TOOL 03

FINDING OUR MORAL EDGES

A tool for anticipating difficult situations, exploring responsibilities and deciding how to respond.



REFUGEE YOUTH SERVICE
LEARNING HUB

PART OF THE LEARNING HUB

This Tool is part of the Refugee Youth Service Learning Hub, which brings together Insights, Practice Guides and Tools built from ten years of working alongside displaced children and young people.

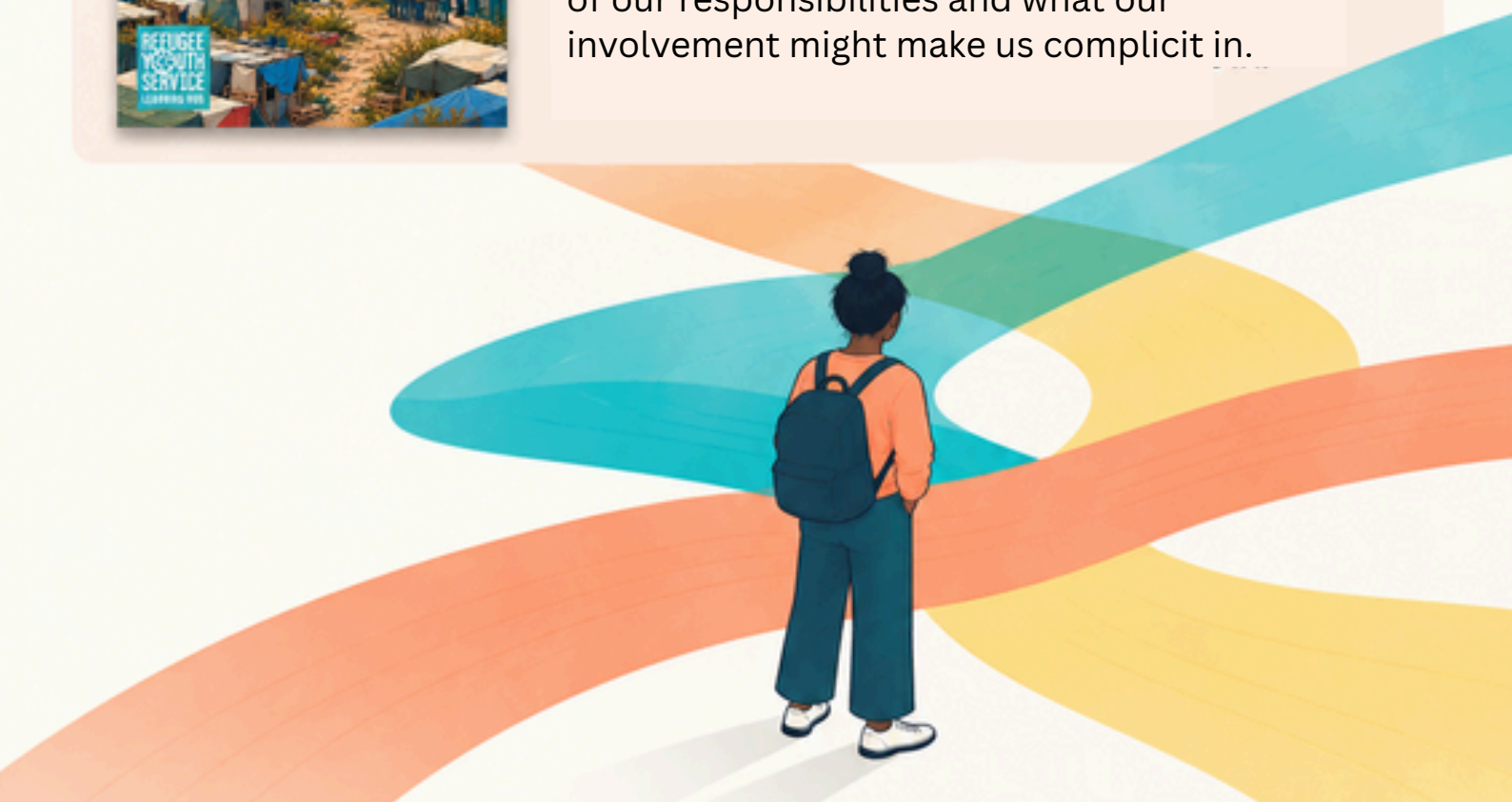
Our Tools draw on experiences from frontline practice. They help individuals and teams explore difficult questions, think through their responsibilities and make more considered decisions, particularly when there are no straightforward answers.



COMPANION READING · INSIGHT 03

Moral Edges

We recommend reading Moral Edges alongside this Tool. It explores the experiences and difficult questions that shaped these exercises, including the limits of our responsibilities and what our involvement might make us complicit in.



ABOUT THIS TOOL

Recognising the limits of our responsibilities before the pressure arrives.

What are moral edges?

Trying to help someone can sometimes take us beyond what we should or can do. As Moral Edges explores, this can happen suddenly, when a crisis pushes us to make decisions that aren't ours to make. Or it can happen gradually, as we take on responsibilities that belong to others, until an exceptional response becomes part of our everyday work.

In either case, we risk becoming complicit in processes or systems that we should be questioning.

Why use this tool?

Whether a difficult situation arises suddenly or develops over time, it can be hard to recognise where our responsibilities begin and end. This Tool helps individuals and teams anticipate difficult situations, explore the questions they raise, and make more conscious and shared decisions, rather than simply responding to pressure or allowing existing arrangements to go unquestioned.

How to use it

The Tool includes three short worksheets to work through either on your own, in supervision or as part of a team discussion.

01

ANTICIPATE

What might we be asked to do, and what pressures might we face?



02

EXAMINE

Where are our responsibilities and moral edges in this situation?



03

DECIDE

How will we respond, and how will we review and learn from this?



ANTICIPATING MORAL EDGES

What might we be asked to do when the pressure is on?

The hardest decisions often arise when somebody needs help, the usual systems are not responding, and we are asked to do something beyond our normal role. Use this exercise with your team to imagine the situations you might face. Think about who could ask you to step in, what they might need from you, and where your responsibilities could become unclear.

01 PEOPLE WE SUPPORT

What might someone ask us to do because they trust us or have nowhere else to turn?



Possible situations (from past experience or imagined)...

02 FRIENDS & FAMILY

What might relatives, friends or community members expect us to do on someone's behalf?



Possible situations (from past experience or imagined)...

03 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

What might another organisation ask us to do when its own resources or capacity fall short?



Possible situations (from past experience or imagined)...

04 OFFICIALS & STATUTORY BODIES

What might authorities ask us to do when they cannot, or will not, fulfil their responsibilities?



Possible situations (from past experience or imagined)...

NEXT STEPS

Choose one or two situations that feel particularly difficult or likely to arise in your context. Work through the Moral Edge Check on the following pages to explore where your responsibilities end, what you might become complicit in, and how you could respond.

THE MORAL EDGE CHECK

Deciding when to step in, stay alongside or hold the line.

Use these questions to think through a specific situation. This tool can be used individually, in supervision or with your team. There are no right answers, but the aim is to make the decision more conscious, shared and accountable.

01 WHAT IS HAPPENING?



Understand the situation and what is at stake.

- What is happening?
- What harm are we trying to prevent?
- What will happen if nobody acts?

Notes and reflections...

02 WHAT IS PULLING US TO ACT?



Explore the pressures and influences on our judgement.

- Why does this feel urgent?
- Are people expecting us to act?
- How might our relationships, values or past experiences be influencing us?

Notes and reflections...

03 WHERE IS OUR MORAL EDGE?

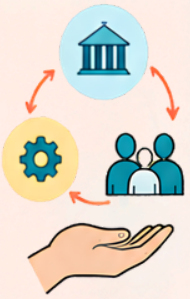


Consider what is ours to do, and what is not.

- What authority or responsibility do we have in this situation?
- What belongs to other organisations or professionals?
- Where might we be crossing a line?

Notes and reflections...

04 WHAT ARE WE BECOMING COMPLICIT IN?



Think about the bigger picture.

- What process, decision or system are we helping to sustain?
- Does our involvement make it easier for others not to act?
- Is this complicity justified by the circumstances?

Notes and reflections...

DECIDING & REVIEWING

Exploring options, agreeing a response and revisiting the decision.

Once you have worked through the first four questions, use these final steps to explore alternatives, decide on a way forward, and agree how and when to review the decision.

05 IS THERE A THIRD OPTION?

Explore ways to respond without taking over.

- Can we remain alongside, advocate, challenge or escalate?
- What support could we offer within our role?
- Are there creative alternatives?



Notes and reflections...

06 IF WE GO FURTHER, WHY?

Consider whether an exception is necessary, and if so, how it will be managed.

- What justifies going beyond our usual role?
- Who agrees with this decision?
- What are the limits and when will this end?



Notes and reflections...

07 DECISION RECORD

Use this space to summarise the decision and agree next steps.

WE WILL...

What we have agreed to do.

WE WILL NOT...

What we have agreed not to do.

IF AN EXCEPTION IS NECESSARY, WE WILL...

How it will be managed, by whom and for how long.

WE WILL REVIEW THIS DECISION WHEN...

When and how we will revisit it to prevent it becoming routine.

THANK YOU FOR READING

Continue exploring

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REFUGEE YOUTH SERVICE

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