# SWVG outreach*– 12th draft text 1 April 2022*

**What is this?**

SWVG needs to deliver a consistent and high quality message to people about our work, why people seek sanctuary in the UK and what happens to them when they do.

As well as being consistent, we save time if we don't have to re-invent ways to say this. So this aims to support SWVG volunteers to communicate our message in different ways:

* talks, lessons, presentations
* displays and posters
* website and, to a limited extent, social media
* news releases, media interviews
* printed materials

It offers wording and facts on the topics you might want to cover.

There are three sections: Section 1 is about asylum and asylum seekers, section 2 about SWVG and “Resources” (section 3) gives links that may be useful such as films and a quiz.

**Talks and presentations**

Of course, you will want to choose what is suitable for your audience, and add a personal flavour: for example, telling the story of an asylum seeker you know.

SWVG Comms Group is creating a standard design for slides and presentation materials and a portfolio of suitable images, with permissions, which can be used alongside this text with confidence.

See also SWVG [**Tips on giving talks**](https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/training/tips-on-giving-talks/)

**The text**

The text has been prepared by the SWVG Communications Group.

Each topic in sections 1 and 2 has a simple summary and core messages. There are more details in case you need to respond to questions or cover something more thoroughly.

Selections from the summary and core should provide enough of a framework for most talks and displays. Extra information is available for most topics if you need it. This extra information is shown in grey in the last part of the topic.

Not all topics need to be covered at every talk but following this guide will help ensure nothing essential is forgotten.

This information was checked for accuracy. Sources are highlighted in yellow (if checked in 2021) or turquoise (if checked in March 2022). We strongly recommend that before you use the text, you click on the source to check whether facts have changed since that date.

# Section 1: about asylum

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| The people we support |
| We help people who seek sanctuary – “asylum” - in the UK, They are afraid of persecution in their home countries. They are often called “asylum seekers”.  If they succeed in getting permission to stay in the UK, they are called “refugees”. We also support refugees who have been recently given permission (called “leave to remain”) if they need help adjusting to their new life. |
| Core information |
| An **asylum seeker** is someone who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country because of danger back home and who is waiting to hear the outcome.  Under international law (the 1951 UN Convention), a **refugee** is someone who ‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable to…avail himself of the protection of that country’.  Until someone receives a decision as to whether or not they are accepted as a refugee, they are an asylum seeker. In the UK, they do not have the same rights as a refugee or a British citizen. For example, asylum seekers aren’t allowed to work.  The right to seek asylum is a legal right we all share. It isn’t illegal to seek asylum, because seeking asylum is a legal process. The fact that you have been refused asylum does not make you ‘illegal’ – it just means you haven’t been able to meet the very strict criteria to prove your need for protection as a refugee. [*https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/about/facts-about-refugees/*](https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/about/facts-about-refugees/)  There is nothing in international law to say that refugees must claim asylum in the first country they reach. However, a European regulation (the Dublin Regulation) allows a country such as the UK to return an adult asylum seeker to the first European country they reached.  If successful, asylum applicants to the UK are awarded refugee status and then granted ‘leave to remain’ – in other words, legal permission to stay in the UK, for up to five years. If the situation for them in their home country has not improved after those five years, they can apply to stay permanently.  An asylum seeker may get limited leave to remain, for a shorter period. Some people who are given permission to stay for a limited period on humanitarian grounds but may be given no recourse to public funds (see section 6 below). If unsuccessful in their asylum application, they can appeal against the decision in a fixed time period. If this appeal is unsuccessful they are liable to be deported. If they can gather new/additional evidence to support their application, they can submit a fresh claim. |
| Extra details if needed |
| *From SWVG website* [*https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/about-asylum/whats-an-asylum-seeker/*](https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/about-asylum/whats-an-asylum-seeker/)  The full wording of the definition of a refugee according to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is:  “A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”  From Refugee Council [*https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/the-truth-about-asylum/?utm\_source=Refugee+Council&utm\_campaign=3256484b08-EMAIL\_CAMPAIGN\_2020\_02\_25\_02\_03&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_c07ad73468-3256484b08-369500113*](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/the-truth-about-asylum/?utm_source=Refugee+Council&utm_campaign=3256484b08-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_02_25_02_03&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c07ad73468-3256484b08-369500113)   * The 1951 Refugee Convention guarantees everybody the right to apply for asylum. It has saved millions of lives. No country has ever withdrawn from it. * There is no such thing as an ‘illegal’ or ‘bogus’ asylum seeker. Under international law, anyone has the right to apply for asylum in any country that has signed the 1951 Convention and to remain there until the authorities have assessed their claim. * It is recognised in the 1951 Convention that people fleeing persecution may have to use irregular means in order to escape and claim asylum in another country – there is no legal way to travel to the UK for the specific purpose of seeking asylum. * Although [as stated above] there is nothing in international law to say that refugees must claim asylum in the first country they reach, the European regulation that allows a country to return an adult asylum seeker to the first European country they reached means that countries on the edge of Europe have responsibility for a lot more asylum seekers. * Some of the countries through which people travel to get to Europe are unsafe. Many have not signed the Refugee Convention, meaning that people who remain there will not get international protection and be able to rebuild their lives. From Refugee Council [*https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/the-truth-about-asylum/?utm\_source=Refugee+Council&utm\_campaign=3256484b08-EMAIL\_CAMPAIGN\_2020\_02\_25\_02\_03&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_c07ad73468-3256484b08-369500113*](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/the-truth-about-asylum/?utm_source=Refugee+Council&utm_campaign=3256484b08-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_02_25_02_03&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c07ad73468-3256484b08-369500113)   When the UK government agrees that an individual who has applied for asylum meets the definition in the Refugee Convention, they will ‘recognise’ that person as a refugee and issue them with refugee status documentation. Usually refugees in the UK are given five years’ leave to remain. They must then apply for further leave.  A person whose asylum application has been unsuccessful and who has no other claim for protection awaiting a decision is called a “refused asylum seeker”. Some refused asylum seekers voluntarily return home, others are forcibly returned. For some it is not safe or practical to return until conditions in their country change.  A migrant is someone who has moved to another country for other reasons, such as to find work, sometimes called an economic migrant. Refugees are not economic migrants.  From Refugee Council [*https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/the-truth-about-asylum/?utm\_source=Refugee+Council&utm\_campaign=3256484b08-EMAIL\_CAMPAIGN\_2020\_02\_25\_02\_03&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_c07ad73468-3256484b08-369500113*](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/the-truth-about-asylum/?utm_source=Refugee+Council&utm_campaign=3256484b08-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_02_25_02_03&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c07ad73468-3256484b08-369500113) |

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| Refugees and asylum seekers – the figures |
| There are few legal ways for a person to safely escape their country when at war. People do not place their lives in smugglers hands because they want to. The lack of safe and legal routes has resulted in thousands losing their lives at sea. |
| Core information |
| * In mid 2021, 84 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disrupting public order. * 48 million (57%) are internally displaced – in other words, they are displaced within their home country * Almost 32% are refugees; just over 5% are asylum-seekers * 42% of the internally displaced people are children. * 73% are living in countries neighbouring their country of origin, often developing countries. * 68% came from just 5 countries: Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar.   (ref: <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>  https://www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends/ |

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| How many people come to the UK, and why? |
| Core information |
| * Mostly, people don't choose where they end up. * most people are unaware of their eventual destination when they make the initial decision. The destination is chosen by the routes used by the agents to take them to Western Europe. People merely pay the agents * those that do choose the UK do so because: “The UK is a good place to be human”; family members are living in the UK or there is an existing community of people from their own country. Social networks are important * language - English is an important international language and many people have seen English language films and often English is taught * 48,500 asylum applications were made in the UK in 2021 – a 63% increase from 2020. * the top five countries of origin of people seeking asylum in the UK were **Iran**, **Iraq**, **Eritrea**, **Albania**, and **Syria**. * In terms of the number of asylum applications per head of population, **the UK ranks 18th highest in Europe**.   (<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/top-10-facts-about-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum/> |
| Extra details if needed |
| If anyone asks about the counties people come from:   * the nationality of asylum seekers change as crises come and go across the world, since asylum seekers come mainly from countries embroiled in political and military conflicts * Syria is not listed because many refugees are identified outside the UK and brought here with the help of the UK Government and the United Nations. These people are known as resettled refugees * Albania - history of clan violence as well as political instability * many flee Iraq from political persecution, particularly Kurds * Eritrea - totalitarian government with widespread offences against human rights * Iran - repressive, ethnic; gender and religious minority repression, severe economic difficulties due to sanctions * Pakistan - poverty, hunger, unstable, religious tensions, civil war * Iraq - cycles of warfare, crippling sectarianism Sunnis excluded, country led by Shias, ISIS controlled areas, political and tribal conflict * Bangladesh - repressive on women and girls’ rights, no minimum age for forced marriages, ethnic cleansing by Burmese military * South Sudan - ethnic violence, fastest growing refugee crisis in the world  the rate at which leave to remain is granted at the initial decision stage varies by country of nationality, ranging from 80% for Eritreans to less than 5% for Bangladeshis. Asylum decisions by nationality, 2019, top 6 countries for number of decisions (excl. Dependants) (source: Refugee Council)   |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **Decisions** | **Refugee status** | **Humanitarian Protection** | **Discretionary Leave** | **Refusals** | | Iran | 3,460 | 2,211 | 6 | 2 | 1,207 | | Iraq | 2,187 | 420 | 133 | 9 | 1,539 | | Eritrea | 2,007 | 1,735 | 3 | 1 | 264 | | Sudan | 1,675 | 1,418 | 3 | 0 | 247 | | Afghanistan | 1,134 | 546 | 52 | 1 | 424 | | Albania | 1,102 | 143 | 1 | 7 | 853 | |

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| Stories of asylum seekers |
| People don't want to leave their home. Their hard decisions and difficult journeys leave physical and mental scars. |
| Core information |
| Tell the story of someone you know  *or* use stories on our web page [*https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/about-asylum/asylum-stories/*](https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/about-asylum/asylum-stories/)*,*  Emphasise common experiences:   * sudden departure * overwhelming sense of threat and fear * leaving loved ones * leaving home and possessions * difficult journey * physical and mental scars |
| Extra details if needed |
| This may be a good moment to show one of the films listed under “Resources” at the end of this document. |

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| The history of people coming to UK |
| Britain always been a ‘melting pot’ |
| Core information |
| Refugees have always arrived in waves as a result of conflict and religious or ethnic persecution.  Europeans living today, in whatever country, are a varying mix of ancient bloodlines from Africa, the Middle East, and the Russian steppe. [*https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/2019/07/first-europeans-immigrants-genetic-testing-feature/*](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/2019/07/first-europeans-immigrants-genetic-testing-feature/) |
| Extra details if needed |
| * Huguenots: the word "refugee" entered the English language when the Huguenots landed- around 50,000 French Protestants came to England after Louis XIV revoked the 1598 Edict of Nantes in October 1685 [*https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/refugee-week-the-huguenots-count-among-the-most-successful-of-britains-immigrants-10330066.html*](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/refugee-week-the-huguenots-count-among-the-most-successful-of-britains-immigrants-10330066.html)*)* * Basque: British activists at the Basque Children's Committee (BCC) got permission for nearly 4,000 children to come to the UK, arriving in Southampton in May 1937. The government would not take on financial responsibility for the refugees, so the BCC spearheaded efforts to raise funds. [*https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-35532286*](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-35532286) * Jewish: After [Adolf Hitler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolf_Hitler) came into power in 1933, Jews began to escape [German-occupied Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German-occupied_Europe). Some came to the UK on [transit visas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transit_visa), which meant that they stayed in Britain temporarily, while waiting to be accepted by another country. Others entered the country by having obtained employment or a guarantor, or via [Kindertransport](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kindertransport). About 70,000 Jewish refugees were accepted into Britain by the start of [World War II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) in 1939, and 10,000 more people made it to Britain during the war. [*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jews\_escaping\_from\_German-occupied\_Europe\_to\_the\_United\_Kingdom*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jews_escaping_from_German-occupied_Europe_to_the_United_Kingdom) |

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| How asylum seekers are treated in the UK |
| Some people believe that it’s too easy to get into the UK but the process for claiming asylum in this country can, in fact, be long, stressful and complex. |
| Core information |
| Anyone who has fled to the UK and wants to stay here must present themselves at their port of entry to an immigration officer or travel to the Asylum Screening Unit in Croydon to register a formal application for asylum to the Home Office. They are photographed and finger-printed and get an application registration card.  This is followed by a compulsory asylum interview with a case worker, where the asylum seeker is asked to explain in detail how they have been persecuted in their home country and why they are afraid to go back, providing any evidence supporting their claims. But many are not able to do this, having left home under pressure without passports, identification or travel documents.  Then they have to wait to hear what the Home Office decides.  Unless they can afford to pay for their own accommodation, an asylum seeker cannot choose where to live. The Home Office can send them anywhere in the UK, usually where housing is cheaper, and people are poorer to be housed in accommodation (known as NASS) paid for by the government.  Asylum seekers are left in limbo, unable to work, until they hear the outcome of their application. In some cases it can take a considerable time, even years. *from* [*https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/about-asylum/asylum-facts/claiming-asylum/*](https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/about-asylum/asylum-facts/claiming-asylum/)The time delay, along with the prohibition on working, can lead to deterioration in the mental health of asylum seekers.  **These are some of the problems with the current system:**   * long delays - Government target is 6 months but thousands of people have to wait years for a final decision on their claim, meaning they are left in limbo and unable to plan for their futures. The backlog in cases awaiting an initial decision rose to a record high.  At the end of December 2021, 100,564 people were waiting for an outcome on their initial claim for asylum. Of these, 61,864  (61%) have been waiting for more than 6 months, up from 46,796 the year before. <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/top-10-facts-about-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum/> * mistaken decisions - a large number of initial decisions are found to be wrong. In 2021, 49% of appeals succeeded. https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/top-10-facts-about-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum/ * poor legal support - (limited hours of legal aid and none if application based on Article 8). The number of lawyers offering legal aid has been reduced |
| Extra details if needed |
| Asylum seekers believed to have legitimate claims are put into accommodation provided by the Home Office, including private housing and temporary accommodation such as hotels or B&Bs.  In December 2019 there were 1,637 asylum seekers held in detention. (source: the Migratory Observatory, Oxford)  Asylum seekers not in detention are required to report on a regular basis. If they fail to do this, their claim can be dismissed.  Decisions are made by civil servants in the Home Office or by immigration judges.  **The possible outcomes:**   * **leave to remain** – some asylum seekers are given legal permission to stay in the UK as a refugee for five years, after which they can apply to settle in the UK permanently; some others are given Discretionary Leave to Remain, others Humanitarian Protection (see next section for more on this) for 5 years. They can also work and claim income support and other benefits * some asylum seekers are given **Limited Leave to Remain** under article 8 of the Human Rights Act for a variety of periods, typically two-and-a-half years. This group can work but have no recourse to public funds. They have to re-apply every 2.5 years up to 10 years. (Fees for extensions £601 per individual + £200 health levy). They have no access to legal aid. The actual cost to the HO is £243! * Some are given **Discretionary leave to remain.** This falls under Article 8 of the Human Rights Act and is for 30 months without recourse to public funds. Victims of slavery and Trafficking may receive Discretionary leave to remain * **A refusal** – In this case, the government may begin the process of removing the asylum seeker from the UK. Some are helped to leave voluntarily, others are put in a detention centre and forced to leave. Some go underground.   Asylum seekers can appeal against a refusal if they do so within 14 days, at a cost of £80 upwards.44% of appeals succeeded. The quality of original decision making is often poor, with many refugees having to rely on the courts to award protection following an appeal of the Government’s initial decision. The appeals process can be complex and lengthy, with people seeking asylum having to wait months for their appeals to be heard. Thousands of people have to wait years for a final decision on their claim, meaning they are left in limbo and unable to plan for their futures. |

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| If someone doesn't qualify as refugees, do they have protection under the human rights convention? |
| Someone may be at risk of serious harm if they return to their country of origin but not for a reason covered by the Refugee Convention. They may be eligible for ‘humanitarian protection’ and get leave to remain in the UK for up to 5 years. |
| Core information |
| Some people may not qualify for refugee status but may be eligible for ‘humanitarian protection’ with leave to remain in the UK for up to 5 years. Humanitarian protection covers situations where someone may be at risk of serious harm if they return to their country of origin but they are not recognized as refugees because the risk is not of persecution for a reason covered by the Refugee Convention. |
| Extra details if needed |
| See Home Office *https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/597377/Humanitarian-protection-v5\_0.pdf* |

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| Asylum seekers and poverty |
| Asylum seekers are very poor.  Asylum seekers get £5.39 per day per person, plus a roof over their head (announced 8 Jun 2020).  This is less than someone on minimum Income Support.  They are not allowed to earn. |
| Core information |
| Asylum seekers are housed in special accommodation. They can’t choose where.They are given a living allowance in cash or vouchers, pitched well under Income Support. In spring 2022, this was £40.85 per person per week to cover food, clothing and toiletries. That makes £5.84 a day per person. This is loaded onto a debit card (ASPEN card) each week and can use as normal direct debit card or withdraw cash.Many of the asylum seekers we support live on less than £6 a day. Many cannot afford phone calls or bus fares.If their claim is rejected, they have to leave government housing and lose financial support. While they wait to make a fresh claim, they are effectively destitute.If they have made a second claim after having been refused asylum, they getaccommodation, as beforea payment card (but they cannot withdraw cash and only certain shops accept the card)Pregnant women get an additional £3 per week and a one off maternity payment of £300.They are all entitled to free primary health care prescriptions, dental care and eyesight tests, plus help paying for glasses.All children can attend school, and there is funding for 15 hours of pre-school for children from two years old. |

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| Asylum seekers and work |
| For asylum seekers in the UK, earning a living is not an option. |
| Core information |
| When they arrive in the UK, asylum seekers are not legally allowed to work.  So how do they manage? Asylum seekers can apply for support payments while their claim is being considered. At present, these stand at under £6 a day for food, clothing, toiletries, transport and any other needs. The effect is that the vast majority of UK asylum seekers live well below the poverty line. (More jn previous section)  And this can go on a long time. SWVG has had cases where people waited four years. |
| Extra details if needed |
| If a UK asylum seeker’s claim remains undecided after a year, he or she can apply for work – but only for skilled jobs where there is an identified national shortage.  Other EU countries allow asylum seekers to work after nine months’ waiting for a decision on their claim, and 12 of them grant permission to work after six months. Germany allows asylum seekers to work after three months.  Asylum seekers in many other countries can also apply for a much wider range of work, including unskilled jobs. In Belgium, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Spain and Sweden, for example, they can work in any jobs. |

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| Asylum seekers and volunteering |
| Asylum seekers are usually allowed to undertake voluntary work. |
| Core information |
| The Home Office advice includes:  *Voluntary activity should not amount either to employment or to job substitution.*  *Asylum seekers should not be expected to be out of pocket as a result of volunteering, and reimbursement may be made for meal or travel costs but should not be made as a flat rate allowance.*  *From SWVG website* [*https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/members/members-home/roles-and-training/supporting-clients/voluntary-work/*](https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/members/members-home/roles-and-training/supporting-clients/voluntary-work/) |
| Extra details if needed |
| The Home Office advice also includes:  *Care must be taken when dealing with assertions from asylum seekers that the nature of the continuing or proposed activity does not contravene their conditions of support.*  *Asylum seekers should not be led to believe that voluntary activity is regarded as a step towards refugee status.*  *From SWVG website* [*https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/members/members-home/roles-and-training/supporting-clients/voluntary-work/*](https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/members/members-home/roles-and-training/supporting-clients/voluntary-work/) |

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| Asylum seekers and health care |
| Everyone has a right to a GP including all asylum seekers and refugees, even if they’ve been refused Leave to Remain.  People don’t need to provide proof of address or identity to get free primary health care.  Asylum seekers are often anxious about asking for health care. This isn’t made easier by the complicated rules. |
| Core information |
| Everyone in England, Scotland and Wales is entitled to free primary healthcare and free emergency healthcare. This includes care at community facilities, GP surgeries, and mental health centres.  People don’t need to provide proof of address or identity when registering at a GP surgery.  Asylum Seekers and refugees have an absolute right to secondary health care. Refused asylum seekers, unless they have submitted a fresh claim, are not entitled to free hospital treatment. However immediately necessary or urgent medical treatment should be given, with bills sent afterwards. [*https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/visiting-or-moving-to-england/visitors-who-do-not-need-pay-for-nhs-treatment/*](https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/visiting-or-moving-to-england/visitors-who-do-not-need-pay-for-nhs-treatment/)  **Interpreters:** People have the right to an interpreter if they need one. The GP/hospital is responsible for organising it.  [*https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/members/members-home/roles-and-training/supporting-clients/health-care/*](https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/members/members-home/roles-and-training/supporting-clients/health-care/) |
| Extra details if needed |
| More at [*https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide*](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide)  It is worth remembering that:   * asylum seekers have usually grown up in a culture very different from ours with different expectations and ways of behaving * they are likely to have had very painful experiences * they have suffered from a major separation from family, culture and religion * they may have suffered physical and psychological trauma and may suffer from depression, sleeplessness, nightmares or PTSD * they may feel exposed to risk and in fear of their lives * they may not understand the system. They may fear bills they cannot pay. They can be fearful of uniform and anyone who seems “official” * If their knowledge of English is weak, they may not understand what you say and so say “yes” and appear happy to please you and protect themselves * they may be homeless * they are likely to have very little money * they may have no access to public funds * they may have physical health problems associated with their ethnicity |

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| Living in a hostile environment |
| Asylum seekers tell us they find the system complex, inhumane and demoralising. |
| Core information |
| Problems they encounter:   * they can’t work (except in special circumstances), drive, rent, or have a bank account. The law requires people including landlords and employers to check a person’s immigration papers (which makes such people agents of the state, at risk of criminal charges if they do not do this) * [astronomically high](https://www.freemovement.org.uk/how-expensive-are-uk-immigration-applications-and-is-this-a-problem/) immigration application fees *(https://www.freemovement.org.uk/how-expensive-are-uk-immigration-applications-and-is-this-a-problem/)* * [indefinite detentio](https://www.freemovement.org.uk/immigration-minister-struggles-with-meaning-of-indefinite-detention/)n *https://www.freemovement.org.uk/immigration-minister-struggles-with-meaning-of-indefinite-detention/* * the Byzantine [complexity](https://www.freemovement.org.uk/how-complex-are-the-uk-immigration-rules-and-is-this-a-problem/) of the rules *https://www.freemovement.org.uk/how-complex-are-the-uk-immigration-rules-and-is-this-a-problem/* * [enforced separation](https://www.freemovement.org.uk/home-office-makes-changes-appendix-fm-minimum-income-rule-following-mm-case/) of some families *https://www.freemovement.org.uk/home-office-makes-changes-appendix-fm-minimum-income-rule-following-mm-case/* * problems in getting an education [*https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/08/debunked-the-5-biggest-refugee-myths/*](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/08/debunked-the-5-biggest-refugee-myths/)   The results can be:   * depression / anxiety * loss of confidence * de-skilling * physical ill health * boredom * shame |
| Extra details if needed |
| Theresa May, then Home Secretary, declared in May 2012 that she wanted to create a “really hostile environment” for irregular migrants in the UK. She set out the broad aims of the hostile environment:   1. To discourage people from coming to the UK; 2. To stop those who do come from overstaying; 3. To stop irregular migrants being able to access the essentials of an ordinary life.   (From 2017, the Home Office started to refer to the “compliant environment”.)  The Immigration Act 2014 introduced laws which have since been tightened or expanded under the Immigration Act 2016.  At the time of the introduction of the Bill which became the Immigration Act 2014, then Immigration Minister Mark Harper said the Bill would:  *stop migrants using public services to which they are not entitled, reduce the pull factors which encourage people to come to the UK and make it easier to remove people who should not be here.*   * Globally, 34% of university-age youth are in education, but that figure for refugees is just 1%. Only [61%](https://www.unhcr.org/herturn/) of refugee children have access to primary education, compared to an international average of 91%. At secondary level, 23% of refugee teenagers go to school, compared to 84% globally. [*https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/08/debunked-the-5-biggest-refugee-myths/*](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/08/debunked-the-5-biggest-refugee-myths/) |

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| When someone gains asylum |
| Good news – but more problems start at once |
| Core information |
| * limited leave to remain (up to 5 years) after which you have to pay to apply for renewal * access to benefits (limited for those with ‘humanitarian protection’) * chance to be reunited with dependents. * permission to work   BUT   * the end of financial help * xxx days to leave Home Office accommodation * xx days to get NI number, claim benefits, open a bank account, find somewhere to live, find furniture, sign up for services, find a job… * continuing uncertainty about future. |
| Extra details if needed |
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# Section 2: about SWVG

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| Who we are |
| We are a group of volunteers who befriend and support adult asylum seekers and refugees in the Southampton area. |

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| Our values |
| **We believe that the current UK asylum system is inhumane**, and that:   * people seeking asylum have a clear right to protection under the international laws that the UK has signed up to; * all asylum applications should be heard and dealt with promptly, fairly and fully; * no one seeking asylum in the UK should be forced into danger or destitution; and * everyone seeking asylum deserves respect and compassion.   *From SWVG website* <https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/about-us/> |

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| What we do |
| We’re volunteers working with asylum seekers |
| Core information |
| We offer:   * Befriending and offering one-to-one support to asylum seekers and refugees * Offering modest financial assistance to those who are homeless and/or destitute * Giving one-to-one English teaching for asylum seekers * Helping people to find and work with a solicitor to further their asylum claims * Providing activities for asylum seekers * Getting legal guidance for specific cases * Working with other Southampton refugee charities who run a weekly Drop-in Centre in the city * Reaching out to churches, schools and community groups who can help them * Campaigning for a fairer, more efficient asylum system in the UK.   *From SWVG website* [*https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/about-us/*](https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/about-us/) |
| Extra details if needed |
| **For a quick overview, read our** [**booklet**](https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/SWVG-2019-brochure.pdf)   * solicitors work with asylum seekers to further their asylum claims. We can also get legal guidance for specific cases, and SWVG gets specialist advice and training from a top immigration solicitor * we run a weekly drop-in centre with other Southampton refugee charities * we reach out to other organisations who can help, such as community groups, churches and schools, and we provide speakers for local groups * our funding comes from charitable trusts and our own fundraising activities. * we pay for only 25 hours per week administrative assistance. Everything else is done by trained volunteers * we provide opportunities such as:   + an allotment   + free bicycles, and cycle repairs   + football for women   + outings to the seaside, New Forest etc |

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| How you can help SWVG |
| You can volunteer to work with an asylum seeker and/or you can help SWVG in other ways |
| Core information |
| You can:   * befriend and support someone who is claiming asylum * teach English language, literacy and other basic skills to adult asylum seekers and refugees   AND/OR   * join a group and:   + organise activities for asylum-seekers to combat loneliness and boredom   + [campaign](https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/members/members-home/groups/campaigning-group/) for a fairer, more efficient asylum system locally and nationally   + help with our communications - website, Facebook, Twitter, newsletter, and print materials such as leaflets   + organise events to raise funds and spread the word, such as concerts, dinners or talks   + apply for grants and donations   + raise awareness of asylum and the work of SWVG, reaching out to people with talks and events   + organise learning activities for potential, new and existing SWVG members   You are particularly welcome if you yourself have come to the UK from another country and know what it’s like to start to make a new home in a new country |
| Extra details if needed |
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| Other ways to help people who are seeking sanctuary |
| You can tell people the truth, dispel the myths, and support campaigns  You can donate to SWVG or to national and global organisations |
| Core information |
| * Three good websites to find out more:   + <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/>   + <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>   + <https://www.migranthelpuk.org> * Tell people the truth about people who come here for asylum and dispel the myths – see, for example, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/08/debunked-the-5-biggest-refugee-myths/> * Support campaigns such as Refugee Action’s Right to Work, link needed (family re-unification link needed and ending of detention link needed * Donate to SWVG - <https://www.justgiving.com/swvg> |

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| SWVG DETAILS |
| SWVG - Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group – is an independent organisation run by its members. |
| Core information |
| Ring or text 07503 176350  email [info@swvg-refugees.org.uk](mailto:info@swvg-refugees.org.uk)  website <https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/> |
| Extra details if needed |
| SWVG is not connected to the Government. SWVG is both a company and an independent charity, number 1183558.  SWVG members are also volunteers. If you would be interested in becoming a member, email us at [info@swvg-refugees.org.uk](mailto:info@swvg-refugees.org.uk), speak to me afterwards, or pick up a leaflet. Chris H add link to SWVG website when revised.  Members elect a Board of trustees each year at the AGM. List of trustees at <https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/trustees-and-patrons/>  SWVG constitution is at <https://swvg-refugees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CIO-SWVG-constitution-2019.pdf> The SWVG constitution was last updated in 2019. In 2019, SWVG was approved as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered with the Charity Commission number 1183558). SWVG’s previous constitution was approved by the Charity Commission in 2003. Under it, SWVG was an unincorporated charity registered with the Charity Commission number 1103093.  **To find out more, see our Charity Commission pages including our Annual Reports and Financial Statement.** We have two sets of pages: [*one set for charity number 1103093*](https://beta.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regId=1103093&subId=0) till December 2019. the [*other set for charity number 1183558*](https://beta.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regid=1183558&subid=0) from Jan 2020. |

# Section 3: Resources

**Films**

* North Star Fading – [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3ry-lVY-ig*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3ry-lVY-ig) (we suggest only first 3.09 mins)
* Refugees (6 minutes) about people fleeing from their homes, from Brainwaves [*https://youtu.be/Rd6qXgUkNnk*](https://youtu.be/Rd6qXgUkNnk). It was made in 2017 but remains a good introduction.
* Video: People look into the eyes of refugees (5 minutes) <https://youtu.be/By_BHbskg_E>
* short [TEDEd video](https://youtu.be/25bwiSikRsI)  giving an overview of refugees and asylum seekers.
* 15 minute video of a [Syrian family's refugee](https://youtu.be/ItNWqzBTC0w) journey.
* 5 minute video about [claiming asylum](https://youtu.be/tIaHbI6p4m8) in the UK
* 5 minute video about the [initial screening](https://youtu.be/iuPtDGuhEU8) interview
* video that discusses how hard it is to get [right to remain](https://youtu.be/lQ7fnER3ccQ)

1. **Quiz** Refugee Council Feb 2020 <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/the-truth-about-asylum-a-quiz/?preview=true&utm_source=Refugee+Council&utm_campaign=3256484b08-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_02_25_02_03&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c07ad73468-3256484b08-369500113>:

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| |  | | --- | | **1. How many people applied for asylum in the UK in 2019**  [**a) 35,566 b) 65,256 c) 12,788**](https://refugeecouncil.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=53fef05286df2f4c5da66f8fb&id=ecaa20161f&e=9a93d55212) | |
| |  | | --- | | **2. Of these applications, what percentage was granted protection?**  [**a) 52% b) 12% c) 72%**](https://refugeecouncil.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=53fef05286df2f4c5da66f8fb&id=97aa907416&e=9a93d55212) | |
| |  | | --- | | **3. Which country do most refugees in the UK originate from?** [**a) Syria b) Afghanistan c) Iran**](https://refugeecouncil.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=53fef05286df2f4c5da66f8fb&id=19a19fe19f&e=9a93d55212) | |
| |  | | --- | | **4. How many people waited more than 6 months for an initial decision on their claim from the Home Office?**  [**a) 17,459 b) 22,549 c) 8,114**](https://refugeecouncil.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=53fef05286df2f4c5da66f8fb&id=768a1c02d8&e=9a93d55212) | |
| |  | | --- | | **5. While they await a decision, are people seeking asylum allowed to work?** [**a) No b) Yes c) No, except in limited circumstances**](https://refugeecouncil.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=53fef05286df2f4c5da66f8fb&id=88d4bc83b6&e=9a93d55212) | |
| |  | | --- | | **6. These are reasons that have been given by the Home Office for rejecting an asylum claim - TRUE or FALSE?** [**a) Because you went on holiday. b) Because Christianity is not a religion of peace. c) Because of Brexit.**](https://refugeecouncil.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=53fef05286df2f4c5da66f8fb&id=5135805240&e=9a93d55212) | |

[**Answers.**](https://refugeecouncil.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=53fef05286df2f4c5da66f8fb&id=7caf524d16&e=9a93d55212)