



**FAMILIES  
TOGETHER**

# Local campaigning toolkit

Campaigning together to change the rules keeping  
refugee families apart

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# Welcome to the campaign



This is designed to support you to organise, work with others and deliver campaign activity to support expanding the rules on refugee family reunion over the coming year. This toolkit will provide you with information about why we need to act, what it is you can do and some ideas and guidance for how you can do it to maximise your campaigning impact in your local community.

## Why now?

The political environment we are campaigning in is ever changing. 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 new MPs are aware this is a matter constituents care about, to keep it on the agenda of returning MPs and that of the Home Office, so we can make progress and achieve our goal to reunite refugee families as soon as possible.

# The issue

Imagine fleeing war, but having to leave your mum, dad, brother or sister behind during a traumatic escape. Eventually you reach safety in the UK and are allowed to stay here. But your family are still in danger. The law means they can't join you. You worry about them constantly – the uncertainty and stress mean you're unable to rebuild your life.

Right now, this is the reality for many refugees, denied the right to be with the people they love by needlessly strict UK laws. Such rules are leaving vulnerable people isolated, traumatised and alone. This must change. You can help refugees reunite with their families and put their lives back together.

Currently adult refugees can sponsor only their very closest relatives to

join them – their partners and children under 18 years old. Refugee children do not have the right to sponsor any family members to join them. This means that mothers and fathers in the UK are unable to bring their children over the age of 18 to join them; refugee children in the UK are forced to live apart from their parents; and refugees are unable to bring elderly relatives to live with them in safety.

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 and time has run out for the bill to become law.

But the opportunity for 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.

The rules keeping refugee families apart are unfair. We need your support and action to change them.

# We are asking for

## One



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

## Two



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

## Three



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

# Sayid's story

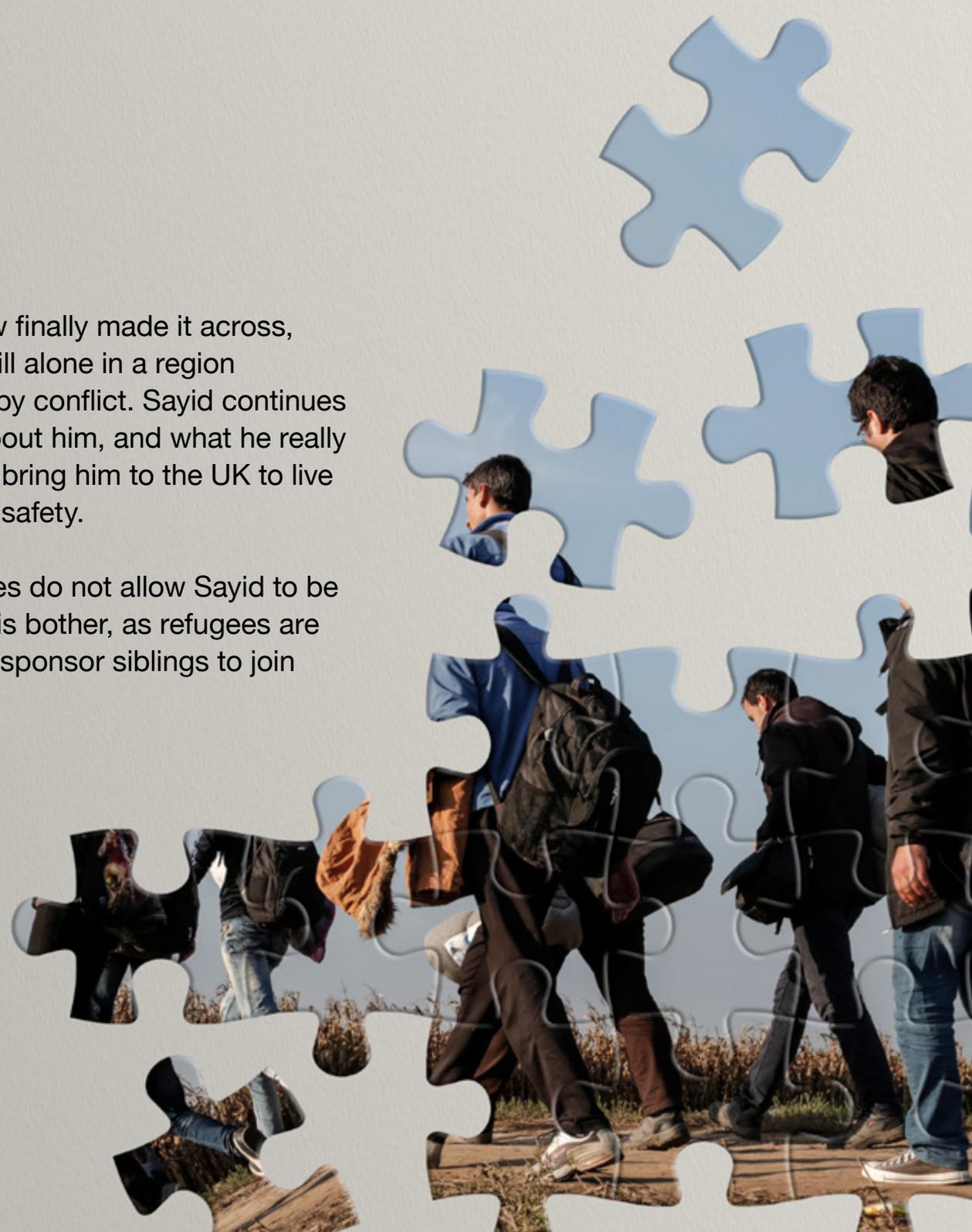
Sayid escaped from Syria and was resettled in the UK with his wife and children. But he is struggling to focus on his new life because of his anxiety about Nizar, his younger brother, who is just 17 and who is still stuck in Syria.

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.

The UK rules do not allow Sayid to be joined by his brother, as refugees are not able to sponsor siblings to join them here.



# Take Action

## Lives have been left in pieces – help bring refugee families together

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

Through the imagery of a jigsaw, together, we'll show MPs across the country that now is the time to bring all the pieces of the puzzle together for refugee families to rebuild their lives.

## Organise a group meeting, stall or campaign event:

action cards, jigsaw props, and template jigsaws are all available for you to use to draw attention to and gain support for the campaign. If you want, join up with other supporters locally.

**Collect messages** on your action cards and if you have space, build jigsaws together – using the templates from the [Families Together webpage](#) or create a public display to engage people in conversation and action. You could ask people to sign the individual jigsaw pieces and write messages of support for the campaign.

## If you're holding a public event:

- Invite your MP to your event
- Take a photo of your MP with the campaign prop and ask them to share their support
- Share the message by inviting your local media to a photo call and share your pictures on social media;

## Following your event or meeting send your MP all the action messages alongside a letter calling for them to take action.

Template letters and resources you need can be found on the [Families Together campaign site](#).

## Share your messages with the hashtag #FamiliesTogether

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 to create a small change in the Home Office's rules. These changes would make a real difference to people's lives.

### Want to do more?

There are more ideas at the end of the toolkit if you want to run a series of activities to build support in your community. There may already be lots of support for refugee rights in your community (service provision and other campaigns) so if you want to build a longer term campaigning plan of activity, we have provided guidance below to support you to do so.



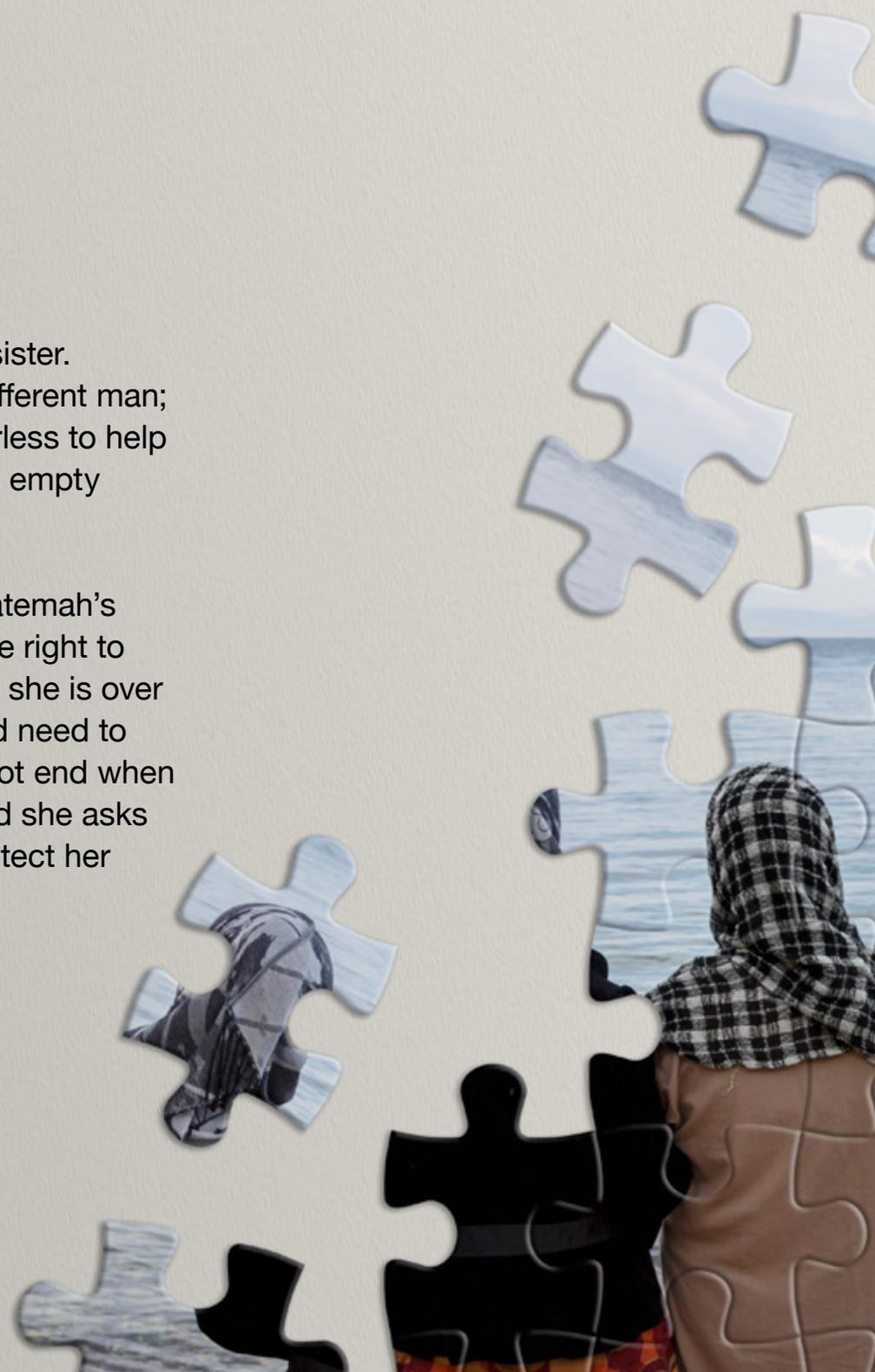
# Fatemah's story

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.



# Getting Organised

Before you start, be clear about what you want to achieve. Your goal is 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, who are 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 to 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, help keep families together, families belong together, the wonder of family life.

# Working with others

## Partnerships and allies

There are 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. 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 their own 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 – [FamiliesTogether@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:FamiliesTogether@amnesty.org.uk)

## 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

## 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?

## Targets

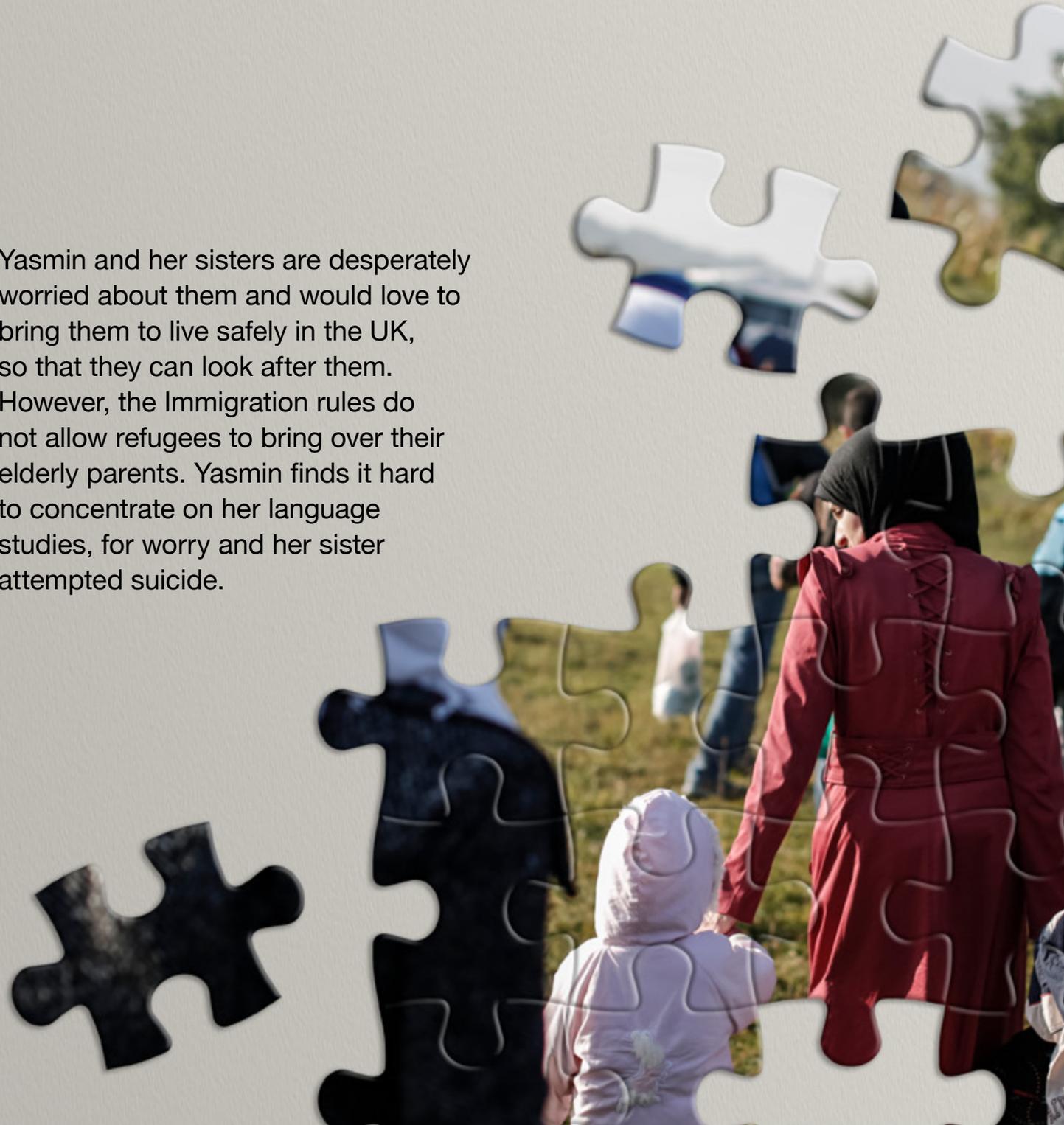
The main target for this campaign activity is your local MP. What are their key interests and how can you link this campaign to them? How sympathetic are they to the cause, what power do they have to influence others, instigate/push for change? Are there any other targets in your community who you can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

# Yasmin's story

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.



# Messaging and Storytelling

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 emotionally 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. Such rules are leaving vulnerable people isolated, traumatised and alone.

**Think** – This is unfair, we need to keep refugee families together so they can rebuild their lives with their families.

**Feel** – Empathy – because our families are our loved ones who support us – we all need family. Family provides security, comfort and love. We miss our family when they are not there.

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



## Media

What media opportunities are 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. Invite your local media contacts along to your event (especially at the same time your MP visits). But you may wish to think of doing some of the following in addition:

- Refugee columnist in local paper (please contact the coalition if you'd like support and advice about sharing your story)
- 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 one 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 we can all share each other's messages.**

# Additional campaigning ideas

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 if you have time for a longer term campaign plan.

## If you have a little more time...

- A local storytelling social media campaign with pictures/videos sharing what is happening at the local level and what inspires you to take action in the community
- Action boards/public displays by setting up a stall for others to join the action
- Letters to MPs about why family is so important, personal stories from across the community

## Sharing the story in unusual ways

- Create some recipe cards which include recipes from refugees' home countries or a personal story of home and family
- A community food exchange/ recipe swap event between refugees and local residents
- Guerrilla knitting – create messaging displays through knitting and display them in your community – community knitting groups that may be interested in this
- Messages in a bottle as a public display/art installation

## If you want to hold a bigger event...

- Tea/coffee mornings – carry on the jigsaw theme and get people talking over a puzzle
- Refugee cook out – using local shops' produce
- Diverse cultural tasting menus in local restaurants
- Create a human chain as a local media stunt to reflect solidarity across the whole community
- A creative stunt to get across a specific message e.g. this could be some street theatre

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

For advice and guidance on the above, please speak to the organisation you are connected with.



# And finally....



Our power to change things comes from a collective voice and the unity of coming together. It would be great 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. 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 us on the email below to schedule a call with one of the team.

You can contact the coalition:  
[FamiliesTogether@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:FamiliesTogether@amnesty.org.uk)

Share your activities on social media  
[#FamiliesTogether](https://twitter.com/FamiliesTogether)

Visit our website at  
[famielstogether.co.uk](http://famielstogether.co.uk)

**The Families Together Coalition is supported by:**

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