

# CARLISLE REFUGEE ACTION GROUP



## MYTHBUSTERS

### Some simple facts in response to common misinformation about refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the UK

**Asylum seeker:** A person fleeing from persecution in another country who has made themselves known to authorities and exercised their legal right to apply for asylum.

**Refugee:** A person whose application for asylum has been successful and who is allowed to stay in another country having proved they would face persecution in their home country. They have the same rights as permanent members of that country.

**Migrant:** A person who moves from one country to another for the primary purpose of work or study whether permanently or temporarily.

#### 1. The country is flooded with refugees!

There is absolutely no evidence for this. The UK has agreed to take in up to 20,000 refugees from the Syrian conflict over a five-year period. This is a little over the number of spectators who can fit into the CARLISLE football ground spread over the whole country! Hardly noticeable and hardly flooded. Cumbria itself is one of the largest and least populated counties in the UK.

#### 2. They are all here illegally!

Firstly there is no such thing as an illegal or bogus asylum seeker. International law states that anyone has the *right* to apply for asylum in another country and remain there until the authorities have assessed their claim. Refugees have gone through this taxing process and been successful in their application.

#### 3. They all want to come to Britain!

The great majority of refugees and asylum seekers (86% according to the UNHCR) are in some of the poorest countries in the world, often near or next to war zones. Asylum seekers look for safety and have little choice as to where they end up. Yes, some *do* try to come to Britain, most often because they have family here. In 2013 Pakistan hosted the most (1.6 million) refugees in the world. Germany has accepted the most asylum seekers in Europe, followed by countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands.

#### 4. They take our houses!

Refugees are actually housed under a separate system and are not competing on local housing lists. They have *no choice* in where they are housed and are often placed in hard to let properties.

#### 5. They don't want to work and don't contribute!

Many asylum seekers are well educated and skilled. They include doctors, teachers, architects, carers and tradesmen to name just a few professions. Asylum seekers *cannot* work until they have refugee status. The fact is that refugees *do* overwhelmingly work and pay taxes.

## 6. They receive lots of benefits!

In fact asylum seekers receive only *half* of the amount given as Jobseeker's Allowance which is a paltry amount. **Refugees are only entitled to the same benefits as anyone else**. Migrants are *less likely* to claim benefits or live in social housing than people *born in the UK*.

## 7. The Council Tax goes up because of refugees!

As refugees are looked after by the Central Government and not local government, they have no effect on council tax. Thoughtless vandalism and littering have more effect on Council Tax than refugees.

## 8. Britain is a soft touch!

Asylum seekers go through the arduous process of being fingerprinted, photographed and security checked before being issued with ID cards. They have to report regularly to immigration centres and can be detained at any point during their application process.

## 9. Britain takes more than its fair share!

Britain actually takes less than 3% of the refugees in the EU, the vast majority being taken by much poorer countries and the majority of European asylum seekers being taken by Germany and Sweden.

## 10. They take our jobs!

Refugees **want to work** and only find jobs where there are labour shortages. There is no evidence that they take jobs away from others.

## 11. They are only here for the benefits!

Refugees are only here because they are **escaping war or persecution** in their country of origin. They may also want to come to Britain if they have family here.

## 12. What do migrant workers contribute?

Figures from 2011 show that migrant workers paid 37% more in taxes than they received in public services. National Insurance figures show that migrants come here to work and set up businesses paying taxes and thereby giving much more into the system than they take out. Many are well educated but are often paid less than UK born workers. They pay tax and national insurance to the tune of £3 billion which is much needed in the UK for pensions, social care and the wider running of the economy.

## 13. Migrants are a drain on public services!

Migrants are *less likely* to claim welfare benefits or live in social housing than people born in the UK. They are 3 times more likely to live in the private rented sector (Migration Observatory.) Migrants are *more likely* to be **young, healthy, well qualified** and therefore **contribute more** to the tax and benefits scheme than they receive. They **deliver vital services** in areas such as social care, education, construction and particularly in the national health service.

**For more information and facts: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk); [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org);  
[www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)**

**[www.carlislerefugeeactiongroup.org.uk](http://www.carlislerefugeeactiongroup.org.uk)**

**Carlisle Refugee Action Group (CRAG) is supported by Carlisle One World Centre**

