



Young refugee strategy

Delivering towards Strategy 2030

Who we are

The British Red Cross is here for humanity.

We are part of the world's largest humanitarian network. Our teams stretch across the UK and 190 countries, ready to support people when the worst happens. Together, we help people prepare for, respond to, and recover from crisis – including those seeking safety in the UK.

Today, more people are being forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence, and persecution than ever before. Helping people experiencing **displacement and migration** has never been more important. Whether they are adults, children, or families, we help displaced people arriving in the UK, bringing hope and life-changing support.

This is our young refugee strategy for the next five years, setting out our focus for displaced children and young people. It is a strategy for our young refugee work and is guided by the British Red Cross mission and the fundamental principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.



Our mission

To mobilise the power of humanity so that people can prepare for, respond to, and recover from crisis.

Our fundamental principles

- **Humanity:** We prevent and relieve human suffering wherever it is found.
- **Impartiality:** We help without discrimination, focusing only on people's needs.
- **Neutrality:** We do not take sides in conflicts or political controversies.
- **Independence:** We are independent from governments and other organisations.
- **Voluntary service:** We are a voluntary movement not driven by profit.
- **Unity:** There can only be one Red Cross or Red Crescent in any country and its humanitarian work must be open to all.
- **Universality:** We are part of a global network that helps people around the world.

Why we need this strategy

Humanitarian challenges are affecting people's homes and lives. Young people seeking safety face many risks and barriers. Helping them to dream big and build a future has never been more important.

Fact: According to the United Nations, nearly 50 million children under the age of 18 are displaced, making up about 40 per cent of the global displaced population.

Children and young people are **vulnerable to crisis**. They face displacement during their most formative years. Losing family and the traumatic things they've seen can have long-term effects.

After enduring dangerous journeys, they arrive in the UK, where too many risk **missing out on care and support**. Without knowing English and their rights, their ability to be children and youth is disrupted. They may become isolated and easy targets for exploitation and criminal activity.

Changes in the world around us can disproportionately affect children and young people. Wider economic challenges have put incredible **pressure on public services**, making it harder for them to get youth-focused support.

The **digital world** is changing how they live and communicate. Challenges in society impact young refugees at a time in their lives when they are less equipped to deal with them.





Looking to the future

We want every young refugee arriving in the UK to live with safety and dignity. In a changing world, this is not a small task. But as the British Red Cross, we are part of the world's largest humanitarian network, and every year we support over 5,000 young refugees in the UK.

That's why we will continue to help where we are needed the most and can make the most difference. Young refugees are at a higher risk of crisis but face barriers to growing up in a safe and supportive environment. We believe we can make the biggest difference by working with them to restore their **safety, dignity and connection with loved ones**.

To do this, and to do it well, we will work together with **young people** to provide humanitarian support that protects and fulfils their rights. Internationally, we are part of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, which believes that every young person is resilient and ready to make a difference.

The big picture

This strategy delivers towards the migration and displacement goals of **British Red Cross strategy 2030, whose vision is to restore safety, dignity and connections with loved ones for those who are displaced, focusing on most urgent cases of need.**

We believe young people have amazing potential and can create a world where everyone gets the help they need in a crisis. That is why this strategy also supports our **youth engagement strategy 2035**.

The British Red Cross puts communities first. This strategy supports our **community education** mission to transform lives through humanitarian education – highlighting the experiences of young refugees in schools and creating fairer, compassionate spaces for them.

The young refugee strategy, youth engagement strategy, and our community engagement mission each sit under and contribute to the delivery of our overarching **strategy 2030**, while also working together and supporting each other.



How we shaped this strategy

Young people are experts on their own lives. We see this in the vibrant communities they create – staying connected with each other and with family, building diverse friendships, being active and motivated, and keeping their culture and values alive.

This is why we spoke directly with young people aged 15 to 25 who access our services as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, young adults, or newly arrived family members.

We worked together in group sessions to help shape the objectives and outcomes of this strategy. We asked them what they hope to achieve in the UK, what they need to feel safe and what they're looking for in coming to the British Red Cross.

Our new strategy is shaped by their voices and experiences. We developed it together and we will deliver it together.

Insight: Young people in Birmingham, Glasgow, Gravesend and London shared their views with us. Across all groups, the top priority was learning English, followed by fulfilling their rights and taking part in community activities.





Who we are here for

We support children and young people up to age 25 who are fleeing their homes for safety. We focus on three groups where we can have the greatest impact.

1

Unaccompanied and separated children

Unaccompanied children are in the UK without their family. They may be in care or not be recognised as children. Separated children have arrived without their parents but live with other relatives.

2

Newly arrived children in families

Children arriving with family who are seeking asylum, or arriving through safe migration routes to join a refugee parent or caregiver.

3

Young adults (18 to 25)

Young people navigating early adulthood while seeking asylum or arriving through safe routes.

Our ambition and objective

Our ambition

Young refugees receive support in a crisis and are resilient.

Our objective

Restore young refugees' **safety, dignity, and connections with loved ones**, including access to safe and inclusive development opportunities.

What we will do

Our activities for young refugees are: **help in a crisis, development opportunities, and support efforts to speak up for change.** In each of these, we will work to restore their safety, dignity and connections with loved ones.



1

Help in a crisis

The challenge

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children face typical issues of their age, but also grapple with unique obstacles such as loss of family, language barriers, loneliness, and for some, age dispute and exploitation. Without support, they are forced into adult responsibilities and may struggle for basics like safety, food and housing.

Additionally, **newly arrived children in families** need support to rebuild their lives after leaving behind everything they knew as home. They face difficulties with housing, education, health, and benefits, impacting their ability to be children.

Young adults (18 to 25) face challenges as they transition through early adulthood. Navigating the immigration system is hard, and those experiencing exploitation or gender-based violence need specialist support. Looked-after children may have little support after turning 18.



The opportunity

Drawing on decades of expertise, we will help in a crisis. We will provide casework support to **unaccompanied children** to enter into care, and we will help those with age disputes to be recognised as children. Survivors of exploitation will receive specialist support to recover and access their rights, including child-specific protections.

We will continue our strong work in tracing and reuniting separated families. Young refugees can trace loved ones if they wish to, and **newly arrived families** will access housing, education, healthcare, and benefits for their children.

Young adults will be guided through the asylum and government systems until they feel strong and ready to take steps themselves.

As challenges change and the world arounds us shifts, our help in a crisis must stay flexible to meet people's needs. We will continue to develop our support based on young people's views and our expertise, ensuring that our help in a crisis continues to be impactful.

2

Development opportunities

The challenge

All young people have dreams and want to build a future, but young refugees face unique challenges. Their **education** has been disrupted, and there is no automatic access to formal learning opportunities in the UK and no specialist support. Lack of English language support, delays in entering education, and living in isolated areas can limit their ability to learn and grow, making it harder to **prepare for the future**.

Governments and other agencies have recognised the need for children and young people to develop holistically. We need to make sure that young refugees not only receive support during times of crisis but also have opportunities to **develop as young people** and reach their potential.



The opportunity

We will continue to provide targeted support for young refugees to learn and grow.

Our dedicated young refugee teams are experts at delivering group activities and fill a vital gap in the system. Young people will continue to come together in safe, supervised spaces where they can build life skills, form peer connections, improve their English, and access academic support and opportunities offered in partnership with other organisations.

Recognising that **young women** have unique experiences, we will provide safe and supportive spaces for female-only groups to understand their rights, explore their interests, and build community.

Working closely with our youth engagement team, we will ensure that young refugees can access British Red Cross **youth opportunities**. We will work together to ensure that we create opportunities to bring young refugees closer with other young people to co-design meaningful development activities.

3

Support efforts to speak up for change

The challenge

Across the world, children and families are being forced out of their homes at a greater rate than ever to search for safety – often because of climate-triggered natural disasters, conflict, disease and poverty.

Many will have experienced severe trauma before arriving in the UK, including sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, torture, and living through conflict.

Every child and young person has the right to **safety, dignity and connections with loved ones** under the law. But when they arrive in the UK, they often face further challenges, uncertainty, and fear.



The opportunity

We will use our data and insight to support the efforts of our policy and advocacy team to bring about meaningful public policy change.

By using the power of our neutrality and impartiality, we will help create safe environments for young refugees arriving in the UK. We will draw on our evidence, insight and trusted voice to advocate for **support from day one**.

Because connections with loved ones are so crucial to young people, the British Red Cross will advocate for improved **family reunion** rights, including making it easier for siblings to reunite.

Key figures: Every year our refugee services reach over **40,000 people** in 58 towns and cities across the UK. Over **5,000** are young refugees aged 15 to 25 and around 700 are unaccompanied children. Over 40 per cent of people we support have nowhere else to turn.

How we will work

Everything we do must put the needs and potential of young refugees at the centre. We will deliver impactful services, partner with others, and support our policy team's efforts for change – from better understanding young people's strengths and needs to determining how we can make the greatest impact.

Deliver services

Whether supporting unaccompanied children, reunited families, or young adults facing challenges, we will work with young refugees safely and meaningfully. Our **casework support** and **group activities** promote their rights and their ability to be young people. We recognise the important role of families in supporting newly arrived children and are committed to developing family-based approaches where needed.

Work in partnership

We know we can't do it alone. That's why we're building strong partnerships – with charities, strategic partners, devolved governments, and other Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies – to make the greatest **impact**.

Support efforts to speak up for change

We will use the power of our neutrality and impartiality to help create safe environments for young refugees arriving in the UK. We will use our evidence, insight and trusted voice to advocate to governments for **support from day one**, as well as making it easier for siblings to **reunite**.



Young refugee outcomes

While creating this strategy, we spoke with young people about what matters to them. They shared what's important to them about life in the UK and what they hope to achieve through British Red Cross services:

- young people are informed about their rights and are more able to access relevant services
- young people have increased confidence in navigating the transition to adulthood
- young people have improved community engagement
- young people have increased life skills.

What young people told us

“The British Red Cross is the only place I call home. I met new people and made friends that I am still in touch with”

“The British Red Cross encouraged me to believe in myself and helped me discover my self-confidence”



“I know my life path and my rights as a young woman now thanks to the British Red Cross”

“Thank you for helping me to access food, medicine, and legal advice”

Our promise to young people

1

Putting rights first

We will support young refugees to access their rights fully and equally.

2

Being trauma-informed

We will recognise the impact of trauma on young people and resist re-traumatisation.

3

Child safeguarding

We will always prevent, and respond to, harm and abuse.

4

Quality services

We will build on our excellent track record of high-quality support services.

5

Data and insight

We will use our insight and evidence to support efforts to speak up for change.

6

Equity and inclusion

We will support organisational efforts to be anti-racist, inclusive and youth-centred.

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