

Afghan Resettlement Support & Safeguarding

According to the Foreign Secretary, the UK evacuated 17,000 people from Afghanistan from 1 April to 1 September 2021. As they start their new lives in the UK, safeguarding organisations may come across children and families who are vulnerable and in need of extra help and support.

It is important that professionals remain alert to the usual safeguarding concerns and indicators in adults and children. Everyone needs to consider the [‘think family approach’](#) – this means thinking about the child, the parent and the family when considering vulnerability or what extra help and support may be required.

Recognising those in need of extra help

We can all play a role in identifying children, young people and adults in need of support.

Some of the signs indicating that a child or adult may be struggling include the following:

- Ongoing physical health problems with no apparent cause
- Excessive nervousness or crying
- Mistrust or fear of healthcare professionals or people of authority
- Fear and anxiety and hopelessness
- Social isolation, no support network or loss of community
- Thoughts about traumatic events that won't go away
- Avoidance of talking or thinking about subjects which may be linked to trauma
- Talking about a traumatic event in the present, as if it is happening now
- Problems managing behaviour, attention, or emotions
- Being constantly tired or falling asleep which might indicate that they are not sleeping well.

Some individuals may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. They may experience an increase in fear and anxiety or

experience flashbacks regarding the trauma they have been through.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Many individuals, especially children, have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). These can be related to war or persecution that may affect their mental and physical health long after the events have occurred. These traumatic experiences may have occurred while the individual was in their country of origin, during displacement from their country of origin, or in their new environment.

Common health challenges may include the following:

- Untreated communicable diseases
- Poorly controlled chronic conditions
- Maternity care
- Mental health and specialist support needs

Traumatic events and hardships

Prior to fleeing, a number of those resettling in the UK will have experienced traumatic events or hardships, including the following:

- Violence (as witnesses, victims and/or perpetrators)
- War
- Lack of food, water, and shelter
- Physical injuries, infections, and diseases
- Torture
- Forced labour
- Sexual assault
- Lack of medical care
- Loss of loved ones and/or separation from families
- Disruption in or lack of access to schooling or education

Cultural barriers

Children, young people and adults may face practical and cultural barriers which prevent them from accessing support, these include the following:

- Limited English
- Navigating a hostile asylum system
- The stigma around seeking mental health support
- Lack of social support
- Poverty/economic hardship

Women

Women's immigration status is a huge stress for them especially during pregnancy. Many won't have access to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and may be too afraid to come forward for maternity care. Isolated mothers will have no safety net if unable to work or support themselves and their children. This also increases the risk of exploitation, domestic abuse and deprivation.

More information on domestic violence and abuse is [here](#).

There is added pressure for women to disclose trauma and gender-based violence early in their asylum claims. Survivors of trauma need time and support to make these disclosures to avoid re-traumatising. The impact on pregnant women will be particularly acute.

Additional support may be needed for women who have experienced FGM (female genital mutilation) and their female children if they are at risk of FGM. FGM can cause ongoing physical and mental health issues, including complications during pregnancy and childbirth, which should be planned for. It may also deter women from being screened for cervical cancer.

More information on FGM [here](#).

LGBTIQ+

Individuals identifying as LGBTIQ+ may not have received appropriate health care prior to their resettlement due to homophobia, transphobia, high costs or isolation that exacerbated chronic conditions. Children with intersex traits may have been subjected to surgeries, hormonal treatments and other procedures in an attempt to forcibly change their appearance.

LGBTQ+ people are extremely vulnerable, they are at risk of persecution and death, after arriving in the UK they are often met with suspicion and cruelty, where they should be welcomed and supported. After arriving they have to rebuild their lives from scratch, with limited access to vital resources including benefits, housing and education, this leaves them under immense stress which negatively impacts their mental health

and ability to integrate. They often struggle to have their sexual orientation or gender identity believed. In some countries, disclosing you are LGBTQ+ will mean certain death. If asylum claims are rejected, LGBTQ+ refugees' risk being deported to countries where they could be imprisoned, tortured or even killed for being themselves.

Exploitation, trafficking and modern slavery

Afghans who have been resettled into the UK as a result of supporting British efforts in Afghanistan, have been assessed that there is a risk to life. This makes them and their families more vulnerable.

They can also be more vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking and modern slavery. This can often involve experiences of mental, physical and sexual violence. More information on modern day slavery can be found [here](#).

Worried about a Child?

If you are [worried about a child](#), follow the guidance set out in either The City of London Thresholds of Need or The Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework.

For children in **Hackney** – call 0208 3565500 or email MASH@hackney.gov.uk

For children in the **City of London** – call 0207 3323621 or email children.duty@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Worried about an Adult?

If you are concerned about [an adult experiencing harm](#):

For people in **Hackney** – call 020 8356 5782 or email adultprotection@hackney.gov.uk

For people in the **City of London** – call 020 7332 1224 or email adultsduty@cityoflondon.gov.uk

If you think someone is at risk of immediate harm, please contact the police by calling 999

Signposting and Support

[Helen Babmer Foundation](#)

Human rights organisation providing treatment and support to refugees and asylum seekers who have experienced extreme human cruelty

[Migrant Help UK](#)

A charity offering advice and support to vulnerable migrants

[British Red Cross](#)

Offers support to refugees

[Asylum Help](#)

Provides confidential and impartial advice on how to claim asylum and offers financial, accommodation support, and health assessment

[Children & Families Across Borders](#)

Deals with child protection cases that involve the UK and other countries. It protects vulnerable children who have been separated from family members as a result of divorce, forced migration, seeking asylum or those victims of trafficking as well as other vulnerable children and families.

[Electronic Immigration Network \(EIN\)](#)

A registered charity providing information on immigration and refugee law via the internet. The EIN website has a two-level access, the free public site and the subscription member's site. The member's site provides easy access to immigration and asylum-related decisions from the Tribunal up to European Court of Human Rights.

[Right to Remain](#)

A UK Human Rights organisation, working to build a strong movement for the right to remain in the UK. It works with groups across the country supporting migrants to establish their right to remain with dignity, safety and humanity, and to challenge the injustice of the immigration and asylum system.

[National Asylum Support Service](#)

(NASS) As part of the Home Office service, NASS provides support to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute while their asylum applications are being considered.

[The Salvation Army](#)

Helps refugees living in the UK in their communities on an individual basis, offering practical help and sanctuary to vulnerable refugees and their families escaping war-torn areas ensuring refugee families do not fall prey to exploitation.

[LGBT Refugee Project](#)

Support designed for LGBT+ asylum seekers and refugees.

[Peter Tatchell Foundation](#)

Asylum advice for LGBT refugees.

[Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy](#)

Government information and guidance on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

[Refugee Council](#)

Moments for Mindfulness: a [self-help guide](#) to managing stress and uncertainty.

[Therapeutic wellbeing resources](#)

supporting refugees and asylum seekers with a better understanding of the NHS

[Good Thinking](#)

Coping with Trauma: a [workbook](#) to help process emotions and begin to heal.