



# Teaching about Forced Migration – A Guide for Bradford Educators

**Bradford is a proud City of Sanctuary and has been shaped by generations of migration. Those who come here as refugees and asylum seekers are seeking sanctuary - a safe place to belong and rebuild their lives after being forcibly displaced from their own countries. Yet as a society, we are navigating a rise in hostility, misinformation, and polarising narratives around migration. In this context, how we teach about migration and displacement matters deeply. We are not just conveying facts but aiming to build a culture of welcome and compassion with young people at the forefront, able to think critically about these issues.**

**We want every migration story taught in a Bradford classroom to spark compassion, inspire thoughtful dialogue, and reflect the rich, complex reality of our city. Because it's vital to approach this topic with care, we've put together some advice to help you to deliver it in a responsible way.**

## 1. Start with yourself

- You don't need to be an expert on forced migration to teach it effectively but it's essential to start by reflecting on your own assumptions and recognising any unconscious biases.
- Approach the topic with openness, and through your teaching, model an approach rooted in welcome, curiosity, and empathy.
- Take time to familiarise yourself with accurate definitions of terms like refugee, asylum seeker, and migrant, and consider using relevant local, national, and global statistics to provide context and challenge common misconceptions.

## 2. Know your context

- In Bradford, some learners may have direct experience of forced migration while others may have little to no understanding of it. Many will already hold questions or opinions shaped by personal experience, conversations, or the media where hostile or misleading narratives about refugees are increasingly common.
- Take time to gauge where your learners are in their understanding. Inviting them to lead the initial conversation can be a great way to surface existing knowledge.

## 3. Amplify lived experience but never put pupils on the spot

- First-hand stories of refugee experiences are incredibly powerful - they're personal, memorable, and often far more impactful than statistics alone. Curated stories, guest speakers, and Bradford-based resources are really valuable.
- However, never pressure or expect students to share their own migration stories. If a young person chooses to share, it should always be voluntarily and handled with care and sensitivity.





#### 4. Prioritise empathy over pity

- Migration stories should inspire empathy and not evoke pity. Frame narratives around strength, resilience, and our shared humanity, helping learners see people seeking sanctuary as individuals like themselves, not victims or defined solely by the label 'refugee.'
- Tailor your approach to suit the age and developmental stage of your learners to nurture empathy: with younger children, for example, focus on kindness and welcome; with older learners you could delve into the difficult choices people face, the moral complexities of migration, and the broader systemic injustices involved.



#### 5. Teach safely: trauma-informed practice matters

- Be aware that some content may be triggering; you may wish to have a quiet word with any learners who have lived experience of seeking sanctuary before a lesson.
- You could provide a quiet space for these individuals or allow opt-outs from discussions.
- Always establish ground rules with a whole class at the beginning of a lesson about respectful dialogue.

#### 6. A call to action

- Learners often feel moved by what they've heard when we teach on this subject. So, what next? Channel their compassion into meaningful action. How can we be more welcoming? There are many organisations and resources out there ready to support you and offer practical ideas and responses.



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