

Together With Refugees Campaign Pack



Local action to resist the cruelty of the
Nationality & Borders Bill and show support
for a more compassionate approach

Overview & how to use this pack

In July 2021, the UK government introduced its long-trailed Nationality and Borders Bill, but it will be months before Parliament finally votes on whether it becomes law. The proposed new law would be a hammer blow to the UK as a place of safety for people fleeing war and persecution. The Together With Refugees coalition will campaign to show that most people want an approach that is kinder, fairer and more effective. This pack shows how you can help people in your local area raise their voice and use people power to make a difference.

We've taken a first step towards this by uniting as never before through Together With Refugees. We launched the coalition campaign in June with wide national and local media coverage. In July we put the media spotlight on refugee communities who have contributed to our national life in the seven decades since the signing of the UN refugee convention. We're well underway thanks to all that you've been doing.

We know our campaign isn't going to be easy. The government has a big majority in Parliament that it can use to push through the Bill, and it has powerful allies in parts of the media. But the combined pressure of citizens coming together through organisations like yours in coordinated action can be an even more powerful force for change. And if we can mobilise people we know are sympathetic to our cause, but not yet active, we can make a real difference.

Over the coming months the next phase of the campaign will focus on the Bill, where our campaigning activity will have three main strands:

1. Further initiatives to secure national media coverage for the campaign to help reframe the public debate.
2. Lobbying work by Together With Refugees members in Westminster and Whitehall on the Bill.
3. Mobilising pressure at a local level to:
 - Demonstrate public backing of a more compassionate approach through gathering individuals' signs of support and displaying them at local and national level, as MPs discuss the Bill;
 - Lobby MPs in their constituencies to press the government to rethink the overall approach of the Bill and secure specific changes in key areas;
 - Amplify the reach of these activities through local media and social media to demonstrate broad support for a better approach.

This campaign pack focuses on the third strand of activity; mobilising pressure at local level. If you're a local member of the coalition you can run the campaign in your area. If you're a national member, please think of ways you can adapt and promote the activities through your local networks, or support the campaign actions in other creative ways. We'd love to hear your ideas!

Over the coming weeks and months we will be adding ideas to this pack, and providing more detail on some of the activities already proposed. If there is anything in particular you would find useful, please let us know by emailing us at:

info@asylum-reform-initiative.org.uk

The suggested ideas are here to inspire rather than overwhelm or limit you. They are based on initiatives already carried out by other local groups in different parts of the UK. Whatever you decide to do, however big or small, it will count towards the national show of support for refugees. You know your strengths, your networks and what works in your area, so please feel free to interpret these ideas in whatever way you want.

We have been bowled over by the creativity of local groups' initiatives. Whatever you do, we'll be keen to know about your activities. So please make sure you post pictures, details and links to your activities on social media. Remember to use the hashtags [#TogetherWithRefugees](#) and [#WhoWeAre](#) so we can follow you and count your activities towards the national picture.



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Together With Refugees

Who we are

Together With Refugees is a coalition of over 300 national and local organisations, who believe in showing compassion to refugees. Members include refugee-led groups and those representing people with lived experience of the asylum system, faith, student, women's rights, human rights and LGBT+ groups, trade unions, housing organisations, legal and advice centres, international development NGOs and arts projects, among others.

Together With Refugees is founded on a simple, but powerful, set of shared convictions: how we treat refugees is about who we are. At our best, we are welcoming and kind to those facing difficult times. If any one of us feared for our lives or for the lives of our loved ones, we'd want to know that others would help us to safety.

Together With Refugees is founded on a simple, but powerful, set of shared convictions: how we treat refugees is about who we are.

Together, we are calling for a better approach to supporting refugees that is more effective, fair and humane. This means standing up for people's ability to seek safety in the UK no matter how they came here, and ensuring people can live in dignity while they wait for a decision on their asylum application. It means empowering refugees to rebuild their lives and make valuable contributions to their communities. And it means the UK working with other countries to do our bit to help people who are forced to flee their homes.



Heart symbol and hashtags

The heart is a symbol that we can all stand behind to express solidarity as a movement. It uses the colours of the refugee nation flag created by Yara Said for the first ever refugee team in the 2016 Olympics. The colours were inspired by a lifebelt, representing hope. The heart was developed with refugee organisations and people with lived experience of being refugees.



#WhoWeAre
#TogetherWithRefugees

With our campaign hashtags [#WhoWeAre](#) and [#TogetherWithRefugees](#) the heart is intended to be freely adopted and widely used to express support for refugees, while underpinning a sense of unity. The heart and the hashtags help us unite as a movement, demonstrating we are larger than the sum of our parts.

Key messages

The key messages below are intended to help, as simple guidance for when you are talking with local people, media and your MP. Wherever possible, the general rule is to focus on our positive vision. For information about the government's new plans and what we're calling for please see the [Nationality and Borders Bill](#).

- How we treat refugees reflects who we are. At our best, we are welcoming and kind to those facing difficult times. If any one of us feared for our lives or the lives of our loved ones, we'd want to know that others would help us to safety.
- Please join our call for a kinder, more humane approach to refugees – so they can seek safety in the UK, rebuild their lives and make a valuable contribution to their communities.
- Refugees have always been a part of the UK. It's who we are.
- The UK government is planning to introduce new rules for how we treat refugees. The plans represent a major attack on people seeking safety. And they undermine our obligations under international law.
- Too often people fleeing war, persecution or violence are treated with hostility in the UK, rather than compassion.

Preferred terms

Freedom from Torture has produced [a useful guide on messaging and preferred language](#) to help us influence the potentially sympathetic audiences (persuadables) that we aim to reach. It is well worth a read.



The Nationality and Borders Bill

Our key concerns

If passed into law, the Nationality and Borders Bill will deny many refugees the chance to seek sanctuary in the UK, criminalise many of those who try, isolate refugees in harmful out-of-town institutions, and undermine 70 years of international co-operation under the UN refugee convention. Combined with the government's refusal to set a clear target on how many refugees the UK will resettle, it would drastically cut the overall number we give safety to.

As well as being inhumane, it will be expensive, unworkable and undermine our international standing. The government says the Bill will 'fix the broken asylum system'. Instead it will worsen problems such as the large, growing backlog of people awaiting a decision on being accepted as a refugee, and the poverty and insecurity they suffer in the meantime.

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Together With Refugees members have identified four particular areas of concern in the government's proposals for joint campaigning. Of course, individual members of the coalition will continue to work on other important aspects of the Bill as well. [More detailed briefings from coalition members can be found here](#). If the Bill were to become law as presently proposed it would:

1. Enshrine two classes of refugees based not on why they came (what forced them to flee their home) but on how they came (for example, if they were forced to come by 'irregular' routes such as in lorries or boats). This could mean [an estimated 9,000 to 21,600 people a year that the UK currently accepts as refugees would be turned away in future](#). Under the new law, the government would be empowered to rule that their claims for asylum would not be heard (no matter how valid their case) and expel them to another country - even though the UK has no current agreements with other nations to do this. Or, if unable to do this, the new law would mean the government could grant such people a new limited status to be in the UK, with fewer rights to reunite with their family or get support to live on. They would be kept in limbo with the constant threat of being expelled from the country. The new law could also criminalise those helping people seeking asylum reach the UK - not just people smugglers, but refugees themselves or others providing help, such as those rescuing people at risk of drowning.

2. Give the government powers to expel people seeking asylum 'off-shore' to a country where they have no connection and before their claim for asylum has been given a fair hearing in the UK. This would be similar to the controversial, expensive and failed approach used by Australia. While the government does not have the agreements or infrastructure to put this into practice now, the powers in the Bill would enable them to move to it in future.

3. Lead to a sweeping shift to putting people seeking asylum in out-of-town institutions, rather than housing them in the community where they can get practical help, legal support on their claim for refugee status, and start to rebuild their lives. This is despite the disastrous recent experience of the government putting people in such segregated institutions by using disused army barracks, which was condemned by the High Court for their appalling conditions and preventable Covid outbreaks.

4. Fail to set any clear target for resettling refugees in the UK through international resettlement programmes. This is despite the government's declared support for 'legal' routes which it uses to justify proposals to block refugees coming to the UK via 'informal' routes. Together With Refugees is calling on the government to commit to a clear target to resettle at least 10,000 refugees a year through internationally-agreed programmes. (And we'll focus on this through the [#CommitToResettlement campaign](#)). It is also pressing for the government to ensure more safe routes for people to come to the UK to seek asylum, including through enabling refugees to be reunited with their families in safety in the UK in line with the calls of the [Families Together campaign](#).



What we're calling for

The Bill and the government's New Plan for Immigration fail to address the real problems in the UK's approach to refugees. Instead we are calling for a more humane, fair and effective approach that:

- Stands up for people's ability to seek safety in the UK no matter how they came here;
- Ensures people can live in dignity while they wait to hear a decision on whether they will be granted protection as a refugee;
- Empowers refugees to rebuild their lives, and contribute to their communities;
- Means the UK works with other countries to do our bit to help people who are forced to flee their homes.

The rest of this pack covers the actions we can take together to achieve our joint vision of a more compassionate approach to refugees.

See the [Show Your Heart](#) action to mobilise people and demonstrate the breadth and depth of local support for refugees.

There's guidance to support you to [engage your MP](#) and make sure they are in no doubt about the depth of local feeling.



Show Your Heart

The aim of the 'Show Your Heart' campaign action is to enable all kinds of people to come together to demonstrate their support for a kinder approach to refugees in a simple, visual and public way. And to do this over the coming months while MPs are considering the Bill in Parliament. Individual signs of support for refugees will be gathered at local level and presented in orange heart displays, representing strong local support across the country. Photos of these orange heart displays and details of local groups' activities will be brought together for everyone to see, and promoted through the media and on social media.

The main ideas in this section are based on activities already pioneered by local groups in the Together With Refugee coalition. Here you can find out about the stages for creating your own orange heart displays.

The activity includes the following steps:

1. Collecting signs of support for refugees from local people - either as individuals or a community like a school, club or faith community. These could be selfies with orange hearts, messages of support for refugees or simply signatures of support to an agreed statement. Or something else. It's up to you to decide. It would be great if you could collect these expressions of local support over the coming months while the Bill is being debated.
2. Gathering the signs of support together and presenting them into one big orange heart display.
3. Revealing your big orange heart display (that brings together all the individual messages of support or selfies) in an iconic local place or landmark. We plan to have some key moments over the autumn and later in the year, linked to the Bill, that you might want to use to 'reveal' your orange heart display.
- 4 Organising your photo for maximum impact.
5. Inviting your MP to attend the unveiling of your orange heart display. MPs would be left in no doubt about their constituents' concerns for people fleeing war and persecution.
6. Getting your activities covered by the local media and making a noise on social media, making it even more difficult for your MP to ignore you.

Guidance and suggestions for how to approach steps 1 to 4 are covered below.

You can find guidance for [engaging your MP](#) and [securing media coverage](#) by clicking on these links.

Show Your Heart at local landmarks

Before you start it's useful to have a clear idea of what your final orange heart display will look like. Have a look at the ideas below. For example, if your display is a fabric banner (perhaps an old bed sheet) to be displayed on a bridge (see D below) you may want people to write their messages directly onto it. If your final display is to be projected onto an iconic landmark (see E page 13) you will need digital versions of your signs of support, like selfies or scanned or photographed messages).



A: Digital selfie with hearts
(Credit: Asylum Welcome)



B: Digital portraits
(Credit: Norwich City of Sanctuary)



C: Individual messages on flag



D: Individual messages on heart banner



E: Portraits projected on Norwich Castle
(Credit: Norwich City of Sanctuary)



F: Orange postcards to MPs used to create a heart installation



G: Display of posters outside Norwich Cathedral
(Credit: Norwich City of Sanctuary)



H: Examples of posters

Getting local people to show support

Once you've decided what sign of support from individuals will suit your heart display, you can plan how to go about getting them from the public.

So how do you get local people to show their support for a more compassionate approach to refugees? You could do this by reaching out to individuals online or through a series of activities and events. To reach new audiences you might like to identify friendly local organisations who might be keen to help.

Reaching out online

In the time of Covid you may prefer to reach out to people to support the action online. You could ask your own supporters to get family and friends to provide signs of support or selfies or whatever signs of support you decide on.

A few of the ideas below could be done entirely online.

A few of the ideas below could be done entirely online. See how [Norwich City of Sanctuary](#) sought support for their heart display online by looking at item 4 on this page.

Organising stalls

For example, you could organise a stall (with permission) in your local town centre, at the village green, in your place of worship or at a fair or festival. You can talk to people who attend your stall about the government's plans and ask them if they would lend their support by adding their sign of support, a signature or selfie or whatever you settled on.

Organising talks

Or if you have more time, you may like to organise a more formal event with speakers. Groups like U3A, the Rotary Club, schools, colleges, anti-racist groups, places of worship and student groups are often looking for speakers on topical subjects.

After the talk you could ask all those participating to support the action. Allow time for this to be done during the event. Even with the best will in the world, busy people may find it difficult to follow through afterwards.



Getting local allies involved

You could also approach other potential allies giving you access to audiences naturally aligned to our aims. If there is a local City of Sanctuary group, they will have contacts for schools, museums and churches who are involved in their 'streams of sanctuary' initiative. Through your group you may already be connected to sympathetic and campaigning groups such as international development organisations, trade unions, housing associations, LGBT+ campaigners, and women's, faith and anti-racism groups. It would be great to publicise their involvement in the SHOW THE HEART action so others can see the breadth and depth of support for refugees from across different communities around the country.

Another way to find potential allies is to check out the national [Together With Refugees coalition members on our website](#) and see if there are any that have groups in your area.

Briefing volunteers to talk to the public

Volunteers who will be speaking to members of the public might like to read our [key concerns about the Nationality and Borders Bill](#) and our alternative vision for people seeking safety.

Volunteers may also want to read our [key messages](#). When engaging with the public it is always best to focus on the positive (a more compassionate approach to refugees) but volunteers may also need to talk about your concerns in the Bill, to make it clear why action is needed now.



Gathering and presenting the signs of support in one big orange heart display

Once you have collected all your signs of support (selfies, messages or signatures) you can then collate them into your big orange heart display. The heart can be presented in a number of ways. We've gathered some ideas, 'how to's' and tips based on the work of other groups.

See [Ideas for Show Your Heart displays](#)

Revealing your big orange heart display

Ideally, you would invite your local MP and media to attend and witness the big event with your orange hearts at a local landmark.

We're keen that we start building the momentum for the campaign as soon as we can – so go ahead with planning, securing signs of

support and organising your local orange heart displays! We will be identifying some key dates linked to the Bill timetable that groups might find helpful to organise around. We plan to coordinate so that local groups around the country organise the big reveal of their orange heart display on the same date/s.

We're also keen for a national rallying point sometime during the debates on the Bill. We will let you know the dates as more becomes clear on the Bill timetable. These national moments could help to maximise pressure on local MPs and help achieve media coverage.

We're keen that we start building the momentum for the campaign as soon as we can – so go ahead with planning, securing signs of support and organising your local orange heart displays!

Organising your photo for maximum impact

When you decide where to display your orange heart, consider the vantage point for the final photograph. If you have a photographer in your group, ask them to help plan the composition from the start. This can help to make sure the picture includes the iconic landmark so it's recognisable, and features the orange heart prominently.

A good photo can [secure you local media coverage](#) even if no media shows up on the day.

Other ideas to Show Your Heart

And of course you may prefer to do something entirely different to contribute to the [objectives of the campaign](#). You are best placed to decide what you'd like to do to make local support for refugees seen and heard.

Birmingham is Together With Refugees



This banner is a great example of an initiative by a local group demonstrating visible support for refugees in a particular place. It was part of Celebrating Sanctuary Birmingham's community engagement for Refugee Week. It was taken and displayed at several workshops and events through the week including their main festival event.

Banner created by Jane Thakoordin and Margaret Murray. Commissioned by Celebrating Sanctuary Birmingham for Refugee Week 2021. Supported by ACE and Birmingham City Council.
Photo by Rabiya K Latif.

Kent Together With Refugees



For the 70th Anniversary of the UN Refugee Convention, volunteers of the Kent Refugee Action Network created this simple message in the sand. The resulting tweet captured lots of attention on Twitter. KRAN has found that it is fairly straightforward to capture attention on social media with relatively little effort.

[Read their case study](#)

Photo credit: Kent Refugee Action Network

Guidance for engaging your MP

Thanks to Asylum Matters for providing the content for this section.

Why speak to your local MP?

The passage of the Nationality and Borders Bill is an opportunity for MPs to oppose the government’s harmful plans, advocate for specific proposals to do things better, and speak up for an overall approach to refugees that is more effective, fair and humane. We know that there are MPs across the UK and in different parties who want to see a better approach, and there are others who are open to being persuaded. However, the government has a significant majority in Parliament and there are many MPs who have not yet been engaged on the issues. It’s also vital that we win clear support from all the opposition parties to ensure they press hard on the Bill – and back our proposals for a better approach in their party’s policies for what they would do in government.

We know that there are MPs across the UK and in different parties who want to see a better approach, and there are others who are open to being persuaded.

Many MPs will have heard from the small, but vocal, minority who oppose a compassionate approach to refugees. But it is crucial they hear loud and clear from as many people and groups in their constituency who stand together with refugees as possible particularly people with lived experience of the asylum system. The more you can show wide support from voters in their constituency, the more impact it will have. We want to build support among MPs, both from new allies and long-standing supporters. To achieve this, we need to make the case directly to them to ensure they feel confident they have the backing of the people they represent.



St Augustine’s Centre in Halifax invites local MP Holly Lynch MP and Shadow Immigration Minister, Bambos Charalambous, to discuss concerns about the UK’s asylum system and how to campaign to make it better. Photo credit: St Augustine’s Centre

Speaking to MPs, councillors, local mayors and other key politicians is a central part of the Together With Refugees campaign because it will:

- Raise awareness of the campaign;
- Make it clear that lots of local people feel strongly about a fairer system for refugees;
- Persuade more political leaders to publicly back the campaign and advocate for reform.

Engaging your MP

Find your local MP

The most effective way you can act is by focusing on your local MP, whose responsibility is to represent you in Parliament and to the government whether or not they agree with you. You can find out who your MP is, their contact details including their email address, and how to [access their website here](#). If you're in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales, you may also wish to contact your representatives in the Northern Ireland Assembly, Scottish Parliament or the Senedd. See below for more guidance on engaging with your representatives at a national and local level.

Send a letter to your MP

We have provided a [template letter](#) you can use or adapt to write to your MP. We know the power of direct meetings with MPs (whether face-to-face or on-line) and are keen to secure as many as these as possible across parliamentary constituencies.

A letter that feels genuine and individual will carry more weight with MPs. It is always powerful to share your personal experiences.

This letter is something for you to personalise, including your own reasons for opposing the government's plans and wanting a better alternative - perhaps drawing on our [key concerns about the Bill](#). A letter that feels genuine and individual will carry more weight with MPs. It is always powerful to share your personal experiences. If you - or someone in your group - have experience of the asylum system, you could describe why you want to see change. If you represent a group or particular part of the community, you could describe to the MP how the Bill would negatively impact on your local community and the people you work with, and the difference an alternative approach could make.

Top tips

- When you write to your MP, you may not receive a reply straight away. You can always follow up with your MP's constituency office by phone. Check out their website for up-to-date contact details. Be polite but persistent.
- If you know other organisations or groups working with refugees in your area, you can join forces and write to your MP together. Collective approaches can be powerful when trying to persuade your MP to meet you.
- If you are still struggling to arrange a meeting with your MP, check whether your MP is holding open 'surgeries' that you can attend. Surgeries are allocated times where MPs meet with their constituents to discuss any local concerns. Check out your MP's website to see if they have any surgery sessions coming up.

[Here is a link to the template letter](#)

Organising a meeting

MPs will often offer to meet and discuss your issue. This can be the most effective way of enlisting the MP's support for the cause. There are a few things you can think about in advance to help make your meeting as effective as possible:

Meetings in the time of Covid

At the time of writing, physical meetings for most MPs are still rare but this may be changing. Instead, lots of MPs are conducting their meetings over video link. If the MP is able to meet, they will be able to organise a video conferencing link for you to dial in on such as Zoom, Skype or Microsoft Teams.

Researching the MP

If you're meeting for the first time, you should do some research about your MP, including their party's position and whether they have said anything before on asylum or refugee issues. You can do this by looking at their voting record, questions they've asked, or just their social media feed.

[Find their voting record here](#)



Who you attend with

It can often be beneficial to work with others, so that as wide a range of experiences and viewpoints as possible are shared with the MP. The Together With Refugees coalition has brought together a wide variety of groups and communities, not just those who focus on refugees

specifically. Do think about whether you could link up with some of these groups to add impact when you meet your MP. If you yourself do not have lived experience of the asylum system, it is particularly helpful to work alongside those who do, so they can describe the personal impact of government policies.

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Plan your messages and actions

It is best to arrive at your meeting with very clear messages you want to convey (as well as resources, such as the [information on the Bill](#) to help communicate them - you can [access Bill briefings by other Together With Refugees members here](#)). Be clear on the actions you are asking the MP to take. This could be publicly stating their support on social media, asking a question in parliament, or writing to the Home Secretary, for example.

We will update our suggested focus for actions and requests here in the next version of this pack.

After the meeting - and letting us know

It is always helpful to publicise the meeting on social media, and ideally using photos if everyone is comfortable with this (at the moment this may just be a photo of a Zoom screen!) Equally, it is valuable to

follow up with the MP by email after the meeting to confirm / ask about the actions they said they would take, and to thank them for their time. Often, it may take more than one meeting to persuade your MP; so do always suggest another meeting. Finally, please do let us know you've met with your MP and, if possible, how it has gone as this really helps us understand what is happening locally and how this can connect with lobbying work in Parliament. You can write to us here: info@asylum-reform-initiative.org.uk

Often, it may take more than one meeting to persuade your MP; so do always suggest another meeting.

[Here are some tips for meetings with your MP](#)

[You can also find other ways to engage your MP here](#)

What next?

If you are collecting [Show Your Heart signs of support](#) you could ask your MP to speak at, host or attend an event where you are asking participants to contribute their signs of support. Your MP could be asked to go first and the publicity used to get others to send in their signs of support.

Having gained public political support from local decision-makers, you could follow-up by asking them to meet with people with lived experience of the asylum system and local groups to share your concerns in more detail and discuss any potential further actions. Or this could be combined with the event above.

You could also use the statement and media coverage as a hook to approach other regional decision makers, or to demonstrate the strength of local opposition to the Bill when approaching your MP.

Other decision makers

While it is important to engage with MPs, there are other decision-makers and political representatives that can be helpful allies in our campaign for a fair and compassionate asylum system.

Local and devolved decision-makers can put pressure on national decision-makers (like MPs) to take action.

[Here are some more resources for engaging local councillors, MSPs, MSs and other decision-makers](#)

If you live in Scotland or Wales, you will have constituency and regional representatives in the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) or Senedd (MSs).

[You can find your MSPs here](#)

[You can find your MSs here](#)

The Scottish Government and Welsh Government also have Ministers who are responsible for refugee and asylum issues as they relate to devolved matters.

You can find them on the [Scottish Government](#) and [Welsh Government](#) websites.

People with lived experience

If you are a refugee and/or your group is led by people with lived experience of the asylum system it will help hugely in the planning and executing of your campaign activities. It will also help when organising meetings with your MP and events that require speakers. People with direct experience of the asylum system are best placed to represent their concerns about the government's plans. And we know that audiences connect more with people and their stories, rather than dry facts and figures.

If you have lived experience of the asylum system and are thinking about speaking in public, here are some issues to consider:

People with direct experience of the asylum system are best placed to represent their concerns about the government's plans.

- Could public appearances expose you to danger or affect your asylum claim?
- Would mentioning the country you come from expose family members to risk?
- If it is not safe or comfortable to speak publicly, how might you protect your identity (e.g. photos not allowed, your real name withheld, information limited so that it doesn't reveal your identity)?
- If you aren't comfortable speaking publicly, perhaps you could provide a statement to be read out.
- If you prefer not to appear on video, you can switch off the video if the event is happening via Zoom, Skype or Microsoft Teams.

If you don't have people with lived experience as part of your group, here are some issues to consider:

- When asking someone with lived experience to join an activity ask them how they would like to be involved. For example, they may be happy to join planning meetings to help shape the approach your group takes.



Speaking engagements:

- Be clear about why you are asking them to speak and how it will help further your aims.
- Ask them if they are comfortable / it is safe for them to use their real name, share details about their asylum claim or their country of origin. If there are any concerns consider changing your request to one they are comfortable with, and ask someone else to speak.
- Ensure they aren't pressured to share anything they don't want to.
- Brief them about the audience.
- If required, support them to write a speech or statement and provide logistical support if needed.
- Give them the opportunity to share other expertise related to the topic – in addition to their lived experience.
- If you can, please offer travel and food expenses. Or if it's an online event, support them with internet connectivity.

If you have permission, refer to them by their full name in publicity for the event. Only use descriptions such as 'asylum seeker' or 'refugee' alongside other descriptors like their job title (nurse) or family status (father-of-three).

Many thanks to the One Strong Voice network for advice on this section.



Media and social media

Getting local media to cover your event

Bridget Chapman, Caseworker and Media Lead from Together With Refugees member Kent Refugee Action Network shares her top tips for getting local media to cover events.

When I started organising events I had no idea what I was doing. I was surprised at how easy it was to get press coverage. Here is what I learned.

1. The first thing you need to know is that local journalists are usually very stretched so if you can provide them with a decent photo and a positive local story, they will almost certainly use it! You are saving them time and they will probably bite your hand off. The photo is key though. It needs to be a good clear image that tells a story.
2. Twitter is great for speaking to local journalists directly. If you use Twitter, start searching for local journalists now and follow them. Change your bio on Twitter to say something like “Campaigning for refugees in [insert town]” so that they know that you’ll be an interesting person to follow.
3. Find other local press contacts by googling. I just googled ‘UK local media contacts’ and found [this excellent list](#) but there will be even more in your area if you look.
4. Start to collate all your contacts so that when you have information to send out you know exactly who you are going to send it to, and you don’t lose any time.
5. The event you plan doesn’t need to be big. The main thing is to get a really good, strong photo that the press will want to use. We have created huge pro-refugee messages on our local beach with just two people and a garden rake! One person to write the message with the rake, and the other person to take a great photo from a good vantage point.

[See Bridget’s case study here](#)

6. Obviously if you can get people there, the more that you can get into the picture the better. But we have had photos used with no people at all in the image.

The event you plan doesn’t need to be big. The main thing is to get a really good, strong photo that the press will want to use.

7. Once you have your picture you need to get it out straight away. Put it on social media and tag the local papers and journalists. Make it clear from the accompanying text what has happened. For example, “Local campaigners in [insert place] send a message of support to refugees in their community.”
8. Email it to local papers and journalists too, to make absolutely sure they get it. Include some basic information. Remember the classic questions: Why did you have your event? What were you hoping to achieve? When and where did it happen/ will it happen? Make sure there’s a contact number, so that if any journalists have questions they can give you a ring.
9. Include some quotes from named people locally who supported the event, with their permission of course. Also make sure anybody appearing in your photos has agreed for the photos and their names to be used in local media. NB. Take particular care with people who have lived experience of the asylum system. They may feel safer if their identity and name isn’t disclosed publicly.
10. Get supporters who use social media to post the same picture and a message expressing support for the event using a hashtag of the town for example #Kent in the hope local media may pick it up.
11. When you do get press coverage make sure you share the link on your social media and encourage others to share it too. You’ll be amazed at how many people you can reach! And the more clicks on that story the more likely that the local press will cover your events in the future.

Thanks so much to Bridget for sharing her knowledge and experience. We’d love to hear any other tips and tricks that have worked for you to share in future campaign guidance.

Drop us a line at info@asylum-reform-initiative.org.uk



Share your activities on social media

Siva Thangarajah, Digital Comms Officer, from [IMIX](#) shares her tips for promoting your activities on social media below. We also include some advice about how to use the campaign hashtags.

Use social media to share your activities, your concerns about the Nationality and Borders Bill and to demonstrate local support for refugees.

Hashtags and handles

Using relevant hashtags and handles will help to increase engagement with your posts. When you use the campaign hashtags ([#TogetherWithRefugees](#) and [#WhoWeAre](#)) it helps us measure and track our overall joint activity.

Be creative in your messaging and consider how you can best use the two campaign hashtags to complement and reinforce your activities.

Bear in mind [#WhoWeAre](#) has two meanings.

- 1) How we treat refugees reflects [#WhoWeAre](#).
- 2) Refugees have always been part of the UK. It's [#WhoWeAre](#).

Campaign hashtags

Here are some ideas for how to use the hashtags in the SHOW YOUR HEART campaign.

[#WhoWeAre](#)

Refugees are as much part of Halifax as the Wainhouse. It's [#WhoWeAre](#)
Refugees are as much part of the UK as red post boxes. It's [#WhoWeAre](#)
Refugees are as much part of Scotland as the Royal Mile. It's [#WhoWeAre](#)
In Cardiff, we welcome people fleeing war and persecution.
How we treat refugees reflects [#WhoWeAre](#).

[#TogetherWithRefugees](#)

We are [#TogetherWithRefugees](#)
Birmingham is [#TogetherWithRefugees](#)

[#AntiRefugeeBill](#)

Many Together With Refugee coalition members are using the hashtag [#AntiRefugeeBill](#) to talk about the Bill. Using this hashtag will help to make sure your posts appear in the threads and conversations where you want it to be seen. However, we know this language will not work for all coalition members, so please adapt your messaging as you see fit.

Photos and film

Take lots of photos and videos at the event. Then choose the very best. Visual material is very important for all social media platforms, and posts with videos or images get better engagement.

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You might wish to take a mixture of portrait and landscape videos that you can then adopt across social media platforms.

Twitter

Tag your local councillors, MPs, and any other figures. Tag means to include the Twitter name or handle of an individual or organisation.

Are there local activists or influencers that might be interested, and who might share your tweet on their channels? Are there local organisations or local news organisations you could tag? Also, it is worth tagging local organisations and people involved in your event. This will make it more likely that your tweets get liked and shared, and responded to.

Tagging also applies to other social media platforms. Tag relevant public-facing accounts of local councillors, MPs or groups. Be careful not to spam though. It's always better to send personalised tweets to busy people so that they are more likely to read them, and can easily respond, like or retweet.

Posts with images do much better on Twitter, so share videos and images along with your text.

Facebook

If your local event or activity is open to the public, post on your local Facebook group, so your followers know about it. People on local Facebook groups are often highly engaged, so it is a good way to keep them engaged, and of course they may share, so their followers can find out too.

Afterwards, you can share videos and/or photos on your Facebook page.

Instagram

Share pictures and videos on Instagram to spread the word about your event among your friends and other local circles. See if your local newspaper has an Instagram feed, you can also send them the photos (it massively helps if they are striking or stand-out images).

Timeframes

We hope this pack provides enough information and useful tools to get you going, whether you are organising meetings with your MP, securing your signs of support for your big orange heart displays or any alternative ideas for demonstrating the breadth of support for refugees.

We're also keen to have key national moments in the campaign to amplify your efforts and put extra pressure on MPs. For example, although you can get planning and organising meetings and events now, we'd like to suggest specific dates when your heart displays are revealed all over the country at the same time. We also anticipate that the campaign will culminate in a national rallying point at key points while MPs are debating the Bill. We'll keep you posted on timings for this as soon as we know more about the Bill's passage through parliament.

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