

A brief guide for schools welcoming Ukrainian children to their community



How the Including Children Affected by Migration (ICAM) programme can help

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“Polina came to our bedroom awakened by the sound of explosions. I didn’t know and still don’t know what to tell her. Her eyes today are full of fear and terror; eyes of all of us.”

Alina, mother of two children from the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv shared this reflection on her Instagram story. Her daughter Polina is 7 years old.

With the urgent imperative to meet the physical needs of child refugees and overcome communication difficulties when there are differences of language and culture, consideration of the emotional and social needs of refugee Ukrainian children may be postponed.

Yet attention to children’s Social and Emotional Wellbeing is also urgent and may help to prevent problems that endure long after the immediate crisis is over.

This conviction is at the core of the ICAM programme. It aims to help schools offer a secure and safe environment of ‘convivencia’ (a Spanish word meaning ‘living together in harmony’) in which children affected by migration can recover from the disruption to their learning and development that they have suffered.

The business of schools is learning. Brain science proves that our brains will not allow us to learn effectively if we are uncomfortable, frightened or unhappy. The ICAM approach focuses on improving the social and emotional wellbeing of children in school and in the home so that they can build learning relationships and begin to thrive again.

The programme is successfully tried and tested and provides guidance, training, support and resources for schools. Information and resources are free and can be found at www.icamproject.eu.

A short video outlines the ICAM programme: <https://youtu.be/1GYEJAp7ksl>

Support for schools for including Ukrainian children

This short guide is written to help schools deal with the effects of the crisis in Ukraine in 2022 and to give them quick access to the research-based knowledge and materials that the ICAM programme has developed.

Any response to including refugees affects the whole school community and ICAM has identified 12 key areas for sustained action. The most relevant of these when an urgent response is required are:

- 1. Awareness of the past and present experiences of CAM and their possible effects**
- 2. Effective strategies for the induction of new CAM into the school community.**
- 3. Effective strategies to ensure the safety and the wellbeing of students in and around school and particularly online**
- 4. Additional support for CAM’s social and emotional learning and general wellbeing**
- 5. Support from, and help for, CAM’s parents / carers on continuing social and emotional learning in the home**

This guide therefore focuses on these areas. They are dealt with in more detail in the ICAM Handbook and coaching materials available at www.icamproject.eu

Awareness of the past and present experiences of CAM and their possible effects

1. Research into the effects on the lives of children displaced during World War 2 (WW2) shows the importance of:

Seeing CAM as individuals

The media tend to picture migrants as a mass. Images of children in conflict areas grasp our attention and attack our emotions, as posters did in WW2. This forces us to pay attention to the situation as a whole, rather than to the plight of the individual who has their own story to tell. Individual children will have psychological and social difficulties very much dependant on their own experience. Hence it is important that, whenever possible, CAM are supported as individuals not as a member of an undifferentiated group.

Recognising feelings of isolation

CAM may have been separated from some or all of their family, be now living in an 'alien' community and subjected to the values of an unfamiliar culture (e.g, the schools' rules and customs). It is important to recognise how isolated they may feel and to find ways of helping them to overcome these feelings.

Providing clear support and counselling

At the end of WW2 there was no counselling and no account was taken of children's lack of schooling or possible difficulties within the home. In some instances these were so serious that they resulted in a complete breakdown of the family unit, especially where the children were returning from evacuation and the husband from the forces. It is important to recognise and provide the differing levels of support that CAM will require.

Ensuring that CAM do not miss out on childhood.

Some young children displaced in WW2 were forced to take on roles well above their age. They never really experienced a childhood and its inherent features such as play, socialisation and in some cases, education.

Schools should be aware of not only the family background of a child but also where they come within the family hierarchy, the responsibilities that they assume and the effect this may have.

Providing adult role models Many children grew up both during WW2 and afterwards, without a male role model. This not only created problems for some of them in relating to male figures but, in a situation where the mother was left on her own and took on the role of both father and mother, caused a breakdown in the traditional mother-child relationship. In some cases, children were forced into taking on the adult roles themselves and had to look after not only their siblings but also their parents. Some parents, especially fathers, were so emotionally scarred by their own experiences that they were unable to raise their children in a loving, caring family unit.

Dr Peter Heintz refers to this as '*emotional fatherlessness*', a situation where the father is so psychologically damaged that, although physically alive, he is unable to provide support and a 'healthy psychological growth structure' for his children. For some WW2 children a desperate need for a father figure became very debilitating and affected the upbringing of their own children.

When mothers have suffered traumas as a result of losing a husband/partner, losing their homes, losing their careers or being physically abused, the repercussions can be so great as to leave the children without any semblance of loving care and attention. To put it simply, what sometimes remains after such extreme trauma is the '*body shell*' of the parent now lacking a soul or spirit.

Some CAM may have experienced the emotional, if not the physical, absence of one or both parents and other adult role models will be especially important to them.

Overcoming distrust

In the psyche of many war children there is an element of distrust. As children, they have no say in what is going on in their present, nor indeed in their future, and consequently they rely on adults to make decisions for them. Some of these decisions may turn out to be detrimental to their well-being. They become aware that adults cannot necessarily be trusted and also that life can be unpredictable.

Throughout their lives, some WW2 refugees found it difficult to enter into any sort of relationship or had an urge to end relationships unnecessarily. They had a fear of rejection and habitually find it difficult to express their emotions and anger.

Schools will need to take this element of distrust into account.

Recognising the effects trauma

It can be very difficult for those of us who have not experienced conflict or dislocation to empathise with those who may have witnessed death, destruction and disruption on a scale most of us cannot imagine.

Some children who have experienced separation, loneliness, fear and other emotional stress can suffer from 'sequential traumatisation'. If they have been subjected to more than one traumatic event, the later one confirms the former and thereby increases the impact.

There are similarities between the migrants wandering around Europe at the end of WW2 and those of today. Many children in such circumstances are conditioned to repress their fears in order to cope with everyday living. In so doing, some enter adolescence and adulthood believing that there is neither a place to call home, nor a relationship they can consider secure. Such concerns can lead to low self-esteem and lack of identity on the part of the child.

As well as having suffered the effects of the tangible aspects of war such as air-raids, death, destruction and devastation, many CAM across Europe have been concerned primarily with survival, and have memories of environmental and personal experiences which can manifest themselves in their later lives as psychological triggers. Their need for food, warmth, and a sense of belonging will occur many times within their stories.

Providing psychological support

Adults who have lived through various different conflicts as children show long term effects that are very similar in nature. One positive finding from research into this is that deprivation of even the most basic necessities, even in very early childhood and for a very long time, does not appear to stop the child's personal development if there is psychological support for the family. In addition, the child in such circumstances can often transform traumatic experience into something positive and creative.

However, some children do not have the security of a family structure or the benefit of external support. Schools need to identify those who need additional help and find ways of supplying it.

2. Attachment and trauma theory and CAM

Attachment, trauma and an Internal Working Model

Children need secure attachments to adults who play significant roles in their lives. Attachments impact significantly on their development – physically, socially, emotionally and behaviourally as well as on their ability to learn.

Secure attachments ensure a world view or positive 'Internal Working Model' There are many students in our schools who do not have secure attachments and who have a negative Internal Working Model. Usually this is because of early disruptions to the relationship with the primary care-giver (through absence or repeated poor, inconsistent or abusive responses to the baby's needs) – but sometimes through a later trauma that the child has suffered.

The model is used as a template throughout life to predict behaviours, and consists of three components – how the child views itself, how it views other people (adults in particular) and how it views the world. For the securely attached child this model might look like this:

- Self - “I am good, wanted, worthwhile, competent, and lovable.”
- Adults - “They are appropriately responsive to my needs, sensitive, dependable, caring, trustworthy.”
- The world - “My world feels safe and predictable”

For the insecurely attached, whose experiences have not led them to these conclusions, their Internal Working Model might look like this:

- Self - “I am bad, unwanted, worthless, helpless, unlovable and shameful.”
- Adults - “Adults cannot be trusted to meet my needs. I have to be in control and meet my own needs.”
- The World -. “The world is unsafe and unpredictable”

Possible effects of the experience of migration

Not all CAM will have significant or long-lasting problems resulting from their experiences. It is important to know (as far as is possible) the individual stories of CAM and their families, while being mindful that these may be shared in a fragmented fashion and will develop only when trust is established.

The majority of CAM who experience trauma will have some change in their behaviour and emotional functioning. Fortunately, however, for the majority of these children these symptoms are short-lived. Some may exhibit no easily observable changes in their thinking, feeling or behaving. In general, the more threatened a child felt, the closer they were to injury or death, the more the event disrupted or traumatized their family or community, then the more likely it is that there will be symptoms.

It is important for staff to be able to distinguish CAM whose reactions and responses fall within the range that schools would routinely be expected to deal with in the classroom and within whole-school structures, as they would for others who have experienced difficult events in their lives, and those who require additional support at a small group level, or, for the most extreme, who require external specialist support.

For CAM whose migration experiences have included traumatic events the following effects might be observable

Re-experiencing: In play, drawing and words, the child may repeat, re-enact and re-live some elements of the trauma. They may repeatedly ask adults to describe what happened. They may experience intrusive thoughts or nightmares. The traumatic experience is close to the forefront of their mind and can be triggered in many different ways.

Avoidance: e.g. being withdrawn or numb, daydreaming, avoiding other children and social opportunities, giving up previously enjoyed activity

Hypervigilance: hyper-reactivity (e.g. being on ‘red alert’, constantly scanning the environment for danger. Showing anxiety, sleep problems, behavioural impulsivity. Increased aggression may be seen in adolescents.

Fearfulness: The child may develop profound ‘empathic’ concerns for others experiencing trauma, including fictional characters and animals. They may explain their concern to avoid danger e.g. by playing under a table “It will be safe here if the bombs come”. They may develop a fear of particular days or dates and a belief that, if they are alert enough, they will recognise warning signs and avoid future traumas.

Immediately following a trauma, CAM will not have been very capable of processing complex or abstract information. As they get further away from the event, they will be able to focus longer, digest more and make more sense of what has happened. It takes many moments of sad clarity for the reality of the trauma to actually sink in for young children. Between these moments of harsh reality, they use a variety of coping techniques – some of which can be confusing or upsetting for adults.

The child will experience and process the same material differently at different times following the trauma. Some show a natural remission in symptoms over a period of a few months. However, for a significant number some form of post-traumatic symptoms can last for many years. Indeed, more than thirty percent of children living through traumatic stress develop some form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This is a chronic disorder requiring the attention of mental health professionals.

In the long run, the opportunity to process and re-process events many times will facilitate healthy coping. This re-processing may take place throughout the development of a given child. Even years after the original trauma, a child may revisit the loss and struggle to understand it from their current developmental perspective. An intensity of emotional feelings will often be seen on various anniversary dates following the trauma (e.g. one month or one year).

One of the most important elements in this process is that children of different ages have different styles of adapting and different abilities to understand abstract concepts often associated with trauma such as death, hate or the random nature of natural disasters.

Effective strategies for the induction of new CAM into the school community

1. Welcoming CAM to the school might involve:

- Identifying a key person who will be responsible for arranging and monitoring the student's induction and for liaising with parents/carers – a Key Adult
- Encouraging staff to smile and be positive with new families when they first walk through the door. Sometimes, while focusing on organisational issues, it is easy to forget to smile!
- Arranging for an interpreter to be available where necessary and if possible.
- Obtaining whatever information is available about the student's previous experience to discover the positive attributes that they will bring to the school and suggest any immediate issues that should be addressed.
- Finding out, from the family's perspective, about the student's immediate physical, social, emotional and cognitive strengths, interests and needs.
- Taking time to ensure that parents/carers have a clear understanding about school policy for key areas such as: safeguarding; home learning; behaviour management; attendance; uniform; assessment and reporting achievement.
- If possible, providing an opportunity for the student and their family to visit the school prior to the start date.
- Where there is a school uniform, providing help with obtaining it where necessary and if possible.
- Understanding what the student's and family's needs for access to the host language are and organising provision
- Helping the family to access local services/organisations which may help them to settle into their new environment.

2. The importance of a Key Adult

There should be a single point of contact in school for CAM families wherever possible – a Key Adult. It is confusing and potentially stressful for families to have to communicate with a variety of members of staff. The role of a Key Adult might include:

- Ensuring that parents/carers are shown around the school and that possible differences in teaching methods, how their children will be helped to learn the host language and particular requirements, such as uniforms and homework policies, are discussed;
- Ensuring that parents/carers are informed about any rights to free school meals, travel and equipment or uniform grants;
- Ensuring that, wherever possible, there is an interpreter or bilingual classroom assistant when the student starts school;
- Providing support and information for all school staff involved with admissions about the background of the students;
- Ensuring that all relevant staff are informed that they will be receiving a new student in their class;
- Ensuring that appropriate assessments take place and that the information is accurately recorded and forwarded to all relevant teaching and support staff;
- Ensuring that students receive any welcome materials such as a map of the local area, plan of the school, name of their class teacher, details of any 'buddy' or mentor and timetable;

The Key Adult might also forge links with community and cultural organisations and ensure that school mechanisms are in place for referring families to specialist support/social organisations where necessary.

3. Providing a 'Buddy'

The school might ask another student to act as a 'buddy' to a new student, to befriend them, introduce them to others, help them to find their way around and understand the school routines.

4. Assessment

The induction process should include an assessment of the child's needs, including their need for host-language learning, their general academic ability (in order to correctly place the student in classes and to identify any missed education) and possibly the more holistic needs of the family. It should also include an assessment of the child's need for additional social and emotional support or counselling.

The assessment of need should be viewed as a process rather than an event. Induction processes - interviews, visits etc. – will be important in informing the immediate decisions that should be made when CAM start at a school but information gained during these initial assessments may be incomplete – for example families may not be willing to share the whole story of their experiences with the school staff, before trust has been established, and CAM's true abilities (linguistic, academic and social and emotional) may be masked by anxiety or shyness when starting at a new school and in a new country. Therefore there should be arrangements in place for ongoing assessment and regular reviews of progress

Effective strategies to ensure the safety and the wellbeing of students in and around school and online

1. Convivencia (living together in harmony)

Schools provide by far the most important opportunity for CAM to develop socially and emotionally and, as they learn, to experience what it feels like to be safe, happy and appreciated in a community. Outside the family, the school will have the single biggest influence on the wellbeing, growth and development of CAM.

Although students spend only 25% of their waking time in a year there, the school can play an important role in supporting CAM for the other 75% of their waking time when they are living at home in the community.

Schools have been described as “islands of virtue within a decaying society” and, while that description may be a little extreme, it is certainly the case that schools can embody positive well-established values which inspire not only their students but also students’ families and others in the local community. They should ensure that the whole school community shares and, in the education it provides, upholds these common values.

Too often the inclusion of CAM in schools is seen as a problem to be resolved when, in reality, their membership of the school community enriches its lifeblood and, in particular, provides rich opportunities for realising the fundamental vision of a school which believes in, and values, convivencia (living together in harmony).

CAM have much to offer the school community and, even through their experience of separation and loss, they may enhance social and emotional learning by showing others how there can be positive outcomes from adversity and demonstrating the remarkable resilience of the human spirit. CAM also bring opportunities for all members of the school community to celebrate diversity while creating convivencia through respect, acceptance and understanding of the experiences, values and beliefs of others

The ICAM programme promotes a positive approach to creating a school climate of convivencia where students feel safe, relaxed and happy and where bullying and other forms of violence cannot flourish.

2. Preventing and dealing with bullying

A report for UNICEF (*Violence Reduction in Schools – a guide for country offices UNICEF 2014 Authors NCfLB*) notes that approximately 40% of school age children worldwide regularly experience violence in schools. Bullying accounts for approximately 80% of violence against children. Unless schools take specific steps to protect them, CAM are particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse – mainly bullying (including cyber-bullying), which is notoriously meted out on members of any community who are seen as different in appearance, circumstance, or culture.

Because bullying is systematic abuse of a weaker person by a stronger person, it is not a conflict between equals. Therefore, dealing with bullying requires a special form of mediation which protects the weaker person and stops the stronger person repeating the offence and the ICAM programme suggests a common strategy to ensure this.

3. Online safety

The ICAM programme also recognises the need to help CAM to use the internet (and, in particular, the social media on which they may rely heavily) in ways that are both safe and responsible to the welfare of others. It aims to develop their Social and Emotional Learning, and increase their online media literacy, so that they have the ability to protect themselves and other children, to make safe and responsible decisions when they are online and to deal with the avoidance of, and response to, cyberbullying, radicalization and grooming - as victims or as bystanders.

The internet is the most powerful aid for universal access to learning yet developed. However, damage and harm caused by abuse and improper use of it is now one of the biggest threats to vulnerable children.

Additional support for CAM's social and emotional learning and general wellbeing

1. Supporting CAM in dealing with the impact of traumatic experiences

For students suffering the effects of trauma, a consistent and positive relationship with a class teacher (or one other Key Adult in the school), forming a secure attachment is pivotal in their capacity to engage in learning.

a) Listening if CAM talk about a traumatic event

Whilst staff should not deliberately seek to provoke memories of difficult times in the lives of CAM, they should not be afraid to talk about traumatic events when they are brought up by the student, using age appropriate language and explanations. Children do not benefit from 'not thinking about it' or 'putting it out of their minds.'

If a child raises the subject and then senses that adults are upset about the event, they become more scared and will not refer to it again. Adults should try to listen calmly, answer questions, and provide comfort and support. Listening and comforting a student without avoiding or over-reacting will have long-lasting positive effects on the student's ability to cope with trauma.

The normalisation of emotions is useful. To explain that their feelings and responses are common and understandable can be enormously helpful to students who are suffering the effects of trauma. With older children it can be helpful to explain the typical effects of trauma and offer a simple science-based explanation.

b) Responding to what CAM say

The memories of CAM may be fragmented and contradictory. When processing information under conditions of trauma, the brain is not capable of taking in all details – these may be filled in afterwards and the sequence of events may be muddled. It is important to accept inconsistencies and remember that the aim is to help the person process the memory, not to establish an objective truth.

However, young children often make false assumptions about the causes of major events, and in these circumstances it is important to challenge their thinking. Their assumptions may include some sense that they were at fault. Adults often assume that causality is clear, but children assume some degree of personal responsibility for the traumatic event (which may have involved the death of a loved one). This can lead to very destructive and inappropriate feelings of guilt.

Adults should correct and clarify if they see false reasoning developing. Over time, the ability of the child to cope is related to the ability of the child to understand.

Some elements of trauma seem beyond understanding, and this can be explained to a child. They should not be allowed to develop a sense that there is a secret about the event, something that adults understand but will not share. It should be made clear that there are some things that nobody can understand.

c) Providing a consistent, predictable pattern for the day.

It will help CAM to feel secure if there is a known structure to the school day. If a day is to include new or different activities, CAM should be told beforehand and the reason for the change in pattern should be explained. It is important for CAM to know that the staff are in control. It is frightening for traumatized children to sense that adults caring for them are disorganized, confused or anxious.

d) Establishing trust

CAM who have suffered traumatic experiences are likely to exhibit many of the trust and relationship difficulties manifested by children with attachment difficulties, and adults may therefore have to work hard to earn their trust.

A focus on establishing safety (e.g. showing the student the locks and systems for keeping them safe) will be of importance.

The more the student knows about the 'who, what, where, why and how' of the school world, the easier it will be for them to make sense of it. Unpredictability and the unknown make a traumatized child more anxious, fearful and, therefore, more symptomatic - they may be more hyperactive, impulsive, anxious, and aggressive and have more sleep and mood problems.

Without factual information, children speculate and fill in the empty spaces to make a complete story or explanation. In most cases, their fears and fantasies are much more frightening and disturbing than the truth. It is important to tell CAM the truth, even when it is emotionally difficult, or when the adult doesn't know the answer to a problem. Honesty and openness will help CAM develop trust.

e) Keeping a record of symptoms and behaviours.

All traumatized children exhibit some combination of the symptoms listed above in the acute post-traumatic period. Many exhibit these symptoms for years after the traumatic event. The symptoms will wax and wane - sometimes for no apparent reason. It is helpful to keep some record of observable behaviours and try to discover patterns in them.

f) Avoiding upsetting situations

If staff observe increased symptoms in a student occurring in a certain situation, or following exposure to certain topics or activities, arrangements should be made to restructure or avoid these triggers.

g) Allowing for CAM's need for control.

Like children with attachment difficulties, CAM who have experienced trauma have a need to be in control of what happens to them. They have experiences of being utterly helpless in a frightening situation, and their Internal Working Model may tell them that they cannot trust adults to protect them.

Giving the students choices is helpful. If they have some element of control in an activity, or in an interaction with an adult, they will feel safer and more comfortable and will be able to feel, think and act in a more mature fashion.

If a student is having difficulty with compliance, it is helpful to frame the consequence as a choice for them "You have a choice. You can choose to do what I have asked or you can choose....." This simple framing of the interaction with the student gives them some sense of control and can help defuse situations where they feel out of control and therefore, anxious.

2. Additional small group support within the school

The ICAM programme provides resources for small group work on additional social and emotional learning for CAM.

Topics include:

- Getting to know one another
- Dealing with feelings
- Exploring angry feelings
- Friendship and loneliness
- Dealing with change
- Saying goodbye

The social and emotional needs of the majority of CAM will be met within a school which is developing various aspects of convivencia - a welcoming environment; positive attitudes from staff and students, underpinned by understanding of their history and empathy for their experiences; a sensitively delivered whole school social and emotional learning curriculum; good induction processes; family involvement - will all contribute to the inclusion of CAM and meet their needs for emotional health and wellbeing.

Some CAM may, as a result of the challenges of their migration experiences, require some additional strategies to be put in place in the classroom and some may also benefit from extra social and emotional learning support within the school, for example from a school counsellor or from small group work.

In identifying CAM who may benefit from small group support, schools should delay making judgements about their needs until they believe that an adequate period of settling-in has passed (unless the behaviours or emotional needs are severe enough to warrant immediate concern). All students new to a school will take some time to adapt, and this will be especially relevant for those experiencing a new country, a new language and an unfamiliar culture.

CAM who might benefit from small group work include:

- Those who are still unconfident after a reasonable settling in period and are not demonstrating a sense of belonging (e.g. not joining in class activities; avoiding social contact in the playground; being sad; being unusually withdrawn)
- Those who need some support in developing friendships and friendship skills -these might be taught explicitly in a small group or arise through the opportunity to work in a safe, welcoming environment with peers.
- Those who exhibit high levels of vigilance and anxiety, avoidance behaviours or acting out behaviours such as impulsivity, aggression or unmanaged frustration.
- Those who are displaying re-experiencing of traumatic events in their play, drawings, conversations etc. or other evidence of traumatic stress

3. Additional individual support from outside agencies

Some CAM may need one to one support from professionals e.g. doctors, psychologists or psychiatrists outside the school.

It is very difficult to know what constitutes a 'normal' response to the stress and possible trauma of the migration experience, and what might be considered 'abnormal' and beyond the remit and expertise of school staff.

As a guide, it is helpful to know that an acute post-traumatic change in feeling, thinking and behaving is normal – persistence of such changes or extreme symptoms are not. Many clinicians working with traumatized children have noted that the persistence of symptoms beyond three months is associated with increased risk for problems. If symptoms of traumatic stress persist beyond three months, the general consensus is that they should be addressed. If they persist for six months or if the symptoms interfere significantly with any aspect of functioning, it would be appropriate to suggest that the child sees a professional from within the health-care system.

4. Additional support for safe and responsible use of the internet

The ICAM programme adds sessions to the small group workshops which are specifically designed to address the social and emotional aspects of online behaviours that build digital resilience, risk awareness, harm reduction and pro-social online behaviours.

Topics include:

- My online experience
- Online behaviours
- Emotions and resilience online
- My online presence
- Cyber-bullying
- Risks and good online habits
- Questioning what we see online
- Online benefits and barriers

These resources are designed for 8-14 year-olds but the age at which they are first used should be carefully considered and depends on professional judgement following discussions with parents and carers.

Some parents may feel that independent use of online social media platforms should not occur before the age of 13 or 14. It is possible that these parents, knowing the risks of ungoverned access to the internet, put in place strict usage guidelines for their children, and use parent controls and age-appropriate filters to prevent children from exposure to online harm. But this will not be true for

everyone and there have been reports of children under 10 being targeted through what could be considered as “safe spaces” on the internet.

Consequently, it is necessary to take an informed view on when best to start a programme designed to meet the needs of the individual CAM.

Support from, and help for, CAM's parents / carers on continuing social and emotional learning in the home

1. Strategies for promoting effective communication with parents/carers

- Bilingual staff can be useful in providing translation and acting as interpreters, as can community groups and support agencies. It is common practice for the families of CAM to rely on children, who often develop host-language skills more quickly than their parents/carers, to act as interpreters for them. This can place children in a difficult position both practically and psychologically – it is often not appropriate for them to be involved in the conversations between adults, and it can place a burden on them, creating role-conflict.
- Assistive technologies e.g. Microsoft Translate are powerful tools to aid communication and understanding. With parents/carers schools can explore what is available and what best suits their needs.
- Parents/carers can usefully be asked (during induction for example) how they would like to be communicated with and these wishes accommodated where possible. They may prefer text messages or emails.
- Communication from a 'Key Adult' may be more successful than communication from an unfamiliar person. Many hard to reach groups of parents/carers respond least well to generic letters sent out to the home, even if these are translated. For the families of CAM, because of negative associations, the arrival of a letter from the school may unintentionally cause anxiety and worry.
- An explanation of the different types of communication that the school engages in – for example the use of home-school diaries, or the sending home of certificates could form part of the induction activities.
- There should be regular positive communications– there may be an expectation that any communication from the school will be related to something negative.
- Face to face communication (where necessary through an interpreter) may be more likely to result in understanding and action than the use of written communication. It is useful (if labour intensive) particularly when relationships with the school are new and being established, as it allows for personal interaction and the building of trust.
- The establishment of a group meeting or regular social activity (perhaps with representatives from community groups) can be a useful way to pass on key information and ensure that questions and concerns are addressed. This could also be a forum for asking for the support of parents/carers – for example in the classroom, or parents'/carers' social activities. .
- If parents/carers are to be asked to come into schools the extent to which they feel generally welcomed and supported will be important.
- If there are good relationships with community organisations locally, representatives from these could meet with the school and key dates, information and invitations could be shared, so that the organisation can encourage the families to respond.
- Schools should consider the care arrangements of CAM and ensure that communications are addressed appropriately. Names should be used where possible.

2. Engaging parents/carers in the life of the school

The engagement of families will be facilitated if schools:

- Take account of the particular needs of the families of CAM in school policies and processes, e.g. by ensuring communication is translated where necessary; having clear points of contact within the school; recruiting staff with appropriate language skills.
- Ensure staff are aware of the challenges facing the families of CAM and are confident to engage and support the families.

- Ensure robust and targeted induction procedures for families of CAM.
- Create a school environment that helps the families of CAM to feel welcome, understood and supported.
- Forge links with community and cultural organisations and have school mechanisms in place that can signpost families to specialist support/social organisations.
- Where possible, provide opportunities for parents to develop the skills that they identify as important
- Provide school mechanisms that reduce the isolation of the families of CAM and enable them to forge supportive relationships with other parents e.g. through coffee mornings or invitations to help in school events.

3. Helping parents to support their children's social and emotional development

The ICAM programme provides a guide to help schools work with parents/carers to further their children's social and emotional development

Topics include:

- The Importance of praise
- The Importance of listening
- Understanding and dealing with feelings
- Exploring angry feelings
- Conflict resolution
- Dealing with change
- Looking after ourselves

In addition there is guidance for sessions concerning online safety and responsibility.

Topics include:

- The online experience of myself and my child
- Online behaviours
- Emotions and resilience online
- My child's online presence
- Cyber-bullying
- Risks and good online habits
- Questioning what we see online
- Online benefits and barriers

Providing group learning through workshops can help immeasurably with the partnership between parents/carers and the school. Working together in the sessions will help to strengthen a trusting relationship between school and family based on a shared appreciation of the contribution each makes to the wellbeing of children and the care they share for the growth, development and happiness of the student. This will add to the feeling of security and belonging of CAM families in the school and in the wider community that the school represents.