

Trauma and mental health in young people seeking asylum

City of Sanctuary
Local authority network

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**UK TRAUMA
COUNCIL**

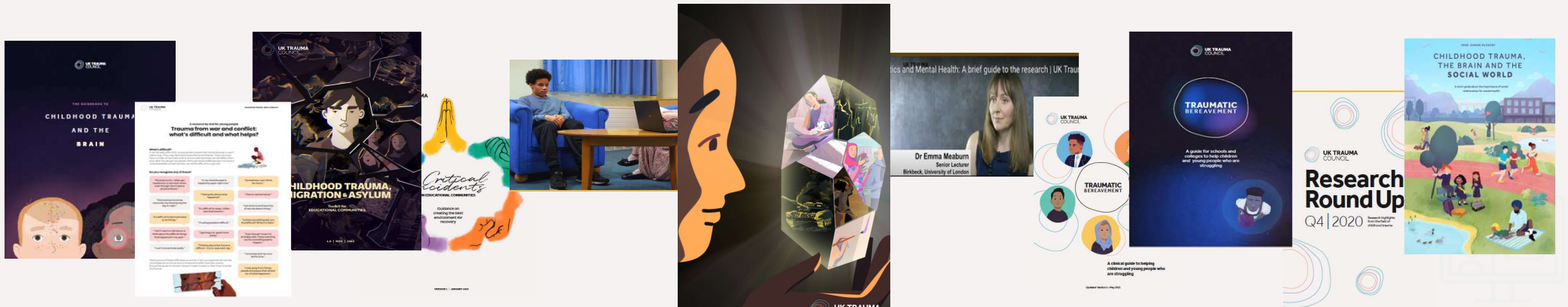


An **Anna Freud** project

UK Trauma Council

Creating a world that nurtures and protects children and young people following trauma.

Free evidence-based resources to improve professionals and carers' understanding of the nature and impact of trauma.



Co-created with intended users
and children & young people

Guidance, toolkits, videos,
animations, research
summaries, webinars and
training

Council members
UK child trauma experts

Setting the scene

We all use language differently. My intention is to use language inclusively, respectfully and thoughtfully. Let me know where I can improve.



Hearing and thinking about trauma can be difficult and at times distressing.

Do what you need do to care for yourself.

Traumatic experiences

- Range of traumatic experiences: Children and young people seeking asylum are likely to have gone through a number of difficult and potentially traumatic experiences.
- Trauma timeline: This may include traumatic events in their country of origin, during their migration journey and here in the UK.
- Trauma significance: Many young people seeking asylum rate their journey to the UK as their most traumatic experience.
- Mental health: Rates of PTSD and other mental health conditions are significantly higher than for UK born peers.



However,



- **Avoid assumptions:** post traumatic stress and mental health difficulties aren't inevitable. Neither are they the only difficulties a child or young person may have- developmental, language, learning, neurodivergence.
- **Do your own homework:** You may well be working 'in the dark.' What can you find out about common experiences from their country of origin?
- **Identity:** Having experience of migration and asylum doesn't define someone. Remember the other aspects of their identity- faith, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality etc. Consider their strengths, skills and hopes for the future.



"Sometimes I see their big smiles, but their eyes look so sad - you can only imagine what they've seen."

— **Teacher**

So how might
traumatic
experiences impact
a young person
seeking asylum?

Post traumatic reactions might include:

- Internal and external
- Physical and bodily reactions
- Being on high alert
- Intrusive thoughts and memories
- Avoiding trauma reminders
- Feeling anxious
- Struggling with low mood
- Impact on wellbeing, home life, education and social life

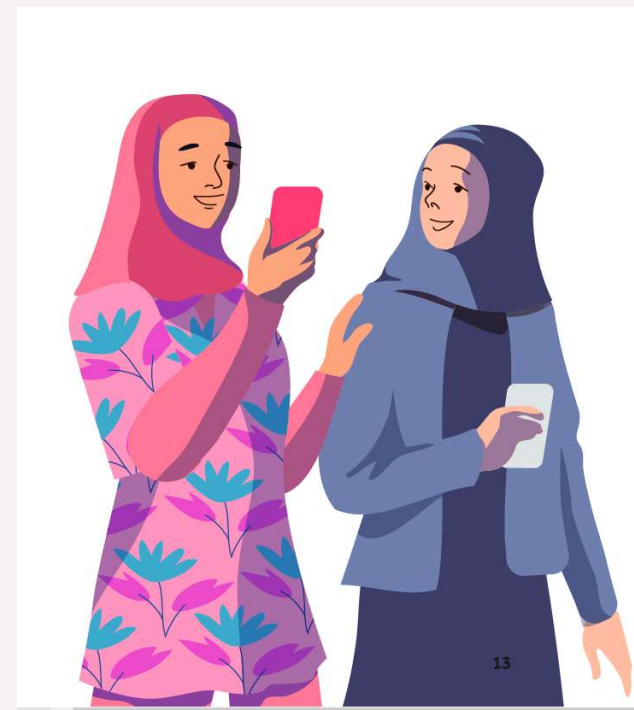
Additional stressors of migration

Is this framework culturally appropriate?

How a child or young person makes sense of their traumatic experiences and their reactions and how they speak about (or don't speak about them) might be different according to their culture, faith, gender or socio-economic status etc.

BUT

these kind of reactions are seen to be generally universal.



Supporting recovery for children and young people seeking asylum

Whilst rates of mental health problems are higher, they aren't inevitable.

Although some young people will need specialist help, there is a lot adults can do to buffer and protect from longer term mental health difficulties.

What is being done and can be done to help children feel....



(Hobfoll et al 2007)

When to seek specialist help

Trauma reactions are natural and understandable responses for children and young people who have experienced the trauma of war, conflict and persecution. Even though you can play an important role in their recovery through the environment you have created, sometimes extra help is needed.

- Consider impact
- A considered approach
- Collaboration
- Prioritise relationships

Adjustment, recovery and healing is possible.



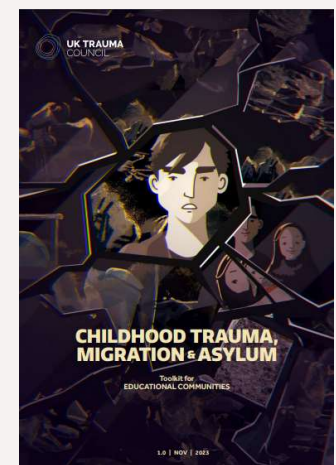
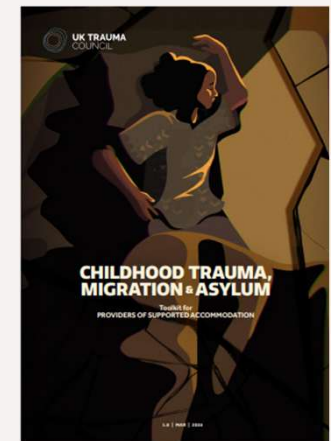
The resources were co-produced with a range of partners including:

- Kent Refugee Action Network
- Nottingham Education Sanctuary Team (NEST)
- St Mary's Ukrainian School
- Mellers Primary School
- British Red Cross



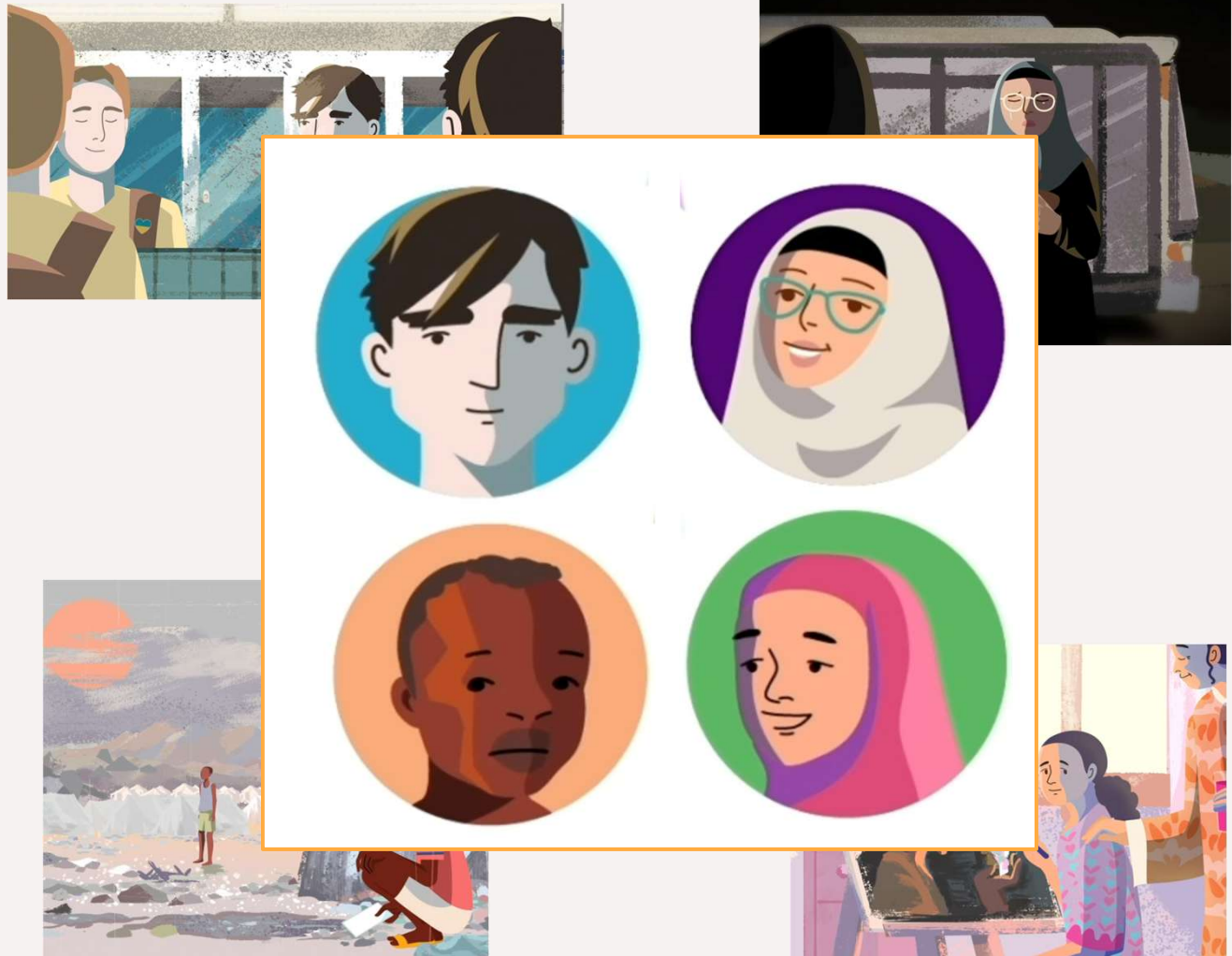
Three toolkits: for community organisations, for supported accommodation providers and for educational communities

- To recognise trauma reactions
- To support professionals to respond to their needs and best support their recovery
- When to refer on for specialist help
- Self care for staff, vicarious trauma and vicarious resilience
- A workshop plan for community organisations



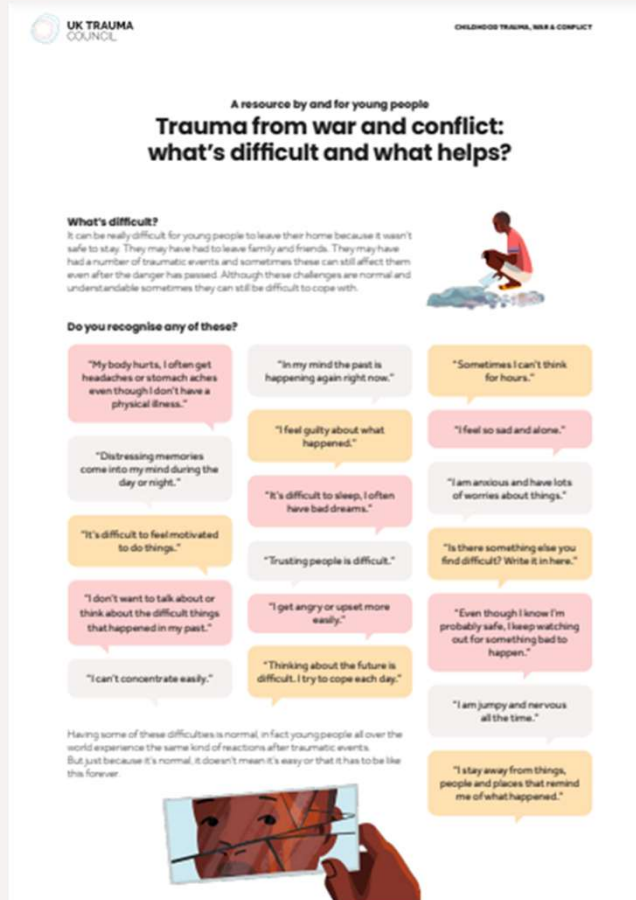
Film

- A short, animated film for young people experiencing the long term affects of war and conflict. It highlights the importance of social connections and addressing traumatic memories from the past.
- Arabic, English, Farsi, Hebrew, Pashto, Tigrinya and Ukrainian versions
- Co-produced with young people with lived experience
- International dissemination



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= YSA7-xCz4k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSA7-xCz4k)

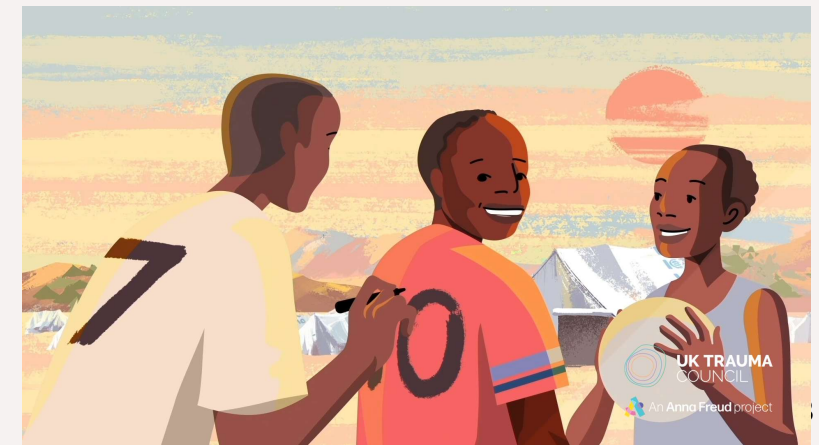
Self-help resource for young people



Printable resource helping young people to:

- identify trauma reactions,
- find ways to manage overwhelming feelings in the moment
- think about seeking support

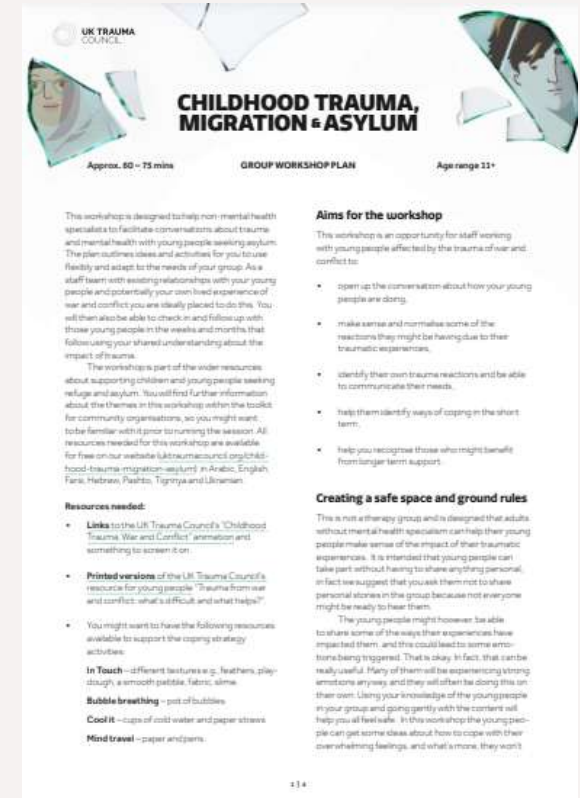
Arabic, English, Farsi, Hebrew, Pashto, Tigrinya and Ukrainian versions



Workshop plan for community organisations

Workshop plan for staff in community settings without mental health training. The workshop uses the animation and young people's self-help resource to:

- open up conversation about mental health
- make sense and normalise trauma reactions
- identify and communicate their needs
- help them identify ways of coping in the short term
- recognise those who might benefit from longer term support.



To find out more see

[Childhood Trauma, War, Migration
and Asylum - UK Trauma Council](#)

Thank you

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