



## Language Support for Migrants *A Council of Europe Toolkit*

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### Tool 3 - Some considerations to be aware of when working with recently arrived migrants

**Aim: To offer recommendations on issues relating to the needs of recently arrived migrants, especially refugees.**

All staff, especially teachers and volunteers, need to take account of the emotional state of recently arrived migrants, especially those who are refugees, by following the recommendations below.

- If you are already working with a group of learners, prepare them for the arrival of new members of the group by providing some information about their background.
- Welcome the new arrivals and try to reassure them. Aim to create an atmosphere in which the new arrivals feel able to express themselves and to share whatever information they wish about themselves but expect different individuals to behave differently.
- In general terms, respect the privacy of the migrants you are working with and remind all learners of principles such as tolerance and respect.
- It is important to avoid discussing topics which may distress migrants, especially refugees, or which may make them feel uncomfortable, such as their experiences while travelling to reach safety. If sensitive issues are raised by other learners, they may upset new arrivals and cause them to withdraw from learning activities.
- Some refugees may spontaneously talk about their traumatic experiences. If they do so, listen with empathy and show that you are interested in them as people. If you feel that some individuals are still suffering from the effects of these experiences, seek the help of a psychologist or counsellor.
- Refugees suffering trauma may be disorientated and upset, and may have problems with concentration and memory, so they may need more encouragement to participate in learning activities.
- Consider carefully the following main needs, and try to identify who is available to help with them:
  - the need for healthcare: some migrants, especially refugees, may be exhausted and distressed when they arrive. They may also be ill due to difficult conditions during their journey.
  - their welfare needs: depending on their accommodation arrangements, they may not have easy access to good food, suitable sleeping and bathroom arrangements, clean clothes, etc.
  - the need for orientation and information about their new environment, the language support programme, etc.
- Discuss these and similar difficulties with other colleagues, such as healthcare staff, counsellors and social workers and those in charge of administrative procedures.
- Dealing with traumatised refugees may itself be traumatic, so never try to handle serious cases alone: get help from other members of staff and discuss your experiences with an expert.