



Home Office

Chris Philp MP
Minister for Immigration Compliance
and the Courts

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 11 August to the Home Secretary on behalf of your constituents regarding permission to work for asylum seekers. I am replying as the Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts and I am sorry for the delay in replying.

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. The follow-up report published by the Lift the Ban coalition is being considered by the Home Office as part of our ongoing review.

Chris Philp MP