**Background information for the Children and Families Wellbeing Project**

The Syrian resettlement programmes have been running in Yorkshire and Humberside for over 2 years, with every Local Authority taking part. All Local Authorities and partners across the region work collaboratively and closely, with Migration Yorkshire providing a direct project management role for all except one area. Different areas started with varying experiences of migration and we have enabled learning and development across the region supporting those with previously less experience or expertise in refugee issues. The partnership working has led to a number of regional initiatives including the setting up of mental health support across most of the region provided by specialist refugee mental health providers, Solace, Haven and Refugee Council.

Through this and the regional partnership work with Local Authorities, it is becoming increasingly apparent that children arriving from Syria are suffering from trauma caused by family separation/ death, war trauma and bombing, complex family ill health and dynamics associated with stressful relocation/ adaptation to interim countries and UK. The experience of complex trauma is having an impact on their family life, school attendance/ behaviour and ability to integrate in the following ways:

1. According to agencies working within the field, trauma is affecting children’s ability to settle, adapt culturally and integrate into their local community. It also affects family relationships where stressed parents do not yet have the support networks to provide consistent boundaries around behaviour. Where serious concerns have been identified, children are not meeting the threshold for CAMHS services, as mainstream mental health services may not see war-related trauma as within their remit.

1. Schools can represent a safe place for refugee children, providing structure/ routine and enabling faster integration for the whole family. However, schools in Y&H are reporting behaviours they find alarming and may misinterpret as they fall outside of mainstream safeguarding guidelines. This is causing increased distress to children and families when inappropriate actions, such as exclusions are taking place because schools do not have the expertise or remit to deal with post-traumatic stress symptoms caused by living in war zones.
2. The other issue that adds to the situation of settling children into schools/ isolation and impacts mental health wellbeing is the placement of children and young people in schools that are not very culturally diverse/ not used to receiving EAL refugee learners. Schools can lack experience, understanding and support strategies to best help these isolated learners.

The project aims to provide early interventions for newly-arrived traumatised refugee children and their families to help them feel safe and secure in their new environment, including in the school setting, by providing support from specialist mental health providers.

This project will work alongside existing therapy provision, working with trained interpreters, Migration Yorkshire allocations team, Refugee Council and Local Authority Keyworkers and other organisations to assess need and provide early intervention.

Solace will establish a new team of family and children’s therapists to set up and deliver the project. It will be an integral part of Solace’s service provision, although the team will work exclusively with people referred to this specific project.