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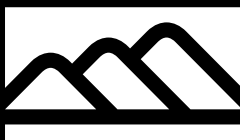
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VISION 2025-30 UNVEILED



Our bold strategy for 2025-2030 is now live — six missions to empower, connect, amplify and build the future with young people. Rooted in lived experience, designed for change.



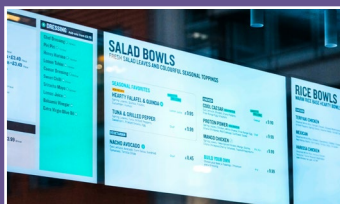
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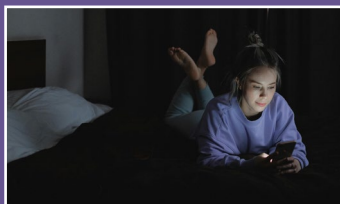
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Youth Leads UK runs leadership programmes for young people aged 15-19. Here's what some of our recent graduates had to say about their experiences:

"The industry insights sessions helped me see how broad the world of work really is. I realised that finding a job isn't just about earning money - it's about doing something you actually enjoy."

"The staff were amazing and genuinely cared. They remembered our names, our hobbies, and the little things — that made it easy to trust them and make real friendships."

"Learning about CV writing and finance management gave me practical skills I'll use well beyond the programme. It made me feel more prepared for the future."

"Youth Leads gave me real opportunities — I sat on an interview panel, improved my public speaking, and built a stronger CV. I'm genuinely grateful for the experience."

WELCOME TO THE YOUTH LEADS MAGAZINE!

This isn't just a magazine - it's your space, your voice, and your power. Youth Leads Magazine is brought to you by Youth Leads UK, the charity that's all about helping young people like you thrive. Whether it's training in media, business, or employability skills, we're here to guide you from dream to reality.

This magazine showcases the talent of young people - writing, photography, design, and more - all created to inspire and empower. And outside these pages, we're making waves across the UK, helping thousands of young people land jobs, ace interviews, and unlock their potential.

We're proud to do what we do, and even prouder to have been recognised by decision-makers and the Royal Family. Ready to get involved? You can apply to join our programmes, find out more about what we do, and support or work on our website. Head to youthleads.uk

HERE'S TO MORE PAGES, MORE VOICES, MORE POWER. LET'S GET STARTED!

ENJOY THE MAGAZINE!

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Youth Leads UK, registered charity 1155789 strives to provide accurate and up-to-date information. If you have seen any mistakes or anything that you are not happy with then please email us: info@youthleads.uk

What you read here represents the voices and opinions of our young writers - not necessarily those of Youth Leads UK.

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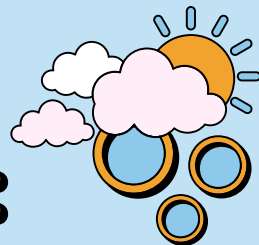
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WHY MONEY MATTERS FOR GEN Z:

A GUIDE TO FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



By Yahya Dahir



I know that the 'economy' is a term you hear frequently from your parents/carers and in the news. That's because it shapes every decision we make with money. Let me give you an example: We all love the iconic 99p Flake from the ice cream trucks. Now I've seen them sell for £3.00, even £4.50 down south. This is inflation at work. Inflation is the increase in the average price of goods and services in terms of money. That sounds like a lot of jargon, but it means the things we buy cost more, so our money is worth less.

Now you're probably thinking, 'Why should this matter to me?' It doesn't just hit our pockets; it affects jobs as companies can't afford to hire more staff. That's why young people often struggle to find jobs and why lots of employers are looking for people with experience, even in entry roles.

This is where financial literacy comes in, as we can't control inflation or the economy, but we can become more financially responsible. That doesn't mean being stingy, never going out and enjoying yourself; it's just knowing how, when, and what to spend your money on. Financial education is gaining knowledge and skills about finances, while financial literacy is knowing how to use that knowledge and those skills in everyday life. I believe that financial education and literacy are very important, as they help us to understand and manage money so that we don't end up struggling financially in the future.



Tips to Build Financial Literacy:



Start Tracking Finances - Keep an eye on daily costs to avoid overspending



Assess Your Situation - Know your money, spending habits and any debts



Set Financial Goals - Set achievable goals for short and long term



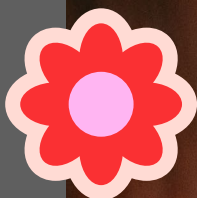
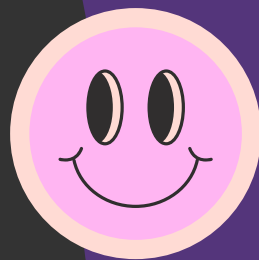
Consume Media - You can read books like Rich Dad Poor Dad or listen to podcasts like The Dave Ramsey Show, which give practical tips

I strongly urge the government and those with influence to prioritise financial education for young people. Teaching money management should be an everyday part of school life, not an overlooked topic. We can equip the next generation with the essential life skills and create a confident society.

HOW TO BE HAPPY

By Talha Ghani

Since humans have existed, our main goals have been pretty simple: stay safe, keep going, and find happiness. If you're reading this, you've already made it through every challenge life has thrown at you so far, but are you truly happy? Maybe yes, maybe no, or you're somewhere in between. Yet one thing's certain: we all crave real happiness. Today, you'll discover how to tap into this powerful feeling of joy and learn ways to sustain and share an emotion so strong yet so wonderfully simple.



THOUGHTS: ARE YOU LETTING THEM HEAL?

- ✦ Increased gratefulness, for example, saying to yourself **"I am grateful for my family," "I am thankful for my health,"** or **"I appreciate my positive relationships."**
- ✦ Increased journaling, which can help release negativity onto paper, frees up the mind.
- ✦ All emotions will pass - you are never happy, sad, angry, or miserable forever!
- ✦ Research shows that happy people often value time over money.



FEELINGS: FRIEND OR ENEMY?

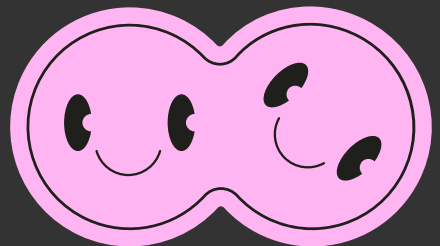
- ✦ What we resist, persists. Accept your feelings and emotions rather than suppressing them. The benefit? Lower depression and quicker recovery.
- ✦ Praise yourself kindly and directly, for example: **"I am beautiful."**
- ✦ Forgive others to release negativity and grudges, while still remembering the lessons learned.

BEHAVIOUR: DO YOUR DAILY ACTIONS REFLECT THE LIFE YOU WANT?

- ✦ Talk to more people in real life - less screen time and more face-to-face interaction spark dopamine. Even chatting in a queue can make a difference. Once you've started a bond, put in the effort and time to maintain it.
- ✦ Be kind to others. Small acts, like giving a compliment, may seem minor but can have a massive impact on them and on you!
- ✦ Donating money or buying gifts for others can reduce stress and even lower blood pressure.
- ✦ Take on challenges, and once you've achieved them, you feel a sense of accomplishment. For example, learning a new language.
- ✦ Exercise: simply moving your body regularly throughout the day, or doing short bursts of intense activity, boosts mood.
- ✦ Avoid social media for at least an hour before bed to reduce anxiety and improve sleep quality.
- ✦ Prioritise quality sleep; it balances brain chemicals like serotonin and dopamine, reduces stress, and improves emotional control, helping you feel calmer and happier.
- ✦ Ask yourself: are your short-term pleasures costing you long-term joy? Limit "fake fun" (activities that feel good briefly but harm your overall wellbeing), and instead focus on those that build lasting happiness.



Happiness isn't one-size-fits-all. To me, it's about loving relationships; for others, it's personal growth, peace of mind, or a moment of laughter. What matters is understanding how your thoughts, feelings and behaviour influence your emotional wellbeing. Whether it's increased gratefulness, forgiving others or making new friends, happiness can be harnessed. In the end, it's not about being cheerful every moment, but about creating a life where joy, meaning and connection are part of your everyday choices.



HOW MASS SPECTROMETRY COULD REVOLUTIONISE EARLY CANCER DETECTION

By Carys McEvoy

Imagine if cancer could be detected before symptoms even fully appear. Cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide. Catching cancer early dramatically increases the opportunity for recovery. A tool which can aid us in this is Mass Spectrometry (MS). MS is a useful chemical tool which can detect tiny chemical changes in the body, indicating the presence of cancer before tumours are detectable by other methods.

Mass spectrometry measures the mass of molecules in a sample. The process of carrying out mass spectrometry is as follows:

1. **Molecules, e.g. lipids (fats), metabolites or proteins are ionised (turned into charged particles).**
2. **These ions are sent through a mass analyser, which separates them based on their mass-to-charge ratio (m/z) - this essentially means how heavy they are in comparison to their electrical charge.**
3. **A detector records the results as a mass spectrum, giving a chemical fingerprint of the sample.**

This allows researchers to identify and quantify thousands of molecules even in very small amounts.



By detecting changes in the body's chemistry at a molecular level, MS enables the early diagnosis of cancer before tumours fully develop. This can be done by analysing samples such as blood, tissue, or urine to measure proteins, metabolites, or lipids. By comparing results from healthy and cancer patients, researchers can identify specific biomarkers, essentially clues that signal the presence of different types of cancer.

MS is currently being used to detect a wide range of cancers, including breast, ovarian, lung, pancreatic, prostate, melanoma, bladder and brain cancers. However, this is mainly at the research or clinical trial level and is not yet routinely used in hospitals due to the high costs, the need for specialised equipment, and the complexity of data interpretation, although it is gaining popularity. Tools using mass spectrometry show promising results: the iKnife used in surgery can detect cancer with about 97% accuracy while the MasSpec Pen has achieved around 94-96% accuracy in detecting tumours, and new blood tests are reaching nearly 98% accuracy. MS could be the answer to saving millions of lives through faster, earlier diagnosis.

KENDRICK LAMAR: HOW HE IS 'NOT LIKE US'

By Salma Nawar

Kendrick Lamar Duckworth, an American rapper, is very influential in the hip-hop scene. From chart-topping albums to the disses at Drake and the accompanying legal action to his latest album, Kendrick has never failed to make headlines.

His most recent feat is his song with the prominent R&B singer SZA, 'Luther', from his latest album 'GNX'. Besides its viral online success, it has managed to stay at #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 for 13 consecutive weeks, which is incredibly rare. So far, fewer than 50 songs have managed to stay at #1 for over 10 weeks, with the vast majority being pop or R&B songs.

Kendrick Lamar's longest charting song, however, is without a doubt 'Not Like Us', which spent a record-breaking 22 consecutive weeks at #1. Not only that, but it has also won Kendrick 5 Grammy awards! This makes Kendrick a 22-time Grammy-winning artist, with 57 nominations. Despite only being a diss track, 'Not Like Us' has certainly not failed to make history, as it is now the longest charting rap song, especially significant in the hip-hop scene.

Kendrick's success didn't start here; Kendrick Lamar has also won a Pulitzer Prize for Music for his 2017 album 'DAMN.', making him the only artist outside the genres of classical and jazz to win the award. I personally believe that 'DAMN.' has not received the recognition it deserves, with songs that became instant hits, such as 'HUMBLE.' and 'LOVE.', as well as songs with incredibly influential and intimate lyrics, such as 'DUCKWORTH.' and 'FEAR'. Something that is also quite interesting is how the album was designed to be played backwards as well. Kendrick explained in an MTV interview that this structure represents "the duality and contrast of the intricate Kendrick Lamar." This creative approach perfectly exposes his true musical and lyrical genius.



If you've found this interesting, then I'd love to recommend a few songs:

1. 'Reincarnated' from GNX
2. 'LOYALTY. FEAT RIHANNA' from DAMN.
3. 'Complexion' from To Pimp A Butterfly
4. 'Sing About Me, I'm Dying Of Thirst' from good kid, m.A.A.d city
5. 'Mirror' from Mr Morale and The Big Steppers

Kendrick Lamar continues to shape the future of hip-hop, whether reflecting on personal struggles or showcasing truths about society. If you haven't already, give his music a listen. I hope you'll enjoy these songs, and perhaps find your next favourite artist!

A MILLION DREAMS

By Farjana Bareek

Dreams vs Society...what's your dream? As the years go by, so many of our dreams fade. People in power tell us what we should become, and there's a short list of "good jobs": doctor, dentist, pharmacist. I'm not anti-medicine or law, tech, or finance; those careers matter and some people genuinely love them, but is that what you want? Is it your dream job?

Let's break it down. Many professional routes take years: GCSEs, A-levels/BTEC, then a long time at university. Tuition fees in England for 2025/26 can be up to £9,535 at most providers, before you even add living and travel costs. Contact time also varies a lot by subject and university; some students get plenty, others much less, so experiences can feel uneven. From someone I know at university, I've heard of timetables with only a few contact hours a week and loads of self-study. That might work for some people; for others, it can feel like you're paying thousands to teach yourself. Either way, the money and pressure stack up fast, and not everyone ends up liking the job they trained for.

Especially for some Muslim students, the current loan system is difficult because paying or receiving interest conflicts with their beliefs. Although the government has said it's developing Alternative Student Finance that's compatible with Islamic finance principles, it plans to roll out alongside the new Lifelong Learning Entitlement from 2026/27. Right now, some Muslim students feel forced to give up university or settle for paths they don't truly want, just to avoid loans with interest.



An interest-free option would finally let them study what they're passionate about: architecture, art, fashion, whatever it may be, without having to choose between their faith and their future. It's about having the same chance to follow your dreams as everyone else, without financial systems holding you back.

I also want to shout out to teachers in schools and colleges. So many put in huge effort, build real relationships and support us every day. University lecturers can be great too, but when cohorts are massive, it's easy to feel like a number. That's not a dig, just the student reality some of us see.

Whether your path is maths, science, IT or something totally different, ask yourself: Do I actually want this? I used to think I'd be an English teacher just because I was good at English and not as strong in science or maths. But my real dream is to be an author. Lots of people want to study something creative but get told to be "realistic" or that it "rarely works out". Those courses are sometimes mocked as 'Mickey Mouse degrees', yet creative work shapes culture, communication and community. If you have a hobby, skill or passion, you can turn it into something, and yes, that might be a business.

Being self-employed is more possible than ever: the internet is packed with free tutorials and tools, including AI. Creators like Iman Gadzhi and Simon Squibb, both entrepreneurs who share start-up advice, post loads of practical tips. Start small: try one hour a week, then one hour a day. Step by step, you can build to the point where leaving a job you don't enjoy feels safe.

Your dream might be as niche as sewing fluffy fruit cushions, crocheting keyrings or designing calligraphy bookmarks. Believe in yourself and take the first step. My little brother did at 11. He launched Fruitvia, a tiny smoothie stand that taught him real-life skills like sales and creative thinking. It doesn't have to be big to be powerful.

You don't need to stay stuck in a job or a degree you don't like. You can work your way out of it. You don't have to live a life that isn't yours; your dreams are worth the risk!



THE ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL SCHOOL SYSTEM:

WHY IT'S FAILING STUDENTS

by Hana Sheikh

The UK education system often takes a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching, focusing more on keeping order than on understanding individual needs. From my perspective, it feels like schools see us as a single class rather than as people with our own challenges, strengths, and ways of learning. To make their jobs easier, some teachers end up picking one student as their go-to person when something goes wrong, and that student often becomes the default target for blame. This kind of bias can leave students feeling punished unfairly, even when they've done nothing wrong.



POTENTIAL UNDERLYING CAUSES OF MISBEHAVIOUR

In many cases, what teachers label as “misbehaviour” actually comes from deeper issues that often go unseen. Factors like mental health struggles, stressful home environments, disabilities, or constant feelings of unfair treatment can all contribute to how a student behaves in school. When these problems are ignored, students can end up feeling hopeless and give up altogether because they believe no one will listen anyway.

According to the Department for Education and the ‘Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) Programme’, neurodivergent students, less able students, and those dealing with trauma are often misunderstood in school settings. Instead of receiving support, many are disciplined for behaviour linked to these deeper challenges. For example, the UK Parliament’s ‘POSTnote on Support for Neurodivergent Children and Young People’ found that inconsistent teacher training and limited awareness often lead to unfair treatment in mainstream schools.

THE IMPACT OF TEACHER BIAS

These set biases often affect students who keep to themselves and don't cause a 'fuss'. Teachers may assume such students are fine, labelling them as the "good kid", and overlook any struggles they might be hiding. This can create a sense of distrust and resentment, rather than the safe, inclusive environment schools should provide.

Sociologist Howard Becker's Labelling Theory (1963) supports this idea, as teachers' labelling students as "good" or "troublemakers" can shape how students perceive themselves. Over time, this affects confidence, motivation, and even whether they continue with higher education at college or university.



MOVING TOWARDS A BETTER SYSTEM

If schools want to help young people thrive truly, they need to focus less on control and more on understanding. This means teacher training that includes awareness of mental health, neurodiversity, and trauma-informed practice, something that projects like UCL's "Supporting Neurodiversity in Education" initiative and Oxford's Neurodivergent Education for Students, Teaching & Learning (NESTL) are already exploring.

Schools should also listen to student voices and provide spaces where young people feel safe expressing how they really feel. Because in the end, education should be about growth, not just grades and students shouldn't feel unseen in the one place meant to help them succeed.

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE NHS

By Hamail Afzal



As we all know, the NHS is currently facing many challenges, which have been a hot topic in the news. From staff shortages to the social care funding crisis, there is a wide range of problems affecting our healthcare system. In this article, we'll explore some of these key issues to help you gain a better understanding of the state of healthcare and social care in the UK today.



AGEING POPULATION

As healthcare improves, people are living longer than ever before. It is estimated that by 2050, one in four people in the UK will be aged 65 or over. While this is a positive sign of medical progress, an ageing population also brings new challenges. Older people are more likely to experience frailty and complex health conditions such as dementia. Many may also have multiple long-term conditions known as multi-morbidity. These factors increase the demand for healthcare and place greater financial pressure on the NHS. According to Age UK, more than two million people aged 65 and over have unmet needs for care and support. This shows that our health and care systems are struggling to keep up with the growing demand.



SOCIAL CARE FUNDING CRISIS

Social care provides essential support for people with extra needs so they can live independently. This could include someone visiting your home to help with household chores or full-time care in a care home. However, the social care system has been seriously underfunded for many years. Each year, demand increases, yet many people still cannot access the help they need. It's estimated that 2.6 million people are currently unable to get the care and support they require. Without enough funding and staff, social care services face mounting pressure, and this directly affects the NHS, as more people end up in hospital when they could have been supported at home.



STAFF SHORTAGES

The NHS is experiencing a long-term shortage of staff across almost every area. There are too few nurses, midwives, and GPs to meet the growing demand for care. Some regions, especially coastal communities, have 15% fewer consultants and 7% fewer nurses per patient compared to the national average. When hospitals don't have enough permanent staff, they often rely on locum (temporary) doctors to fill the gaps. While this helps in the short term, it can disrupt the continuity of care for patients and costs the NHS extra money, money that could be used for other essential services. The main reasons for staff shortages include low pay, long working hours, burnout, and the effects of Brexit, which led to fewer healthcare workers coming from the EU. According to NHS staff surveys, almost half of employees say they've experienced burnout or stress at work in the past year.



NHS LONG TERM PLANS

To tackle these problems, the NHS has developed a Long Term Workforce Plan that aims to rebuild and strengthen the healthcare system for the future. Some of the key goals include:

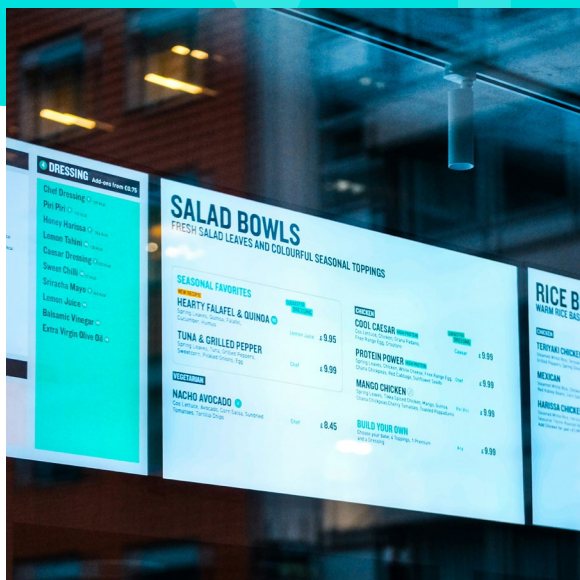
- * **Develop 'Ageing Well' programmes:** Increasing support for community response teams, frailty assessments (tests to help older people stay independent), and improved care in care homes.
- * **Joined-up care with social services:** Working more closely with local councils and care providers to reduce unnecessary hospital stays and delayed discharges.
- * **Double medical school places:** Expanding training places to 15,000 annually by 2031/32, focusing on regions with the greatest need for doctors.
- * **Scale up apprenticeship routes:** Ensuring that 22% of clinical training is delivered through apprenticeships by 2031/32, including new medical degree apprenticeships.

In conclusion, the NHS remains one of the UK's greatest achievements, but it faces major challenges that cannot be ignored. With the right investment, long-term planning, and focus on supporting both patients and staff, there is hope that the NHS can continue to provide high-quality care for generations to come.

THE HIDDEN DANGER OF MENUS

By Sarah Curless

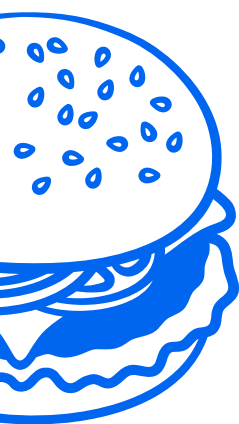
Eating out at a restaurant, whether it's for a special occasion or simply a catch-up with a friend, is supposed to be enjoyable, right? Yet in April 2022, the government introduced legislation that changed this forever. From this date, all restaurants, cafes, and takeaways in England with more than 250 employees were required to display calorie labels on menus. On the surface, it may seem like a harmless way to encourage healthier living. But why can it be so damaging? And what are the hidden consequences?



In tackling obesity, the government claimed calorie labelling would help people make “conscious” choices. But obesity is far more complex, influenced by socioeconomic status, activity levels, genetics and mental health factors far beyond simple willpower. Reducing it to calories fuels the stigma that obesity is merely a choice. Public health campaigns should instead empower individuals, encouraging long-term behavioural changes.

The evidence behind calorie labelling is weak. A Cochrane review found little proof it makes a difference, and while one US study initially showed a four per cent drop in calories per order, the effect disappeared within four years. This isn't a long-term solution.

What is concerning is the impact on those with eating disorders. BEAT estimates 1.25 million people in the UK suffer from such illnesses, with anorexia tragically holding the highest psychiatric mortality rate. For those in recovery, eating out is already daunting. Adding calorie counts can trigger harmful behaviours, heightening guilt, avoidance, and anxiety. In a BEAT survey, 98% of respondents with eating disorders said calorie labelling would negatively affect them. One wrote: “The thought of seeing calories on menus makes me feel so sick and sends me back to the depths of my eating disorder.”



Even for those without eating disorders, the labels can be misleading. As included in the legislation, menus are required to state that “adults need around 2000 calories a day.” This, however, is not in line with the NHS guidance, which state that the ideal daily intake of calories varies by age, metabolism, and physical activity, amongst various other factors. Going out to a restaurant should be a fun and social activity, and it is one people need now more than ever, given the loneliness epidemic. With more people struggling financially, this is, unfortunately, often a rare luxury. Seeing these numbers can spoil the experience, steering them away from what their body truly craves and leaving them more unsatisfied.

This leaves us with an important question: where do we go from here? Whilst calorie information may be helpful for some, it can be deeply harmful for others. People should have the free will to decide whether they want to see this information or not. A possible solution would be to have a menu without calorie labelling and a second menu with it. Another alternative would be to have QR codes for those who want to access the calorie information. Restaurants already ask about allergies and dietary requirements, and mental health conditions should be treated with the same level of care.

In conclusion, with eating disorders on the rise, and the a lack of evidence that putting calories on the menu will help to tackle obesity. Removing these numbers or at least making them optional may seem like a small step, but it could make a huge difference. By taking such actions, we move closer to a future where food is enjoyed, not feared, and fewer lives are stolen by disordered eating.



YOU CAN'T SCROLL PAST THIS ONE

By Olivia Bukowiec



Why do you use TikTok? Is it because you feel tired, bored, or maybe because you want to get rid of an emotion that's difficult to deal with? Thinking before clicking on the app can give you a sense of control over how you spend your time. Some people don't even realise they're scrolling already, because it's just part of their routine.

IS TV BETTER THAN TIKTOK?

After scrolling for just an hour, you probably won't remember every video you've watched. The time you spend watching TikToks doesn't really give you anything useful in the long run. Sure, it cures your boredom for a bit, and it might even distract you from uncomfortable feelings, but pushing them down isn't good for you anyway.

So, instead of watching endless ultra-short clips that you'll forget straight away, try watching a series you're genuinely interested in. That way, you might learn something new and even have more to talk about with others. It's always great when you can chat with people who've watched the same films or shows, sharing thoughts on the events, characters, and perspectives.



THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF DOOMSCROLLING

Not to sound like a parent, but setting a screen time limit can really help you keep track of how long you've actually spent on TikTok. Sometimes we don't even notice how much time has passed and end up wasting a whole day.

In one survey of over 11,000 people, 80% of them use TikTok, with the highest number of users being those aged 18 to 29, where usage rises to about 85%. Some studies have found that using TikTok often has been linked to higher levels of anxiety and depression, especially among people under the age of 24. Personally, I used to feel awful after realising how much time I'd wasted on it. Try setting a time limit, even just a small checkpoint, so you know how long you've been scrolling.

Too many times, I've seen friends at sleepovers wake up and instantly open the app. Too many times, I've seen people scroll instead of chat scroll instead of enjoying time with friends and family. This doesn't just affect those moments; it also affects the memories you make. Do you really want to be remembered as the one who was on their phone the whole party?

VULTURES NOT VILLAINS

By Rowan Boyd

Vultures. A creature most of us recognise, but how well do we really know them? How do you see them? A scavenger, a pest, a nuisance? Or simply as useless vermin with no purpose. It's time for that perception to change. Vultures are not the villains of nature's story; they are its unsung heroes.

Firstly, what do vultures actually do? In a sense, yes, they are scavengers, but that is by no means a terrible thing. They are vital to the ecosystem. By feeding on dead animals, vultures prevent the spread of deadly diseases caused by rotting carcasses. Without vultures, these harmful pathogens and bacteria would be spread throughout the environment and cause many endangered animals to die from preventable deaths.



Another incredible feature of these vultures is that they are a powerful way for conservationists to locate illegal poachers. For example, when a poacher kills an elephant, vultures start circling its carcass. In areas affected by poaching, conservationists watch for these circling birds, which often lead them directly to the crime scene. This method has helped authorities locate and detain poachers. This has saved many of the animals targeted by poachers.

Despite their vital role, vultures are still portrayed as symbols of evil or decay in popular media, from *The Jungle Book* to *Snow White*. However, now that we have proven that vultures aren't these evil villains, but instead these misunderstood secret heroes. We must do everything we can to save them from going extinct, but also to stop their negative portrayal in film, for example, their presence foreshadowing a negative event. BirdLife International notes that 14 out of 22 vulture species are globally threatened and are critically endangered. There are multiple reasons for this, like poachers poisoning the carcasses that they eat or the vultures colliding with power lines that obstruct their habitats.

Whatever the reason, we must act now, we must raise awareness and help these poor creatures who have no voice of their own survive in the world that we're slowly destroying. These are the photos from when I visited Gauntlet Birds of Prey-Eagle and Vulture Park.

CLOSING THE GAP:

THE POWER OF REPRESENTATION FOR RACIALLY MINORITISED STUDENTS

By Maryam Riasat



Across the UK, students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are doing remarkable things in education. They work hard, achieve excellent results, and bring strong talent and drive. Yet many are still not recognised in the same way as their white peers. This disparity is known as the BAME awarding gap, and it affects students' confidence, future opportunities and sense of belonging.

WHAT IS THE BAME AWARDING GAP?

The BAME awarding gap refers to the difference in rates of top university degrees, such as first-class or upper second-class honours, awarded to white students versus BAME students. According to Universities UK, white students were roughly 13 percentage points more likely to receive a first or 2:1 than BAME students in 2018, but this gap has narrowed slightly to 8 percentage points in 2021. But this is not just data; it is a question of fairness. If two students put in the same effort but are recognised differently, we must examine the causes.

WHY DOES THE GAP EXIST?

The gap doesn't mean BAME students lack ability; it's far from it. Many face barriers beyond the classroom: cultural pressure, lack of role models, unconscious bias, and often being the only person of colour in the room. These experiences shape how students engage with education. Microaggressions can knock confidence, while limited support and representation affect belonging, attendance, and performance. But this isn't just about grades, it's about futures. When BAME students thrive, we all benefit from more diverse voices in every field, from medicine to the arts.

WHY IS REPRESENTATION IMPORTANT?

Representation is more than a checkbox; it ensures students feel seen, heard and valued. Seeing yourself in your teachers, textbooks, or stories sends a powerful message: you matter. It leads to:

- * **Better engagement:** Students connect more deeply with lessons that include diverse voices, perspectives and stories.
- * **Fairer assessment:** Inclusive teaching and testing approaches can mitigate bias and support different learning styles.
- * **Role models:** When students see people who look like them in leadership and academia, it strengthens confidence and ambition.

Latest data from the UK's Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) indicates that 14% of UK professors are from ethnic minority backgrounds, a striking under-representation.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

Closing the gap will take time, but it is possible. Here's how we can make progress:

- * **Inclusive curriculum:** Ensure subjects reflect diverse voices in literature, science, history and more.
- * **Bias training for staff:** Educators need awareness of unconscious biases and strategies to challenge them.
- * **Mentoring and support:** BAME students benefit from mentoring, advice and safe spaces in which they feel understood.
- * **Accountability:** Universities should monitor awarding gaps, publish data, and take clear action.
- * **Speak up:** If your course feels biased or one-sided, talk to teachers or student reps. If nothing changes, reach out to diversity or equality officers or submit a formal complaint.
- * **Support peers:** Celebrate BAME classmates' achievements and stand with them if they face discrimination.



The BAME awarding gap isn't just about grades, it's about justice, opportunity, and the future we're building together. By creating an education system that reflects all voices and uplifts every student, we unlock the full potential of our society and shape a fairer, more inclusive tomorrow. In ten years, let's not still talk about gaps, let's celebrate a system that uplifts every learner, fuels every dream and truly reflects the society we aspire to be!

FROM PANDAS TO PANGOLINS:

WHY CONSERVATION MATTERS IN A WORLD OF ENDANGERED SPECIES

By Isabella Foster

Each year, more animals are added to the list of those at risk of endangerment or even extinction. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), over 47,000 species are now threatened with extinction, and this number continues to grow. But how much of this is down to us as humans, and what can we actually do to help?

WHY ARE ANIMALS BECOMING ENDANGERED?

From the much-loved giant panda to the lesser-known pangolin (also known as the scaly anteater), many animals across forests, grasslands and oceans are in danger, and it's mainly because of human activity. While natural events like wildfires or storms can affect animal populations, human-led causes are far more common. These include:



HABITAT DESTRUCTION:

Caused by deforestation, farming, building cities, and expanding roads and factories. When land is cleared for timber or agriculture, animals lose their homes.



CLIMATE CHANGE AND POLLUTION:

Rising global temperatures, caused by burning fossil fuels, are changing the habitats that animals depend on. Ice is melting in the Arctic, forests are drying out, and oceans are warming up. Many animals can't adapt quickly enough to survive these changes.



ILLEGAL FARMING AND POACHING:

Animals are hunted for their fur, tusks, or horns, kept as exotic pets, or used for trophies and traditional medicine.



INTRODUCTION OF EXOTIC SPECIES:

These can harm native wildlife by spreading disease, competing for food, or damaging ecosystems.

These problems don't just harm wildlife; they also affect people by disrupting the natural systems that give us clean air, food, and water. And ethically, many believe we have a duty to protect other living creatures.

Although many endangered species are land mammals, marine life is under serious threat too. Animals like the Yangtze Finless Porpoise and Hawksbill Turtle are now among the Top 10 most at-risk species as published by the World Wide Fund for Nature. They all face dangers such as plastic pollution, climate change, coral reef destruction, and overfishing.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

There's still hope. Conservation efforts have made real progress, such as the return of beavers to Britain after 400 years, and the Giant Panda no longer being classed as "endangered" thanks to the work of the World Wide Fund for Nature and other organisations. Here are some small but powerful ways you can help:

- * **Stay informed** - visit websites like the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, or The Wildlife Trusts to learn more
- * **Buy sustainably** - choose certified eco-friendly products or shop at local markets using your own containers
- * **Use public transport or cycle** - to reduce your carbon footprint
- * **Cut back on waste** - reduce how much food and plastic packaging you throw away
- * **Volunteer or fundraise** - support charities working to protect animals and their habitats, such as People's Trust for Endangered Species

If you know you have the power to make a difference, why not use it?

Even small changes in your everyday choices can help protect the world's most vulnerable species. The future of our planet depends on it!



THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUTH POVERTY IN MANCHESTER

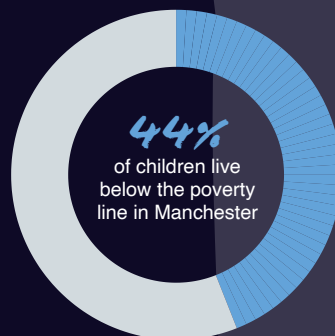
By Naomi Ogunwale Silveira

Manchester is one of the UK's most iconic cities. It's home to Manchester City and Manchester United, where Old Trafford and the Etihad Stadium stand as two of the world's most famous football grounds, representing the city's legendary rivalry. The bee, Manchester's emblem, symbolises its hard-working citizens who strive for greatness. From its rich industrial history to its powerful music and cultural scene, Manchester is known for strength, creativity, and pride. But is life for young people really as bright as it seems?



THE REALITY BEHIND THE STATISTICS

About 44% of children live below the poverty line in Manchester. But what does that mean? Living below the poverty line means not earning enough to afford life's essentials: safe housing, nutritious food, healthcare, and quality education. For a child, this might mean going to school hungry, lacking equipment for lessons, or missing out on opportunities due to financial pressures at home. Poverty isn't just about money; it's about missed chances, limited choices, and daily stress.



THE DIFFERENT FACES OF POVERTY

Poverty comes in many forms. One of the most pressing forms is food insecurity, when families struggle to afford or access enough food. This issue continues to grow in Manchester. Organisations like Manchester Youth Zone work tirelessly, even during holidays, to provide young people with food packages and reduce hunger. So many young people now rely on these packages just to get through the week. But food insecurity is only part of the problem. Many families face housing poverty, living in overcrowded or unsafe homes. Others experience educational poverty, lacking access to technology, books, or safe places to study. Then there's health poverty, where physical and mental healthcare is limited or unaffordable. Despite these realities, young people are still too often labelled "lazy" or "entitled". But those labels couldn't be further from the truth; many simply lack the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

TAKING ACTION: WHAT CAN BE DONE?

To reduce the number of young people living in poverty in Manchester, real action must be taken. Providing hot meals to young people in need could be a crucial first step. The city already has inspiring examples. Initiatives like FareShare Greater Manchester and The Bread and Butter Thing deliver food and essentials weekly. Expanding these services could change even more lives. Beyond food, increasing funding for youth services and safe community spaces would make an invaluable difference. These could be based in schools, youth hubs, and local centres where young people are already engaged.

THE ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM

The reasons behind youth poverty are complex and connected:

- * Insufficient funding for youth and community programmes
- * Lack of opportunities in deprived areas
- * Rising living costs and a shortage of affordable housing
- * Educational inequality, where schools in poorer neighbourhoods lack resources

Youth poverty isn't inevitable; it's the result of choices society makes. These challenges create barriers that too many young people face daily.



HOPE FOR MANCHESTER'S FUTURE

Manchester's youth have purpose, potential, and talent. They are ambitious, creative, and resilient. But without investment, support, and belief, we risk losing a generation to poverty and hardship. Now is the time to act. Let's invest in our youth, create safe spaces, and give every young person a fair chance to succeed.

"CHANGE STARTS WITH SMALL ACTIONS: A MEAL, A SAFE SPACE, A HELPING HAND. THE POWER TO SHAPE MANCHESTER'S FUTURE IS, AND ALWAYS WILL BE, IN OUR HANDS."

WHY 'REVIVE' IS CHANGING THE GAME

By Ayaan Anwar

Have you ever looked at the back of your shampoo bottle and wondered what any of those ingredients actually mean, let alone how to pronounce them? The skin is the largest organ of the human body, and we should all understand what we allow it to come into contact with. If you just took five minutes out of your day, you'd realise how corrupt the self-care industry can be, and how much we don't know about what we use daily.

Revive.
Natural

Hair &
Skin
care

HOW IT ALL STARTED

My curiosity led me to research the industry, its practices, and its ingredients, paving the way for the creation of Revive, a natural hair and skincare brand that does right by you and right by your pocket, with honesty, integrity, and transparency. My journey began at 16 with no lab, no big budget, and no big network. But what I did have was genuine curiosity and passion to make a change.

The products we currently have access to as consumers often don't allow us to understand what we're putting on our bodies with clarity and simplicity. We shouldn't feel forced to stay loyal to certain brands just because of our budgets, especially when natural alternatives are often so much more expensive. If something really matters to you, you shouldn't wait for change; you should step up to the plate and strive to make your dream a reality.



WHAT I DID

Revive uses ingredients with research-proven effectiveness for hair and skin, helping preserve the natural skin barrier. The skincare products contain gentle surfactants to remove excess oils and dirt, aloe vera to soothe, moisturise, and strengthen the skin, and special leaf extracts which can revive your complexion. The haircare range offers gentle, natural alternatives to everyday shampoos and conditioners, as well as styling products to keep your hair looking its best throughout the day without sacrificing comfort or causing irritation.

Some key ingredients include:

KAOLIN CLAY

100% natural and mineral-based, used for centuries in skincare, haircare, and medicine. It helps absorb oils and impurities, making it easier to find your signature style.



SHEA BUTTER

Helps condition hair and reduce frizz.



PINK SALT

Adds texture and volume, giving you an effortlessly amazing look.



What Revive does is keep your skin and hair in the best state possible, giving your skin a natural glow and your hair a healthy shine, without clogging your pores or providing only a temporary fix. It is designed for long-term use, with results you can feel from the first wash for many users.

HOW I DID IT

Even with limited funds, experience, and equipment, I made it work. Balancing A levels, a social life, and financial struggles while funding everything myself with help from my parents wasn't easy, but I stayed determined. I started a TikTok account, [@A2_Wavy](#), to help teenagers improve their hair, reaching over one million views, with several videos passing 200,000. I'll soon launch [@revivenatural.uk](#) on Instagram to grow the brand further. I also tutored GCSE students to reinvest in my business, learning from every mistake and improving each time. My advice? Don't rush. The path to success is never straight. Do it quietly, stay focused, and show results, not the process. That's exactly what I did, sharing free samples with close friends for honest feedback before building from there. This isn't about self-promotion; it's about sharing something I truly care about. Natural hair and skincare alternatives exist, and entrepreneurship is possible no matter your age or situation. Find your why, and make it happen!



THE UNEQUAL BURDEN

By Nikki Yi Tong Guo



MEN AND
WOMEN
AT WORK

Content Note: This article discusses topics including gender inequality, mental health, and suicide. If you find these themes distressing, please do not continue reading.

Have you ever felt the sting of being mistreated or looked down on just because of your gender? That's gender inequality. Gender inequality is the unfair treatment of people based on their gender, where opportunities and respect are not equally given. For example, it can be seen when women are paid less than men despite doing the same role, or when men are discouraged from showing emotions because it's seen as being less 'masculine'.

From an early age, gender inequality can be reinforced by unrealistic standards set by parents and wider society. Little girls are often taught through books and fairy tales that princes are the intelligent ones who 'save the day'. Take the Disney film *Tangled* as an example: Rapunzel is locked away by Mother Gothel, who constantly undermines her talents and confidence, suggesting that women are too weak or naïve to achieve their dreams. Meanwhile, Flynn Rider is shown as free to explore the world and chase his goals without the same barriers, which reflects the unequal expectations placed on men and women in society.

A recent study found that over 89% of toys marketed to girls are pink. Many are linked to makeup, dolls, or childcare, subtly teaching girls from a young age that they should focus on beauty and domestic roles. This can affect their self-confidence and self-image, making them more dependent on societal pressures rather than their own ambitions. For boys, on the other hand, the message is often that they should suppress emotions, avoid vulnerability and take on dominant, leadership roles.

This has real consequences. The Office for National Statistics reported that in 2023, suicide rates for men were 17.4 deaths per 100,000, significantly higher than for women, highlighting the lack of support and recognition for men struggling with their mental health.

Gender inequality can therefore lead to mental health issues, higher suicide rates, and a reluctance to seek help. But resolving gender inequality doesn't mean making men and women identical; it means ensuring both have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. When this happens, it can create stronger economies, healthier families, and a more stable society.

If we work together, we can break down gender stereotypes and challenge unrealistic standards. Some key steps include offering vocational training in STEM subjects to everyone, enforcing anti-discrimination policies in the workplace, and ensuring equal pay regardless of gender.



If you're struggling with your mental health or affected by anything in this article, please know you don't have to go through it alone. You can talk to:

- **Samaritans:** call 116 123 (free, confidential, available 24/7)
- **Andy's Man Club:** free peer-to-peer support groups for men across the UK
- **Speak to your GP, trusted teacher, friend or family member.**

SPOTLIGHT:

INNOVATING MATHS WITH SOFIA DEY CHOUDHURY

By Lucy Tallon

At just 14 years old, Sofia Dey Choudhury is already making waves in education and technology. As the co-founder of Mathletico, a maths learning app with over 20,000 downloads, Sofia is on a mission to make maths more accessible, practical, and enjoyable for everyone. Sofia first discovered Youth Leads UK through her school during Careers Week. Her passion for maths, coding, and creativity shines through as she tells us how Mathletico came to life.



CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF?

My name is Sofia Dey Choudhury. I'm 14 and my hobbies are coding, playing electric guitar, and doing lots of maths Olympiads. I co-founded Mathletico with my dad.



WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO CREATE MATHLETICO?

We first created it in response to the then Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak's 'Maths to 18' initiative, which said every young person should continue with some form of maths until the age of 18. I also found out some sad statistics: low numeracy costs the UK economy about £25 billion a year, and almost half of working-age adults have the maths skills of a primary school leaver. I wanted to do something to help close that gap.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO START CODING SO YOUNG?

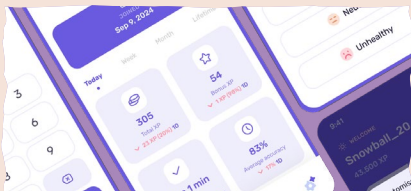
When I was nine, my dad enrolled me in programming classes. I didn't know much about computers, but I was really interested in technology and how it can solve real-life problems. Coding became a creative tool for me. I didn't really see age as a limitation; I just saw coding as an opportunity to make a difference.

WHAT WAS THE MOST EXCITING PART OF DEVELOPING MATHLETICO?

The very first year was really exciting. I did the coding and designed it on Figma. It was overwhelming but exciting too! The best part has been seeing the impact on learners. When we visit schools, we see students who used to find maths difficult starting to enjoy it. Our local council, Buckinghamshire Council, is even one of our customers.

AND THE MOST CHALLENGING?

It's been challenging to balance developing and designing the app with schoolwork. My school finishes quite late, so it can be hard to manage both. Making sure the app meets high educational standards has also been a big task.



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF THROUGH THIS JOURNEY?

I've learned not to limit myself to what I think I can do. I didn't think I could code or design an app, but I taught myself through YouTube tutorials and trial and error. Mathletico taught me that you don't have to have all the answers; you just need to listen, adapt, and keep moving forward.

HOW DO YOU HOPE MATHLETICO WILL HELP YOUNG PEOPLE?

I hope it helps young people see maths as something meaningful and relevant. Lots of people find maths boring, but we focus on functional maths; things like budgeting, data interpretation, and decision-making. Through interactive design and gamification, we make maths feel approachable and fun. I want students to feel that maths is for everyone, not just for people in the top set.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE WITH BIG IDEAS?

You have to take it step by step, start small, but start now. When we started Mathletico, it was just my dad saying, 'Do you want to try coding this?' and it grew from there. You don't need everything figured out before you begin. Ask questions, don't be afraid to fail, and keep going. Our app even crashed once, but we fixed it and kept moving forward.

Sofia's work has already earned her national recognition. She recently won the Atherton Award for female entrepreneurs. Her story is a reminder that age doesn't define ambition and that young innovators can reshape the way we learn.



Mathletico
Bronze Nation

Expert Approved

PEGI 3

10K+ Downloads

Uninstall

Open

BIRTHING VS COLOUR

By Elisabeth Alatiba

Since the beginning of time, women across every culture and religion have been giving birth. Over centuries, medical advances have made childbirth safer and more comfortable, yet in modern-day Britain, one group of women who continue to be failed are Black women.



Official figures also show that in England between 2021 and 2023, women from Black ethnic minority backgrounds faced a maternal death risk more than twice as high as that of White women; a statistically significant disparity. Black women are also significantly more likely to experience birth trauma. Many have described being ignored, dismissed or not believed during critical moments, which contributed to adverse outcomes and feelings of fear and harm as reported by Five X More. Much of this mistreatment is rooted in racism and discrimination within maternity care. A human rights inquiry titled “Systemic Racism, Not Broken Bodies”, led by the charity Birthrights, has brought national attention to these inequalities.

Giving birth is already one of the most difficult experiences a woman can go through, but when combined with racism and discrimination, it becomes even more traumatic. Black women are often assumed to be overly ‘aggressive’, to have a higher pain tolerance, and to “overreact” to pain. These assumptions can lead to medical neglect and dismissive treatment. The consequences can be devastating. According to Birthrights, Black women in the UK are four times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth compared to white women, a statistic that has barely changed in the past two decades.

One heartbreaking story is that of Nicole Thea, an internet personality who tragically lost her life due to an undetected heart condition while pregnant. Despite being reassured by doctors that she was “fine” and that this was a normal part of pregnancy, Nicole continued to feel unwell. She often expressed how out of breath she felt, saying in her YouTube videos: “I could walk from here to the end of the room and feel like I’m dying.” Nicole’s story is just one example of how easily symptoms can be overlooked by healthcare professionals, leading to fatal consequences.

Every woman deserves the right to a safe pregnancy, a respectful delivery and attentive care, regardless of skin colour, race or heritage. As a society, we cannot continue to see these outcomes as just “sad statistics” and part of the process instead. They demand action. We must confront racism and discrimination within the healthcare system, whether it shows up as micro-aggressions, stereotypes or neglect.

Organisations such as Birthrights (a human rights charity that campaigns against discriminatory behaviour) and Black Blossom Alliance (a Black-led charity working to end the health inequalities faced by Black women) play a vital role in raising awareness and influencing policy change.

But the question remains: how many more women have to die because of their skin colour?



THE TRUTH OF LIFE

By Pelumi Adetula

When waking up in the morning, our first thought is someone else's thought.
When choosing what clothes to wear, we choose the ones bland for society,
Wearing outfits we don't want to wear, because what will others say?
Instead of listening to our minds, we choose minds that don't matter.

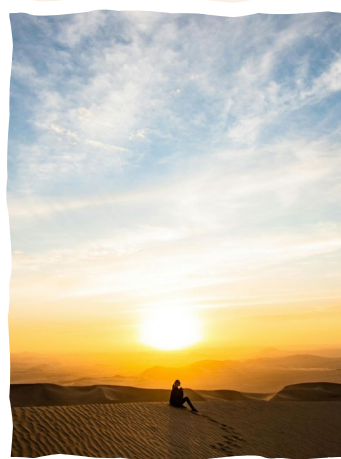
Our shells remain closed because we stay hidden and forgotten,
Our voices remain silent because we feel ashamed and weak.
Our flowers don't flourish since we're pouring too much water on someone else's seed,
The trees we planted yesterday are destroyed today.

Prioritising ourselves first is considered selfish and evil,
While prioritising others is seen as polite and kind.
We suffer and hate ourselves each day to please society's needs,
Stripping away authenticity, replaced with simplicity.

Uniqueness becomes nonexistent, since we consider it weird.
Anytime we look in the mirror, we should see a shining diamond.
Dress in a way that makes us smile,
Listen to our hearts, not what other people say.

Our voices matter, our opinions matter, and what we say matters.
We should pour more water on our own flowers so they can bloom.
The trees we plant take time to grow, some faster than others.
Our shells can be opened when we exit our comfort zones.

Let's be selfish enough to make ourselves happy.
So that we can make others happy too.
We need to love ourselves.
We're all different, all unique, and carry things no one can take from us.





SEEING IS BELIEVING: MY LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE VOLUNTEERING IN CALAIS

By Elena Bloor

Content note: This article discusses themes of refugee trauma, displacement, violence, and death. If you find these themes distressing, please do not continue reading.

Volunteering with refugees at the UK–France border in Calais was a life-changing experience. It was a steep learning curve: of listening, confronting unconscious bias and deconstructing misinformation. I uncovered a stark truth: the difference between my safety and the dangerous reality refugees face is determined by nothing but luck. Now, as Area Lead for Care4Calais in Manchester, I support asylum seekers and refugees, driven by compassion and by an understanding of both facts and falsehoods.

In Calais, I quickly learned there are no formal refugee camps, only informal temporary settlements where people sleep exposed to the elements. Every 48 hours, French police evict them, seizing or destroying tents and belongings, often arriving in riot gear and using tear gas, leaving people with nothing but the clothes on their backs.



It was here, in these dehumanising conditions, that I met doctors, teachers, mechanics, students, mothers, fathers and children, people just like me. Yet, through no fault of their own, they had fled war, persecution and dictatorships, leaving behind futures and families.

In most cases, there are no safe, legal routes or refugee visas to reach the UK1. Government policy dictates that asylum claims can only be made on UK soil, but no safe means are provided to get here. Desperate people are forced into dangerous Channel crossings and later criminalised for trying. This sustains the very smuggling networks the government claims to fight. Offering safe routes would prevent deaths and dismantle those illicit markets.



One girl I met later attempted the crossing with her mother. Their boat overturned in the water on 3 September 2024, and 12 people died. They survived. This is who people mean when they say, "They're all men; there's no room." A child who speaks six languages, who offered me her gloves, whose childhood has been denied by a system that forces her into trauma. These are the stories the media and government often don't tell. The image below shows the conversation.

The difference between me and the individuals I met in Calais is something entirely beyond anyone's control: I was born in a country relatively safe, free from war and persecution, with rights, access to citizenship and a passport that lets me travel freely. In 2023 and 2024, at least 77 individuals are known to have lost their lives; 2024 was the deadliest year on record for Channel crossings². These are deaths that could have been prevented by providing safe routes.

In 2024, the 36,816 people who risked their lives crossing the Channel to claim asylum make up just 0.05 % of the UK population. Of these, 99 % went on to claim asylum, a right enshrined in international law. Across the UK, all forcibly displaced people in 2024 made up just 0.9 % of the UK population. By contrast, that figure is 3.6 % in Germany, or 38 % in Lebanon, a country with far fewer resources⁸. From these figures, I believe the UK is far from being "overwhelmed".

By failing to provide safe routes, we force mothers, daughters, fathers and sons, people who have shown enormous courage in fleeing horrors we can barely imagine, to risk their lives. We must educate ourselves, stand in solidarity with refugees, and demand that everyone is treated with the respect, dignity and protection they deserve.

16/10/2024

Today I met a 7-year-old girl and I made a bracelet with her. She speaks 6 languages. She told me with a bright smile, "I love it when you come here". I said I was very happy to meet her and spend time with her. She brought me a cup of water to say thank you. She also brought a cup of water for her toy elephant, gave him some water to drink and gave him a bath. We sat together in the pouring rain as we made the bracelet - me in my 6 layers and waterproof coat, and her in the flimsy second-hand jumper we'd just given her, already rain-soaked.

Later, when I brought her the bracelet we had made together and tied it around her small wrist, she said how my hands were really cold. I immediately apologised.

Without hesitation, she replied, "It's okay. I will get you my gloves. You need them."

She has a heart of gold

THERE'S ESCAPE IN ESCAPING

By Cara Shenton

Everything is art. After all, what is earth without art? It's just "eh." Many people view media and literature as mere entertainment or hobbies without real depth. But creative interpretation is much more than that. Art offers escape, understanding, and connection. It shapes how we see ourselves and the world around us.



THE POWER OF REPRESENTATION

We often wonder why a certain film, book, or song strikes a deep emotional chord, while someone else may feel something completely different. That's the beauty of creative interpretation: it reflects humanity's endless whirlpool of ideas, thoughts, and emotions. For some, a movie perfectly captures a feeling they've struggled to understand until that moment. For others, a song sparks joy or motivation, offering the boost they need to take the next step or simply have a better day.

Interpretations remind us that someone out there sees us. They recognise something we thought was invisible. That kind of connection can bring comfort or even discomfort that pushes us to reflect and grow. It is emotional and cultural power in its purest form. Has an adaptation of a book ever made you feel something new? Has a song ever reminded you of an experience you didn't realise had shaped you? Those are the quiet moments when art becomes transformative.

CULTURAL & SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF ART

Cinema doesn't just entertain, it brings people together, tells important stories, boosts the economy, and creates evolving opportunities. Film, television, and video contributed £12.6 billion to the UK economy in 2019, according to socialfilms.co.uk. Additionally, Rieger & Bente (2018) found that entertaining films can support recovery from stress by promoting relaxation and detachment from stressors.

From ancient storytelling and fables to today's streaming platforms and albums, art has always helped us make sense of the world and ourselves. It's both timeless and ever-changing.



PERSONAL & EVERYDAY ESCAPES

Many people turn to art in times of crisis, whether that's painting, writing poetry, directing a film, listening to an album, dancing, gaming, or taking photographs. We all do it, often without realising why. It feels good to feel good. It feels good to be transported somewhere else. It feels good to be understood, to laugh, to cry, to create. Art gives us those moments.

Even the earliest humans told stories that stayed with generations because they had an impact. Think of the tales that sparked your childhood wonder when you wanted to be the doctor on screen, the superhero in your book, or the rockstar on your radio. Those creative escapes shaped who we dreamed of becoming.

CALL TO ACTION: LET ART INSPIRE CHANGE

So next time you're watching a movie and think, "I want to be more like this character," act on it. If your favourite artist took the leap that led to their record deal, remember it's okay to try to take your own leap. And if you're feeling low, find comfort in the nostalgia of a cartoon, the rhythm of a song, or the colour of a painting. Be inspired by media and literature. Be inspired to change, to start fresh, and to see the world differently because there's escape in escaping.

Look for the art in your earth.



YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

DO YOU WANT TO DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS, GROW YOUR CONFIDENCE, AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

WHAT YOU'LL GAIN

✦ Your Voice, Your Way

Write articles for the Youth Leads Magazine, direct a photoshoot or help others.



✦ Get Job Ready

Get the skills you need for your dream job with CV, cover letter and job interview help.

✦ Industry Insights

Visit high-rise offices and meet industry leaders who'll give you advice.



✦ Social Action

Uncover the power of making a difference by leading your own community projects.

✦ Skills for Life

Learn about money, your rights, responsibilities & much more.



FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15-19



FREE SNACKS PROVIDED & TRAVEL IS PAID FOR



THE PROGRAMME IS WEEKLY, FOR 12 WEEKS & IS FULLY FUNDED WHICH MEANS IT'S FREE FOR YOU

"Youth Leads helped to light a spark in me, and I found my passion. They helped me believe in myself and now I see no limits."
– Nicole

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