

ASYLUM SEEKERS  
AND REFUGEES  
DO NOT GET LARGE  
HANDOUTS FROM  
THE STATE **ASYLUM  
IN SCOTLAND**

BRITAIN'S ASYLUM  
SYSTEM IS VERY  
TOUGH **THE FACTS**  
ASYLUM SEEKERS  
ARE LOOKING FOR  
A PLACE OF SAFETY  
POOR COUNTRIES  
- NOT THE UK  
LOOK AFTER  
MOST OF THE  
WORLD'S REFUGEES

scottish  
refugee  
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# ASYLUM IN SCOTLAND THE FACTS

This guide provides up-to-date information about the asylum system and aims to encourage an informed debate on asylum. It sets out facts about the refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland and highlights the benefits they can bring.

# BRITAIN'S ASYLUM SYSTEM IS VERY TOUGH ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE LOOKING FOR A PLACE OF SAFETY

- There is no such thing as an 'illegal' asylum seeker. Under the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights everyone has the right to seek asylum from persecution in a safe country. On applying for asylum, a person's claim is assessed against the 1951 UN Refugee Convention.
- The Refugee Convention has saved millions of lives, including people who escaped the conflicts and genocide in Yugoslavia, Kosovo, Rwanda and Darfur in Sudan.

- The Refugee Convention is the key legal document in defining who is a refugee, their rights and the legal obligations of states. It was initially created to protect European refugees in the aftermath of World War II.
- The vast majority of asylum seekers have managed to escape war, torture or persecution and need a place of sanctuary where they can be protected.
- The top ten refugee-producing countries in 2006 included Eritrea, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Iraq, Sudan and Somalia. All these countries have poor human rights records or are experiencing ongoing war or conflict. For example, Eritrea, a country in East Africa, has a documented record of torture of prisoners. Often people are imprisoned for their political or religious beliefs. (Source: Home Office Country of Information Report and Amnesty International)

BRITAIN'S  
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# ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES DO NOT GET LARGE HANDOUTS FROM THE STATE

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- Asylum seekers are not allowed to work and are forced to depend on state support. The current level of support for a single asylum seeker is just over £40 per week (this is set at 30% below standard income support levels). *(Source: Home Office Border and Immigration Agency)*

REFUGEES MAKE  
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- The vast majority of asylum seekers want to work and to support themselves and their families. Many do volunteer work while their asylum claim is processed, both to benefit their community and to maintain their skills.
- Asylum seekers and their children must pay overseas students fees (often more than £10,000 per year) if they wish to study beyond HND level. Being unable to work during the asylum process means they have no way of raising this amount of money, leaving many young asylum seekers in a limbo with no access to work or education.
- Asylum seekers cannot choose where they live and their accommodation is not paid for by the local council. They are not given better accommodation than the rest of the population. It is more likely to be 'hard-to-let' properties that no one else wants to live in.
- Asylum seekers are one of the most deprived groups in the UK. People whose asylum claim has been rejected and who are unable or afraid to return to their country of origin can face homelessness and complete destitution.

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BRITAIN'S  
ASYLUM SYSTEM  
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/WHO'S WHO?

- According to the Department of Work and Pensions, almost a third of refugees have contributed to society by doing voluntary work since arriving in the UK.
- There are currently over 1000 refugees working in the UK as doctors, dentists or nurses. Many more medically qualified asylum seekers are not allowed to work because of their immigration status, despite them possessing much-needed skills. (*Source: British Medical Association; British Dental Association; Royal College of Nursing*)
- Immigrants to the UK have been recognised as making a positive financial contribution to the country. Research from the Institute for Public Policy Research has concluded that "the relative net fiscal contribution of immigrants is stronger than that of the UK-born, and has been getting even stronger in recent years." (*Paying Their Way; IPPR; April 2005*)

# SCOTLAND IS NOT BEING SWAMPED BY ASYLUM SEEKERS

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- Asylum seeker numbers have been decreasing for a number of years. This reduction in asylum applications is partly due to measures which prevent people from getting to the UK to apply for asylum rather than a reduction in human rights abuses in the world.
- In 2006, the number of people claiming asylum in the UK was at its lowest level since 1989. (Source: UNHCR *Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialised Countries 2006*)
- Asylum seekers make up less than 1% of the population of Glasgow (where the vast majority of asylum seekers in Scotland live). (Source: COSLA *Strategic Migration Partnership Website*)
- If all the refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland gathered at Hampden football stadium, it would be less than 20% full.

# BRITAIN'S ASYLUM SYSTEM IS VERY TOUGH

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- The UK asylum system is strictly controlled and it can be very difficult to be recognised as a refugee. During 2005, fewer than 1 in 10 applications were granted asylum at the initial decision. (Source: *Home Office Statistical Bulletin Asylum Statistics 2005*)
- Research by Amnesty International has shown that Home Office decision making can be very poor. One in every six asylum seekers who is initially refused is granted asylum on appeal.

REFUGEES  
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# POOR COUNTRIES - NOT THE UK - LOOK AFTER MOST OF THE WORLDS REFUGEES

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- Two-thirds of the world's refugees are living in developing countries, such as Tanzania and Pakistan. Many are living in large refugee camps.
  - The UK hosts only 2% of the world's 10 million refugees and the whole of Europe only hosts 25%.
- (Source: UNHCR)*

# WHO'S WHO?

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## **Asylum seeker**

In the UK, an asylum seeker is someone who has made a formal application for asylum and is waiting for a decision on their claim.

The Border and Immigration Agency must decide whether or not that person qualifies for protection under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or human rights legislation.

## **Refugee**

A refugee is someone whose application for asylum has been successful. They have been recognised as needing protection under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention because the UK Government believes they have a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

### **Refused asylum seeker**

A person whose claim for asylum has been refused by the UK Government and is awaiting return to their country of origin.

### **Economic migrant**

A person who has moved to another country voluntarily to improve their quality of life through work or study.

### **Illegal immigrant**

A person who has arrived in this country, intentionally not made themselves known to the authorities and has no legal basis for being here. Or someone whose legal status in the UK has expired.

# REFUGEES MAKE A HUGE CONTRIBUTION TO SCOTLAND DEVOLVED OR RESERVED?

Only the UK Parliament at Westminster can pass immigration and asylum legislation.

However several areas of law-making and a number of policies and services which impact on asylum seekers and refugees are devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

These include education, employment, police protection, housing, legal aid, children services and social work services.

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