



World Refugee Day – 20 June 2018

"This not about sharing a burden. It is about sharing a global responsibility, based not only the broad idea of our common humanity but also on the very specific obligations of international law. The root problems are war and hatred, not people who flee; refugees are among the first victims of terrorism." — *UN Secretary-General, António Guterres*

Below are the true definitions of a refugee, an asylum seeker and an economic migrant:

Refugee:

"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."

In the UK, a person is officially a refugee when they have their claim for asylum accepted by the government.

Asylum Seeker:

A person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded.

Economic Migrant

Someone who has moved to another country to work. Refugees are not economic migrants.

Below are some interesting facts and “myth busters” relating to refugees and asylum seekers:

- About 1,200 medically qualified refugees are recorded on the British Medical Association’s database.
- It is estimated that it costs around £25,000 to support a refugee doctor to practise in the UK. Training a new doctor is estimated to cost between £200,000 and £250,000.
- The vast majority of people seeking asylum are law abiding people. Many destitute refused asylum seekers fear approaching the police to report incidents of sexual harassment and assaults, avoiding contact for fear of being picked up, put in detention and deported.
- Immigration officers have the power to detain asylum seekers, even if they have not committed any crime.
- Almost all asylum seekers are not allowed to work and are forced to rely on state support – this can be as little as £5 a day to live on.
- Asylum seekers do not jump the queue for council housing and they cannot choose where they live. The accommodation allocated to them is not paid for by the local council. It is nearly always ‘hard to let’ properties, where other people do not want to live.
- Most asylum seekers are living in poverty and experience poor health and hunger. Many families are not able to pay for the basics such as clothing, powdered milk and nappies.
- Asylum seeking women who are destitute are vulnerable to violence in the UK. More than a fifth of the women accessing our therapeutic services had experienced sexual violence in this country.
- There is nothing in international law to say that refugees must claim asylum in the first country they reach. A European regulation

allows a country such as the UK to return an adult asylum seeker to the first European country they reached.

- The top ten refugee producing countries in 2015 all have poor human rights records or on-going conflict. Asylum seekers are fleeing from these conflicts and abuses, looking for safety.
- In 2014, worldwide, 34,000 children applied for asylum having arrived in the country of refuge alone, with no parent or guardian. 1,945 of these applications were made in the UK. Many of them come from Eritrea, which was recently condemned by the UN for gross human rights violations
- The UK is home to less than 1% of the world's refugees – out of more than 59.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide.

Refugees in the London Borough of Sutton: The Government has now made a commitment to allow some of these children to be resettled in the UK by 2020. Cllr Ruth Dombey, as Leader of Sutton Council, has been fully supportive of this and called for urgent action in support of Syrian refugees. She has also made it clear that Sutton will play its part in caring for these children.

The Council is committed to doing whatever it can to accommodate the greatest number of unaccompanied children and refugee families so long as the government has committed to providing the necessary support and funding to local councils to allow us to do this.

At SHS: We had discussions with local faith groups about helping with a bid to support older, single refugees; our approach was agreed in principle by HOC last year.

However, the Council wished to concentrate its resources on addressing the needs of child refugees at the moment so our discussions are on hold.