enter postcode to find local services • A&E: 24/7 for urgent risk of harm
Maternity Entitlements	Pregnant women (10+ weeks) or families with children under 4; • England, Wales, NI: Eligible for Healthy Start Vouchers and the Sure Start Maternity Grant (first child only; must be receiving qualifying benefits). • Scotland: Eligible for Best Start Grant & Best Start Foods	England, Wales & NI: • Healthy Start Voucher • Sure Start Maternity Grant Scotland: • Best Start Grant & Best Start Foods (Scotland) / Call 0800 182 2222

Building on the foundation of Do No Harm, the next principle that shapes effective long-term support is **Strengths-Based practice**. This approach starts from the belief that every person and family arrives with abilities, lived experience, and resilience that can be built upon. Rather than focusing on what is missing, it shifts attention to what is already present and working.



NO ONE STARTS FROM NOTHING

Every family brings something valuable with them: skills they have used in work, education, or daily life; cultural knowledge and traditions; problem-solving abilities; and the resilience that has carried them through difficult circumstances. They may also be forming early connections in the community, even if those relationships are small - a kind neighbour, a welcoming teacher, or another parent at school. These strengths are the starting point. When you notice and acknowledge them, it helps families see that they are not beginning from zero, but from a place of experience and capability.

ACHIEVEMENTS COME FROM CAREFUL RISK-TAKING

Progress happens when people are encouraged to try new things with support behind them. Every small win becomes evidence of capability. They build confidence and momentum, and they help families recognise their own ability to overcome challenges. Your role is to create the conditions where these steps feel possible and safe, offering support without taking over, and leaving space for real growth.

PARTNERSHIP, NOT RESCUE

When challenges arise, it can be tempting to step in and fix things. But lasting independence develops when families lead their own decisions. A strengths-based approach means working alongside people, not ahead of them. You offer guidance, information, and encouragement, but the family remains in control of choices that shape their lives. This partnership respects their autonomy and ensures the skills they build will continue long after your formal support ends.

★ FINANCES Case Study

Ahmad, 35, is a former mechanic who arrived 4 months ago from Aleppo, Syria. He receives Universal Credit only, which is affected by benefit cap, and risks being sanctioned for missed appointments. You visit him to talk about share codes, but he's angry, saying he heard about a place he can get a cash-in-hand job that won't stop his benefits. He also dislikes computers because last time he did, money disappeared from his bank.



Building Bonds - Key Considerations

Strengths first

- Recognise and celebrate Ahmad's motivation and resourcefulness - he is actively seeking ways to earn.
- Acknowledging these strengths reinforces trust and confidence.

Managing Attitude and Frustration

- Avoid confrontation - it often escalates tension.
- Use de-escalation techniques: acknowledge feelings without agreeing: *"It sounds like this has been really frustrating for you."*
- Remember: Partnership, not rescue - walk alongside Ahmad, don't try to "fix" him.

Focusing on Abilities, Not Deficits

- Avoid labels like "illiterate" or "needs help."
- Identify what Ahmad can do - spoken English, small digital tasks - and build on those skills.
- Celebrate progress, however small, focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses.

Advising on work

- Guide Ahmad toward safer and more sustainable options.
- Explain Universal Credit rules: Earnings reduce benefits gradually, and working above certain thresholds can lift the benefit cap.
- Warn about risks of cash-in-hand work: no stability, no sick pay, holiday pay, National Insurance, or minimum wage protections.
- Involve your safeguarding lead or external resources like the Modern Slavery Helpline if exploitation is suspected.

Building Bridges - Key Considerations

Volunteering as a stepping stone

- Timing matters. Ahmad may be frustrated or angry, so first focus on listening and empathy.
- When ready, explain how volunteering can build confidence, expand his network, and provide UK experience.
- Clarify that volunteering is a step toward paid work, not a replacement.

Rebuilding digital confidence

- Avoid framing computers as an obstacle. Start with small, practical tasks, e.g., checking messages, looking up directions.
- Connect him to free digital skills classes at libraries or community centres.
- Gradually building competence reflects: *Achievements come from careful risk-taking.*

Information on digital scams

- Approach the topic gently; avoid blame or embarrassment.
- Acknowledge that scams are sophisticated and anyone can be affected.
- Explain common signs of scams, such as unexpected messages asking for money, personal details, or urgent action.
- Remind him to protect his personal information, keeping bank details and passwords private, and to share identification documents only with verified, legitimate organisations when it is clearly required.
- Signpost trusted resources such as Action Fraud and Cyber Aware for reporting scams and accessing safety guidance.

Checking entitlements and benefits

- Support Ahmad to explore all possible entitlements, including Universal Credit, housing support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), Council Tax reductions, and local hardship funds.
- Remember that you are not a financial advisor and cannot give official financial advice. Your role is to guide Ahmad to reliable sources, such as Citizens Advice, Turn2Us, or other local support services, and help him understand his options, how to apply, and what information he needs to provide.
- Sit together at a computer, go through official websites step by step, and demonstrate how to check and apply independently, so Ahmad gains confidence and control over his finances.

Building Links - Key Considerations

Supporting DWP / JCP appointments

- Don't dismiss missed appointments - trauma, anxiety, or unfamiliarity with official processes can make attendance difficult.
- Help Ahmad prepare by explaining what to expect, role-playing appointments, or practicing online booking systems.
- Providing small, structured steps helps build independence and reduces stress over time.

Budgeting and financial tools

- Introduce budgeting gradually, respecting his wariness of banks or digital tools.
- Show simple tracking methods, such as a basic spreadsheet or app, and explain the pros and cons of financial products without overwhelming him.
- Highlight helpful government schemes such as [Help to Save](#), which rewards savings for eligible Universal Credit recipients.

Using share codes for employment

- Explain that BRP cards alone no longer prove the right to work; a share code from gov.uk is required.
- Show him how to generate and use a share code when needed, building digital confidence and independence.
- Reinforce that he does not need a share code immediately - guidance should be provided gradually and as needed, so he feels in control.

MYTHS

FACTS

If someone starts working, all their Universal Credit stops immediately

Universal Credit reduces gradually as earnings increase. Small amounts of work may reduce UC slightly, but full-time or higher-paid work can lift the cap. You can help families understand how income is reported and how payments change over time.

The benefit cap reduces all benefits equally

The benefit cap only applies to certain benefits. Disability benefits like PIP do not count toward the cap. Working can lift the cap, but some benefits may still reduce gradually based on income. You can help families understand how the cap applies to their situation.

If a family member takes a cash-in-hand job, their benefits won't be affected

Undeclared income can lead to repayments, sanctions, or penalties. Cash-in-hand work is risky and may offer no legal protections, sick pay, or holiday pay.

I must know everything about benefits to help a family

You don't need to be a financial expert and you cannot give official financial advice. You can guide families to reliable sources, explain processes, and help them use official websites safely.

Reflections:

- How can you recognise and build on your supported family members' existing strengths and motivation?

- How can you help them take safe, manageable steps toward employment, volunteering, or learning new skills?

- How can you support confidence-building with digital tools while respecting their pace and comfort?

- How can you maintain partnership, not rescue, and set boundaries that protect both them and yourself?

FINANCES RESOURCES

Resource	Eligibility	Website
Benefits Information	Official UK government website with the latest rules, eligibility, and application links.	<u>GOV.UK Benefits</u>
Universal Credit	A monthly payment for people on low incomes or out of work that combines support for housing, children, and living costs. Eligibility usually depends on living in the UK, being aged 18 to State Pension age, and having savings under £16,000.	<u>Universal Credit - How to Claim</u>
Child Benefit	Regular payments to help with the costs of raising children. Eligible families are responsible for a child under 16, or under 20 if in approved education or training. There is no limit on the number of children.	<u>Child Benefit - How to Claim</u>
Personal Independence Payment (PIP)	Supports people aged 16 to State Pension age with long-term health conditions or disabilities that affect daily living or mobility. It is not means-tested and helps cover extra costs, such as mobility aids or personal care. Assessments focus on the impact of the condition on daily life.	<u>PIP - How to Claim</u>
Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity (LCWRA)	Extra support within UC for those whose health condition limits their ability to work. Eligibility declared during a UC claim, and a capability assessment may be required.	<u>LCWRA - How to Claim</u>
Carer's Allowance	For people aged 16+ who spend at least 35 hours/week caring for someone receiving certain disability benefits, including PIP and Disability Living Allowance, providing additional income for carers helping with daily living or supervision.	<u>Carer's Allowance - How to Claim</u>

FINANCES RESOURCES

Resource	Eligibility	Website
Citizens Advice	Free, confidential advice for all residents on benefits, financial support, and other practical issues.	Citizens Advice England Citizens Advice Scotland Citizens Advice Cymru Citizens Advice NI
Turn2Us Calculator	Online benefits calculator and grant search for families on low income or receiving benefits	Turn2UsCalculator
Jobcentre Plus	Advice on benefits, support with job applications, and financial help for work-related needs such as travel or training. Eligibility: Available to people receiving Universal Credit or other income-related benefits; the type and level of support depend on individual circumstances and the work coach's assessment.	Jobcentre Plus

Resource**Eligibility****Website**

Discretionary / Crisis Funds	Low-income families needing extra help with rent, emergencies, or essential items	Free items: • Trash Nothing • Freecycle • Freegle England: • Discretionary Housing Payment Scotland: • Scottish Welfare Fund Wales: • Discretionary Assistance Fund NI: • Discretionary Support
Charitable Grants	Low-income families or families with disabled/seriously ill children; one-off grants, no repayment	• Turn2Us • National Zakat Foundation • Family Fund
Food Support	Families in crisis or low income; emergency food parcels or free meals	• Trussel Trust • Food Cycle • NextMeal • FareShare (Scotland Specific)
Transport	Families on Universal Credit; up to 50% off trains or some bus fares. Discounts vary by provider local Jobcentre Plus.	Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount

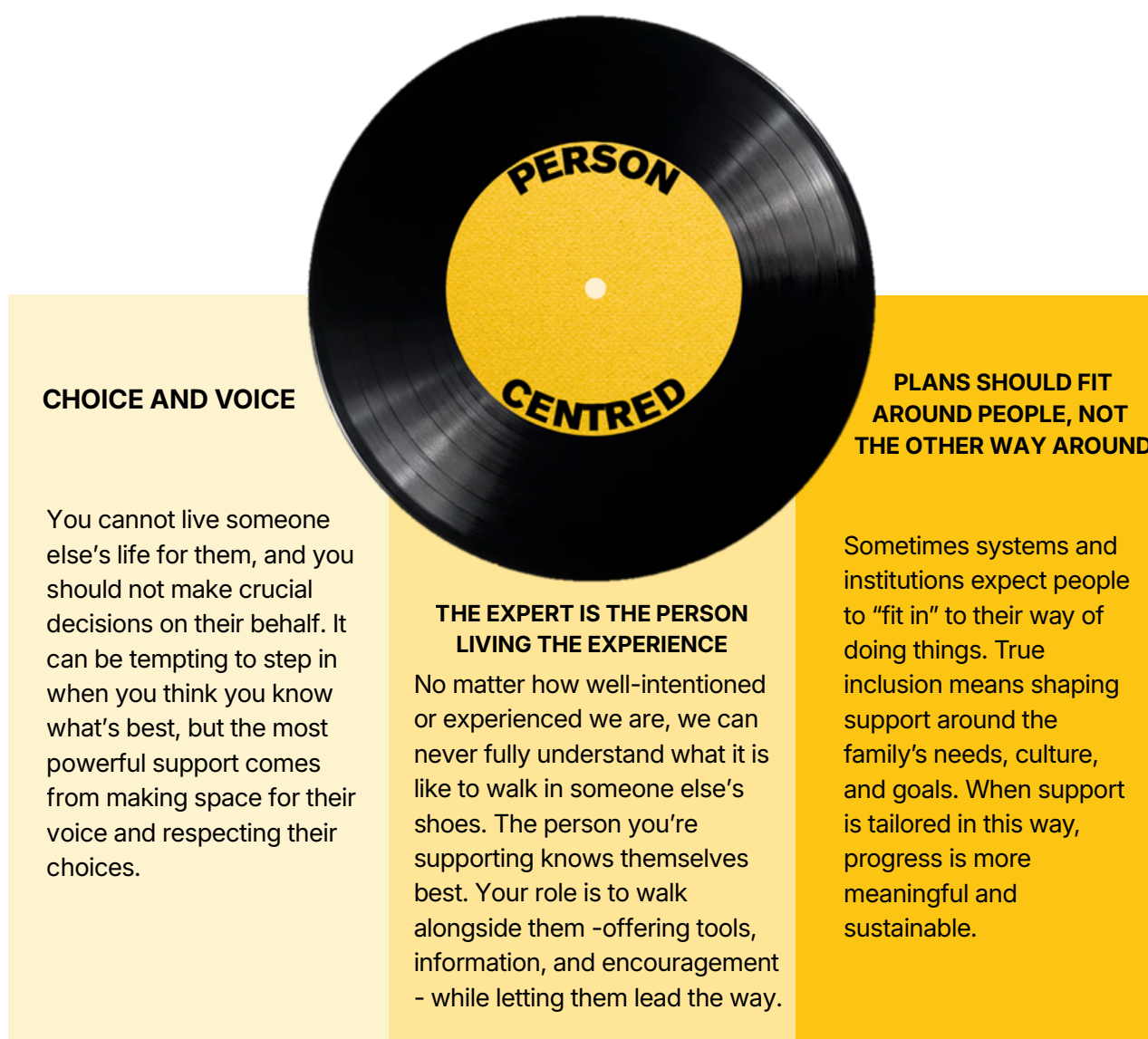
Resource

Eligibility

Website

Savings Schemes	Savings options that help families build financial security, including government-supported schemes and interest-free or Sharia-compliant accounts. Eligibility: • Help to Save: 50% government bonus for families on Universal Credit or Tax Credits • Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs): Open to everyone (subject to age and residency requirements) • Sharia-compliant bank accounts: available to anyone meeting standard account criteria.	• Help to Save • Tax-Free Individual Savings Account (ISA) • Interest-free, Sharia Compliant Banks: Al Rayan Bank, Gatehouse Bank, (online services only in Wales), BLME (England only)
Proving Right to Work	Refugees and those with leave to remain must generate an online Share Code via GOV.UK to prove eligibility to work in the UK	GOV.UK - Prove Right to Work
Safety & Exploitation Support	Anyone at risk of modern slavery, scams, or exploitation	• Modern Slavery Helpline: 08000 121 700 • Action Fraud • Age UK - England • Age Scotland • Age Cymru • Age NI • Citizens Advice: England, Wales, Scotland, NI

Having established safety and recognised families' existing strengths, the next principle focuses on placing their voice and choices at the centre of support. This is the essence of the **Person-Centred Approach**. It is about listening carefully, respecting autonomy, and empowering families to lead their own journey while you walk alongside them. By prioritising their goals, needs, and perspectives, Person-Centred practice ensures support is meaningful, responsive, and builds long-term confidence and independence.



★ EDUCATION Case Study

Dunya is a very smart 18-year-old, with excellent English, who arrived from the Northern town of Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 2 months ago. She joined the Sixth Form of a local school and they're pushing to have her take A Levels soon. The only involvement her parents have had is to make sure it's a single-sex school, and to ask you to tell the school that she should be removed from PSHE/ Health & Wellbeing lessons. She hopes to go to university, but her parents have said that her existing certificates (from exams passed in Afghanistan) would probably be irrelevant, and they also think it's too expensive.



Building Bonds – Key Considerations

Engaging with Parents

- Avoid assumptions about parents' interest or availability for school events
- Explore flexible alternatives, such as separate meetings with teachers and interpreters, to ensure they can participate meaningfully
- Help parents feel included and informed without creating pressure - *support should fit around people, not the system.*

Supporting Dunya's Academic Pathway

- Avoid rushing Dunya into A Levels immediately; consider foundation courses, tutoring, or starting a year below if needed
- Focus on gradually building her confidence, knowledge, and skills
- Encourage careful planning and incremental achievements, allowing her to progress at a sustainable pace

Respecting Parental Wishes While Empowering Dunya

- Avoid ignoring parents' concerns about PSHE/RSHP lessons - doing so could create family conflict.
- Explain the curriculum in culturally sensitive terms, highlighting safety, life skills, wellbeing, and preparation for further education.
- Offer opportunities for parents to speak with teachers directly to build trust and understanding.
- Always check with Dunya about her preferences - choice and voice are central to her wellbeing.

Building Bridges - Key Considerations

School and Community Resources

- Connect Dunya with teachers, counsellors, mentors, or youth organisations who provide guidance and support beyond her immediate circle.
- Facilitate introductions to local community or cultural organisations for networking, guidance, and social support.

Wellbeing and Pastoral Support

- Link Dunya to school wellbeing teams, counselling, or youth support services if needed.
- Support both her and her parents to understand available mental health and life skills resources.

Education Information

- Provide access to school inspection reports (Ofsted - England, Estyn - Wales, Education Scotland - Scotland, Education and Training Inspectorate - Northern Ireland), as well as course options, and local learning programmes.
- Share information step by step so families can make informed decisions without feeling overwhelmed.

Building Links – Key Considerations

Recognition of Existing Qualifications

- Check which of Dunya's prior exam certificates could be formally recognised in the UK.
- Guide her through ENIC (The UK National Information Centre) for a Statement of Comparability, which shows what her overseas qualifications equate to in the UK.
- Support could include helping her check certificates, explaining the process, or accompanying her through online applications.

Fees and Scholarship Information

- Inform Dunya and her parents about Home Fees for students with refugee status (tuition rates vary by nation: e.g., in Scotland, first undergraduate degrees may have no fees).
- Introduce Sanctuary Scholarships and other opportunities for displaced students, such as those listed by Student Action for Refugees (STAR).
- Providing this information empowers Dunya and her family to make informed decisions and exercise choice.

University Pathways

- Avoid telling Dunya what is "realistic" or "unrealistic" - this is not your role.
- Share clear, factual information about entry requirements, grade expectations, and timelines.
- Discuss alternative pathways (foundation courses, bridging programs, or gap years) without pressuring her to commit.
- Respect that Dunya is the expert in her own experience and leads decisions about her future.

Reflections:

- How can you support your supported family members' learning and development in ways that respect their readiness and confidence?

- How can you involve family members in decisions about education, while respecting cultural values and beliefs?

- How can you connect them with schools, mentors, or community resources in ways that are safe and supportive?

- What steps can you take to ensure the family's voice remains central while providing practical support across personal, community, and institutional levels?

EDUCATION RESOURCES

Resource	Details & Eligibility	Website
Supporting Children at School	Guidance on the UK education system in multiple languages. Resources and training for teachers supporting refugee and asylum-seeking children, covering trauma-informed approaches, English learning, inclusion, and wellbeing.	<u>The Bell Foundation</u> <u>Welsh education system</u> <u>Scottish education system</u> <u>English education system</u> <u>IRC Healing Classrooms</u>
ESOL Classes	English language classes, both formal and informal, to build language skills, confidence, and communication. Eligibility: Adults or young people needing English support, including refugees and low-income learners.	Local colleges/adult education centres (varies by nation)
Functional Skills Courses	Free courses in English, Maths, and IT to improve foundational skills. Eligibility: Adults, refugees, low-income learners, or those seeking basic skill development.	- Local Colleges - Functional Skills Courses: <u>England</u>, <u>Wales</u>, <u>NI</u>
Everyday Skills	Flexible online courses in English and Maths for adults, providing foundational skills and confidence. Eligibility: Adults needing flexible learning options, including refugees and low-income learners.	Open University: <u>England</u> , <u>Wales</u> , <u>Scotland</u> , <u>NI</u>

Resource	Details & Eligibility	Website
Overseas Qualifications	ENIC Statements of Comparability formally recognises overseas qualifications in the UK Eligibility: Migrants or refugees seeking UK recognition of prior qualifications; may be funded via Jobcentre Plus.	<u>ENIC - Statement of Comparability</u>
Career Guidance & Vocational Training	Guidance on careers, apprenticeships, vocational training, or skill development. Eligibility: Adults, refugees, or supported learners seeking employment or skill progression.	England: • <u>National Careers Service</u> • <u>FindCourses.co.uk</u> Wales: • <u>Careers Wales</u> Scotland: • <u>Skills Development Scotland</u> NI: • <u>Careers Service</u>
Sanctuary Scholarships	University scholarships for refugees to help with higher education costs. Eligibility: Refugee students; availability varies by university	<u>Student Action for Refugees (STAR) Network</u>
Higher Education	Guidance on university applications, tuition fees, and scholarships for refugees, displaced persons, and those with leave to remain across the UK. Refugees and people with humanitarian protection are generally eligible for home-fee status. In Scotland, first undergraduate degrees may be fully funded through SAAS.	UK-Wide: • <u>UCAS</u> • <u>UKCISA Student Advice</u> Scotland: • <u>SAAS</u> • <u>Scottish Refugee Council</u> NI: • <u>Student Finance</u>

MODULE 7: TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE & CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Trauma-Informed Care

In the context of refugee support, Trauma-Informed Care is not about acting as a therapist or a mental health professional. It is a standard that applies to everyone.

It is a way of providing support that acknowledges that trauma is a frequent reality for those forcibly displaced by conflict or persecution. Rather than guessing who has trauma and who does not, we create an environment that is safe and supportive for everyone.

This approach guides us to see behaviours (like confusion, anger, or withdrawal) as natural responses to past experiences, not anomalies that always require clinical intervention.

The 4 R's of Trauma-Informed Care

To be trauma-informed, we must:

1. **REALISE** that trauma affects displaced people due to 3 major causes in both the past and the present.
 - a. We understand the trauma for refugees is not a one-off experience; it is layered. It starts in their home country, compounds during displacement, and changes shape rather than disappearing upon arrival to safety.
2. **RECOGNISE** the four ways someone may show signs of trauma.
 - a. We learn to spot the ways families might display potential signs of trauma. We recognise that “difficult” interactions may actually be a sign of a person in survival mode.
3. **RESPOND** with four trauma-informed approaches.
 - a. We do not just know about trauma; we shape how we work because of its impacts.
4. **RESIST** retraumatisation for yourself and others by shifting from cultural competence to cultural humility.
 - a. We commit to resisting re-traumatisation by ensuring our support does not cause additional harm. This is achieved through a commitment to cultural humility and continuous self-reflection, ensuring all efforts are culturally responsive to the unique needs of the families we serve.

Home by Warsan Shire (British-Somali Poet)

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark.
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well.

your neighbours running faster than you,
breath bloody in their throats
the boy you went to school with
is holding a gun bigger than his body
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay.

no one leaves home unless home chases you,
fire under feet
hot blood in your belly
it's not something you ever thought about
doing
and even though you carried the anthem
under your breath,



only tearing up your passport in
an airport toilet
sobbing as each mouthful of
paper made it clear that you
wouldn't be going back.

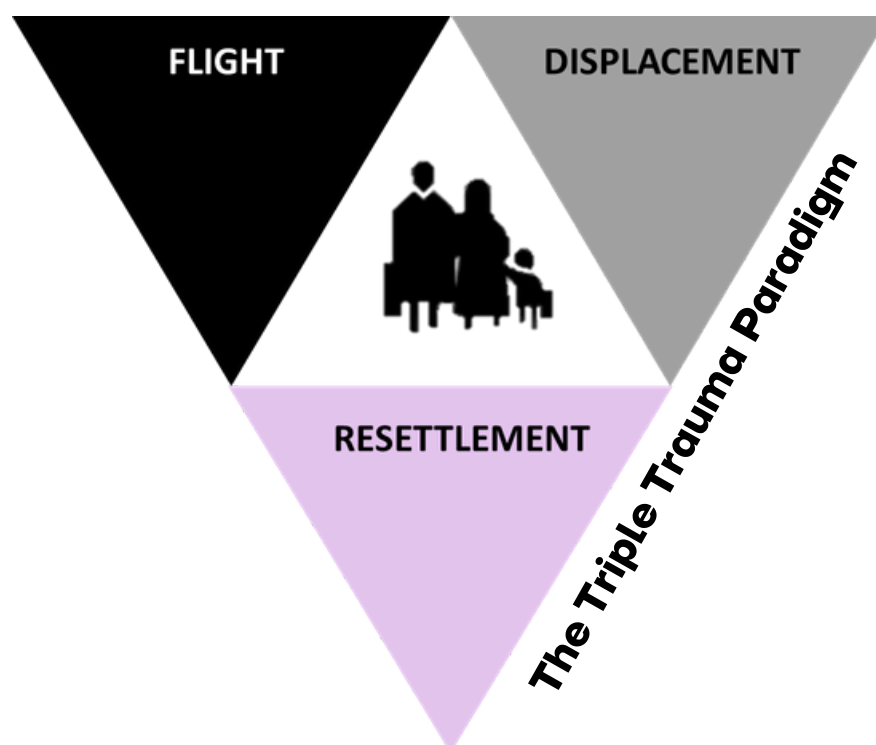
you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land
no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the
stomach of a truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles
travelled
means something more than journey.
no one crawls under fences
no one wants to be beaten
pitied

no one chooses refugee camps
or strip searches where your
body is left aching
or prison,

because prison is safer
than a city of fire
and one prison guard
in the night
is better than a truckload
of men who look like your father
no one could take it
no one could stomach it
no one skin would be tough enough

no one leaves home until home is a sweaty
voice in your ear
saying-
leave,
run away from me now
i dont know what i've become
but i know that anywhere
is safer than here.

1. **REALISE** that trauma affects displaced people due to three major causes in both in the past and the present



The Triple Trauma Paradigm is the framework that highlights that forcibly displaced individuals rarely face a single traumatic event. It is a cumulative process that begins in their home country (**flight**), compounds during flight (**displacement**), and continues to change shapes after reaching safety (**resettlement**).

1. **FLIGHT**

This phase encompasses the traumatic events that occurred in the family's home country that led to their departure.

Common Causes

- War, Death, Chaos, Societal Breakdown
- Persecution: Being followed, monitored, hiding, secrecy, harassment, or threats.
- Torture: Imprisonment without trial, arrest, disappearances, and kidnappings.
- Gender-based violence (GBV)
- Emotional Losses: Separation from family, friends, pets, community, identity, and culture.
- Financial Loss: Loss of home, job, and possessions.

Emotional and Psychological Impacts

- Shocked
- Panicked
- Urgency
- Pressured
- Angry
- Afraid
- Hypervigilant

2. DISPLACEMENT

This phase covers the trauma and stress experienced during displacement and in temporary settings (such as camps, transit countries, or detention).

Common Causes

- Fear of being caught: Fear of being stopped at checkpoints, detained, or returned at borders.
- Precarious Status: Exploitation, forced bribes, trafficking/slavery risk.
- Insecure Conditions: Assault, rape, women and girls at greater risk of abuse, scarce resources, conflict, and theft.
- Crowded, Unsanitary Conditions: Long waits or denial of essential services (e.g., medical care for illness, malnutrition).

Emotional and Psychological Impacts

- Grief
- Guilt
- Exhaustion from decision-making
- Powerless
- Isolated
- Self-doubt
- Uncertain
- Hypervigilant
- Anxious

3. RESETTLEMENT

This phase covers the new traumatic events that occur once the individual reaches safety.

Common Causes

- Culture Shock: Stress from unfamiliar culture, weather, clothes, foods, and language.
- Limited Resources Access: Barriers to housing, education, income, and legal support.
- Isolation, Discrimination, Alienation, Marginalisation.

Emotional and Psychological Impacts

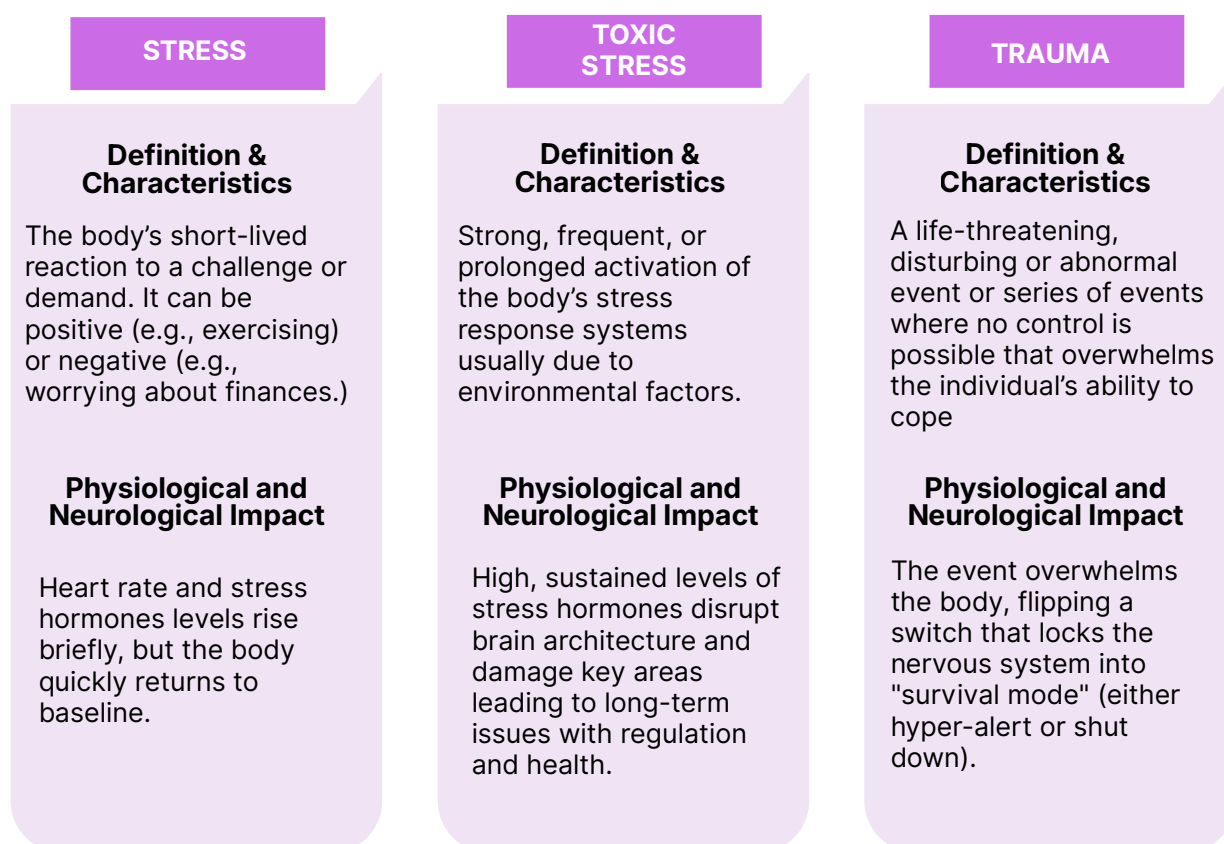
- Hopeless
- Stressed from poverty whilst rebuilding life
- Anxious for children or older relatives
- Frustrated at learning the new language or complex systems

2. **RECOGNISE** the four ways someone may show signs of trauma

To effectively **RECOGNISE** the signs and symptoms of trauma, we must first understand how stress impacts the body and brain.

1. The Continuum of Stress

We differentiate stress by its **duration**, **intensity**, and the presence of **support**, defining the three major responses below:

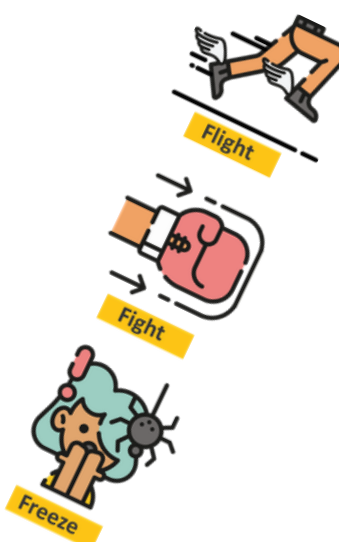


2. Immediate Impacts: Survival Mode

The brain has a fundamental mechanism to prioritise survival above all else. When it registers a threat, real or perceived, it triggers an automatic, life-saving response, often referred to as "**survival mode.**"

This is the body's automatic, instinctual reaction to a traumatic event, and it manifests in three primary ways:

- **Flight:** the attempt to escape, run, or avoid the threat.
- **Fight:** the attempt to confront, resist, or attack the threat.
- **Freeze:** the attempt to hide, become still, or mentally check out when escape or confrontation is impossible.





The Brain in Survival Mode

The diagram above shows the functional change in the brain during a threat response (or survival mode):

- 1. Executive State (Prefrontal Lobes):** This is the "thinking brain" responsible for logic, planning, and control. In survival mode, its function is largely shut down.
- 2. Emotional State (Limbic System):** This includes structures like the Amygdala (the alarm center). It becomes hyperactive, quickly flagging everything as a potential threat.
- 3. Survival State (Brain Stem):** This is the brain's "life-support system" controlling functions like breathing and heart rate. When the alarm center (Amygdala) registers an overwhelming threat that cannot be defeated (Fight) or escaped (Flight), the Survival State takes over to initiate the Free response.

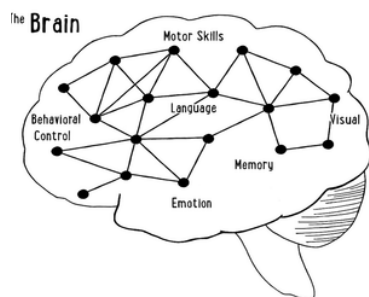


IMPORTANT NOTE: People often feel intense shame or guilt over their survival actions or inactions (e.g., freezing or feeling unable to help others). As a volunteer, it is vital to offer consistent assurance that there is no ideal response to trauma. The responses are an automatic, biologically perfect strategy designed by the body to maximise survival chances.

Crucially, some people struggle to leave this survival mode after the event is over, especially if they have experienced multiple, chronic traumatic events. Their brains are "stuck" in a high-alert state.

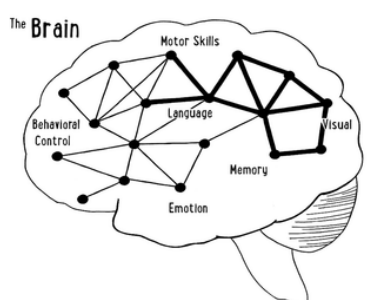
INTRODUCING TOXIC STRESS

3. The Impact on the Brain



A. Neurons and Connections

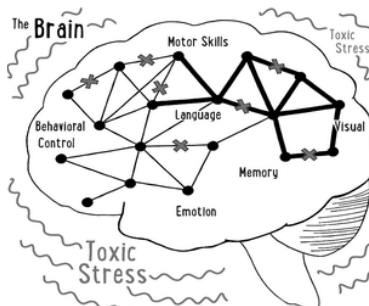
The brain is made up of specialised cells called neurons. These neurons are located in different parts of the brain and are responsible for specific functions like language, memory, emotion, and behavioral control. Neurons communicate with each other across tiny gaps called synapses, forming vast networks of connections. These connections are what allow us to perform complex functions.



B. Healthy Wiring

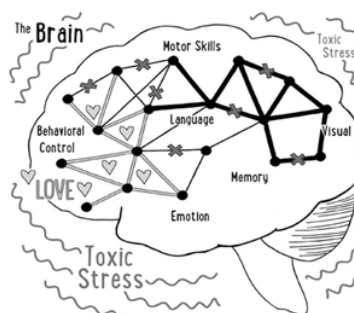
The brain develops in a healthy manner by strengthening the connections between neurons. This process occurs most robustly when three conditions are consistently met:

- A safe and predictable environment.
- Supportive and consistent relationships.
- A nurturing environment.



C. Trauma Rewiring

When people experience severe adversity for a prolonged period, brain development can be affected by this toxic stress, and the brain connections may start to break off. Childhood is particularly a time of rapid brain development and severe adversity can cause damage to growing brains.



D. The Good News: Neuroplasticity

Despite the damaging effects of toxic stress, the good news is that brains continue to develop all our lives. This ability to change and form new connections is called neuroplasticity. We can leverage neuroplasticity to encourage healing by providing the environment the brain needs:

- Low stress levels and a safe environment.
- Supportive socialisation.
- Cognitive stimulation, sleep, diet, and exercise.

4. What might this look like in the people you support

The neurological changes above result in observable signs that typically manifest across four interconnected domains:

Physiological (Body): since many remain stuck in "survival mode," the nervous system remains overactive, leading to physical exhaustion and somatic pain.

Common signs: chronic fatigue, persistent stomach or headaches, back pain, digestive issues, severe sleep problems (such as insomnia or nightmares), and pains that don't seem to have a physical cause.

Cognitive (Thinking): toxic stress can damage connections in the prefrontal cortex (focus) and hippocampus (memory), leading to struggles with processing.

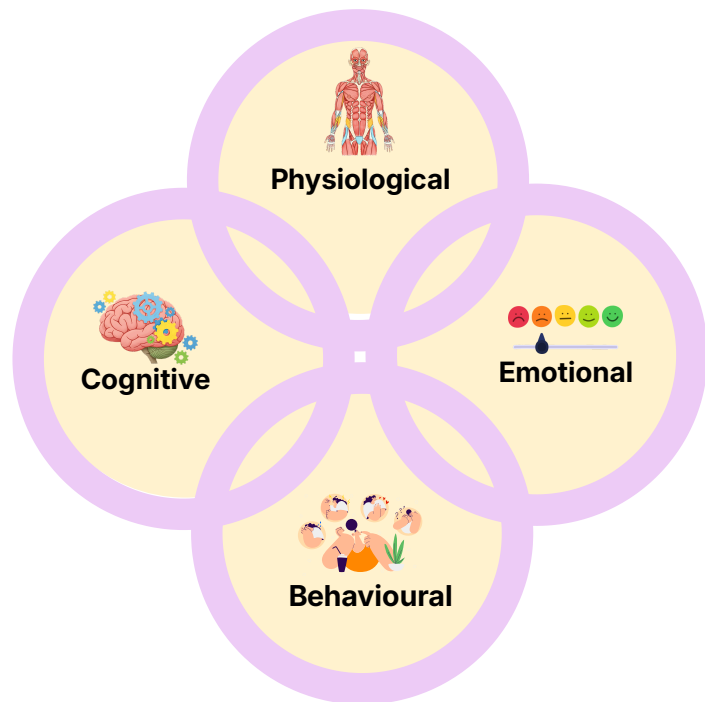
Common signs: trouble concentrating and filtering distractions, persistent thoughts about traumatic events, memory impairment, and negative thinking

Emotional (Feelings): the amygdala (the alarm centre) often becomes hypersensitive, leaving the "regulation centre" compromised.

Common signs: rapid or extreme shifts in mood, fear or anxiety, agitation or irritability, hopelessness, apathy, trouble managing emotions

Behavioural (Actions): though observers may perceive these behaviours as disruptive, they are actually strategies used to manage internal distress and a lack of safety.

Common Signs: trouble managing behaviour, avoidance of social contact, hypervigilance, mistrust, engagement in risky behaviour, and poor self-regulation



Adults often have more protective factors than children because their brains are fully developed. They often also have a stronger sense of self and purpose which can help them recover from trauma and come back to their pre-trauma state. However, adults who have experienced adverse childhood experiences may struggle to recover as in effect, they have had a double dose of trauma which can mean their baseline is higher than someone who has had a safe and nurturing childhood. Without experiencing stability at some point in their lives, adults who have also had traumatic childhoods may struggle to recover from trauma. It is this safety and stability that is required for most people to heal.

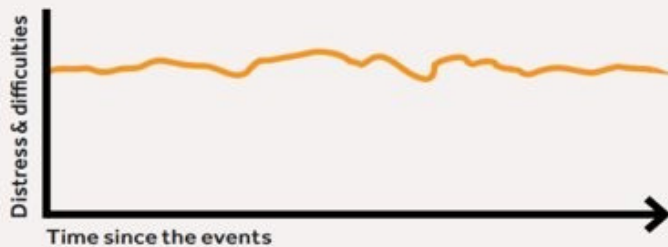
Impact on recovery baseline from single vs. multiple traumatic events



Most importantly, adults and children need safety, stability and time to begin to heal and every individual will experience the healing process in their own way.

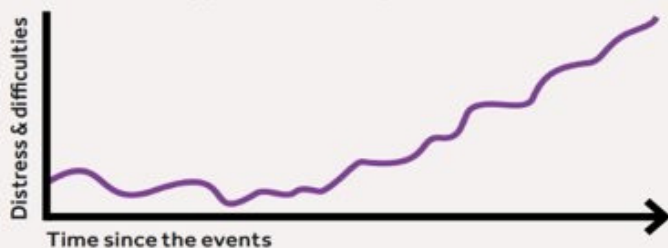
Enduring

The distress and difficulties persist over time



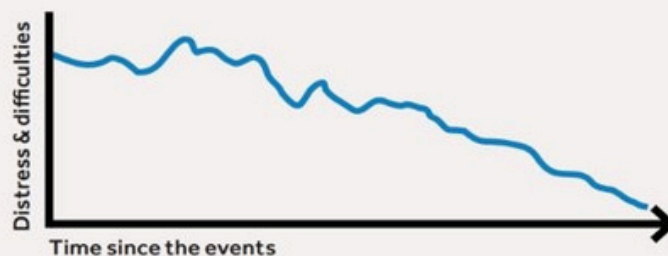
Delayed

Appear not to be distressed or have difficulties at first, but start to struggle at a later stage



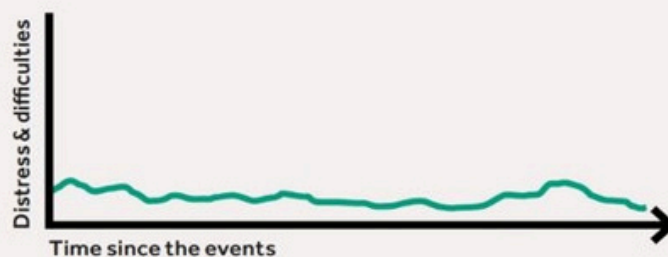
Recovery

Distress and difficulties at first, but they get less over time



Unaffected

Appear not to have any difficulties



Everyone reacts differently to trauma and it is important to remember this when we are supporting newly arrived families. These four graphs show the most common ways people react to trauma over time.

3. **RESPOND** with four trauma-informed approaches

To **RESPOND** effectively, we must integrate our knowledge of trauma into our daily practice. Your role is not to act as **therapists** or to ask families to **uncover deep emotional wounds**. Instead, our goal is to create a healing environment. By changing how we interact and structure our support, we provide the stability needed for families to recover on their own terms.

Adapted from the SAMHSA framework, we utilise four core approaches to guide every interaction:

SAFETY



CHOICE & VOICE



CULTURE & COMMUNITY



TRUST & TRANSPARENCY



- **Safety:** Ensuring physical and psychological safety is the foundation.
- **Choice and Voice:** Restoring power and control to the individual.
- **Culture and Community:** Leveraging cultural strengths and social support.
- **Trust and Transparency:** Building relationships through openness and consistency.

REMINDER: Not every individual has experienced trauma, and not everyone exposed to a traumatic event will develop lasting symptoms. We must never assume a diagnosis. Instead, we set a universal standard: providing everyone with the support needed to support a survivor, just in case.

Safety



Safety is not just a checklist of physical conditions, like having a lock on the door; it is a fundamental neurological state. When the brain does not feel safe, a person cannot learn, trust, or settle.

Trauma recovery research shows that safety and stability must come first. Before survivors can grieve or rebuild community ties, they must feel secure in their own bodies. Safety also regulates "neuroception," the body's subconscious scanner that constantly asks, "Am I safe?" For many trauma survivors, this scanner is set to high sensitivity, interpreting even ordinary stimuli - like a loud voice, sudden movement, or lack of information - as threats.

This principle reflects Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which places safety at the foundation. We cannot expect a family to focus on higher-level tasks, such as learning a new language or navigating complex bureaucracy, if their basic needs are unmet. The brain will always prioritise safety over learning. Safety must be defined not by our intentions, but by the family's perception.

How Can We Establish Safety?

For many families, the world has been fundamentally unsafe. Systems, authorities, and environments have previously been sources of danger. Therefore, safety is not just the absence of danger; it is the presence of predictability.

To build safety, we must work across three levels: Physical, Emotional, and Relational.

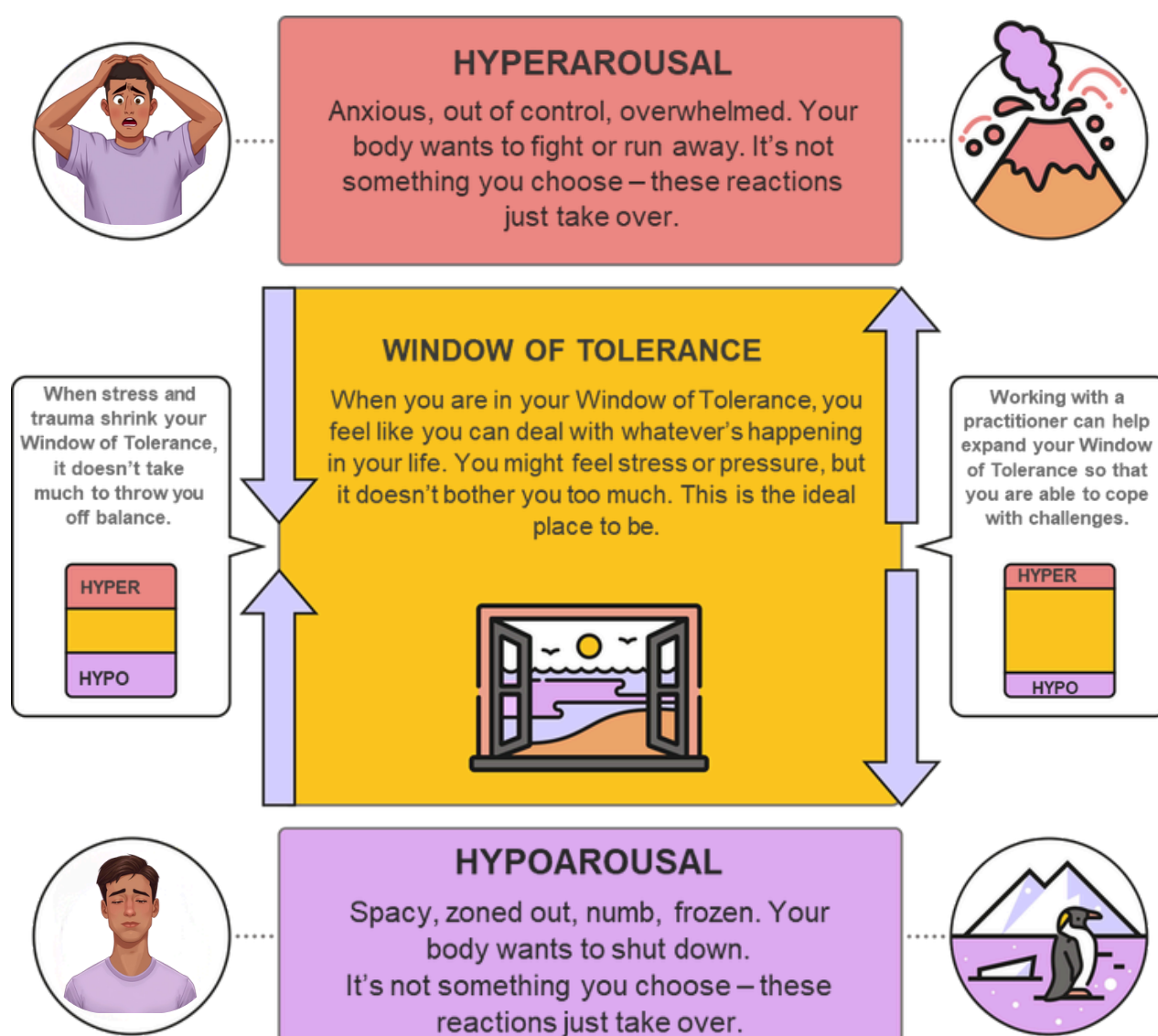
Physical Safety (The Environment)	Emotional Safety Through Predictability	Relational Safety (Radical Consistency)
Secure the Space: Ensure housing is secure, private, and free from hazards. Don't just hand over keys; walk through the accommodation. Show explicitly how to lock doors and windows to restore a sense of perimeter control.	Routines: Chaos keeps the brain in alarm mode; routine allows it to settle. Try to schedule meetings or grocery runs on the same days and times each week.	Do What You Say: Do not make promises you can't keep. If you promise to visit on Tuesday at 2 PM, arrive on Tuesday at 2 PM. If you are running 5 minutes late, text them. To a survivor, a lack of reliability can signal danger or abandonment.
Orientation to Systems: Explain immediately how appliances work and, crucially, how to access services (such as the emergency and GP). Knowledge reduces the fear of the unknown.	Visual Schedules: Trauma can impact the brain's ability to process verbal plans. Use a physical calendar or visual map to show the plan rather than just saying it. This reduces anxiety about "what comes next."	Clear Boundaries: Be clear about what you can do and what you cannot do. Vague promises create anxiety; clear boundaries create safety because the client knows exactly where they stand.
Respect Privacy: Never enter their personal space (bedroom or home) without explicit permission and knocking. This reinforces that they control the boundary.	The "Roadmap" Technique: Explain what will happen before it happens. Before any new event (appointment, school visit), provide a step-by-step guide: <i>"We will drive there, we will wait in a room, a doctor will ask these three questions, and then we will leave."</i>	The "Clean Slate" Approach: Shame is a dominant emotion in trauma. If a client acts out (Fight) or withdraws (Flight/Freeze), do not "punish" them. Greet them the next day with warmth and a fresh start. This shows them that the relationship is durable.
Sensory Safety: A hyper-sensitive nervous system can be easily overwhelmed by noise or chaos. Work to keep the initial living environment calm, organised, and free from overwhelming sensory stimuli (e.g., loud TVs, too many visitors at once).	"Do With, Not For" (Co-Creation): Instead of imposing a schedule on a family (which mimics control), build the routine together. Ask, "What time works best for your morning routine?"	Non-Threatening Body Language: Sit at eye level (don't stand over them). Keep an open posture. Keep your voice calm and rhythmic, which signals safety to the instinctual brain.

The Window of Tolerance

We establish physical, emotional, and relational safety to help families remain in their "Window of Tolerance." The Window of Tolerance is the optimal zone where a person can function, learn, and manage their emotions effectively. When we are here, we are calm and engaged. Trauma shrinks the window. A narrowed window means that even minor stressors like a confusing form, a delay, or a loud noise can instantly push the individual into a survival state. As a volunteer, your goal is to recognise where the person is and use sensory strategies to help them return to the centre.

Regulation Strategies

Logic does not work when someone is out of their window because their "thinking brain" is offline. Instead, we use body-based (sensory) strategies to signal safety directly to the nervous system.



Hyper-arousal (The "Storm"): Down-Regulate

The "Slow Low Low" Technique: Consciously adjust your voice by: **Slowing** down your talking pace, **lowering** your volume, and **lowering** your pitch.

Movement: Walk with them. Pacing helps discharge the "flight" energy.

Sensory Anchors: Offer a glass of water, open a window for fresh air, or encourage deep breathing.

Avoid questioning and consequences. Do not ask "Why are you shouting?" Logic will only escalate the situation.

Signs: Anxious, angry, shouting, pacing, overwhelmed (Flight/Fight)

Signs: Spacy, zoned out, numb, silent, frozen. (Freeze/Shut Down)



Hypo-arousal (The "Iceberg"): Up-Regulate

Grounding exercises: these are exercises that pulls their mind back to the room. E.g.: ask them to point out 3 things they can hear or see.

Movement & Activation: encourage standing up, stretching, or walking.

Physical Sensation: tapping or squeezing body parts like arms or legs to feel the body boundary or splashing cold water on their face.

Sensory objects: hand them a stress ball, a textured object, or a fidget toy. Engaging the hands in simple, rhythmic movements can help "thaw" the freeze response.

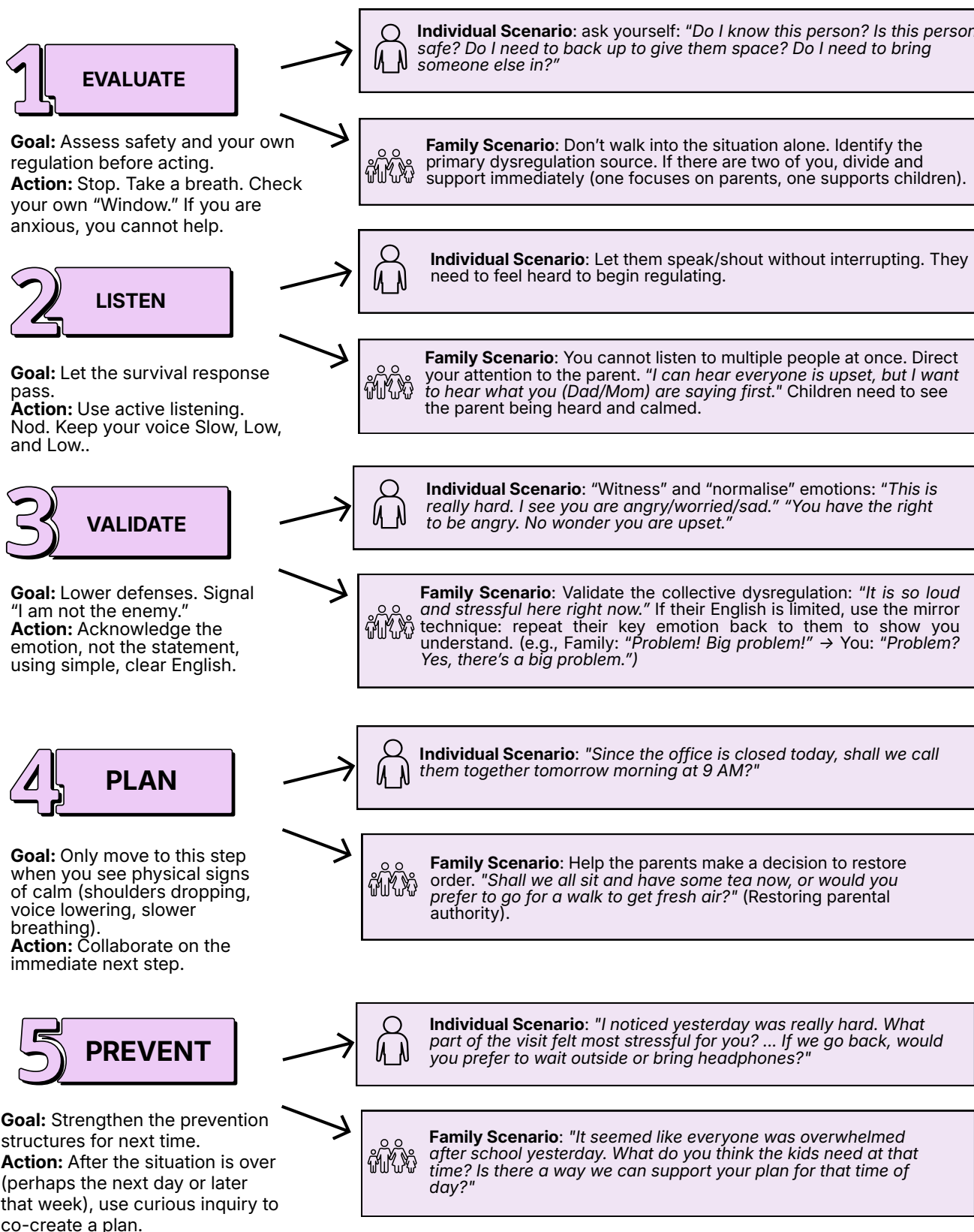
Prevention vs. Intervention

It is important to distinguish between prevention and intervention. Safety techniques are preventive: proactive structures used when a person is calm to reduce risk, maintain stability, and avoid triggering dysregulation. Regulation strategies are interventions: short-term responses used only when a person becomes dysregulated (outside their Window) to help settle the nervous system and prevent escalation. Your role is **not** to heal trauma or replace professional care. These tools are meant to prevent situations from getting worse and to support short-term stability until appropriate professional help can be accessed.

The De-Escalation Framework: Your Roadmap

When a situation escalates, whether it involves one person or a whole family, you cannot rely on instinct. You need a map.

Thinking of the following De-escalation Framework as that map. It tells you *what* to do and *when* to do it.



The Crucial Distinction:

- **Steps 1–3 (The Regulation Phase):** These steps are aimed at the Body. You must use the Regulation Strategies (Slow Low Low, Grounding) we discussed earlier. The goal is simply to bring them back into their Window of Tolerance.
- **Steps 4–5 (The Prevention Phase):** These steps are aimed at the Brain. You use the Safety Techniques (Planning, Routines) we discussed in the first section. The goal is to solve the problem and stop it from happening again.

CHOICE & VOICE



Forced displacement often negatively impacts a family's sense of control and self-efficacy. Fleeing violence or persecution strips families of the ability to direct their own lives, and the systems they enter often further limit their autonomy.

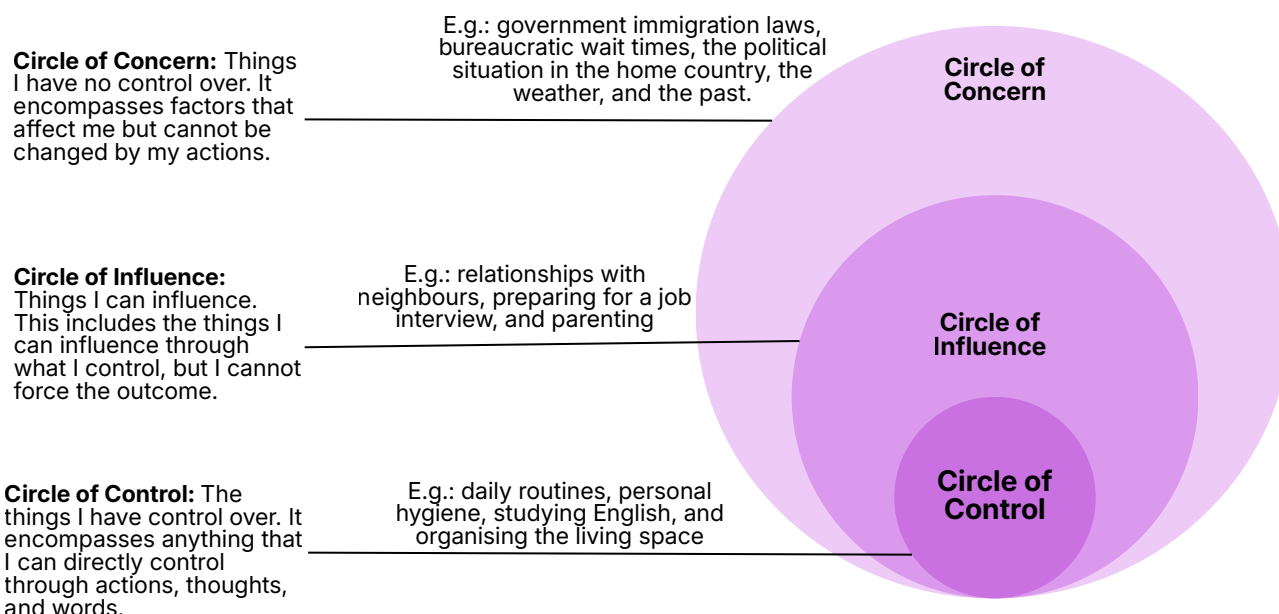
This state of diminished autonomy is rarely temporary. Research (UNHCR, World Bank) estimates that protracted refugee situations last around 20 years, meaning many families spend decades in camps, detention centres, or temporary housing with little say over what they ate, where they lived, or how they spent their time.

Over time, people may learn that their actions do not change outcomes - a coping response known as **Learned helplessness**.

When families arrive in your community, they may appear withdrawn or dependent on you to make all decisions. If you do everything for them, you risk reinforcing learned helplessness. Learned helplessness is not a deliberate or conscious choice; it is an adaptive response in which motivation gradually drops away after repeated experiences of having no control.

Trauma also blurs the lines between what we can control and what we cannot. This often leads to developing a small circle of control alongside immense anxiety, as the brain exhaustingly tries to solve problems that are unsolvable.

To visualise this, we use Stephen Covey's Circle of Control:



Practical Strategies: Restoring Agency

Your role is to restore the family's agency. You are responsible for reminding them of the agency they possess but may have forgotten due to trauma.

To move from a dynamic of dependency to self-efficacy, apply the following strategies:

1. Expand the Circle of Control

Displacement often creates a fixation on what cannot be controlled, leading families to experience their Circle of Control as extremely limited or absent. To counter learned helplessness, you must actively guide the family to widen this inner circle.

- **Validate and Pivot:** acknowledge systemic frustrations to establish emotional safety, then intentionally redirect attention to the Inner Circle.
- **Operationalise:** Identify concrete, manageable tasks the family can complete immediately. Successfully completing these small tasks provides the brain with neurological evidence of effectiveness, reducing anxiety and proving that their actions still yield results.

2. Facilitate Independence

The goal of sponsorship is partnership, not rescue. While Vygotsky's scaffolding model was designed for children, with adults it must be applied in reverse. Start by assessing what the family can already do independently, then add support only where needed. Over-support risks reinforcing dependency.

- **Phase 4 - Independence ("You do, I cheer"):** Start here if possible. Observe what they can already manage alone.
- **Phase 3 – Empower ("You do, I help"):** Stay nearby as a safety net; intervene only if they get stuck.
- **Phase 2 – Assist ("I do, you help"):** Share the task when stress or novelty increases. (e.g., they hold the map, you pay the fare).
- **Phase 1 – Model ("I do, you watch"):** Use sparingly, only when the task is entirely new or capacity is temporarily reduced. You perform the task while they observe (e.g., navigating a bus route).

Progress is rarely linear. A family may function independently in one area (e.g., transport) and need support again in another (e.g., medical emergencies). This is expected. When stress rises, step back into the scaffold; when stability returns, step out again.

3. Mitigate Decision Fatigue (Structured Choice)

A brain processing trauma has a reduced capacity for complex decision-making. This is known as Decision Fatigue. To rebuild confidence without causing Decision Fatigue, offer frequent, low-stakes opportunities to choose using an "A or B" structure. Instead of open-ended questions, offer two concrete options.

- Example: *"We need to buy school supplies. Would you prefer to go today at 4 PM or Saturday morning?"*

4. Restoring Voice

Voice is the second half of agency. It is the belief that *"If I speak, the world changes."* Displaced families often arrive with a belief that speaking up is either dangerous or futile. They may fear that offering negative feedback will lead to the withdrawal of support, or they may simply believe you will not listen.

To break this cycle, you must actively dismantle the power imbalance and prove that their voice has weight. This is done through the active elicitation of feedback and, crucially, **acting upon it**.

- **Eliciting Feedback:** You must actively ask families for their opinion rather than waiting for them to volunteer it. This involves creating safety by de-personalising criticism and listening for non-verbal hesitation.
 - De-personalise it: "Some families find the bus system confusing. How have you found it?"
 - Listen for the 'Soft No': If you hear a long pause or a hesitant "maybe," treat it as a No. Verbalise it: "I hear some hesitation. We don't have to do this."
- **Close the Loop ("You Said, We Did"):** When the family gives feedback, you must show them the result (e.g., "Because you requested X, we have changed the plan to Y").
 - Example: "You mentioned you preferred rice over pasta. We changed the shopping list for this week. Is this okay?"

Culture and Community:

1. The Role of Culture in Displacement

Forced displacement is not merely a geographical shift; it is a rupture of the social and cultural fabric that sustains individual identity. For many displaced families, culture serves as a primary psychological system during times of crisis.

Research indicates that maintaining cultural continuity (language, religious practices, dietary customs) is a protective factor against the development of severe mental health conditions. Conversely, the pressure to abandon one's culture in favour of the host culture accelerates psychological distress.

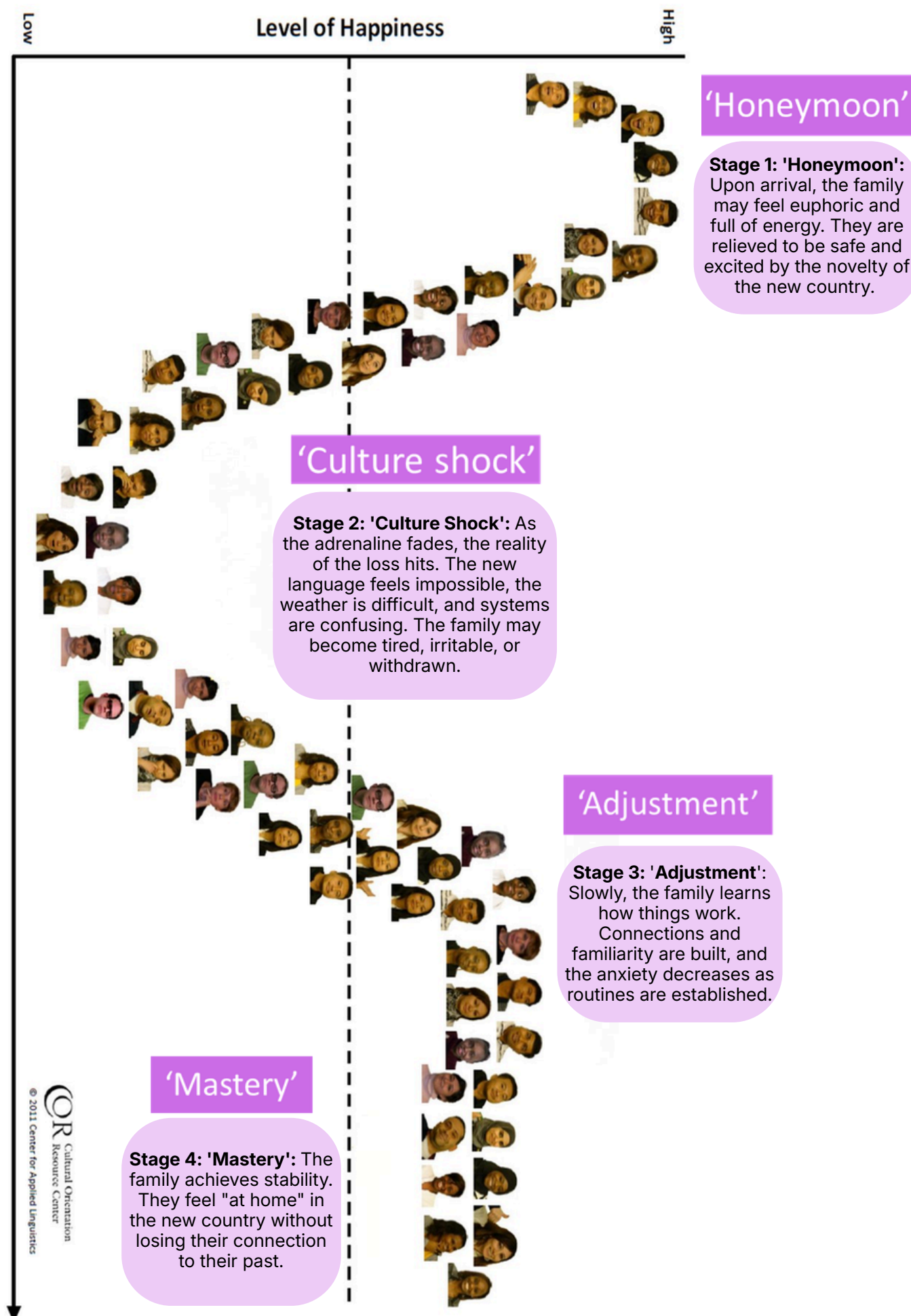
Therefore, your role is not to assimilate them (erasure of the past), but to include them (the synthesis of the past identity with the new environment).

2. The Cultural Adjustment Curve

Most newcomers experience an emotional trajectory known as the U-Curve of Cultural Adjustment. As shown in the graph below, happiness often starts high, dips significantly when reality sets in, and then slowly recovers.

It is important to understand that a drop in mood is not always caused by trauma. Often, it is the natural result of the exhausting process of adjusting to a new culture.

When to intervene: A dip in happiness is an inevitable part of moving and not an indication that you are failing as a sponsor. It is the brain processing change. However, if a family member stays in the "low" phase for a prolonged period and cannot function in daily life, this may be a sign of depression requiring professional support.

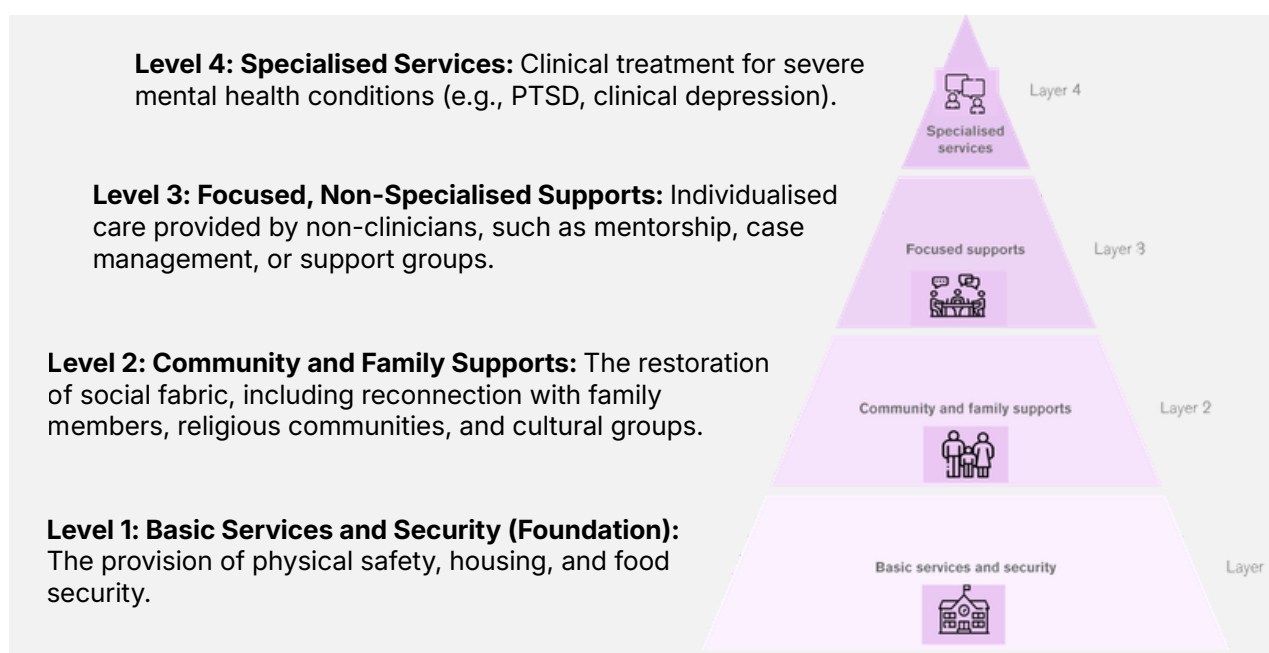


3. Strategies for Support

To facilitate healthy adjustment, you can use the **Psychosocial Support (PSS)** framework.

Psychosocial Support refers to the actions that promote a person's holistic well-being within their social environment. Most people can recover from trauma without specialised mental health services. Research shows that healing is primarily driven by safety and social connection, not clinical therapy. Furthermore, Western-style 1-to-1 counseling is not always culturally appropriate, particularly for individuals from cultures that view healing as a collective, community process rather than an individual one.

As the IASC Intervention Pyramid below demonstrates, the majority of people will heal simply by receiving basic support (Levels 1 & 2). Only a minority will require focused support (Level 3), and very few will require specialised medical attention (Level 4).



How to Use This Framework in Practice?

Do not invert the pyramid. A common mistake is attempting therapeutic support (Level 4) before basic needs like heating or food are secured (Level 1). Use this framework as a checklist to prioritise support.

Step 1: Secure the Foundation (Level 1). Before addressing emotional needs, ensure physical needs are met. Is the housing secure? Is the heating working? Are they registered with a GP? Reducing these stressors is often the most effective early mental health intervention.

Step 2: Build Social Capital (Level 2). Once safety is established, focus on restoring connection using the Bonds, Bridges, and Links framework:

- a. Bonds: Connect the family with diaspora or faith communities to restore cultural and emotional safety.
- b. Bridges: Introduce the family to neighbours, local groups, and community activities so they can build an independent support network.

Step 3: Monitor and Listen (Level 3). Provide consistent, calm mentorship while actively signposting to additional support. This may include local women's groups, community organisations, structured wellbeing courses, or other relevant services. Offer a listening ear, but do not take on a therapeutic role.

Step 4: Refer with Care (Level 4). If, after the lower layers are in place, an individual continues to show signs of significant distress (e.g., inability to function, severe withdrawal), support them to access formal help through their GP or local mental health services.

Trust and Transparency:

According to trauma-informed care principles (SAMHSA), trust is the primary mechanism that makes a person feel safe. It is a non-negotiable foundation.

Research on displacement highlights that refugees frequently experience "Institutional Betrayal." This occurs when the institutions responsible for protection (governments, police, or neighbours) become perpetrators of harm. Consequently, the fundamental assumption that "helpers are safe" is shattered.

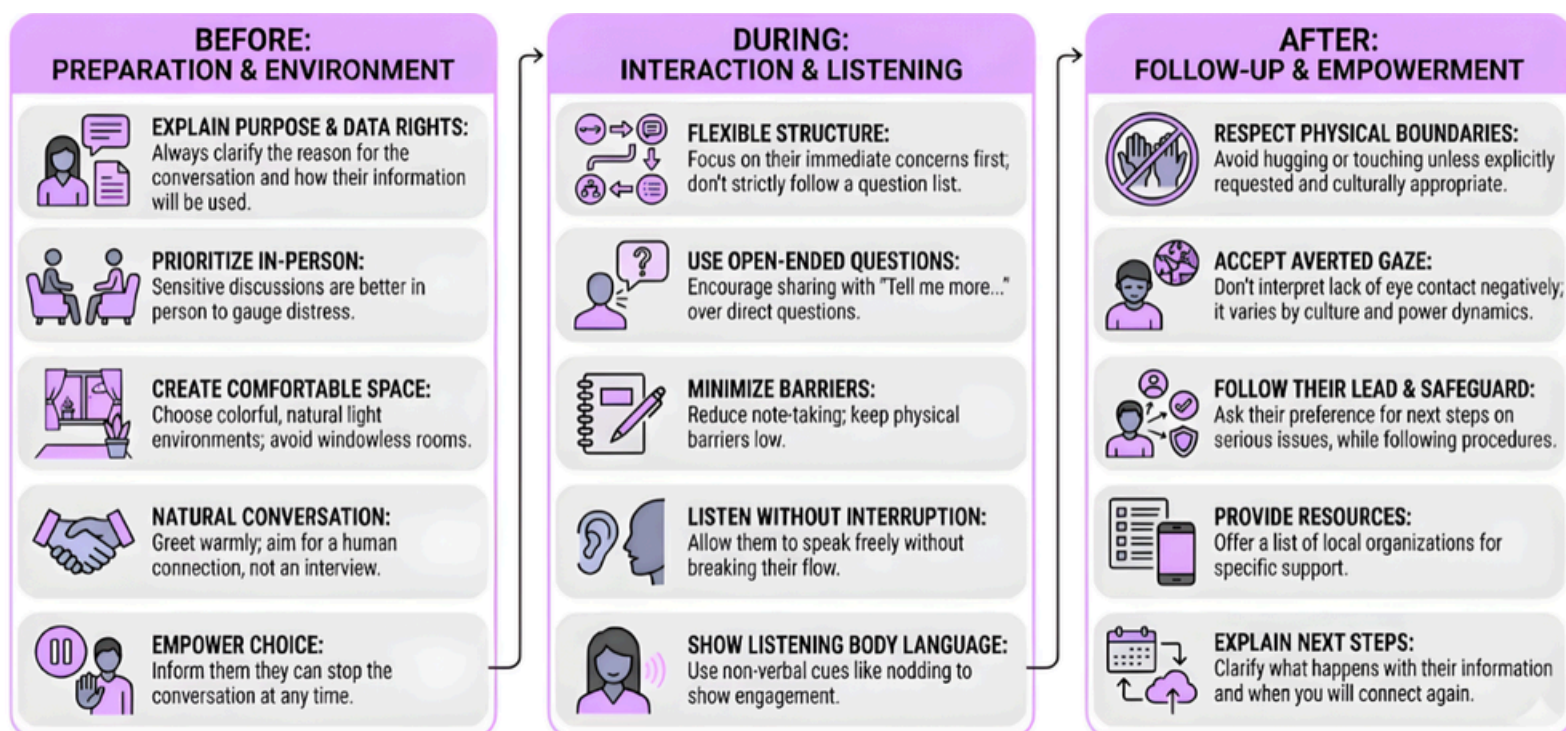
For a sponsor, because you hold resources, you resemble the systems that may have failed the family. Hence, trust cannot be assumed; it must be systematically demonstrated.

How can I build trust?

Trust isn't built by big promises, but by consistent small actions. As Dr. Bruce Perry notes, healing comes from "patterned, repetitive experiences."

For a brain expecting danger, trust grows through steady "relational doses"—being on time, staying calm, keeping promises. One dose isn't enough; it takes hundreds. Inconsistency resets the brain to fear. Consistency matters more than intensity.

How do I maintain transparency and manage sensitive conversations?



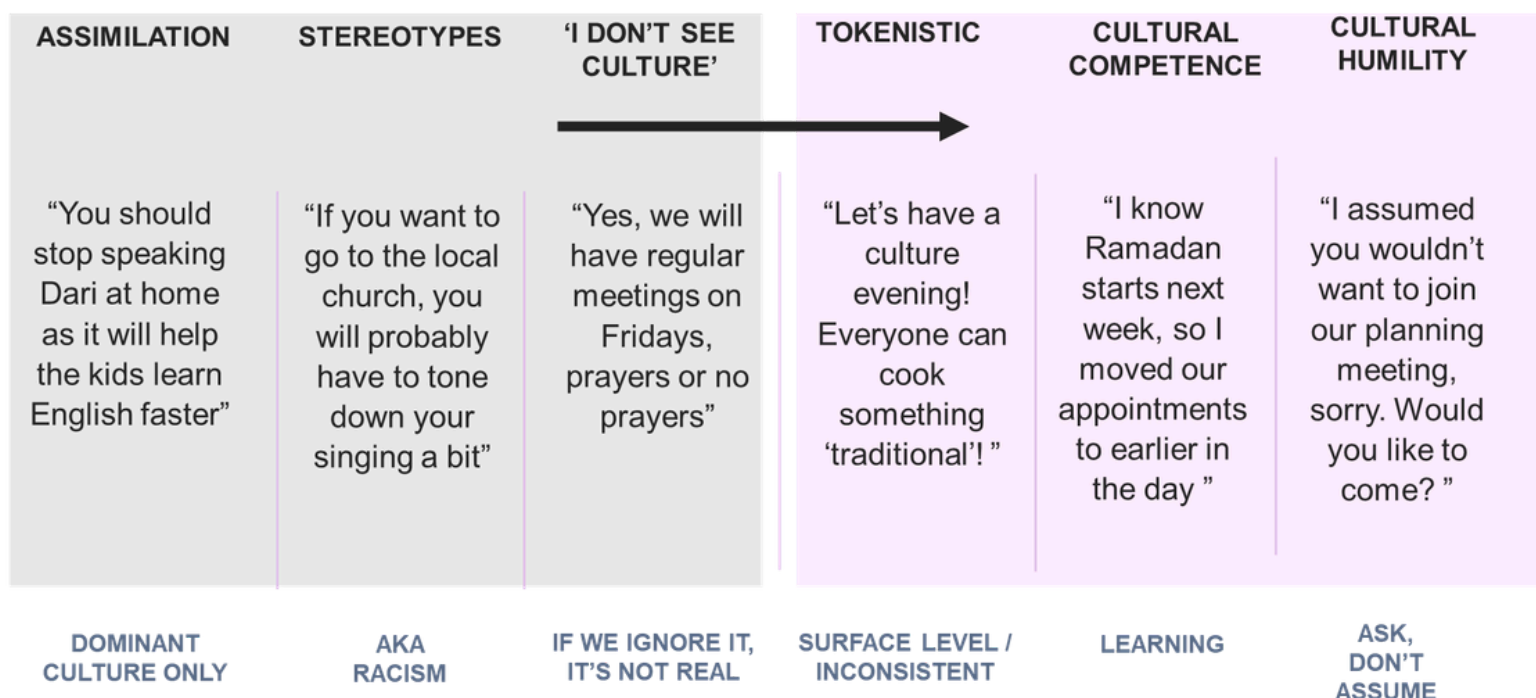
4. **RESIST** re-traumatisation for yourself and others by shifting from cultural competence to cultural humility

The final "R" of the Trauma-Informed framework is **RESIST** Re-traumatisation. We often think of "re-traumatisation" as a response to loud noises or scary events. However, for displaced families, re-traumatisation frequently occurs through Cultural Erasure.

Research indicates that the pressure to abandon one's culture in favour of the host culture ("Assimilation") accelerates psychological distress. When we assume that we know what is "best" for a family based on Western norms, we inadvertently replicate the powerlessness the family fled from.

To avoid this, we must move beyond the idea of "Cultural Competence" (knowing about a culture) and embrace Cultural Humility (respecting an individual).

The Spectrum of Cultural Understanding



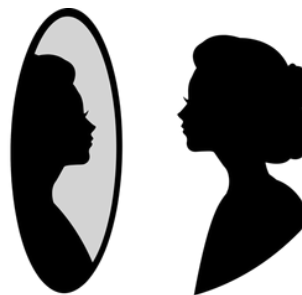
The Shift: Competence vs. Humility

For decades, volunteers were trained in Cultural Competence. Research suggests this model has limitations because it creates a hierarchy where the sponsor is the "expert." However, it is impossible to be fully "competent" in a culture that is not your own. No amount of reading will give you the lived experience of that identity. Pretending to be an expert creates a false sense of confidence, reinforces the power hierarchy, and leads to stereotyping.



Cultural competence

The ability to learn about, understand, appreciate and interact with people from **cultures** or belief systems different from one's own

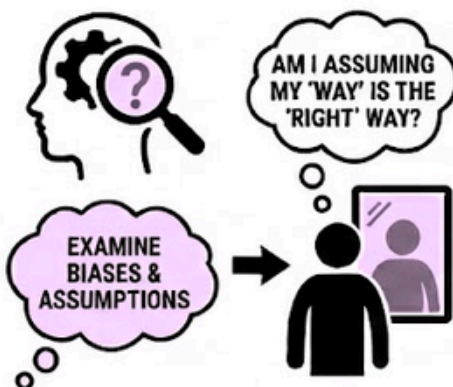


Cultural humility

Seeing **each individual** (including yourself) as a complicated, multi-dimensional human being with their own history, experiences, heritage, beliefs, desires and point of view

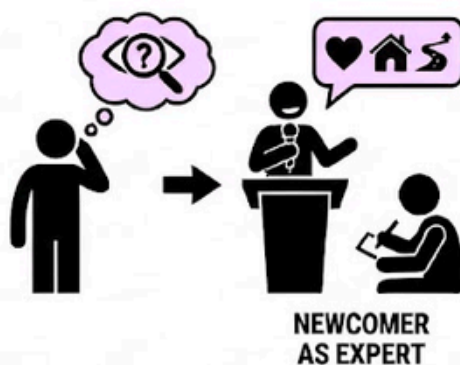
PRATICING CULTURAL HUMILITY: 3 STRATEGIES TO RESIST RE-TRAUMATISATION

A. LIFELONG LEARNING & CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION



ACTION: Maintain openness; don't rely on generalisations. Be a learner, not a knower.

B. MITIGATE POWER IMBALANCES



ACTION: Recognise your own cultural lens and cede power. Prioritise the newcomer's voice and expertise regarding their own life.

C. HOLD INSTITUTIONS ACCOUNTABLE



ACTION: Advocate for equitable support. Ensure the environment adapts to the family, not the other way around.

SHIFT FROM 'COMPETENCE' (KNOWING) TO 'HUMILITY' (RESPECTING & LEARNING) FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED SUPPORT.

