

Feedback from refugee and asylum seeking parents

YoungMinds Welcome is a project focusing on supporting the mental health needs of asylum seeking and refugee children. As part of this project, we spent time with parents of these children to offer ideas around ways in which they could support their children's emotional well-being and mental health.

During these sessions we asked the parents what they would like other adults to know in order to best support their children. Below are some of the suggestions and thoughts that the parents shared with us.

- Mental health can feel scary to talk about, sometimes I worry about being judged.
- Awareness of mental health is improving in my culture, but the stigma is still there.
- Our children can be bullied at school for their race, culture and class - help prevent our children being bullied.
- Teach people it's not our fault what happened in our country.
- We don't have many opportunities to integrate into the community - help us to integrate and make friends.
- Understand that our children can be very confused about the refugee/asylum seeking process; the time, the delays, the consequences/meaning of it all.
- Our children sometimes feel that their parents are the 'foreigners' as they can speak better English and have more connections than their parents to their host country.
- Parents can feel isolated if they can't afford English lessons or opportunities to integrate into the community.
- Understand that there can be conflicts and hostility between the children and parent. Sometimes the child feels resentment towards the parents for making the 'choice' to come to this country and that it is their parents' 'fault' that the family are now living on a low income.
- It can be hard for the children to understand we are unable to afford the same lifestyle as their peers e.g. having money to go out with on a weekend.
- Some children experience feeling ashamed of their parents e.g. how they speak, how they act in front of their friends when cultures clash, or when their parents feel too anxious to socialise with the other parents at the school gates.
- Some social events are unfamiliar in our culture and we need help understanding them, e.g. sleepovers.
- Children feel stigmatised because they are on free school dinners and may try to avoid them because of this.
- Parents feel under pressure to provide their children with the equivalent that non-refugee children can afford e.g. the latest clothing, gadgets and stationary, and pocket money etc.

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