

All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees Inquiry: Refugees Welcome?

How to get involved: A Guide from [Regional Asylum Activism](#)

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Refugees is a group of Members of Parliament (MPs) and Lords from all political parties with an interest in refugees. The group discusses issues relating to refugees and aims to promote the welfare of refugees. You can find out who's a member of the APPG on Refugees [here](#).

APPGs can call for inquiries into particular issues. They ask for written and oral evidence from experts and those with direct experience of the issue. The APPG then discusses this evidence and decides on recommendations for action. They publish the findings from inquiries in reports which can be used to lobby for change.

For example, in 2014 the APPG on Migration and the APPG on Refugees held an [inquiry into the use of immigration detention in the UK](#). The inquiry made a number of important recommendations in their final report, such as a calling for a time-limit on immigration detention. The inquiry and report has helped campaigners and Parliamentarians win a number of key changes to immigration detention policy.

On the 19th July, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees launched a new Inquiry into the experiences of new refugees in the UK. The inquiry will look into the experiences of refugees who have claimed asylum in the UK, as well as those who have arrived as refugees in the UK through resettlement schemes.

This is a brilliant opportunity for refugees and people working with them to tell people in power about the challenges faced by refugees in the UK, as well as showcasing areas of innovation and good practice. The inquiry is particularly interested in hearing about integration, employment and access (and barriers) to key services. They're also keen to investigate the differences in support available for resettled refugees and those who go through the asylum system, and whether there are particular barriers faced by different groups of refugees, such as women or LGBTI refugees.

You can read the full terms of reference for the Inquiry on the Refugee Council website:

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/8247/Refugee_Welcome_APPG_inquiry_ToR_for_website.pdf.

Submissions should be no longer than 3,000 words and must be submitted in a Word format to Jonathan Featonby at the Refugee Council. **DEADLINE FOR RESPONSES: Saturday 1st October 2016**

By email jonathan.featonby@refugeecouncil.org.uk OR

By post Jonathan Featonby, Refugee Council, PO Box 68614, London, E15 9DQ

We know that contributing to inquiries can be very time-consuming for individuals and small organisations, but Regional Asylum Activism is here to help! In the past, we've supported individuals and organisations to submit evidence to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Immigration Detention and the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into Asylum. You can read more about our previous work [here](#)!

There's lots of ways you can get involved and get your voice heard. Check out our guidance below and get in touch with your local Regional Asylum Activism co-ordinator to find out more.

Julia Savage – North West – northwest@regionalasylumactivism.org – 07557 983 264

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1. Responding as a group or an organisation

The inquiry is keen to hear from organisations or groups of people who work with or support refugees in the UK. You will be witnesses to the barriers and difficulties faced by asylum seekers and refugees in the UK, and it's important that your voices are heard!

A key aspect of the inquiry's terms of reference is to examine the support available – both from state-funded bodies and civil society – for refugees to be welcomed into the UK. The Inquiry has particularly asked for evidence on the following topics:

- How far does current UK policy and legislation allow newly resettled and newly recognised refugees to integrate and rebuild their lives here?
- Are there any particular barriers that newly resettled and newly recognised refugees face?
- Are there any areas of good practice where refugees are being supported successfully? Are there any differences in support in the different regions of the UK?
- Is support provided to vulnerable refugees, including those who are disabled or who have been victims of torture, adequate?
- Do particular groups of new refugees, such as LGBTI refugees or refugee women, face any specific barriers to experiencing a welcome in Britain?
- What support is available to local communities who are accommodating refugees? What more could be done to support local communities who may be impacted by refugees?

It's best to focus your evidence on the basis of the experiences and expertise you have, so do not feel the need to answer all the questions!

2. Sharing your own experience as a refugee

The Inquiry team is particularly keen to hear from those who have recently been granted refugee status in the UK (within the last 12 months). You can either send in testimonies as a stand-alone piece of evidence, or can include it in a joint submission with other individuals or organisations.

The Inquiry is particularly interested in hearing about the following issues from newly granted refugees:

- What were your experiences of being a newly resettled or newly recognised refugee in the UK?
- Did you/do you have any support from any organisations to help you access services such as doctors' appointments or housing?
- Were there/are there any services that were easier to access? Were there/are there any services that were more difficult to access?

We've put together a form which can help individuals to capture and submit their evidence and you can download it from our website. We're happy to meet with anyone who'd like to share their story with the inquiry, so if you know someone who would be happy to share their story with the Inquiry, please get in touch with an RAA coordinator!

3. Inquiry Questions and Submission Templates

To make it as easy as possible for anyone to submit evidence to the inquiry, we've made a submission template. We've looked at the terms of reference of the inquiry and added in some extra question prompts and other tips. We hope this helps!

Top Tips!

1. Point – Evidence – Explain!

Make sure you back up your points with evidence! You can use statistics, stories and case studies to do this.

2. Make recommendations!

Submitting evidence to an inquiry is a great opportunity to make recommendations for national and local policy change.

3. Ask for help!

Not quite sure what to do? Get in touch with RAA! We're here to help.

Organisation Submission Template

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Explain who you are, what your organisation does (if you are from an organisation), and whether the response is a joint submission or from a single organisation.

1. How far does current UK policy and legislation allow newly resettled and newly recognised refugees to integrate and rebuild their lives here?

This question asks respondents to think about the impact of government policy on the experiences of new refugees in the UK. For example:

- *How does the asylum system impact on the experiences of new refugees? Think about the impact of Section 95, Section 4, inability to work, accommodation provision, access to healthcare, and length of time waiting for decisions.*
- *How does the 28-day grace period impact on the experience of new refugees? Think about problems in the move-on period, access to housing, benefits and education.*
- *What is the difference in the type of support received by resettled refugees (Gateway, Mandate and the SVPRS) compared with those in the asylum route.*

2. Are there any particular barriers that newly resettled and newly recognised refugees face?

This question is looking to identify particular issues faced by new refugees in accessing services or integrating after receiving decisions, and to look at why. For example:

- *Finding work/training*
- *Finding accommodation*
- *Access to healthcare*
- *Accessing higher education*
- *Accessing family reunion and travel documents*

3. Are there any areas of good practice where refugees are being supported successfully? Are there any differences in support in the different regions of the UK?

This question gives you the opportunity to talk about good practice and innovative work which has supported refugees. For example:

- *Local authority and third sector partnerships*
- *Locally produced integration strategies*
- *Community-led welcome initiatives*

4. Is support provided to vulnerable refugees, including those who are disabled or who have been victims of torture, adequate?

This question asks whether there is sufficient support made available to refugees with additional needs.

5. Do particular groups of new refugees, such as LGBTI refugees or refugee women, face any specific barriers to experiencing a welcome in Britain?

This question is an opportunity to highlight the specific issues faced by certain groups of new refugees. This is an opportunity to focus on your particular area of expertise and knowledge.

6. What support is available to local communities who are accommodating refugees? What more could be done to support local communities who may be impacted by refugees?

This question is looking at the relationship between local communities and new arrivals. It is an opportunity to consider the impact of asylum dispersal as well as more general comments on community cohesion and integration.