

Access to Higher Education

Potential Project, 20th June 09



What is the PROBLEM and why we are trying to fix it.

There is a misunderstanding that everyone in the UK has a right to education. They don't. Various barriers prevent refugees and asylum seekers access to university. Some apply to both groups, others just to people seeking asylum.

Context for those seeking asylum

- Process from Asylum seeker to refugee status can take from six months to years. Eg: Cases concluded within six months. April 2007, UK Border Agency concluded 35% December 2007, UK Border Agency concluded 40%
- If you are an asylum seeker you:
 - Have no choice to your accommodation
 - Can only receive 30% below basic income support OR are given vouchers
 - Not entitled to work – but can undertake voluntary work
 - Can attend subsidised courses at college but not higher education

Barriers to higher education

For both asylum seekers and refugees:

- **Admissions:**
 - Universities reject students without confirmed refugee status
- **Poor Support (family)**
 - Students may be alone in the UK
 - If not alone, their family may have no knowledge of UK educational system
 - Family may not support potential student going to university
- **Pre-UK qualifications**
 - Qualifications from non EU countries – not all are recognised by British universities.

For asylum seekers:

- **Fees:**
 - If accepted, university charge international fees
- **Poor Support (Financial)**
 - Not entitled to loans – whether student loans or banks
 - Not entitled to work, therefore not able to rely on oneself
- **Prior to Higher Education**
 - At Further Education (16yrs to 18 yrs), not entitled to the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

This is what STAR wants to do - SOLUTION

The STAR national team aims to set up a mentoring project to young refugees/ asylum seekers who wish to access entry into Higher Education.

The project will be broken into **3 stages**:

1. MENTORING prior to university

This stage is to assist – face-to-face – young refugees and asylum seekers within colleges and Sixth Forms whose teachers/school coordinators have identified as having potential or wanting to go to university.

The mentoring will range from assisting students with revision advice/techniques, to identifying which course will suit ‘mentees’ best at university and providing mentees with the information regarding university life, fees and expectations.

2. SUPPORT at university

The idea we have for this stage is that of possibly **e-mentoring**. We are aware that certain mentors and mentees will wish to continue being paired (due to rapport hopefully built along the way) but it may be impossible to have face-to-face sessions as mentees and mentors may be at different universities. Here e-mentoring can be useful in providing mentees with support that not only refugees/asylum seeker students need, but any first year student.

3. CAMPAIGN for admission policy change.

Those best suited to assist with the issues of refugee and asylum seekers entering universities are students. No one knows the hurdles of fees, admissions and so forth better than university students. STAR members have the opportunity to help make the necessary changes: i.e. approach VCs and admissions and campaign for change to how asylum seekers are admitted and charged.