

Newsletter March 2017

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# The Refugee Council Advocacy Network Newsletter



SUPPORTING AND  
EMPOWERING  
REFUGEES

*We aim 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. [Read more about the Advocacy Network](#) and share with others who may be interested in joining.*

## Latest news

### Court victory will help keep children safe

A court has ruled that local authorities must protect and accommodate unaccompanied young people in their area while their ages are being assessed.

[Read more.](#)

### Get in touch about active reviews

Last week there were several [news reports](#) about the Government actively reviewing refugees' cases after five years and assessing whether or not is safe for them to be returned to their country of origin. We are extremely concerned about this and are currently unsure about what it will mean in practice.

If you have any experience of working with people facing such a review, please let us know. **Email us: [parliamentary@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:parliamentary@refugeecouncil.org.uk)**

## **Charities urge Government to reunite more refugee families**

Oxfam, the Refugee Council, the British Red Cross and Amnesty International all expressed concern at the closure of the Dubs scheme and are now calling for the Government to do more to help refugees escape danger and reunite with their loved ones in the UK.

**[Read more.](#)**

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## **Parliamentary Updates**

### **Children and Social Work Bill**

The Children and Social Work bill gained a lot of attention due to a cross-party amendment that would have required the Government to publish details regarding the capacity for local authorities to take in unaccompanied children. The amendment came in response to the announcement that only 350 children would come to the UK under the "Dubs amendment" scheme. The amendment was **defeated** by 287 votes to 267 votes.

We had also been very concerned by the potential impact that Government proposals in the bill to allow local authorities to opt-out of some safeguarding duties for children. After cross-party pressure, the Government agreed to remove the proposals from the bill.

### **Access to higher education**

Along with a number of other agencies, we have been working with Lord Dubs on an amendment to the Higher Education and Research Bill, aimed at removing the three year wait that refugees with Humanitarian Protection have before they can

access financial support for university costs.

Syrian refugees resettled through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme are granted Humanitarian Protection, rather than refugee status, and so are the largest group affected by the three year restriction. In response to the amendment, the Government said that "The Government understand the importance of accessing higher education as soon as possible for those on the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme and are looking very carefully at this issue."

The joint briefing on the amendment can be found [here](#).

### **Problems with Universal Credit?**

As you will already be aware, refugees encounter a raft of difficulties moving from asylum support onto mainstream welfare benefits. Refugees who live in areas where Universal Credit is being rolled out face particular barriers to securing an income before their asylum support ends, not least because they will rarely have an existing bank account. Universal Credit is being **rolled out gradually** to Job Centre offices across the country.

We are continually working with the relevant government departments to raise these issues and have submitted evidence to this [parliamentary inquiry](#).

Please let us know if refugees you're working with are experiencing problems with Universal Credit during the 'move on' period. **Email us:**  
[parliamentary@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:parliamentary@refugeecouncil.org.uk)

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## **Resources**

**Asylum statistics**

New statistics published on 23rd February show a drop in the number of people seeking refuge in Britain last year. The figures also show how many people were granted refugee protection in 2016 and which countries people had fled from.

**[Read our top 20 facts on the latest asylum stats here.](#)**

**[Read our statistics briefings here](#)**

## **Asylum in Europe database**

We're proud to have contributed to the **[Asylum in Europe Database](#)**. It's an amazing resource, explaining and analysing the asylum process in 20 European countries.

**[Read the UK country report here.](#)**

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