

Young Roots

Supporting young refugees to reach their potential
Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021



YOUNGROOTS

Helping young refugees to realise their potential

www.youngroots.org.uk



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Young Roots' Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021. Our vision is of a world in which all young refugees and asylum seekers can realise their rights and fulfil their potential. This plan sets our priorities over the next three years as we focus on our mission to improve the well-being and life chances of the young people we work with.

Young people, staff, trustees, and partners have informed this plan. Our starting point is that young refugees have capabilities, strengths and potential. Our work aims to build on this and identify how our support can be most effective. External evaluators have undertaken an assessment of need in the areas we work. This, together with our experience and analysis of the external environment, shows how young refugees and asylum seekers we work with face multiple and complex challenges. Hundreds of the young people we see each year are in the UK without their parents or families having escaped terrifying situations and having had traumatic journeys to the UK. Attempting to access mental health provision and quality immigration advice, being socially isolated, being desperate to learn English and missing their families are all key challenges for many young people. Our services are seen as vital by young refugees and asylum seekers and are highly valued by our partners, who want us to be able to provide more of the casework and youth activities that we currently deliver.



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Young Roots has a dynamic, focussed team and will continue to work with determination and creativity to support young refugees and asylum seekers to address the many challenges they face.

Our main work is in London with well-established programmes of work in Croydon and Brent. Last year we worked with 621 young refugees and asylum seekers here aged 11-25. We also support a refugee youth summer camp in Al Bass Camp, Lebanon with Sour Community Disability Project, and work on a project in Nepal through our trusted local delivery partners.

VALUES AND CULTURE

Founded in 2004, Young Roots is a vital organisation that has a track record of quickly responding to need. We have demonstrated our impact by improving the lives of young refugees and asylum seekers in the short and long term.

Our staff team is experienced and proactive with backgrounds in youth-work, counselling, academic research and human rights. Our Trustee Board includes professionals from the finance, legal, policy, international development and social work sectors.

We believe young refugees and asylum seekers:

- are central to shaping the services and activities we currently offer, as well as those we plan and develop in the future and should have authority at all levels of Young Roots
- are capable of, and should be supported in, advocating for their own and others' rights
- should be free from discrimination and be treated equally
- are entitled to all the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This includes the right to health, housing and education. We believe they should be supported to integrate into local and host communities

“There’s just a massive need for Young Roots and the services it provides”

Partner organisation

Young Roots

- welcomes young refugees and asylum seekers from anywhere in the world and irrespective of religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, race, religion and belief
- promotes collaboration and working in partnership with relevant organisations in order to provide the best possible services and projects
- prioritises safeguarding the young refugees and asylum seekers we work with
- responds to unmet need by developing activities and services grounded in evidence based research
- aims for excellence and best quality in all that we do, valuing responsiveness, understanding, responsibility, creativity, knowledge, participation and kindness
- values staff and volunteers and strives to provide a working environment that will allow the development of a diverse team to deliver its best work

Improve access to rights and entitlements

Improve communication skills

Improve the well-being and life chances of young refugees and asylum seekers

Reduce social isolation

Facilitate learning opportunities

Increase training, work and volunteering opportunities



OUR ACTIVITIES

One-to-one Casework - supporting young refugees access high quality legal advice and representation, access mental health support, resolve housing issues including homelessness, provide support through age assessment processes and help access education.

Facilitated youth groups - where young refugees meet each other, play games, make music, enjoy well-being sessions like mindfulness, and get lessons about important issues like health. We also run a Girls Group in partnership with the Refugee Council.

Cultural and orientation trips - where young people gain confidence, learn about the UK and have fun.

Sports groups - our weekly football group and cycling project are thoroughly enjoyed. They build confidence and bonds between young people.

Skills building workshops - our regular workshops at our youth groups support understanding of different health issues, keeping safe, and accessing rights and entitlements.

English language peer support programmes - this innovative project supports English language learning in the mentees and skills development and confidence in the mentors.

Learning and development opportunities - our new Leadership Group will bring opportunities for young refugees and asylum seekers to use their voice and skills.

EXTERNAL CONTEXT

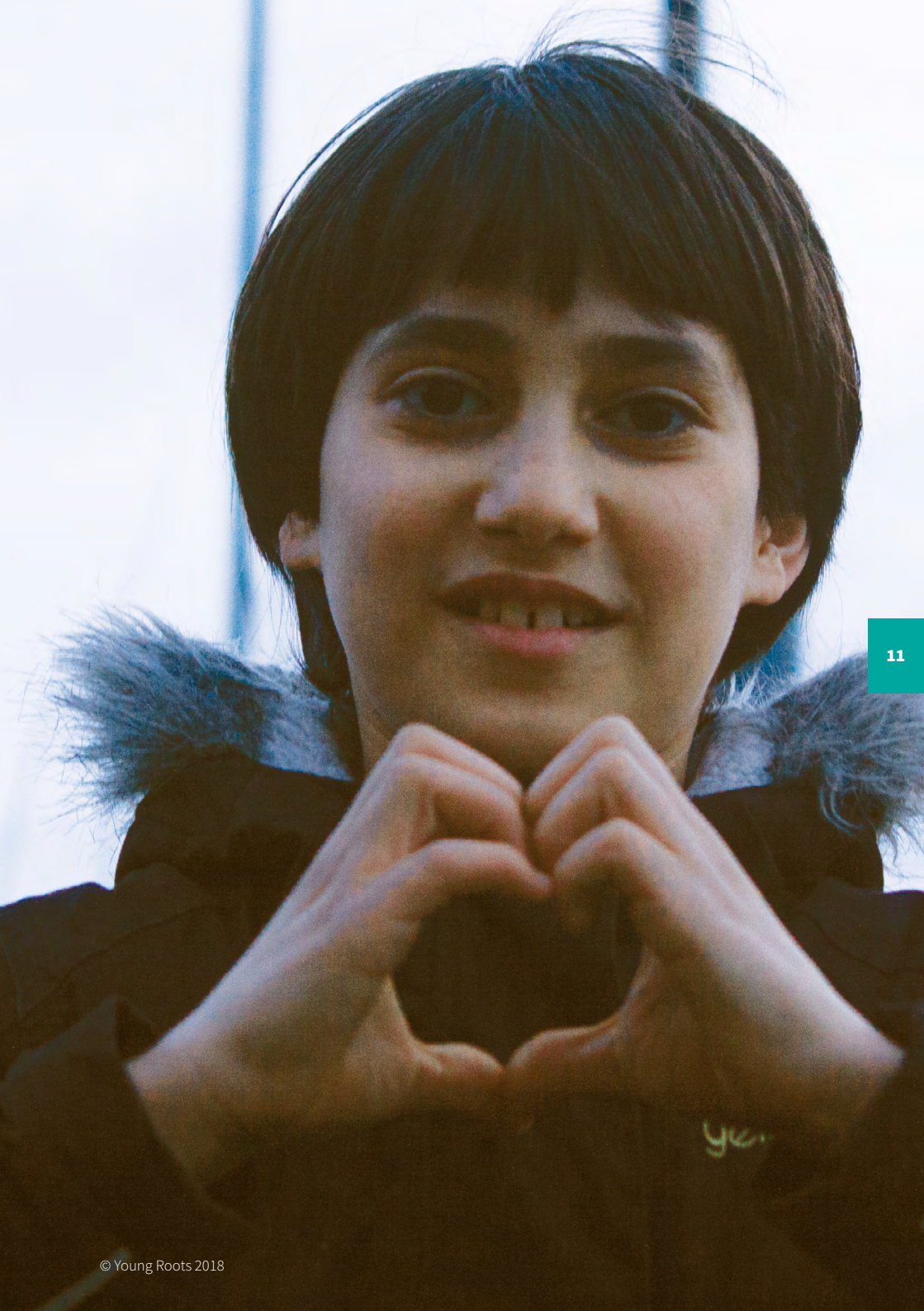
Many of the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers in the UK are the children and young people who often have to make perilous journeys to a safer life alone. In the first half of 2017, over 1000 applications for asylum in the UK were made by unaccompanied children⁴. A significant number of young refugees and asylum seekers come to Croydon and Brent, where Young Roots focuses its UK efforts.


These children and young people have lost key parts of their formative years, missing out on valuable education and safe spaces to play and learn.

A key barrier to integration is learning English (5) and the young people we see are desperate to study and practice. Equally, many are socially isolated and lonely without family or friends.

It is estimated that 50% of refugee children may face Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (6) and accessing mental health provision is important to recover from traumatic journeys to the UK and experiences in their home countries.

Young refugees and asylum seekers also require support to navigate the UK's complex, protracted and often unfair asylum process. For the many that face it, the process of age assessment is also extremely stressful. Unlike adult refugees, children who go





“I got problems solved like with my solicitor and I felt happy thanks to games. Everything has changed. My English is better and I feel happier. Life is easier. I started going to Croydon College some weeks ago. Come to Young Roots!”

Young person



through the challenging asylum system are not entitled to the right to sponsor family members to join them in the UK.

These challenges are compounded by the processes required to settle in a new country: enrolling in school and college; living in the care system; or finding a place to live.

The UK Government’s social policies are not adequate to meet the needs of young refugees and asylum seekers. Social services are sometimes unable to provide safe and adequate support (7). There is no doubt that there will be big changes to the support available as a result of the Immigration Act 2016.

Young refugees and asylum seekers are facing an increasingly hostile reception in the UK. In Croydon, the violent attack on a 17-year-old Kurdish-Iranian in 2017 shocked the country and was symbolic of the levels of hateful intolerance. Many of the young people we work with were close to the victim and it was upsetting and shocking for them.

Like many charities, Young Roots continues to experience on-going challenges with a difficult economic situation and increased competition for resources coupled with ever increasing demands for our services and expertise. Cuts to school and health budgets affect the services that are able to be offered to those we work with in the UK. We await the impact of Brexit.

Working in partnerships has proved to be crucial in order to meet the many and complex needs of refugees and asylum seekers. We work in partnership with the Refugee Council, Amnesty International UK, the Bike Project and numerous other providers. We are proud members of the Croydon Young Refugees Network, and founded the North West London Young Refugees Network last year. We are delighted to be continuing our 14 year collaboration with our delivery partner Sour Community Disability Project in Lebanon, and in Nepal with trusted partners.



STRATEGIC GOALS

2018 - 2021

1

Target unmet needs of young refugees and asylum seekers

- i. Embed our Youth Participation Strategy into all areas of our work ensuring that understanding the needs and views of young refugees and asylum seekers continues to drive our development.
- ii. Continue to grow, develop and adapt our casework service and range of youth activities in London including through building partnerships.
- iii. Continue to be at the heart of sector collaboration in both Brent and Croydon developing joint projects and funding bids.
- iv. Develop our English Language Learning peer support project to involve the wider community.
- v. Further our work to support young refugees and asylum seekers on their pathway to realise their education and career potential through both our youth activities and casework service.
- vi. Build resilience in young people through both one-to-one and group work, to help them achieve their potential and safeguard them against exploitation.

2

Increase the impact of our international work

- i. Expand our work in Lebanon based on an assessment of need.
- ii. Evaluate the need for future work in Nepal.

3

Use our frontline experience and understanding to influence policy and practice both locally and nationally

- i. Develop a Young Leadership Group of young refugees and asylum seekers to lead our involvement in wider issues as well as inform our internal practice.
- ii. Increase our supporter base of individuals and local and national organisations in order to raise our profile and increase our voice and influence.



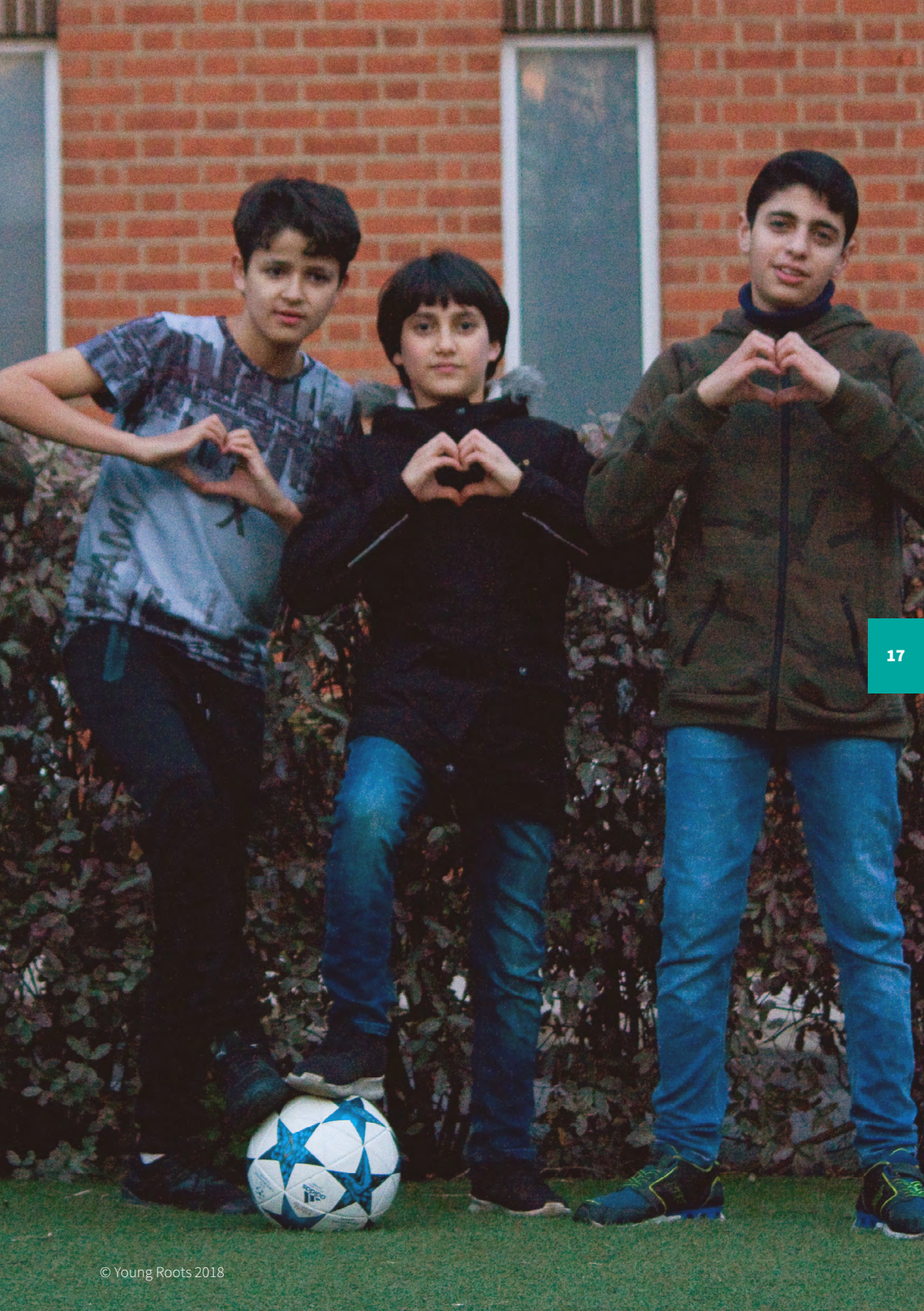
“Young Roots have helped me with my situation. Activities keep me busy. We learn from different people and then we teach other young people. When I’m sad I come here and feel relaxed. They motivate me a lot.”

Young person

4

Ensure we are sustainable, efficient and effective in the long term

- i. Implement our fundraising strategy in order to fund our ambitions including developing our expertise and capacity within the staff team and Board of Trustees.
- ii. Establish an approach to long-term development of our IT systems.
- iii. Obtain office and activity space that meets the needs of the teams in London.
- iv. Further develop the Governance of Young Roots to ensure it continues to meet its responsibilities and adds value as the organisation develops.
- v. Grow and develop the expertise of our staff and volunteers to ensure all staff fulfil their potential and we’re able to best support young refugees and asylum seekers.



**Feedback from our
externally led UK
consultation with young
refugees, partners, staff,
volunteers and trustees:**

Young Roots was viewed as vital by all the stakeholders.

The way casework and youth activities are integrated is highly valued.

There is a great deal of unmet need for the services that Young Roots both does and could provide in Brent and Croydon.

Young refugees would like us to provide more English language service support.

There is a need to provide services for different age groups acknowledging the wide range of needs between age 11 and 25.

Stakeholders agree that there is a need to increase our casework provision in London and to develop our partnership work with mental health support providers and those who can provide legal advice.

There is a desire to expand our work to enable more links with wider society and to build in elements of life, education and employment planning.

There is a strong desire from stakeholders to work in partnership with Young Roots, not in competition. There was also a desire to avoid service duplication.

Partners were keen that Young Roots undertook policy and campaign work using their experience and expertise prioritising as necessary according to our capacity.

CASE STUDY

Isak is a 19 year old refugee from Ethiopia. He has been in the UK since 2015 and Young Roots has supported him since March 2017. He had been homeless previously and when he was referred to us he was looking for long-term accommodation.

Our casework service supported him to apply for benefits and attend job centre appointments. We referred him to the refugee employment charity, Breaking Barriers for help drafting a CV and finding work. We referred him to the London Housing Trust for his own independent accommodation and he moved into one of their shared properties in June 2017. We have also supported Isak to access healthcare including assisting him to register with a dentist and GP, and attended various medical appointments with him. We supported him to register at Croydon College and he is now studying English there three days per week.

He attended one of our weekly youth groups, our peer support English programme and accessed one-to-one casework support.

He enjoys the youth group:

“we socialise, we eat and drink and play games. That’s very good – I enjoy it.”



Isak explained:

“After I arrived in the UK there were a lot of inconveniences because I was new. I didn’t know what to do, it was hard to get used to the situation, but gradually I was able to make my life somewhat in order and now I’m in college, I now have settlement here so I’m out of that kind of situation now. I have a plan and I’m living according to my plan. I have to work on my language. If I can master English to some extent, my plan is to continue education. I’m interested in electrical engineering, to work in that field and have a good life.”

“Everyone at Young Roots was helping me with everything including scheduling my medical appointments, taking me there, enrolling me in college, taking me to the job centre, when my benefits stopped they get them started again. So they were very vital in all aspects of my life for all these years. If I hadn’t come to you I would not be in college, I would not have housing. My caseworker is always with me, she’s very compassionate. I feel very blessed to have her as my caseworker.”

Thank you

Thank you to the amazing people who fund our work. Without you, Young Roots simply wouldn't exist and many young asylum seekers and refugees would be without vital support. We appreciate you as partners and recognise your vital contribution.

Big Lottery	Children In Need	Lloyds Bank Foundation
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	Highgate Has Heart	
Drapers Charitable Trust	Help Refugees	
The London Mayor's Office	#iWill	

along with very many individuals.

¹ UNHCR – Global Trends Study – June 2017

² UNICEF – Sept 2016

³ Refugee Council – Quaterly asylum statistics – August 2017

⁴ Refugee Council – Quaterly asylum statistics – August 2017

⁵ Refugee Action – ESOL research – Oct 2017

⁶ J Psychosoc Nurse Mental Health Sevices – Mental Health of Young Refugees – McGuinness, Durand - Dec 2016

⁷ Ofsted - Croydon Social Services report - 2017

⁸ UNRWA – website

Where to find us

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Young Roots relies on donations from individuals
and grants from charitable trusts and foundations.

To support our work, please visit our website

www.youngroots.org.uk

To make a bank transfer, our details are:

sort code: 40-52-40

account number: 00020581

