

# Myth Buster

Be informed...  
Migration Matters



# 10

## About Myth Buster

This Myth Buster was produced by the Newcastle City Wide Asylum Seeker / Refugee Support Group: A group of statutory and voluntary sector organisations who have been working collaboratively in the field of migration since 1999. Much of what is printed in the media and elsewhere about migration is simply untrue. Here are some facts that might make you see things differently. For more information please go to: [www.cityofsanctuary.org](http://www.cityofsanctuary.org)

## THE NORTH EAST IS 'FLOODED' WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS

### IS IT REALLY? THE FIGURES MAY SURPRISE YOU

The North East has a population of over 2.6 million people. There are less than 2,400 asylum seekers here; they represent less than 0.08% of the total population of the region. At the time of writing, official statistics show that migration to the UK is in decline.

At the end of March 2013 there were 2,378 asylum seekers in our region, with around a third living in Tyne and Wear and two thirds in Tees Valley.

1. Middlesbrough	818
2. Stockton-on-Tees	632
3. Newcastle	357
4. Sunderland	193
5. Gateshead	159
6. Hartlepool	113
7. North Tyneside	65
8. South Tyneside	36
9. Redcar and Cleveland	5

(Numbers of individuals supported by the Home Office. Source: Jomast, April 2013)

## THEY'RE HERE ILLEGALLY

### NO. WE ALL HAVE A RIGHT TO SEEK ASYLUM

International law states that anyone has the right to apply for asylum in another country and remain there until the authorities have assessed their claim. There is no such thing as an 'illegal' or 'bogus' asylum seeker.

The burden is on the person seeking asylum to prove and evidence "a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion"

(1951 UN Convention on Refugees)

The UK asylum system offers this protection but is strictly controlled and complex.

## THEY DON'T WANT TO WORK AND DON'T CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMY

### THE LAW WON'T LET THEM!

Many asylum seekers are skilled and want to work and contribute, but the law prevents this until their asylum claim has been decided, which can take many months. After this, many refugees contribute strongly to the economic success of the country.

## THEY ALL WANT TO COME TO BRITAIN

### NO, THEY JUST WANT TO BE SAFE

People fleeing danger in their own country simply want safety. In fact, it is the poorest countries in the world, often those bordering war and crisis zones, which accept the largest number of refugees.

Most asylum seekers do not choose their destination country. When fleeing persecution, it isn't the first thing on an individual's mind. Those with some choice often come to the UK because they have friends or family here.

A Home Office report concluded that there was absolutely no evidence to suggest that asylum seekers had a detailed knowledge of the UK welfare benefits system.

(Understanding decision-making of asylum seekers, UK Home Office report)

## THEY TAKE OUR HOMES

### NOT TRUE

Asylum seekers are not put on housing waiting lists; they're housed under a separate system and can't choose where they live. The Home Office allocate asylum seekers to accommodation which will usually be a specialist hostel or a hard-to-let empty property.

## EUROPEAN COMPARISON

In 2012, the UK ranked 11 out of the main 15 EU countries in terms of asylum applicants per head of population. The UK received a total of 27,500 applicants (including dependents).

France, Germany and Sweden all received more applications than the UK - 60% of the total - with France and Germany both receiving more than 60,000 applicants each.

Source: UNHCR

## WHAT THEY RECEIVE

### FACT

A typical asylum seeker has to live on £36.62 per week - just over £5 per day. That's significantly below the poverty line, and half of the payment to an individual on jobseekers allowance.

## ASYLUM SEEKERS MEAN HIGHER COUNCIL TAX

### ABSOLUTELY NOT

Asylum seekers are looked after by central government, not local councils. No money from Council Tax is spent on housing asylum seekers. There's no evidence that areas with higher asylum seeking or migrant populations have correspondingly high council tax rates.

## BRITAIN IS A SOFT TOUCH

### NOT TRUE

Think about how you would feel having to leave your country very quickly to go to a place where you have no family, friends and little knowledge of the system. People fleeing their own country are usually very frightened, often leaving everything they know because their own and their families' lives are in danger.

Seeking asylum is never an easy option, and on reaching a place of sanctuary in the UK, all asylum seekers are:

- fingerprinted (even children)
- photographed
- security checked
- issued with ID cards

### All must

- report at regular intervals to immigration reporting centres

### All can be

- detained at any point during their asylum application (including children and pregnant women)



CITY OF SANCTUARY



# SO, WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY...



## Asylum Seeker

Someone who is fleeing persecution in their homeland, has arrived in another country, made themselves known to the authorities and exercised the legal right to apply for asylum.

## Refugee

Someone whose asylum application has been successful and who is allowed to stay in another country having proved they would face persecution in their home country. Refugees have the same rights as permanent residents of the UK.

## Migrant

A person who moves from one country to another for the primary purpose of work or study, whether permanently or temporarily. Many of these migrants have arrived from other European Union states, as they are entitled to do under the European Treaty.

## THE UK TAKES MORE THAN ITS FAIR SHARE OF MIGRANTS

### THE UK EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IS NOT REMARKABLE WHEN COMPARED WITH OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES

The UK operates in a global economy where people will migrate to and from areas responding to the supply and demand needs of the labour market.

Not only has the UK's immigration grown in line with world migration, but the UK has a smaller proportion of immigrants and lower rates of net immigration than the US, Canada, Australia and several large European countries.

Less than 3% of the world's migrants live in the UK compared with 5% in Germany and 20% in the US.

(Finney and Simpson, 'Sleepwalking to segregation'? Challenging myths about race and migration 2009)

Many of the migrants arriving in the UK from Eastern European countries during the economic boom of the early 21st century have since returned home

## WHAT DO MIGRANT WORKERS CONTRIBUTE TO THE UK ECONOMY?

### MUCH MORE THAN YOU MIGHT THINK

In 2011, migrants paid 37% more in taxes than was spent on the public services that they received.

Migrant workers pay income tax and National Insurance contributions. According to the Home Office, migrants and refugees made a net contribution of about £3 billion to the UK economy – that's worth 1p on income tax.

The UK has an ageing population as a result of declining birth rates and the fact that people are living longer. Migrant workers are needed to ensure that there is a sufficient skilled workforce to fill available jobs, especially after the recession, and pay the taxes that will fund pensions in the future.

(Britain's Immigrants: an economic profile IPPR)

## THEY'RE TAKING OUR JOBS

### NOT TRUE

Migrant workers move to areas where there are vacancies, and they are filling vacancies where there are skills shortages.

Under the new 'points based' system, migrants from outside the EU are only permitted to take jobs where there are recognised skill shortages and where they can prove before they enter the UK that they have qualifications, skills and abilities, and are sponsored by an employer.

The North East has a long history of recruiting workers from abroad, and as many as one in four businesses depend on migrant workers to stay in business. This includes the National Health Service with all the benefits that this provides to citizens of the North East.

(UKBA; IPPR)

## MIGRANTS BRING CRIME TO OUR STREETS

### THERE'S NO EVIDENCE

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) say that offending rates among migrant communities are in line with the general population.

However, migrants are more likely to be victims of crime, suffering harassment in the community and discrimination in the work place.

## MIGRANTS ARE GIVEN PREFERENTIAL ACCESS TO SOCIAL HOUSING

### IT'S JUST NOT TRUE

Recent research commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission found no evidence of migrants being given preferential access to social housing.

Pressure on housing is caused by changing household structures (the trend for smaller household numbers and larger houses) rather than population growth through immigration.

## MIGRANT WORKERS ARE DRAINING THE REGION'S PUBLIC SERVICES

### NO - QUITE THE OPPOSITE!

Migrants are more likely to be young, healthy and well qualified, and contribute more to the tax and benefits system than they receive.

Far from acting as a drain on public services, new migrants help to deliver vital services in areas such as social care, education, construction, and particularly in the health service.

## THEY'RE ONLY HERE FOR THE BENEFITS...

### NO ...MIGRANTS ARE LESS LIKELY TO CLAIM WELFARE BENEFITS AND LIVE IN SOCIAL HOUSING THAN PEOPLE BORN IN THE UK

National Insurance data shows that migrant workers overwhelmingly come to the UK to work, not to claim benefits.

Migrant workers are often highly educated people – more than a third left full time education after the age of 21 – twice as many as in the UK population. Despite higher education and skill levels, their wages are substantially lower than UK born workers.

(Migration Observatory 2012)

