

Welcome to the UK!

It's **Refugee Week** from **19 to 25 June**, so we find out more about refugees and meet a teenager from Afghanistan who's made a new life here in the UK...



Can you imagine leaving behind all your friends and family, and travelling to a strange and unfamiliar land where you can't speak the language? Sounds scary, right? That's the reality for refugees – people who have been forced to flee their home country because they are in danger and are seeking protection (or refuge) in a new nation.

Meet Nageeb!

This young man from Afghanistan tells us why he left home and talks about the people who've made him feel welcome in the UK...

Name Nageeb

Country of origin Afghanistan

Age 17 (came to the UK age 16)

Hobbies Table tennis, swimming, football

According to UNICEF, Afghanistan, in Central and South Asia, is 'the world's most dangerous place to be a child'.



When I was 15, I began working as an interpreter for my cousin in Afghanistan. I speak many languages, including Hindi, Farsi, Pashto and English, and we were interviewing people about the war in my home country, trying to give them a voice to express themselves.

But when the Taliban authorities found out what I was doing, they started sending me threatening letters. They said if I didn't stop, they were going to make me pay...

After that, I came to the UK as part of the Gateway Protection Programme (a way for some refugees to resettle in the UK without claiming asylum (see glossary below)). It was really hard to leave my family – I had never been anywhere here without them before. I cried every night for my first two weeks in the

UK. But then I was reunited with my big brother and felt secure again.

It's very difficult to leave your home town and come to live in an unknown country. Luckily, because I already spoke English, it was easier for me to make friends at school. My social worker helped me a lot, too, and I spent a lot of time at my local table tennis club. They really welcomed me – it became like my second home! I'm also involved in a theatre production called *Borderline* – it's a comedy about life in the 'jungle' refugee camp in Calais!

The people in the UK have been really kind but I still miss my family, especially my mum and dad. But I feel proud that I've managed to settle here and start a new life on my own. My great ambition is to go to university and become a solicitor.



WHY DO REFUGEES LEAVE THEIR HOMES?

There are many reasons a person might fear harm in their country of origin. They could be fleeing from a war there, or they could be persecuted (treated badly), because of their religion, beliefs, race, political views, gender or membership of a particular social group.

GET INVOLVED!

During Refugee Week, hundreds of events take place across the UK that celebrate the music, art, literature, food, fashion, dance and ideas that refugees bring to the UK. Head to refugeeweek.org.uk/events to find an event near you. From BBQs and dance-offs to football matches and music festivals, there's something for everyone. Yay!

AMAZING FACT!

Nageeb learned fluent Hindi purely from watching Bollywood movies. Wow!

GLOSSARY We clear up the confusion!

Asylum seeker – an asylum seeker is a person who has left their country of origin and applied for asylum (shelter or refuge) in another country. Every refugee is initially an asylum seeker unless they come to the UK through the Gateway Protection Programme.

Refugee – someone fleeing conflict or persecution. In the UK, a person officially becomes a refugee when their claim for asylum is accepted by the government.

Refugee camp – a temporary settlement built for displaced people. The average camp houses around 11,000 people, but some are like mini cities and may hold hundreds of thousands.

Migrant – a person who has travelled to another country to improve their lives (to find work, better education, or to reunite with family), but NOT because of a direct threat or persecution. A British person who goes to live in another country is also a migrant. Unlike refugees, who cannot safely return home, migrants can return home if they wish.

Illegal immigrant – someone who does not have a visa (permission) to work and live in the country they are in, or whose visa has run out. This term does NOT apply to people seeking asylum. Some people do not like the term and prefer to use 'undocumented migrant' instead.

5 FACTS ABOUT REFUGEES

- 1 There are an estimated 21 million refugees around the world, and almost half of them are children.
- 2 The UK is home to less than 2% of the world's refugees. Only a quarter of people who apply for asylum in the UK have their claim accepted.
- 3 Most refugees (86%) live in poorer countries, often in refugee camps.
- 4 Many refugees and asylum seekers hope to return home at some point in the future, if the situation in their country of origin has improved.
- 5 Last year, the most UK asylum applications came from people from Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

