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COUNCIL**
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Together 
for Families

Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme Guidance for Secondary Schools

This guide provides information and practical support for secondary schools in aiming to optimise both the child's and the school's experience of resettlement under the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (SVPR)



www.cornwall.gov.uk

This guide functions as an independent guide although it is in continuation of the Syrian Vulnerable Person Scheme Guidance for Primary Schools which gives additional information about the SVPR Scheme.

The guide provides **the learning from previous experience of resettlement, research of the consequences of the cultural differences and the relationship between the home and the school.** This guide aims to **reduce the possibility of discrimination and cultural exclusion** by enabling an inclusive environment and strengthening the communication between those involved.

It is important for schools to understand the culture of refugee children as this reduces the risk of non-attendance, underachievement or exclusion of the pupil.

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Glossary

The purpose of this glossary is to explain glossaries present in this guide but also to evade any misunderstanding about terms which occur within the work of the SVPR Scheme and migration in general.

A **“Refugee”** is a person who has been forced to flee from its home country because of war, persecution or national disasters. Refugees are asylum seekers who have been given refugee status. Refugees are entitled to work and can apply for welfare benefits. Refugees mentioned in this guide are people under the SVPR Scheme who have been forced to leave Syria and have been accepted as being vulnerable by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR). On arrival the SVPR refugees are granted five years’ refugee leave to remain. After the five years they can apply for indefinite leave to remain (permanent residency).

The **“Community Sponsor Scheme”** is a scheme developed by the Secretary of State for the Home Office to enable community groups to support refugees brought to the UK through the scheme. In cases where families are resettled under the Community Sponsor Scheme, the Community Sponsor group fundraise in order to support the families’ resettlement, hence the support from the Local Authority is at a minimum. Among other things, the groups provide housing, help the families in order to gain English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualifications and make the initial contact with the schools.

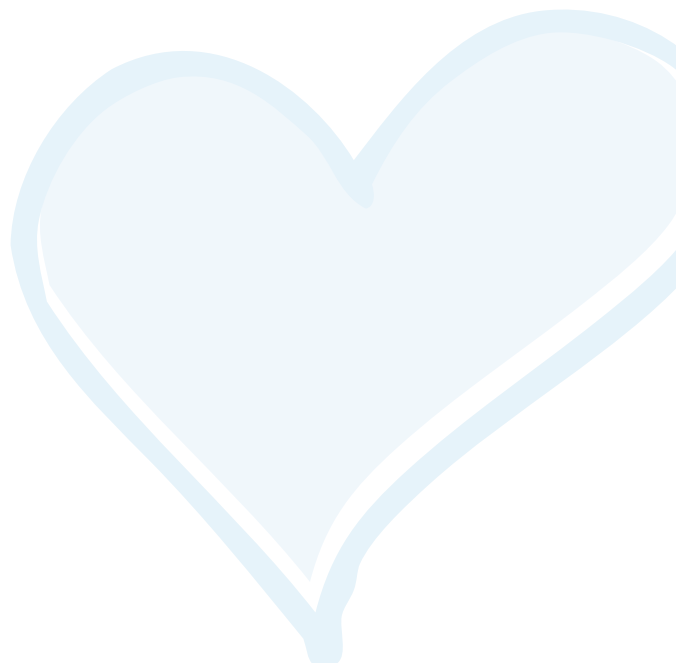
A **“Migrant”** is a person who moves from one place to another especially in order to find work or better living conditions. It differentiates from the word “refugee” in the way that migrants in a greater extent have a choice to move. People from the European Economic Area (EEA) who are working or are registered as a jobseeker have the right to reside in the UK.

An **“Asylum seeker”** is a person who has left their country of origin and is seeking asylum in another country. They are not entitled to work in the UK hence they rely on state support which is

approximately £37.75 per week per person. Asylum seekers are allocated a place to live. The housing is not paid for by the Local Authority. Asylum seekers between the ages of five to seventeen must attend mainstream education.

An **Unaccompanied child** is a child without the presence of a legal guardian. Cornwall Council is committed to support unaccompanied refugee children however the council do not currently have any unaccompanied children from the area in and around Syria.

The **Vulnerable children Resettlement (VCA) Scheme** is an additional scheme to the SVPR Scheme. The UK has made a commitment to resettle 3,000 vulnerable children from the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) by 2020. It is not only targeting unaccompanied children but also the families of vulnerable children at risk. Cornwall Council is not currently supporting any families under the VCA Scheme.



Contact information

Cornwall Council SVPR Scheme Coordination

Serena Collins, Commissioning Officer
Together for Families

✉ serena.collins@cornwall.gov.uk

☎ 01872 324754

Joanne Wadley, Assistant Commissioning Officer
Together for Families

✉ refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk

☎ 01872 327412

Translation Support

If the school needs support on translation from Arabic to English, please contact Cornwall Council on the following email:

✉ refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk

Cornwall Council Media team

✉ mediarelations@cornwall.gov.uk

If a school or family is approached by the media in regards to the SVPR Scheme, **they should make contact to the Council Media team.**

Bookstart

Bookstart is a programme which encourages people of all ages and cultures to engage with books. Bookstart hold additional dual language resources.

Bookstart Coordinator

✉ eyl@cornwall.gov.uk

Cornwall Council Inclusion Education Welfare Service

Natasha Davey-Diop, Education Welfare Officer (Inclusion)

✉ Natasha.Davey-Diop@cornwall.gov.uk

☎ 01872 322910

SVPR families can sometimes require help to ensure their children get the most out of their education. Cornwall Council has an Inclusion Education Welfare Service that can support schools with advice and guidance around meeting the needs of SVPR families including training and transition.

Early Help Hub

If you have any concerns about a specific SVPR family, please follow the Early Help Hub process. Please see the link provided:

www.cornwall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/childrens-services/early-help/professionals/

For early intervention in regards to a SVPR child's well-being in school, please contact the Cornwall Council's Education Welfare Officer.

Safeguarding

In cases where a teacher is concerned about a child's well-being and whether their human rights are being endangered, the school must take action by following the school's safeguarding policy and procedure.

Confidentiality

The families under the SVPR Scheme are particularly vulnerable.

The subject of refugees attracts considerable press and public interest.

If a school is approached by the media, they should contact the Council Media Team on mediarelations@cornwall.gov.uk and should not give any information to the media.

Internal communications within the school should respect the families' privacy.

What we offer to schools within the SVPR Scheme

- **Workshop** which provides information on the SVPR Scheme if required
- **An interpreter** who can assist at meeting with the families
- **Transition support**
- **Support** from an Inclusion Officer
- **Guidance** from the Police Diversity Community Team
- **Training, trauma and counselling support** for the staff

Expectations of the school

- **To use the funding to provide extra support** for the child to meet their specific EAL needs
- **To make use of interpreters** for any official meetings
- **To make use of online translation services** to help with day to day communication
- **To look for opportunities to connect the families with other Arabic speaking families** in the school, where this is appropriate
- **To liaise with other schools to learn from each other** (for example we are aware that one school has used Makaton and found this helpful and have managed to identify additional funding)
- **To contact the Scheme Co-ordinator with any arising issues**, if required an interpreter will be made available
- If the school is aware of any Arabic speakers in the school or local community, **consider whether they would be suitable as a volunteer** and approach them regarding this.



Transition

The process of smooth transition between primary and secondary school is essential in regards to maintaining the progress of the SVPR child. This applies both to the support at school and the social life of the pupil.

A SVPR child who has experienced forced migration is more vulnerable when moving to a new educational setting where they have to respond to new challenges in an unfamiliar environment.

Communications

Information sharing between the different educational settings is the key to a successful transition. Person-centered planning needs to include the progress already achieved, needs of the SVPR child and effective use of communication with the parents. Planning the transition is advisable to start between year five and six to prepare the child for the upcoming change.

Moreover, the parents and child must be involved in the process of transition to understand the changes a new educational setting involves. The child and parents must be made aware that the secondary school to a greater extent expects the pupils to be independent both in regards to learning and the pupil's social life.

Visit the school

To reduce stress, parents and children under the SVPR scheme should be given the option to visit the school prior to the transition to become familiar with the new environment.

During this visit, the family should meet a member of staff whom the secondary setting has chosen to be the contact person for the family throughout the child's time in secondary school. This will enable good communication and build confidence between the parties involved.



The buddy system

When children move from primary school to secondary school, it is recommended to have a buddy system between SVPR pupils and pupils born in the UK, who already know each other. Fostering the friendship made in primary school makes the transition easier on the children which is vital in cases of vulnerable children who already face numerous challenges. The schools are encouraged to arrange visits to the new school before the children start, where the buddies can be made familiar with the new setting together.



The home situation

All schools are aware, that the home situation has an impact on a child's performance in school, hence it is important that the teachers are aware of the potential challenges which are possible within the homes of vulnerable Syrian families.

It is the learning of the scheme that it is not unusual that SVPR children lack daily routines.

This implies, among other things, no regular meal time and bed time. This lack of routine is likely to have an impact on the child's behaviour in school.

The families under the scheme come from different backgrounds and it is unknown to what extent they have been exposed to atrocities. Consequently, we must be mindful of not assuming anything, whether it regards the mental health of the child, the child's family or the reason of a child's behaviour. However, our learning within the scheme

is that the background does have an impact on the child. Previously we have seen eating disorders, high levels of anxiety, issues with attachment and children becoming young carers for their parents.


Through the scheme, Cornwall Council can offer training, trauma support and counselling to the staff if required.



Home-school relationship

Due to the language barrier, attention to how communication with the parents is executed effectively is necessary.

Here follows some possible solutions to facilitate the communication in preparation for greater involvement from non-English speaking parents in their child's education.




It is important to note, that despite the fact that English is essential to learn, **talking Arabic at home, together with English, is not disadvantageous to the child** as it advances the child's ability to learn new languages and acknowledge their background. Moreover, it opens up for the possibility of becoming translators and interpreters.

The libraries and the book-gifting programme "Bookstart" have resources in Arabic such as dictionaries, dual language picture books and children's books.

Communicate via text messages or make use of an interpreter

Parents of the SVPR Scheme can have very limited English skills, particularly in the first year, which is why the school must ensure that the information is sent in a way which is intelligible for the parents.

Information sent via a text message is advantageous because the parents are able to translate it directly on their phones. If the information does not fit in the format of a text message, a translation of the letter into Arabic is necessary. If further assistance is required, communication can be supported by the council.



If a SVPR parent does not attend parent's evening or a school event, it is good practice if the key member of staff, who is responsible for the communication between the school and the specific family, **call the parents to arrange a meeting.**

Different day for parent consultations

It is advisable to extend the parent consultations with the SVPR families. To make time for this, parent consultations with SVPR parents can be arranged on a different day. An extended consultation will not only allow for the extra time it takes to have a conversation via an interpreter, furthermore, providing an opportunity **to clarify any uncertainty and address questions that are likely to occur in a meeting with a new school system** in place. Moreover, EAL pupils, especially SVPR, are likely to face more challenges than an English speaking pupil which is important to make time to cover in a parent consultation. Lastly, it will make the parents and teachers more familiar with each other which will aid a closer and more trusting relationship between the parents and the school.

Parent buddy system

Facilitating a buddy system between SVPR parents and parents who are familiar with the secondary environment is valuable. This can be made with a parent who has a child who has been in the secondary environment for a couple of years. If possible, it can also be arranged between SVPR parents and parents who have an EAL child themselves. Parents then know people they can address their questions to. Moreover, it is likely to increase the SVPR parents' interaction with the school and the local community.

Educational planning

Greater use of teaching assistant time

SVPR children are likely to **have had gaps in their learning as a result of interrupted or missed schooling**. Together with the fact that SVPR pupils are unlikely to be able to be assisted with homework by their parents due to their own educational needs, a higher use of teaching assistants in class will add value to the child's achievements in school.

The need of additional classes

It is the experience of the scheme that **SVPR children benefits from attending additional classes** to meet the standards of their class mates. However, in planning an individual timetable, it is important to make sure that it does not cause exclusion of the child. As the child is already in a vulnerable position, the child must have the best condition to strengthen the friendships with class mates and not feel like they are standing out.

Homework

Many SVPR children find it very difficult to complete homework successfully at home due to a lack of materials, space and privacy.

Parents may also have low literacy levels, meaning that they are unable to assist with homework.

Schools should ensure that there is adequate support in place for SVPR children to complete homework. This should allow them to feel included, rather than keeping them in a break or lunchtime to complete homework, which can



be seen as a punishment. Allowing SVPR pupils to complete their homework during school time reduces the risk of conflict between pupil and class teacher.

Sex and gender education

In many cases sex education contradicts the parents' cultural and religious values especially learning which concerns sexual intercourse. The children can find themselves in situations where living up to both the expectations of the curriculum and their religion is difficult.

Previous examples show that it is beneficial to arrange a meeting between the parents, the teachers and an interpreter where the content of the educational material is explained. Moreover, the parents should be made aware that they can withdraw their child from Sex and Relationship Education although the topic of human reproduction, which is a part of science, is statutory.

Trauma Informed Schools

With every school in Cornwall being Trauma Informed, the schools are able to support children who suffer from trauma or mental health problems. Members of staff who have undergone training in dealing with mild to moderate mental health problems such as anxiety, conduct disorder, substance use disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder, will be very useful as the main contact for the SVPR families.



Staff know best what works within their educational setting, although having a classroom wherein the teaching and behaviour reflect the cultural diversity within the room, such as celebrating religious holidays and trying traditional food, has proven valuable in reducing stereotyping, preventing bullying and racist incidents and has a positive effect on a minority child's self-esteem. **An educational setting that succeeds in preventing bullying and racist incidents create a safe environment where pupils are able to learn and fulfil their potential.**

Bullying and racist incidents

A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.

Racist incidents are not just about the colour of one's skin, it can be about one's ethnic background or religion. In Cornwall, SVPR children have previously experienced bullying and racist incidents within the secondary environment. Schools must have actions to reduce this risk. To help prevent bullying and racist incidents, it is important that it is clear to the pupils, parents and staff what the school perceive as bullying and racism and how this is dealt with. Furthermore, it needs to be explained to the pupils how they can report such incidents. In dealing with a racist incident, staff should be aware of the context of the incident, as well as all of the pupils involved. All incidents of this nature should be recorded on a Racial Incident Recording form, separately from a bullying log. It is vital that all racial incidents are dealt with swiftly

and effectively and parents are informed of actions taken. This maintains good relationships with the school and reassures parents that name-calling, racist incidents and hate crimes are being dealt with appropriately. This is very important due to the parents need to feel that their children are safe after having lived in unsafe conditions.

Bullying can happen to all children and schools must support every child who has been exposed to such. Due to SVPR children's ethnic and religious background, they are more vulnerable to racism, and this is more likely to escalate due to previous experiences. It is important that staff is alert to the potential bullying that this group face and the additional emotions that can be evidenced due to resettlement. **a**

Cultural and religious factors

Some Muslim children start participating in additional religious and cultural matters when they reach a certain age. Girls might start wearing hijab and children will take part in Ramadan.

The school must be aware of the possible challenges which might occur due to religious beliefs. It is important to be aware of situations where the SVPR children might stand out due to cultural and religious factors. Examples are girls outfit during swimming classes which covers their full body or a child's behaviour when fasting.

Calendar with key dates

It can be valuable to teachers to keep a calendar which marks the key celebration dates in Islam, such as Eid, to achieve a greater understanding of the pupil's behaviour. This information is moreover valuable in including the pupil's religious and cultural background in the classroom. By representing the child's culture and religion positively, the school will reach a higher level of inclusion, which is seen on the agenda on the new Ofsted framework.

Likewise, it will help the families if a calendar is provided to give them a simple overview of key dates during a school term such as school trips, special events and half terms. This is important in order to reduce absence.

Gender

Schools might experience that gender roles are significant within the homes of the SVPR families. The majority of the SVPR families in Cornwall appreciate traditional values to some extent which implies that the males are responsible for financial support, decision making and the protection of the family. Due to the fact that the children in many cases have greater knowledge of



English than their parents, boys play a significant role in the decision making within the households. This may reveal itself in meetings with parents and other situations where communication is made between the house and the school regarding school policies.

Moreover, the traditional view on gender may impact the view on sexuality. In families where heterosexuality is perceived as the only appropriate sexuality, the children might only be familiar with heterosexuality and the parents may well be unwilling for their children to learn about sexual diversity and gender fluidity.



The media

The media, especially the news, has a significant impact on children under the scheme in several ways.

The news

It is our experience that children under the scheme are exposed to news at home that in some cases is inappropriate for children and is not necessarily discussed or explained by the parents. **Furthermore, due to both the child and parent's limited English skills, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of what is on the media's attention can generate fear and possibly disclose traumas.**

Internet safety

Cases have been seen where children are searching for inappropriate violent content online. **As many of the parents may not be proficient internet users, they are unable to control their child's use of the internet.** It is therefore important that the school is aware of the child's use of the internet

and reiterate safety messages to the child and parents.

Mobile phones

In continuation of the above paragraph on internet safety, the staff must be alert to a SVPR child's use of mobile phones. **SVPR children coming from areas of conflict makes them particularly vulnerable in regards to the content they look at online and the societies they communicate with.** Staff must be alert and questioning the SVPR children's use of mobile phones due to the high risk of isolation and the vulnerability to radicalisation and child sexual exploitation.



Workshops


A yearly workshop for schools with SVPR pupils will be organised by the Scheme Coordinator in order to create a proactive network of peer support and sharing good practice learned.

Furthermore, it will generate consistency in the way different educational settings are managing the challenges presented through the scheme. This workshop is needed in overcoming issues with discrimination within the community.



**Have
your
say...**

This is our first guidance produced based on our experience with resettlement. Feedback is greatly appreciated so we can improve our support and offers to schools. You can provide feedback using the following email address:
refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk



Contact us

For advice and guidance please email us on
refugeehelp@cornwall.gov.uk

If you would like this information in another
format or language please contact:

Cornwall Council, County Hall
Treyew Road, Truro TR1 3AY

Telephone: 0300 1234 100
Email: equality@cornwall.gov.uk
www.cornwall.gov.uk