



# Refugee Education UK strategy 2024-2027



**This document is a condensed version of our organisational strategy. For more details, please refer to our full strategy, available on our website: [reuk.org/strategy](https://reuk.org/strategy)**

“At Refugee Education UK, we have had the privilege of working alongside refugee and asylum-seeking young people for more than a decade, supporting them to access and thrive in education in the UK. Through our direct education support programmes for young people, our training programmes for educators and other practitioners, and our research and policy work, we are reminded, day-in day-out, that education is critical to the building of more hopeful futures.

Over the last few months we’ve spent time as a community of young refugees and staff team, analysing the challenges, data and potential solutions to enabling refugee children and young people to access and thrive in education – as well as being honest about our organisational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

This strategy is the result of that work – our current best thinking about how we, as an organisation, can work towards a world where all refugee young people are able to access education, thrive in education, and use that education to create a hopeful, brighter future.”

**Catherine Gladwell, Chief Executive, April 2024**



# Why we exist

In conflict, schools are destroyed, occupied by armed groups and used to shelter displaced people. Where learning continues, students and teachers can be targets of violence. For many, continuing to learn is just not possible.

When children and families are forced to flee their homes, they miss out on more education as they make dangerous journeys trying to find a place of safety.

**For young refugees arriving in the UK, education is a priority; it's how lives begin to be rebuilt, and hope for the future is rekindled. But getting back into and progressing in education is fraught with challenge.**

**We want things to be different.**

For many years, the young people we work with have told us that education is one of the few forward looking things in their lives.

**We believe that when we invest in education, it sends a clear and powerful message of hope: that there is a future, and it's a future worth investing in and preparing for.**

# Our mission

To equip young refugees to build positive futures by thriving in education.

## The values we work from

All our work is guided by three core values;

- **A foundation of hope**
- **Valuing the individual**
- **Changing the landscape**

REUK was founded by a group of volunteers from a small church in Harlesden, London, motivated by a conviction that one of the practical outworkings of the Christian faith is to provide care, support and welcome to the displaced. We carry out our work in the context of this Christian history and ethos.

**REUK is a community of young people, volunteers and staff members of all faiths and none, learning from each other and journeying together as we pursue quality education for all young refugees.**

We respect faith, culture, and the role of these in our own lives and in the lives of the young people we work with. We support all young refugees and asylum seekers whatever their faith, religion or beliefs.

## Our objectives

### • **Education Access**

Young refugees will be better able to access education, from primary school to university

### • **Education Thriving**

Young refugees will achieve better academic and psychosocial outcomes

### • **Education change**

Education systems will be environments where young refugees are welcomed and enabled to thrive

**There are more people displaced globally than ever before**

**At the end of June 2023, there were an estimated 241,000 refugees in the UK, with a further 175,000 asylum seekers awaiting a decision. Refugees from Ukraine account for almost half of the UK refugee population. Resettlement pathways are very limited and protect only a tiny minority.**

**Charities within the UK migration sector are struggling; research and policy work in particular is poorly resourced. There is high dependency on trusts and foundations for income; financial reserves are low.**

**There is global recognition of the importance of education for refugees, and increasing appetite – and commitments – from international bodies, education institutions and local authorities who want to be part of the solution.**

**Refugee children and young people continue to face significant challenges to both accessing and thriving in education, at all levels, and there is no overarching policy framework dedicated to their integration into the UK education system.**

**The asylum policy environment is increasingly hostile. The Illegal Migration Act 2023 and The Borders & Nationalities Act 2022 have made asylum policy more restrictive and punitive than ever before. Public opinion however, may have warmed – but those opposed are very hostile and fueled by a skeptical media.**

In order to achieve our ambition for the next three years, we will organise our work around three key pillars:



## Education Access

- Access to Education Advice Line
- Access to Schools
- Access to FE
- Access to HE
- Pathways

**Pillar 1**

## Education Thriving

- Early Skills  
(Orientation Programme)
- Academic Community and Learning  
(Educational Mentoring and Study Groups)
- Education Wellbeing

**Pillar 2**

## Education Change

- Research, policy and advocacy
- Youth Advocacy and leadership
- Education professional networks:  
training and good practice

**Pillar 3**

# Pillar 1: Education Access

More than half of the world's refugee children are out of school, and only 6% access university. In the UK, they face waits of up to 9 months for school places on arrival.

As they progress to further and higher education, eligibility, finance, language and academic barriers accumulate, leaving young refugees locked out of education and denied the chance to build a future.

## As a result of our work:

- Young refugees will better understand and navigate the UK education system
- Young refugees will enrol in education in the UK
- Education practitioners and institutions will take actions to welcome and support refugee children

In the long term, as a result of the work within this pillar, **young refugees will be better able to access education, from primary school to university.**



## Pillar 2: Education Thriving

Getting into education is just the first step.

Once there, language barriers, gaps in previous learning and mental health challenges mean young refugees achieve poorer education outcomes – with unaccompanied children 3 years behind non-migrant children by the time they complete secondary school.

### As a result of our work:

- Refugee children and young people demonstrate improved basic skills
- Refugee children and young people report improved emotional wellbeing/resilience
- Refugee children and young people meet key educational goals

In the long term, as a result of the work within this pillar, **young refugees will achieve better academic and psychosocial outcomes.**



## Pillar 3: Education Change

There is no overarching policy framework for the integration of refugee learners into the UK education system, and there are key evidence gaps in what works best in education for refugee children.

School leaders and teachers want to help, but lack the needed training and support. Good practice is often hidden and the expertise of young refugees is not considered in policy making.

### As a result of our work:

- Evidence generated by REUK influences decision makers and the refugee education ecosystem
- Refugee children and young people are valued and listened to by education system decision makers
- Education practitioners and institutions take actions to welcome and support refugee children

In the long term, as a result of the work within this pillar, **education systems, practices and policies will enable young refugees to thrive.**

## Invest in systems and processes

We will ensure we have **appropriate financial and practical infrastructure** to do our work safely and well – including the systems that allow us to **monitor our impact**, manage the growing number of relationships we hold, and the IT resources appropriate to the size and scale of our work.

## Invest in people and culture

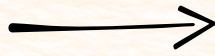
We will continue to invest in our **anti-racism, equality, diversity and inclusion work** doing more to **centre the voices and experiences of those with lived experience of forced migration**. We will continue to prioritise **staff care**, and will improve our internal staff development.

## Invest in resources and fundraising

Our **fundraising capacity** needs to grow to support the size and scope of our programmes. We aim to **diversify our income** by building better and stronger relationships with individual supporters, corporates, generating earned income through training and consultancy work and by getting better at **telling the stories that reveal the impact of our work**.

# Where we will work: A national strategy

## Strengthen



## Grow



Ensure our London-based work is fully benefiting from **our new home, The Lighthouse** – and that this national headquarters will operate in such a way that our work across the whole country is strengthened and equipped.

Aim to **strengthen the existing non-London hubs** in the West Midlands (in particular) and in Oxfordshire.

When advertising roles within the team, the starting point will be that (unless the funding or specific work dictates otherwise) **the roles can be carried out from any of our three in-person offices** – London, Birmingham or Oxford.

When we are next in a position to proactively open a **new hub**, we will prioritise doing so in the **north of England or one of the devolved nations**.

We will only do this when we are in a position to fund two in-person roles.

Other potential growth is likely to be subject to **Local Authorities commissioning** orientation programmes within their region.



# Support our work

## Join us

There are many ways to get involved with the REUK community.

Sign up to our newsletter  
[reuk.org/keepupdated](https://reuk.org/keepupdated)

Become a volunteer mentor  
[reuk.org/mentoring](https://reuk.org/mentoring)



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