

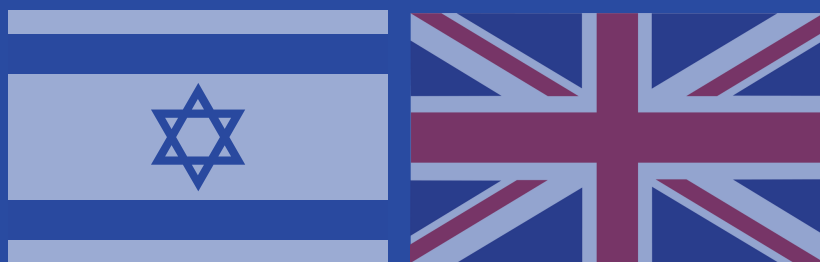
PARTNERSHIP OF
JEWISH SCHOOLS




IN COLLABORATION WITH

CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT
FOR JEWISH SCHOOLS

Guidance for welcoming Israeli children and young people into UK schools





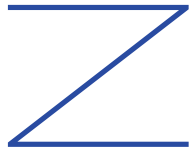
01.

Introduction



02.

Take Away Messages



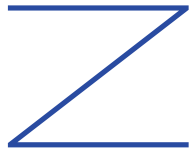
03.

Looking after yourselves
first



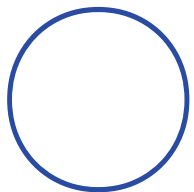
04.

Supporting transition,
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Talking about the war



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Communicating with
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Supporting your existing
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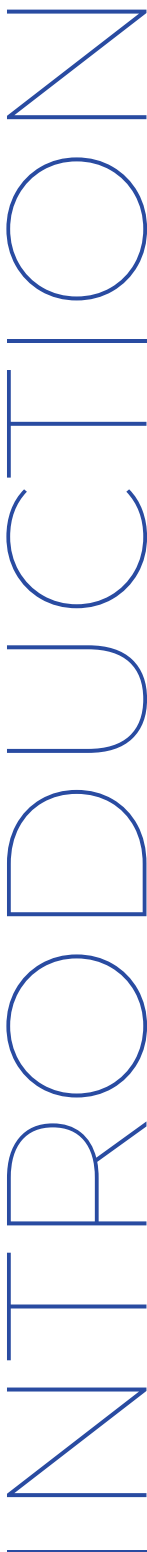
References and further
resources

10.

Appendix

11.

Acknowledgements



This guidance aims to support UK schools welcoming Israeli children who have fled the current Israel-Hamas war, to successfully integrate into their new school environments. It aims to help school staff create 'schools of sanctuary' using trauma-informed principles. We want schools to feel proud in extending a warm welcome to all new Israeli families and to be able to treat them as equal members of the school community.

This guidance is not focused on psychoeducation about trauma and the general impact of war on the wider Jewish community. This has been offered elsewhere.

It acknowledges that school staff might be feeling anxious and under-prepared to support these families. It acknowledges that many, but not all, school staff may also be experiencing their own anxiety or trauma because of the current Israel-Hamas war. It recognises that when adults feel anxious or stressed it is harder for them to think clearly, to plan and organise tasks, to reflect on what skills they already have and what resources already exist within their school communities.

This guidance offers evidence-based tools and strategies that are currently being used and can be delivered in schools. It will signpost to some practical and usable resources that are safe and effective for school staff to use.

Please remember, research has shown that giving children who have fled war the opportunity to attend school is 'the best medicine'. By simply opening your doors to these children you are already supporting them to feel safe, feel connected and to process any trauma they have experienced, or continue to experience.

02. TAKE AWAY MESSAGES

There are five evidence-based Guiding Principles that reduce trauma and create the best environment for recovery. Support your school community to:

Feel calm

Be Safe

Be In Control

Be Hopeful

Feel Connected

1

Look after yourself first

If you want to be able to offer support, listen and co-regulate with children and young people, then you need to first be well-regulated yourself. What are you doing to look after yourself?

2

You can be the emotionally available adult they need

Respect children's rights not to talk about recent events, but create opportunities to listen to them, play with them and get to know them.

3

Engage with 'watchful waiting'

This means looking out for concerning behaviours and vulnerability factors by observing carefully, communicating with parents/carers and keeping records of what you see and hear. If you are particularly worried, seek advice.

03. LOOK AFTER YOURSELF FIRST

“We cannot pour from an empty cup”

(Dr Tina Rae, Child Psychologist)

We know that if we want to be able to offer support, listen and co-regulate with children and young people, we need to first be well-regulated ourselves. This means ensuring school staff are thinking about their own self-care and are given the support they need to do so.

Self-care will look different for different adults and it’s important that each member of staff is able to think about what kind of self-care works best for them. Consider ways you can connect, be active, learn, give to others and pay attention to the moment ([NHS 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing](#)).

A helpful approach for school staff is the ‘30-3-30 approach’ (developed by [4 Mental Health](#)). Choose an activity of your choice that can help you stay calm, focused and able to cope based on the time you have available:

- 30 seconds: deep breaths; sips of water; counting backwards from 20; notice one thing you see, hear, smell and feel; positive self-talk (remind yourself of a favourite quote/song lyric).
- 3 minutes: have a hot drink; draw a picture; listen to a song; talk to a colleague; send a message to a friend; note down urgent tasks on a post-it.
- 30 minutes: read; get some fresh air or exercise; enjoy some cooking; watch a favourite TV show or listen to a podcast; call a friend or family member; phone a helpline.

Senior Leadership should take time to ask staff about their wellbeing. In these challenging times, when some members of staff may be experiencing their own trauma from the war, find small ways to support staff by ensuring the staff room is a warm, welcoming and well-stocked area. Are your systems for ensuring there is always milk in the fridge working? Could you be offering fruit/biscuits more frequently? Is there enough seating and somewhere to eat lunch? Share ideas at a staff meeting or on a notice board to create your school’s own 30-3-30 approach. Ensure all staff know about your Employee Assistance Programme.

04. SUPPORTING TRANSITION, INTEGRATION AND A SENSE OF BELONGING

“Ask me about my favourite football team, my favourite games and books.”

(Voice of a Refugee Child)

Starting a new school is difficult for all children. Israeli children joining your school may have additional challenges including recent/ongoing trauma, speaking no English or having English as an Additional Language (EAL) and having no familiar faces amongst the other children or school staff. Your task is to make them feel welcome, provide support, encourage friendships and make sensitive assessments about their language, learning and wellbeing.

Some advice will apply to younger children, and some applies to older students, but most applies to children and young people of all ages and can be adapted to be age-appropriate.

This section provides ideas to support with:

1. Asking for help and support
2. Providing a successful induction
3. Making use of other children and families
4. Creating a climate where Israeli children feel welcomed and valued
5. Making the curriculum accessible
6. Classroom organisation
7. Nurturing resilience and supporting emotional wellbeing

This section has been informed by the National Education Union’s [‘Welcoming refugee children to your school’](#) resource.

1. ASKING FOR HELP AND SUPPORT

- Identify people within the school community who speak Ivrit. This may include teaching and support staff, office staff, security team, parents or grandparents of other children and students at your school. Consider how each person is best placed to support your community, e.g. by acting as a key emotionally-available adult, supporting reading, supporting translation of resources, liaising with parents or helping connect families and services.
- Explore opportunities for new volunteers to join your school community. This may be through your parent body or the [Jewish Volunteering Network](#). Ensure your volunteer policy is up-to-date and ready to use.
- Identify resources available in Ivrit to support children to access books, games and the curriculum. This might include e-resources, such as Ivrit audio books.
- Clarify the level of in-school support which can be available for Israeli children and draw up a timetable for small group and/or individual support, including who will plan and deliver this support.
- Find out about specialist resources and support which may be available through your local authority/NHS Trust (e.g. Educational Psychologists; supporting children with English as an Additional Language), your Trust or Academy group, local synagogues or other organisations.
- Identify mental health professionals who may be able to assist if children and young people are showing signs of significant or prolonged traumatic stress.
- Identify organisations and services that can help Israeli families with, for example: living arrangements, finding work, medical services, holiday camps, childcare, finances and mental health and wellbeing.

2. PROVIDING A SUCCESSFUL INDUCTION

Before they arrive, consider the following:

- Do the children have appropriate school uniform, including school shoes and PE kits?
- Do they need any school equipment such as school bags, lunch boxes, pencil cases, textbooks or current texts being studied?
- Do they need anything allocated to them and named around school, e.g. coat pegs, trays, desks and lockers?
- Have they been added to all class lists and resources?
- Have they been added to all school systems, e.g. Google classroom, Tapestry, etc.?
- Do they have any special dietary requirements, including allergies?
- Have they been allocated a buddy? Or a key adult?

Consider ways in which the school environment can be made welcoming, such as welcoming posters in English and Ivrit, or labelling rooms in Ivrit too (e.g. dining hall, medical room, Head Teacher's office or playground).

A welcoming first day:

- Make sure all adults know their name, how it is pronounced and spelt.
- Ensure they know the names of the key adults and other children they will meet. This includes adults who may help them at break or lunchtime.
- Check that they know some key school and classroom vocabulary and if necessary, label rooms and items in Ivrit. For example: toilet, book, bag, desk and playtime.
- Take them for a tour around the school, if possible, with other children or adults who speak Ivrit.
- Ask them where they would like to sit in the classroom and if there is anyone they would like to sit with.
- Check-in on how they are feeling regularly, especially after break, lunchtime and at the end of the day. Update parents at the end of the day.

Respect pupils' right to not talk about any recent events in their life. This may last many days or even weeks. Give them opportunities to talk in private about their family and recent events.

“Treat me as an individual, not as part of a group.”

(Voice of a Refugee Child)

Getting to know your Israeli students:

As with any new student, you will gather some information through admission forms. Other information you will need to find out once they have started. Here are some important questions your staff should be able to answer. Remember not to make assumptions about any child, their family or their experiences of the war to date.

- **Language levels** - do they speak any English? Do they understand any English? What other languages do they speak/understand? What language is being spoken at home? Observation and informal assessment can be carried out from day one, but any formal assessment of the pupil's English should be postponed for two to three weeks. Once a child has had a chance to settle, then consider conducting a standalone baseline initial assessment of their English proficiency using appropriate assessment tools, e.g. The Bell Foundation EAL Assessment Framework.
- **Previous educational experience** – have they been to nursery or school before, or is this their first educational experience? What year were they in before and what support did they have?
- **Additional needs** – medical information; glasses or hearing aids? Any known or suspected special educational needs or disabilities?
- **Exposure to trauma** – direct exposure to war; recent bereavements; family members in service; missing family members who stayed in Israel. Many children may have been out of education for an extended period when they join your school. Many may be in a ‘flight/fight/freeze’ mode. Many will also be resilient and able to connect, engage and build positive relationships. Some will have had little knowledge or experience of the war.
- **Variety of current living circumstances** – are they with wider family? Are they staying with strangers or do they have their own home? Do they have toys, books or sporting equipment? Are they accessing any extra-curricular or community activities?
- **Parent wellbeing** – Do their parents/carers have access to support and a local community? Do they have additional needs you need to know about? Are there any other family factors important to know about?

3. MAKING USE OF OTHER CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- Introduce Israeli families to other Israeli families in their child's class or year group or from across the school.
- Establish a 'buddy' system which has status, is supervised and monitored (by teaching staff and playground supervisors). Involve a wide range of children for different tasks, for example, to support the Israeli children in class, going to lunch or at playtime.
- Encourage Israeli children who are older or who have been at school for longer to support younger children or those that have arrived recently.
- Involve other children in making a welcome card, transition book, video or film about the school that can be sent to new or prospective Israeli children and their families.

4. CREATING A CLIMATE WHERE ISRAELI CHILDREN FEEL WELCOMED AND VALUED

- Give current students an opportunity to talk about welcoming Israeli students before they join their class, or away from the new Israeli students. They are likely to have questions such as: 'can we talk to them about the war?', 'can we ask them about their family?', 'what should we play with them?', 'how can we help them?'
- Encourage all students to use some Ivrit when it is appropriate to do so. This might include teaching children how to say hello and goodbye.
- Involve Israeli children in creating signs and resources for their classroom and for around the school. Help them create Ivrit/English dictionaries, particularly for subject-specific vocabulary. Even if they speak English, they may not know maths and science vocabulary.
- Ensure that adults are using precise language in 'easy to hear' sentences. Support oral information with visual information, use additional gestures and concrete materials and resources.
- Adopt a 'can do' attitude, a child-centred approach and have high expectations focused on the child's strengths. Be interested: 'what do you already know about this?', 'what are you interested in?', 'what are you good at?'

5. MAKING THE CURRICULUM ACCESSIBLE

- By prioritising emotional wellbeing ahead of learning, children and young people will be better placed and more able to then engage with education.
- Ensure your goal or target for the lesson is as clear as possible.
- Consider topics or resources which could be triggering to new students. This may include topics linked to warfare, bereavement or family separation. Make judgements about what can continue to be used and what could be adapted.
- Use more drama, puppets, art, pictures, photographs, charts, flow diagrams, storyboards, maps and photographs than normal. Support teaching with everyday items – toys, food, equipment, newspapers/magazines. Hold up equipment needed as instructions are given, e.g. ‘you will need your whiteboard and a pen’.
- Notice achievements in subjects that are less reliant on language, such as maths, art and PE and celebrate these.
- Assess English language and literacy skills in a sensitive way to ensure materials can be adapted as necessary. [The Bell Foundation](#) provides evidence-informed guidance for school staff about supporting children who use English as an Additional Language.
- Use bilingual dictionaries and web-based translators and apps; maximise the use of technology.
- Have available a range of games that are likely to be familiar or easy to learn, e.g. a pack of cards, dominoes, noughts and crosses, board games, Jenga, Kerplunk, etc.
- Have available art materials, construction toys (e.g. Lego) or colouring/puzzle books (e.g. dot-to-dot; spot-the-difference) so that these can be enjoyed if the lesson is too challenging, or they need some quiet time within the classroom.
- Play more music and songs than usual to support your lessons.
- Use books with lots of visual content, or no words, for all year groups.
- Have available a wide variety of maths equipment and resources for the children to access as they need them.

The [Bell Foundation](#) have a [Great Ideas resource page](#) which has many ideas for supporting EAL students in the classroom. For children new to English, collaborative activities, drama and role play, translanguaging and using visuals/graphic organisers are some of the most helpful tools and strategies. They also provide a number of teaching resources linked to the National Curriculum.

6. CLASSROOM ORGANISATION

- Consider how children are grouped or seated within the classroom. Would they benefit being seated with other children who speak Ivrit, with good English language role models, or with children who will naturally include them in their conversation and play?
- Encourage the Israeli children to bring in photographs, toys or items related to their favourite hobbies or interests. Help them share these with their class.
- Prioritise activities that encourage collaboration to help with English language acquisition.
- Support all children with listening and speaking skills. Create opportunities for regular circle times or form room discussions. Set up extra clubs at lunchtime such as art, board games or Lego clubs.
- Prepare children for any changes or unexpected events to their timetable, including if their usual teachers won't be available. Let them know what will stay the same as well as what will change, and how the change will last.

7. NURTURING RESILIENCE AND SUPPORTING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

“Listen to me when I need to talk and give me time to play and get to know others.”

(Voice of a Refugee Child)

There are many interventions and strategies that schools already have in place to support the emotional wellbeing of their students. Many of these can be used to support the emotional needs of Israeli children joining your school. Here is a reminder of some of the things you may already have available and can draw upon:

- Trauma-informed practice (see [Trauma Informed Schools UK](#))
- Mental Health awareness; Mental Health Leads
- Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) (see [ELSA Network – Emotional Literacy Support Assistants and Resources for Emotional Literacy Support Assistants](#))
- [Emotion Coaching](#)
- [Zones of Regulation](#)
- Providing calm corners and safe spaces – using tents, screens, blankets and beanbags (see Dr Tina Rae’s 15-minute video on [Creating Calm Corners and Safe spaces](#))
- Using outdoor spaces and opportunities to exercise
- Whole class ‘brain breaks’ and breathing exercises (e.g. [‘Star of David deep breathing exercise’](#))
- Create opportunities for children to have control and power. For example, give them choices over where to spend break and lunchtimes, when to have support in class, what lessons to take part in and when to have a break.
- PSHE and SEND resources that build self-esteem, resilience and self-confidence.
- Support friendships: buddy systems and benches, lunch clubs, play leaders, paired work and Circle of Friends.
- Choice boards, visual timetables, emotion key rings and scales.

You do not need to be a trained therapist to be an emotionally available adult who can listen and create safe spaces for children and young people.

05. TALKING ABOUT THE WAR

“Don’t assume I want to talk about the war and my experiences. Sometimes I just want to be treated the same as other children.”

(Voice of a Refugee Child)

By avoiding talking about the war, children can become more anxious and less able to regulate their emotions and process any trauma they have experienced. Adults need to be able to talk about the war with the children they support, both at home and at school. Current students and new students may need separate spaces for these conversations.

Key principles of good practice:

- Use school to provide routine, structure, opportunities to connect with others and exercise / time outdoors.
- Adults need to accept, validate and affirm children’s feelings. Scripts such as, “this is scary, but you are safe” and “there is hope” are important.
- Be curious about what they know, what they want to know and how they feel. Don’t dismiss their questions and conversations as this can lead to trauma being stored and unprocessed. If their timing isn’t great then acknowledge the question, write it on a post-it with the child and agree when you will return to the conversation.
- Ensure information is fact-checked and use scripts such as “that’s a great question, I don’t know but I’m going to find out for you” if you are unsure of an answer or want to check out the information they have told you.
- Build in daily opportunities for creativity and play.
- Point out ‘helpers’ and opportunities to help so that students can notice the good that is being done to support others and contribute as appropriate.
- Create ‘time away’ – ensure there are moments of joy, laughter and gratitude.

Dr Tina Rae has summarised evidence-based approaches to talking to children about war into a helpful [‘Talking about War Plan’](#).

06. COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS/CARERS

Send a clear communication to all parents that your school is proud to be welcoming Israeli children. Explain briefly what the school is doing to ensure these families feel welcomed, safe and supported. Emphasise that it is the responsibility of the whole school community to welcome new families.

You may wish to hold a parents' meeting at school for new families to explain the school's ethos, expectations and support available. This should be in English and Ivrit.

Ensure new parents are added to any school communications, email lists and class WhatsApp groups. Ask class reps to ensure that new families know about how birthdays are celebrated at school, any upcoming events at school or birthday parties which may have already been organised.

You may want to offer further support for all your parents/carers at this time. We recommended the UK Trauma Council's 'Critical Incidents in Educational Communities – working together with parents & carers'. Other resources for parents are given at the end of this guide.

07. SUPPORTING YOUR EXISTING STUDENTS

Welcoming Israeli children who are fleeing war is an opportunity for your current students to learn about empathy, sharing and caring, respect and kindness.

Most children will be familiar with other children joining and leaving their class. Most children will be resilient to these experiences and will naturally include new children in their play, support them with learning and be able to say goodbye if or when the children return to Israel.

Be aware of existing students who may be vulnerable at this time. This includes students who you know already have had Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), as well as those students who may currently have family living in Israel, serving in the IDF or know someone who has died or has been taken hostage. See Appendix One for more information on the importance of 'watchful waiting' and responses to trauma.

08. FURTHER SUPPORT FROM PAJES AND CISJS

Tier 1 This guidance and the associated webinar have provided schools with a trauma-informed summary of evidence-based practice that will support school staff to welcome Israeli children and families into their school communities.

Tier 2 Trauma-informed systemic psychological consultations will be available for schools who have welcomed Israeli families fleeing the current war. These are free for schools to access and will be delivered by Jewish Educational Psychologists (EPs). They are being funded by PaJeS, at a special discounted rate. The consultations aim to help Senior Leadership Teams explore how they are supporting Israeli families, and the impact this support is having on their school. A Consultation can be requested by emailing wellbeing@pajes.org.uk using the subject: 'Integrating Israelis Tier 2 Consultation'. An EP will be in touch to arrange a convenient date and time for a session.

You can also contact your Local Authority Educational Psychology Service for advice, or you may choose to discuss further support options with private EPs.

Tier 3 We recognise there may be some situations where more specialist support is required either for individuals, or groups of students or staff (see Appendix One). We recommend the flow-chart and advice from 'Section 4: When to seek specialist help' of the new [UK Trauma Council's Childhood Trauma, Migration and Asylum Toolkit for Educational Communities](#).

We are creating a directory of services which schools may wish to use to access more specialist support. Please note: we are not endorsing or recommending services or professionals listed. You can also contact specialist services you already work with, such as CAMHS or private counsellors/therapists.

09. REFERENCES AND FURTHER RESOURCES

Supporting trauma and children fleeing war:

The UK Trauma Council has published guidance for professionals and for young people impacted by trauma, war, migration and asylum (November 2023). This includes a toolkit for educational communities and an animation and self-help guide for Young People in Hebrew: [Childhood Trauma, War, Migration and Asylum - UK Trauma Council](#)

Welcoming refugee children into schools

[Welcoming refugee children to your school \(National Education Union\)](#)

Excellent free webinar by Dr Tina Rae aimed at school staff: [How to talk to children and young people about war | Understanding and supporting our Refugee children \(A free webinar by Dr Tina Rae\) – Evidence for Learning](#)

Phoenix Group offers helpful and relevant resources e.g. [A resource bank for non-clinical professionals to support children who have escaped from war, conflict and persecution](#)

For information on Schools of Sanctuary see: [Home - Schools of Sanctuary \(cityofsanctuary.org\)](#)

Supporting children using EAL

[The Bell Foundation - Changing lives and overcoming exclusion through language education](#)

[NALDIC | EAL National Subject Association](#)

Support for parents who want more information about looking after their children after trauma

[Looking after your child following trauma - a guide for parents.pdf \(penninecare.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Helping Your Child with Loss and Trauma: A self-help guide for parents: Amazon.co.uk: Trickey, David, Lawson, Vicky, Cooper, Prof Peter, Waite, Polly: 9781472138637: Books](#)

APPENDIX ONE: 'WHEN TO WORRY ABOUT THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA' TOOL FOR SCHOOLS

What is trauma?

'A psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience, often involving a sense of intense fear, terror and helplessness'
(Perry, 2011)

Every child will respond differently to trauma. This will depend on their developmental level, previous life experiences, level of exposure to trauma, parental reactions and their change in living circumstances. **Most Israeli children will be resilient** however some children may be showing signs of trauma and post-traumatic stress. **We recommend a 'watchful waiting' approach.** This means looking out for behaviours and vulnerability factors through observing children carefully and communicating frequently with their parents/carers and teachers.

Below are some indicators that children may be experiencing traumatic stress:

- Being more clingy than usual to parents or trusted adults
- An increase in crying and wanting more hugs and physical contact
- Finding it hard to concentrate and focus
- Becoming withdrawn from social interactions
- Not sleeping as well as normal / having nightmares
- Not eating as well as normal
- Having strong feelings and becoming angry, irritable, tense or more fidgety than normal. This could lead to them being aggressive towards others or hurting themselves
- Complaining of stomach aches and headaches more than normal
- Hypervigilance – being very aware of everything happening around them and 'jumpy' at loud noises or being surprised
- Being preoccupied with thoughts and memories of traumatic events. This may include showing feelings and re-enacting experiences through play
- Behaving like a much younger child, which may include bed-wetting or thumb sucking

If you are feeling particularly worried about a child or young person, the following questions might help you gather more information that you can then use to talk to mental health professionals.

Please note, the questions below are designed to only be used at least one month after a traumatic event has happened. However, for children fleeing an ongoing conflict, it is likely they are experiencing ongoing trauma while the war continues. It is not possible to clinically treat trauma whilst is ongoing.

Gather information from more than one source if possible, including your own observations, talking with the child or young person (if appropriate) and talking with their parent/carer. If language is a barrier, try to use an interpreter to support these conversations.

1. Was the child directly exposed to traumatic events? What was the nature of these (e.g. prolonged violence, loss of family, culture, separation, exposure to adversity as they flee their country). Could these be ongoing?
2. Did they witness something happen to another person or learn that something happened to a family member or close person? Note the details of this.
3. Are they having distressing memories or images that keep coming up? How often and what is the impact?
4. Are they experiencing distressing dreams that are related to the event? How often and what is the impact? What is the quality of their sleep like?
5. Are they experiencing flashbacks? How often and what is the impact?
6. Are they easily startled and are they demonstrating hypervigilance (i.e. continuously scanning the environment, searching for anything that could mean danger or pose a threat?) Are there any key triggers for this? What is the impact of this?
7. Does the young person have strong waves of feelings about what happened? Does the young person avoid situations, people, and conversations which may remind them of the event?
8. Does the young person have intrusive thoughts about the event and think about it, even when they don't want to?

These questions have been taken from Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's Wellbeing Team 'Support for Trauma' tool. They have been adapted from the Child Revised Impact of Events Scale (CRIES), which is also the recommended screener within the UK Trauma Council's toolkit for educational communities.

We recommend the flowchart and advice from 'Section 4: When to seek specialist help' of the new UK Trauma Council's Childhood Trauma, Migration and Asylum Toolkit for Educational Communities.

This guidance has been written by Jewish Educational Psychologists who are all registered with the Health Care Professionals Council, and all have significant experience working with school communities both through Local Authority employment and privately. We all have experience offering Critical Incident support to schools and are also members of the British Jewish community. We have recently created a new working group 'Critical Incident Support for Jewish Schools' (CISJS).

**This guidance has been written by the following members of CISJS:
Gemma Handelsman, with support from Ben Levy, Hannah Morris, Hannah Abrahams and Jemma Levy.**

This guidance has been informed by several resources, including some written in recent years to support refugee children who have joined UK schools from Ukraine, Afghanistan and other countries experiencing war and conflict.

It has also been informed by conversations with Head Teachers and teachers at Jewish schools who have already welcomed Israeli children into their classrooms. CISJS thanks those who have contributed.

Version 1: November 2023