




Education Welcome Pack



Refugee Education UK

Contents

Hello from Refugee Education UK	1
Education system and access	2
• Education in England – how it works and why it matters	2
• Types of state schools	3
• Getting a school place	4
• School: some key things to know	5
• Your role as a parent or guardian	7
Welcome to school!	8
Have fun helping your child learn English!	9
Starting school	10
• Supporting your child when they start school	10
• The first week at school	10
• Who will they meet at school?	11
• What will happen in their first week at school?	12
• What will it be like in their classroom?	13
Other sources of support	14

Acknowledgments

Sections marked as from 'The Bell Foundation' are taken from the resource, 'About the English Education System: Primary Schools. Guidance for parents of children who use English as an Additional Language (EAL).' Used by kind permission. Website: bell-foundation.org.uk

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We would also like to thank the staff and students from John Keble Church of England Primary School and Newman Catholic College for their wonderful contributions to this pack.

Hello from Refugee Education UK

Dear friends from Afghanistan,

We want to extend a very warm welcome to you. We are a charity called Refugee Education UK and our aim is to equip young refugees to build positive futures by thriving in education.

We have produced this welcome booklet to tell you about the education system in England so you can help your children access and be prepared for going to school.

The first section of this booklet is aimed at parents and guardians and contains useful information about the education system in England.

The rest of the booklet is for your children – to welcome them and to tell them what school is like in England. We recommend you read these sections with your children, and there are also some fun pictures for your children to colour in.

Finally, we have some advice on what kinds of activities you can do with children while they are waiting for a school place and at the weekend – including where they can start to learn English for free online.

We have also included the names of other organisations who will be able to help with different needs you might have.

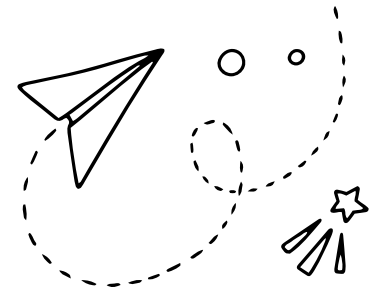
We hope your children are able to settle into and thrive in schools across England; we are very pleased to have them here.

With warmest wishes,

The whole Refugee Education UK team



Education system and access



Education in England – how it works and why it matters



All children in England between the ages of 5 and 16 are entitled to a free place at a state school – and, in fact, they have to go to school. This is called ‘compulsory school age’.

Education can change lives – both in the long term and immediately. It’s particularly important for children who have experienced conflict, trauma or displacement as it can help create routine, a feeling of safety, and the beginnings of new friendships and belonging.

The education system in England is divided into key stages. Here’s a diagram of our education system:

State schools follow a national curriculum, which is a set of educational subjects and standards to ensure that all children learn the same things.

If more detailed information about our education system would be helpful, you can look at this website: gov.uk/national-curriculum.

Type of education institution	Key stage	Year group	Age
Primary education	Early years foundation stage (EYFS)	Reception	4–5
	Key stage 1	Year 1	5–6
		Year 2	6–7
	Key stage 2	Year 3	7–8
		Year 4	8–9
		Year 5	9–10
		Year 6	10–11
Secondary education	Key stage 3	Year 7	11–12
		Year 8	12–13
		Year 9	13–14
	Key stage 4	Year 10	14–15
		Year 11	15–16





After secondary education

Further education: After secondary education, your child will have to stay in some form of education or training until they turn 18. There will be lots of education options for your child at this stage. These options include A Levels, BTECs (The Business and Technology Education Council qualification), NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications), diplomas, apprenticeships, and more. Some options combine academic learning with vocational and practical skills and work placements.

Higher education: After further education, some children will want to go on and study at university. They could study an undergraduate degree, and some may want to continue and do postgraduate courses!

Types of state schools

State schools are free to attend – but there are several different types:



Local Authority schools: these schools are funded by local government and follow the national curriculum.



Faith schools: these schools are associated with a particular religion. There are lots of Church of England schools in England, but children of many different religions attend these schools. Some schools, including some Catholic and Islamic schools, may give priority to children of the same religion.



Academies and Free schools: these schools are funded by central government and run by not-for-profit trusts, and are independent from the local authorities.



Special schools: when a child has a special educational need that cannot be met through the support available within mainstream schools, they can attend a special school. These schools can help children with specific physical, mental and learning needs.

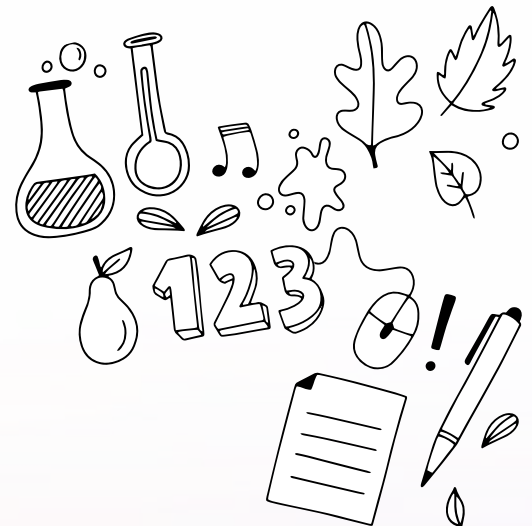


Getting a school place

The government is working hard to get school places for every refugee child, but sometimes creating lots of new school places all at once can take longer than hoped for. In the end, every refugee child of compulsory education age (age 5–16) should be studying alongside other children in a state school.

Here is some information from **The Bell Foundation** about how finding a place for a child normally works:

- Contact your local council (also called the Local Authority or LA) to find a school place for your child because:
 - The local council must find a school place in the local area if your child is aged 5 to 16 years old
 - You can find more information about school admissions here: [gov.uk/schools-admissions](https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions)
- Here are some ideas to help you decide which school you like:
 - Visit the school during open evenings or days
 - Look at their school website
 - Read their most recent Ofsted inspection report: reports.ofsted.gov.uk
 - Check the school's overall performance: compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk
 - Talk to other parents about what they think of the school
- When you know which schools you like, you will need to:
 - Fill in the online application form, giving a few schools you like
 - Include your catchment area for a primary school application (a catchment area is the geographical area that a school will accept applications from)
 - Ask for help from your local council's School Admissions Team as the school application process can be complicated
 - Ask the council if there are other people, community groups or interpreters who can help you



While you wait

While you wait for a school place, there are some helpful things that your child could be doing.

- Your child could start learning or improving their English. We have created a list of websites and places where your child can learn English for free. You can find these on our website at reuk.org/welcome.
- There might be some charities or organisations in your local area that are running educational activities or groups. Have a look at our resources page for some ideas! If you have a support worker, you could also ask them what is available nearby.

Schools: some key things to know

Here are some important things to know about schools in England:

School terms and holidays

- The dates for the school terms and holiday will be different depending on where you live. You can speak to your school or look at this website to find out more: [gov.uk/school-term-holiday-dates](https://www.gov.uk/school-term-holiday-dates).
- The school year normally starts in September and finishes in July.
- There are normally three terms: **Autumn Term**, **Spring Term** and **Summer Term**.
- There are holidays between terms, which follow this pattern:

Holiday name	When	Duration
Christmas holiday	Late December – early January	Around 2 weeks
Easter holiday	Late March – early April	Around 2 weeks
Summer holiday	Late July – early September	Around 6 weeks

- There are usually 'half terms', which are one-week breaks half way through a term.

Getting to and from school



- There will be different ways to get your child to school. Depending on how close you are to the school, you might be able to get to school by walking or cycling. Otherwise, you can use public transport or, in some cases, drive.
- Your child might be able to get free transport to school. If you have a support worker, talk to them about this, or find out more about the eligibility criteria here: [gov.uk/help-home-school-transport](https://www.gov.uk/help-home-school-transport). Or search for your local council's provision here: [gov.uk/free-school-transport](https://www.gov.uk/free-school-transport).

Tests and assessments



- At the end of key stage 1 (Year 2) and key stage 2 (Year 6), children normally sit some tests in English, maths and science. These tests are called SATs (Standard Assessment Tests), and they help teachers understand a child's progress.
- There might be some other informal tests and assessments in between the SATs.
- If your child is new to learning English, your school can make some adjustments for certain tests, as doing the tests in English might be too difficult. You can talk to your child's school about this.

Welcome and fairness



- Your child should be treated fairly and with respect when they attend school. We hope that they will receive a warm welcome from other children and teachers.
- Your child has a right to practice their religion in schools. But please note that you should talk to your child's school before religious holidays if you want to take them out of school for a day – you must get permission if this is outside of school holiday dates.

Homework



- Your child will be given work to do outside of the class, often at home.
- Sometimes this homework will be online. If you don't have access to good internet or technology to complete this work, make sure you talk to the school.
- Your child's school may have a homework club. Homework clubs usually take place after school, and your child can do their homework there and ask for help from teachers.

What your child will need



The following helpful guidance on the things that your child might need for school is from **The Bell Foundation**. Remember to talk to your child's school if you struggle with anything or if you have questions. Sometimes schools have a second hand uniform and equipment sales!

- Ask your child's school if there is a school uniform and where to buy it:
 - Lots of schools in England expect children to wear a school uniform but some do not.
 - Your child's school will provide a list of what to buy and tell you where you can get it; ask about Physical Education (PE) kit and swimming kit too.
 - If you have financial difficulties, speak to your school as they may be able to help.
- Ask your school about equipment for learning, which may include:
 - A bookbag for reading books, homework and letters from school.
 - A rucksack for PE kit, packed lunch and other equipment.
 - A pencil case for stationery, e.g. pens, pencils etc.
 - A calculator and other maths equipment.
- Ask your school about lunchtime meal options for your child, which include:
 - A school meal – sometimes called a school lunch or dinner.
 - A packed lunch – brought in from home.
 - A home dinner – going home for lunch.
- Ask about the school meals menu, the cost and how to pay, because:
 - The school can help with special diet requirements, e.g. Halal meals.
 - Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 get Free School Meals.
 - Other children can also receive Free School Meals (FSM) if the family is on certain benefits. You can find out more here:
[gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals](https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals).



Nursery and childcare

You may be able to find free nursery or childcare for your child before they start primary school. Find out what is available in your area here:

[gov.uk/find-free-early-education](https://www.gov.uk/find-free-early-education).

Thinking ahead to secondary school

If your child is starting school in Year 5 or 6, you might want to start thinking about secondary schools for them. Secondary school will feel different to primary school, and your child will work towards national exams called GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education), which are normally taken at the end of Year 11. If you have access to the internet, look up tinyurl.com/bellfoundationsecondary to read **The Bell Foundation's** helpful guide on secondary school.

Your role as a parent or guardian

You will play a key role in your child's education. **The Bell Foundation** has some guidance on how you can help your child to learn and get involved with school life, this has been printed separately and included as part of this pack. Your child's school will have some expectations of you as parents. Here is what is likely to be expected of you:

Send your child to school every day and on time, unless they are ill, have an appointment or it is a religious holiday. Find details on free school transport eligibility criteria here:

[gov.uk/help-home-school-transport](https://www.gov.uk/help-home-school-transport). Or search for your local council's provision here: [gov.uk/free-school-transport](https://www.gov.uk/free-school-transport).

Contact the school to tell them why your child is absent. Tell the school in advance if you can.

You can only take your children out of school during the school holidays. If you decide to take your children out of school during term time, you may have to pay a fine. Speak to the school to find out more or look at this website: [gov.uk/school-attendance-absence](https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence).

Tell the school about any important events or circumstances for your child or family. They will try their best to support you.

Provide medical details and contact details.

Complete consent forms to say whether or not your child can go on school trips, have photographs taken etc.

The child's school will communicate regularly with you so that you can keep up to date with what is happening. Schools may use different forms of communication:

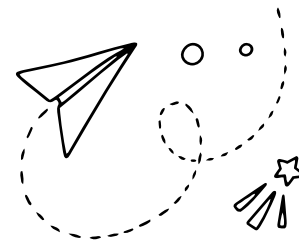
- **School website:** important dates, information and announcements
- **Notifications:** text messages, social media (e.g. Twitter) and apps
- **Online systems:** school meals and parents' evening appointments
- **Emails and letters:** school, classroom and holiday information
- **Parents' evenings and reports:** face-to-face meetings and reports
- **Meetings and information evenings:** about school life and subjects
- **Direct communication:** one-to-one conversations by phone or email

Find out more information by talking to teachers or other parents in the playground.



Welcome to school!

We are so excited for your children to join our schools:



Year 5 children at John Keble School in London say hello!

Some local children wanted to tell you more about what they enjoy about going to school:

Hawa: "My favourite thing about school is getting to play sports, particularly football."



Olivia: "Welcome to the UK! I have three favourite subjects at school – art, reading and writing – they are all creative and they make my imagination better."



Children from John Keble School and Newman Catholic College have also made a welcome video for your children. If you have access to the internet, scan the following QR code or go to reuk.org/welcome to watch this video.



Izatullah: "I am from Afghanistan. My favourite thing about school is English lessons, so I can learn more English. I also like Maths and PE. My dream is to be a pilot."



Have fun helping your child learn English!

Games are a fun way to help your child to learn English and find out about life in England. Try this flashcard game to see for yourself!

What you need:

- The deck of school flashcards included in this pack.
- At least two players (including you).

The aim of the game is to match an image with a word. The game will help your child to build their vocabulary. It is most suitable for children who are new to English or in the early stages of learning the language.

1. Shuffle the flashcards.
2. Separate them into two piles on a flat surface.
3. Ask the players to take turns to turn over the flashcards (one from each pile of cards).
4. If the cards match – an image with a word – then the player keeps both cards.
If the cards do not match then the player returns the cards to the correct piles.

Advanced game:

Encourage your child to say the word on the card by modelling the language for them. For example, you say 'book' and then they say the word.

If you have access to the internet there are lots of websites and apps that will help your child learn English at home. Scan this QR code on your phone or go to reuk.org/welcome.



The words in the flash card game are:

Word	Pashto translation	Dari translation
Bag	بیک	بیک
Uniform	یونیفورم	یونیفورم
Pen	قلم	قلم
Pencil	پنسل	پنسل
Pencil case	د پنسلونو کڅوره	جای پنسلی
Ruler	خط کش	خط کش
Desk	میز	میز تحریر
Chair	چوکی	چوکی
Classroom	درسي ټولگی	صنف درسی
Playground	د لوبو میدان	زمین بازی
Ball	توپ	توپ
Teacher	بنوونکی	معلم
Friend	ملگری	دوست
Toilet	تشناب/بیت الخلا	تشناب
Lunch	د غرمي ډوډی	نان چاشت
Computer	کمپیوټر	کمپیوټر
Breakfast	ناشتا	ناشتای صبح
Peg	پانه	میخ
Home time	په کور کي د فراغت وختونه	وقت خانه
Book	کتاب	کتاب



Starting school

Supporting your child when they start school



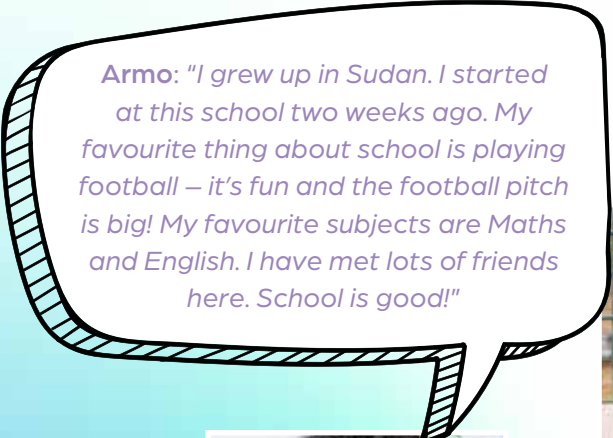
We know that for your child starting a new school in a different country may be difficult. It might be helpful to talk to your child about the following things:

- They may feel a mixture of excitement and nerves before starting in their new school.
- The first week may be overwhelming, particularly if they have not learned much English before.
- Please assure your child there will be support for them at school.
- Remind them that it will take a bit of time to settle in and that is okay.
- At first, your child may find the school day long and tiring. To help them focus at school, you can make sure they go to bed early and get lots of sleep. Clear daily routines will also help them settle into school life.


Talking your child through the following section will help them understand a bit more about what to expect in their first week.

The first week at school

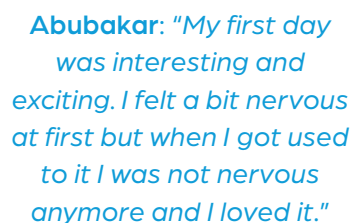
Some children from two schools in London wanted to share what starting school was like for them:



Armo: "I grew up in Sudan. I started at this school two weeks ago. My favourite thing about school is playing football – it's fun and the football pitch is big! My favourite subjects are Maths and English. I have met lots of friends here. School is good!"



Natasha: "I remember being in the playground with my mum, I told her that I was really nervous and I thought that everyone would make fun of me because I was new. But a lot of people were nice to me and I found a friend who is still my best friend."



Abubakar: "My first day was interesting and exciting. I felt a bit nervous at first but when I got used to it I was not nervous anymore and I loved it."



Who will they meet at school?

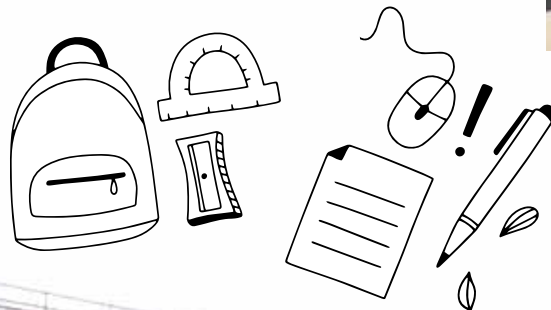
Although all schools are different, most schools have the following members of staff. Telling your children about the different people at school will help them to understand what to expect:

- **Headteacher:** a school's headteacher is responsible for managing the running of the school.
- **Teachers:** in primary schools each class has its own teacher who is responsible for their education. This teacher will teach your children most subjects, apart from specialist areas such as PE (Physical Education) or Music.
- **Teaching assistants:** your child's class may have a teaching assistant to help the teacher with children who need extra support.
- **Receptionist and other office staff:** your child's school may have office staff who help organise the running of the school and oversee any visitors to the school.
- **Specialist staff:** some schools will have EAL coordinators, who help children for whom English is an additional language; many schools also have SEND coordinators for children with special education needs and / or disabilities.
- **Pastoral staff:** your child's school may also have pastoral staff who look after the wider wellbeing of the children, particularly their emotional needs.

Most schools will have a website you can visit which will introduce you to who is who at your child's new school. They may have pictures your child can look at.



Mrs Allard is the headteacher of John Keble school in London



Secondary School

In secondary school different subjects will be taught by specialist teachers in different classrooms. Your child's timetable will tell them the name of the classroom. The school will make sure someone shows your child where they need to go in the first week. Your child will have one teacher who will be in charge of registering them at the beginning and end of the day.

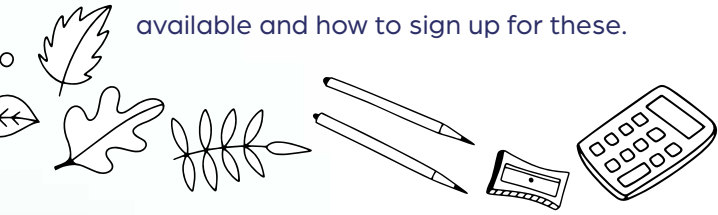
What will happen in their first week?

In their first week your child will be put into a class with roughly 30 other pupils. In primary school, this will be a mixture of boys and girls. The class will have a class teacher who will teach most of their lessons.

Your child may be given a timetable so they know when their different lessons will be. Most of the lessons will be in the same classroom. If a specialist lesson is going to be taught elsewhere (e.g. Physical Education might be outside), your child will be shown where to go. The timetable will also say when breaks from lessons and lunch time is.

It is likely that the class teacher will give your child some induction activities to help them settle in.

Many schools offer clubs that run after school. You can ask the school what clubs or activities are available and how to sign up for these.



School teacher



If you are worried about your child's wellbeing

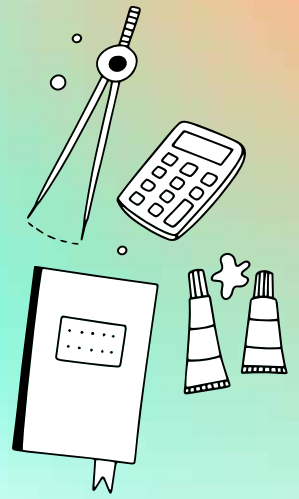
- If you are worried about your child, or if you think that they are not being treated well by other pupils, you can talk to their teacher or another member of school staff.
- The school will be able to help you because all schools will have policies and procedures in place to respond to these concerns.
- If you think that your child is being mistreated by their teachers or other school staff, you could contact the safeguarding lead at the school or the senior leadership, or you could contact your local authority. If you need advice or guidance, you can contact the UK's leading children's charity, the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children), using the free phone number **0808 800 5000**.

What will it be like in their classroom?

Your child will spend a lot of their time in their classroom. The picture below is an example of a primary school classroom.



If you have access to the internet, scan this QR code or go to reuk.org to see a video of Maggie and Mia from John Keble school showing you around their classroom. We hope after reading this your child feels more comfortable about what school will be like and can look forward to meeting their class and their teacher.



School children at their desks



White board

Class screen



Teacher's desk

Children's desks

Other sources of support

At REUK we are education specialists, however there are many other local and national organisations and charities, as well as government provision, that can help you and your family settle in more broadly. This section provides some additional information on where else support can be found.

Activities to do with your children

As you settle into your new home, and as you prepare for your child to start school, you might find it helpful to get involved with activities in your local area. There are lots of fun things to do for free with your children in the UK. Here are a few ideas:

- Your local area will have a play park for children with swings and slides and outdoor space for you to enjoy.
- Many of the UK's museums can be accessed free of charge.
- Lots of urban areas have city farms you can visit.
- If you have children who are preschool age, there is probably a local toddler's group you can attend to meet and spend time with other families.
- Faith groups often run evening clubs for primary and secondary school children.

Do ask someone local what is available in your area and if there are any children's centres nearby.

Other helpful charities

Below is a list of other charities who offer different types of support to refugees:

Refugee Council – refugeecouncil.org.uk

The Refugee Council can provide crisis advice and practical support. They can help you integrate into your new community and offer mental health counselling.

Refugee Action – refugee-action.org.uk

Refugee Action can give you practical support to help you settle into your new home and community.

National Zakat Foundation – nzf.org.uk

If your family is Muslim, the National Zakat Foundation has a number of different funds – a hardship fund, an education fund, a housing fund, and a work fund – which you can apply to for financial assistance.

British Red Cross – redcross.org.uk

The British Red Cross are still working on the ground in Afghanistan. If you have family affected by the recent developments in Afghanistan the British Red Cross International Family Tracing service might be able to help.

Citizens Advice Centres – citizensadvice.org.uk

There are Citizens Advice centres across the country. Citizens Advice provides advice on rights regarding benefits, work, debt and money, housing, family, the law and immigration. You can ask for help online or ask where your local centre is if you would like to speak to someone in person.



Migrant Help – migranthelpuk.org

Migrant Help helps to protect people affected by displacement and exploitation, helping them to thrive and recover from their trauma. They have different key services, including resettlement support, and interpretation services. They have information if you are concerned about loved ones in Afghanistan.

NSPCC – nspcc.org.uk

NSPCC is the UK's leading charity for children. They have a range of programmes to prevent child abuse, help rebuild children's lives and support families. One of their services is a helpline. If you are worried about a child, even if you are unsure, you can call **0808 800 5000** to speak to a professional counsellor for help, advice and support.

Online wellbeing resources

Wellbeing exercises

If you have access to the internet there are a number of breathing, relaxation, anxiety response, and sleep exercises available online in Pashto and Dari. Scan the following QR code or go to reuk.org/welcome to access these resources.



Childline (for children) – childline.org.uk

NSPCC runs a helpline for children, called Childline. Childline can help anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue that they are going through – big or small. Your child can talk to a trained counsellor for free, confidentially, at any time of the day and night. They can contact Childline by phone (by calling **0800 111**), by email, or through a one to one counsellor chat. Please note that Childline does not normally have interpreters.

Adult Education Courses

There are lots of ESOL courses (English for Speakers of Other Languages) across the country that can help you with your speaking, listening, reading and writing, and through which you can gain qualifications to prove your language proficiency. There is a lot of free provision, so do ask what is available locally.

Interpretation services

If you need interpretation for any key meetings or events, do talk to your support worker if you have one. You could suggest the following services which provide low-cost interpretation services for refugees and migrants:

- Clear Voice (part of Migrant Help) – clearvoice.org.uk
- Praxis' interpretation service – praxis.org.uk/interpreting



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