

Wakefield District



The Truth about
Asylum Seekers & Refugees

Wakefield, like most other towns and cities in the United Kingdom has had continuous migration of people from all over the world. This has contributed significantly to its growth and prosperity.

Immigrants have included the Irish community in the 1840s, German families in the 1880s, and communities from South Asia and the Caribbean in the 1970s. Workers have contributed to the local economy taking on roles within the textile and mining industries and are now filling much needed roles in the health service

The UK has a proud history of accepting refugees who have made a massive contribution for over 450 years.....

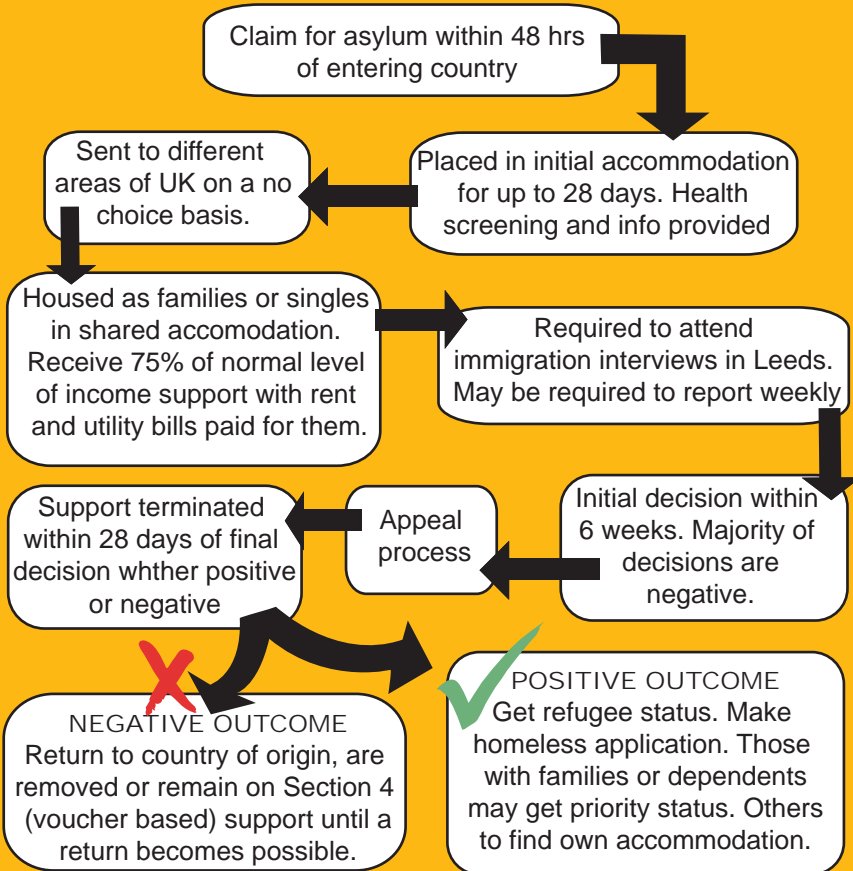
....including Jews fleeing the Holocaust, Ugandan Asians, Chileans and Kosovans escaping persecution in more recent decades.

The widening of European membership to Central and Eastern Europe and the small numbers of asylum seekers and refugees coming to our District continues this trend.

What's the difference between an Asylum Seeker, a Refugee and a Migrant Worker?



What happens when someone claims asylum?

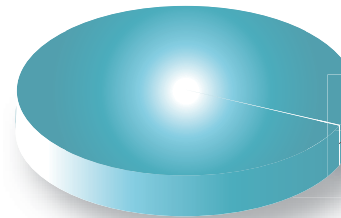


WAKEFIELD

Wakefield is a multi-cultural city with citizens from more than 50 different nations all over the world

The total population in Wakefield is approximately 321,000. There are approximately 350 asylum seekers in Wakefield at any one time.

WAKEFIELD DISTRICT POPULATION



Asylum Seekers make up less than 0.2% of the population

There are approximately 51,500 school children in the District. Approximately 200 of these are asylum seeker and refugee children.

80% of Asylum Seekers who are successful in their claim choose to stay in the District and contribute to the economy.

What makes people seek asylum?

Blessings was born in 1974 in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe. In 1999 he started to be active in local politics by supporting the Movement for Democratic Change. He used to drive the Manicaland 'spokesman' during rallies for the election.

As the current regime of Zimbabwe doesn't tolerate the opposition, he was attacked at his home by Zanu PF supporters after the June Parliamentary election in Zimbabwe 2000. They burnt his car and took him to a rural area, seriously beating him. He was left in the middle of nowhere to die. Somebody found him and took him to hospital where it took several days for his injuries to heal. Whilst his wife and mother came to visit him at the hospital they were chased by Zanu PF supporters. After trying to escape they were involved in a tragic accident in which they died.

This tragic incident changed Blessings' life, and with his life in danger, he escaped from Zimbabwe arriving in the UK in January 2002. He stayed with some members of a church, depending on their generosity and charity, not knowing that he had the right to claim asylum. He is now in the process of claiming asylum.

Sivar escaped from Iraq with her uncle when she was just 10 years old. As a member of the PUK, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, her uncle and the rest of the family faced persecution under Saddam Hussein's brutal regime.

In the brief time she has been in the UK, Sivar received a Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Award in 2006 for her outstanding contribution in her local school and for overcoming adversity.

Elizabeth fled from political persecution in Zimbabwe in 2002. She now lives and works in the Wakefield District after being granted asylum.



“**W**hen the asylum team left me at the flat I will call my home, I felt lonely and it created a void. I left my country to avoid being persecuted. Here I found myself without family support. The support from my extended family back home is no more. Now it's down to me and my children together to make support each other. Faced with cultural shock, I am also grieving my lost culture, with some people calling me names and eggs being thrown on the windows. All this is happening too fast to come to terms with the changes.”

FACT and FICTION

The UK was one of the original signatories on the 1951 Refugee Convention that gives people across the world the right to apply for asylum. It has saved millions of lives. No country has ever withdrawn from it.

FACT: Famous refugees include Albert Einstein, the Dalai Lama, Sigmund Freud, John Barnes, Trevor McDonald and Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York.

FICTION: Asylum seekers come to the UK for economic reasons.
FACT: Many asylum seekers did not choose to come to the UK. They come to escape persecution, death and torture. Many want to return home but can't because their lives are in danger.

FACT: Most of the world's refugees are looked after by some of the poorest countries in Africa and Asia

FACT: Fish & chips, the Mini and Marks and Spencers were all created by refugees.

FICTION: Most asylum seekers get involved in crime.
FACT: Asylum seekers do not commit more crime than anyone else. In fact they are three times more likely to be victims of harrassment, hate crimes and abuse.

FICTION: Asylum seekers all have mobile phones and wear designer clothing.
FACT: Asylum seekers and refugees are not provided with designer clothes, mobile phones, televisions or cars. They are allowed to drive and are subject to the same license, taxation and MOT rules as everyone else

FICTION: We take more asylum seekers than any other country.
FACT: In fact the UK takes less than 3% of the world's asylum seekers and we are only 11th in Europe in terms of asylum seekers per head of population.

FICTION: Refugees and asylum seekers are a drain on our economy.
FACT: Immigrants including refugees add £2.5 billion to the economy. Many of them are professionals and contribute to the regeneration of areas.

USEFUL CONTACTS

LOCAL

Wakefield MDC

Community Cohesion Team

Wakefield Council's Community Cohesion team based in Neighbourhoods and Communities works towards promoting cohesion and integration in partnership with the voluntary, community and statutory sector organisations.

cohesion@wakefield.gov.uk, 01924 305735

Open Door Project

Wakefield Asylum Team, 01924 304388, asylumsocial@wakefield.gov.uk

Homeless Unit, 01924 304362 or 01924 304360

homelessunit@wakefield.gov.uk

Supported Housing Team, 01924 304364

Wakefield District CAB

The Citizens Advice Bureau gives advice and information on any problem you may have. If you want to help us by volunteering please contact us.

01924 380790

West Yorkshire Police

Race & Hate Crime Co-ordinators, **0800 6060606**

Rasa Advocacy Project

Rasa is a refugee community organisation that provides free and confidential interpreting and advocacy services both asylum seekers and refugees who live in the Wakefield District. Rasa has volunteering opportunities and running ESOL and IELTS classes.

01924 368855, rasa.advocacy@btconnect.com

Leeds Refugee Council **0113 244 9404**

NATIONAL

Refugee Council,

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Stop Hate UK

www.stophateuk.org, 0113 293 5100

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