



3.4 Ideas for events

Here are some classic events to give you some inspiration.

1. Speakers

A simple and effective way to help more students learn about refugees is to invite someone with refugee experience or an expert to talk and answer questions.

Key things to remember:

- Have a clear topic
- Keep each talk short, e.g. 20 min plus 10 min for questions
- Always plan to start 10 mins after the time advertised to allow for latecomers
- Ensure there is a handout or leaflet to take away to help people remember
- Say clearly how people can find out more and get involved

Bigger Ideas:

- Arrange a series of speakers, perhaps all under a certain theme
- Invite speakers with different opinions and set up a debate
- Hold a larger conference with a few talks during an afternoon / evening

2. Stalls and leafleting

If you can't get them to come to you, then you need to go to them!

The stall is the classic tool for engaging with the public. It's simple, direct and you can reach a large number of people in a few hours.

See the Tip Box at the end of this document for how to plan the perfect stall.

3. Films, plays, exhibitions

Films, plays and exhibitions are a great way to reach a wider audience with some key facts and new insights into what it's like to flee your home and seek protection in a foreign country. And during the winter-months this is a great way to escape the grey and rainy skies!

Set up a film screening or a series of screenings at your university. Advertise to all students and make it a fun event for those who have not been to an event about refugees before.

4. Articles

A great way to get a message to lots of people, which allows space for a more detailed argument, is to publish an article in your student or local paper.

For example, you could write a piece on a specific asylum policy or about your experience volunteering.

5. Quiz

Host a pub quiz in your union with a round on refugees. Make it a fundraiser with prizes for the winners. You could get lots of societies together, with each choosing a topic for each round.

Just try to keep it fun as well as educational!

6. Poster campaign

If you're a creative bunch then perhaps a poster campaign is your best tool. If they look good and placed in tactical positions then they can be really effective.

Key things to remember:

- Have a clear message you want people to get from the poster – Is it a statistic? Is it to challenge a stereotype? Is it simply to highlight something nobody knows about?
- It must stand out from the crowd of posters. If it doesn't grab attention then it simply won't work.
- Try to avoid ambiguous messages. Once the posters are up you can't control how others will interpret it (because you won't be there to explain what you meant!). So think carefully how others might see it, get opinions from your friends, etc.
- How long will it stay up before it gets taken down? If it will only last an hour then think again where you put it.
- You'll need trillions! Well, not quite that many, but to make an impact you need to put them up everywhere all at once and have another batch ready.
- Get a team of volunteers – putting up hundreds of posters can be time-consuming work. Do it together and blitz your campus in one swoop!

You might want to think about alternatives to posters, e.g.

- Put beer mats on every union bar table
- Write messages in chalk on the ground or walls (be careful where you do this!)

7. Eye-catching stunt

Bored of standing behind a stall?

Try something a bit different to catch people's attention, to get a message across in an effective way and build your profile.

Stunts can be whatever your imagination can come up with. But think about whether they have some key elements:

- **Visual** – you either need passers-by to notice it, or local media to take a picture for the paper. Either way, it needs to look interesting.
- **Symbolic** – to make people aware of something new, or to make sure people remember what you're doing, you want a powerful image or idea (e.g. think of sitting in a cage in an orange jumpsuit outside the union)

- **New** – if it's been done a thousand times before and everyone has seen it then it will lose its impact. So try to come up with a new idea or different spin on an old one.
- **Low cost** – there are a lot of cool things you can do for free, so there's no need to plan an expensive stunt
- **Involving** – stunts which encourage people to take part rather than simply be observers are always more engaging

Top Tip – combine different events for the same message!

Focus on a single topic for a month or a term and organise various events to reach different people in different ways with the same message for maximum impact.

For example, Edinburgh STAR ran a 'Culturally Aware Campaign' – focusing on a different world region and issues specific to it each month, including publishing facts in posters and the student press and having a night with a speaker or performer related to that region.

The Perfect Stall

The stall is very simple, but to be truly effective you'll need to put some careful thought and preparation into it.

Before

- Be clear on why you are doing it, who you are trying to reach and what you are hoping to achieve (e.g. 300 signatures)
- Check where you can get permission for a stall
- Pick a spot that's busy and with plenty of space, but bear in mind practicalities (such as noise, shelter if it rains)
- Timing is crucial so plan when you will be there. Maximise the time you are putting into this stall by being there when other people are! Think lunchtimes, breaks between lectures, etc.
- Get volunteers – sign up people to a rota for 1-2 hours each, keep people in pairs and don't leave anyone too long or they'll lose enthusiasm!
- Brief volunteers – make sure everyone knows exactly what you are doing, what materials they need, etc. So give everyone the info they need at a meeting beforehand.
- Prepare all your materials – have you got your banners/leaflets etc, have you printed out petition copies, do you have pens, a cash float, etc?
- Make it attractive and get noticed – you'll need to have something to draw people to your stall: music, something colourful, a game or competition, free sweets, free *anything*...

During

- Give yourself plenty of time to set up – you don't want to be fiddling with pins and blu-tac while hundreds of potential supporters are rushing past!
- Check you're visible – can you be seen at a distance, will people know who you are or what you might be doing? Giant banners are key here.
- Be pro-active. You are in danger of wasting your time if you spend a lot of energy setting up a stall and then sit down twiddling your thumbs. And if you're working hard to get attention then you don't need to be out there for very long.
- Have a standard stationary pack with you, with scissors, tape, blu-tac, pins, marker pens, plain paper, etc.
- Keep important things safe and secure. Always know where your petition is and don't let it blow away in the wind or get lost under a pile of leaflets and rubbish.
- Promote yourself! Make sure it's obvious that this is a STAR stall and what students need to do to join.
- Take a picture! Beautiful stalls want the world to see them.

After

- Pack up and store all your materials. The end may be chaotic and you'll be exhausted, but check you have everyone and store it somewhere safe for next time.
- The job isn't quite done yet. Make the most of what you achieved with your stall but following up with the reason you did the stall in the first place. That means typing up emails, photocopying and posting petitions, putting cash collected in the bank, and so on.
- Make a note (on paper or in your head) about anything that didn't work well so you can improve next time: was the location right? Did you have enough volunteers?