

# How do we respond to refugees and people seeking asylum here in the UK?

## School Assembly Notes

Suitable for Key Stage 3/4/5

### Aim

To highlight the difficulties of daily life for many refugees and asylum seekers in the UK and the work that JRS do in response.

### Preparation and materials

You will need the PowerPoint slides that accompany this assembly and a way of displaying them.

### Assembly

1. Have [Slide 1](#) on display as the students enter the room.

*Show Slide 2.*

How do we see refugees and asylum seekers? Ask the students what comes to mind when they think of refugees and asylum seekers. What images or narratives do they see on TV, in newspapers or on social media?

Reveal some examples on the slide of negative newspaper headlines and of some positive images of people welcoming refugees at German train stations, or buying items for charities at the Choose Love pop up store in London before Christmas. Explain there are many contesting views on refugees and asylum seekers.

Ask the students if they think that in society we see refugees and asylum seekers presented as a problem to be dealt with? Or do we see them as people who have the same unique personalities, hopes and dreams that all of us do?

2. *Show slide 3.* Read the definition provided for who is classified as a refugee under the UN Convention. This is the definition that most countries use when making decisions on who they will give refugee protection to. This narrow criteria and the amount of evidence many countries, including the UK, expect people to provide to show they are a refugee can make it very difficult for some people to get the help they need.

*Show Slide 4.* Read the definition of asylum seeker provided on the slide. *These definitions should help pupils understand some of the complex language and distinctions that are made between people seeking safety.*

3. *Show slide 5.* Ask the questions in the following slides by asking students to raise their hands to show what they think the answer is. Reveal the answer and then explain it with the following details.

Explain there are 26 million refugees worldwide. Add to this approx. 46 million internally displaced people (those who have fled their homes but remain in their home countries), 4.2 million asylum seekers and 3.6m Venezuelans displaced abroad. Total of 79.5 million people worldwide, over 10 million more than the population of the United Kingdom.

*Show slide 6.* Turkey hosts 3.6 million refugees. 2<sup>nd</sup> Pakistan with 1.4m and 3<sup>rd</sup> Uganda also 1.4m. Lebanon hosts approx. 1million, with a population of 6m. This means of 1 in 6 people in Lebanon are refugees. Many of you might have said Germany given how much we have heard about them welcoming so many refugees but we see that 85% of the world's refugees are hosted in developing countries. – Are we richer countries doing enough?

*Show slide 7.* Explain that approx. 35,500 people came to seek asylum in the UK in 2019. That is just over a third of the amount of people who can fit into Wembley Stadium for an FA Cup final, a tiny number compared to the population of the UK.

4. Many of these asylum seekers have very difficult lives here in the UK. When someone arrives claiming asylum in the UK, they will receive some accommodation and receive £37.75 a week to live on. Things get even more difficult if you struggling to get a positive result from your asylum claim, something that is very common with the Home Office often treating asylum seekers with suspicion.

5. *Show slide 8.* Read the quote from one refugee friend about not being able to work whilst seeking asylum.

Explain that for the refugee friends at JRS life can be very difficult as they often have had their first asylum claim refused. At this point the government stops the small amount of financial support they receive and they are evicted from their accommodation. Not being able to work means that they are made destitute and rely on friends or family and charities like JRS for support, just to survive.

6. *Show slide 9.* Those who attend JRS's weekly day centre in East London receive travel money so that they can access important legal and medical appointments, emergency mini-grants to newly destitute individuals and a healthy warm lunch.

The JRS Day Centre is a safe space to rest, get referrals to key services and meet friends over a cup of tea or coffee. Each month we give out over 250 toiletry packs and we often distribute clothing and food parcels.

7. *Show slide 10.* Explain that the destitution JRS's friends face means that they are at very high risk of street homelessness. Here is a quote from another refugee friend who has experienced time sleeping on the streets.

In January, JRS UK published 'Out in the Cold', a report based on surveys which were conducted at the day centre. It showed that....

47% of refugees do not have a regular place to sleep

62% of refugees have been street homeless in the last year

42% of refugees do not feel comfortable around the people they stay with

*Show slide 11.* JRS run a hosting scheme called 'At Home' which arranges 3 month placements for some day centre friends to provide them with secure accommodation which is in such desperate need. This hospitality makes such a huge difference to those in need. Think about how much your health and wellbeing would improve in a home that is warm, has somewhere to clean yourself and that is safe.

*Show slide 12.* Since the Covid-19 outbreak, JRS have closed their Day Centre to keep their refugee friends, staff and volunteers safe. Instead, they have been delivering food and toiletry parcels to their friends wherever they are staying during lockdown. They have also moved to offer advice and emotional support over the phone, and have been continuing their activities through zoom. JRS has also provided monthly mobile phone top ups and a £15 emergency grant every fortnight to each of their refugee friends.

### **Time for reflection**

*Show slide 13.* Encourage the students to spend some moments in silence to reflect on what they have heard. How would they feel if they were in this position?

Ask them what action they might want to do to help change things for refugees and those seeking asylum going forward.

*Show slide 14.* Encourage the students to find out more about refugees and think about what they could do to help.

*Show slide 15.* Lead the students in the JRS Prayer

*Prayer*

Lord Jesus,

Give us courage to accompany others, for in walking at their side we find you there present with us.  
Give us joy that we might serve others, for in tending the wounds of those who suffer, we sense your healing grace at work in us.

Give us wisdom as we advocate for others, for in defending the downtrodden we hear your voice speak for us.

Grant that in all we do, we may give you glory Lord; we return all we have in love to you, for you have given everything to us.

**Amen.**

*Show Slide 16.* Show the ways students can follow and contact JRS UK to find out more information.