

23 June 2017

NOT THE FAKE NEWS

By Cathy Wilcock

REAL STORIES OF REFUGE AND ASYLUM

It is two weeks after the General Election 2017. This year, more than any other in recent history, it was the campaigns which made all the difference. Having polled well before the campaign, The Conservative Party failed to secure an outright majority. Election season has become a breeding ground for 'Fake News'. The Oxford Internet Institute defines fake news as 'various forms of propaganda and ideologically extreme, hyper-partisan or conspiratorial political news and information'. It estimates that, during elections, fake news stories are shared online more frequently than real news. However, fake news is not only a phenomenon of the internet age, nor is it exclusively a feature of electoral politics. As Joy Rahman*, a refugee based in Manchester, argues, 'there has always been fake news about migration. When I arrived here in 2005, I was shocked to see what newspapers said about refugees and asylum seekers. It's just wrong!'

"There has always been fake news about migration"

Perhaps objectivity is not achievable in any kind of media reportage: in many ways, no news is real news since a single narrative can never deliver the full story. Whether they realise it or not, the author of any news piece, is partial, biased and embedded in a specific political context. Nevertheless, news stories around refuge and asylum issues often distort plain facts and

statistics. The Daily Mail, for example, has reported that 'Britain is swamped with asylum seekers' when actually, the number of asylum applications per year is less than half the number it was in 2002.

The consequences of fake news can be very damaging. Ivan Humble, former English Defence League member, has argued that sensational news headlines played a part in fostering the fear of immigrants that he once had. In a recent interview with 'Open Your Eyes to Hate' he points out that 'For every negative story [about immigrants] there are ten positives that you never see. Why? Because they don't sell papers'.

"This single edition newspaper will tell 'Not the Fake News' about refuge and asylum"

This single edition newspaper will tell 'Not the Fake News' about refuge and asylum: the stories that don't usually make the headlines. Written in one day by a group of displaced people in collaboration with Manchester-based journalists and migration researchers from the University of Manchester's Migration Lab, this paper offers real stories of refuge and asylum by the people who have direct experience of these issues and those who research them. If you would like to challenge the fake news, please read on!

**All people involved in writing this paper have been anonymised.*

Not the Fake News Q&A

Q: What percentage of the UK population is made up by refugees and asylum seekers?

A: 0.24% as of mid 2015

Q: How many people seek asylum in the UK every year?

A: Around 30,000 in recent years. In 2002 the figure was over 80,000.

Q: Where do most people who seek asylum in the UK come from?

A: Eritrea (3,695), Iran (3,242), Sudan (2,912) and Syria (2,539)

Q: What percentage of the world's refugees are in Europe?

A: Less than 14%

Q: Does the UK take the most asylum applications in Europe?

A: Seven European countries take more asylum applications than the UK.

Q: Which European country takes the largest number of asylum applications?

A: Germany, takes the most, then Sweden, then Hungary. Between them, these three countries process 63% of Europe's asylum claims.

Q: What do asylum seekers receive in benefits?

A: £5.28 per day

(Source: UNHCR, Red Cross)

23 June 2017

Is Britain a 'soft touch' for asylum seekers?

By Madeline-Sophie Abbas

In reality, Britain is a 'hostile environment' for those seeking asylum.

Britain has long been heralded a country of sanctuary for those fleeing persecution or conflict. Tolerance and compassion are considered 'British values.' The reality however, is that Britain falls far short of its European neighbours. In 2015, there were only six asylum applications for every 10,000 UK residents compared to 26 across the EU28. The UK is therefore below the EU average per head of population, ranking only 17th among EU28 countries (House of Commons, 2017).

The reality is that the asylum system is incredibly tough. Official House of Commons figures report: "63% of asylum applicants in 2016 were refused. Between 2004 and 2016, around three-quarters of applicants refused asylum at initial decision lodged an appeal, but only around one quarter of those appeals was granted" (House of Commons, 2017).

Applicants are in limbo as they wait for a decision which takes at least six months and can take years, causing severe psychological distress as asylum seekers' lives are put on hold and they are unable to work. The total number of pending asylum cases received since 2006 was 24,903 at the end of December 2016 (House of Commons, 2017: 11) showing the stark reality of how many cases remain unresolved for years.

Fact: Britain only received around 3% of all asylum claims made in the EU during 2016

Source: Refugee Council 2017



Photo credit: Rick Findler

In reality, Britain has been adopting an increasingly tough asylum system. There have been seven immigration bills in the past eight years. UK Human Rights organisation, Liberty (2016) reports: "Theresa May has made 45,000 changes to the Immigration Rules [as Home Secretary]. Appeal rights have been removed, legal aid denied, asylum support slashed and families torn apart."

May made it abundantly clear that Britain would undertake a hard line, declaring plans to create a 'hostile environment' for those without leave to remain. Identity checks, including those with British citizenship, are required before being able to access essential amenities such as routine healthcare treatment or privately rented accommodation. Sanctuary seekers whose claims are rejected are left destitute without recourse to public funds.

The widely criticised 'Go Home' vans (Operation Vaken campaign) was a stark manifestation of May's hostile environment. The message, driven around six ethnically diverse London boroughs in 2013 was clear: 'Go Home or Face Arrest.'

Not only did it communicate Britain's hard line approach, but the campaign contributed to the criminalisation of immigration, including those seeking asylum (known as 'cimmigration').

Encouraging the British public to view asylum seekers as criminals requiring detention and deportation rather than protection further compounds the injustices and horrors that the vast majority have been subjected. Even those whose applications are successful are not granted permanent residence in Britain meaning their futures remain insecure and the hostile effects of Britain's asylum system continues to affect their lives and livelihoods. Britain is far from a 'soft touch' for asylum seekers.

Sources:

researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN01403/SN01403.pdf

www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/campaigning/immigration-act-2016

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/4935_top_20_facts_about_refugees_and_asylum_seekers

- **Fake News:** Britain is a 'soft touch' for asylum seekers
- **Not the Fake News:** Britain is tough on asylum seekers (Refugee Council, 2017)

Asylum-seekers not here for benefits

By Jane, Sabah and Ria Sunga

People seeking safety live on £35 per week.

A common misconception about asylum-seekers is that they come to the UK to claim benefits. There are also misconceptions that funds for housing asylum-seekers come from the taxpayers' pocket levied through Council Tax. In reality, asylum-seekers receive only £35 per week in vouchers to buy food and their housing is not paid for by local council tax, but by a separate fund altogether.

The media often conflates the categories of 'migrant,' 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker,' but these obscure differences in rights to benefits that the three groups have. A migrant is anybody who has crossed an international border for permanent or semi-permanent residence. Their rights (to work, to access health care, to access benefits etc.) will depend on where they have come from and why. A refugee is someone who has gained protection from persecution outside of their home state under the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol. They receive benefits such as access to housing and they have the right to work. Asylum seekers are people who are applying for refugee status. For those seeking asylum, barely any entitlements or benefits exist and they do not have the right to work.

As Angel, a destitute asylum-seeker urges 'the media says we are here for benefits but this is not true. These "fake news" and their writers and editors should be accountable... They should speak to asylum-seekers to understand what really happens to us – what reality really is'. Similarly, Sabah reflects 'These stories they write and our lives are completely different'. The stories of Sabah and Angel*; two asylum-seekers but with very different experiences of seeking asylum demonstrate. Both nonetheless illustrate the difficult conditions affecting asylum seekers in the UK.

Sabah arrived in the UK around five years ago. She left her home country in fear of persecution with her young son. She explains 'We are here for safety.... We are running from persecution. No one would

simply leave their family and friends to just flee.' Upon arriving in the UK, she and her son were assigned to low-cost housing in unsafe areas. They received an ASPEN (Asylum Support Payment Enablement) card which has only £35 per week to live on for both them. Aside from this, they have no access to public funds or services. When Sabah reached the UK, she received no information that would help her navigate her day-to-day life or access essential amenities such as the location of her local GP or shops or how to use public transport. The £35 goes directly on food, and she and her son walk for miles to get from place to place.

"These stories they write and our lives are completely different."

Angel claimed asylum 10 years ago, but was rejected and lost everything, and was forced to rely on the kindness of strangers while she appeals. She received no help from the Home Office or Local Government, with legal aid being withdrawn from asylum services. To survive, she figured out who to contact: first, Refugee Action – a charity organisation offering support and advice for refugees and those going through the asylum system. The organisation informed her about groups and activities supporting refugees and asylum-seekers. Due to funding cuts, there are few organisations which can support her and their capacities are severely diminished. Angel remains unable to acquire any government support services, relying instead on friends, charities and organisations. She cannot even access healthcare. She reflects 'I did not come here for jobs and benefits. I came to seek sanctuary and safety. Here in the UK, I am not free or safe yet! I am still in the process of applying for refugee status. And once

I get that, I will contribute to this country. At the moment, my life is in limbo, and I face hostility from people all the time. I have a voice, but no one listens to me or cares, so I feel like I don't exist."

The accounts of these two women show that, far from having extensive benefits, they have very little. Furthermore, not all asylum-seekers have the same rights to the £35 per week living allowance. Not everyone receives even the minimal lifelines offered by the ASPEN or AZURE card. Some, like Angel, remain destitute and rely on the kindness of strangers to get by. This was not their choice. They are vulnerable persons seeking safety and a human life.

What benefits do refused asylum seekers get?

Refused asylum seekers can apply for:

- somewhere to live
- £35.39 per person on a payment card for food, clothing and toiletries
- help with prescriptions for medicine, dental care for your teeth, eyesight tests and glasses

Refused asylum seekers won't be given:

- the payment card if they don't take the offer of somewhere to live
- any money

Mothers with young children can apply for:

- an additional £5 per week for a baby under 1
- an additional £3 per week for a child aged 1 -3

Applications for these benefits are lengthy and difficult to complete, especially for people who are destitute in the first place.

Source: Gov.uk/asylumsupport

23 June 2017

The Destitution Trap

By Kath Grant, Jenny Rivett, and two anonymous writers

Destitution revealed as the only real outcome of UK asylum system.

People seeking asylum in the UK are trapped in a cycle which will inevitably lead to destitution and homelessness whether their cases are successful or not. It is not only those who have been refused asylum who lose their support and housing - people whose claims are successful have just 14 days to leave their accommodation and find somewhere else to live. This results in homelessness.

The Red Cross has reported record numbers of UK asylum seekers falling into destitution in the last two years. Karl Pike, policy and advocacy manager for the British Red Cross, described it as 'a silent crisis' with organisations such as theirs being left to pick up the pieces.

'Levels of destitution in the asylum system are getting worse, including for the people who have been granted protection status by the Home Office. Refugees should not be left destitute having fled awful violence and persecution,' he added.

Fast-tracking of fresh asylum claims means that refusals can be received within a week, and with just a fortnight to pack up their lives, the loss of housing of many people is the beginning of a downward spiral into destitution. Even for those who eventually win their case, the asylum process can

"the loss of housing of many people is the beginning of a downward spiral into destitution."

mean families and individuals experiencing homelessness several times.

The constant insecurity of living in destitution causes a huge strain on the mental wellbeing of people seeking asylum. There are long waiting lists for counselling and other health service in any case but, for people who are destitute, there is the added strain of accessing services and information in the first place.

People are forced to rely on word of mouth about the kind of health and other support they are entitled to. Some professionals have responsibilities that they are not fulfilling – for example, people whose asylum claims have been refused are entitled to healthcare through using the HC1 form but many GPs fail to advise people of this.

The experience of destitution while people are still in the asylum system is deeply stressful but, even once their status is secure, their lives can still be unstable and unsafe. They have to apply to their local councils for housing and, although families are often given priority, there have been instances of local authorities saying that they can house the children – which they legally obliged to do – but not adults. For many, the only alternatives are to move into expensive private rented accommodation, try to find emergency housing, or live on the streets.

"a silent crisis"

Until they access support, people who have just achieved safety have no money for food or transport costs and are often forced to rely on charities and other organisations. It becomes an even more traumatic experience if a lack of English means they are unable to communicate either verbally or in writing. These difficulties often lead to people living in destitution for much longer than is necessary.

Definitions

Destitution: Poverty so extreme that one lacks the means to provide for oneself

Homelessness: Having no home or place of residence

Sources: *Dictionary.com, Merriam-webster.com*

Fact

There has been a 15% rise in cases of destitution seeking support from the Red Cross.



Photo credit: Duncan C

Scapegoat / asylum-seeker?

By Barly, Molly Geidel and an anonymous writer

Asylum seekers are scapegoated for many of Britain's social problems.

In Brexit Britain, some media outlets and some politicians have blamed asylum seekers for social ills as varied as homelessness, labour shortages, violent crime, and terrorism.

Media scapegoating of refugees is particularly prevalent in tabloids like The Express and The Daily Mail, which paint a picture of a 'soft touch Britain' where migrants receive 'free hotels' and other lavish perks like 'I-pads and wide-screen TVs.' One headline links terrorism to asylum-seekers claiming that 'Bombers are all sponging asylum seekers' and another links migration to a rise in crime. In the lead-up to the Brexit referendum, Nigel Farage took a scaremongering approach, using an image of a queue of refugees to warn of a 'breaking point.' Many people have been led to believe that social problems such as the lack of school places, hospital beds, crime rates and a threat of terrorism are due to people seeking asylum.

This scapegoating impacts the views of British people which, in turn, has a knock-on effect on the emotional and psychological health of asylum seekers.

In a 2016 BBC poll, three in five British adults surveyed (61%) said accepting refugees from countries such as Syria and Libya puts Britain's security at risk, and more than half (56%) thought that Britain's economy cannot afford to accept any more refugees.

"Many people have been led to believe that social problems such as the lack of school places, hospital beds, crime rates and a threat of terrorism are due to people seeking asylum."

In a recent interview, one Manchester-based refugee reflected on this. He argued that 'The media [and] society see that you come to benefit. Blaming. It affects you mentally, not only superficially. Society affects you. The situation affects you. There are problems finding a job. I say bon jour in French. They see danger. In England, discourses are defamatory. All problems are blamed on migrants, asylum seekers.'

In this kind of defamatory environment which makes economic and social integration so difficult. Despite the media headlines, it is evident that many British citizens mistrust these narratives and welcome refugees. Many asylum seekers thrive and contribute to the society despite this unfair targeting. Imagine what it could be like without the scapegoating sections of the British Press?

**Question:
Who are asylum seekers?**

Answer:

There is no one identity of an asylum seeker, everyone is an individual, everyone is different. Asylum seekers are children, mothers, sisters, fathers and brothers. There is no stereotype! Some are doctors, engineers, lawyers, artists, sport-players and singers, from all different backgrounds, people who want to contribute to society.

"There are problems finding a job. I say bon jour in French. They see danger."

23 June 2017

I was 'herded like a sheep' to Yarlswood Detention Centre

By Rebecca, Madeline-Sophie Abbas, Conrad Bower, and Sarah

Asylum seekers are criminalised and dehumanised in detention

S Seeking asylum is a universal right yet many of those in the UK system are criminalised and dehumanised as they go through the process.

An asylum seeker currently living in Manchester has described her traumatising journey to Yarlswood Detention Centre that still affects her 3 years later. A system that herds vulnerable people like criminals and creates a hostile environment is brought to light.

Sarah* arrived in the UK from Cameroon in April 2014, when she was 38 years old. She travelled to the UK to escape the torture and abuse she suffered in Cameroon, not expecting to experience even more dehumanising treatment in the UK immigration system.

When Sarah arrived, she received initial medical treatment from an injury to her leg from torture she experienced in Cameroon. After this, still shell shocked due to arriving in a foreign country, she was transferred to a police station cell. Here, the inadequacies of the immigration system first hit home when she was informed there were no sanitary products available to help her through her period, the only thing they provided were a pair of disposable underwear and toilet paper. Dungavel Removal Centre in Glasgow was the next enforced destination, Sarah says it was 'Horrible, it was just as if I was in a prison. I just wanted to get out of the room and be on my own'. She spent 3 days at Dungavel, mostly locked in her room in the evenings where the guards had the keys to open her door, she found the clanging of doors being unlocked very distressing. She also received a medical examination here, which was to prove crucial later on.

At 9pm she was informed by a guard that she would be transferred to Yarlswood with no information about what Yarlswood was and why she was being sent there. They bundled her frightened into a van at 1 a.m., without explaining why she was being

moved. She was led through Yarlswood to the accompanying sounds of banging doors and keys turning in locks, and introduced to her two cell mates. Fortunately, Sarah did not have to spend the night there as a doctor's report from the examination in Dungavel arrived saying that Sarah's injuries were attributable to torture, and she could not be detained in a detention centre. She did not learn the reason for her release until much later. Sarah was sent by a black cab to Birmingham, where she was eventually housed in a hostel, she says, 'I was herded like a sheep through the immigration to Yarlswood'.

"Horrible, it was just as if I was in a prison."

The traumatising experience Sarah went through is all part of the planned 'hostile environment' declared by Theresa May in 2013. This has portrayed immigrants, including asylum seekers, as 'illegals' and has increasingly linked immigration to the criminal justice system. An important effect of this often missing from reports on asylum is the dehumanising impact on those seeking asylum who are treated like prisoners and constantly kept 'in the dark' and as disorientated as possible.

This hostile environment continues even after asylum seekers leave detention. Rebecca* an asylum seeker from Zimbabwe currently living in Manchester says 'We are already locked up. When you wake up in the morning you don't know where you are going or be able to start your life. Even when you are outside you are already in detention... Prisoners are treated better than us. We are just asylum seekers – we are not criminals.'

Criminalising conditions of detention affect all aspects of asylum seekers' lives: they are denied access to routine healthcare, unable to work, and forced to report periodically to the Home Office. Not only are asylum seekers subjected to psychological trauma and forced to live in limbo but they experience extensive monitoring and surveillance, further indicating how the dehumanising disciplinary effects of detention continue to operate beyond the Immigration Removal Centre.

Sarah is still affected by her experience in the UK's detention system. When someone mentioned a detention centre to her while living in her hostel accommodation she passed out in shock, mistakenly thinking that she would be returned there. And repeated communications from the Home Office are a continuing source of stress, she says she only feels happy 'when there are no letters from the Home Office' dropping on to her door mat.

**all names have been changed to protect identities.*

Detention Fact Box

- There are 13 Immigration Removal Centres and 4 Short Term Holding Facilities across the UK. The bed capacity of these centres is about 3800.
- In 2016, 13,230 asylum seekers entered detention. Detained with them were 7,914 of dependants, the majority of these were children.
- 3-4% of detainees are detained multiple times.
- The UK is the only country in the European Union not to have a time limit on detention.

Sources: Refugee Council, All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees.



Photo credit: A Breaux

Privacy is a human right too

By Joy, Hattie Ditton, Louise Bolotin and one anonymous writer

Poor asylum housing leaves people feeling violated

A Asylum housing has been branded 'disgraceful' by a Home Affairs Select Committee. The physical problems associated with vermin infestations, damp and unsafe appliances have been well documented – see for example, the film *The Asylum Market* by Brass Moustache Films. However, the psychological effects of asylum housing are far less well known. 'I came here for safety, but my privacy is constantly invaded.' Joy is a 50-year-old woman who came to the UK in 2003 from Kenya to seek asylum after fleeing persecution. After 14 years, she is still waiting for a decision on her right to remain and hasn't seen her four children whom she was forced to leave behind. She says that accommodation provided for asylum seekers is unsafe and a lack of privacy makes her feel more vulnerable.

It has badly affected her mental health and she has severe depression. She explains 'The housing officers are supposed to knock three times on your door before they enter, but they let themselves in anyway. They don't care if you are naked, they still come in.' Joy says she doesn't feel safe in her room because even when she goes out, the housing officer may still let themselves in and go through her personal belongings.

"the housing officer may still let themselves in and go through her personal belongings."

On one occasion, the housing officer took photographs of her room when she was out. One of the women in the house told Joy and the housing officer eventually apologised, but it left Joy feeling even more violated. She especially didn't want anyone photographing the medication she takes to manage her mental health. This lack of privacy adds to the mental distress that many asylum seekers can experience while they are waiting for their cases to be heard. Joy often feels like she wants to kill herself in her room because she feels the housing officers don't listen to her and that she doesn't have a voice 'I live in shared accommodation with other women. Sometimes there is violence in the house and it makes me afraid. One of the other women was always opening my post. I complained to the housing officer - he took two months to respond.'

"I feel constantly watched."

Joy says that her housing conditions and the long wait for a decision on her future means she can never relax: 'It's like prison - I have nightmares. I feel paranoid because people have come into my room without my permission and I feel constantly watched.'

Emily, 52, arrived here from Congo 10 years ago and says the system is designed to make asylum seekers even more vulnerable and to pressurise them to return home. She was detained for a while in the notorious Immigration Removal Centre, Yarlwood, and, like Joy, her experiences living in the UK as an asylum seeker has damaged her mental health further.

PRIVATE HOUSE

Question: Is privatisation of asylum housing part of the problem?

Serco is one of the companies contracted by the government to deal with asylum seekers and, as well as running detention centres, they act as housing officers. Serco currently has six government contracts. The National Audit Office says the government aims to save £140 million over seven years this way.

According to Serco's website, their values are, 'trust, care, innovation and pride. We take care of each other and those we serve, and we aim to make a positive difference to people's lives.' Yet a report by the charity, RAPAR, says the UK Border Agency awarded the contracts without giving accurate information on service users - asylum seekers. 'The Serco values are a lie,' says Joy. 'They make us feel like idiots.' Emily agrees: 'Everything is bad - they are not working for us.'

23 June 2017

Why did you choose to come here?

By Stephen Kingston, Gemma Sou, and Pauline

There was no choice...

F For anyone who believes that asylum seekers choose to come to the UK instead of anywhere else, read Pauline's story. Husband butchered by a corrupt regime. Fleeing for her life to the UK. No home. No food.

Pauline fled the politically motivated extreme violence of perpetual President Joseph Kabila in the so-called 'Democratic' Republic of Congo. Her husband was killed, her friends butchered or disappeared. Their crime? Opposition to a corrupt dictator.

'It's a rich country but the people are suffering' Pauline explains 'My family wanted elections and freedom but if they catch you, they kill you or take you into detention...they cut hands, arms, slit your neck like chickens. My husband opposed them. They killed him.'

Pauline left her children with her mother and walked over the Congo border to Rwanda, where she got a plane to anywhere safe... 'I didn't even know I was going to the UK' she recalls, 'I had no choice...'

Pauline arrived in the UK five years ago as a desperate asylum seeker. She is currently still appealing against the rejection of her claim... 'They [Home Office] said 'They killed your husband not you?'

"My husband opposed them. They killed him."

The myth is that refugees and asylum seekers somehow choose to come to the UK, instead of seeking sanctuary in the first safe place they arrive at. Pauline had no idea where she was going. Now she is here, she gets no benefits, no legal aid to help her appeal and not even a roof over head. She currently lives on £5 a week. She relies on charity food hand-outs and people letting her sleep in their house. Back in the Congo, Pauline ironically ran a construction

business. She explains 'I can't work and the authorities here have cancelled everything' she says 'I don't know why. I have lived for many years here like an animal. I get nothing. I could work and pay my taxes... I can do hairdressing, look after children... I'll do cleaning, anything'

'This is now my life' says Pauline 'I'm strong, I'm happy because I don't have problems with the police and the state. But one day I will live like normal people...'

"I had no choice..."

Q&A

Q: Where do people come from?

A: In the first quarter of 2017 most of the people claiming asylum arrived from Iran (664), Pakistan (663), Iraq (602), Bangladesh (480), India (389), Albania (357), Nigeria (308), Sudan (289), Afghanistan (287), Vietnam (263).

Q: How many people who arrive end up staying?

A: In the first quarter of 2017, 31% of cases determined were accepted. 66% were refused. The remainder were given other verdicts such as discretionary leave to remain and other grants.

Q: What happens when a case is refused?

A: In the first quarter of 2017, 1,049 asylum seekers left the UK. 565 were forcibly removed, 166 left under assisted voluntary return, 196 left under notified voluntary return, 122 left by other voluntary means. How 'voluntary' is 'voluntary return'?

Source: Refugee Council 2017

Photo credit: Toni Bley





**Meet
'not the fake'
writers**

There were 21 writers in this project.
Not everyone wanted to be photographed.



23 June 2017

Pass it on!

Read, Tweet, And Deliver

This paper tells not the fake news about refuge and asylum. However, it is not enough to write it: the news is not news until it is delivered and read! Please help us to spread this paper across Manchester. Once you have read the paper, tweet about it using the hashtag #notfakenews – tell us where you have found the paper, maybe tweet us picture of it, then pass it on to a friend, leave it where someone else will find it, just don't throw it away!

The newspaper will also have an online home at www.migrationlab.manchester.ac.uk Check back there to see how far the paper has gone.



Photo credit: Chris Lyon



It is two weeks after the General Election 2017. This year, more than any other in recent history, it was the campaigns which made all the difference. Having polled well before the campaign, the Conservative Party failed to secure an outright majority. Election season has become a breeding ground for 'Fake News'. The Oxford Internet Institute defines fake news as 'various forms of propaganda and ideologically extreme, hyper-partisan or conspiratorial political news and information'. It estimates that, during elections, fake news stories are shared online more frequently than real news. However, fake news is not only a phenomenon of the internet age, nor is it exclusively a feature of electoral politics. As Joy Rahman*, a refugee based in Manchester, argues, 'there has always been fake news about migration. When I arrived here in 2005, I was shocked to see what newspapers said about refugees and asylum seekers. It's just wrong!'

Perhaps objectivity is not achievable in any kind of media reportage: in many ways, no news is real news since a single narrative can never deliver the full story. Whether they realise it or not, the author of any news piece, is partial, biased and embedded in a specific political context. Nevertheless, news stories around refuge and asylum issues often distort plain facts and statistics. The Daily Mail, for example, has reported that 'Britain is swamped with asylum seekers' when actually, the number of asylum applications per year is less than half the number it was in 2002.

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This single edition newspaper will tell 'Not the Fake News' about refuge and asylum: the stories that don't usually make the headlines. Written in one day by a group of displaced people in collaboration with Manchester-based journalists and migration researchers from the University of Manchester's Migration Lab, this paper offers real stories of refuge and asylum by the people who have direct experience of these issues and those who research them. If you would like to challenge the fake news, please read on!

*All people involved in writing this paper have been anonymised.

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Q: What do asylum seekers receive in benefits?
A: £5.28 per day

(Source: UNHCR, Red Cross)

#notfakenews

 Tweet us - @pathway_arts | @CathyWilcock | @mcrmeteor

www.migrationlab.manchester.ac.uk

Live UK Campaigns

By Jane, Sabah and Ria Sunga



Photo credit: Dan Vernon

Can things get better? And how?

Safe Passage

Safe Passage was formed in October 2015 after a group of volunteers who travelled to the 'Calais Jungle' became aware of the hundreds of unaccompanied children who were desperately trying to reach their family members in the UK. A partnership between lawyers, community organisers and faith leaders, Safe Passage is a project of Citizens UK determined to find a legal and safe way to help children reunite with their families.

In January 2016, Safe Passage won a landmark legal ruling at the Royal Courts of Justice, opening up a legal route for family reunification for children in Calais. In response to the pressure created by the legal victory, the government announced a £10 million fund for minors in Europe. Safe Passage helped push the 'Dubs Amendment' through Parliament, and in May 2016, for the first time, the UK agreed to accept some of the most vulnerable unaccompanied child refugees from Europe who do not have family in the UK.

The demolition of the Calais camp in October 2016 saw the UK transfer 900 unaccompanied children through an expedited process. Safe Passage were in Calais to oversee the process and safeguard the unaccompanied children.

Safe Passage continues to work to ensure the safe, and legal movement of unaccompanied children to the UK with teams working in France, Italy, and Greece, and in February 2017 assisted with the first direct transfer of three children from Syria to their family in the UK. Since then over 1000 children have been reunited with their families.

Source: safepassage.org.uk

Asylum Matters

Asylum Matters is an advocacy and campaigns project that works in partnership, locally and nationally, to improve the lives of refugees and people seeking asylum through social and political change. They connect local communities to campaigns for change, and help people develop the skills and know-how to campaign effectively.

They are working towards a number of goals, as laid out in the Birmingham Declaration; a set of principles for refugee protection endorsed by 320 UK organisations. These include: Improved decision making on claims, improved access to good quality legal advice and representation, an end to destitution, permission to work for asylum seekers under specific, free access to healthcare for all asylum seekers, asylum seekers to be welcomed & befriended on arrival, free language tuition. Above all Asylum Matters is campaigning for all asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to be treated with dignity and respect.

Source: www.facebook.com/AsylumMatters

Set Her Free

The Set Her Free campaign was launched in Parliament in January 2014 by Women for Refugee Women. It seeks to raise awareness of the detention processes of those seeking asylum in the UK, and end the detention of women asylum seekers and refugees. The trauma caused by unpredictable and indefinite detaining of women which can occur at any time during their asylum process can be irreversible and can be devastating particularly for vulnerable women who have already endured psychological or physical violence.

Set Her Free is a campaign that is run both nationally and internationally, leading debates in Parliament, and gaining the support of politicians, celebrities, and activists in the UK and abroad. In 2016 Set Her Free campaigned to ban the detention of pregnant women, a ban which was passed by the House of Lords, but amended to a 72-hour limit by the House of Commons by (the then) Home Secretary Theresa May.

Source: www.refugeewomen.co.uk/campaign

READ MORE ABOUT CAMPAIGNS ...

... to end asylum destitution
regionalasylumactivism.org/home/council-motions-against-destitution

... about the privatisation of asylum housing:
resistprivatisingstopserco.wordpress.com

... against deportations run by Manchester-based human rights charity RAPAR
www.rapar.org.uk

... to end the racist abuse of asylum seekers and refugees
www.standuptoracism.org.uk

... to provide refugees with equal access to higher education
www.star-network.org.uk/index.php/campaigns/equal_access

... around asylum seekers accessing public healthcare
www.mind.org.uk/about-us/our-policy-work/equality-human-rights



23 June 2017

WHO ARE WE?



Pathway Arts

Pathway Arts uses creativity to bring people and communities together. We believe that everyone has the right to express themselves, and that art can be used as a positive tool to educate and inform people. Through workshops with vulnerable and marginalised people, we create art that can be shared and enjoyed by everyone, raising awareness and promoting a more cohesive society.

Find out more at www.facebook.com/podcollective



The Meteor: Manchester's Alternative Media

The Meteor is a not-for-profit, independent media project – an alternative, radical, community-based publication for the people of Manchester. By telling stories that are neglected in the mainstream, investigating and challenging local power structures and exploring important issues, from the everyday to the earth-shattering, we aim to promote social justice in our city and beyond.

Find out more at www.themeteor.org



United For Change

United for Change is a refugee-led group in Manchester campaigning for dignity for people seeking asylum in the UK. Our aims are to bring change in whatever we are doing, to advocate the welfare of asylum seekers, to challenge oppression, to be the voice of the voiceless, to end the stigmatisation of asylum seekers.

Find out more at www.facebook.com/UFCManchester



Revive

Since 2002, Revive provides free practical and integrated support to refugees and people seeking asylum, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, disability, age or beliefs. Revive offers specialist advocacy advice and detailed case support work and a network of other activities that aim to move a person from crisis into self-help and self-advocacy. Revive is part of the Greater Manchester Refugee Support Partnership.

Find out more at www.revive-uk.org



The University of Manchester Migration Lab

The Migration Lab was launched in January 2017 as a joint initiative between The University of Manchester's Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute and the Global Development Institute. It brings together the 70+ researchers who are working on migration issues across the University. The Migration Lab supports researchers at The University of Manchester to lead innovative and impact-based research on migration and to create spaces for interdisciplinary and intersectoral dialogue about migration both within and beyond the University.

Find out more at www.migrationlab.manchester.ac.uk

This paper was written over one day by a mixed group of displaced people, Manchester-based journalists and researchers from The University of Manchester's Migration Lab. The workshop was designed and facilitated by Pathway Arts. It was funded by the Social Responsibility Fund at The School of Arts and Cultures at The University of Manchester.

If you would like any more information about this project please contact Cathy Wilcock Cathy.wilcock@manchester.ac.uk