

10 WAYS FOR CITIZENS TO
SAVE SANCTUARY



Independent Asylum Commission
CONDUCTING A NATIONWIDE REVIEW OF THE UK ASYLUM SYSTEM
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE **CITIZEN** ORGANISING FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

The Independent Asylum Commission – in association with the CITIZEN Organising Foundation – between October 2006 and July 2008, conducted the most comprehensive review of the UK asylum system ever undertaken. The twelve Commissioners, chaired by Sir John Waite and Ifath Nawaz, spent eighteen months listening to evidence from all sides of the debate and all parts of the country, through public hearings, expert witnesses, individual testimony, an opinion poll, focus groups, People's Commissions and interviews. They have published recommendations that they believe will safeguard people who seek sanctuary here, but also restore public support for sanctuary among the British people.

The Independent Asylum Commission's work is complete – now the CITIZENS for Sanctuary campaign begins the work of transforming the recommendations into reality.

This booklet has been produced by the Independent Asylum Commission and the CITIZENS for Sanctuary campaign to help ordinary citizens, leaders of CITIZEN member organisations and community groups, and all people of goodwill, to begin the transformation of how we treat people seeking sanctuary. The booklet identifies ten of the Independent Asylum Commission's key findings and proposed solutions, and suggests actions for individuals and groups at a local and national level.

We hope that this inspires you to act, and "be the change you want to see in the world."

CONTRIBUTORS

'10 Ways for Citizens to Save Sanctuary' is a CITIZENS for Sanctuary publication in partnership with the Independent Asylum Commission and the CITIZEN Organising Foundation.

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'10 WAYS FOR CITIZENS TO SAVE SANCTUARY' –

This booklet does what it says on the tin! The Independent Asylum Commission made over 180 recommendations, but we have selected ten where ordinary citizens can make a difference and transform some of those recommendations into reality. Whoever you are, wherever you live, you'll find something that you can do to make life better for people who seek sanctuary in the UK.

On each page, this booklet will focus on one issue identified by the Independent Asylum Commission, suggest a solution to the problem, and provide some practical actions for citizens. There are "What can I do" tips, aimed at individual citizens, at local communities, and at changing national policy.

No-one will be able to do every single action, but feel free to pick and choose ideas, and even think of your own.

And if you are inspired by the ideas and want to know more about the practicalities, there are details of each action and contact details for our Projects Organiser (who can help with any enquiries) on our website:

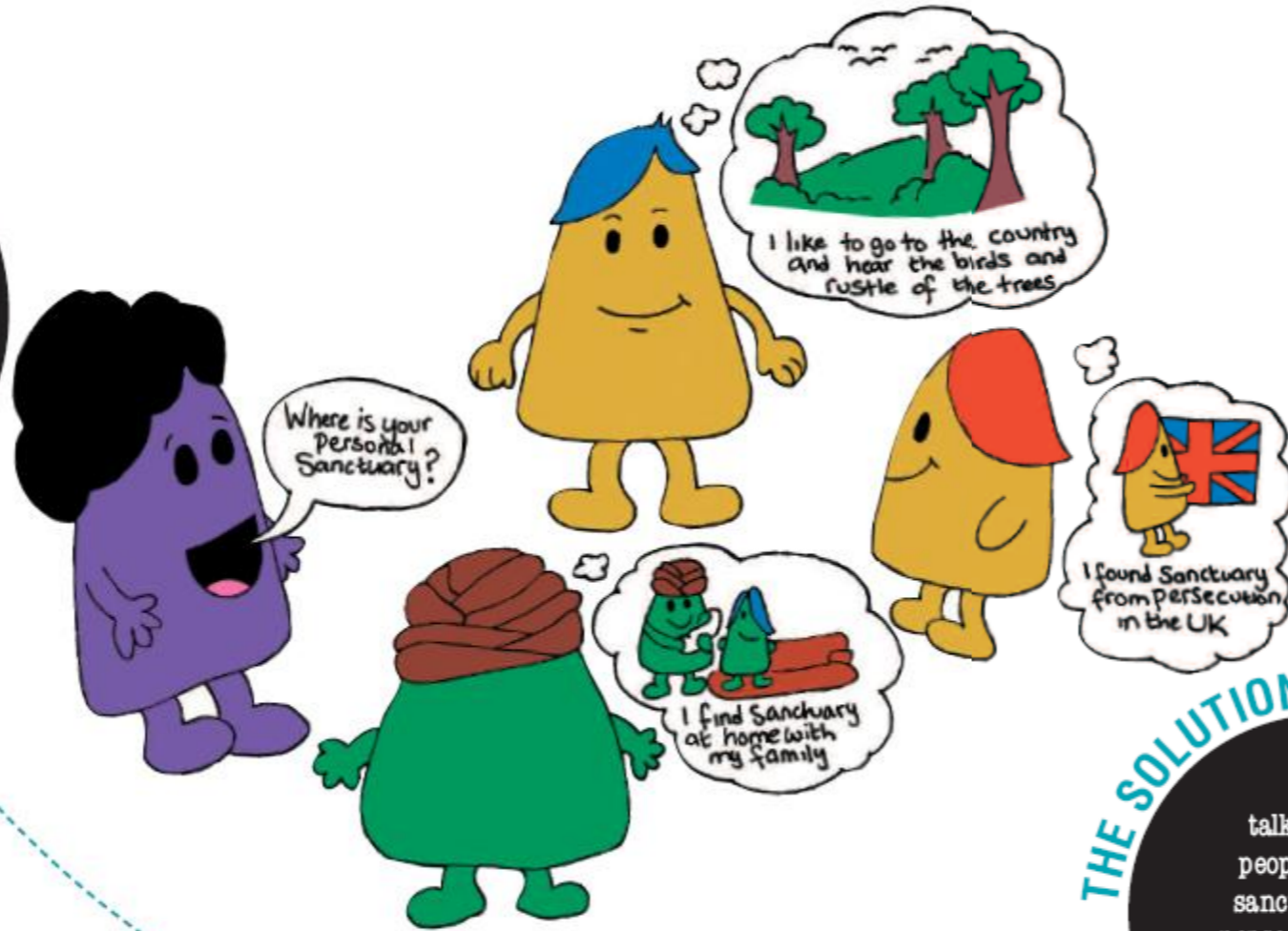
www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk

Your own practical action may not seem much on its own, but put it alongside the small actions of thousands of other citizens and together we will have gone a long way to saving sanctuary.

Let us know how you get on with your actions by emailing sanctuary@cof.org.uk. We would really like to know how you get on, read any stories you would like to share with others, and find out what difference your action made. Don't be shy! We would love to share your success as an encouragement to others to act too!

THE ISSUE

People are confused about the word 'asylum' and do not share a common understanding that it means providing sanctuary to people fleeing persecution.



WHAT CAN I DO?

Try to use the term 'sanctuary' when talking about people fleeing from persecution. People understand 'sanctuary' and 85% of the public think it is a positive word.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Help people understand what it means to be a person seeking sanctuary from persecution by asking them if they have a personal sanctuary.

THE SOLUTION

When talking about people seeking sanctuary from persecution avoid using the term 'asylum'.

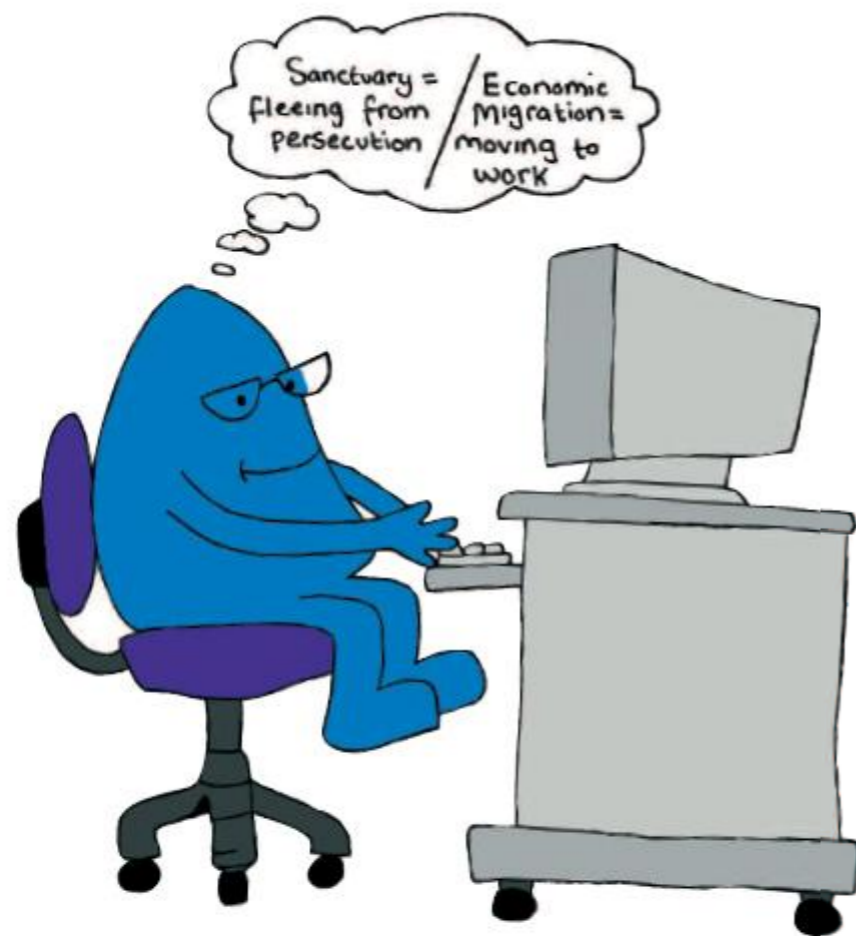
WHAT CAN I DO?

Encourage your local MP, newspaper and council to use alternatives to 'asylum' like 'sanctuary'.

A RECENT OPINION POLL SHOWED THAT MORE PEOPLE ASSOCIATE THE WORD 'ASYLUM' WITH MENTAL ILLNESS THAN WITH PROVIDING A SAFE HAVEN TO THOSE FLEEING PERSECUTION.

THE ISSUE

The British public is confused about the reasons people come to the UK, mixing up people seeking sanctuary from persecution with those who come to work and study.



THE SOLUTION

Use language carefully so that you use the right terms for people who come seeking sanctuary, and for other legitimate reasons such as to study or work.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Spend 10 minutes on the internet or in the library researching the different reasons that people come to the UK, such as to seek sanctuary, study or work.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Email your friends the link to the UN's online game 'Against All Odds' and find out with them what it is like for those who flee persecution.

WHAT CAN I DO?

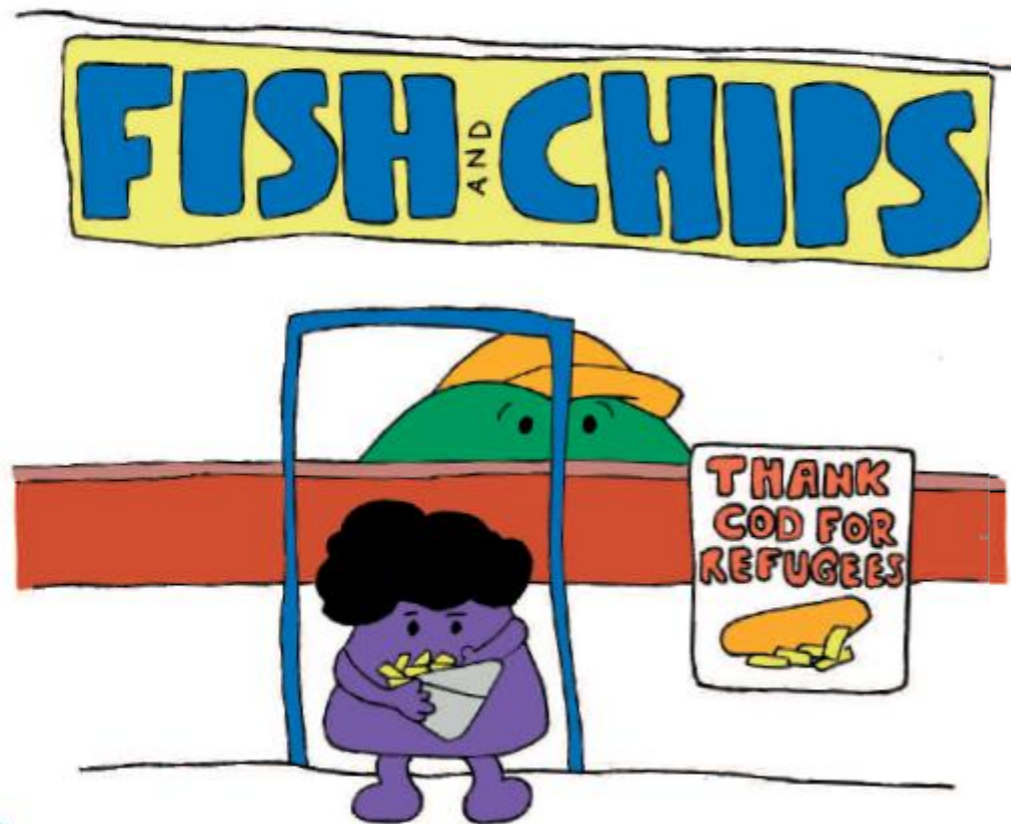
Ask your local newspaper editor to update their style guide to include terms such as sanctuary.

For more information and advice on how to perform these actions visit www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk

69.7% OF THE PUBLIC THINK THAT INFORMATION THEY RECEIVE REGARDING MIGRATION, DOES NOT DISTINGUISH CLEARLY ENOUGH BETWEEN DIFFERENT MIGRANT GROUPS.

THE ISSUE

The public are proud of the UK's history of providing sanctuary to people fleeing persecution, but are unaware of the contribution that refugees have made in shaping UK society.



THE SOLUTION

Celebrate the enormous contribution that refugees have made to the UK.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Read the book 'Bloody Foreigners' by Robert Winder to find examples of some of the contributions that refugees have made to the UK over the centuries.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Encourage your church, mosque or school to hold an event celebrating the contribution of refugees to the UK – or even to your community.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Ask your local chip shop if they will support Refugee Week by displaying a poster or leaflet explaining how fish and chips was brought to the UK by refugees.

WITHOUT REFUGEES, CLASSIC 'BRITISH INSTITUTIONS' SUCH AS FISH AND CHIPS, MARKS AND SPENCER, AND THE MINI WOULD NOT EXIST.

THE ISSUE

Research shows that British people want to provide sanctuary to people fleeing persecution, and that they feel even more positive when they have met a person seeking sanctuary.



THE SOLUTION

Encourage encounters between people seeking sanctuary and UK residents.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Befriend a person who is seeking sanctuary in the UK.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Invite a person who has sought sanctuary to give a presentation on their experiences to your local group, branch or congregation.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Encourage local sports clubs or cultural organisations to participate in events that bring together settled communities and people seeking sanctuary.

For more information and advice on how to perform these actions visit www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk

65.7% OF THE PUBLIC THINK THAT IT IS "VERY" OR "QUITE" IMPORTANT FOR THE UK TO PROVIDE SANCTUARY TO PEOPLE FROM ABROAD WHO ARE FLEEING PERSECUTION.

THE ISSUE

People who live in areas where those seeking sanctuary are placed feel that they do not know enough about who the new arrivals are and why they have come.



WHAT CAN I DO?

Find out the facts about the people seeking sanctuary in your locality.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Encourage your community to join with others locally to form 'sanctuary welcoming groups'. Why not push for your area to become a 'City of Sanctuary' too?

THE SOLUTION

Provide communities with better information about the people seeking sanctuary in their area.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Persuade your local council to provide clear and impartial information about people seeking sanctuary to local residents.

For more information and advice on how to perform these actions visit: www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk

"EFFORTS MUST BE MADE TO PROMOTE TOLERANCE AND NEIGHBOURLINESS TOWARDS THOSE SEEKING SANCTUARY AND ASSIST INTEGRATION AT A LOCAL LEVEL."
INDEPENDENT ASYLUM COMMISSION'S SAVING SANCTUARY REPORT.

THE ISSUE

The public supports the idea that those seeking sanctuary should be allowed to make a contribution through work – but they are prevented from doing so by the government.



THE SOLUTION

Provide people seeking sanctuary with support to increase their skills and prepare them for work in the UK or back home.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Mentor a person seeking sanctuary who works in a similar job to you.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Ask businesses, voluntary and other organisations to set up volunteer internships for people seeking sanctuary to help them and the communities in which they live.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Work with others locally to lobby your MP and Government to allow people seeking sanctuary to work.

For more information and advice on how to perform these actions visit www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk

51% OF THE PUBLIC BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE SEEKING SANCTUARY SHOULD BE ABLE TO WORK WHILE THEIR CLAIM IS BEING PROCESSED. 48% BELIEVE THAT THEY SHOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO WORK IF THEY HAVE HAD THEIR CASE REFUSED BUT ARE UNABLE TO RETURN HOME THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN.

THE ISSUE

The public wants the government to ensure that fair and just decisions are made about who is given sanctuary.



THE SOLUTION

Help make sure that the UK makes the right decisions about who needs sanctuary and who does not.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Adopt one of the civil servants who make the difficult decisions about who needs sanctuary and who does not; encourage them to make fair and just decisions.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Set up a group to serve tea and coffee and provide a friendly welcome to people seeking sanctuary when they visit your local UK Border Agency office.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Volunteer to become a 'McKenzie Friend', supporting people seeking sanctuary when they go to court to have their case heard without a legal representative.

“THE UK SHOULD HAVE A FAIR AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING BODY THAT TAKES PRIDE IN GIVING SANCTUARY TO THOSE WHO NEED IT, AND DENYING IT TO THOSE WHO DO NOT.”
INDEPENDENT ASYLUM COMMISSION'S SAVING SANCTUARY REPORT.

For more information and advice on how to perform these actions visit www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk

THE ISSUE

People believe strongly that those seeking sanctuary should not be made destitute by the government in an attempt to force them out of the country.



WHAT CAN I DO?

Try to live on a £10 charity food parcel for a week, like a person refused sanctuary in the UK. Film your day or write down your thoughts and send it to your local TV station or newspaper.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Find a local scheme that exchanges cash for the supermarket vouchers given to some people seeking sanctuary, or get your church, community group or trade union branch to set one up.

THE SOLUTION

Help end the destitution of people seeking sanctuary.

WHAT CAN I DO?

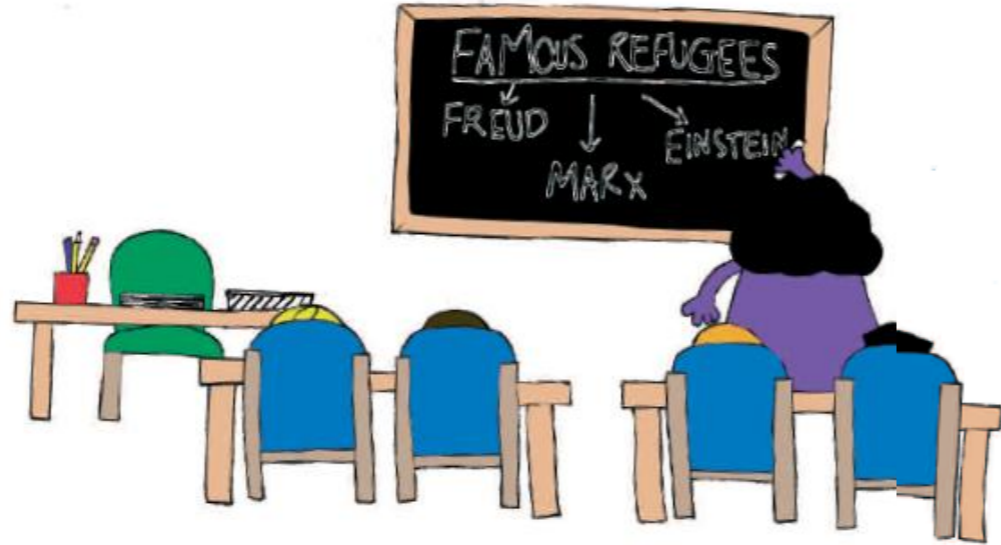
Lobby your local MP to campaign against destitution.

For more information and advice on how to perform these actions visit: www.citizenforsanctuary.org.uk

“THE USE OF DESTITUTION AS A LEVER TO COMPEL REFUSED ASYLUM SEEKERS TO ACCEPT RETURN IS INDEFENSIBLE, IS OPPOSED BY 61% OF THE PUBLIC, AND SHOULD END.”
INDEPENDENT ASYLUM COMMISSION’S SAFE RETURN REPORT.

THE ISSUE

People's primary source of information about people seeking sanctuary is the national media, followed by local media, and word of mouth.



WHAT CAN I DO?

Challenge stereotypes held by friends and colleagues about people seeking sanctuary with positive stories about individuals who have sought sanctuary and made a contribution to the UK.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Write to your local schools and ask them to ensure children leave with an understanding of the importance of the UK's past and present role as a sanctuary for those fleeing persecution.

THE SOLUTION

Show leadership and challenge negative stereotypes of those seeking sanctuary.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Meet with the people who are asking for your vote before the next general election, and ask them to support the recommendations of the Independent Asylum Commission.



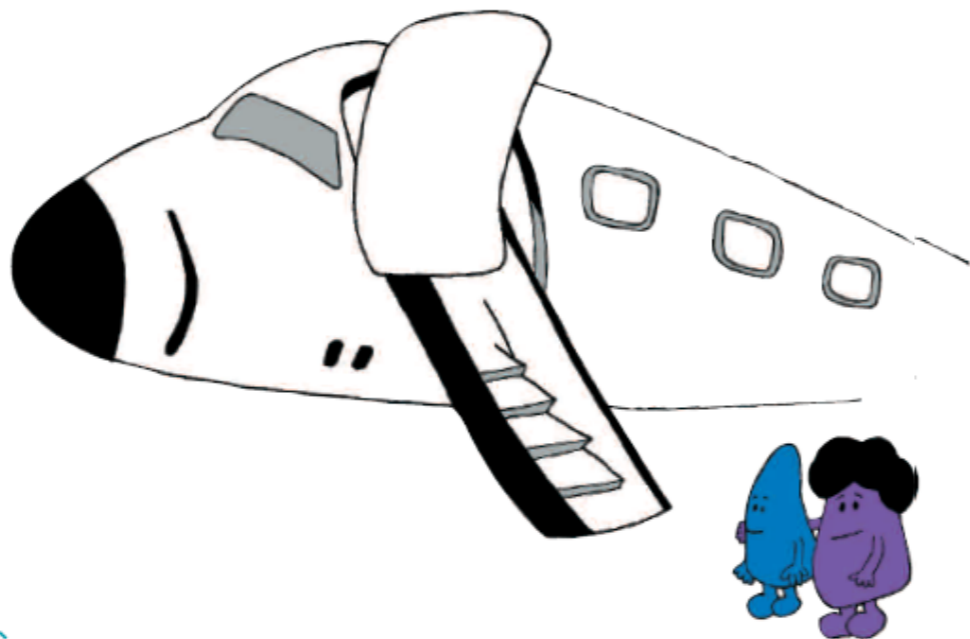
For more information and advice on how to perform these actions visit www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk



“EDITORS, JOURNALISTS AND BROADCASTERS... SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE IMPACT OF THE CONTINUALLY NEGATIVE STORIES ON PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO THOSE SEEKING SANCTUARY, AND ENSURE THAT POSITIVE STORIES ARE ALSO HIGHLIGHTED ON OCCASION.” INDEPENDENT ASYLUM COMMISSION'S SAVING SANCTUARY REPORT.

THE ISSUE

There is no system for monitoring the safety of people who are refused sanctuary and then expected to return home.



THE SOLUTION

Monitor people refused sanctuary to make sure that they are not in danger when they return home.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Help to support and prepare a person refused sanctuary to return home safely and sustainably.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Twin your congregation or community with a congregation or community that the person is linked to so you can monitor their safety.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Write to the Foreign Secretary to ask what the Government are doing to monitor the safety of those refused sanctuary in the UK.

“INDEPENDENT PRE-RETURN ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING OF THOSE FACING FORCED RETURN WOULD ENCOURAGE FURTHER CONFIDENCE IN THE RETURNS PROCESS.”
INDEPENDENT ASYLUM COMMISSION'S SAFE RETURN REPORT.

For more information and advice on how to perform these actions visit: www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk