

HOW TO SUPPORT TRANSITIONS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REFUGEE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK

ADVICE FOR SIXTH FORMS AND COLLEGES

This advice sheet provides sixth forms and colleges with key information about how they can help refugee and asylum-seeking young people reach higher education (HE). It accompanies the research report [Education Transitions for Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Young People in the UK](#).

KEY FACTS: RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS TO HE

All young people, regardless of their immigration status, have the right to access education. But globally, only 3% of refugees reach university.¹ There are a number of challenges preventing many young refugees and asylum seekers from accessing university in the UK, including immigration status.

 IMMIGRATION STATUS	 TOP-LEVEL SUMMARY OF ENTITLEMENTS IN ENGLAND ²
Asylum seekers	Likely to be classified as overseas students and unable to access student finance
Limited Leave to Remain ³ Discretionary Leave to Remain ⁴	Likely to be classified as overseas students and unable to access student finance. However, a number of exceptions exist including the 'Seven year/half-life rule'
Indefinite Leave to Remain Section 67 Leave Calais Leave	Eligible for home fees and student finance but required to prove three years' ordinary residency
Refugee status Humanitarian protection ⁵	Eligible for home fees and student finance

'NO STUDY' CONDITIONS

While the 'no study' conditions that were introduced in 2018 have led to some restrictions to access to education, being Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE) does **not** automatically equate to being unable to study. For more information on the 'no study' condition, please see Coram Children's Legal Centre's [fact sheet on 'no study' conditions and immigration bail](#).

NOTE: The above is a summary. Always check Coram Children's Legal Centre's [fact sheet on access to HE](#) and [UKCISA](#) for detailed and up to date information.

REACHING HIGHER EDUCATION: HOW TO HELP

Lots can be done to help young refugees and asylum seekers access university. There are actions that you as an individual can take now, and things your institution can do in the longer term. Below are **5** challenges young people may face, and how you and your institution can help.

1

CHALLENGE: INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

 MECHANISM FOR HELP	 THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW	 THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO
 <p>ACCURATE ADVICE AND GUIDANCE ON RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS</p>	<p>If you know that a young person is from a refugee or asylum-seeking background, have sensitive conversations with them about their status and their rights and entitlements to university, particularly if their status leaves them ineligible for home fees and student finance.</p> <p>Get up-to-date and accurate information before you have these conversations: check Coram Children’s Legal Centre’s fact sheet and UKCISA guidance. If you have any questions, you can read RSN’s FAQs or email RSN’s Access to HE helpline.</p> <p>Read RSN’s Thinking Ahead to Higher Education Toolkit.</p>	<p>Ensure there is a trained focal point who can respond to queries from refugee and asylum-seeking students and support their education progression.</p> <p>Ensure the availability of additional support for refugees and asylum seekers is well advertised and that young people know who they can approach for support if they want it.</p> <p>Run training or awareness-raising initiatives for all staff about the challenges refugees and asylum seekers face progressing in their education.</p>

2

CHALLENGE: IMPLICATIONS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS

 MECHANISM FOR HELP	 THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW
 <p>ACCESSING SCHOLARSHIPS</p>	<p>Support young people to identify potential scholarships at universities or through private providers. STAR provides an overview of universities offering sanctuary scholarships.</p> <p>Encourage young people not eligible for home fees or student finance to only apply to universities that offer scholarships for seekers of sanctuary.</p> <p>Encourage young people to apply to UCAS as early as possible to give them the best chance of accessing scholarships. Ideally, they should start work on personal statements the summer before they apply.</p> <p>Work with young people with eligibility for home fees and student finance to challenge wrong decisions made by Student Finance England or universities.</p>
 <p>EXTEND STUDY AT FE LEVEL</p>	<p> THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO</p> <p>Extend opportunities for students to continue studying so that they do not have an enforced gap in their education trajectory if they must wait to meet ordinary residency requirements. For example, consider establishing programmes which allow young people to complete A-Levels over three years.</p>

3

CHALLENGE: UNIVERSITY ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

 MECHANISM FOR HELP	 THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW	
 <p>ADVICE ON COMPLETING THE UCAS APPLICATION AND PROVIDING REFERENCES</p>	<p>Encourage students to alert universities that they are from a forced migration background in their UCAS application, explaining that this will be to their advantage as a potential contextual admissions candidate. This should be done in both the personal statement and the reference.</p> <p>Encourage students to display how their personal experience has driven their motivation to study their chosen subject, if they are comfortable to do so.</p> <p>If you are providing a reference, detail how a young person's forced migration experience has affected their educational experience. Mention if the young person is also in care, living independently, and/or has had an interrupted education. Include any evidence to demonstrate their rapid educational progress or academic resilience.</p>	

4

CHALLENGE: EDUCATION PATHWAYS

 MECHANISM FOR HELP	 THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW	 THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO
 <p>EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT</p>	<p>Refer young people into educational mentoring programmes or English/English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) groups.</p>	<p>Set up ESOL groups within the sixth form or college.</p> <p>Provide small group and/or one-to-one education support within the institution.</p>
 <p>LONGER TERM PLANNING</p>	<p>Invite voluntary sector organisations or community groups to run tailored guidance and pathway planning sessions for young refugees and asylum seekers as early as possible.</p> <p>Consider summer interventions that may help students create more competitive UCAS applications. For example, organise work experience for young people who haven't had the opportunity yet.</p> <p>If their GCSE or predicted grades don't reflect their academic potential, encourage young people to read relevant academic books or undertake MOOCs, which can help them to display this potential in their personal statement.</p>	<p>Organise school trips or taster days with universities.</p>

CHALLENGE: APPLICATION PRESSURE AND MENTAL HEALTH

 MECHANISM FOR HELP	 THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW	 THINGS YOUR INSTITUTION CAN DO
 <p>SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT AND PASTORAL SUPPORT</p>	<p>Provide young people with additional targeted support with their university applications, including with drafting person statements for UCAS and scholarships and providing interview practice.</p> <p>Encourage young people to complete their UCAS application before January in order to spread out work on the UCAS application and scholarship applications.</p>	<p>Ensure that strong pastoral and mental health support is available. Draw on services that provide youth-focused counselling and wellbeing activities. Be particularly mindful of key pressure points (particularly exams and university application periods).</p> <p>Work with families and parents to help them understand the pressures that young people are likely to be facing.</p>

For more details, contact [Refugee Support Network](#) or [Unicef UK](#).

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1 UNHCR (2020). Coming together for refugee education: education report 2020. UNHCR. www.unhcr.org/5f4f9a2b4

2 For a detailed overview of entitlements in Scotland and Wales please see [UKCISA](#).

3 While government guidance on LLR and DLR was updated following the 2015 Tigere case, Coram Children's Legal Centre notes that a narrow interpretation of the guidance still excludes those who have arrived in the UK as teenagers. For more details: www.childrenslegalcentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Higher-Education-May2017.final_.pdf

4 As above.

5 That those with Humanitarian Protection no longer have to demonstrate 3 years ordinary residency is a new progression [March 2020] that may not yet be reflected in Coram's fact sheet. See [UKCISA](#) for more.