



RESEARCH SUMMARY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Transitions through education for refugee and asylum-seeking young people in the UK

This research summary is based on the findings of Refugee Support Network (RSN) and Unicef UK's research report, [Transitions through education for refugee and asylum-seeking young people in the UK](#). It provides a brief overview of the key findings that emerged from the research. For more detail, please read the full report.

For children and young people who have been forced to flee their homes, education is a source of hope, a space of safety, and a path to opportunities for the future. But, across the world, only 3 percent of refugees reach university.¹

What helps refugees and asylum seekers in the UK make progress in their education? And what makes their journey difficult?

A little bit about the research

This research, which was commissioned by Unicef UK and conducted by Refugee Support Network (RSN), examines refugee and asylum-seeking young people's education journeys through the UK education system. The research specifically explores the journey to further education (sixth form or college) and higher education (university).

The research is based on the experiences of more than 500 young people and practitioners in the UK from three new sources:

- interviews with experts and practitioners across the sector in England
- interviews and focus groups with refugee and asylum-seeking young people
- anonymised data from three RSN education programmes

Overarching factors affecting education progression

What hinders?

- A lack of support and encouragement, which can mean a young person doubting their abilities and goals
- Poor mental health and emotional well-being
- Experiences of poverty and financial hardship

"Even if [young people] are ready and willing to go to college, literally a £1.50 bus fare is what stops them."

What supports?

- Always providing support through challenging times
- A young person's ability to be resilient in the face of challenges
- Welcoming and encouraging educational environments

"I said to myself 'I'm gonna go [to college], I'm gonna keep doing this so I can build up my education'. I didn't lose hope."

Transitions to further education

What hinders?

- The implications of some immigration statuses when a young person is over the age of 18
- Not enough accurate information, advice and guidance
- A lack of adequate opportunities to meet a young person's educational goals
- The impact of immigration systems and procedures
- Reluctance from some sixth forms and colleges to admit refugee or asylum-seeking students

"Some people go to college [...] twice a week for three hours. In my humble opinion, that's not enough at all [...] it is something you need to do every day."

What supports?

- Targeted support with college application and enrolment processes
- Sixth forms and colleges with inclusive and welcoming approaches
- Long-term educational guidance and pathway planning

"[Young refugees and asylum seekers] need the same opportunities [as other students] to think about where they want to go in the future."



Transitions to higher education

What hinders?

- Not enough accurate information, advice and guidance
- Some immigration statuses leaving a young person ineligible for home fees and financial support
- Entry requirements that are challenging for young people with disrupted educational histories to meet
- The pressure of university application processes
- Reluctance from some universities to admit refugee and asylum-seeking students

"My whole journey was about finding the information that wasn't given to me and then [...] making my own way into university."

What supports?

- Long-term educational guidance, advice and support
- Participation in pre-university opportunities such as open days and summer schools
- Scholarship schemes – from universities and other sources, such as foundations
- Clear information and flexible approaches from universities

"On the open day, you meet others who are in that situation [...] we understand each other. That gives you hope. You don't feel alone."

Conclusion

This research shows that young refugees and asylum seekers face many barriers to realising their right to education. These barriers can build up as young people attempt to reach college and university, and can become increasingly difficult to overcome.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Our research clearly demonstrates that progress is achievable. There are actions that can be taken – by government, education institutions and voluntary and private sector organisations – to help make it possible for refugees and asylum seekers to reach further and higher education.