



Press Release – Thursday 14 April 2022

Mental health professionals develop Psychological First Aid Kit for families hosting Ukrainian refugees

A Psychological First Aid (PFA) guide has been compiled by the Psychological Society of Ireland's (PSI) Special Interest Group in Human Rights & Psychology (SIGHRP). This guide is for those who will have contact with Ukrainian refugees and will be useful for those involved with hosting Ukrainians displaced by the conflict. It is aimed at helping the public understand how best to support people who have experienced a significant trauma.

PFA is humane, supportive, and practical assistance to fellow human beings who recently suffered exposure to serious stressors. It is a way of providing support from one human to another human who is experiencing distress. The Psychological Society of Ireland's SIGHRP was formed to bring psychological thinking and science to the discourse on human rights, and to promote the use of psychology to understand and support human dignity and health equity.

The guide contains a list of helpful do's and don'ts to help address the needs of people following a refuge-seeking crisis event:

- Do facilitate familiar routines (sleeping, eating, self-care);
- Do help people feel calm and hopeful;
- Do connect people to correct information, services, and social supports (especially access to or location of loved ones);
- Do help people regain control of their lives and involve themselves in decision-making;
- Don't intrude or ask people to analyse what happened, rather provide personal space;
- Don't encourage re-telling of traumatic events, rather listen to personal stories when they are volunteered;
- Don't exaggerate what you don't know, voice your opinion, or draw from personal experiences; just listen.

Elaine Martin (Principal Psychologist Specialist) of the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) said: "How the human brain and body react to trauma is universal. How a person makes meaning of what is happening and what they do to heal is mediated by culture and personal history. As

hosts we must take care not to impose our western perspective on mental health care. In our rush to help we can blunder. It is time to be humble, tread lightly, listen and learn.”

The Psychological First Aid (PFA) guide can be [viewed here](#).

ENDS

For further information, or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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To note:

- The *rapid response psychology tool* to aid the public's assistance to Ukrainian refugees arriving in Ireland, which was produced by the PSI's Special Interest Group in Human Rights, [can be viewed here](#);
- The PSI, with circa 4,000 members, is the professional body for psychology and psychologists in the Republic of Ireland;
- The PSI's Special Interest Group in Human Rights & Psychology was formed to bring psychological thinking and science to the discourse on human rights, and to promote the use of psychology to understand and support human dignity and health equity;
- The PSI is committed to maintaining high standards of practice in psychology and also to exploring new and innovative ways of furthering psychology as an applied science.