

# **Sanctuary in Scotland**

**Information on refugee issues  
for faith groups in Scotland**





# **Around the globe the number of people who have been forced to leave their homes has never been greater.**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates (June 2020) that there are 79.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide requiring humanitarian protection. This is more than at any time in the UNHCR's 70-year history.

The number of refugees coming to Scotland in recent years has been increasing.

Families have been resettled across the nation, from the central belt to the highlands and islands, in cities, towns and villages.

The response of local communities, of local authorities, of the Scottish Government and of Scotland's faith groups has been positive, but many people want to know more about the situation; why are there refugees coming here now? How can we help people, at home and overseas?

In November 2015 the Church of Scotland established a refugee co-ordination project. From the outset the Church sought advice from Scotland's Churches and religious communities, the result being a partnership called Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees.

We bring together Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Interfaith organisations who share a commitment to working together, across barriers of religion, race, nationality and culture, for the common good.

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees has been working with the Scottish Refugee Council, the Bridges Programmes and WEA Scotland on a two-year project from 2018-2020 called the New Scots Integration Programme. This project, part-funded by the European Union's Asylum Migration and Integration Fund, has sought to raise awareness of refugee integration issues among faith groups in Scotland.

We are living through times of political, economic and social uncertainty because of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union and the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. During such times the stranger and the immigrant can often suffer or be victimised; the role of diverse faith and cultural groups in working together for positive community cohesion is especially important.

# Definitions

**Christians, Muslims, Jews and people of all different religions recognise and respect the importance of every human person; life is special and precious, and we have a common duty to uphold and promote human dignity.**

And so, it is with caution that we should apply labels or attempt to define people, especially when it is increasingly the case that the terms 'asylum seeker' or 'migrant' carry a negative or pejorative connotation. Sometimes people use terms like 'migrant', 'immigrant' or 'refugee' fairly interchangeably, which can make it confusing.

It is important to set out some of the UK legal definitions you might come across at the start, as knowing these is necessary to understand the particular circumstances and potential needs of people you might meet or work with.

## Migrant

- lives or intends to settle somewhere other than their place of origin
- could have many reasons for moving

## Asylum seeker

- flees their homeland
- arrives in another country, whichever way they can
- makes themselves known to the authorities
- submits an asylum application
- in the UK, has a legal right to stay in the country while awaiting a decision

## Refugee

- has had their claim for asylum accepted by the government (in the UK, this is decided by the Home Office), or has been brought by the government from overseas from a refugee emergency situation
- can now stay either long-term or indefinitely

## Internally displaced person

- has been forced to leave their home
- remains within their own country (has not crossed an international border)
- can have the same humanitarian needs as refugees who have fled to another country

## Refused asylum seeker

- has been unable to prove (or the authorities have not accepted) that they would face persecution back home
- has been denied protection by the authorities
- must now leave the country, unless they wish to appeal the decision or there are legitimate reasons why they cannot yet return home
- In the UK, they have no right to accommodation, welfare or employment; destitution can often mean homelessness and relying on charities for support.

## Economic migrant

- has moved to another country to work
- could be legally or illegally resident, depending on how they entered the country
- may or may not have a legal work permit



## Find out more

**British Red Cross**  
[redcross.org.uk](https://www.redcross.org.uk)

**Scottish Refugee Council**  
[scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk)

# Statistics

**79.5**

**million forcibly displaced people worldwide**

**26**

**million refugees**

**45.7**

**million internally displaced people**

**4.2**

**million asylum seekers**

Statistics from:  
[unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance](https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance) [refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/the-truth-about-asylum](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/the-truth-about-asylum)  
(accessed August 2020)

Approximately **50%**  
of the 26 million refugees are  
under the age of 18.

The UK is home to approximately **1%**  
of the 26 million refugees.

**73%**  
of the world's displaced people  
live in countries neighbouring  
their countries of origin.

**68%**  
of UNHCR refugees come  
from five countries:  
Syria (6.6 million)  
Venezuela (3.7 million)  
Afghanistan (2.7 million)  
South Sudan (2.2 million)  
Myanmar (1.1 million)

**The five top refugee-hosting  
countries are:**

**Turkey (3.6 million)**  
**Colombia (1.8 million)**  
**Pakistan (1.4 million)**  
**Uganda (1.4 million)**  
**Germany (1.1 million)**

## Global migration

In 2018 it was estimated that more than 258 million people were international migrants. According to the BBC 'the number of people crossing borders in search of a better life has been rising steadily. At the start of the twenty-first century, one in every 35 people is an international migrant.'

## Forced displacement

The number of people worldwide who have been forcibly displaced due to conflict or persecution is 79.5 million. This figure includes 45.7 million people who were displaced within their own country (known as internally displaced people, IDPs). (UNHCR, 2020).

## Displacement due to the climate emergency

At the 13th Economic Forum in Prague in May 2005, Prof Norman Myers of Oxford University said: 'When global warming takes hold there could be as many as 200 million people [displaced] by disruptions of monsoon systems and other rainfall regimes, by droughts of unprecedented severity and duration, and by sea-level rise and coastal flooding.'

## Modern day slavery

There are more people enslaved today than at any other time in history. Experts have calculated that roughly 13 million people were captured and sold as slaves between the 15th and 19th centuries; today it is estimated that more than 40.3 million people are living in some form of modern slavery, according to the International Labour Organisation and the Walk Free Foundation. 1 in 4 are children, and 71% are women and girls. In the UK over 10,000 people were identified as potential victims by the authorities in 2019. Although not all slaves are migrants, some people overseas are exploited or trafficked to the UK to be forced to work as slaves. This includes forced sexual exploitation, domestic slavery or forced labour on farms, in construction, shops, bars, nail bars, car washes or manufacturing. Rescued survivors of modern slavery in the UK who are also migrants may need additional protection if they have a fear of persecution if they were to be returned to their country of origin.

<http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migration-to-the-uk-asylum/>

# Why do people become refugees?

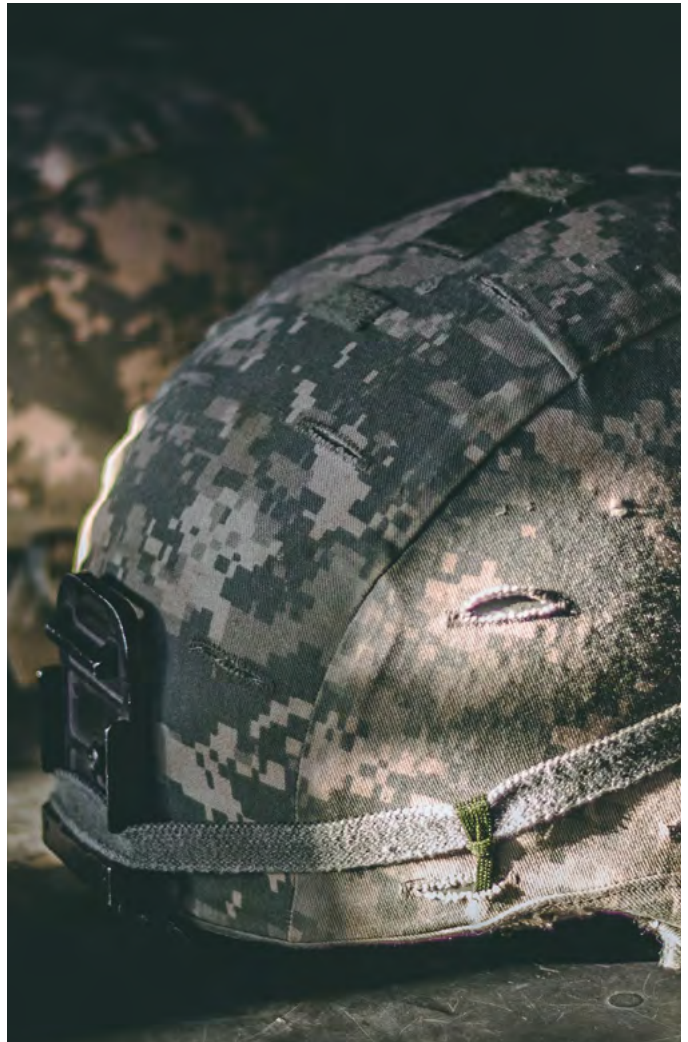
## War

Throughout history, armed conflict has affected civilian populations. After the Second World War the devastation of Europe led to the creation of international aid agencies including Christian Aid and Oxfam. War and terrorism today are two of the main reasons why large numbers of people have to leave their homes.

### Find out more

**United Nations High Commission for Refugees**  
[unhcr.org](http://unhcr.org)

**Oxfam**  
[oxfam.org.uk](http://oxfam.org.uk)







# Why do people become refugees?

## Escaping persecution

Another consequence of the Second World War and the Holocaust was the establishment of the United Nations, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Refugee Convention. These established the principles that no-one should suffer persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, gender, sexual orientation or disability. In parts of some countries today life is difficult for religious minorities, such as for Christians in some places in Pakistan, or Muslims in Myanmar, where the governments are unable or unwilling to protect minorities. Freedom of expression and criticism of the government in countries like Iran and Eritrea can also be dangerous and mean that people have to try to escape.

### Find out more

**Amnesty International UK**  
[amnesty.org.uk](https://www.amnesty.org.uk)

**Freedom Declared**  
[freedomdeclared.org](https://www.freedomdeclared.org)

# Why do people become refugees?

## Climate crisis

The UN Refugee Convention recognises protection from persecution, but it is becoming clear that climate refugees will increase in numbers over the coming years. Large parts of Bangladesh and a number of low-lying South Pacific island states are at severe risk of rising sea levels; what will happen to these people and cultures when their homes are destroyed? In other places droughts, floods or changing weather patterns might make continued habitation much harder. At the Paris Climate Conference in December 2015 rich nations agreed \$100bn worth of support to help poorer nations respond to the unavoidable effects of the climate emergency; helping the people forced to move needs to be part of this conversation. The Global Compact on Refugees, adopted by an overwhelming majority in the UN General Assembly in December 2018, recognised that 'climate, environmental degradation and natural disasters increasingly interact with the drivers of refugee movements.'

### Find out more

**Friends of the Earth**

[foe.co.uk](http://foe.co.uk)

**The Climate and Migration Coalition**

[climatemigration.org.uk](http://climatemigration.org.uk)





# Why do people become refugees?

## Poverty

In some countries extreme, chronic poverty of individuals and lack of state resources for infrastructure in education and employment means that there is sometimes no choice between starvation and migration. Remittances (money earned by people working in higher income countries sent home to families in poorer nations) can sustain families and protect whole villages from disaster. With the resources of the world so unequally distributed, it is not surprising that some people would be willing to risk everything by putting money and their lives in the hands of people traffickers to try to reach Europe, the USA or Australia through difficult and dangerous journeys.

### Find out more

**Christian Aid**  
[christianaid.org.uk](http://christianaid.org.uk)

**War on Want**  
[waronwant.org](http://waronwant.org)

# A Global Issue

Rather than thinking about a single 'refugee crisis', the world is actually experiencing an increasing trend towards the mass forced displacement of millions of people.

Some of these are issues driven by long-term factors, such as climate change and inequality, others by specific emergencies in individual countries or regions.

There are often refugee hotspots at border crossings as people seek sanctuary and come up against bureaucratic challenges or political hostility.

The UNHCR – the United Nations Refugee Agency – publishes a current list of emergency situations at [unhcr.org/emergencies](https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies)

Faith groups around the world work together to address international and regional issues:

**The International Catholic Migration Commission**  
[icmc.net](https://www.icmc.net)

**The World Council of Churches**  
[oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/migration-and-social-justice](https://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/migration-and-social-justice)

**HIAS - The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society**  
[hias.org](https://www.hias.org)

**The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe**  
[ccme.eu](https://www.ccme.eu)

**Churches Together in Britain and Ireland - Churches Refugee Network**  
[ctbi.org.uk/category/witnessing-together/asylum-and-refugees/crn](https://www.ctbi.org.uk/category/witnessing-together/asylum-and-refugees/crn)



## The UK and refugees

The UK has a long history of being a place of refuge, from the French Huguenots in the 17th and 18th Centuries, to Belgian refugees in the First World War, and European Jews in the 1930s. It was British lawyers and diplomats who helped frame the language of Human Rights and established the United Nations in 1948.

This respect for human rights and the rule of law is widely recognised and refugees coming to the UK will often cite this tradition as a reason for wanting to seek sanctuary here. There remains a reputation that Britain is a welcoming and hospitable place for refugees.

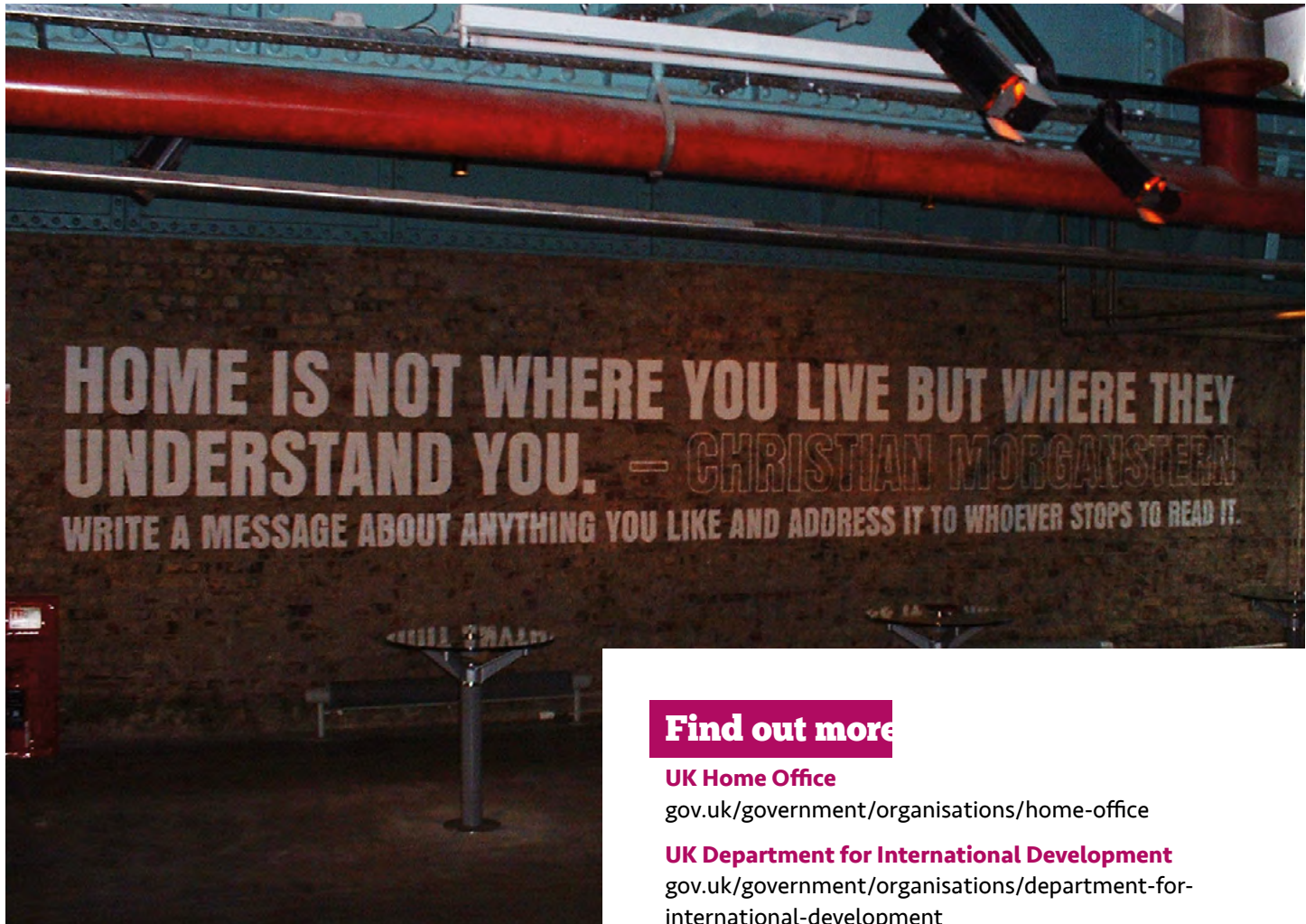
The UK Government sets some of the major refugee and asylum policy areas, including how much international aid money is spent to help humanitarian relief work overseas. It also sets limits on the numbers of people coming through resettlement programmes. It decides on the level of support refugees receive when they are in the UK and how the asylum process is implemented, including how decisions are made, what rights people seeking asylum have and the level of their humanitarian support. The Government is also responsible for the process by which refugees in the UK can be reunited with their family members, and for helping children who have been

separated from their parents or carers to be offered a place of safety and help bring them back together.

In recent years, however, UK Government policy has changed and is becoming increasingly harsh towards asylum seekers and refugees. Public concern about levels of immigration, as well as a rise in far-right and populist movements around the world whipping up fears and stoking racial and religious hatred, have played a part in changing the refugee landscape in the UK.

Faith groups, human rights campaigners and refugee-led organisations have been challenging and criticising the UK Government for its divisive rhetoric and for implementing a programme of policies known as the 'hostile environment' which are designed to make life for asylum seekers and refugees as miserable as possible, in order to push them to give up and return to their country of origin – even if they face a fear of persecution.

For information about particular issues, including housing, employment, destitution, detention and deportation, see the information on pages 22-34 to learn more and find out what Scottish faith groups are doing and how you can support calls for improvements to how asylum seekers and refugees are treated.



## Find out more

### UK Home Office

[gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office)

### UK Department for International Development

[gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-development](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-development)

# Scotland and refugees

The land Clearances in Scotland's Highlands and Lowlands in the 19th Century are a useful reminder that we've been here before; but then it was forced migration from Scotland to many other parts of the world.

In the 1980s and 1990s Scotland welcomed small numbers of refugees from Vietnam and the Balkans.

Small numbers of refugees from other emergency situations have been resettled in Scotland including:

- In 2007 80 people from the Democratic Republic of Congo came to Motherwell in South Lanarkshire
- From 2013 five Scottish local authorities agreed to participate in a scheme to resettle Afghan staff and their families who worked with the British armed forces in Afghanistan during the military action from 2001-2014.

## Find out more

**Scottish Government - New Scots**  
[beta.gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers](https://beta.gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers)

**COSLA** - [migrationscotland.org.uk](https://migrationscotland.org.uk)







## Asylum dispersal

In 2000 as a result of UK Government decisions, people seeking asylum in the UK were sent to stay in different cities and towns in a policy known as 'dispersal'. In Scotland, the City of Glasgow has been the main local authority area to take part and accommodate asylum seekers. Since 2000 Glasgow has been home to significant numbers of people seeking asylum, who have come from many different countries and for many different reasons. It also means that faith groups, charities and residents of Glasgow have considerable experience of working with and alongside people in the asylum process. In fact, Glasgow has more asylum seekers than any other local authority area in the whole of the UK; at the end of June 2019 more than 4,000 people seeking asylum were living in Glasgow.

Since 2015, every local authority area in Scotland has received Syrian refugees under a UK Government resettlement programme.



## Resettlement of Vulnerable People

In the autumn of 2015 the UK Government announced a new increased target for resettlement of vulnerable refugees from UNHCR camps in emergency situations, with people being brought directly to the UK. The initial target was to resettle 20,000 vulnerable people from the war in Syria, plus an additional 3,000 vulnerable children and their families from the wider Middle East and North Africa region, over the period from 2015-2020.

All of Scotland's local authorities agreed to participate in the resettlement programme. By the end of 2019:

19,353 people came to the UK through the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Programme. 3,190 came to 32 Scottish local authorities.

1,747 people came to the UK through the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Programme. 251 to nine different Scottish local authorities.

The resettlement costs are provided by the UK Government. For the first year of resettlement the costs come from the overseas aid budget. For years 2-5 local authorities receive a tapered level of support (from £5,000 per person in their second year to £1,000 per person in year five).

In the summer of 2019 the UK Government announced that it would combine the existing resettlement programmes and expand them to establish a new Global Resettlement Scheme to begin in spring 2020, initially aiming to resettle 4,000-5,000 people per year.

## Community Sponsorship

Since 2016 it has been possible for faith and community groups in the UK to take part in a Community Sponsorship programme. This allows local groups to be directly involved supporting the resettlement of a refugee family through one of the Government resettlement schemes mentioned above. From 2020, refugees who come through Community Sponsorship are counted in addition to the resettlement targets set by the UK Government, so it will make a real difference to the number of people who can be offered a place of safety.

### Find out more

**RESET Community and Refugees – Community Sponsorship support**

[resetuk.org](https://resetuk.org)

**Sponsor Refugees – Citizens UK**

<https://www.sponsorrefugees.org/>



# Refugee Integration in Scotland: New Scots

Integration is a long-term, dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation, where all parties give and receive.

It involves positive change in both individuals and receiving communities, which leads to cohesion and respect for diversity and different cultural identities. This involves a shift in the majority communities' ways of thinking. It is necessary to understand and accept that cultures and identities – including our own – are not static but changing. Integration is also a process of reducing socio-economic barriers between people or groups of people, creating equal opportunities and enabling people to participate actively in the public, economic, social, and political as well as religious spheres; it is a common effort towards a peaceful and equitable society.

Faith is an important factor for integration. For many people religion is an essential part of their identity but often in policy approaches to integration religion is subsumed under culture.

In Scotland the Scottish Government has developed the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018-2022. The strategy sets out a vision for a welcoming Scotland where refugees and asylum seekers are able to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive.

Integration is measured by indicators (Employment, Housing, Health, Education, Social connections ('bonds', 'bridges' and 'links'), Language and cultural knowledge, Safety and stability, and Rights), which can identify areas for particular development for individuals and communities.

The five principles that underpin the New Scots strategy are:

- Integration from day one
- A rights based approach
- Refugee involvement
- Inclusive communities
- Partnership and collaboration

Scottish faith groups work with other voluntary sector organisations, refugee community groups, local and national Government and statutory agencies to help improve outcomes for refugee integration, both for New Scots as well as for receiving communities.

**Find out more**

**New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy**

[gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/new-scots/](https://gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/new-scots/)





**Our context:**  
**issues for refugees, society**  
**and faith groups in Scotland**

## Children

Save the Children have a particular focus on the needs of refugee children, including the welfare of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who may be seeking to come to the UK to be with friends and family.

### **Save the Children**

[savethechildren.org.uk](http://savethechildren.org.uk)

In the UK the British Red Cross support people who have been granted refugee status to be reunited with their families, as family reunification is one of the rights which refugees are granted.

### **British Red Cross**

[redcross.org.uk/](http://redcross.org.uk/)

In Scotland the Scottish Guardianship Service and Aberlour work to support child refugees especially where they have been separated from their parents.

### **Scottish Guardianship Service**

[gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/  
unaccompanied-children](http://gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/unaccompanied-children)

### **Aberlour**

[aberlouraberlour.org.uk/services/scottish-guardianship-  
service/](http://aberlouraberlour.org.uk/services/scottish-guardianship-service/)

## Culture

The sharing of stories, food, music and art through intercultural dialogue and encounter can be one of the most rewarding experiences for refugees (sharing what is important and precious to them) as well as for people belonging to the host community (as an opportunity to learn new things and have new experiences).

Refugee Festival Scotland takes places every year in late June / early July and is an opportunity for mutual sharing and learning. The Scottish Refugee Council also have an arts and culture programme.

[refugeefestivalscotland.co.uk](http://refugeefestivalscotland.co.uk)

[scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/working-for-change/  
arts-culture](http://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/working-for-change/arts-culture)







Photo credit: Ahmad Sharaf

## Destitution

People seeking asylum can experience destitution – when they are left with no accommodation and no financial support. This could be because their asylum claim has been refused, and they are no longer entitled to support from the state. Or if their claim is successful, they have 28 days to vacate their accommodation; not much time to find an alternative, and it can be impossible to provide a deposit if they have no income.

The Refugee Survival Trust is a Scotland-based charity which supports people in this situation, including by offering small grants to help people buy food and other essentials and bus passes. They lead a partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council, British Red Cross, University of Strathclyde and Glasgow Night Shelter, which provides the Destitution Asylum Seeker Service (DASS). DASS offers advice, legal support and help with finding temporary accommodation.

**Refugee Survival Trust** [rst.org.uk](http://rst.org.uk)

**DASS** [rst.org.uk/what-we-do/destitute-asylum-seeker-service-dass](http://rst.org.uk/what-we-do/destitute-asylum-seeker-service-dass)

Glasgow Destitute Asylum Network (GLADAN) brings together charities, church and community groups and individuals who are actively concerned for people who have been made destitute, and in many cases homeless, following the refusal of their application for asylum, and other vulnerable migrants with no recourse to public funds.

**[destitutionaction.wordpress.com](http://destitutionaction.wordpress.com)**

## Detention

People can be detained in Immigration Removal Centres either during the asylum application process or if they have applied and been refused. Some will be sent back to their country of origin, but many cannot – even if they want to. Some are stateless, because their country won't accept them back (many asylum seekers do not have a valid passport); others have lived in the UK for many years and can no longer prove their original nationality. Many stateless people find themselves detained indefinitely. Others are detained because their countries are too dangerous for deportations to take place. At the end of 2019 more than 160 people have been held in detention for more than six months. Most bail applications are refused. In 2019 73 children were detained

There is one Immigration Removal Centre in Scotland, at Dungavel near Strathaven. It has room for 249 men and women and is operated by GEO Group on behalf of the UK Home Office. At the end of 2019 there were 42 people detained in Dungavel.

**Scottish Detainee Visitors**

[sdv.org.uk](http://sdv.org.uk)

**Detention Action**

[detentionaction.org.uk](http://detentionaction.org.uk)

**Bail for Immigration**

[Detaineesbiduk.org](http://Detaineesbiduk.org)

## Employment

The rights on access to employment are different for asylum seekers and refugees. People who have been granted refugee status, including those who have been resettled directly from overseas, are allowed to work. People who are still seeking asylum are prohibited from working. This policy has been in place since 2002; a wide coalition of refugee organisations and faith groups have called on the UK Government to 'Lift the Ban' on asylum seekers working after they have been in the country for six months.

### Lift the Ban campaign

[refugee-action.org.uk/lift-the-ban/](http://refugee-action.org.uk/lift-the-ban/)

For refugees with the right to work, getting into employment can be difficult due to language and cultural differences, or the challenges in recognising qualifications obtained overseas. Glasgow-based charity the Bridges Programmes aims to help refugees into employment, education or training.

### Bridges Programmes

[bridgesprogrammes.org.uk](http://bridgesprogrammes.org.uk)

## Empowerment

Developing the bonds between refugees can help new approaches and ideas to develop. A number of Refugee Community Organisations around the UK have been set up and are able to speak on issues which matter to them. This can also help to develop links with decision-makers and influence shapers in public policy and wider society, meaning that the views of the people most affected are taken into consideration, following the model of the Poverty Truth Commission: Nothing About Us Without Us Is For Us.

Finding things which interest individual refugees can also provide both an occupation as well as a chance to make friends with other refugees and with members of the host community. Just one example is: Bikes for Refugees is an Edinburgh-based project which enables refugee volunteers to help repair old bikes and provide them to those which need them.

Find out about refugee community organisations on the New Scots Connect map.

[scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/location](http://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/location)

In 2020 the Scottish Parliament legislated for all persons legally resident in the country to have voting rights for local and Scottish Parliamentary election.

[scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/working-for-change/policy-campaigns/right-to-vote/](http://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/working-for-change/policy-campaigns/right-to-vote/)



## Food and Shelter

For refugees the lack of security and stability can make it difficult to access basic needs for bread and a bed. Sharing food, especially preparing and eating together, can be an important action of bringing people together, one which underlines our common humanity.

In Scotland, you can support refugees through helping local community food projects such as community kitchens or foodbanks. Be aware that different religious groups have different rules and restrictions on certain foods, and so check first what is needed or appropriate.

As there is a significant population of refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow, a list of projects working to meet basic needs including food projects, a night shelter for homeless asylum seekers and refugee charity Positive Action in Housing are listed by GLADAN – Glasgow Asylum Destitution Action Network.

### **GLADAN**

[destitutionaction.wordpress.com](http://destitutionaction.wordpress.com)

The situation in Calais has been high profile since the summer of 2015. Scottish Catholic groups have supported the Catholic Worker House in Calais, Maria Skobtsova.

The Church of England Diocese in Europe also has activities with the migrant population and works with a number of organisations offering practical assistance.

### **Maria Skobtsova House, Calais**

[mariaskobtsova.org](http://mariaskobtsova.org)

### **Diocese in Europe**

28 [europe.anglican.org](http://europe.anglican.org)

## Gender

Side by Side is a growing global movement of people of faith who want to see gender justice become a reality across the world. They draw together faith communities in many different countries, and in each country work together wherever possible to meet local challenges in bringing about justice and equality for all people, irrespective of gender.

### **Side by Side**

[sidebysidegender.org](http://sidebysidegender.org)

In Scotland Refugee Women's Strategy Group (RWSG) is a group of refugee and asylum seeking women, supported by Scottish Refugee Council and funded by Comic Relief, whose aim is to ensure that the voices of refugee women in Scotland are heard. RWSG work together to represent the views of refugee and asylum seeking women to key decision makers and service providers in order to influence the policy and practices that affect their lives. Their group is an integral part of Scottish Refugee Policy Forum, which is a federation of Refugee Community Organisations.

### **Refugee Women's Strategy Group**

[scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/refugee-women-working-together-to-bring-about-real-change/](http://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/refugee-women-working-together-to-bring-about-real-change/)

Amma birth companions are a charity that provide trained, nurturing birth companions to vulnerable women in Glasgow who face giving birth alone, away from their friends, family and other support systems.

### **Amma Birth Companions**

[ammabirthcompanions.com](http://ammabirthcompanions.com)

## Health

In Scotland, everyone is still offered universal healthcare provision regardless of their asylum or refugee status. This is not the same for other parts of the UK because health care is a matter devolved to the Scottish Parliament. For example, in England access to some NHS services are not available to people seeking asylum that have had their claim refused.

Information for Scottish healthcare professionals is available at:

[nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/healthcare-for-refugees-and-asylum-seekers](https://nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/healthcare-for-refugees-and-asylum-seekers)

## Language

Language is one of the most important factors in someone feeling able to contribute to and participate in wider society, from finding out information like reading a bus timetable to being able to express your opinion or ask questions.

In Scotland a number of services for refugees and asylum seekers to learn English are provided – a range of projects are listed by ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Scotland.

### **Glasgow ESOL Forum**[glasgowesol.org](https://glasgowesol.org)

Sharing Lives, Sharing Languages is a programme developed by the Scottish Refugee Council to help community organisations run language and integration projects.

[scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/sharing-lives-sharing-languages/](https://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/sharing-lives-sharing-languages/)

## Legal Protections, Rights and Entitlements

The legal issues in the UK around refugee protection and the asylum process are complicated and change frequently, often because of policy decisions by the UK Government. Understanding how all the legal issues interact (such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, EU rules, rights to family reunion, legal aid funding etc.) in detail is not easy, but if you are or know someone who is seeking asylum or would like to know more, UK charity Right to Remain have produced a Toolkit – a guide to the UK immigration and asylum system. It gives an overview of the legal system and procedures, with detailed information on rights and options at key stages, and actions you can take in support of your claim, or to help someone else. The development of the Toolkit was made possible thanks to the financial support of members of the Iona Community.

### **Right to Remain Toolkit**

[righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit](https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit)

For wider issues relating to migration in general (covering asylum and refugee as well as economic-social migration), the charities Migrants Rights Network (which seeks to promote policy analysis, partnership and debate for the rights of all migrants) and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (which campaigns for justice in immigration, nationality and asylum law and policy) are useful sources of information.

### **Migrants Rights Network**

[migrantsrights.org.uk](https://migrantsrights.org.uk)

### **Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants**

[jcwi.org.uk](https://jcwi.org.uk)





## Media

The media – broadcast, print, online and social networks – have an important role both in raising awareness as well as shaping public attitudes and opinion about migration in general and refugee issues in particular. We have a role in being alert to the political bias of different newspapers, and of promoting positive stories and news on our own social media platforms.

Christian Aid are inviting supporters to contact their newspapers on refugee issues in a programme called Change the Story.

### **Christian Aid Change the Story**

[christianaid.org.uk/change-the-story](http://christianaid.org.uk/change-the-story)

## Modern Slavery

Human trafficking and modern day slavery are global issues; it is now estimated there are more people living in slavery today than at the height of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In the UK rescued victims of human trafficking can be in a vulnerable position as returning to their country of origin could risk sending them back to the people traffickers. Some will find their only option is to seek sanctuary in the UK.

TARA – Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance – offers support services to rescued victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Scotland. Migrant Help provides services to victims rescued from domestic servitude. Action of Churches Together in Scotland have an Anti-Trafficking Group which seeks to raise awareness and provide more information about trafficking issues in Scotland. Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland (SOHTIS) is a charity that works to raise awareness and support individuals who have escaped or been rescued from slavery in Scotland.

### **TARA**

[communitysafetyglasgow.org/what-we-do/supporting-victims-of-gender-based-violence](http://communitysafetyglasgow.org/what-we-do/supporting-victims-of-gender-based-violence)

### **Migrant Help**

[migranthehelpuk.org](http://migranthehelpuk.org)

### **ACTS Anti-Trafficking**

[Groupacts-scotland.org/activities/anti-human-trafficking](http://Groupacts-scotland.org/activities/anti-human-trafficking)

### **SOHTIS**

[sohtis.org](http://sohtis.org)

## Politics

Following the UK vote to leave the European Union in June 2016 there has been a reported increase in anti-immigrant hate crime. With political attention now focussed on the process by which the UK leaves the EU, questions about how the UK lives up to its obligations to offer refugee protection are in danger of being overlooked.

The Joint Public Issues Team (Church of Scotland, Methodist Church, United Reformed Church and Baptist Union of Great Britain) contribute to public policy development on refugees and support campaigns and lobbying initiatives. They have a longstanding theme of work around 'welcoming the stranger'. Keep up to date with their work and the latest developments on their website, by subscribing to their newsletter or following them on social media.

### **Joint Public Issues Team**

[jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://jointpublicissues.org.uk)

At Westminster an All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees brings together politicians from all different parties to explore issues and make recommendations. This APPG on Refugees is supported by the Refugee Council in England.

### **Refugee Council (England)**

[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

## Religion

Freedom of religion is an important part of life in Scotland today; you don't have to look far back in Scotland's history to see what impact sectarianism and the wars of religion had on the peace and prosperity of society. Religious hate crime is still a factor, however, and asylum seekers and refugees can be targeted for their religion (or perceived religion) or race. For new arrivals in Scotland, finding a place of worship can also be important.

Some people seek asylum in the UK because their religion makes it impossible to live in their country of origin. For others, it might be a case of seeking asylum for non-religious reasons but when in the UK they convert to a different religion, which could make it much harder for them to return to their country of origin. Such cases are often treated with scepticism or labelled 'conversions of convenience' in order to support an asylum claim. From time to time ministers of religion are called on to provide expert advice on the truthfulness of someone's religious experiences. If you are in this situation, please contact Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees for further information (contact details on the back page).

## Social Connections

When people from different nationalities, races, religions, cultures and languages come together it can often be difficult to overcome barriers and differences. For good community cohesion and integration of new arrivals it takes effort from both sides – but the results will be good for everybody.

All across Scotland there are new voluntary groups set up to welcome refugees or to encourage people to take action to support refugees at home or abroad. Find out what is happening in your area on the New Scots Connect map.

[scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/location](http://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/location)

The Scottish Community Development Centre provide training and consultancy support in all aspects of community development. They provide support to all organisations and partnerships that work in and with communities to support community engagement and community capacity building in any context and at strategic and practice level.

**Scottish Community Development Centre**

[scdc.org.uk](http://scdc.org.uk)

The Scottish charity Refugee Survival Trust offers grants to refugees to help access education and employment opportunities – both can be important things to help refugees feel able to belong to and contribute to society.

**Refugee Survival Trust**

[rst.org.uk](http://rst.org.uk)



## Visa Fees

The Home Office grants many people Discretionary Leave to Remain for 30 months; once each time period is up they must make a fresh application for Further Leave to Remain until they have clocked up 10 years, when they can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (after a further year they can apply for citizenship).

Applications for Further Leave to Remain used to be free. In recent years the fees have risen sharply and now far exceed the cost incurred for administering each application. In 2020 Further Leave to Remain costs the Home Office £143 to administer, but the fee is £1,022. Indefinite Leave to Remain costs £243 but the fee is £2,389. There is an additional Health surcharge of £400 per year per application.

There is now legal aid for renewals, and although an application can be made for the fee to be waived if the applicant demonstrates that they will otherwise become destitute, solicitors face the dilemma that they cannot apply for a fee waiver without charging an extra fee themselves. And there is no guarantee of success and no right of appeal.

Migrant Voice is leading a campaign to review the level of Home Office fees.

**Migrant Voice**  
migrantvoice.org

## Torture

Freedom from Torture is a UK based charity which works with survivors of torture. The majority of Freedom from Torture clients report having been targeted due to their race, ethnic origin, gender, religious, cultural or political beliefs. Political activists and journalists are often selected by the authorities for exercising their freedom of expression and vocalising their opposition to government policies. Many people are tortured during conflicts, where torture is used to instil a climate of fear and to force people to flee. Family members are sometimes targeted simply by association in an effort to get to someone else.

Freedom from Torture also helps the children of torture survivors who have been through great trauma. They may have witnessed violence and abuse or been forced to interpret the stories of their parents to the authorities in the UK, causing them to digest and repeat information which can have a traumatising effect.

They have a centre in Glasgow which offers assessment, counselling and psychotherapy, medico-legal report writing service (for presenting evidence to support an asylum claim) and training and supervision for local agencies working with survivors.

**Freedom from Torture**  
freedomfromtorture.org





**Take action**  
**what can I do?,**  
**what can my community do?**





# Become a Church of Sanctuary or a Place of Worship of Sanctuary: Revitalizing an ancient tradition

Church of Sanctuary is an initiative from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. It can easily be adapted for other faith communities, and any group can sign up to the non-religious City of Sanctuary movement, which includes a section for faith groups.

Sanctuary, or hospitality-with-safety, is a long-standing prophetic theme of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, the foundation for which is found in the Law-books of the Hebrew Scriptures, and echoed in Jesus' teaching about how we treat the neighbour and the outsider. The Hebrew Scriptures refer once to love of neighbour and 37 times to love of the outsider or stranger. Sanctuary in churches used to assist those who claimed to be innocent of a crime, but in the last few decades has operated in churches in Central America, the United States and the UK primarily to protect immigrants or refugees facing deportation by the state. Now we need places of worship who wish to meet and greet new arrivals fleeing from war and hunger. We need sanctuary for all vulnerable people.

There are three steps to becoming a Church or Place of Worship of Sanctuary. The whole congregation needs to be involved:

**LEARN** – about what it means to be seeking sanctuary, and be actively involved in awareness raising

**EMBED** – take positive action to make welcome and inclusion part of the values of your congregation or community, to support those seeking sanctuary and refuge, and to include them in your activities

**SHARE** – with pride, your vision and achievements: let others know about the positive contribution refugees make to society and the benefits of a welcoming culture for everyone

Involve people seeking sanctuary, and refugees, in helping you to progress and achieve these principles.

Talk about how you will sustain this work in meaningful ways

Resources and more information about becoming a Church or Place of Worship of Sanctuary can be found online at:

## Church of Sanctuary

[churchofsanctuary.org](http://churchofsanctuary.org)

## Hospitality and Sanctuary for All – a pamphlet by the Rev Dr Inderjit Bhogal

[churchofsanctuary.org/resources](http://churchofsanctuary.org/resources)

## City of Sanctuary

[cityofsanctuary.org/by-theme/faiths/](http://cityofsanctuary.org/by-theme/faiths/)

# Call for Change

Contact your elected representatives and ask them to outline what they are doing to help refugees. Don't just write to your MP or MSPs, contact your local councillors as well. Local authorities have a critical decision to make about whether they are involved in resettlement programmes. The best thing you can do is to contact or meet all your representatives – your Westminster MP, your Holyrood MSPs and your local councillors.

Make sure you get a reply – if you don't then follow up your contact. As your representatives they work for you and are accountable to you.

If you can, why not invite them along to a community event or a meeting so they can meet other members of your group?

## **Write to your Westminster MP on issues relating to Home Office policy and International Development policy:**

- The right to work for asylum seekers and the level of support they receive
- The quality of accommodation and access to services
- Policies of dawn raids and detention
- Destitution
- Decision-making in asylum cases and legal processes
- The numbers of refugees resettled directly from conflict zones

- The administration of family reunification and to offer resettlement in the UK to unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- Commitment to the 0.7% target for aid spending
- Ensuring that money is spent well and on humanitarian relief and protection

## **Write to your Holyrood MSPs about:**

- Promoting support for refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland as it relates to their wellbeing and integration
- Tackling racial and religious hatred
- Promoting respect for diversity in the education system and in public life

## **Write to your local councillors to:**

- Ensure that your local authority is doing everything it can to participate in UK wide programmes to offer a home to asylum seekers and refugees, which might include participating in asylum dispersal, receiving more people under resettlement programmes, and / or offering help to unaccompanied asylum seeking children, transferred from other parts of the UK or resettled from places such as Calais or camps around Syria.
- Ask that they are committed to making your local area one which is safe for everyone.





## Tips

- ▶ Meet Your MSP and Meet Your MP materials have been produced by the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office – [scpo.scot](http://scpo.scot)
- ▶ Sign up to newsletters and follow on social media some of the campaign groups and refugee organisations listed in this booklet.
- ▶ Do you have someone who has direct experience whose story you could share?
- ▶ If you have a sympathetic representative, why not ask if they'd like to share a story on their website or ask them to sign a Motion (Holyrood) or Early Day Motion (Westminster) to show their support?



## Give money

If you are able to give money, please consider donating to a charity that works with refugees. The scale of need is increasing, both at home as well as internationally. Projects are continually struggling to meet demand and the extent of humanitarian need continues to grow.

You may wish to support small charities or large ones.

You might want to help work overseas or here at home.

You might want to contribute something which relates to your own faith tradition or interests; you and your faith community will know (or will be able to decide) what is best.

You might also want to fund-raise for a specific cause or charity, perhaps as a sponsored event. This can be a fun way of doing something with other people and you also get the chance to raise awareness of the issue and your support for refugees at the same time.

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees is happy to help advise you on some of the charities that we have worked with that have a longstanding track record and excellent reputation for their work with refugees, at home and abroad. Please get in touch with us by visiting our website [sfar.org.uk](http://sfar.org.uk).

Some organisations also collect donated goods and arrange for them to be transported and distributed. This might be for refugees in Scotland (and can include food banks), or for people overseas.

Our advice is that money can often be spent better locally rather than incur costs for storage, transport and distribution – but we know that for many people it can be a case of giving both money and donated items. And so we recommend if you are thinking about donating items:

- ▶ You should give in response to clear list of requested items – so you know that the thing you are collecting will be needed.
- ▶ The organisation doing the collection is a registered charity (do they have a charity number that you can check) – so you know that there is a process or ensuring that the donations are used for the purpose intended
- ▶ Consider if you can give money as well or instead – to bypass the costs of storage, transport, sorting and distribution.

## Meet, talk, eat and share life together

Personal encounter and building friendships is often much more effective at teaching us new understanding than learning knowledge.

As refugee numbers are increasing in Scotland, and people are being settled all across the country, many people who are supportive of refugees would like the chance to offer their own support by volunteering or making friends to new neighbours.

In Scotland there are a number of activities and initiatives that have been set up to help you connect with others to meet and learn together.

New Scots Connect is an online map and database of organisations and activities connected to refugee integration across Scotland. You can register your own faith community with what you are doing or can offer, and find out what else is happening in your area.

**[scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/location](http://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/location)**

Local authorities have responsibility for managing refugee resettlement in their areas. If you want to know how many refugees are living in an area, what activities are taking place and how you can support the council staff members in welcoming refugees, contact your local authority office and ask about refugee resettlement, or speak to your elected Councillors or members of the community council.

If you live in or near Glasgow, where there is a much larger asylum seeker and refugee population, you should find out what the Glasgow Integration Networks are doing – these

bodies, which cover different parts of the city, bring together organisations and individuals to share information and work together to support integration:

**Govan Community Project** [govancommunityproject.org.uk](http://govancommunityproject.org.uk)

**Central and West Integration Network** [cwin.org.uk](http://cwin.org.uk)

**South East Integration Network** [seinglasgow.org.uk](http://seinglasgow.org.uk)

**Maryhill Integration Network** [maryhillintegration.org.uk](http://maryhillintegration.org.uk)

**North Glasgow Integration Network** [facebook.com/  
NorthGlasgowIntegrationNetwork](https://facebook.com/NorthGlasgowIntegrationNetwork)

**Local Welcome** makes it fun and easy to cook and eat with refugees in your community. They have a group in Glasgow as well as other cities across the UK – and are looking to grow. They have useful instructions for people wanting to organise and lead, and for people who want to support and lend a hand. [localwelcome.org](http://localwelcome.org)

If you have a spare room, or your faith community has accommodation that is not currently being used, could your bed be offered to an asylum seeker or refugee who has found themselves to be homeless? Refugees at Home and Room for Refugees are two programmes that match homeless or destitute asylum seekers or refugees with hosts – providing emergency accommodation and the opportunity for a life-changing experience for both host and guest.

**[refugeesathome.org](http://refugeesathome.org)**  
**[roomforrefugees.com](http://roomforrefugees.com)**

## Develop partnerships and organise

Faith groups have an enormous capacity to help co-ordinate community responses and activities. They can be a source of volunteers and sometimes can help with fund-raising. They have buildings, or connections to other faith groups that might have space to meet or hold events. They are respected in the community and have links with schools, the police, local politicians and other civic and voluntary organisations.

Whether or not you have refugees in your immediate neighbourhood, there are other things that you could consider to help build a culture of welcome and support:

Join or start an interfaith group to promote dialogue and understanding

**[interfaithscotland.org](http://interfaithscotland.org)**

Join a local City of Sanctuary group if there is already one in your area

**[cityofsanctuary.org](http://cityofsanctuary.org)**

Promote Refugee Festival (June) events in your community, or host events in your premises

**[refugeefestivalscotland.co.uk](http://refugeefestivalscotland.co.uk)**

Could you take part in other social justice festivals including:

- Solas (July) [solasfestival.co.uk](http://solasfestival.co.uk)
- Just Festival (August) [just-festival.org](http://just-festival.org)
- Take One Action! Film Festival (September) [takeoneaction.org.uk](http://takeoneaction.org.uk)
- Edinburgh World Justice Festival (September) [ewjf.org.uk](http://ewjf.org.uk)
- One World Week (October) [oneworldweek.org](http://oneworldweek.org)
- Interfaith Week (November) [scottishinterfaithweek.org](http://scottishinterfaithweek.org)
- Mitzvah Day (November) [mitzvahday.org.uk](http://mitzvahday.org.uk)

Register your community and what you are doing or can offer on New Scots Connect from the Scottish Refugee Council

**[scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/location](http://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/location)**



## Find out more

### SCOTLAND

#### **Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees**

[sfar.org.uk](http://sfar.org.uk)

#### **Scottish Refugee Council**

[scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](http://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk)

#### **Refugee Survival Trust**

[rst.org.uk](http://rst.org.uk)

#### **Scottish Government – New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy**

[gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/new-scots/](http://gov.scot/policies/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/new-scots/)

### UNITED KINGDOM

#### **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland – Churches Refugee Network**

[ctbi.org.uk/category/witnessing-together/asylum-and-refugees/crn](http://ctbi.org.uk/category/witnessing-together/asylum-and-refugees/crn)

#### **Jewish Council for Racial Equality**

[jcore.org.uk](http://jcore.org.uk)

#### **Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants**

[jcwi.org.uk/](http://jcwi.org.uk/)

#### **Migrant Voice**

[migrantvoice.org](http://migrantvoice.org)

#### **Right to Remain**

[righttoremain.org.uk](http://righttoremain.org.uk)

## Dates for your diary

- **January**  
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- **February**  
Racial Justice Sunday
- **March**  
8th – International Women’s Day
- **June**  
20th – International Refugee Day  
(Sunday closest to 20 June is Refugee Sunday / Sanctuary Sunday)
- **July**  
Solas Festival
- **August**  
Just Festival
- **September**  
21st International Day of Peace
- **October**  
One World Week  
Edinburgh World Justice Festival
- **November**  
Interfaith Week  
Mitzvah Day  
25th – start of 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women
- **December**  
1st - World AIDS Day  
10th - International Human Rights Day  
18th – International Migrants Day



Photo courtesy of Emily Macinnes [www.emilymacinnes.com](http://www.emilymacinnes.com)



# The Church of Scotland



Action of Churches Together in Scotland



Interfaith Scotland



Justice & Peace Scotland (Scottish Catholic Church)



The Methodist Church in Scotland



Muslim Council of Scotland



Quakers in Scotland



Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society



The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities



The Scottish Episcopal Church



The Salvation Army Scotland Office



The United Free Church of Scotland



The United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland

## SCOTTISH FAITHS ACTION FOR REFUGEES

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[www.sfar.org.uk](http://www.sfar.org.uk)  
[www.twitter.com/WithRefugees](https://twitter.com/WithRefugees)

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees is administered by the Church of Scotland

Scottish Charity Number: SC0 11353

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk)