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**SUPPORTING AND
EMPOWERING
REFUGEES**

Welcome to our Advocacy Network bulletin

This is the first bulletin of the Refugee Council's new Advocacy Network. The aim of the Advocacy Network is to provide a direct link between the Refugee Council's Advocacy Team and other individuals and organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. The network is based on a principle of information sharing and collective working to achieve positive policy change for refugees and asylum seekers.

You have received this bulletin because we thought you would be interested in joining the Advocacy Network (if you are not, you can unsubscribe at the bottom of this e-mail). [Read more information about the Advocacy Network](#) and please forward this to others who you think may be interested in joining.

Asylum statistics

On 25th February the Government published the latest asylum statistics. In 2015, the UK did see a rise in the number of people seeking asylum, but looking across Europe as a whole, we received just 3% of all asylum claims made in the EU last year. [Read our Top 20 facts](#) and [our latest asylum statistics briefings](#), including breakdowns of the statistics by grant rates and countries of origin.

Immigration Bill

The Immigration Bill is currently at Report Stage in the House of Lords with amendments still to be debated on subjects including asylum support for refused asylum seekers, support for care leavers, ending indefinite detention, and expanding family reunion. Last week, the Government suffered a defeat on an amendment which will allow asylum seekers to work after six months. MPs will vote on whether to keep the amendment when the Bill returns to the House of Commons next month. [Read our latest briefings on the Bill.](#)

If you'd like to be receive updates on what's being said about refugees and asylum seekers in Parliament, [sign up to our regular newsletter.](#)



#LetThemFly

On 30th March, the UNHCR is holding an international conference to encourage countries to commit to creating pathways of admission for Syrian refugees. [Ask your MP to call on Richard Harrington to ensure the UK is doing its part](#)

New Home Office guidance on dispersal of pregnant women and new mothers

In 2013, we worked with Maternity Action on [research](#) which found that pregnant women were being moved around the country multiple times and often late in their pregnancy, separating them from their maternity care and their friends and family, with worrying implications for the health of mother and baby. Since then we have continued to call on the Home Office to improve their guidance and practice.

In February new guidance was published which offers much greater protections for women during pregnancy. It should lead to significantly fewer dispersals likely to take place and much better co-ordination and support for women when they do take place. [Read the guidance here.](#)

Dublin III Briefing

The Dublin III regulation is used, like its predecessor Dublin II, to transfer asylum seekers like parcels across Europe and is rightly the subject of much criticism. However, it does provide an avenue for families separated in different asylum systems in Europe to be brought together in one country. Some elements are discretionary, but some have to be followed; [for more information on this little known aspect of the 'Dublin system' read our briefing.](#)

Age assessments

The British Dental Association [has issued a clear warning to dentists](#) that X-rays should not be taken or routinely used in order to help judge the age of young asylum seekers, calling the practice 'inaccurate' and 'unethical'.

Coming up: asylum strategy

During her speech to Conservative Party Conference last October, the Home Secretary, Theresa May, announced that the Government would publish an asylum strategy in 2016. We anticipate that this will be published in the next few months and we will keep you updated on its content and the Refugee Council's response. [Read our initial response.](#)



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