Working with Refugee Children – Key Points

The number of refugees and asylum seekers has increased in recent years. In Oxfordshire, as of January 2023, there were **724 refugee and newly arrived children** in around **200 schools** in the county.

All refugee children will have experienced some form of loss. Some, but not all, will have experienced traumatic events.

5 key principles that can be used to plan how to support refugee children in your school:

1. **Safety** – familiar routines and structures, and a sense of consistency, will help things feel more predictable, and therefore promote feelings of safety.

2. **Calming** – after exposure to prolonged stress and possibly experiencing traumatic events, refugee children may be in a high state of alert. Adults need to help children to recognise and understand how they feel and learn ways to calm and regulate.

3. **Self-efficacy** (the extent to which you believe you can influence the things that happen around you) – help restore self-efficacy by giving children control and influence where possible. Do things 'with' them and their family, rather than 'to' or 'for' them.

4. **Connectedness** (also called belonging) – support refugee children to regain a sense of connection and belonging by facilitating attuned interactions, positive relationships with other children and staff, and valuing what they contribute to your school.

5. **Hope** – it can be helpful to reflect on positive views about the future and counter the sense that 'all is lost'. Provide a nurturing and positive environment for children to help them to flourish. This may also involve signposting families to support, such as housing.

Remember, the language needs of children who are refugees will vary widely.

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) takes around **2 years to develop**. BICS includes the language we need for day to day living; it has a relatively simple structure and is easier to understand.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) takes on average **5-7 years to develop**. CALP includes the more academic language needed to understand and discuss content in the classroom. It has fewer non-verbal cues and involves abstract concepts, specialised vocabulary and uses more complex language and structure

If you see children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) experiencing difficulties in the classroom, you can:
- think about how to add more context to the activity e.g. include visual information such as objects, pictures, or demonstrations
- build in activities which give children time to talk together in pairs so they've having face to face conversations about the lesson
- link lessons to real life contexts that children already understand – this can help to make language more meaningful.