

Questions and Answers: Dealing with asylum misconceptions

'Too many asylum seekers come to the UK and we take more than our fair share'

Although many British people express the view that there are too many asylum seekers in the UK, the reality is that in the last five years we received less than 26,000 applications a year.

Similarly, Britain does not take 'more than its fair share'. In 2013 the UK ranked fourth among EU countries for number of asylum applications, with France and Sweden receiving twice as many and Germany more than four times the number of asylum applications at 109,6000.

Between April and June 2014 the UK received 7% of the total applications in 15 of the countries within the EU with Germany, France, Sweden and Italy all receiving more applications than the UK.

'Asylum seekers are not genuine'

Approximately half of those applying for protection in the UK are granted it. The latest statistics show that 36% of initial decisions were to grant protection in the UK. Of those who were initially refused asylum, 25% of these initial decisions were overturned on appeal, and this figure is even higher for specific nationalities: 42% of appeals from Iranians were successful on appeal as were 39% from Sri Lanka and 34% from Afghanistan.

Many of those who are refused do have a genuine fear for their safety, but the Home Office may have concluded that their fear is exaggerated or that the situation in their country has improved, or that they could relocate to another area of their country and be safe.

'How come asylum seekers get priority access to housing and benefits'

They do not. Asylum seekers do not have access to council housing or to income support. While waiting for a decision on their asylum claim or appeal against the refusal of asylum, seekers can be given accommodation, if they would otherwise be destitute and homeless and receive financial support from the Home Office at rates substantially below that of income support.

Asylum seekers may need to access this support because they are not allowed to work in the UK.