



Suffolk Refugee Support Summer 2026 Newsletter

www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk

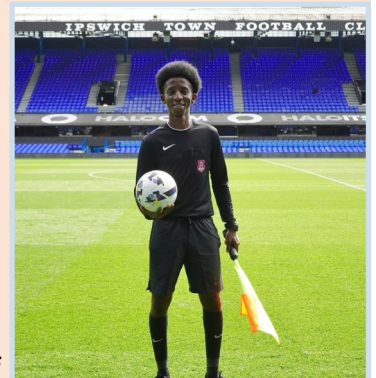
38 St Matthew's Street, IPSWICH, Suffolk IP1 3EP
Registered Charity Number: 1078794

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Nasser's story

Three years ago, Nasser arrived in the UK from Sudan on his own, aged 16. Recently, he stepped onto the pitch at Portman Road as a qualified FA referee—a moment that reflects how far he has come through hard work, determination and resilience.

From the start, Nasser was determined to build a future for himself. He attended our ESOL Summer School and Homework Club, and received GCSE English support from one of our amazing volunteers. Throwing himself into every opportunity we provided, he worked hard to make new friends and learn more about British culture. His dedication paid off when he passed his GCSE English. Today, he is continuing his studies with additional maths support as he works towards his ambition of becoming an engineer.



Football is another passion for Nasser. He attended our Refugee Football Group every week until an injury forced him to stop playing. Rather than stepping away, he found a new way to stay involved. With support from the Ipswich Town Foundation and his own natural leadership skills, he trained as a referee, passing the FA Referees Course, practical assessment and Laws of the Game exam to become a Level 7 Referee. He now regularly officiates local league matches.

Nasser has also become a volunteer with Suffolk Refugee Support, helping at football sessions and acting as an ambassador for the group, even being interviewed during a royal visit. He also volunteered at the British Heart Foundation shop to further improve his English.

One of his proudest moments came recently when he was invited to referee the Ipswich Town Foundation staff. He told us he would never have been standing on that pitch without our support, but the truth is that Nasser's achievements are a testament to his own talents and courage.

UPDATE—this August, Nasser is refereeing at the Edinburgh International Cup, the UK's largest youth football tournament. Listen to him talking about his experiences, the welcome he has received in Suffolk, and the pain of separation from family [here](#).

Can you help to keep Suffolk a safe, welcoming place for refugees and asylum seekers?

Our work not only provides practical support and vital services, but helps to change the narrative around people who deserve understanding and help to rebuild their lives. If you would like to show your support for this work, you can donate securely online [here](#).



Refugee Week

During Refugee Week in June, we shared stories of the people we work with to celebrate the resilience, achievements and contributions of refugees across Suffolk. In addition to Nasser (see first page), Omran, a young refugee from Afghanistan, [shared his story](#) with the East Anglian Daily Times, we [highlighted the contribution](#) of Natalia from Ukraine, who has made such an impact on the community in Bungay, and shared the [first hand experiences](#) of an asylum seeker who has been waiting two years but has used that time positively by studying, volunteering and supporting others. We had an incredible response to these stories, with 30,000 engagements across our social media posts during the week. This really does show that, despite the hostile rhetoric and negative framing of refugee issues by some, there is an overwhelming appetite for a different narrative, positive representations, and stories of welcome and human connection of which we can all be proud.



Elsewhere, we held a powerful exhibition of art made by young refugees in Suffolk at Ipswich Library (you can see some of the [highlights here](#)), we spoke to the BBC Make a Difference show about our Sewing Group, and we took part in the Great Get Together Community Day at Northgate High School. We asked students where they would go if forced to flee, how they would get there and what they would take, and it was wonderful to see them engage with such thoughtfulness and empathy. Last but by no means least, our International Women's Group held a lovely Refugee Week picnic, attended by the new Mayor of Ipswich, Councillor Pat Bruce-Browne. The picnic gave us a chance to say farewell to Sarah (pictured), who has done such a phenomenal job coordinating our Sewing Group. We will miss Sarah's passion for showcasing the skills of the women we work with, but she leaves an amazing legacy with the group.

Summer trips and activities

Refugees and asylum seekers are often excluded from opportunities to engage with the natural environment in their new communities. Lack of resources, unfamiliarity with local places, social isolation and the demands of rebuilding their lives mean that many never visit the landscapes and cultural sites that shape the identity of the places they now call home. We provide a range of practical support, but also know that real integration depends on a sense of belonging and community connection, so we put a focus on creating opportunities for people to build deeper connections, share their own stories and engage with others across cultures.



This summer we have enjoyed a lovely multi-generational walk with a Ukrainian group along the banks of the Orwell from Freston to Suffolk Food Hall (pictured right). Our Sewing Group had a wonderful end of term visit to Snape Maltings (pictured top), with huge thanks to Britten Pears Arts for all their hospitality. We have also taken groups of young asylum seekers to Felixstowe beach and the Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds, and organised farm outings to make connections, share knowledge of food and growing, and increase access to healthy local produce.



Global Trends Report

The refugee situation in the UK (and here in Suffolk) should always be seen in an international context. The UNHCR's Global Trends Report is essential reading for anyone interested in the bigger picture. [This year's report](#) shows that at the end of 2025:

- 117.8 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence and human rights violations
- 65% of refugees are hosted in countries neighbouring their own
- The number of refugees finding safety through resettlement or sponsorship pathways globally fell by more than half in one year
- 36% of refugees were hosted by just 6 countries (Colombia, Germany, Turkey, Uganda, Iran and Chad)
- 9 million people were awaiting a decision on their asylum claim (for comparison 64,000 people were awaiting an initial decision in the UK)



Small boats vs safe routes

A tiny fraction of the world's refugees attempt to reach the UK. For those who do—often because of family connections, English language, community networks or historical/political links—safe and legal routes are vital to reduce dangerous journeys and undermine the people smugglers' model. With all the debate around small boats, it is rarely mentioned that the UK government is closing off the few safe routes that exist as an alternative. The Afghan Resettlement Programme is closed to new applicants, Refugee Family Reunion has been suspended for a year with no timescale for resumption, and in the year ending March 2026 just 4,894 refugees were resettled to the UK, down 52% in two years (with minimal arrivals through the UNHCR referral route).

Recently marked the 75th anniversary of the UN Refugee Convention. You can watch Lord Alf Dubs [reflecting here](#) on how Britain saved his life and that of 10,000 other children through the Kindertransport. But if you are a refugee fleeing the world's worst displacement crisis in Sudan today, there are no safe, legal routes to reach the UK. The government has repeatedly pledged to open new safe routes, but after two years there are no details, not one person has been able to apply through a new route, and resettlement numbers continue to fall. In the meantime, many thousands of people have endured prolonged separation from family, and children have been left alone in conflict zones. Inevitably, some will resort to dangerous, irregular journeys to reach safety and their family. If you believe those who need it most should be able to access safety without being forced into traumatic journeys, please ask your MP to support an increase in effective safe, legal routes. You can find resources and template letters from [Safe Passage here](#).

**STOP
PRESS**

We are recruiting!

**STOP
PRESS**

We are looking for an Advice Worker to deliver advice, guidance and practical support to refugees and asylum seekers across Suffolk. The deadline is 25th August.

Full details here: suffolkrefugee.org.uk/current-vacancies/

We hope you've enjoyed this newsletter—we'd love to hear from you with any feedback. If you received this indirectly, and would like to join our mailing list, please email us: office@suffolkrefugee.org.uk

Thank you again for all your support, donations and volunteering - we really couldn't manage without you!