

# **LIFT THE BAN:** **WHY PEOPLE** **SEEKING ASYLUM** **SHOULD HAVE THE** **RIGHT TO** **WORK**

**LIFT**  
**THE**  
**BAN**



**I want to work – I don't want any more hand-me-downs. I want to enjoy the reward of my sweat. I don't want to rely on the Government's benefits – I want to work so I can prove myself to my children."**

**Rose**

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#### **Acknowledgments**

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We are also grateful to Global Future for preparing the cost analysis included in section 3.5.

#### **Methodology**

This report is based on a review of the existing literature regarding asylum and work, in addition to a survey that was completed by 246 people across the country with direct experience of the asylum system. Three focus groups were also carried out with people seeking asylum, refugees and migrants in order to discuss the question of giving people the right to work.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People seeking asylum in the UK are only able to apply for the right to work after they have been waiting for a decision on their asylum claim for over a year. Even then, the few people who are granted such permission are rarely able to work in practice because their employment is restricted to the narrow list of highly-skilled professions included on the Government's Shortage Occupation List.

This means that people are essentially banned from working whilst they wait months, and often years, for a decision on their asylum claim. Instead they are left to live on just £5.39 per day, struggling to support themselves and their families, while their talents are wasted and their integration set back.

The Lift the Ban coalition, made up of over 80 non-profit organisations, think tanks, businesses and faith groups, is calling on the UK Government to give people seeking asylum and their adult dependants the right to work:

- unconstrained by the Shortage Occupation List, and
- after they have waited six months for a decision on their initial asylum claim or further submission.

**In this report, we argue that a policy change would:**

- Strengthen people's chances of being able to **integrate into their new communities**
- Allow people seeking asylum to **live in dignity** and to provide for themselves and their families
- Give people the opportunity to use their skills and **make the most of their potential**
- **Improve the mental health** of people in the asylum system
- Help to challenge forced labour, exploitation, and modern slavery.

We demonstrate how a change in policy could benefit the UK economy, through **net gains for the Government of £42.4 million**.

We also present evidence to show that a change in policy would be **popular amongst the UK public**, with 71% agreeing that people seeking asylum should be allowed to work.

We believe that people who have risked everything to find safety should have the best chance possible of contributing to our society and integrating into their new communities. This means giving people seeking asylum the right to work so that they can use their skills and live in dignity.







# 1. INTRODUCTION

**When people claim asylum in the UK, having left homes and loved ones in order to escape conflict and persecution, they are desperate to start their lives again.**

**Finding safety is their immediate priority, but once they are here people hope for a quick and fair asylum process that will allow them to enter work or education as soon as possible. Journeys to safety in the UK may already have taken months or even years, and people are eager to reach a point where they can start to rebuild their lives.**

Finding work is a huge part of this process of rebuilding, and allowing people to participate effectively in their new communities. Yet people are only able to apply for the right to work after they have been waiting for a decision on their asylum claim for over a year, and few are granted this permission. In the rare cases where approval is given, people must take up jobs on the Shortage Occupation List, which is highly restrictive and includes such professions as ‘classical ballet dancer’, ‘nuclear medicine practitioner’, and ‘geoenvironmental specialist’.<sup>1</sup> In practice, therefore, people in the asylum system are effectively banned from working and must rely wholly upon state support to avoid destitution.

These restrictions on the right to work are in place despite how damaging they are – both for the UK economy and also for those people who are forced to wait for long periods of time for a decision on their asylum application, without the opportunity to develop their skills or increase their chances of being able to integrate once they are granted refugee status. By lifting such restrictions and giving people the right to work earlier in the process, the UK Government would allow people seeking asylum to live in dignity, as well as introducing a policy that is popular amongst the UK population and solidly grounded in evidence.



Lift the Ban is a coalition, made up of over 80 non-profit organisations, think tanks, businesses and faith groups, who have come together to call on the Government to **give people seeking asylum and their adult dependants the right to work, unconstrained by the Shortage Occupation List, after waiting six months for a decision on their initial asylum claim or further submission.** The campaign is rooted in the knowledge, views and testimonies of those who have direct experience of the asylum system.

In this report, we present the background to the current UK policy, which has been in place since 2002, and debunk some of the common counter-arguments to policy change. We highlight the UK's position as an outlier amongst comparable countries; no other European country has such a restrictive waiting period. This is equally true of Canada and the USA.

We also set out the arguments for why change is needed, according to what we know from existing evidence and based on the results of a survey undertaken by Lift the Ban coalition members with 246 people across the country who have direct experience of the asylum process. Throughout the report, we include the testimonies of people that we work with, most of whom told us that they are desperate to work in order to regain their independence and to be able to contribute to the UK economy.<sup>2</sup>

**We argue that giving people seeking asylum the right to work could:**

- ➔ **Strengthen** people's chances of being able to integrate into their new communities;
- ➔ Allow people seeking asylum to **live in dignity** and to provide for themselves and their families;
- ➔ Give people the **opportunity** to use their skills and make the most of their potential;
- ➔ **Improve the mental health** of people in the asylum system;
- ➔ **Benefit the UK economy** by allowing people seeking asylum to contribute, as well as reducing the costs associated with asylum support;
- ➔ **Deliver** evidence-based, popular and pragmatic policy change.

**“ We don't come here to beg.  
We want to work.  
To be autonomous.  
To depend on ourselves.”**

**Mary, focus group participant\***

\*In order to protect the anonymity of those we spoke with, all names used in this report are pseudonyms.

## OUR SURVEY

**In August and September 2018, Lift the Ban coalition member organisations across the UK carried out a survey with 246 people who have direct experience of the asylum process. See page 16.**



**94%** of respondents said that they would like to work if they were given permission to do so.<sup>i</sup>



**52%** of survey respondents told us that they had used a **food bank** at some point in the past year.



**Of the 36 people surveyed who had applied for permission to work after waiting for an asylum decision for over 12 months: only 8 were granted permission, only 2 of these were able to find jobs in reality.**

## 2. BACKGROUND

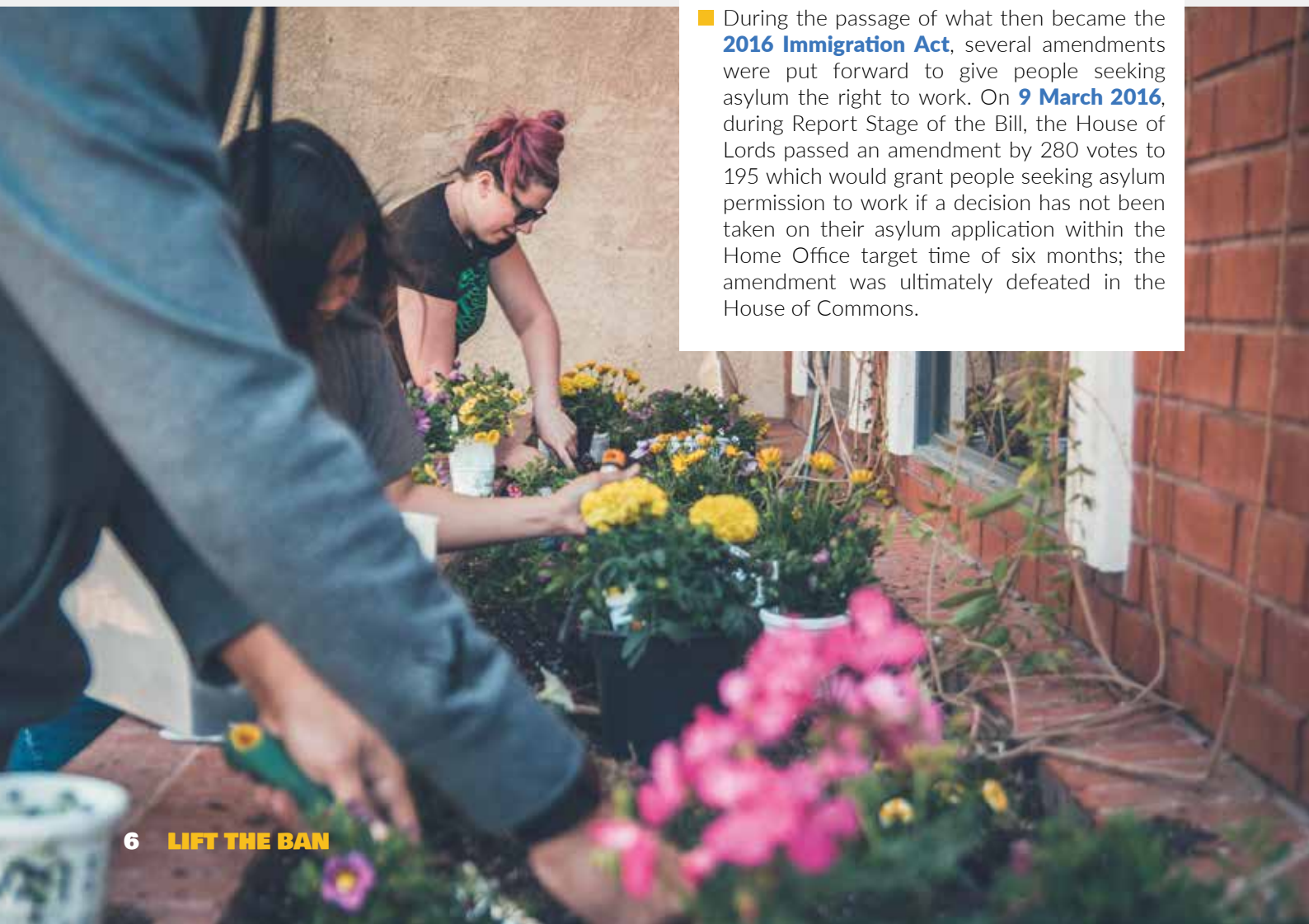
### The right to work for people seeking asylum in UK policy and legislation

Currently, people can apply for permission to work after they have been waiting for a decision on their asylum claim for over a year (if that delay is not considered to have been caused by the applicant themselves). Those who have made further submissions which have been pending for over 12 months can also ask for permission to work.<sup>3</sup> However, even when such approval is given this is restricted to jobs on the Shortage Occupation List, and people seeking asylum are not allowed to be self-employed.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, despite the fact that they are going through the same anguish as main asylum applicants, the adult dependants of people seeking asylum are not allowed to apply for permission to work at all – something that impacts particularly on women, who are more likely than men to be the dependants of their partners. It is unclear how many people currently have permission to work, as the Government does not collect this data, but numbers are low.<sup>5</sup>

### RECENT POLICY DEVELOPMENTS



- **Up until 2002**, people seeking asylum could apply for permission to work if they had been waiting for six months or more for an initial decision on their asylum claim. In July 2002, this provision was withdrawn except in 'exceptional cases'. No policy was developed to explain what these might be.
- **In February 2005**, a new immigration rule was introduced to comply with the 2003 European Union Directive on Reception Conditions, which the Government had opted into. This rule allowed people seeking asylum to apply for permission to work in the UK if they had been waiting for over 12 months for an initial decision on their asylum claim.
- **In 2010**, the right to work after 12 months was extended to those who have made further submissions on their claim; at the same time, however, the right to work was restricted to jobs on the Shortage Occupation List.
- During the passage of what then became the **2016 Immigration Act**, several amendments were put forward to give people seeking asylum the right to work. On **9 March 2016**, during Report Stage of the Bill, the House of Lords passed an amendment by 280 votes to 195 which would grant people seeking asylum permission to work if a decision has not been taken on their asylum application within the Home Office target time of six months; the amendment was ultimately defeated in the House of Commons.





**When somebody applies for asylum in the UK, the Home Office aims to make a decision on their case within six months, provided that is it not classified as 'non-straightforward'.<sup>6</sup> When the right to work after six months for people seeking asylum was withdrawn in July 2002, the Government argued that faster decision-making times in the asylum determination process made the previous policy irrelevant:**

**“ The asylum system is working increasingly quickly, through reforms and increased resources... This means that the employment concession, whereby asylum seekers could apply for permission to work if their application remained outstanding for longer than six months without a decision being made, is becoming increasingly irrelevant.”<sup>7</sup>**

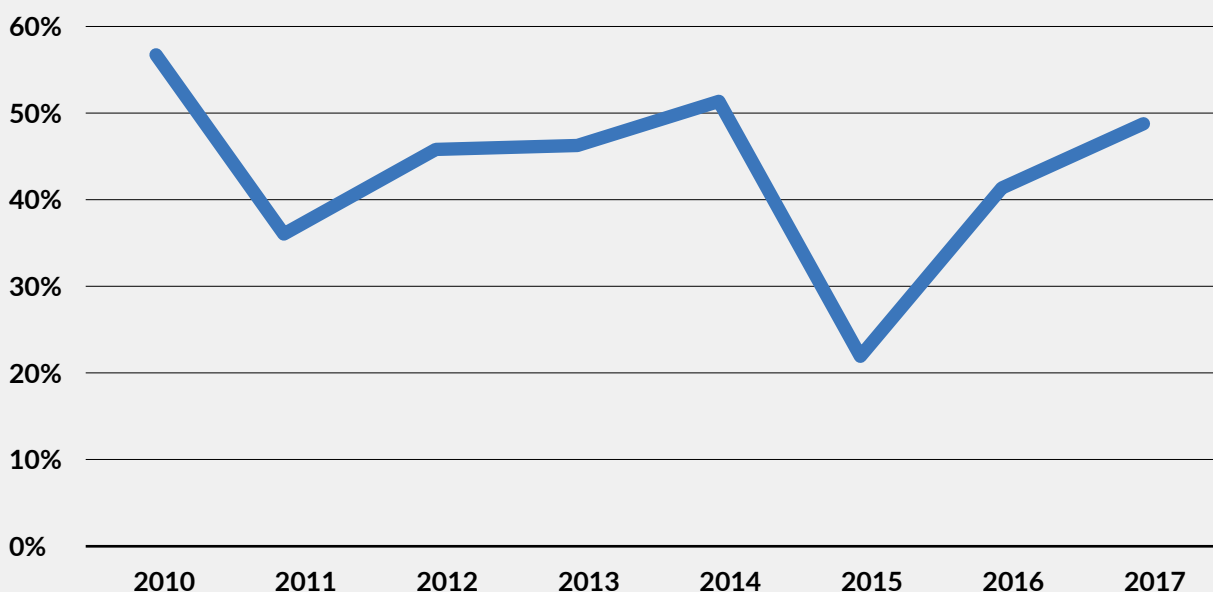
Time and again, however, the Home Office has shown an inability to make timely and correct decisions on asylum applications. Over recent years the number of people waiting for a decision on their asylum claim for more than six months has grown steadily.

By mid-2018, the number of people waiting over six months for a decision on an asylum claim had risen to 14,528, the highest number since public records began and an 8% increase on the previous year, despite the fact that since 2015 asylum applications have been steadily falling. The proportion of people waiting over six months for a decision on their initial asylum claim has also risen since 2015, and currently almost half of main applicants waiting for an initial decision on their asylum claim have been waiting for over six months. **It now seems difficult to argue that a quick decision-making process makes the 'employment concession' irrelevant.**

Instead, the arguments for lifting the ban on working have become increasingly compelling. Allowing people to work would give them the opportunity to live in a dignified manner whilst they wait for a decision on their asylum application, a process that can sometimes extend for months or even years beyond the Home Office's own target. It would also mean that people can maximise their potential and contribute to the UK economy and their communities. For those who end up leaving, this would give them a greater likelihood of being able to rebuild their lives elsewhere; for those who stay, their chances of being able to successfully integrate into their new communities would be far greater.

**Currently almost half of main applicants waiting for an initial decision on their asylum claim have been waiting for over six months.**

**% of people (main applicants and dependants) waiting over 6 months on initial decision**



## 2.1 DEBUNKING THE 'PULL FACTOR'

**One common justification for restricting access to the labour market for people seeking asylum is that policies which allow people seeking asylum to work serve as a 'pull factor' that attract people to apply for asylum in the UK rather than elsewhere. Further, there are those who argue that a change in policy would encourage 'economic migrants' to apply for asylum in order to be able to work. According to this second argument, policies which restrict the economic rights of people seeking asylum serve as a deterrent to 'spurious' asylum applications from economic migrants.**

Researchers have widely discredited the idea that opening the labour market up to people in the asylum system draws people to the UK, or encourages people to 'choose' the UK when seeking asylum. Indeed, there is not one piece of credible, published evidence to support the long-term validity of this premise.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, those studies that do exist – including one commissioned by the Home Office – show that **there is little to no evidence of a link between economic rights and entitlements and the destination choices of those seeking asylum.**<sup>9</sup> Instead, to the extent that a deliberate choice is made at all, the elements shaping such decisions are generally determined by colonial links between countries, the ability to speak the language, the presence of relatives and friends in the host country, and the belief that the host country is generally safe, tolerant and democratic – rather than a specific knowledge of the conditions of reception upon arrival.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, research has shown that the introduction of restrictions on the right to work has had no impact on the volume of asylum applications and that asylum applications do not decrease when

unemployment in host countries increases.<sup>11</sup> In fact, many people are unaware prior to arrival that they will be unable to work whilst waiting for a decision on their asylum claim. This is borne out by the results of the survey carried out by Lift the Ban coalition members. Of the 246 people who responded, 72% told us that they had not known prior to arriving in the UK that people seeking asylum are not allowed to work. Only 16% told us that they had been aware of this before their arrival.<sup>12</sup>

If the right to work is granted after six months, moreover, it becomes even more difficult than it already is (given the lack of evidence) to argue that people who would not otherwise have applied for asylum may do so as a route into work in the UK. It seems improbable that somebody would bring themselves to the attention of the authorities on the basis that there may be a chance that their asylum application will not be decided within six months and they will at that point be able to work. As academics at the University of Warwick have pointed out, for people who arrive in the UK without a visa and with the intention of working, it is easier to remain hidden than to apply for asylum and become visible to the authorities. Given the administrative hurdles involved, and the fact that applicants who are perceived as not having a genuine basis for their claim are more liable to be detained or deported, "[a]pplying for asylum would... put such individual's [sic] migration-for-work project in grave jeopardy. The availability of work in the informal economy may therefore be a greater attraction to people who have no legitimate claim for asylum than formal labour market access for those awaiting a decision on their claim."<sup>13</sup>

Of the 246 people who responded to the survey

**72%**

told us that they had not known prior to arriving in the UK that people seeking asylum are not allowed to work.







## 2.2 LEGAL CHANGES TO ARTICLE 8

**There are also those who argue that giving people seeking asylum the right to work would allow people who are refused asylum – and thus expected to leave the UK – to claim that they have developed a ‘private life’ in the UK. Proponents of this argument claim that it would therefore be more difficult for the Home Office to remove such people from the country under Human Rights law. But this counter-argument holds little water when held up to scrutiny.**

Whilst it is true that, prior to 2014, public interest considerations relevant to Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (including the right to a private life) were not defined in UK legislation and so arguably allowed for a more flexible interpretation, these considerations were clarified by amendments to the law introduced by the Immigration Act 2014. The relevant legislation now tells us that “[l]ittle weight should be given to a private life established by a person at a time when the person’s immigration status is precarious.”<sup>14</sup>

In addition, the immigration rules allow for applications to be made on grounds of private life, and set out requirements to be met. None of the listed requirements relate to employment and there are no identifiable circumstances in which it would be easier to meet the requirements of the rules through taking up employment in the UK.<sup>15</sup> It therefore seems unlikely that an asylum claimant who is employed whilst waiting for a decision that is ultimately refused would necessarily be in a stronger position to challenge their removal than would somebody who had not been able to work.

# WHAT HAPPENS ELSEWHERE?



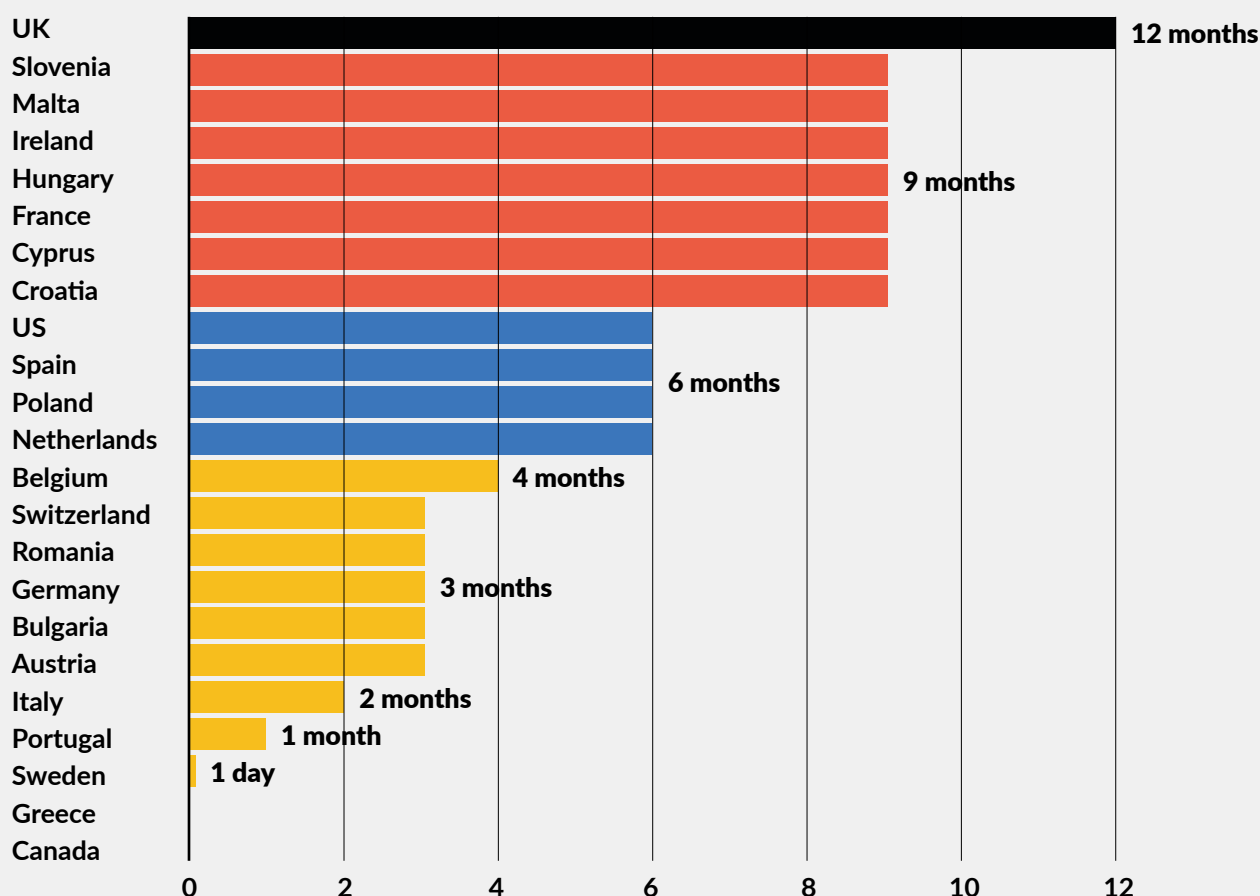
**The UK's approach to employment rights for people seeking asylum is significantly more restrictive than that of any other comparable country.**

Following the removal in 2018 of a near-total ban on people seeking asylum working in Ireland,<sup>16</sup> no other European country now enforces a minimum 12-month waiting period. This is equally true of Canada and the USA.

The European Union Reception Conditions Directive of 2013 (to which the UK chose not to 'opt in') set the maximum waiting period for the right to work at nine months after an individual has lodged an asylum claim.<sup>17</sup> Many other countries, moreover, do not place restrictions on the type of employment somebody can take up – unlike in the UK, where the Shortage Occupation List makes it practically impossible for people to work, even after a 12-month wait. As the graph below demonstrates, many countries have chosen to set a considerably shorter exclusionary interval, and some allow work from the first day. **If the UK were to adopt a six-month waiting period, unrestricted by the Shortage Occupation List, it would go from being an outlier to joining the international mainstream.**

Of course, even in countries with shorter waiting periods people seeking asylum continue to face a number of practical obstacles to accessing work. The most commonly cited hurdles are employer discrimination, language barriers and lack of recognition of existing qualifications. There are also some countries (such as Austria, France and the Netherlands) that restrict work either according to sectors or through limiting the numbers of days per year that people seeking asylum are permitted to work. In addition to simply giving people the right to work, therefore, it is key that conditions are put in place for this right to be realised in practice. Below we highlight current practice in Spain, Canada and Denmark as examples of good practice in facilitating access to employment for people seeking asylum in order to secure economic savings and promote integration.

**Length of time (in months) before people seeking asylum are given the right to work**<sup>18</sup>



## SPAIN

The Spanish asylum system is built around the concept of preparing people for integration into mainstream Spanish life. People seeking asylum are **permitted to work after six months**. There is no labour market test and no restrictions placed on what jobs can be done.

Language and vocational training is made available to everyone during the initial, non-working six months, and a broader package of support is provided once individuals are eligible to work. This includes personalised career guidance, support in finding work, and occupational training.<sup>19</sup>

The Spanish Government evidently sees the costs of providing support and training to everyone in the asylum system – including those whose claims are eventually unsuccessful – as being outweighed by the benefits of ensuring that those who are granted status are well positioned and prepared to integrate into society. The Belgian Government takes a similar approach.<sup>20</sup>



## CANADA

Canada has **no formal waiting period** for access to the employment market. Once a person has completed an initial interview with federal authorities they can apply for a work permit.

As the number of people claiming asylum in Canada has risen in the last two years, federal policy has focussed on getting people into work while they wait for a decision on their case. The Government has significantly reduced the time taken to process work permit applications and now has a target of 30 days.<sup>21</sup> Ninety-seven percent of applications for work permits are approved,<sup>22</sup> and in the year to April 2018 just under 14,000 work permits were granted.<sup>23</sup> This has allowed the Canadian Government to reduce its social assistance payments for people seeking asylum, thus resulting in savings for the taxpayer.

## DENMARK

In Denmark, people seeking asylum can work **after 6 months**, subject to certain conditions.<sup>24</sup>

In several municipalities, a 'Fast Track' programme has been introduced that aims to facilitate early access to the local labour market by preparing people for the job market while they await a decision on their asylum claim. It includes an eight-week training programme that provides participants with an introduction to Danish culture, language skills, vocational training and potential local internships, techniques for job search, information about local work culture, network building and motivational talks. One of the key aims of the programme is to make the transition from an asylum claim to refugee status more fluid, by ensuring people are immediately in a position to enter the job market. A recent evaluation of the two-year programme showed that, of the 70 participants who had been granted refugee status, almost two-thirds (61%) were self-supporting.<sup>25</sup>





## 3. WHY IS CHANGE NEEDED?



### 3.1 HELPING PEOPLE TO INTEGRATE

**In the foreword to the Government's Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper, published in March 2018, Sajid Javid – then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and Home Secretary at the time of writing – set out the Government's ambition “to build strong integrated communities where people – whatever their background – live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities.”<sup>26</sup>**

This included increasing the integration support given to people recognised as refugees after their arrival in the UK. Yet the current policy excluding people seeking asylum from working undermines attempts to ensure that they are able to effectively integrate once they are granted refugee status. Indeed, discussing refugees' access to the UK labour market, one leading academic in asylum and refugee policy refers to what she calls the “inherent contradiction between UK refugee integration strategies that focus on employment... and restrictive government policies that negatively affect access to the labour market.”<sup>27</sup> Such restrictive policies include those which limit access to the labour market for people seeking asylum.

Employment is widely seen as one of the most important factors in securing migrant integration.<sup>28</sup> And, in addition to the direct benefits that work brings to people's ability to integrate, employment may have indirect benefits for other key areas of integration, for instance learning the language.<sup>29</sup> Early intervention, moreover – including early labour market integration – has been consistently shown to be key for successful integration.<sup>30</sup> Policies that see integration starting at ‘Day 1’, as soon as somebody arrives in the UK, are therefore likely to be more effective than those which consider integration to begin only when somebody has been granted refugee status.<sup>31</sup>

Evidence suggests that, when people seeking asylum are subject to extended periods during which their access to the labour market is restricted, their economic integration is slowed. One study put the cost of a pre-2000 employment ban for people seeking asylum in Germany at €40 million per year on average in terms of welfare expenditures and forgone tax revenues from unemployed refugees.<sup>32</sup> The study also found that the longer the employment ban, the worse the subsequent employment trajectories of refugees. It referred to “an influential

early integration window”, where the period following arrival proves significant in determining subsequent integration trends, and where “early investments yield disproportionate integration returns.” This is consistent with a study of people seeking asylum in Switzerland, which showed that the longer somebody waits for a decision on their asylum claim, the lower their subsequent chances of finding employment.<sup>33</sup>

Currently, without the right to undertake many basic everyday activities, and receiving just over £5 per day to live on, sometimes for years, many people claiming asylum lose hope that they will ever be able to rebuild their lives. Furthermore, the impact of the asylum process, and the long delays that people are often subject to, do not vanish for them and their families when refugee status is granted. For those waiting to receive a decision, after a long period of exclusion from mainstream services and the job market, their ability to rebuild their lives will have been damaged.

“Last year, they granted me refugee status, but I still feel the pain and I still take the medication... Even now, I don't have confidence to look for work. I am tired. I am still stressed. They granted me, it's OK, but I need a long time to come out of this stress.”

Afia, focus group participant

Waiting a long time for a decision on an asylum application means that people will struggle to make up for lost time in the jobs market when they are eventually granted status. One former solicitor we spoke to as part of the focus groups, for instance, was worried about her employment prospects after having waited for a decision on her asylum claim for five years:

“I'm worried about my future job because of these five years that I lost. When you're applying for a job it is important for employers if you have experience; so this five year gap that I have, I've tried my best to fill this gap. But I had no chance to work in my profession... I would not be so worried if I had had the opportunity to [study], but now I don't think I will find a job that is suitable for my education because of my lack of experience working in this country.”

Moreover, whilst people are permitted to volunteer for a charity or public sector organisation while they await a decision on their asylum application, there are few other opportunities for them to develop their skills or to improve their employability prospects. This includes the chance to learn English, as people seeking asylum are not eligible for government-funded English language teaching until they have waited six months for a decision on their asylum application, at which time they receive only partial funding to cover 50% of the course.<sup>34</sup>

“At the moment, you have no plans for the future. Or even for the present. You have no plans for anything.”

Pauline, focus group participant

The Government's current approach excludes people from the labour market from an early stage, ostensibly to prevent the integration of those who are not recognised as needing protection. But the actual outcome of current policy merely serves to set back the subsequent integration of those who are granted refugee status. Attempts to ensure earlier integration – including in the labour market – would mean that people are better able to integrate into their new homes and communities, at an earlier stage.

71%

PUBLIC  
SUPPORT  
FOR CHANGE



Polling undertaken in 2018 with a wide cross-section of the UK population showed that **71%** of people polled agreed with the statement:

**When people come to the UK seeking asylum it is important they integrate, learn English and get to know people. It would help integration if asylum-seekers were allowed to work if their claim takes more than six months to process.**

The statement united people whose views on migration otherwise vary widely – **with only 8% of those polled disagreeing** – as well as those with different views on key political topics such as Brexit: **63% of Leave voters** and **78% of Remain voters** agreed that asylum-seekers should be allowed to work.<sup>35</sup>

## 3.2 ALLOWING PEOPLE TO LIVE IN DIGNITY

**“ If I was allowed to work, I would feel like a human. Everyone knows what being a human is... It is very good for everybody.”**

**Hina, focus group participant**

There are various factors that define our identities, and work is clearly a very significant one. An intentional policy of restricting people's access to the labour market for months and sometimes years is certain to have a significant and harmful impact on those people's sense of pride and dignity. Indeed, research supports the idea that work contributes to people's well-being: one analysis carried out by the Office for National Statistics in 2014 showed that people whose total household income consists of a high proportion of cash benefits, regardless of the actual level of that income, are likely to experience lower life satisfaction, lower ratings for the perception that the things one does in life are worthwhile, lower happiness, and higher anxiety.<sup>36</sup>

During focus groups we held to discuss work with people who have first-hand experience of the asylum process, employment was frequently identified as a central part of their identities, and a fundamental part of their humanity:

**“ I want to work in this country because I want to find my identity. My identity is my work, my identity is my job. If I can work, I can improve my life and I can help other people. I will be happy and confident.”**

**Ahmet, focus group participant**

Participants told us that being denied the right to work is “degrading” and marked them out from others, meaning that they lost respect for themselves. Several people told us they no longer felt human:

**“ Being here, we are not working, it's like we've been put to one side, as if we are not human beings. The way they treat us like we are nobody, we are animals.”**

**Martha, focus group participant**

Others spoke about how it had felt to live on just over £5 per day, which is the financial support that people in the asylum system receive. Indeed, **over half (52%) of survey respondents told us that they had used a food bank at some point in the past year,**<sup>37</sup> which gives a sense of the degree of poverty that people are currently living in:

**“ There were times I could not afford sanitary towels. I would walk into public toilets and steal toilet paper to use. How dehumanising is that?”**

**Faith, focus group participant**

Several parents spoke of the shame they felt in not being able to provide for their families and children, and the impact this was having on their mental health. In particular, people told us that their children did not understand why they were staying at home every day, instead of going to work like other people's parents, and they were afraid that this would result in their children losing respect for them.





## ROSE'S STORY



**Rose has been waiting for a decision on her initial asylum claim for three years. She lives with her two children.**

Rose explained to us that she was worried about the impact that waiting for a decision, without the right to work, was having on her young children. She told us that her children don't understand all that she is going through, and that she tries to ensure that they are able to lead a normal life to the best of her ability. But often she is unable to offer them even the most basic of things:

“Not being able to work, it cripples you... As a parent, you feel that you are not good enough... When you have kids, their daily needs – there are things that you need to give them. You can't give them the whole world, but you have to provide them with at least the basics. If I were working, I would not have to go to charity shops all the time to get hand-me-downs for my kids.

They have lots of school trips and the least you pay is £10 – that is if the trip is in town. I have to pay because if I don't pay, the child doesn't go. In a class of 25 kids, if your child doesn't go on a trip because you haven't paid the £10, how would that child feel?

They compare themselves to friends and it is hard to deal with. My daughter once said that she wished she could live with her friend because they can afford all sorts of toys – she doesn't want to live with [me] because I say no to so many things. But those words coming out of any child's mouth are painful to any parent... Does she understand? Does she understand that if we buy a toy for £15, these £15 can buy us milk, bread, and basic essentials instead – the toy will not fill your stomach, but the food will.”

Rose told us that she is desperate for her children to be proud of her, and to be a role model for them, but she is scared of the example that she is being forced to set:

“[My children] ask me 'why are you not working?' They expect their parent to work and when they don't see their mum working, they want to know why: Are you different?

Sometimes, they come home from school and they ask me 'how was your day?' Nothing - I don't have anything to tell them. I worry that seeing me not doing anything, it will make them lazy. When they see me not doing anything... they see me sitting down doing nothing, they might think this is a way of life.

They are happy when I take them with me to Oxfam [where Rose volunteers]. They sit there watching me work at the till and they like it. They don't know that I am not being paid but they see me at work – so I need to lead by example... The role is to be the model that you want your children to be – I want to work so they appreciate what work, earning money, means.”

Rose wants to be given the opportunity to be productive, and to show what she is capable of doing. She told us that having the right to work would make the waiting more bearable:

“I want to work – I don't want any more hand-me-downs. I want to enjoy the reward of my sweat. I don't want to rely on the Government's benefits – I want to work so I can prove myself to my children.”

# SURVEY RESULTS

In August and September 2018, Lift the Ban coalition member organisations across the UK carried out a survey with 246 people who have direct experience of the asylum process. The survey asked them about their education and employment history, pre-arrival knowledge of UK asylum policy, reliance on food banks, and work aspirations.



**94%** of respondents said that they would like to work if they were given permission to do so.<sup>i</sup>

Only three people said that they would rather not work. One of these people told us that they would first like to study, though there may be a range of reasons why people seeking asylum may not want or be able to work, including specific health problems, disabilities, or childcare responsibilities.



**52%** of survey respondents told us that they had used a **food bank** at some point in the past year.<sup>ii</sup>

**72%** of people (178/246) told us that they had **not known prior to arriving in the UK** that people seeking asylum are not allowed to work.



Only 16% (39/246) told us that they had been aware of this before their arrival.<sup>iii</sup>

**74%** of respondents told us that they had secondary-level education or higher.

**37%** of those surveyed held an **undergraduate or postgraduate university degree**, which falls just short of the percentage of the total UK population classed as graduates (42%).<sup>iv</sup>



Of the **36 people surveyed who had applied for permission to work** after waiting for an asylum decision for over 12 months, **only 8 were granted permission**. Only **2 of these were able to find jobs** in reality. Survey respondents who had not found employment told us that this was because of the restrictions imposed by the Shortage Occupation List.

i Of the total number of survey responses (246), 27 responses that did not include this question (i.e. the question was not posed as not included on the survey version) have been discounted. The remaining 10 respondents either left their answers blank or answered 'Don't Know'.

ii Nineteen of the total number of survey responses (246) were discounted as the question had been removed from the versions of the survey they completed. Of the remaining 227 responses, 119 people replied that they had used a foodbank; 99 responded that they had not. The remaining respondents either answered 'Don't Know/Can't Remember' or left the response blank.

iii The remaining 12% (29/246) either answered 'Don't Know/Can't Remember' or did not answer the question.

iv Office for National Statistics (2017) 'Graduates in the UK labour market: 2017', available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/graduatesintheuklabourmarket/2017>

### 3.3 FULFILLING PEOPLE'S POTENTIAL

Of those who responded to our survey, 94% said that they would like to work if given permission to do so.<sup>38</sup> Only three people said that they would rather not work; one of these people told us that they would first like to study, though there may be a range of reasons why people seeking asylum may not want or be able to work, including specific health problems, disabilities, or childcare responsibilities. Indeed, the right to work must not mean an obligation to work.

On the whole, people told us that they find it particularly upsetting that they are unable to put their skills to use whilst they are waiting for a decision on their asylum claim. One focus group participant, for instance, told us:

“ I’m a midwife, and here I am wasting away. When my services are well needed out there, and I heard they are now going out of the UK to recruit midwives. And here I am, wasting away.”

Asked about their qualifications, 74% of people told us that they had secondary-level education or higher. Over a third (37%) of those surveyed held an undergraduate or postgraduate university degree, which falls just short of the percentage of the total UK population classed as graduates (42%).<sup>39</sup> Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents were working before they came to the UK,<sup>40</sup> despite the fact that many of their countries of origin have been at war for years, or have some of the world’s lowest employment rates. These findings are consistent with a Refugee Council survey undertaken with Zimbabwean people seeking asylum in 2009, which found that the majority of people surveyed had a high level of education and vocational qualifications.<sup>41</sup> As a result of current policy, the Government is creating a situation whereby people are forced to live in limbo for long periods of time and are unable to put their talents to use. Their many and varied skills are being wasted, at best; at worst, they are being lost.

“ What pains me, is that back at home I used to work for an international NGO... I could afford anything I wanted at the time. But I am here because I need protection in a foreign country.”

Faith, focus group participant



“ [You feel] useless and like all your experience and education is wasted. That’s the feeling I get.”

Elene, focus group participant

In addition to their desire to use their skills, the majority of those we spoke with during the focus groups expressed their wish to provide for themselves and their families, rather than being dependent on others, including the government. Many spoke of the contribution that they would be able to make to the UK economy, should they be given the right to work:

“ If you are able to work, you would contribute to the country, you would pay taxes. Helping the community. You would be independent as well. Let’s assume everyone here [was] working. We would be contributing to the country and paying our tax.”

Esther, focus group participant

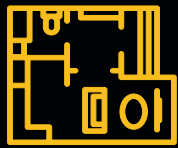
“ Without working you do feel like you are useless... we are getting £37 per week. I’m not comfortable with that. We want to earn our own money. [And] it’s not only to earn money, it’s to keep ourselves busy and not to depend on someone... Sitting at home, it’s stress and depression.”

Mary, focus group participant



# OCCUPATIONS SURVEY

Work histories given by survey participants included:



**INTERIOR DESIGNER.** BARRISTER.

HOTEL MANAGER. **CAR MECHANIC.**



AIRLINE FLIGHT COORDINATOR.

ACCOUNTANT. INSURANCE REPRESENTATIVE.

BANKER. TRAVEL AND TOURISM OPERATOR.

CLERK. PLUMBER. **SOLICITOR.**



SECRETARY.

**FARMER.** CLERICAL WORKER.



SUPERMARKET WORKER. **BUILDER.**

SOCIAL WORKER. SALES EXECUTIVE.

GRAPHIC DESIGNER. SHOP OWNER.

WAITER. CIVIL SERVANT. **JOURNALIST.**



DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY. CASHIER.

TRADER. TELECOMMUNICATIONS ENGINEER.



**INTERPRETER.** CONSTRUCTION WORKER.

SHEPHERD. **RESTAURANT OWNER.**



IMMIGRATION CONTROL OFFICER.

POLITICIAN. **PHARMACIST.**



DRIVER.

CALL CENTRE AGENT.



SEAMSTRESS.

DENTAL HYGIENIST. **BANK TELLER.**

**TAILOR.** BICYCLE RENTAL AGENT.

**TV & DOCUMENTARY DIRECTOR.**



ADMINISTRATOR.

GOLD MINER.

TOWN PLANNER.



**TAXI DRIVER.**

SOLDIER.

ELECTRICIAN.

STATISTICS ASSISTANT. **NURSE.**



**FISHERMAN.** CAR SHOWROOM MANAGER.

CLEANER.



PHARMACEUTICAL ASSISTANT.

MEDICAL LABORATORY ASSISTANT.

**CARTOGRAPHER.** SOFTWARE ENGINEER.

ACCOUNTS EXECUTIVE. **BUSINESSMAN.**



**ENGINEER.** AIRCRAFT TECHNICIAN.

PETROL COMPANY WORKER. COUNSELLOR.

FACTORY



WORKER. **HAIRDRESSER.**



**TEACHER.** PROCUREMENT OFFICER.

# ALEXANDER'S STORY

**Alexander arrived in the UK in January 2017, and claimed asylum on arrival at the airport. In his native country, Belarus, he was a graphic designer, working in advertising and design: "I had a good job and I used to make good money. My parents were very proud of me for my work."**

However, after becoming a candidate for the opposition party, Alexander was threatened by the Government and the secret police. He was forced to flee Belarus and leave his wife and young child behind.

Alexander told us how difficult it has been waiting for a decision on his asylum claim without being able to work:

**"I don't know how to occupy myself. That's why I volunteer, I also attend college... I'm [a graphic designer] but I would really like to work normally and be paid for it because the money is a big problem... I am not sure what will happen to me if I can't work for more years. I am not sure if I will be able to work if I have to wait any longer. My skills and experience can help this country but right now, I don't feel like that because I am not allowed to work to use my skills... I have lost touch with the latest trends and technology because this profession moves so quickly and it changes. Not working in this profession for two years is a very long time – I have fallen behind in this."**

In July 2018, having waited for a decision on his asylum claim for 18 months, Alexander was finally given permission to work. However, due to the time it has taken for him to obtain a National Insurance number, he has so far been unable to do so in practice – and even lost an employment opportunity that had been offered to him.



**"I thought I would get a national insurance number straight away. I started working on my CV. I started looking for jobs on-line and created a LinkedIn account. But after two weeks, I was not as positive. I am told I have to wait six weeks.... Employers say: 'you have good experience, but we can't give you a job without a national insurance number.'**

**I lost a chance to work for company that I met with – they wanted me to start and I felt that I could do this job and create something new for them, but I lost this chance now."**

Alexander told us that he looks around himself and sees the devastating impacts of the Government's policies towards people seeking asylum all the time:

**"For people seeking asylum, money is only one motivator for work. Working also allows people to have a clear mind and a clear vision for the future. I don't have that now – I don't have a clear vision for the future."**

**People wait for so long to work and then when they can, they just don't know how to do it or why they need to do it. People lose motivation after a long wait, it is difficult to return to a positive state of mind when you've been in the system so long. People after a while don't understand how and why they must return to a normal life. Mentally, this destroys you."**

## 3.4 ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

**There is considerable evidence to suggest a strong and positive link between employment and mental health. Data from the NHS, for instance, shows that employed adults are less likely to have a common mental health problem than those who are economically inactive or unemployed.<sup>42</sup>**

Research also suggests a link between unemployment and depression, with the latter worsening when people lack the support networks provided by friends and families.<sup>43</sup> Many people claiming asylum will be in this position, having left their support networks behind when fleeing their countries. Even after arriving in the UK, people may be 'dispersed' to an unknown part of the country – thus moving them away from friends, acquaintances, community organisations and specialist support services – if they are unable to pay for their own accommodation and require support from the Home Office to avoid being left destitute. Indeed, research into mental health outcomes in people seeking asylum has shown that unemployed people in the asylum system were more than twice as likely to have major depressive disorder.<sup>44</sup> Another study undertaken in Australia in 2013 with 29 people seeking asylum, who had no right to work, found that:

**“When our interviewees were asked to identify the biggest challenges they faced now they were living in the community, not having the right to work was the most common answer... Being without the right to work creates forced unemployment... Even though many of those we interviewed were trying to structure their days with some of the very few activities available and affordable to them, spending waking hours with very little to do was compounding the mental distress of their other major concerns.”**

Similarly, during recent research undertaken in the UK by Refugee Action into the experiences of people going through the asylum system, being deprived of the right to work was identified as one of the main challenges for people waiting for a decision on their asylum claim.<sup>45</sup> Giving people the right to work could therefore go some way to improving the mental health outcomes of those going through the asylum process.

**“[It is good to work] because you go out and your mind is busy. If I stay home for a long time, it is not good and I think about bad things.”**

**Naza, focus group participant**



## PETER'S STORY



**Peter arrived in the UK from the Middle East four years ago, and claimed asylum. During the two years he waited for a decision on his asylum claim, Peter told us that he felt isolated and lonely, rejected by others because of the fact that he was claiming asylum and wasn't working or studying.**

**“ I was completely on my own. I [wanted] to build connections with people but it isn't that easy. Nobody wants to know you. It is difficult when you're an asylum seeker, because there is nowhere to go... Sometimes, you feel like you're invisible. Even though I speak very good English, it was not easy to communicate with people. Because the first question people ask is 'what are you studying or where do you work?' and I was doing neither. I couldn't lie - so I would say neither. And that would be the end of the conversation.”**

Peter told us that while he was waiting for his decision, having too much time on his hands meant that he had little to do but think of the past and re-live his traumas:

**“ It becomes a vicious circle. It just carries on and on - you become depressed and you re-live your experience and because you re-live your experience, you are depressed.”**

When he found out from his solicitor that he had been granted refugee status, Peter couldn't stop screaming with excitement. But he soon realised how hard it would be to make the transition from two years of sitting around and waiting, to depending on himself again.

**“ I was done with one battle and I entered a new one. Things were still uncertain for me.”**

Peter is a qualified teacher and hoped to be able to find work quickly, but for months he struggled to find a job and instead spent his time volunteering, whilst applying everywhere he could. One year on he finally found a job, but even now he worries that in future the gap in his CV may have a negative impact on his employment prospects:

**“ If I was working earlier, I think I would not have suffered as much. I think people should be given the chance to work - they can build a CV for themselves so that once they have refugee status, they can get into paid employment straight away... the gap in the CV is really bad. I cannot fill that - I have lost that period of time.”**

Peter told us he can't see the logic in the Government's decision not to allow people to work while they wait for a decision on their asylum claim:

**“ I don't understand: If I don't work I need to claim benefits and if I don't get benefits, then I need to work; but people complain that asylum seekers live on benefits. But there is no other choice if they can't work. So, which one is it?”**

## 3.5 BENEFITING THE UK ECONOMY

**In addition to the human argument for allowing people seeking asylum to work, there is also a compelling financial argument.<sup>46</sup>**

This section sets out the estimated benefits to the UK economy that could come about as a result of a policy change that allows people to work earlier in the asylum process. We base our estimate on a calculation of the amount that the Government would save by not having to provide subsistence (cash) support to people, plus the extra money received by the exchequer through payroll contributions from income tax and national insurance.<sup>47</sup> These two elements will be the most direct way in which the UK Government could gain financially from such a policy change, though there are of course other, longer-term savings that a more comprehensive calculation could take into consideration.

**We estimate that a change in policy would result in an economic gain of £42.4 million for the UK Government, as a result of additional tax revenues and savings.**

**We arrive at this estimate based on the following:**

- By the end of 2017, 14,306 people – main applicants and dependants – were waiting more than six months for a decision on their initial asylum application, of whom approximately 11,000 are over 18.<sup>48</sup>
- Assuming that a person seeking asylum works full time (37 hours a week)<sup>49</sup> on the national minimum wage, they will pay a total tax and National Insurance contribution of £1,400 per year.<sup>50</sup> If we assume that half of the people who are currently waiting more than six months for a decision on their initial asylum application are able to work full time on the national minimum wage, the Government would therefore receive an extra £7.7 million per year from their tax and National Insurance contributions.

If, meanwhile, people were paid at the current national average wage, the Government would receive an extra £5,745 per person per year in taxable income and National Insurance contributions.<sup>51</sup> In total, even at 50% employment, **the Government would receive an extra £31.6 million per year.**

- While somebody is awaiting a response on their asylum claim, they are eligible for accommodation and/or subsistence (cash) support if they are destitute or are likely to become destitute within 14 days.<sup>52</sup> Support rates are currently set at £37.75 per week,<sup>53</sup> and accommodation costs a minimum of £300 per month to provide.<sup>54</sup> Over a year, therefore, the approximate cost of supporting one person waiting for a decision on their asylum claim is £5,563.

Even if we assume that people may need to retain some kind of accommodation support – given the fact that somebody earning the national minimum wage salary is likely to require assistance with paying for their housing, and people seeking asylum are currently not eligible for housing benefit – the Government could still save £1,963 per year for each person that is moved off subsistence (cash) support and into employment.<sup>55</sup> If we assume, as above, that 50% of people will find employment, **this would amount to savings of £10.8 million per year.**



We arrive at a total estimated gain of £42.4 million for the UK Government by totalling the revenue gained through National Insurance contributions and taxable income of 50% of people paid at the current national average wage, and the savings that the UK Government would make if the same number of people were moved off subsistence (cash) support. If we assume only 50% employment at national minimum wage, meanwhile, savings of over £18 million could still be made; either way, it is clear that a change in policy would result in net gains for the UK Government.

Due to the availability of data, this calculation is only provisional and we would welcome the development of a more detailed costing. Our estimated figure of £42.4 million is based on several assumptions, including the reasonable belief that there are currently very few people seeking asylum in work from the cohort of those waiting for over six months on their initial application.

For want of a better estimate, or any data on employment rates for people seeking asylum (or those who were granted refugee status through the 'asylum route'), we have assumed 50% employment. But even a lower figure would clearly result in net benefits. Due to unavailability of figures, moreover, no calculations have been made of the savings or gains that could be made if people waiting for a decision on further submissions for over six months are taken into account. This means the current assumption we make of 50% employment would represent a lower proportion of the total population that would be eligible to work should there be a change in policy.

Finally, the calculation presented here only shows the short-term benefits, rather than the longer-term savings that will accrue when people are better able to integrate, speak the language, and support themselves.

Despite the caveats given, then, the financial argument for policy change is compelling. Even if only some of those who are eligible to work are able to do so, allowing people to move off asylum support and enter the labour market could result in huge potential savings for the Government that would significantly benefit the UK economy – both in the short and the longer terms.

“Working is contributing to society... So let them give us the right to work, we keep fit, and then pay taxes to the country, and then they don't have to spend their money on us.”

Nadifa, focus group participant

## NET BENEFIT TO THE UK ECONOMY OF A CHANGE IN POLICY



### ■ Low-end estimate

## £9.2 MILLION

If 25% of people who are currently waiting more than six months for a decision on their initial asylum application are able to work full time on the national minimum wage, the Government would receive an extra **£3.85 million per year** from their tax and National Insurance contributions.

If they are moved off subsistence (cash) support but retain support for accommodation, the government would save **£5.39 million per year**.

### ■ Our estimate

## £42.4 MILLION

If 50% of people who are currently waiting more than six months for a decision on their initial asylum application are able to work full time on the national average wage, the Government would receive an extra **£31.6 million per year from their tax and National Insurance contributions**.

If they are moved off subsistence (cash) support but retain support for accommodation, the Government would save **£10.8 million per year**.

### ■ High-end estimate

## £124.4 MILLION

If 100% of people who are currently waiting more than six months for a decision on their initial asylum application are able to work full time on the national average wage, the Government would receive an extra **£63.2 million per year** from their tax and National Insurance contributions.

If they are moved off both subsistence (cash) support and also accommodation support, the Government would save **£61.2 million per year**.



## 3.6 CHALLENGING FORCED LABOUR AND EXPLOITATION

During a speech to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2017, Prime Minister Theresa May set out the UK Government's intention to eradicate forced labour and modern slavery.<sup>56</sup> There is good reason to believe that a change in policy which allows people seeking asylum to work could help in the fight against forced labour. Long periods spent in poverty, without the right to work, make people more vulnerable to exploitation, including exploitative labour.

One recent study that explored experiences of forced labour among people seeking asylum in England found that "the experience of severely exploitative labour, including forced labour, is often unavoidable for refugees and asylum seekers in order to meet the basic needs of themselves and their families."<sup>57</sup> The OECD has also found that legal barriers to employment risk people resorting to informal work.<sup>58</sup> Giving people seeking asylum permission to work earlier in the process may help to tackle this, thus helping to reinforce the Government's efforts to end forced labour and exploitation.

“ One time, this rich-looking man said to me: 'I am assuming you are an asylum seeker. You're a beautiful woman, if you had a man look after you like me, you would look better and be happier.' I said, 'What's that to you?' and left. Imagine if, at that point – at my weakest point in life – I would have said yes to him. What would have happened to me? Would I have been turned into a prostitute or used by different men? But sometimes... there were times, when I needed money, and I would say: 'what if?'"

Faith, focus group participant



## 4. CONCLUSION



### A POPULAR AND EVIDENCE-BASED CASE FOR CHANGE

The Lift the Ban coalition is calling on the UK Government to give people seeking asylum and their adult dependants the right to work:

- ➔ unconstrained by the Shortage Occupation List, and
- ➔ after they have waited six months for a decision on their initial asylum claim or further submission.

A policy change that gave people seeking asylum the right to work would be both pragmatic and popular. There is strong public support for giving people seeking asylum the right to work – with 71% of a wide cross-section of the UK population agreeing that if people were allowed to work after waiting for six months for a decision on their asylum claim, this would help them to better integrate. And lifting the ban could also be beneficial to the UK economy, leading to a potential net gain for the Exchequer of £42.4 million.

People seeking asylum want to work. Currently, they go to enormous lengths to volunteer and study, often walking hours every day to attend courses run by voluntary organisations – because taking the bus could mean that they cannot afford to eat that day. If they had the right to work earlier in their asylum process, people would be better able to live in dignity, fulfil their potential, and have the best possible chance of integration into their new communities.

“ I don't want to sleep. I want to earn money. I want to buy a lot of things but I can't buy them. I get £37 a week and if I want to buy anything I have to save for more than 3 months. I prefer to work. I will be more independent... I will feel more confident because I will have more experience... It's given me more stress. I haven't got any family here to help me; no mum, no dad or sister or brother. Just myself. So I need to earn money. I am thinking about my future. I don't want to sleep. I had dreams in my own country but I couldn't do that because of the war [and the] fighting. But I want to do that here. I have the chance [but] I can't do that if I can't work. When I stay at home alone, I can't stop thinking. I need something to do. I want to do things to make me feel better.”

Survey respondent

## ENDNOTES

- 1 See 'Tier 2 Shortage Occupation List: Government-approved version valid from 19 November 2015', available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/486107/Shortage\\_Occupation\\_List\\_-\\_November\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486107/Shortage_Occupation_List_-_November_2015.pdf).
- 2 The survey was carried out by Lift the Ban coalition member organisations, across the UK. Three focus group discussions were also held with people who have direct experience of the asylum process in London, Manchester, and Nottingham.
- 3 An individual whose asylum claim has been refused or withdrawn, and has exhausted their appeals rights, may submit new evidence to support their claim. This is called a 'further submission'. <https://www.gov.uk/submit-new-evidence-asylum-claim>
- 4 See 'Tier 2 Shortage Occupation List: Government-approved version valid from 19 November 2015', available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/486107/Shortage\\_Occupation\\_List\\_-\\_November\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486107/Shortage_Occupation_List_-_November_2015.pdf).
- 5 Whilst public figures for the numbers of people granted permission to work are not available, the experience of Lift the Ban coalition members – who work with people seeking asylum on a daily basis – suggests that these numbers are extremely low. The results from our survey go some way to supporting this assertion.
- 6 The Home Office defines 'non-straightforward cases' as those "where factors outside of the Home Office's control mean it is not possible to make a decision within 6 months of the claim being lodged, and are therefore not measured against the customer service standard. The internal Home Office guidance document 'Asylum customer service standards: non-straightforward cases' sets out a number of reasons why a case may need to be categorised as non-straightforward. These fall into 7 broad case types: • the claimant claims to be a victim of torture and is awaiting a medico-legal report from 1 of the 2 Home Office recognised providers; • the claimant is pregnant, or has a verified medical condition which hinders progression of the case; • the claimant has a particular vulnerability, such as a mental health condition, which requires careful handling; • the Home Office is awaiting information from another Home Office unit or other government department or agency in order that all the evidence relating to the claimant is available, for example where the claimant is a potential victim of modern slavery; • the claim is identified as one that may fall to be considered by another EU member state under the provisions of the Dublin Regulation; • it would not be appropriate to make a decision on the claim, or cohort of claims, until legal or policy considerations have been resolved; • the claimant has caused delay to the case, for example in not providing supporting documentation or failing to attend their substantive interview." See Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (2017) 'An inspection of asylum intake and casework, April – August 2017' (London, 2017), available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/662769/An\\_inspection\\_of\\_Asylum\\_intake\\_and\\_casework.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662769/An_inspection_of_Asylum_intake_and_casework.pdf)
- 7 HC Deb (23 July 2002) vol. 389, Col. 1041W, available at: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2002-07-23/debates/e78022cc-6428-449a-9ed4-f1596b538b17/AsylumSeekers>
- 8 A systematic review of research into the relationship between labour market access for people seeking asylum and the numbers of asylum applications received, published in 2016, found that not one study reviewed has found a long term correlation between labour market access and destination choice. See Lucy Mayblin and Poppy James (2016) 'Labour market access for asylum seekers', Policy Briefing: 03/16.2, available at: <https://asylumwelfarework.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/is-access-to-the-labour-market-a-pull-factor-for-asylum-seekers-long.pdf>
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid. See also Vaughan Robinson and Jeremy Segrott (2002) 'Understanding the decision-making of asylum seekers', Home Office Research Study 243 (London) and Heaven Crawley (2010) 'Chance or choice? Understanding why asylum seekers come to the UK', British Refugee Council (London), available at: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0001/5702/rcchance.pdf>
- 11 See for instance Roger Zetter, David Griffiths, Silva Ferretti, Martyn Pearl (2003) 'An Assessment of the Impact of Asylum Policies in Europe 1990- 2000', Home Office Research Study 259; Thomas Holzer, Gerald Schneider, and Thomas Widmer (2000) 'The Impact of Legislative Deterrence Measures on the Number of Asylum Seekers in Switzerland (1986-1995)', International Migration Review, 34(4): 1182-216; Eric Neumayer (2005) 'Bogus refugees? The determinants of asylum migration to western Europe', International Studies Quarterly, 49(3): 389- 409.
- 12 The remaining 12% either answered 'Don't Know/Can't Remember' or did not answer the question.
- 13 Mayblin and James (2016) 'Labour market access for asylum seekers', op cit.
- 14 See Section 117B of Immigration Act 2014, Ch. 2, available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/22/section/19/enacted>
- 15 See Immigration Rules part 7, Paragraph 276ADE, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-part-7-other-categories>
- 16 Government of Ireland Department of Justice and Equality website, 'Permission to access the labour market', available at: <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/labour-market-access>
- 17 See Article 15 of Directive 2013/33/EU.
- 18 'Adapted from the Asylum Information Database reception conditions comparator, available at: <https://www.asylumineurope.org/comparator/reception>
- 19 See Asylum Information Database country report for Spain, available at: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/spain>
- 20 See Asylum Information Database country report for Belgium, available at: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/belgium>
- 21 See evidence from the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, No.074, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 28 September 2017, available at: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/SECU/meeting-74/evidence>
- 22 Government of Canada (2018) 'Ministers Hussen, Garneau and Goodale provide an update on progress regarding asylum seekers in Quebec and announced new outreach initiatives in Nigeria', News release, 7 May, available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2018/05/ministers-hussen-garneau-and-goodale-provided-an-update-on-progress-regarding-asylum-seekers-in-quebec-and-announced-new-outreach-initiatives-in-ni.html>
- 23 Government of Canada (2018) 'Members of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Irregular Migration meet to discuss latest influx', News release, 19 April, available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2018/04/members-of-the-ad-hoc-intergovernmental-task-force-on-irregular-migration-meet-to-discuss-latest-influx.html>
- 24 The Danish Immigration Service (2018) 'Conditions asylum seekers must meet in order to work', available at: <https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/Words-and-concepts/US/Housing/Conditions-asylum-seekers-must-meet-in-order-to-work>
- 25 See Martin Ledstrup and Marie Larsen (2018) 'From refugee to employee: work integration in rural Denmark', Forced Migration Review (58): 14-16, available at: <http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/ledstrup-larsen.pdf> 26 HM Government (2018) 'Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper: Building stronger, more united communities', available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/696993/Integrated\\_Communities\\_Strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696993/Integrated_Communities_Strategy.pdf)
- 27 Alice Bloch (2008) 'Refugees in the UK labour market: The conflict between economic integration and policy-led labour market restriction', Journal of Social Policy, 37(1): 21-36.
- 28 For relevant literature see Lucy Mayblin (2014) 'Asylum, welfare and work: Reflections on research in asylum and refugee studies', International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy 34(5/6): 375-391. A survey of 207 migrants undertaken in 2018 by Migrants Resource Centre asked people where they learn the most about British community and values. By far the most popular response was 'in the workplace'; 43% of survey respondents chose this reply, whereas the second most popular responses – 'in your neighbourhood and community' and 'through mainstream media' – received only 15% of responses each. See Migrants Resource Centre (2018) 'Integrated Communities Strategy: MRC submission of evidence and response to the government green paper consultation', available at: [https://www.migrantsresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/MRC-response-Integrated-Communities-Strategy\\_final1.pdf](https://www.migrantsresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/MRC-response-Integrated-Communities-Strategy_final1.pdf)
- 29 Language learning appears to be more successful when the learner has a particular motivation (for instance employment) to learn. See for instance David Lasagabaster, Aintzane Doiz and Juan Manuel Sierra (eds.) (2014) 'Motivation and Foreign Language Learning: From theory to practice' (John Benjamins Publishing: Philadelphia). Research also shows that unemployed adult students face obstacles – including to language learning – "because they feel emotionally and personally detached from a society that has rejected them, leaving them professionally and economically inactive." See Sergio Bernal Castaneda (2017) 'Lifelong learning and limiting factors in second language acquisition for adult students in post-obligatory education', Cogent Psychology 4(1).



- 30 See OECD (2017) 'Finding their Way: Labour market integration of refugees in Germany' (OECD, Paris), available at: <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/Finding-their-Way-Germany.pdf> ; also OECD (2014) 'International Migration Outlook 2014' (OECD, Paris), available at: [https://hliadacipes.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/OECD\\_IMO-20141.pdf](https://hliadacipes.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/OECD_IMO-20141.pdf) ; also OECD (2016) 'Making Integration Work: Refugees and others in need of protection' (OECD, Paris), available at: [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/making-integration-work-humanitarian-migrants\\_9789264251236-en#page69](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/making-integration-work-humanitarian-migrants_9789264251236-en#page69)
- 31 The 2018-2022 New Scots Integration Strategy, for instance, talks of the importance of integration from Day One: "The key principle of the New Scots strategy is that refugees and asylum seekers should be supported to integrate into communities from day one of arrival, and not just once leave to remain has been granted." Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/01/7281>
- 32 Moritz Marbach, Jens Hainmueller and Dominik Hangartner (2018) 'The Long-Term Impact of Employment Bans on the Economic Integration of Refugees', *Science Advances* 4(9).
- 33 Jens Hainmueller, Dominik Hangartner and Duncan Lawrence (2016) 'When lives are put on hold: Lengthy asylum processes decrease employment among refugees', *Science Advances* 2(8).
- 34 Refugee Action (2016) 'Let Refugees Learn: Challenges and opportunities to improve language provision to refugees in England', available at: <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/letrefugeeslearnfullreport.pdf> . Fully-funded courses are sometimes provided at the discretion of colleges.
- 35 Jill Rutter and Rosie Carter (2018) 'National Conversation on Immigration: Final report', available at: <http://www.britishfuture.org/articles/national-conversation-final-report/>
- 36 See Office for National Statistics (2014) 'Income, Expenditure and Personal Well-being, 2011/12', available at: [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160107224013/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766\\_365207.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160107224013/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_365207.pdf)
- 37 Nineteen of the total number of survey responses (246) were discounted as the question had been removed from the versions of the survey they completed. Of the remaining 227 responses, 119 people replied that they had used a foodbank; 99 responded that they had not. The remaining respondents either answered 'Don't Know/Can't Remember' or left the response blank.
- 38 Of the total number of survey responses (246), 27 responses that did not include this question (i.e. the question was not posed as not included on the survey version) have been discounted. The remaining 10 respondents either left their answers blank or answered 'Don't Know'.
- 39 Office for National Statistics (2017) 'Graduates in the UK labour market: 2017', available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/graduatesintheuklabourmarket/2017>
- 40 This percentage only includes the 215 respondents who told us that they had been 18 or over when they arrived in the UK.
- 41 See Lisa Doyle (2009) '"I hate being idle": Wasted skills and enforced dependence among Zimbabwean asylum seekers in the UK', *Refugee Council*, available at: [https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/blogs/3693\\_i\\_hate\\_being\\_idle](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/blogs/3693_i_hate_being_idle)
- 42 See the 2007 and 2014 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Surveys, which look at the mental health and wellbeing of people in England, available at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/adult-psychiatric-morbidity-survey> . Also see Sally McManus, Paul Bebbington, Rachel Jenkins and Traolach Brugha (eds.) (2016) 'Mental health and wellbeing in England: Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014' (NHS Digital: Leeds), available at: [https://files.digital.nhs.uk/pdf/q/3/mental\\_health\\_and\\_wellbeing\\_in\\_england\\_full\\_report.pdf](https://files.digital.nhs.uk/pdf/q/3/mental_health_and_wellbeing_in_england_full_report.pdf)
- 43 Margaret Linn, Richard Sandifer and Shayna Stein (1985) 'Effects on unemployment on mental and physical health', *American Journal of Public Health* 75(5): 502-506.
- 44 Debbie Hocking, Gerard Kennedy and Suresh Sundram (2015) 'Mental Disorders in Asylum Seekers: The Role of the Refugee Determination Process and Employment', *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 203(1): 28-32.
- 45 Refugee Action (2018) 'Waiting in the Dark: How the asylum system dehumanises, disempowers and damages', available at: <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Waiting-in-the-Dark-Report.pdf>
- 46 Lucy Mayblin and Poppy James have previously calculated asylum support savings if people seeking asylum were given the right to work, but did not include income tax and National Insurance contributions. See Poppy James and Lucy Mayblin (2016) 'Restricting the Economic Rights of Asylum Seekers: Cost Implications', Working Paper 11/16.1, available at: <https://asylumwelfarework.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/welfare-costs-working-paper.pdf>
- 47 The calculations used in this section were produced by Global Future.
- 48 Although figures are available on people waiting for a decision on their asylum application up to Q2 2018, the latest figures that provide age-disaggregated data are those up to Q4 2017. We arrived at a figure of 11,000 by taking the total number of asylum applications from people under 18 years old in 2017 (8,230) and calculating this as a proportion of the total number of asylum applications in 2017 (34,435). Twenty-four percent of asylum applicants in 2017 were under 18. Assuming that a similar percentage of those waiting over 6 months would be under 18, we calculated that 10,873 of those waiting for a decision for over six months would be over 18, and then rounded this off to 11,000 (24% of 14,306 – which was the number of people waiting for an initial decision for over 6 months at Q4 2017 – is 3,433. 14,306 - 3,433 = 10,873 ≈ 11,000).
- 49 Full time working hours are not clearly specified in law and can be anything over 35 hours. However, latest ONS data pegs this at 37 hours. See Office for National Statistics (2018) 'Average actual weekly hours of work for full-time workers (seasonally adjusted)', available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/timeseries/ybuy/lms>
- 50 Minimum wage in this case is taken as £7.83 per hour, since most asylum applications in 2017 were received from those aged 25 and above (see Immigration Statistics on the gov.uk website, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2018/how-many-people-do-we-grant-asylum-or-protection-to#unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children> ). This would give annual earnings of £15,000, giving a taxable income of £3000 at 20% tax rate, equalling an annual tax of £620. Similarly, for the same level of earnings, at the NI rate of 12% would give an annual national insurance payment of £780. Thus, overall tax and NI = £1400.
- 51 Latest ONS statistics show that the median gross weekly earnings ('average wage') for full time employees is £550. See <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings/2017provisionaland2016revisedresults#average-earnings> . This would give annual earnings of £28,600, giving a taxable income of £16,750 at 20% tax rate, equalling an annual tax of £3,350. Similarly, for the same level of earnings, the National Insurance rate of 12% would give an annual national insurance payment of £2,395. Thus, overall tax and NI = £5,745.
- 52 See Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, section 95, available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/33/contents>
- 53 See 'Asylum Support' on the gov.uk website, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get>
- 54 Accommodation support to people seeking asylum is provided by private firms who are contracted by the Home Office. Serco, one of the largest providers of asylum accommodation and support, reported in 2016 that they receive £300 per month from the Home Office to provide housing support to one person, although their real costs average £450 per person See Alan Travis (2017) 'Value of asylum housing contracts doubles after criticism of conditions', *The Guardian*, 23 November, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/nov/23/value-of-asylum-housing-contracts-doubles-after-criticism-of-conditions>
- 55 Given that people seeking asylum are currently not eligible for mainstream benefits, housing benefit will not be available to them. Many people in work are unable to afford housing costs without extra assistance, and this is likely to be the case for people seeking asylum who are given permission to issue and find employment. Other countries have addressed this issue in a range of ways; in the Netherlands, for instance, if people seeking asylum who are staying in state-run reception facilities find employment, they are requested to contribute a certain amount of money towards their accommodation costs. In this case, where somebody is working, it is unlikely that the state would take on the entire cost of their accommodation. For the sake of simplicity, however, we assume here that the entire cost would continue to rest with the UK government.
- 56 See 'PM speech to UNGA on modern slavery: 'behind these numbers are real people'', available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-to-unga-on-modern-slavery-behind-these-numbers-are-real-people>
- 57 Hannah Lewis et al. (2013) *Precarious lives: Experiences of forced labour among refugees and asylum seekers in England*, Research Report, University of Leeds.
- 58 OECD (2016) 'Making Integration Work', op cit.



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