



Craig Whittaker MP

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Asylum System (Refugee Action campaign)

Thank you for contacting me about the asylum system.

The UK has a proud history of granting asylum to those who need our protection. Between April 2014 and June 2017, the Home Office received 97,454 claims for asylum and decided over 64,000 of these within 6 months. However, the Home Office recognises there is more it needs to do and it continues to work with NGOs to look at ways to ensure that those seeking asylum have their decisions dealt with efficiently and effectively.

I fully appreciate that people going through the asylum process may be under severe pressure, which is why the Home Office provides relevant information to asylum claimants throughout the process, including signposting to any support they may require. All asylum claimants are provided with a comprehensive leaflet that sets out what to expect at the asylum interview, the possible outcomes of the asylum claim, how to obtain legal advice to support their claim, details of support organisations that might be relevant, rights and responsibilities of asylum seekers, and information about asylum support and how to apply.

Asylum seekers do not need to work whilst their claim is considered as they are provided with accommodation and support to meet their essential living needs if they would otherwise be destitute. But they are encouraged to undertake volunteering activities. Volunteering provides a valuable contribution to their local community and may help them to integrate into society if they qualify for protection. Those granted refugee status or humanitarian protection, including those who are resettled in the UK, have immediate and unrestricted access to the labour market. Asylum seekers are not allowed to work in the UK unless their claim has been outstanding for at least 12 months through no fault of their own. This policy is designed to protect the resident labour market in order to prioritise access to employment for British citizens and those lawfully resident here, including those granted refugee status.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP