

Labels, Limbo and Lies: *stereotypes and perceptions of young refugees in the UK*

WORKSHOP PLAN

This workshop gives young people the opportunity to explore the issues of young people who are from a refugee background. It has been created by young people at RefugeeYouth with the UK Young Ambassadors and support from the British Youth Council.

This workshop is not a set of *'hard hitting facts'* about refugees and migration – these can be found on many websites (some examples given below) and could be useful tools to inform your discussion – instead this workshop is a series of exercises and approaches to encourage meaningful honest discussion and reflection on a personal level, which will allow young people to question how they act in the world.

Aims of workshop

This workshop aims to

- Create a safe, trusting environment where young people feel comfortable to have honest open dialogue;
- Enables young people to explore their own assumptions and prejudices and the context of our society;
- Encourages discussions about refugee issues in relation to exploring how we as individuals think and feel about ourselves, others and the world around us.

Group size:

Approximately 15 – 20 people

Age 13 years +

Time: Between 2 and 3 hours depending on activities chosen and time given to discussions

Materials needed:

- News Headlines handout
- Pens, papers, post it notes
- Inflatable globe (or a large world map)
- Remote control, option (a real one or make one from an old cereal box or something)
- Internet connection, and link to screen or projector to show films

Background Resources:

The following documents may be helpful to read beforehand to help prepare and to give to participants at the end of the workshop

- *'What are the Human Right issues for young Refugees in the UK?'* by RefugeeYouth, included in this pack
- *'What young people think about...migration and youth participation'* by UK Young Ambassadors, found at www.ukya.org.uk/YourVoiceDetail?id=957

Recommended web resources and information:

- RefugeeYouth and Refuge In Films demonstration what young people from refugee backgrounds are doing to challenge stereotypes and build community: www.refugeeyouth.org and www.refugeinfilms.org
- The National Assembly Against Racism offer's myth-busting facts and figures about refugees and asylum seekers: www.naar.org.uk/resources/PDFs/ASYLUMfact%20sheet.pdf
- Refugee Week produces a number of resources, including a *'Fact Pack'* and *'History and Contribution of Refugees to the UK'*: www.refugeeweek.org.uk/Info-Centre/Facts-About-Refugees
- The Refugee Council has an extensive glossary that gives as a basic explanation of terms used across the refugee sector: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/glossary

¹ The Barbara Melunsky Refugee Youth Agency Ltd, known as RefugeeYouth, is a community of young people from around the world now living in the UK. They use the creative arts and participatory action research to build an inclusive community of friendship and belonging. Together they explore the issues that affect them, find solutions to their problems and take action to bring about change. www.refugeeyouth.org

² The UK Young Ambassadors is a BYC project to ensure the central role of young people in international decision-making through effective and inclusive representation to secure lasting and positive change for people in the UK. www.ukya.org.uk

STAGE ONE: ICEBREAKERS & WARM UPS

These icebreaker games are designed to create an environment where young people feel safe and comfortable to share their ideas and voice their opinions. You can use one or all of them, to building trust, rapport and a relaxed atmosphere amongst the group.

Activity 1: Introducing My World

Time: Approx. 20 minutes

What to do...

- Form a circle, holding the inflatable globe introduce yourself, pointing to places on the globe explain the different parts of the world you feel affiliated to, i.e. where you were born, where your parents were born, countries you have travelled to or would like to go to.
- Passing the ball across the circle to each person in turn inviting them to introduce themselves in the same way

Tip for facilitator:

- > *Don't rush this process. The aim is for participants to understand and be aware of who is in the room and their geographic movements around the world. Give this process the time to draw out all the interesting connections*

Activity 2: Walk the room

Time: a few minutes to get the group mingling and energised depending on what's suitable for the group

What to do...

- Ask everyone to walk around the room, not in circles but in random and different directions.
- Once the group is moving shout out a number (2,4, 9 etc.) instructing participants to form groups of that size as quickly as possible
- Repeat process until group is mixed and people are relaxed to e group with others

Tip for facilitator:

- > *You can use this exercise throughout the workshop whenever you want to get participants into groups – just call the number of the group size you need last!*

Activity 3: Teamwork in pairs

Time: 5 minutes

What to do...

- Ask participants to get into pairs, or use the game above, and ask them to sit on the floor back to back.
- In pairs ask people to sit down and have their backs touching each other. They should then bend their knees and link arms backwards and try to stand up together back to back without breaking the link.

Tip for facilitator:

- > *Be aware of cultural and gender sensitivities in activities that involve person-to-person contact*
- > *This activity is to allow people to rely upon each other in the workshop space and create a sense of trust to allow honest and open discussion later. Therefore if you note participants being unhelpful to their colleague, gently point this out*

Activity 4: Paired interviews

Time: 20 minutes

What to do...

- In new pairs, they have 2 minutes to ask each other the following questions:
 1. *What would you be doing if you weren't in the workshop right now?*
 2. *What would you like to get out of the workshop?*
 3. *If you could do one thing to change the world what would it be?*
- Invite each person to feedback one interesting thing about the person they interviewed.

Tip for facilitator:

- > *The reason for running this activity is for the participants to feel comfortable amongst each other and to allow them to be more open to further exercises in the workshop*

Activity 5: So, who is a refugee?

Time: 5-20minutes

What to do...

- Ask what people have heard about refugees.
- Make sure people feel free to express themselves. Explain that there are a lot of stories and opinions that we hear about these issues and explain there will be time to discuss these things through the workshop.
- Show a choice of the following film
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIJ_0x1q6l8
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OUpsWCvE38&list=PL-6AVOC0m1UV7mcErKPtnxXjK4qkwERwP
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tBKVGK6gvA
- Explain briefly the key words you'll be using through the workshop such as Refugee, asylum and Asylum Seeker, Migrant, Immigrant and Rights.
- Ask if there are any questions before moving on.

STAGE TWO: LABELLING & PRE-JUDGEMENTS

The following activity is a fun and active way to explore how participants naturally act on pre-judgements based on labels given to people.

Activity 1: Stereotypes & Labelling

Time: 15-30 minutes

Preparation:

Write the following characters on post-it notes, one on each:

Policeman/woman
Shopper
Homeless person
Young person
Young refugee
Doctor
Business woman/man
Receptionist
Shop keeper
Young migrant
Foreign person
Footballer
Celebrity

What to do...

- Making it clear they MUST NOT read the characters out loud or let another person know their character.
- Put a character post-it note on the head of half of the participants.
- Ask the group to start walking about the room, interacting with each other according to the characters they see on people's foreheads, for approx. 5 minutes.

Tip for facilitators:

> Encourage the group to react as they would do naturally if they met that character in real life, watch and observe the group to see if it reveals certain stereotypes that we have about homeless people, policemen etc.

- After a few minutes, bring the group back together to form a circle. Those with post-it notes on their heads can now read the character they were seen to be.
- Invite a group discussion and reflection on the experiences, some suggested questions would include:
 - **How did you react to different characters?**
 - **Why did you react in the way you did to different characters?**
 - **Where did you get your information about the different characters from?**
 - **How did you feel about the way other people reacted to your character?**
 - **How do you feel about the word 'refugee' and what does it mean to you?**
 - **How do you think the word refugee is understood by different people in society?**

Summing up:

- Draw out the ideas of stereotypes, where they come from (media, etc) and what the implications are.
- Bring the discussion to a close and try to highlight participant's personal experiences and feelings to illustrate what young refugees feel on a regular basis.
- Show how participant's natural reactions, pre-judgements and stereotypes impacted on how others felt during the activity – just as their pre-judgements and stereotypes would impact on young refugees they may meet in life.

STAGE THREE: LIVES OF LIMBO & CONTROL

The following activities enable young people to explore the experiences of young refugees and how it feels to be living in limbo. Through activities that involve being in control and without control participants experience metaphors of how the immigration system impacts on the lives of young refugees.

Activity 1: Living in Limbo

Time: 15-25 minutes

What to do...

- You may first have to explain what 'being in limbo' means
- Divide the group into two, giving one side an imaginary remote control (or a real one, or make one out of an old cereal box or something!)
- One group begins to move around the room while the other group uses the remote control to give instructions, e.g. fast forward, stop, replay, crouch down, close eyes, pause etc.

Tip for facilitator:

- > Encourage the remote control group to make it as creative and chaotic as they want, so that the others don't know what to expect next.
- > Watch how one group reacts to having total 'control' over the others.

- After a few minutes ask the groups to swap roles. Give them a few minutes before drawing it to a close and ask the whole group to reform a circle.
- Invite feedback on the process and discuss the following questions:
 - **How did it make you feel to be controlled?**
 - **How did it make you feel to be in control?**
 - **What are the areas of your life that you have control over and the areas that you don't?**
 - **What are the implications of not having control over your own life?**
 - **What do you think might be the differences for someone who has come to the UK as a refugee?**
 - **What are the implications of not having control over your own life**

Summing up:

- Wrap up discussion by explaining how this activity illustrates the state of being that young people feel or go through before their immigration status is finalised.
- Young refugees tend not to be able to go to school, access certain necessary services. They also find it impossible to move on with their lives if they feel that they might be deported or have their case lost at the Home Office.
- Being in limbo brings isolation, depression and can lead to some young people following the wrong path, as well as confusion and lack of understanding about the asylum system that they are going through.

Activity 2: Colombian Hypnosis

Time: 10-15 minutes

What to do...

- Get everyone into pairs, asking one person to be the leader, the other the follower.
- Ask the leader to lead their partner around the room with their hand (without touching them). The follower must follow every movement of their partners hand with their face.
- After a few minutes, ask pairs to swap roles and try again but this time using sounds. The leader makes a unique sound that their partners uses to follow them slowly, with their eyes shut.
- After a short time, bring the group back to a circle to discuss the acidity using the following questions:
 - **How did it make you feel to be controlled?**
 - **How did it make you feel to be in control?**
 - **What are the areas of your life that you have control over and the areas that you don't?**
 - **What do you think might be different for someone who has come here as a refugee?**
 - **What are the implications of not having control over you own life?**

Summing up:

- As discussions draw to a close, remind participants that young people who go through the asylum system don't always have their lives in their own hands.
- They are always on edge whilst waiting for a response from the Home Office and this can be for years, and can lead to being deported, destitution, put into detention centre or free to roam London with no money and no right to work.

STAGE FOUR: MEDIA STEREOTYPES

The following activities explore how the media can feed our pre-judgements and stereotypes with false information. Through using film and newspaper headlines participants will explore how their stereotypes affect their reactions to media messages.

Activity 1: Stereotype Stories

Time: 15 minutes

Preparation:

Ensure computer with screen/projector is set up with internet connection ready to show internet-based films.

What to do...

- Invite group to sit ready to watch a short film. Ask them to concentrate on the film and observe.
- Show film 1: <https://vimeo.com/67952062>
- Invite a short group discussion about the film:
 - **What do you see happening?**
 - **What are the intentions of the various characters?**
 - **What do you think happens next?**
- Show film 2: <https://vimeo.com/67951851>
- Ask the group to share their thoughts on this film:
 - **What do you see different this time?**
 - **What are the issues being raised in the film?**
 - **What have you learnt from this in relation to the previous activities and discussions.**

Summing up:

- Having seen these two films participants will be able to identify themselves with some of the characters in the clips and note some of the pre-judgements and stereotypes they are using.
- Consider how film can be an effective way to communicate difficult information and capture the essence in a message.

Activity 2: Newspaper Headlines

Time: 15-30 minutes

Preparation:

Print out and cut up 4 sets of the newspaper headlines provided.

What to do...

- Split the group into 4 smaller groups, giving each group a set of the newspaper headlines
- Ask each group to look at the headlines, discuss amongst themselves and gradually sort them into two piles – the headlines they think are real, and those that are fake:

- When each group is happy with their choices invite them to feedback, taking one headline in turn, comparing what different groups thought. The answers are as follows:
 - **Asylum Seekers in Scotland Get Cash Handout** (*The Daily Mail*, March 2000)
 - **Our sick welfare system rewards foreign scroungers** (*The Daily Express*, 2012)
 - **Refugees made our lives hell too, say neighbours** (*The Daily Express*, 2012)
 - **Next Stop UK: Romanians & Bulgarians are queuing up for handout Britain** (*The Sun*, 2013)
 - **Bogus asylum seekers to be caught by DNA** (fake but based around a real headline in *The Times*)
 - **Illegal Immigrants coming over like lions in their droves** (fake but based on quote of someone responding to a *CNN* headline)
- As the groups have worked through all the headlines, ask them to consider what were their reasons behind the selection of real and fake headlines?
- Invite a discussion about the media and how truthful it is.

Summing up:

- Highlight how important it is to question what they see and read in the media and explore the common stereotypes and misconceptions about refugees and migration.

STAGE FIVE: WRAPPING UP AND CLOSE

It is important to take some time to draw things together. This short review and feedback session will also provide some evaluation as participants share what they have learnt and how it has impacted them.

Time: 15-30mins

What to do...

- Remind the group of all the different activities, topics and discussions you've had during the workshop. Take time to run through this, drawing out the links and key themes.
- Ask participants to take a few moments, in silence to think about what they have learnt from the workshop. Then ask them to write down on a post it a pledge of one that they are going to do differently based on this learning.
- In turn, going around or as participants are ready, invite each to share something they have learned and to stick their pledge up a piece of flipchart paper.
- End the workshop on a fun and energetic note, either an activity you know or something that a participant from the group can lead on. Ending on an energised note will inspire people to their pledge of action forward.