



Home Office

Chris Philp MP  
Minister for Immigration Compliance  
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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP  
House of Commons  
London  
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27 October 2020

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 23 October on behalf of a number of your constituents regarding asylum seeker right to work.

Asylum seekers are allowed to work in the UK if their claim has been outstanding for 12 months or more, through no fault of their own. Those permitted to work are restricted to jobs on the Shortage Occupation List, which is based on expert advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee.

It is important to distinguish between those who need protection and those seeking to work here, who can apply for a work visa under the Immigration Rules. Our wider policy would be undermined if migrants were able to bypass work visa Rules by lodging unfounded asylum claims here.

Unrestricted access to employment could act as an incentive for more migrants to choose to come here illegally, rather than claim asylum in the first safe country they reach. Asylum seekers are provided with accommodation and support to meet their essential living needs if they would otherwise be destitute whilst their claim is considered.

We do encourage asylum seekers to undertake volunteering activities, so long as they do not amount to unpaid work. Volunteering provides a valuable contribution to their local community and may help them to integrate into society if they ultimately qualify for protection. Those granted refugee status or humanitarian protection, including those who are resettled to the UK, have immediate and unrestricted access to the labour market.

Asylum seeker right to work is a complex issue and is under review. It is crucial we take the time to get this right. We are listening carefully to the arguments and considering the evidence put forward on the issue.

I trust this clarifies the Government's position.

**Chris Philp MP**