

Be informed...

Migration Matters

Much of what is printed in the media and elsewhere about migration is simply untrue. Here are some facts that might make you see things differently.

This leaflet was produced during Refugee Week 2023 on behalf of the Newcastle City Wide Asylum Seeker / Refugee Support Group: A group of statutory and voluntary sector organisations who have been working collaboratively in the field of migration since 1999.

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN ILLEGAL ASYLUM SEEKER - WE ALL HAVE A RIGHT TO SEEK ASYLUM

International law states that anyone has the right to apply for asylum in another country and remain there until the authorities have assessed their claim. There is no such thing as an 'illegal' or 'bogus' asylum seeker.

The burden is on the person seeking asylum to prove and evidence "a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion"

(1951 UN Convention on Refugees)

The UK asylum system currently offers this protection but is strictly controlled and complex.

THERE ARE ALMOST NO SAFE ROUTES TO COME TO THE UK

There are very few authorised and working routes for people to safely reach the UK.

There is no visa which enables people to claim asylum in the UK from overseas.

Realistically coming to the country and seeking asylum is the only option for people seeking safety. People often have long and dangerous journeys to seek safety and this includes people crossing the channel in small boats.

There is nothing in international law to say that refugees must claim asylum in the first country they reach.

MOST PEOPLE WHO COME HERE SEEKING ASYLUM ARE GENUINE REFUGEES

Three quarters of asylum claims are granted protection at initial decision stage. That means our own government recognises that they are genuine refugees who are fleeing real danger and need our support.

PEOPLE WANT TO WORK AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMY - THE LAW WON'T LET THEM

Many asylum seekers are skilled and want to work and contribute, but the law prevents this until their asylum claim has been decided, which can take many months. After this, many refugees contribute strongly to the economic success of the country.

For more information please go to the Refugee Action website's *Lift the Ban* page (under the *Campaigns* section): refugee-action.org.uk

REFUGEES CONTRIBUTE IN MORE WAYS THAN YOU MIGHT THINK

Refugees make a huge contribution to the UK. About 1,200 medically qualified refugees are recorded on the British Medical Association's database. It is estimated that it costs around £25,000 to support a refugee doctor to practise in the UK. Training a new doctor is estimated to cost between £200,000 and £250,000.

Children in the UK asylum system contribute very positively to schools across the country. This in turn enables more successful integration of families into local communities.

PEOPLE JUST WANT TO BE SAFE

People fleeing danger in their own country simply want safety. In fact, it is the poorest countries in the world, often those bordering war and crisis zones, which accept the largest number of refugees.

The top 5 nationalities claiming asylum in Newcastle are: Syria, Iraq, Iran, El Salvador, and Eritrea, all have poor human rights records or on-going conflict. People seeking asylum are fleeing from these conflicts and abuses, looking for safety.

Most asylum seekers do not choose their destination country. For those that may have some choice there are a lot of factors that contribute towards a feeling of safety, many of which may influence someone fleeing to the UK. Sometimes people are trying to come to the UK to reunite with family they've been battling to find for years. Sometimes people can't access asylum systems in other countries. People who can speak English find coming to the UK will give them the best possible chance of rebuilding their lives. Everyone's story is different.

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SO, WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY...



Asylum Seeker

Someone who is fleeing persecution in their homeland, has arrived in another country, made themselves known to the authorities and exercised the legal right to apply for asylum.

Refugee

Someone whose asylum application has been successful and who is allowed to stay in another country having proved they would face persecution in their home country. Refugees have the same rights as permanent residents of the UK.

Migrant

A person who moves from one country to another for the primary purpose of work or study, whether permanently or temporarily.

ASYLUM SEEKERS - HOUSING AND HOTELS

Asylum seekers are not put on housing waiting lists; they're housed under a separate system and can't choose where they live. The Home Office allocate asylum seekers to accommodation.

At the moment, there are people seeking asylum being housed in hotels across the UK because there is a lack of suitable accommodation.

Over recent years, the time it takes for a decision to be made on someone's asylum application is getting longer and longer, meaning there is a backlog of applications and more people in need of accommodation whilst waiting for a decision. Currently there are over 150,000 unprocessed asylum cases. If the government cleared the backlog there would not be a need to house people in unsuitable accommodation like hotels.

Hotel accommodation is often in isolated locations far from the rest of the community. The poor-quality accommodation, isolation, lack of privacy and basic essentials often damages people's physical and mental health.

Asylum seekers are looked after by central government, not local councils. No money from Council Tax is spent on housing asylum seekers. There's no evidence that areas with higher asylum seeking or migrant populations have correspondingly high council tax rates.

ASYLUM FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Almost all people seeking asylum are not allowed to work and are forced to rely on state support. A typical asylum seeker has to live on £45 per week - this is as little as £6.43 a day to live on. That's significantly below the poverty line, and significantly less than the payment to an individual on universal credit.

Most people seeking asylum are living in poverty and experience poor health and hunger. Many families are not able to pay for the basics such as clothing, baby milk and nappies.

BRITAIN IS NOT A SOFT TOUCH

Think about how you would feel having to leave your country very quickly to go to a place where you have no family, friends and little knowledge of the system. People fleeing their own country are usually very frightened, often leaving everything they know because their own and their families' lives are in danger.

Seeking asylum is never an easy option, and on reaching a place of sanctuary in the UK, all asylum seekers are:

- Fingerprinted (even children)
- Photographed
- Security checked
- Issued with ID cards
- Individuals may be required to report at regular intervals to immigration reporting centres
- Individuals can be detained at any point during their asylum application
- People are not allowed to work and live in poverty
- People have no say over where in the UK they are housed, and accommodation is often poor quality and overcrowded.

THE UK EXPERIENCE OF ASYLUM IS NOT REMARKABLE WHEN COMPARED WITH OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES

The UK is home to approx. 1% of the 27.1 million refugees worldwide. The UK takes far fewer applications than most other EU countries including Germany, France and Spain. France receives and accepts double and Germany triple the applications that we do.

Most people fleeing stay in their own country (moving to a different area) or to neighbouring countries.

"A typical asylum seeker has to live on £45 per week"

About Newcastle City of Sanctuary

Newcastle is a City of Sanctuary. We are a city built on solidarity, and we are proud to welcome people seeking safety. For more information please go to:

newcastle.cityofsanctuary.org