



## 1.1 What is STAR?

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STAR is the national network of student groups working to improve the lives of refugees in the UK by:

- **Promoting positive images of refugees**
- **Volunteering for local refugee projects**
- **Campaigning for refugees**

Each STAR group is part of a network of groups that comprises over 3,000 students at 30 universities. And STAR is continually growing!

STAR student groups are independently constituted student union societies based at universities all over the UK. Groups affiliate to the national STAR network, which is coordinated and financed by the STAR national charity. Groups then receive support from the STAR National Team. The charity is governed by STAR's Board of Trustees.

Each STAR group is a member of the national charity and makes decisions about its management and direction by voting at the Annual General Meeting and getting involved in consultations throughout the year.

### **Why Promoting?**

The UK does not provide a warm welcome to refugees. Years of misrepresentation in the media and elsewhere has resulted in people seeing refugees and asylum seekers as liars and scroungers.

STAR members can promote greater understanding of refugees and asylum seekers among other students and in the local community. Students do this in lots of ways including publicity stunts like sleeping out in mock refugee shelters and hosting debates, film screenings, theatre performances and speaker events.

Universities are unique places to reach young people with the facts about refugees and increase their awareness of the difficulties of seeking protection in the UK.

By promoting positive images of refugees students can ensure that the UK will provide a warmer welcome to refugees in the future.

### **Why Volunteering?**

Life as a refugee in the UK can be full of loneliness, upheaval and uncertainty.

STAR members can make a positive difference to the lives of refugees by volunteering at local community centres and schools. Students can offer a friendly face at drop-in centres, help with English conversation, organise food parcels or clothes collections, run activity clubs and arrange day trips for refugee children.

In return, STAR members make new friends, learn new skills, learn about life as a refugee and understand why people have been forced to leave their homes.

By volunteering for local refugee projects students can support people during a difficult time and assist them to build a new life in the UK.

### **Why Campaigning?**

Over the years the Government has introduced ever stricter policies for asylum seekers and refugees: thousands are denied accommodation and financial support if their claim is refused; everyone is forbidden from working during the asylum process; and hundreds of children are held in detention every year.

STAR members can effect direct change by standing up against the unacceptable treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. Students can campaign locally, such as lobbying their university for fair access for asylum seekers or protesting against a nearby detention centre. Students can campaign nationally as part of a wide coalition of refugee organisations, such as to end the destitution of refused asylum seekers with Still Human Still Here.

By campaigning for refugees, students can change policy to directly improve the lives of refugees in the UK.