

MYTH BUSTER

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Consortium For Asylum And Refugee Support



BRITAIN IS SWAMPED WITH REFUGEES? NO... WE'RE NOT THAT POPULAR

Britain is in 10th place in Europe per head of population for asylum applications. The vast majority of refugees end up in the Middle East and Africa.

WE ARE BEING RIPPED OFF? NO... HARDLY

A typical asylum seeker gets £5.62 per day to live on. They lose this if they don't live where they are told to by the Government. That's £40.22 per week - roughly 30% below the poverty line.

THEY TAKE OUR HOMES? NO... AS IF

When they are given a house or flat, asylum seekers have often been given the ones that are empty; the properties landlords find difficult to let.

WE PAY MORE COUNCIL TAX BECAUSE OF ASYLUM SEEKERS? NO... NOT TRUE

Asylum seekers are looked after by the Government, not local councils.

In 1999-2000, migrants and refugees made a net contribution of approximately £2.5 billion to the UK economy, according to The Home Office - worth 1p on income tax.

ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE LAZY? NO... OUR FAULT

We don't let them work. Many are really skilled and want to work and we have a shortage of skilled workers.

The Government has reversed legislation so that asylum seekers are now prevented from working. Home Office research has shown that asylum seekers would prefer to support themselves rather than be supported by the Government, yet the law prevents them from doing so.

ALL REFUGEES ARE CON ARTISTS? NO... YOU DECIDE

Even though the Home Office is being tough on refugees applying to stay in Britain, last year, 40% of applicants were given permission to stay.

ONE IN FOUR COME TO THE UK? NO... THAT'S REALITY TIMES 10

In the UK, on average, people think that 23% of the world's refugees and asylum seekers are living in the UK, according to research by MORI. The reality is actually less than 2%.

ASYLUM SEEKERS BRING CRIME TO OUR STREETS? NO... ASK THE POLICE

There is no evidence that asylum seekers commit more crime than anyone else, says the Association of Chief Police Officers. They are more likely to be victims of violent crime, even murder, because of who they are.

BRITAIN IS THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY? NO... NOT TRUE

Asylum seekers are not allowed to claim mainstream welfare benefits.

If they are destitute, the only option for some is to apply for support with the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), the Government department responsible for supporting destitute asylum applicants.

THEY ARRIVE WITH FALSE DOCUMENTS? MAYBE...

It is virtually impossible for people fleeing persecution to reach Britain without resorting to the use of false documents.

Article 31 of the 1951 Convention on Refugees prohibits governments from penalising refugees who use false documents.

There is no such thing as an illegal asylum seeker. The 1951 Convention on Refugees means that by law, anyone has the right to apply for asylum in the UK and remain until a final decision on their asylum application has been made.

IT IS SAFE BACK HOME? NO... IT'S NOT

Most refugees come from Afghanistan, Iraq, Angola, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Iran. All these places have seen serious human rights abuses and some, civil wars. There is a connection between the situation in the home countries of the people who come to the UK for refuge. The increase in positive decisions by the Home Office proves that the majority of the people are fleeing for their lives from harsh and oppressive regimes and severe ethnic conflict.

THEY'RE REALLY WELL OFF? NO... YOU DECIDE

85% of asylum seekers experience hunger

95% cannot afford to buy clothes or shoes

80% are not able to maintain good health.

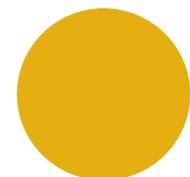
(Source: Oxfam and the Refugee Council study of 40 organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees in the UK.)

IRAN AND ANGOLA LEAD THE TOP TEN

The top ten nationalities of asylum seekers living in the North East.

1. Iran - 424
2. Angola - 257
3. Turkey - 250
4. Eritrea - 222
5. Sri Lanka - 192
6. Zimbabwe - 189
7. Congo Democratic Republic - 185
8. Pakistan - 176
9. Iraq - 165
10. Afghanistan - 116

(Source: North of England Refugee Service and NECARS, December 2005)



ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE DRAINING MILLIONS FROM THE NHS? NO... THE COST IS MARGINAL

Asylum seekers are entitled to NHS services, like other residents and visitors to the UK.

Don't forget the enormous contribution that asylum seekers, refugees and other immigrants make to the economic and cultural life of the UK. Refugees bring with them a wealth of skills and experience.

The Home Office has recognised this and has made a commitment to put the skills to good use. The NHS relies heavily on foreign labour. In London, according to the Greater London Authority for example, 23% of doctors and 47% of nurses working within the NHS were born outside the UK.

"The system is very stretched" says Vivienne Nathenson, Head of Science and Ethics Committee, British Medical Association "and we have a serious shortage of GPs. It adds to the strain but it didn't create it. And if they lived in better conditions they wouldn't need so much intervention from the NHS.

The evidence is that asylum seekers become ill after they arrive in the UK. The BMA also estimates that there may be up to 3,000 refugee doctors - a potentially invaluable resource at this time of acute staff shortage."

EMPLOYERS WON'T HIRE REFUGEES? NO... 90% OF EMPLOYERS WANT TO TAKE ON REFUGEES

Nine out of 10 employers want to take on refugees to meet skills' shortages, but don't because of their ignorance of the law and the confusing Home Office paperwork, according to research done by Personnel Today.

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THEY GET HOUSES AND ARE GIVEN NEW FURNITURE, WASHERS, FRIDGES AND COOKERS?

NO... IT'S NOT THEIRS

Asylum seekers are given support and furnished accommodation until the outcome of their application is decided.

The household equipment never becomes the property of the asylum seeker and is reused for the next family.

As with most furnished tenancy schemes equipment is new for the first person only. A similar furnished tenancy scheme in public sector tenancies operates for residents in a number of areas in North East England.

GREATER LONDON IS TOPS

Around a third of asylum seekers (31%) supported by the Government live in Greater London.

The North East is in sixth place in the UK (with 6%), after Yorkshire and Humberside (13%), West Midlands (13%), North West (11%) and Scotland (7%).

THEY ARE ALL ISSUED WITH MOBILE PHONES, LEATHER JACKETS, TVs, SATELLITE TV AND GIVEN MONEY FOR CARS?

NO... THEY CHOOSE WHAT TO BUY

Asylum seekers receive up to 70% of income support and like all of us have choices about how to spend that money. A mobile phone can be the only link to family in other countries. One woman living in the North East said she wanted to buy a phone card so that she could talk to her mother in Zimbabwe once a week.

ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE UNEDUCATED?

NO... MOST ARE WELL EDUCATED

A high proportion of asylum seekers have substantial educational and work related qualifications and were successful individuals in their home country.

A Home Office survey found that 90% of refugees speak at least one other language and 65% speak at least two, in addition to their first language.

ASYLUM KIDS MESS UP OUR SCHOOLS?

NO... SAYS TEACHERS LEADER

"All the evidence we have is that in some of the toughest schools it is the asylum seekers' children who provide stability, because they are most dedicated to getting the best out of the system."

John Banks, Head of Education,
National Union of Teachers.

WHAT IS A REFUGEE?

A refugee is anyone fleeing their country of birth. Refugees are described as 'asylum seekers' while they are waiting for official recognition as defined by the United Nations.

In the UK it is The Home Office that decides if they can stay or not. There is an appeal procedure. The Home Office may not grant refugee status to some asylum seekers. Or, it may grant the right to stay in this country for a limited time. At the end of this time the Home Office will look at their case again.

If the Home Office believes it is then safe for them to return to their country, they have to go home. If it is still not safe, the Home Office may allow them to stay for longer.

NORTH EAST ENGLAND HAS BEEN FLOODED WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS?

NO... NOT TRUE

North East England has a population of about 2.5 million. There are less than 5,000 asylum seekers.

That's less than a quarter of 1% of the total population of the region.

AROUND 3500 ASYLUM SEEKERS FROM 79 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES IN NORTH EAST ENGLAND

There were 3508 asylum seekers in North East England at the end of December 2005. Around a third lived in Newcastle and a third in Tees Valley.

The North East Top Ten

1. Newcastle - 1081
2. Middlesbrough - 668
3. Gateshead - 392
4. Sunderland - 345
5. Redcar and Cleveland - 327
6. Stockton - 277
7. North Tyneside - 251
8. South Tyneside - 138
9. Darlington - 25
10. Hartlepool - 16

(Numbers of individuals supported by NASS. Source: North of England Refugee Service and NECARS)

