

I shouldn't be standing here, but I am, and it's because of what I believe is worth saving.

Four years ago, I came to this country alone, wandering, lost. I had left everything I cared about behind – my family, my friends, my people, my country. Like countless young people, I drifted aimlessly for a long time. I knew that I still had a long road ahead of me, including an arduous asylum process and I couldn't even muster the will to take care of my own basic needs.

Not knowing what I wanted to do with my life and knowing what was coming, I felt hopeless.

My name is Warith, and I am a refugee.

In one of the most fortuitous turns of luck, I found a little place in Southampton, called No Limits – a youth charity, one of hundreds around the UK. I was at a crossroads. I could have given up or tried asking for help. I had lost everything worth losing, so what's the harm, right?

The memory of my first time in the Advice Centre run by No Limits will forever be engrained in my mind, in a special corner with my other happy memories, like when I met my girlfriend, meeting my newborn siblings and celebrating their significant milestones. I was welcomed with open hearts and minds. A stranger in an even stranger land; I mean, you guys put cold milk in your tea! I felt like I belonged and this was day one.

We would be here all day if I were to recount the myriad of ways No Limits has helped me over the years, and I respect your time more than that, than to bore you with the details, so I will leave you with the most significant one.

I do not think I am alone in thinking that the world over the last few years has turned into this depressing, incessant quagmire of unprecedented catastrophes. That solitary fact is enough to turn anyone's life into this pointless slog when you feel that nothing is worth doing. No matter what you do, it will always get worse, and I have six more decades of this. These dark thoughts followed me like the plague. Every time I looked outside, opened the news, I saw suffering; people, young and old, toiling away with a sense of nihilism. Today was bad; tomorrow will be worse.

Amber was the first youth worker I spoke to. She welcomed me with a smile, offered me a coffee, and asked me how my day was going, and she meant it. She listened patiently, offered advice when I asked and gently rebuffed me when needed. For the first time in forever, I felt like someone genuinely cared. I felt safe. I knew from that moment that this is where I belonged. There are good people out there.

Not only do they deal with their own personal issues, but they go above and beyond in helping you. Everything I needed and things I didn't even know I did, they helped me get it. Housing, education, healthcare and then some. Even my asylum process.

I gained hope. Hope that today would be good and tomorrow will be better. I have since spent nearly every moment of my free time volunteering and eventually working for No Limits. Amber and people like her are the reason why I'm here today delivering this speech, and I hope to be there one day when others reach rock bottom, to pull them back up and guide them and clear the fog of hopelessness.

My story is just a microcosm of what an Advice Hub is and why I and many other young people are so passionate about supporting the Young Futures Hub initiative.