

Sanctuary in Parliament 2018: Towards a Fairer System

Quick Policy Guide

What are the issues?

After fleeing war, torture and persecution in their countries of origin, many people will face ongoing hardships in the UK while stating their claim for asylum. We are proposing three reforms which would ameliorate those hardships. Our priority areas are:

- **Work:** People seeking asylum in the UK are effectively banned from working. This forced inactivity is detrimental to self-esteem and mental health, increases the difficulty of integration for those who are eventually permitted to stay, and places an entirely unnecessary cost on the public purse.
- **Refugee Family Reunion:** Adults who have been granted refugee protection can sponsor their children, spouse or partner to come and join them, but are unable to sponsor other family members. Separated child refugees are not allowed under the Immigration Rules to sponsor any family relatives to join them, leaving them isolated and without support.
- **An end to indefinite immigration detention:** Currently, there is no time limit on detention for immigration purposes in the UK. When people, including those refused asylum, are detained, they do not know when they will be released, causing extreme distress and severely damaging individuals' mental wellbeing. The system is proven to be both ineffective, and expensive, with over 50% of people detained being eventually released.

What are we proposing and why?

The right to work should be granted to any person waiting for longer than six months for a decision. That permission should no longer be limited to jobs on the Government's restrictive Shortage Occupation List.

This would **provide people with a route out of poverty**, would **reduce the cost of the asylum support system**, and would **help aid integration** for those who are eventually permitted to stay. Contrary to arguments made by the Government, there is **no evidence to support the claim that such changes would act as a 'pull factor'** and increase the number of people claiming asylum in the UK

Family reunion rules should be extended, so that refugees can sponsor their parents, and their siblings and adult children up to the age of 25 to join them in the UK. Legal aid should be reintroduced for these cases.

This would provide a **safe and legal route** for people to come to the UK, prevent and ameliorate **mental health problems** and provide **cost savings**, for example meaning that some unaccompanied children would not have to live in Local Authority Care.

A 28 day time-limit should be placed on detention for immigration purposes. No-one should be detained indefinitely, without knowing when they will be released.

This would prevent a lot of **human suffering**, and drastically reduce the UK's use of immigration detention both in scale and length, promoting more **robust decision making** and resulting in substantial **cost savings**, due to a reduction in the number of people detained.

For a full policy briefing see the [City of Sanctuary website](#)

#AFairerSystem