

High-level summary PTSD and sleep

Introduction

The current literature shows that Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) have higher levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder than their counterparts.

Aims

The UASC project in reception centres in Kent aims that compromised emotional health and well-being is identified.

Methods

The UASC project is using an action research methodology which observes the experience and bodily response to the journey made in the migration process.

Interventions have been formulated with knowledge gained through multi-disciplinary conversations in which a new understanding of symptoms was recognised.

Results

In the referrals being received, a recurring symptoms being described was the inability to sleep, lack of concentration and poor emotional regulation.

Concurrent with this, reception centre staff reported that this cohort of young people complained of insomnia and struggled to be awake during the day. Also Paediatricians who undertook Initial Health Assessments reported that a characteristic symptom in relationship to their screening for post-traumatic stress disorder was sleep related concerns.

Yet when UASC's were asked about their journey, they described sleeping during the day in groups and then traveling during the night. They described needing to sleep in packs, so that those on the outside of the pack would be vigilant to ensure safety.

The findings showed that the symptoms reported were contextual to the journey made, rather than necessarily symptomatic to PTSD.

Conclusions

UASC who are newly arrived in the UK have been found to be nocturnal in sleep pattern and needing interventions that support them regulating their body clocks and reducing the habitual hyper-vigilance that was required on the asylum journey.

Without this type of intervention the likelihood to thrive and to acclimatise to living in the UK is likely to be compromised.

