



Bringing youth Together

Youth Summit and Exhibition
Thursday 30th May 2024
Report



Summary

On 30th May 2024, South London Refugee Association hosted the Youth Summit and Exhibition, a day of workshops, art and fun activities to bring young people from the migrant community together. The event was funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

Held in Streatham, London, the team welcomed over 150 people, the majority of whom were aged between 16 and 30.

In the two months before the Summit, young people from partnership organisations were invited to form a planning committee, meeting fortnightly to decide on event content and promotion. Others joined as exhibition creatives, attending workshops to make artwork for the event; further groups of young people volunteered as event crew and cooks on the day.

The Summit was a partnership between the below organisations:

YOUTH SUMMIT & EXHIBITION 2024





152 people came to the event



**14 young people volunteered
as event crew on the day**



**5 community cooks volunteered on
the day**



**One young person volunteered to
take photos and two people
volunteered to film the event**



**20 young people volunteered over
three sessions as exhibition
creatives**



**11 young people volunteered
over three months as
planning committee members**

Workshops

Workshops were delivered by partner organisations and co-facilitated with young people. A range of workshops addressed campaigns, issues and information sharing:

SLRA shared information about the immigration support pledge campaign

Phosphoros Theatre delivered a drama workshop

Citizens UK gave examples of community organising

We Belong delivered their Toolkit training on the asylum process

Brighter Futures youth club shared their positive emotion zine

Bedfordshire University shared their new research project with SLRA

Young people from **Revoke** interviewed others on housing issues



Workshop information from the programme

Share your thoughts on housing with **Revoke**. Cherif and Rehab, who are completing a fellowship with FilmAnthropy, mentored by Revoke, will set up an interview booth to discuss issues related to 'Demanding better housing' - this will become part of a film they are making.

Learn about the Immigration Support Pledge with **South London Refugee Association**. This pledge supports local authorities to commit to best practice around identifying and resolving immigration issues for children in their care, and care leavers.

Express yourself with **Phosphoros Theatre** - use creativity and drama to think about important issues facing refugee youth, including homelessness. You will use your bodies and voices to tell stories and think about ideas of change, whilst having fun at the same time.

Interested in community organising? **Citizens UK** and young people from Lambeth will host 'What is Community Organising?' Together we will ask: How is organising different from other methods of making change? What is power and how do we build it? Young people will share how Citizens UK has done this and provide you with an opportunity to organise for national immigration policy change.

Want to know about the processes of getting status? **We Belong Toolkit** training will help you understand the processes of identifying status issues in young people, explain pathways to settlement and discuss the impacts of immigration rule changes on private life application for young adults and children.

Stay positive with **Brighter Futures**. Why are positive emotions important for young people going through the immigration and asylum system? How can positivity help us to resist and overcome the challenges we face? Join this panel discussion as we share our latest creative project, 'Brighter Zine'.

Understand more about research with **Bedfordshire University, London School of Economics** and **SLRA**. The team will share their new research project, working with young people, exploring how storytelling can impact research and change and how you can get involved.

Creative workshops and activities



Two artists delivered two workshops around the themes of community, collective action, visions for change and young migrant voices. Participants created lino prints and designed posters.

Artworks made by young creatives were displayed around the building, including sculptures, poetry and decorated bowls from Brighter Futures youth group.

The Advocacy Academy and Da'aro Youth Project both held information stalls.

Chess, table-tennis and active games were held outside in the garden for those who wanted time away from the workshops.

Hot food was provided by a local restaurant and volunteer community cooks prepared additional salads, sandwiches and refreshments.

The event was a lively and positive day, with the building buzzing with activity.

Young people from the planning committee led the welcoming and closing speeches.

Performers included two young poets who shared their own poetry and a singer who performed beautiful improvised songs over lunch.

Towards the end of the day, young people took over the microphone and speaker and began an impromptu open mic, selecting songs and singing together.



Feedback from attendees

The fact that you can go in and out of workshops if you need space. It was good. Next time come to Manchester. This venue is lovely, spacious, homely and has nooks and crannies for intimate convo

I want to come again. I made new friends

Perfect day full of fun and useful information. Loved every bit of it

I am so happy with the event. I look forward to more events like this

Very good today, very nice day, I was happy to be here today

I feel excited and safe. Today was purple. Continue it.

Great. I thought immigration workshop would be immigration advice. Was confusing. Sometimes couldn't follow the language.

Today was a perfect day for young people to get together and remember they are not alone

It's an amazing workshop

Great I had fun

More interpreters. Slow down sessions to wait to give time to process.

Art and community talk. Really really nice day

I had sooo much fun and I was really glad to be part of it. It really paid off. We would love to do it again in any of these events you might do in the future as well.

It was a good thing that there were games, poems and speeches, there was also a free mindset to enjoy the moment

Yesterday was amazing, thank you guys for encouraging me, really enjoyed everything

Feedback from attendees

The thing I liked most was the exhibition and artworks. And people sharing speeches and stories that really moved you, it was totally amazing and easy to engage.

'Today I have enjoyed the food and people, I meet different people I have never met, I meet also people from my country so I am happy for that, to come and really enjoy it.

I feel happy, very happy, I want to see a lot of young people coming together, being creative and supporting each other, so that made me very happy yeah.

I think the food was really good, especially the pasta. But I think the company as well was amazing and having the conversations around everything from intersectionality to mental health. I think it actually puts you in the zone to actually think about things that are affecting everyone in the migrant sector. Which resonates with me because I am an asylum seeker.

Well, I love it, I love the way that a lot of people can create lots of art and they can express themselves, for instance in the lino workshop, we were based on the word 'community'. The way they express and the different type of young people ... it's just to see different perspectives of of life.

What I've learned from the event is that when you put the people in the right people in the right space and create the right conditions for them to actually have those conversations that they want to have, it can actually create something that's quite rich and dynamic. And of course, not all the conversations would go exactly how you plan them, but something beautiful comes out of it regardless.

There was a great energy and a wonderful range of workshops.

I thought that the event went really well today, was a really nice atmosphere around, really wholesome. I thought that the layout was really nice. It really catered to a lot of different spaces, people's interests, people's kind of capacities as well. If people really wanted to get involved in things, they could. And if they just wanted to sit in the garden and talk to their friends and they could as well, which was really nice to have that as a range of activity. I thought it was really accessible and how it accounted for people's comfort in that way as well. So yeah, it was really nice.

It is amazing to be here and people from different ethnicities and different cultures, and I learnt a lot and people here are very cooperative and sharing experience with each other.

Planning Committee

Over three months, in the lead up to the event, 11 young people, invited from partner organisations, came together to form the planning committee, meeting fortnightly online and in-person.

Together the planning committee decided on the selection of workshops, artist proposals, promotion of the event, design of the event tshirts and programming.

They also created evaluation questions, interviewed attendees as part of the event film and wrote speeches for the welcoming and closing of the event.

Alongside volunteering with SLRA, many were involved in the delivery of partner workshops and activities.

Evaluation questions

- What questions would we like to ask people who come to the event?
- How can we find out how they felt about the event?
- How can we ask for feedback about changes, improvements?
- How should we ask what people liked and disliked about the event?

SLRA
South London Refugee Association

YOUTH SUMMIT & EXHIBITION

Workshops, games, performances, art and food

This event is for young migrants to meet, have fun and learn about campaigns, participation and community building*

When? Thursday 30th May
12 - 6pm

Where? The Woodlawn Centre,
16 Leigham Court Rd,
SW16 2PJ

*The age group for this event is 14-30 years old

Travel will be reimbursed: £5 for bus travel within London, £10 for train travel within London and £20 travel from outside of London

Annotations:

- We shared the draft tshirt designs and discussed the different options
- The planning committee decided that they would like the colour of the globe on the right hand image but the hands from the left hand image
- Here are some sketches of different designs we made
- We decided to work from a piece of artwork created at the creative workshops. This was not finished but was a good inspiration for our logo design
- The logo will have people joining hands around the world

Volunteer case studies

Gersi has been volunteering and involved with SLRA for several years. He took on a number of different roles as part of the Youth Summit, including joining the planning committee, supporting the social media content and co-facilitating two workshops and discussion sessions. Gersi reflected that the experience *'gave me a lot of confidence, I met some important people as well, it's good to plan and, for the next committee. I know how it works and I know what I am expected to do.'*

As part of the planning committee, Gersi helped to write the evaluation questions and speeches. Through another voluntary role with SLRA, he took a lead in the development of the SLRA Instagram account, which launched in the lead up to the event and also wrote an event summary blog for the SLRA website.

On the day, Gersi was one of the presenters delivering welcoming and closing speeches. He said: *'I was nervous speaking at first but I got comfortable, in terms of support, it was totally fine and I had (SLRA) next to me and any mistakes they were next to me and could help me.'*

Gersi has also been heavily involved in a SLRA campaign to encourage local authorities to take up the Immigration Support Pledge. Through this work, Gersi co-facilitated a workshop to share this campaign with attendees. He presented this information to a packed-out room and led a panel discussion with SLRA staff and a member of the Mayor of London's team. Of this experience Gersi states: *'I had the best day of my life, my mum never saw me like that, when you see someone being proud of you it makes you even prouder for yourself'*. Gersi's discussion was really popular: *'We didn't get through all the questions, it was fully booked and all the people who were there were interested and started asking questions.'*

He also co-delivered a workshop with academic researchers from Bedfordshire University, sharing a research project currently underway with SLRA and describing to other young people what research is.

When asked about his involvement with the event he said: *'you let us lead it, it was not that you were leading it, you let the young people lead most of the committee, you gave us the power, it was not like you were speaking for us.'*

Thinking about the future, Gersi would like to be involved in more leadership opportunities, saying he loved both organising and presenting, and reflecting on his time at the event, he stated: *'I am glad they heard my voice, it's not like I don't have a voice so it was good that they heard me speak.'*

Volunteer case studies

Ariam joined the SLRA planning committee through a referral from Da'aro Youth Project. She also volunteers her time with Phosphoros Theatre Company.

Ariam was interested in creative work through her role with the planning committee and was keen to share some of her poetry at the event.

She participated in the programming and evaluation of the event as part of the planning committee and also enjoyed designing the t-shirt and logo with Canaan, her sister, another member of the planning committee. In terms of her time with the planning committee, Ariam reflected that she would have liked more in-person sessions as she was keen to get to know people better, however she was happy to have met everyone at the summit and made new friends. A highlight of the planning committee role for Ariam was creating the t-shirt design.

At the event, Ariam read two of her original poems to everyone and had this to say: *'I got to experience my first open mic, I've never done that before, I've never read my own words in front of people. I also met another poet and enjoyed talking to her.'*

Ariam was also part of the film crew interviewing attendees about their experiences of the event. She said *'I've never had the experience of being behind or in-front of the camera.'* It was a new experience for Ariam and she fed back that she would have liked a bit more preparation time before being in-front of the camera.

Ariam has said she would like to do similar events in the future, specifically being involved in creative workshops and have the opportunity to read her poetry again.

Volunteer case studies

Canaan joined the planning committee through Da'aro Youth Project; she also volunteers with Phosphoros Theatre Company. Canaan was involved in all planning committee sessions. She enjoyed the planning process and being involved in decisions such as choosing the workshops, writing the questions for the evaluation interviews and writing the opening and closing speeches. Of the approach to the planning committee, she said: *'I think you guys listened and tried to put as much of our input into the summit. I think you guys did that very well. All the creative stuff came from young people.'* She also suggested that: *'Perhaps next time, we could learn more about the different organisations to contact in advance and understand the sector so we could suggest workshops and contact organisations.'*

Canaan volunteered to deliver the welcoming and closing speeches at the event and spoke confidently in front of a large group of people. During the day she was also played a key role in the interviewing of attendees for our evaluation film, she reflected that: *'it was actually fun and we enjoyed being behind the camera'*. Of the event itself she said: *'I think it went great, it was way better than expected. I was surprised to see how many people turned out for the event.'* However, she noted that *'I would have liked more time to go to all the workshops, as I feel like I missed out as I was interviewing people and organising things.'*

Canaan is really interested in being involved in community organising and leadership in the future, she has recently been succesful in applying for a scholarship to study law and will start in September. She suggested that at a future summit *'there should be education based information about joining colleges, higher education, access scholarships, education, what's available and how to access.'*

Volunteer case studies

Cherif joined the planning committee through Revoke, where he is currently being mentored while completing a fellowship with Filmanthropy. In his role with the planning committee, Cherif was keen to be involved in workshops and facilitating the event, presenting and delivering speeches. He supported the development of the programming, the workshops and the attendee evaluation questions. He also co-wrote the welcome and closing speeches and presented these with other members of the planning committee on the day.

Early in our planning committee sessions, Cherif put forward a proposal to include a workshop on the issue of homelessness within the migrant community, as he felt this was an important issue affecting many young people. Working with Revoke mentors, alongside his role with the planning committee, Cherif and another planning committee member and Filmanthropy fellow, created a workshop proposal to interview and film attendees about their experiences and thoughts regarding homelessness. These interviews would then form part of a film created through Filmanthropy. This workshop was directly initiated by Cherif and delivered by a team of young people on the day.

Speaking about his experience of the day, Cherif commented: *'I spent a lot of time inviting people into the interviews instead of finding the workshops so couldn't spend much time to discover but what I saw was ok.'* Observing the general atmosphere at the event he reflected: *'Asylum seekers are under stress so it was good to have space for them to explore, have fun, laugh out loud, make some jokes and have some joy to go back to hotels with.'*

Reflecting on his participation in the planning committee, Cherif noted that he has had various experiences being involved in other committees previously so *'it gave me a feeling that what I did before was not a onetime thing, more is coming and I am building on experience.'* Cherif also encouraged SLRA in the future to start earlier and build in more time for the planning committee, to ensure it is even more youth-led: *'When you say 'planning committee', it has to be our ideas rather than us choosing between things. You should have trust and hope in us, to bring us into the planning committee, it's okay to ask us to build from earlier, to participate in something longer.'* He suggested that it would help some people to be given more incentives to participate *'We need to think – if I go to this session, it's not just my time, I will gain something for it, financial support etc.'*

Thinking about ideas for future participation and involvement, Cherif stated that he was keen to organise a residential and to give young people time in nature. He would be keen to be more involved in campaigns, public speaking and would perhaps consider delivering a workshop, as this would be something new to try.

Volunteer case studies

Hafiz joined the planning committee through Brighter Futures and was an enthusiastic member throughout the sessions, stating at the first session that he was *'happy to be working as a team and all together.'* This was Hafiz's first experience of participating in planning an event as part of a young person's committee. As part of his role, Hafiz was involved in deciding on the workshop proposals, evaluation questions and promotion. Reflecting on the experience he stated: *'I learnt a lot and had lots of experiences sharing ideas and making plans for the event. I thought it was good being on the committee, listening to other ideas, giving my ideas.'*

Hafiz attended the Summit and reflected that: *'the thing I liked most was the exhibition and artworks. And people sharing speeches and stories that really moved you, it was totally amazing and easy to engage.'* He added: *'It was a good thing that there were games, poems and speeches, there was also a free mindset to enjoy the moment.'*

Thinking about future events, Hafiz thought it would be a good idea to have a more open space where people can focus fully on the speakers, and everyone can give their attention to what is being said. He said he *'noticed sometimes people were having their own conversations rather than the conversations we were there for.'*

Hafiz is keen to continue collaborating and participating in planning activities and says: *'the most important thing to me is organising.'*

Creatives

In the months before the Summit, SLRA delivered three art workshops with young people, to create pieces to exhibit.

Twenty young people joined us and, responding to prompts such as 'I feel listened to when...!', 'I feel included when...!', 'I feel empowered when...!', they created banners on fabric to be hung at the event.

We also made bunting decorations to fill the garden with colour.



Who were our partner organisations?



Da'aro Youth Project was established in 2018 and supports young people arriving in the UK alone from the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia).



The Refugee Council is a leading charity working with refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK. Founded in 1951, it supports and empowers people who have fled conflict, violence and persecution in order to rebuild their lives in the UK.



Revoke is a grassroots organisation advocating for the rights and welfare of displaced young people, and those in the care system, living without advocates, families, power, or a voice.



Brighter Futures is a partnership project delivered by Praxis Community Projects and Kazzum Arts. Membership is open to young migrants aged 18-25 who come together to share thoughts, get creative, plan campaigns and events, play games, have fun and eat delicious food together.



We Belong is a migrant youth-led organisation, campaigning for the rights of young migrants, developing young leaders by providing advice, support and training.



Phosphoros Theatre is a London based theatre company that makes political performances starring refugee and asylum seeking actors.



CARAS is a leading refugee charity in South West London providing firm foundations for new-arrival asylum seekers to build happy and successful lives.



Our Second Home is a non profit organisation creating a youth movement for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, aiming to empower young refugees and asylum seekers to flourish in the place they call home.



Element delivers arts projects exploring purpose, motivation and creativity with care leavers.



Young Roots is a London-based charity working with young refugees and asylum seekers aged 11-25. Services include casework, youth and sporting activities, English language mentoring and therapeutic and legal advice.

Feedback from partner organisations

It was nice to see that sessions were focussed and intimate enough to have group conversations; however, that there was also the general buzz of youth events with music and dance.

It was a great pleasure to be there and connect with some of your young people and the other organisations there! The event was so well attended and the vibes were lovely, thanks very much for having us.

The turn out was amazing! The sessions looked really interesting and it seemed very well organised. There were also plenty of SLRA staff on hand to support. The venue was huge and beautiful.

Positive and fun atmosphere, shared lunch and varied workshop timetable, also great that young people's travel costs were covered.

It was all wonderful. It was so full of life and commitment and power in challenging wider circumstances. Well done SLRA.

The atmosphere/vibe was great, especially having the outdoor areas with games and socialising as well the activities indoors. Very well organised in terms of timetable too. Lunch was brilliant too! Really enjoyed just chatting to people, playing chess, the informal side.

Huge number of attendees - what an achievement; the space filled with art looked brilliant; great to see such a passionately activist atmosphere; a fantastic range of organisations represented; refugee leadership within activities; the garden had a wonderful atmosphere over lunch with people playing chess etc; travel expenses had been thought through well; overall a lively and welcoming day.

It's just been really nice to see, like youth participation, but also empowerment and leadership in terms of how they took things on themselves. It really felt like a day where they were kind of in charge and we were just kind of helping them to be able to fulfil what they wanted the day to be, which was really nice.

On the day itself transitions between workshops seemed to run smoothly. Having the garden space for young people to hang out and get to know others and engage in ice breaker games was really nice. It felt like yp from different organizations had space to integrate and get to know each other. Lovely atmosphere. Everyone seemed to be smiling all day.

It was all wonderful. Thank you for the invitation. It is one of the best conferences I have ever attended. The commitment from SLRA to the young people was palpable and inspiring.

Learning for next time

Six hours was a bit too long (which is why we decided to come late) and the location is really far out for us. Our group was too nervous about their afternoon presentation to properly enjoy the activities available when they arrived.

The timing of the event could be improved by having a stricter running order. However, the event did flow well.

In one of the sessions there were a couple of participants that struggled with English and did not have an interpreter.

The poetry and art made the event for me. It would be interesting to expand this further. Do young people have particular interests or skills they would like to teach others? We could have a skills share hour where some young people volunteer to show others how to sew, juggling, boxing technique etc.

Our young people agreed that the location was very far out, and we also wondered about changing the format slightly; because there were so many different things going on, not many people came to our workshop. They did feel that the 5-6 people who attended the workshop were really engaged.

I think that there should have been a dedicated time for young people to chat to the information stalls, the day was packed with amazing sessions but, it meant that young people could only come to the stalls in their breaks before the next session.

I would have liked more time to go to all the workshops, as I feel like I missed out as I was interviewing people and organising things as part of the planning committee.

Central location. Shorter time. More emphasis on fun and games, less on presenting work.

More translators were needed. Professional translators who have the experience to be able to navigate events like this. Ideally facilitators would have time with translators before hand so they can work into their workshop time for pauses etc.

There should be education based information about joining colleges, higher education, access to scholarships, education, what's available and how to access.

Our workshop had far too many people which had a big impact on our delivery and stopped it from being able to be solely youth led as staff had to step in and problem solve when 50 people wanted to participate.

YOUTH SUMMIT & EXHIBITION 2024



SLRA
South London Refugee Association



Esmée Fairbairn
FOUNDATION



YOUNG ROOTS

REVOKE

Lambeth

citizens

ELEMENT



phosphoros theatre
Bringing the unseen to light



CASA
Supporting diversity
challenging adversity



WE BELONG



OSH
Our Shared Home



REFUGEE COUNCIL