

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.



WHAT CAN I DO?

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

WHAT CAN I DO?

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

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?

Ask charitable, voluntary and other organisations to set up volunteering opportunities for people seeking sanctuary to help the communities in which they live.

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.

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

CITIZEN ACTION TOOLKIT 6: Pathways to Employment

Many people complain that they don't like their job.

Others complain that they cannot find a job. But imagine being prohibited from working, sometimes for years on end. For almost all people seeking sanctuary they are told that have no right to even apply for a job. This has a deep and damaging effect on such people, and is a missed opportunity for our struggling economy.

But there are things that we can do!

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CITIZENS for sanctuary

Independent Asylum Commission

This toolkit is a supplement to the '10 Ways for Citizens to Save Sanctuary' booklet. You can download an electronic version or order copies of the full booklet at www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk.

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 Facts

61% of the British public feel that those seeking sanctuary should be able to work whilst their claim is being processed.

48% also believe that if they have had their case refused, then they should be able to work until it is safe for them to return home.

At the beginning of 2009, there were almost 700,000 vacancies in the economy.

Links

Independent Asylum Commission attitudinal research
www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk/report1
Independent Asylum Commission opinion poll
www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk/pages/reports/report1/7_OpinionPoll.pdf

Something for something

It's not surprising really, even in times of recession and unemployment, that British people support the idea that people seeking sanctuary should be allowed to work.

The Independent Asylum Commission wanted to test the values that ordinary people thought should underpin an asylum system. To do this we developed a 'thought experiment' with well-known philosopher, Julian Baghini. Here is a section from the thought experiment:

"Imagine you are on a ship. Three days out of port a small boat hails the captain of the ship. The small boat has three people on board who request to come on board your ship. They say they escaped because their country had become too dangerous for them.

The captain calls his bosses and they tell him that he must keep the three people on board the ship, but must drop them off at the next port, which they will reach in thirty days.

The captain comes to you and asks how you think the three people should be treated in the next thirty days."

We then broke into groups and discussed the question. Participants were then offered four options to give to the captain as advice: throw them overboard; confine them to quarters; ask them to contribute by doing chores on the ship; or treat them like any other passenger.

What was interesting was that the vast majority of people chose the third option. Having discussed it, they felt strongly that if the newcomers were to be consuming food, water and other resources on the ship then they should give something back if they were physically able. In other words, they felt that it would not be right for anyone to get 'something for nothing'.

We conducted an opinion poll to test this finding – and guess what? 61% of the public thought that people seeking sanctuary should be allowed to work while their claim is processed.

So the government is out of step with public opinion in insisting that people seeking sanctuary should not be allowed to work until they gain refugee status.

THE SOLUTION

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

The Facts

“The prohibition on work for those who cannot be returned is a waste of potential and revenue.”

“People seeking sanctuary who pass through the New Asylum Model without final resolution of their case within six months should be entitled to work.”

“People refused sanctuary who cannot be returned to their country of origin through no fault of their own should be eligible for a time-limited, revocable, permit to work in the UK.”

Independent Asylum Commission Deserving Dignity and Safe Return reports.

Links

Independent Asylum Commission reports
www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk/reports

Fighting worklessness

The Government believes that those seeking sanctuary here in the UK are different to economic migrants, and so does not recognize their need to access the job market. However, those seeking sanctuary are often highly skilled and educated individuals who would greatly benefit from being allowed to work.

Many individuals are trained nurses, teachers, accountants, journalists or civil servants. Britain could benefit from the skills that are on offer and utilise this for areas of the market where there is a skills gap. At the beginning of 2009, there were almost 700,000 vacancies in the economy. Allowing those who can to work and pay taxes, rather than claiming benefits, may be one solution to alleviating the economic crisis!

The Independent Asylum Commission found that “the prohibition on work for those who cannot be returned is a waste of potential and revenue”. In light of this research, the IAC recommended cases not resolved within six months should be entitled to work and that that people refused sanctuary but who cannot be returned to their country of origin through no fault of their own should be eligible for a time-limited, revocable, permit to work in the UK.

The Government shows no sign of relenting on this, so what can we do?

Well, encouraging volunteering is one solution. People seeking sanctuary often make a huge contribution to our organisations and communities through their voluntary work.

We can also look at the impact of worklessness on a person. In many cases, people who came here with skills have been deskilled while in the UK. If you have been out of a job for six months you are considered long-term unemployed – so imagine being prevented from working for one, five or even ten years, perhaps when you would expect to be in the prime of your career. Many have aspirations to return to their home country when it is safe to do so, and require certain skills and experience to make a contribution.

To get someone in that position into work will be a challenge – requiring support to boost their confidence and prepare them for the workplace. We need to work with individuals at a local level to identify their needs, provide meaningful volunteer opportunities, explore educational opportunities, and prepare people for work, whether that be in the UK or abroad.

WHAT CAN I DO?

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

The Facts

"Mentoring is a one-to-one, non-judgemental relationship in which an individual voluntarily gives time to support and encourage another. This is typically developed at a time of transition in the mentee's life, and lasts for a significant and sustained period of time."

Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

<http://www.mandbf.org.uk>

Links

Mentoring schemes:

<http://www.smileproject.org.uk/>

<http://www.mrcf.org.uk/#face>

<http://www.timetogether.org.uk/>

Develop a refugee protégé

We all have people who mentored us in our lives – took us under their wing, encouraged and guided us, advised us when there were tough decisions to make.

A mentor is particularly useful when you are in a new situation and you are not quite sure how everything works, and they understand the profession that you are trying to access.

So mentoring a person who is seeking sanctuary is a great way of helping that person overcome the barriers to integration that they face; whether they are of a personal, social, emotional or practical nature. Mentors work to support, encourage and guide their mentee as they work to achieve their goals in education, employment or integration more generally.

Mentoring can be particularly helpful if you mentor someone working in the same field, and you can share your skills and experience which can be of great assistance in their search for employment in the UK. It could also be that your mentee needs additional support in their first few weeks in the workplace with IT packages, the latest technology, managing their time, etc.

It is a sad fact that many highly qualified people seeking sanctuary end up getting jobs that do not match their skills, experience and qualifications. You could help them to get a more suitable job by helping to build their confidence, assisting them with their CV, giving them useful interview tips or spending 30 minutes with them doing different job searches.

Help them set realistic goals! It will be difficult for individuals to maintain their self respect if they feel employers do not respect the skills they have to offer.

Not only will the mentee be learning, but you too will discover many things about the world we live in. You may begin to understand the various issues that force people to leave their countries, the political situation of different areas of the world, different ethnic and religious groups that exist in a country and the problems that arise.

You may know the person who would value having you as a mentor – but if not then there are lots of mentoring schemes, many of which will be listed at your local volunteer bureau. Or you could even set up your own mentoring scheme if you can't find one to join and there is a need in your local area.

WHAT CAN I DO?

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

The Facts

- People seeking sanctuary are not permitted to work (except in some cases where their case has dragged on beyond 12 months).
- Refugees are entitled to work when their claim is accepted. Many of them struggle to find suitable work despite often having higher qualifications than the average British citizen.
- The Independent Asylum Commission recommended that people should be allowed to work if their case went over six months.

Links

Find your MP: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/>
Create an e-petition that will reach 10 Downing Street
<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/>

On yer bike

People seeking sanctuary have not always been prevented from working. Before 2002 it was permitted to work – and the government has flirted with schemes to allow or even require people to work since then.

Now that we know what skills are going to waste, and how utilising them can help individuals integrate into society, it's up to us to take the message to decision makers.

There are plenty of MPs across the political spectrum who would support people seeking sanctuary being able to work – for all sorts of different reasons. Many are concerned about people becoming dependent on benefits, others worry about the burden on the taxpayers, others want to avoid worklessness and deskilling. Most think it is a good idea that people seeking sanctuary should be able to support themselves.

So when you lobby your MP you may be pushing at an open door. Here are some tips:

- Identify your MP - if you don't already know them. Call their office and arrange to meet;
- Do some research – use google and ask others locally to find out what they have said in the past about refugees and people seeking sanctuary;
- Take some people with you – find other people from other organisation to go along with you and that will make your delegation more powerful;
- Find some authentic testimony – always, always take a person who is personally affected to the meeting with you. Not in a tokenistic way, but so they can share their testimony.
- Meet in advance – plan what you are going to say and who is going to ask the MP for what. Make sure they are actually able to do the thing that you are asking, and that you have some local 'asks' too, e.g. ask them to commit to come to a Refugee Week event.
- Give us some feedback – let us know the outcome so that we can see what MPs are thinking across the UK.

Remember, your MP is accountable to you!

WHAT CAN I DO?

Ask charitable, voluntary and other organisations to set up volunteering opportunities for people seeking sanctuary to help the communities in which they live.

The Facts

Zimbabweans seeking sanctuary in the UK are prohibited from engaging in conventional paid or unpaid employment schemes. However, in 2000 their participation in volunteer programmes was sanctioned by the government.

Strategic volunteer internships will equip these eager applicants with renewed and essential skill sets that can be utilized later for the eventual rebuilding of their country when it is safe to return

CITIZENS for Sanctuary have created the Zimbabwean Internship Scheme to effectively place and train Zimbabweans in viable volunteer positions throughout the UK.

Further information

Interested in offering an internship? Contact carina.crawford-rolt@cof.org.uk.

The next best thing to a job

If the government prevents you from working, what is the next best thing?

We think that the answer is a meaningful and strategic volunteer internship, that will help people seeking sanctuary to rediscover, retain and develop skills that will help them either to access appropriate employment in the UK in the future or rebuild their lives in their home country when it is safe to return.

Supporting such an internship scheme is a rewarding and completely legal. Since 2000, people seeking sanctuary have been legally allowed to volunteer in the UK. Some may receive letters from the Home Office which tell them that they “must not enter paid or unpaid employment”. However, this is not the same as a volunteer internship.

By offering an internship in your organisation, you are providing a vital opportunity for people seeking sanctuary to develop and enhance their skills.

The *CITIZENS for Sanctuary* strategic internship scheme for Zimbabweans was set up in response to the government’s refusal to allow thousands of them to work, even though Gordon Brown had said that they would not be returned to Zimbabwe. Civil society organisations decided not to let Zimbabweans rot on their own doorstep, and so offered internships opportunities.

Many Zimbabweans left their country already highly accomplished and educated in various fields of expertise. This makes many of them the perfect intern to assist the needs of your organisation, and offer valuable knowledge, transferable skills, as well as additional support to your associates - all on a voluntary basis.

All in all, your organization is furnished with a win-win programme with individual, workplace, community and international results!

Could you or your organisation offer an internship or even run an internship scheme in your local area? With the help of *CITIZENS for Sanctuary*, why don’t you establish a dedicated team of individuals who can identify internship opportunities, promote the scheme to refugee communities and match the right intern with the right placement. The running of the scheme could even be manned by a Zimbabwean intern.

We know it works, we’ve done it!

Resources

Title

Text

Please let us know how you get on with these actions. We will collate all of the results from across the country and add them to our website so we can see all the change we have accomplished.

If you need advice or support, please contact carina.crawford-rolt@cof.org.uk.

Good luck!