

FAMILIES TOGETHER

Local campaigning toolkit

Campaigning together to change the rules keeping refugee families apart

Welcome to the Families Together Coalition Action Toolkit

This is designed to support you to organise, mobilise and deliver campaigning activity to support expanding the rules on refugee family reunion over the next 6 months. We are running a local level campaign across the country for all coalition members to participate in. This toolkit will provide you with information about why it is essential for us to mobilise now, what it is you can do and some ideas and guidance for how you can do it to maximise your campaigning impact.

Why now?

The political environment in which we are campaigning is in a state of flux. Yet the lives of refugees and their families remain hanging in the balance. We have built cross-party support for this issue, but we need to turn support into concrete action to bring refugee families together. Now is the time to continue to build pressure on politicians to ensure this remains on the agenda of all politicians and the Home Office so we can make progress and achieve our goal to reunite refugee families as soon as possible.



Campaign background

More than half the world's refugees are children, many of them separated from their families as they flee war and persecution in search of safety. But needlessly strict laws in the UK mean many are prevented from being joined by their parents, brothers, and sisters. Restrictive government rules are leaving people isolated, traumatised and alone in the UK, knowing that the people they love still face untold dangers in other countries and without the support network they need to build a new life.

Thanks to thousands of people across the country who have already taken action - 131 MPs voted in favour of MP Angus MacNeil's Private Members Bill on Refugee Family Reunion on 16 March 2018. Since then, the government has blocked the bill's progress. A lot has happened at Westminster recently and with debate focused on Brexit it looks like time for the bill to become law will run out.

But opportunity to change remains, not only could the Home Secretary change the rules with a stroke of their pen but there is likely to be a new Immigration Bill in the next parliamentary session. This could provide us with another opportunity to expand the current refugee family reunion rules.

We are asking for:

1. Child refugees in the UK to have the **right to sponsor their close family** so they can rebuild their lives together and help them integrate in their new community
2. The **definition of who qualifies as family to be expanded** so that young people who have turned 18 and elderly parents can live in safety with their families in the UK
3. The **reintroduction of legal aid** so refugees who have lost everything have the support they need to afford and navigate the complicated process of being reunited with their families

What you can do

STOP PRESS – additional guidance on a creative action and supporting materials will be added to this briefing on 14 October.

Support for the Families Together campaign has been growing since we launched in January 2018, but to succeed, we need to show UK politicians that communities across the country care about reuniting refugee families. Now is the time for us to ramp up the pressure at the local level to create a small change in the Home Office's rules, affecting just a few hundred people a year, which will make a huge difference for each person able to reunite with their loved ones.

Campaign activity

Family and togetherness is at the heart of this campaign. That's why we are asking that campaigners collect messages and stories from the community to create a **public display** to show the community's support for refugees to be reunited with their families.

Invite your MP to engage with the display and to contact the Home Secretary to change the rules to expand refugee family reunion. To build more support and promote the campaign, invite your local media to a photo call and share your pictures on social media.

This is the main activity we are asking people to run in their communities. However, this toolkit also provides some other ideas which you could do in addition to this to have greater influence and continue campaigning in your community.

Downloadable resources coming on 14 October.

Share your messages on #FamiliesTogether

Getting Organised

Before you start, be clear about what you want to achieve, what your objectives are and what your goal is. Your goal could be to influence your MP (or if your MP is already supportive, keep it on their agenda) and your objectives could be around building support through engaging your community and the media locally. It's important to think through what the opportunities and barriers are in your area, so you can develop your plan. Dedicate some time to thinking about what is strategic and tactical to achieve your goals and prepare and develop your own campaigning plan. You can use this toolkit, as well as, mapping out your local context to work out the best way to strategically and tactically influence and build support in your area. This will help you to deliver successful campaigning and have maximum impact. You may wish to spend some time scoping out the following –

- What resources do you have e.g. people who can lead, time, existing materials, supporters/volunteers or people who can speak on behalf of the campaign.
- What are you already doing to support refugee family reunification and is there anything happening in the wider community that you are not involved in?
- Who in your community could help build support with your MP, your allies, the influential people, the opposition? Map out the power in your area and understand the levels of influence others have and where the support/interest is.
- Who can you partner with to increase your reach and impact?
- What are the opportunities for influencing in your area? Does an MP have a role of interest? Is the Local Authority vocal on refugee rights? Is there a Government department located in your area that could be influenced e.g. Home Office?
- What audience do you want reach and engage? Where is this audience and what channels can you use to reach them?
- What are the key messages and asks you want to get across – how can you adapt the national campaign messages to your local context? In this case, children need their parents, families belong together, the wonder of family life.

Mobilising others

Identify a list of partners, allies, targets and audiences who you wish to engage and be clear about what it is you want from them (e.g. to partner with, support from or to influence) then think about what the barriers and opportunities might be for engaging them. You may want to think about what the next steps will be after this campaign moment to retain the relationship afterwards.

Partnerships and allies

There is likely to be many different types of organisations supporting refugees in one way or another in the location you are in. Whether it's a local authority department, a charity providing a service or a business who employs a higher percentage of refugees, this campaign moment is an opportunity to reach out to others and bring them together to get involved in your campaigning activities. Larger organisations may also be working together on other refugee rights campaign issues such as Lift the Ban. By working in partnership, you will be able to achieve your goals more effectively as you will have more resource and be able to reach a wider audience.

Other organisations are likely to have other priorities so identifying what is important to them, finding mutual benefits and inviting them to co-create your plan will go a long way to building healthy long-lasting relationships.

You may wish to think about the support you can provide to your partners and allies during and after the campaign moment. Whether that be a regular email to keep them up to date, regular meetings to progress plans or some training to empower them to act as multipliers – for support with training events please [contact the coalition](#).

Some examples of who your partners, allies and targets to influence might be –

Political and officials

- MPs
- Political party associations including donors (to political parties)
- Local government and Councillors
- The Home Office

Public Sector

- Front line staff; Trade unions; Educational sector – academics, schools, students
- Professional organisations, e.g. social workers, educators, doctors, voluntary orgs.

Business

- Local businesses
- Charity shops – Oxfam, Red Cross, Shops of Sanctuary
- Local media

Third Sector and community groups

- Refugee led and refugee supporting organisations
- Religious groups;
- Arts organisations, theatres;
- Local civil society e.g. the Rotary, Barnardo's grass roots group; service providers, sports teams; parents and toddler groups

Targets

The main target for this campaign activity is your local MP. What are their key interests and how can you link this campaign to them? How sympathetic are they to the cause, what power do they have to influence others, instigate/push for change.

General audiences

To build support and pressure you will need to think about what will motivate the people in your community to listen, get involved and take action as part of the campaign. When thinking about activities in your local area and context, consider the following –

- Is this accessible to all audiences? E.g. adults and children
- Is it exciting enough to attract a diverse range of people?
- It is convincing enough?
- Have you presented the problem and solution clearly and made links to what's happening locally? Is it simple, easy to understand and relatively quick to participate in?
- Do you have your counter arguments ready for those who may not agree or have opposing views?
- Does it allow people to express their power to make change happen?

Campaigning

What do we want people to do?

As previously mentioned, the main activity we would like everyone to do is to create a public display of support where your local MP and the media can be invited along to support.

In order to create the display, it is likely you will need to engage the general public and collect messages in advance. You will need to consider how to do this. We have collated a menu of ideas you could use to campaign in your community to collect messages for the public display, and or to run in addition to this activity so that you have a longer term campaigning plan. Ideas have been arranged on a low/medium/high basis taking into consideration the level of effort that would be needed to deliver the idea along with the level of influence it could have.

Further updates will be provided on 14 October.

Additional campaigning ideas (generated across the coalition)

If you have a little more time...

- A local storytelling social media campaign with pictures/videos etc of what is happening at the local level
- Action boards/public displays set up a stall for others to join the action
- Messages in a bottle as a public display/art installation

Sharing the story in unusual ways

- Recipe cards on family reunion - personal story attached to recipe
- History of local food/ restaurants and refugees/ migrant origins
- Food exchange/ recipe swap between refugees and local residents
- Letters to MPs about why family is so important, personal stories from across the community
- Guerrilla knitting crafts to create messaging displays through knitting. There are lots of community knitting groups that may be interested in this.

If you want to hold a bigger event...

- Tea/coffee mornings
- Refugee cook out – using local shops' produce
- Supper club – nutrition and recipes from other cultures
- Diverse cultural tasting menus in local restaurants
- Cultural festival with food and music by refugee charities

- Human chain stunt which reflects solidarity across the whole community
- A creative stunt to get across a specific message e.g. this could be some street theatre

Messaging and Storytelling

Whatever campaigning activity you decide to deliver, telling the key campaign messages around the problem/solutions and the authentic stories of refugees and their experiences being separated should be at the core of all you do.

How you do this depends on who your audience is and what will be the 'hook' that is most engaging to them. You can think creatively about how to present the message. It may be that an emotional focussed message would work for a particular audience. It may be showing how refugees settle and contribute to society is more moving - the [Refugee Week](#) website can help with this. Being positive about the change you want to see can bring more people onboard. The message should lead back to the core messages around the causes and solutions.

What do you want your audiences to know, think, feel and do as a result of the campaign? Being clear from the beginning will help you to build your conversations and any content you need for your campaigning activities.

For example

Know - Restrictive rules are keeping refugee families apart daughters and mothers, brothers and sisters. This can have devastating consequences.

Think – This is unfair, see the need for refugee families to be united and understand the benefits it has to the individuals and society

Feel – Empathy – because our families are our loved ones who support us. Anger towards the UK Government that they are keeping families apart.

Do – get involved, talk about the issue and take the campaign action.

Media

What media opportunity is there? Having a punchy story, or something appealing that has a local angle is likely to gain media interest.

There are many different ways to engage the media. A standard press release would be the usual route to have your story published. But you may wish to think of doing some of the following -

- Refugee columnist in local paper
- Recurrent TV segment following journey of a few refugees in local community
- Local coalition support letter to editor
- Blog/article from a refugee in a local magazine
- Story around 1 year in the life of a resettled refugee
- Article from a business who has employed refugees and the benefits of a diverse work force
- A celebration of families in your community

Social media

Whatever type of campaigning you decide to deliver, social media channels can help you promote your events, amplify the campaigning you are doing in the real world and reach

further audiences to build support. You can also aim your posts at your targets, for example including your MP's twitter handle in your message and use social media as a channel for influencing. It's worth developing a plan for your social media so you can make sure you can use it to promote your event prior to it happening and collect the right content from your event which you can use during and afterwards. **Use the hashtag #FamiliesTogether to tie in with the activity of the coalition and so that we can all check this to share each other's messages.**

Legal requirements (and other practical considerations)

When putting on events, there will be some things to consider –

- You will need to undertake a risk assessment of any venues you use
- Establish who holds insurance (it is you or the venue)
- If you are using the personal data of people, you will need their consent to comply with GDPR regulations
- If working with children or vulnerable adults you will need to make sure there are safeguards in place to protect people

Sharing personal experience

Many people involved in this campaign and connected to organisations you may work with know only too well the impact of the restrictive rules on their lives. Yasmin, Fatemah and Sayid kindly shared their stories to help progress the campaign and tell the personal side of what a change in the rules would mean for them. You can use these stories to help explain what the reality of the rules are for people currently kept from their families.

Yasmin came to the UK through the resettlement scheme as a cancer patient from Erbil, Iraq. She arrived on 6 June 2017 with her three sisters and lives in Wrexham. Her parents are still in Iraq, unwell and isolated, with no one to help them with their care needs where they are currently living. Her father had a heart attack in the past and suffers from high cholesterol and high blood pressure. Her mother has early stage dementia and is diabetic. Yasmin and her sisters are desperately worried about them and would love to bring them to live safely in the UK, so that they can look after them. However, the Immigration rules do not allow refugees to bring over their elderly parents. Yasmin finds it hard to concentrate on her language studies, for worry and her sister attempted suicide.

Fatemah is from Syria. She is trying to rebuild her life in Scotland but her daughter's life is still in danger. When Fatemah was resettled to the UK, her daughter's fiancé decided that they should seek asylum in Jordan, so they remained in the region. But her daughter's fiancé started to abuse her daughter and two years later, she left. She fled to Turkey to live with her uncle, but he exploited her and stole everything she owned. Today she lives in a cramped room with other Syrian refugees. The Turkish forces conduct brutal raids on Syrian refugees and Fatemah knows many people who have been detained, tortured and returned to Syria. Her daughter lives in fear and cannot go out in public. She must rely on children to buy her bread. Fatemah's younger children pine for their big sister. Fatemah's husband is a different man; he feels broken and powerless to help his little girl. Fatemah feels empty inside and rarely goes out. The UK rules mean that Fatemah's daughter does not have the right to join her in the UK because she is over 18. But Fatemah's love and need to protect her daughter did not end when her daughter turned 18 and she asks only that she is able to protect her daughter's life.

Sayid escaped from Syria and was resettled in the UK with his wife and children. But he is struggling to focus on his new life because of his anxiety about Nizar, his younger brother,

who is just 17 and who is still stuck in Syria. His concern is entirely understandable: both the Syrian army and ISIS, also known as Daesh, threatened Nizar when he refused to join them and he narrowly escaped a kidnapping attempt. Sayid encouraged him to try to irregularly cross the border into the neighbouring country in search of refuge. It wasn't an easy journey for Nizar. People were being shot at and he remained trapped in Syria for several months. He has now finally made it across, but he is still alone in a region convulsed by conflict. Sayid continues to worry about him, and what he really wants is to bring him to the UK to live with him in safety.

And lastly....

Our power to change things comes from a collective voice and the unity of coming together. It would be beneficial to join up with the rest of the coalition where possible; let others know about your event so they can promote you and promote others where you can. Don't forget to let us know what you are doing and the response you get.

Support – get in touch

The core coalition team would love to hear from you and support you with your plans. Let us know that you are taking part and campaigning so we can share your success on social media.

If you would like to arrange a one to one phone or skype call to discuss your plans or seek advice and support, please contact Caroline Pritchard who will schedule in a call with one of the team. You can contact Caroline - caroline.pritchard@amnesty.org.uk

Visit our website at refugeestogether.co.uk

The Families Together Coalition is supported by:

Afghanistan and Central Asian Association (ACAA), All African Women's Group, Amnesty International UK, Asylum Welcome, Asylum Matters, British Future, British Red Cross, CARAS (Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers), Care4Calais, CARE International UK, Central England Law Centre, The Children's Society, City of Sanctuary, Every Child Protected Against Trafficking (ECPAT UK), Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU), Helen Bamber Foundation, Help Refugees, Islamic Relief, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE), Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network (LRMN), Migrants Resource Centre, North East Law Centre, Notre Dame Refugee Centre, Nottingham and Notts Refugee Forum, IMiX, Oxfam, Play for Progress, PRAXIS Community Projects, Refugee Action, Refugee Council, RefuAid, Refugee Rights Europe, Rural Refugee Network, Safe Passage, Scottish Refugee Council, Solidarity with Refugees, SOS Children's Villages, STAR (Student Action for Refugees), The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, UNHCR, University of Bedfordshire Refugee Legal Assistance Project, The Voices Network, Welcome Presents, Welsh Refugee Council, Woodcraft Folk, Young Roots