

Aiming Higher: Climbing Community Project for Asylum Seekers and Refugees Awarded Charitable Status

Tuesday 11 March, 2025

Refugees Rock, a pioneering initiative that uses climbing to support integration and wellbeing for people seeking sanctuary in the UK, has been granted charitable status. Since launching in 2021, the project has grown from a single location at The Climbing Hangar in Liverpool, to operating across ten UK cities, helping over 500 participants build physical, mental and social wellbeing through climbing.

Founded as a collaboration between Action Asylum project, the British Red Cross and The Climbing Hangar, Refugees Rock began by offering free monthly climbing sessions for asylum seekers and refugees who face severe restrictions on work and income. The project creates welcoming spaces at climbing walls across the UK, supported by over 100 "Boulder Buddy" volunteers from the local climbing community.

The achievement of charitable status in January 2025 marks a significant milestone, enabling Refugees Rock to raise public awareness, and access philanthropic funding and tax relief to expand its vital work.

To mark this milestone, The Climbing Hangar has become Refugees Rock's first corporate donor with a £10,000 contribution to support the charity's expansion plans.

Emma Leaper, Co-Founder and Trustee of Refugees Rock, explains: "Asylum seekers in the UK are given an allowance of only £7 per day and have no permission to work. It's almost impossible to maintain physical and social wellbeing under these circumstances. Refugees Rock provides a warm welcome, shared experience, an opportunity for new connections and physical activity that provides some welcome relief from the stress and isolation of our participants' everyday experience. The new charitable status gives us a platform for growth to increase our impact and engagement."

"I like this kind of sport because there is no winner or loser, everyone will win together, we will all reach the top. We help each other. I like the climbing community because everyone is happy and friendly."? - Fadi Bobo, Lebanon

The project has already demonstrated significant impact through its partnership model, working with local climbing facilities and refugee support organisations across the country. Ged MacDomhnaill, CEO of The Climbing Hangar, where the project first launched, highlights the unique benefits of climbing as an integration tool: "Climbing provides a unique environment where all ages, abilities and experience levels can participate together. It's an activity that transcends language and cultural barriers and provides opportunities for collaboration and celebration, alongside the mental and physical benefits. Refugees Rock has been instrumental in helping us build a more diverse and inclusive climbing culture, and the groups bring an immense amount of laughter and goodwill to our climbing gyms."

For more information about how you can get involved in Refugees Rock, and to donate to the project visit <https://refugeesrock.org> or contact Vivien Underwood, hello@refugeesrock.org

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