



Halton Virtual School for care  
experienced young children & young  
people

Guidance on supporting Separated  
Migrant Young Children (SMCs)

Statutory School Age

Including:

Effects of trauma

Prior education

Learning English

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Walking in the shoes

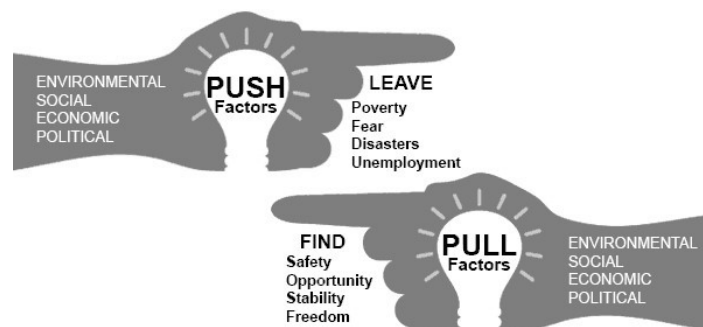


Before going on to read the guidance and suggested support strategies, please take a moment to think and reflect on the possible life journey of the migrant young person.

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

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

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



## Prior education

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

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

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

What kind of admission process does your school have? How is basic information gathered? How is it shared with staff? Are new students asked about prior educational experience, language(s) used for instruction, subjects studied as a matter of routine? See Appendix A (sample flowchart) and Appendix B (family/student questionnaire). For a separated migrant student see Appendix C as an example of what school could use.

What initial assessments are used? Best practice would be to hold off carrying these out until the young person has settled and is feeling more confident. They are not going to be able to demonstrate what they are capable of until then. Standard educational assessment tools are unlikely to be familiar to the young person and possibly not culturally relevant so results of these need to be treated with caution. If possible, ask them to write a short story in their language of literacy (which may be different to their first language). Even though access to translation may not be possible (although it could be copied and pasted into Google Translate), an educator can gauge literacy levels by looking at the amount written, handwriting and punctuation. Source a short text in their language of literacy. Even though the assessor may not understand what the young person is reading, a sense of fluency can be gathered.



## Effects of trauma

When a young person feels intensely threatened by an event he or she is involved in or witnesses, we call that event a trauma. Trauma comes in many different forms. NCTSN (National Young person Traumatic Stress Network) has the following list (not definitive):

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Trauma affects mental health. Some common effects are:

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

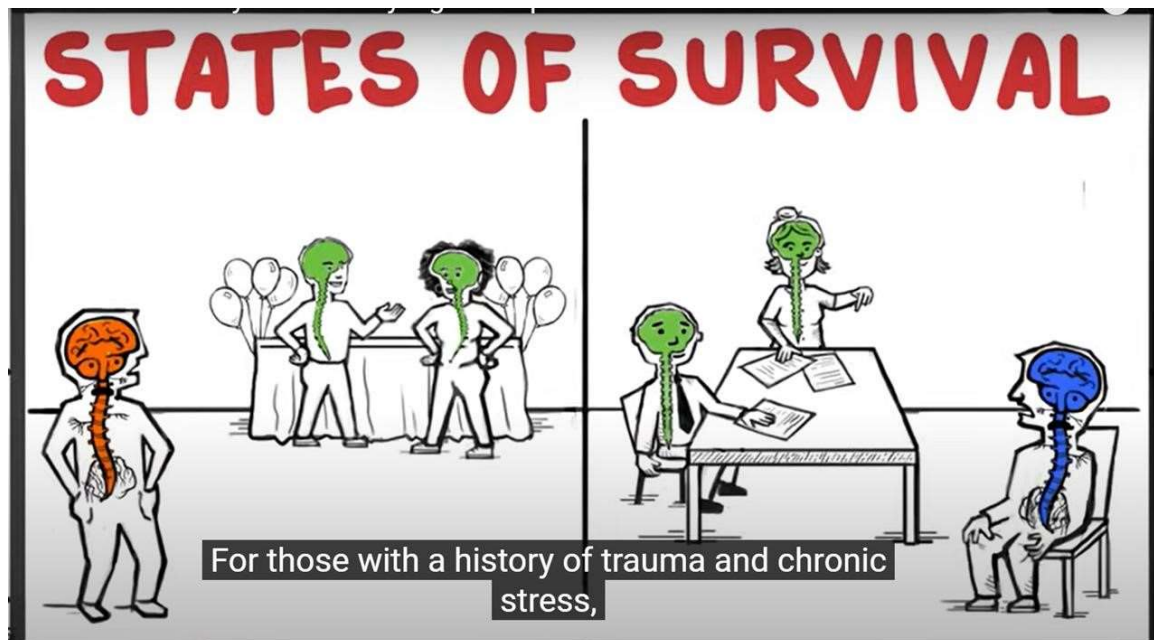
Suggestions for looking after or supporting those struggling with the effects of trauma:

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

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

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

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



English Additional Language (EAL)  
students New to English

### Key points:

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

### Strategies:

- Find out about the student's educational, linguistic, social and cultural background. A young person who has been in a similar educational system for a similar amount of time will make progress faster than a young person who has not because they can make connections with what they already know in their language.
- Provide visual or concrete support wherever possible.
- Encourage the use of first language including reading and writing where possible.
- Pair student with a fluent, articulate English speaker - they learn far more from their peers than adults.
- Make good use of technology to aid understanding. Translation apps on mobile phones can be very supportive. Even if the student isn't literate in their first language, most apps now have an audio function.
- Ensure the student is grouped according to their ability as they will make faster progress. Nothing is more demotivating than being insufficiently challenged. EAL learners do not benefit from being grouped with SEND students in order to have TA support (unless they have SEND themselves).
- Deciding whether an EAL student has SEND takes time. Better to overestimate their ability than underestimate.

## English as an Additional Language (EAL) students Advanced Bilingual Learners)

### Key Points:

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

### Key Strategies:

- Key vocabulary and grammatical structures need to be specified within lesson plans.
- These will need to be explicitly taught by the teacher who should model what this language looks like in practice before asking students to produce it.
- Students will need to be given opportunities to use this new language firstly through speaking, then writing. Barrier games (where one student has information to pass on to another who hasn't got it) and graphic organisers will support this.
- New words and grammatical structures need to be used seven times, on average, before becoming embedded. Repetition and revision will be necessary.
- Work should always be cognitively challenging. Good modelling and scaffolding will ensure these students can access the task.
- Reading fluency will be in advance of comprehension. Students will need specific support in order to access the meaning of new texts.

## Equality, Diversity & Inclusion



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

It places a duty on all public bodies (which includes schools) to:

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

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

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

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

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

Key points:

- This is an extremely diverse group of students whose ethnicity is not 'White British'.
- Some BME students (including migrant young people) have EAL, others do not.
- Although each individual young person is unique and it is important not to stereotype, there are extra challenges and barriers that some minority ethnic students face (particularly those who are not 'White').
- Schools should be monitoring the attainment of these underachieving groups in order to inform their school self-evaluation.
- The young people need to know that school values and appreciates their culture, religion, language and ethnicity.
- School should acknowledge and celebrate that it is possible to be British and Black/ Afghani/Syrian etc. Identity is multi-layered and complex.
- Black students face additional challenges and barriers in that they are more likely to be stereotyped. For some of our black migrant young people coming from black majority countries, the UK may come as a culture shock.
- Some young people may have fled their country of origin due to prejudice and discrimination (e.g. sexual orientation, transgender, ethnic group).



Key strategies:

- Senior management need to demonstrate that they take inclusion seriously. All policies and procedures should be audited with reference to the protected characteristics.
- The curriculum should be monitored to ensure it reflects modern Britain in all its diversity. Tokenistic events which reinforce stereotyping should be avoided and the involvement of the British Minority Ethnic community in all areas of British life celebrated. This requires active thought when planning the curriculum.
- Ahead of introducing a new topic, thought should be given to its impact on those with protected characteristics. Being in care is not listed but is a significant vulnerability. E.g., when covering genetics in Biology, reflect on what this might mean for a student who doesn't know their birth family or currently has no contact with family still living in their country of origin. Consider contacting the Foster Carer/Adopter/Key Worker ahead in order that they can discuss the topic at home beforehand.



## Resources/websites

Resources for teachers:

- [EAL Programme - The Bell Foundation \(bell-foundation.org.uk\)](http://bell-foundation.org.uk)
- [NALDIC | EAL National Subject Association](http://NALDIC.org.uk)
- [Refugee Education UK | Home | London \(reuk.org\)](http://reuk.org)
- [Homepage - Refugee Council](http://RefugeeCouncil.org.uk)
- [About Us – UASC Health](http://UASCHealth.org)
- [Dingle Granby Toxteth Education Action Zone, Liverpool \(primaryresources.uk\)](http://primaryresources.uk)
- [ESOL Resources | Skillsworkshop](http://Skillsworkshop.org)

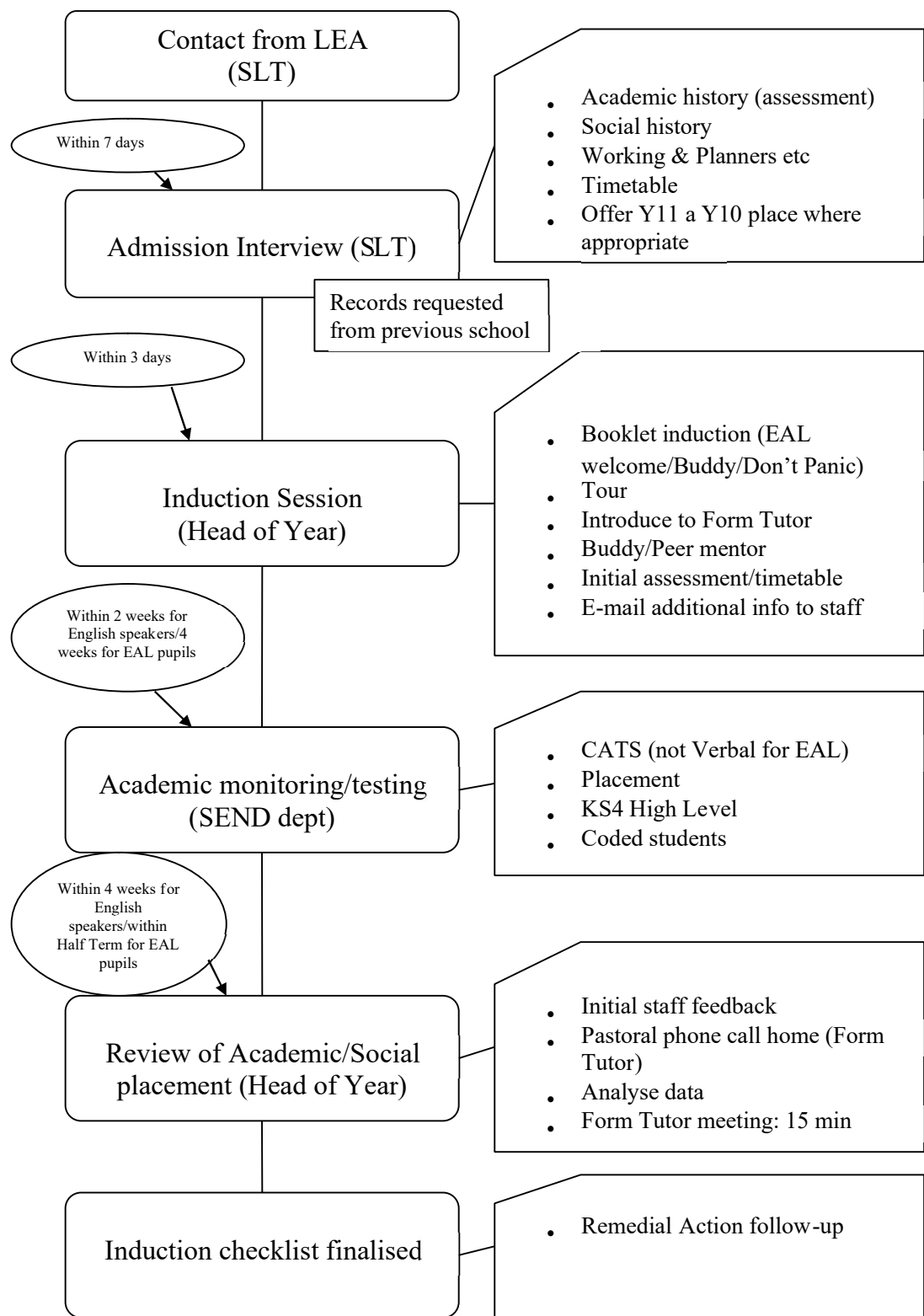
- [Teachers | ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES \(excellencegateway.org.uk\)](http://excellencegateway.org.uk)
- [Home | Learn My Way](#)
- [The Official Shop | Official Life in the UK Learning Zone](#)
- [Online Training Courses & Qualifications | learndirect](#)
- [Post-16 Information for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children | BELS](#)

Free websites for learning English:

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

## Appendix A

MID-TERM ADMISSIONS PROCEDURE
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**Appendix B**  
**Background Information - Addendum to the School Admission Form for Minority Ethnic/Multilingual Pupils**

Gender: 

M	F
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Full name: .....(in order and underline the family name)

Personal name: ..... Preferred name: ..... (may be the same as personal name)

Date of birth	Country of birth	Arrival in UK <i>(if not UK born)</i>	Ethnicity	Religion	Refugee status

**Pupil's use of language:** *(including English)*

Languages	Speaking <i>(proficiency)</i>		Reading <i>(proficiency)</i>	Writing <i>(proficiency)</i>	Used with/ where	Where/when learnt – community schools attended
	Home	School				

**Previous schooling:** *(including breaks in education, pre-school and UK education)*

Country:	Date started	Ages <i>(From/to)</i>	Languages used	Assessment <i>(exams/grades)</i>	Repeated years

**Support for learning:**

Favourite subjects in school	
Interests and hobbies	
Extended leave: ( <i>reasons, time, when</i> )	
Support needed for the child's English language acquisition: ( <i>e.g. bilingual dictionaries</i> )	
Prior experience which may affect learning	

**Support for parents and carers:**

(*tick boxes*)

Interpreter required at parents; meetings	
Bilingual translations of school letters and leaflets would be helpful	
Information on Supplementary Schools is requested	
The parent or carer can bring an interpreter	
School letters written in English can be translated	
Contacts of local community groups are required	

Data collected by: .....

Date: .....

## Appendix C

### INITIAL DISCUSSION RE EDUCATION, CAREERS & ASPIRATIONS FOR SEPARATED MIGRANT CHILDREN (SMC)

Name:	Date of birth:
Year Group:	Religion:
First language:	Country of origin:

Area for discussion:	Young person's response:
Which languages do you speak?	
Which languages can you read?	
Which languages can you write?	
What are your hopes and dreams for the future? What type of work or job might you be looking for?	
What are your strengths? What are you good at? What do you enjoy doing?	
What do you find difficult? How do you manage new situations/challenges?	
How well do you understand the English education system? What questions do you have?	
Have you been to school?	
Have you worked? If yes, doing what?	

If at school, what subjects did you learn?	
Which aspects of school life (if attended) did you enjoy the most?	
Which aspects of school life (if attended) did you enjoy the least?	
Which aspects of school/college are you most looking forward to in England?	
Which aspects of school/college are you least looking forward to in England?	