

Asylum Seekers and Refugees Myth Buster Activity

This activity is based on information from 'Asylum in Scotland: The Facts' produced by the Scottish Refugee Council and available in full from their website www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

- 1) An asylum seeker is a person who has applied for asylum and is waiting for a decision**

True

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 UK Home Office must decide whether or not that person qualifies for protection under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or human rights legislation.

- 2) A refugee is a person whose application for asylum has been successful**

True

A refugee is someone whose application for asylum individually has been successful. They have been recognised as needing protection under the 1951 UN 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.

- 3) There are around 100,000 asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland**

False

There are not even enough asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland to fill Hampden Park. If all the refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland gathered at Hampden stadium it would be less than 40% full. (i.e. less than 21,000).

- 4) There is no such thing as an 'illegal asylum seeker'**

True

There is no such thing as an illegal asylum seeker. Everyone has the right to request asylum and while their case is reviewed they have rights to reside in the UK and cannot be described as 'illegal'.

(NB, A 'refused asylum seeker' is a person whose claim for asylum has been refused by the UK Government and is either appealing or is awaiting return to their country of origin.)

5) Most of the world's refugees live in Europe

False

Most refugees live in countries which neighbour the country that they are fleeing from. (And in 2012 the top ten refugee-producing countries were Sudan, Iran, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Eritrea, Libya and Nigeria).

Two-thirds of the world's 10.5 million refugees (2010) are living in countries such as Tanzania and Pakistan. Many are living in large refugee camps.

6) Asylum seekers cause Scottish people to be unemployed

False

Asylum seekers are not allowed to work and are forced to depend on state support. Most people seeking asylum come from countries with no social security system - so not working has never been considered an option.

Refugees struggle to get their qualifications and experience recognised in the UK, and often fail to find work relevant to their skills. Many do voluntary work while their asylum claim is being processed, both to benefit their community and to maintain their skills.

7) Asylum seekers are given less benefits than Scottish people

True

Asylum seekers do not receive generous benefit payments. There is a significant gap between the welfare support provided to asylum seekers and the support that people in the UK receive.

Asylum seekers currently (2013) receive only 65% of the income support levels for under 25s, and 51% of levels for over 25s and lone parents.

Also the UK Government continues to support many asylum seekers with the 'Azure card'. These cards can only be used to buy certain items in specific shops and do not include any cash for bus fares or phone calls.

8) Asylum seekers get all the best housing in Glasgow

False

Asylum seekers have limited ability to choose where they live - they are generally allocated housing by the authorities. Their accommodation is not paid for by the local council, but by the UK Government.

Also, people whose asylum claim has been rejected and who are unable to return to their country of origin can face homelessness and complete destitution. They have no legitimate means of support and must rely on the charity of others. Between 2009 and 2012 1,849 destitute asylum seekers in Scotland were supported by the Refugee Survival Trust and the Scottish Refugee Council. On average destitute asylum seekers have been destitute for 1.5 years.