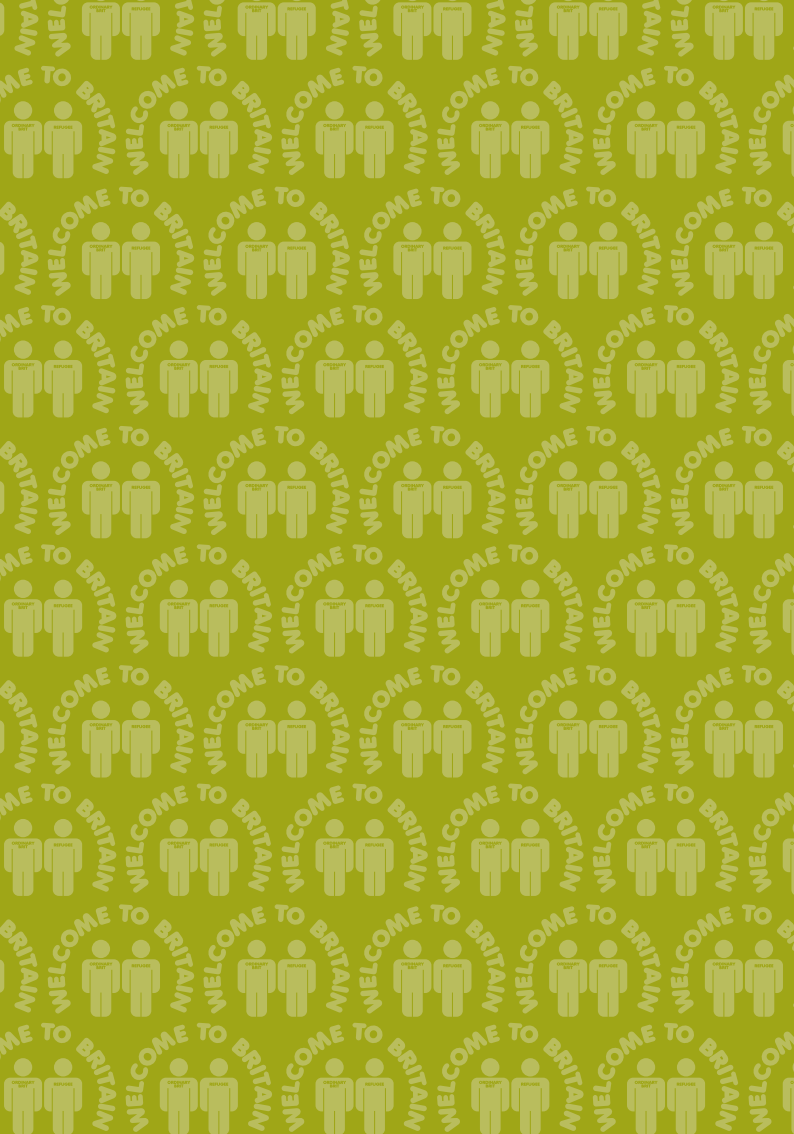




**MAKE YOUR
NEIGHBOURHOOD
NICER: HOW
TO WELCOME
REFUGEES AND
ASYLUM SEEKERS
IN 11 EASY STEPS**



Planting flower borders or clearing bus stops of rude graffiti are both great ways to make your neighbourhood a better place to live, but here's a much simpler way - just try being nicer to the people around you. Especially newcomers like refugees and people seeking asylum.

Refugees may have survived war and human rights abuses in their countries, but one of the toughest barriers they now face is making a new life for themselves here in the UK.

Luckily though, there are lots of ways to make people seeking sanctuary here feel more at home and more valued in your neighbourhood. Everything from setting your nan straight about the asylum system to getting a bit bolder and braver by letting your MP know that us ordinary Brits really do care about how newcomers are treated.

All of the tips given in the following 11 easy steps will help your neighbourhood (and the UK in general) become a friendlier, nicer place where people can get on and can achieve their full potential.

GET CHIT- CHATting

Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Peter Kay. Think of the great speakers of our time who can move, motivate or entertain us with the power of their words. Talking is a wonderful, transformative thing and your words really matter.

Now that you've had the chance to hear the facts about asylum from us, this is your opportunity to pass on what you've heard to everyone else you know. Once people understand the many terrible reasons for people fleeing their homes and the awful treatment they can receive in our country, then they'll want to set other people straight too.

So if you happen to hear any big fat fibs bandied about in the office, school or pub, or if your mum is getting her refugees muddled with her European migrant workers, just spend five minutes helping others get their facts straight.

Here's some openers to kick things off:

**MY LEARNED
FRIEND, I THINK
YOU'LL FIND...**

**I COULDN'T HELP
OVERHEARING...**

**THAT'S AN
INTERESTING
POINT,
HOWEVER...**

If you need swot notes, keep a copy of our guide **Mobiles, Money and Mayhem: the facts and fibs about asylum** in your back pocket. Then when you're completely fluent in asylum, pass it on to someone who needs it more than you. And please remember that the more you pass on the better - just visit our online shop at www.refugee-action.org.uk/RAP if you want to give everyone you know a copy and we'll send you a whole box.

SPEAK UP

Refugees and people seeking asylum get a bit of a rough ride in the media. In fact, if you believed half the headlines, you might think that the majority are would-be terrorists who are all here to pick up free cars and mobile phones.

Truth is that most of us know it's all a bit silly and over-blown. We want to help newcomers feel welcome and want our communities to be peaceful places. So let's not allow those with extreme views to speak for the tolerant British majority.

If we keep quiet, the media and politicians will continue to think that we're nodding our head in agreement, whilst refugees and people seeking asylum will carry on living in fear and isolation, worried that all British folk believe the sensationalist headlines about asylum.



WRITE

If you've been fuming behind your newspaper at another over-blown story all the way to work, or have spotted some simple mistakes in their facts (because even the most thorough people get it wrong sometimes), then drop the mistaken journalist an email and let them know what they've got wrong.

But let's not forget all those lovely journalists who get their facts right and go out of their way to show the human side of asylum. If you see an article or programme that you think was brilliant, then let them know. Big media companies need reassurance that they aren't going to lose money just by being nice about refugees.

Your local media is usually really keen to cover a positive story about local people, so if you have an interesting story about what your group is doing to welcome refugees, contact your local newspaper, TV channel or radio station.



SPEAK

If you feel that an article or programme has really overstepped the mark, then you can contact the Press Complaints Commission at www.pcc.org.uk or call their helpline on 0845 600 2757. For broadcast media you can contact Ofcom at www.ofcom.org.uk or call 0300 123 3333.

Radio and TV stations are always having phone-ins or televised discussions about asylum and current affairs, so why not have your fifteen seconds of fame by calling in to speak out on behalf of refugees?



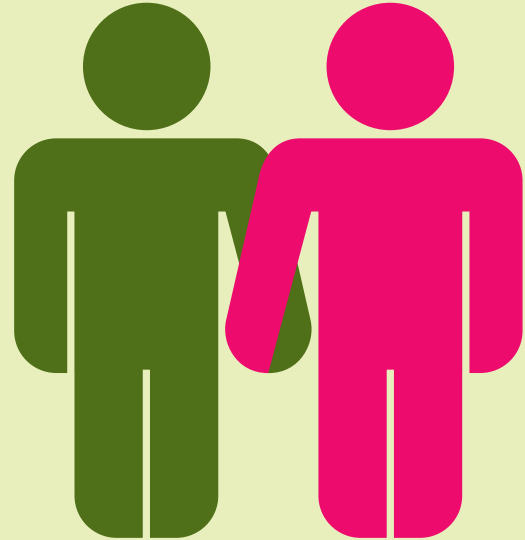
LEND A HAND

If you think you might like to go a step further and have a bit of time that you'd like to spend doing something for newcomers in your area, then don't be shy - get involved. Choose from the list below to work out what kind of volunteer you could be and how exactly you can make a difference.

Volunteer with a befriending or mentoring project that helps refugees settle in your area. Projects such as Time Together (see www.timetogether.org.uk) are often the only way that newcomers get to meet ordinary British folk.

Flex your office skills by giving administrative support to a refugee community organisation.

If you live near a detention centre, show an asylum seeker a friendly face by becoming a visitor. Contact the Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees (AVID) at www.aviddetention.org.uk to find out how.



Help run a drop-in centre for destitute asylum seekers at a local community centre or place of worship.

Help train a refugee football team, volunteer with a sports or arts project that brings young people together, or help people practise their everyday English at a language club.

For more ideas, contact Refugee Action's national volunteering coordinator at volunteering@refugee-action.org.uk.

MAKE YOUR MONEY MATTER

We live in penny-pinching times. All of us are watching our purses that bit harder and charities like Refugee Action have felt the fallout deeply. Which is why your donations count even more. So if you're a busy person who'd love to help but doesn't have the time, digging into your pockets is a hugely welcomed option. Many people's lives could be made better if you donated just one hour's pay to Refugee Action. If you can donate, please do.

Use our refugee converter to work out exactly how to put your pennies and pounds to good use.



A pint and a bag of chips on the way home **OR** let someone chat to a loved one in their war-torn homeland.



A glitzy t-shirt **OR** week's worth of nappies and baby care products for a single parent struggling on 65% of income support.



Cinema tickets for two, fizzy-pop and pick n'mix **OR** accommodate a destitute asylum seeker for a night.



Steak supper for two washed down with a bottle of vino **OR** pay for a ticket to get someone to their asylum interview at the Home Office.



Tickets to a music festival **OR** buy books to help asylum seekers improve their English at a drop-in centre.



A fairly flash flat screen telly **OR** allow five young refugees to go on a summer activity trip.

Make any donation you give work even harder by ticking that nifty GiftAid box. This means that the government gives charities an extra 28% on your money at no cost to you - a whopping £14 extra on a £50 donation. Every little bit helps so to donate today, please visit www.refugee-action.org.uk/support.

USE PESTER POWER

Now you're in the swing of being noisy about asylum, this is the time to get right under the noses of the people who really matter by lobbying your MP or local councillor. These are the people who really need to know that people like us care about asylum seekers and refugees and that actually, we're quite chuffed that our country can provide a safe place for vulnerable people. It's easy to feel like your voice doesn't matter but honestly, it really does.

So if a load of us put our voices together (election time is always a choice moment), then you can bet the movers and shakers will start to sit up and listen. There are many ways to bring out your inner campaigner - it's up to you to decide how you'd most like to make a commotion about asylum injustice.

Write to or email your local MP or councillor to find out what they're doing for asylum seekers and refugees in your area (visit www.theyworkforyou.com/mp to find your local MP).

Join local or national campaigns on refugee and asylum issues and get involved in

everything from sleep-outs to petition signing. For regular updates on our latest campaigns, go to www.refugee-action.org.uk and sign up for Refugee Action's regular e-newsletter 'Action Matters'.

Support international campaigns on the human rights issues that force people to flee their country. Check out www.amnesty.org.uk or <http://aegistrust.org> for current campaigns.

Become a fully-fledged campaigner by joining the right network for you. Students and young people can get involved with Student Action for Refugees (www.star-network.org.uk). Health professionals could join Medact's Refugee Network (www.medact.org), church-goers can contact Enabling Christians Supporting Refugees (www.ecsr.org.uk) and everyone can join Citizens for Sanctuary (www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk).



GIVE YOUR OLD STUFF A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

Liberate your home by kissing goodbye to all the stuff that you don't need anymore. Purge your home of clutter (the rash purchase snow-boots, the surplus spuds and spinach from your allotment) and donate it to a lovely refugee charity.

They'll then pass it on to someone who's arrived here with very little (and gets up to 45% less in benefits than the average Brit gets in income support), who would really, really appreciate a new winter coat or a set of crayons to keep their kids busy.

We can give you a list of local charities and community groups (<http://bit.ly/bQInck>) who will gladly collect your unwanted items for some very grateful refugees and asylum seekers.

A COAT
TOILETRIES
KIDS' BOOK
TOYS
GUITAR
BLANKETS/DUVET
TINS OF FOOD
BOX OF VEG



GET BUSY



It's nice making new friends isn't it? But it's especially important for refugees and asylum seekers as making friends and finding out about their new area can be one of the biggest barriers they face.

Whether you're a local business, school, cricket team, temple, church or Rotary club, there's heaps of events or initiatives you could set up to help newcomers settle in to your area. We can be on hand to help you develop your ideas or learn about similar events that have worked well elsewhere. Just look to the list below for some good ideas to get you started:

Organise an event or new scheme that will get newcomers socialising with their neighbours: a 'let's make friends' scheme for new arrivals, a welcome barbeque, an evening of music from around the world or a great local day out for families.

Set up an informal English conversation club and get people chatting. You don't have to be a professional teacher to help someone, just talking about the footie will really help.

Invite Actors for Human Rights to perform Asylum Monologues (<http://iceandfire.co.uk>) at a local venue. Or organise a Good Screenings film night with a showing of Moving to Mars (www.goodscreenings.org).

Put the many different hobbies and interests of people in your group to good use and set up a sports team or tournament, arts or cookery club. The CLEAR project (www.clearproject.org.uk) runs bicycle workshops where asylum seekers and other locals renovate second-hand bikes for others. Other projects have helped asylum seekers share allotments with others or discover the local countryside through walking groups (see www.ben-network.org.uk).

Sing it like you mean it and use your vocal chords to raise money. Like a charity marathon but without the chafing lycra, Refugee Action have pioneered Charioke - 10-hour karaoke fundraisers that have done brilliantly so far. Keep your eyes peeled for more (see www.refugee-action.org.uk/charioke).

You could also organise your own fundraiser such as a raffle, auction, cake sale, speed-dating or quiz night, and donate the proceeds to Refugee Action. Visit www.refugee-action.org.uk/support for fundraising ideas and info about events you can sign up for.

Start a City of Sanctuary movement in your city. Get your community to join this nationwide movement that is building a culture of hospitality towards people seeking sanctuary (www.cityofsanctuary.com).

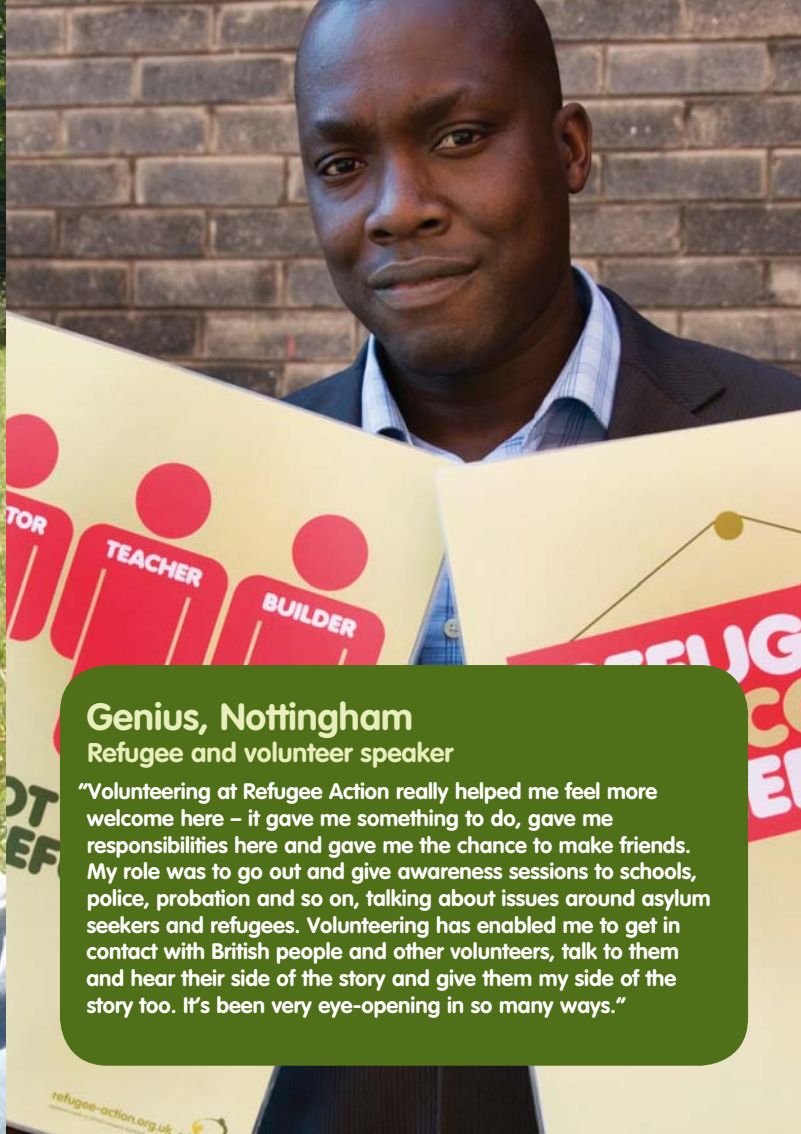


Thom, London

Fundraiser

"I support Refugee Action because it helps people who, in times of truly desperate need, are often the very last to be offered any kind of help. I like the awareness raising work Refugee Action does, as I think people sometimes need to be reminded of what refugees are (ie not economic migrants) and from what horrors they may have fled.

"The experience of running in Regent's Park on a beautiful sunny Sunday and completing the course in good time was very uplifting (not to mention surprising!)."



Genius, Nottingham

Refugee and volunteer speaker

"Volunteering at Refugee Action really helped me feel more welcome here – it gave me something to do, gave me responsibilities here and gave me the chance to make friends. My role was to go out and give awareness sessions to schools, police, probation and so on, talking about issues around asylum seekers and refugees. Volunteering has enabled me to get in contact with British people and other volunteers, talk to them and hear their side of the story and give them my side of the story too. It's been very eye-opening in so many ways."



Nena, Manchester

Refugee and client-line volunteer

"I was working for government ministers in Croatia when one day a group of men came to my house. They wanted information but I wouldn't give it to them. I was put in prison and beaten with metal bars. I don't know how I am still alive. When I was dispersed to Manchester, Refugee Action helped me.

"As a volunteer, I now advise on many different pieces of legislation and I can always ask my colleagues if I am stuck, they are all team players. Now I want to work as an advice worker, probably in asylum issues, to use everything I have learned."



Flavia, London

Campaigner

"I think being British is about standing up for others, and I want my kids to grow up in a society that is tolerant and where people's rights are protected. I campaign for better treatment of destitute asylum seekers because I know that many of these people have escaped war and persecution.

"I wanted to do something to help change the government's policy, so I emailed my MP about destitution. It was good to get a reply from him saying he would write to the Home Secretary about my concerns - it really made me feel I was helping to bring about important changes."

STAY FLUENT

As with learning Mandarin or Double Dutch skipping, once you've got to grips with something like asylum, it'd be very easy to let your new skills slip. Remember that people are more likely to listen to you if you've got fresh facts at your fingertips, so it's important that you keep clued-up on your subject.

Here are some tips from our very own expert speakers on how to stay fluent in asylum.

Get the low-down on the asylum system by inviting Refugee Action to run an awareness workshop or specialist training for your group.

While you're catching up with the gossip columns and TV listings, why not also browse the world news section of the newspaper and keep an eye on the troublespots that drive refugees to flee their homes.

Visit refugee organisations' and human rights websites and join specialist email groups. Here are some of our favourites:



Refugee Action

www.refugee-action.org.uk



Amnesty International

www.amnesty.org.uk



Human Rights Watch

www.hrw.org



Refugee Council

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk



Refugee education mailing list

www.refugeeeducation.co.uk/mailing.htm



Institute of Race Relations
news network

www.irr.org.uk/subscribe

MAKE YOUR WORKPLACE REFUGEE FRIENDLY

Making refugees and asylum seekers feel welcome and accepted should be a bit of a community effort, so that means getting your workplace, community group or organisation involved too. Here are some handy tips to help you attract and involve asylum seekers and refugees as members, service users or volunteers.

Send local refugee support agencies and refugee community organisations promotional materials highlighting the services and activities you offer. If you can, get all the materials about your service translated into key languages and find out how to access interpreters.

For those living on very low incomes, the cost of transport can be daunting, so perhaps consider covering the travel expenses of volunteers, service users and participants.

Single parents with young kids may not have any family support networks in the UK, so think about what childcare provision you might be able to offer.



Try to make your services culturally appropriate. Women from certain countries may prefer to participate in women-only groups or activities, and staying aware of religious festivals or days of prayer lets more people attend your event or activity.

Offer up your office space/community hall/meeting space to refugee community organisations and projects that need a weekly venue to meet.

Recruit refugees and asylum seekers as volunteers or offer them work experience placements. This gives them a brilliant opportunity to meet new people, get involved in their local community and put their skills to good use.

For top tips on recruiting refugee volunteers or employing people with permission to work, chat to our employment and integration service (www.refugee-action.org.uk/ourwork/ries.aspx) and check out the information at the following sites:

www.tandem-uk.com/vol_asylum.htm

www.sheffieldvolunteercentre.org.uk

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/practice/employersguides

SUPPORT REFUGEE WEEK

It's fun! It's easy!
It's Refugee Week! Yay!
Not that we're forcing you, but
if you tick any two from this list
you're almost morally obliged
to go to Refugee Week. Sort of.



CARNIVALS

CONGOLESE DRUMMING

**STUFFING YOUR FACE
ON GLOBAL FOODS**

BELLY DANCING

TAKING IN KURDISH ART

EXPANDING YOUR MIND

PESTERING MPS

Refugee Week takes place across the UK every year in June, so even if you do absolutely nothing for the rest of year, this is the week to do your bit. There are a whole heap of events and activities giving you the chance to learn more about asylum and celebrate the contribution that refugees make to the UK. Visit www.refugeeweek.org.uk and find out what's happening in your neighbourhood.

Refugee Week's Simple Acts campaign is the perfect way to get involved. Its website offers an indispensable guide to the small gestures that can make a big difference to refugees. It gives you tips on everything from cooking a dish from another country to learning to say a few words in another language (www.simpleacts.org.uk). We're trying to get 20,000 acts of welcome completed so once you've done something, make sure you tick it off online.

You can also get to grips with what asylum means from the comfort of your own home. Refugee Action's website has further hints on ways supporters can rally friends to do a Simple Act en masse by organising a book group or film screening.

This year we'll also be co-hosting an online film festival with Brightwide, an exciting new site which features the best of social and political cinema (www.brightwide.com), so you can celebrate Refugee Week wherever you are.

PASS IT ON

Refugee Action is an independent national charity that has 28 years' experience in working with refugees to build new lives in the UK. We'd like to say thank you for taking the time to get to grips with a complicated subject, and for doing any one of the little or big actions mentioned in this book. Hopefully we've given you enough ideas on how to make refugees and asylum seekers welcome in our country. We'd love you to get involved and get active - and the more the merrier as far as we're concerned.

So if you want to support Refugee Action's work by volunteering, campaigning or donating or just want a few more handy pointers on doing any of the actions in this guide then please contact us.

Call 020 7654 0673
or email giving@refugee-action.org.uk.

You can also find more ideas on what you can do as an individual or a group at www.refugee-action.org.uk/RAP.

Once you've read this book (and our other one as well), please go ahead and pass it on. Remember that the more people who speak up and get active, the happier your neighbourhood and the UK will be.

This booklet was originally created for the Refugee Awareness Project, to find out more visit www.refugee-action.org.uk/RAP.

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**IF YOU READ JUST ONE 'MAKE YOUR
NEIGHBOURHOOD NICER: HOW TO
WELCOME REFUGEES AND ASYLUM
SEEKERS IN 11 EASY STEPS' BOOK THIS
YEAR, READ THIS ONE.**

Esme Peach, Brighton

**If you'd like to order more copies of this
booklet, or find out more about what you
can do to welcome refugees, please visit
www.refugee-action.org.uk/RAP,
email giving@refugee-action.org.uk
or call 020 7654 0673.**



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