

THE SITUATION OF YOUNG ASYLUM SEEKERS

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“A young person seeking refuge in the UK may be fleeing war, poverty or persecution because of their race or religion. Often they arrive alone, without friends or family, and don't know what to expect. They're simply looking for somewhere safe, where they can claim their right to health, education and care – rights that everyone in the world has.

A young asylum seeker has to build a new life in this strange country, without knowing whether the Home Office will allow them to stay permanently. They must learn a new language while adjusting to a new culture, finding new friends and choosing what subjects to study. It's a huge challenge - and harder still if they have had little or no previous education. Inside and outside school, young asylum seekers and refugees may become socially excluded because of bullying and prejudice.

Poverty is also a major problem for asylum seekers, who aren't allowed to work in the UK. Financial support for asylum seeking families is only 70% of the amount a UK family receives. If they apply to study beyond school, a young asylum seeker will often be charged the fees of an overseas student – which they are unlikely to be able to afford.

And there's always the threat of detention and then deportation.

When they reach 18, young asylum seekers may be forced to return home. The decision on whether they will be forced to leave the UK can take up to a year to decide, leaving the young person in question unable to make any permanent plans, and possibly very frightened at the prospect of going home.



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The system is military and inhumane. Why are asylum seekers treated differently from UK citizens? Why aren't young asylum seekers treated like any other young people in the UK?”

Jessica

By Jessica, aged 14, Cambridge Woodcraft Folk

WHAT CAN BE DONE... ...BY THIS CAMPAIGN?

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1. We want to **change** people's attitudes to refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. Refugees and asylum seekers are human beings with the same rights and needs as other people and should be welcome in our communities.

2. We want to **tell** people the truth about asylum – that the UK has a tough and clinical asylum system and supports relatively few of the world's refugees. That asylum seekers are not given the support that the UK government recognises as a minimum for its own residents.



3. **Join** Woodcraft Folk's campaign for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers by signing up at:

www.facebook.com/righttorefuge

WHAT CAN BE DONE... ...BY THE UK GOVERNMENT?

1. Set a definite timescale that young asylum seekers will be able to **stay** at school or college

2. Finalise **quickly** where an asylum seeker stays

3. **Provide** a decent standard of accommodation for all asylum seekers

4. **Stop** detaining families with children

5. Make the asylum system **equal** and human, and stop treating asylum seekers like criminals. Listen to the stories of refugees and asylum seekers

6. Provide local **support** groups for asylum seekers and refugees where they don't exist



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“My family has been subjected to psychological torture by the indecision, the changes and the uncertainty. Is it government policy to make people destitute and starve them out of the country?”

LUSI MANUKYAN, whose family fled religious persecution in Uzbekistan and who are threatened with eviction, detention and deportation from the UK

THE FACTS

- **The UN Convention of 1951 states that 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 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...”
- In the UK, a **REFUGEE** is someone whose application for asylum has been successful and has been given permission to live in the UK.
- An **ASYLUM SEEKER** is someone who has asked for asylum in the UK and is waiting to hear the Home Office's decision on whether they can claim asylum – and therefore gain refugee status.
- About 2% of the world's refugees live in the UK. The majority live in developing countries in Africa and Asia.
- Most people seeking refuge in the UK come from Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Pakistan and China.
- The UK rejects over 70% of applications for asylum. About a quarter of these decisions are overturned by appeal.
- Approximately 2,000 children and young people are held in detention each year in the UK. Most of whom don't know why they are there, how long they will be held for or what will happen afterwards.
- **The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** states that all children, no matter where, are entitled to a safe, healthy life with time to play, learn and be heard.

WHAT CAN BE DONE...BY YOU?

We encourage you, your group or your class at school to look at the actions below and discuss which ones you can achieve. Try as many as you can, and let us know how it's going at:

campaign@woodcraft.org.uk

- Make **links** with your local refugee or asylum seeker support group. Ask how you can help.
- Invite young refugees and asylum seekers along to your group or after-school activities, and **invite** them to join the campaign.
- Organise an event about refugees and asylum seekers for the public, to **banish myths** and inform them about the real lives of those who come to the UK for safety.
- Teach other young people about refugees and asylum seekers, for example visit a **younger group** and run activities for them.
- Invite young refugees and asylum seekers to any **camp or trips** you're going on this year.
- Research how your local authority supports refugees and asylum seekers. Can you help them provide this support, or offer **ideas** for improving what they do?
- Talk to your school about providing more support for refugees and asylum seekers, for example creating a **buddy/mentor** system or writing an anti-racist bullying policy.
- Offer your time to local **organisations** who already work with refugees and asylum seekers.
- Provide English language **teaching** to asylum seekers or refugees who would like help.
- Write to your MP asking them to **support** the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.



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What is Woodcraft Folk?

Woodcraft Folk is a UK-wide movement of young people and adults motivated by strong principles of peace, co-operation, tolerance and friendship. Young people attend weekly activities to learn about social issues in a fun, active and equal setting, and frequently develop projects to support issues we feel passionately about. Young people across the organisation chose to campaign in support of refugees and asylum seekers.

A RIGHT TO REFUGE campaign is being run by young Woodcraft Folk. We're grateful for the support of the Refugee Council with information and advice.

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

For more information about Woodcraft Folk and to find out if there's a group near you, visit:

www.woodcraft.org.uk

For more information about the campaign, visit:

www.facebook.com/righttorefuge

If you're a group of young refugees, asylum seekers or any other youth group who wants to help with the campaign, please get in touch.

Your local Woodcraft Folk group is:



LOTTERY FUNDED



The national Woodcraft Folk office:

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Woodcraft Folk is a charity registered in England (1073665) and in Scotland (SC039791)

A RIGHT TO REFUGE

Woodcraft Folk's campaign for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK

