

**Submission
for the
Universal Periodic Review of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland (41st Session Nov 2022)**

Submitted by



Edmund Rice International



International Presentation Association



The Westcourt Centre



REVIVE UK





Asylum Link



Red Dot Foundation



European Province of the Christian Brothers

Edmund Rice International is an international non-governmental organization, founded in 2005 and with Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC since 2012. ERI is supported by two Catholic Religious Congregations, the Christian Brothers and the Presentation Brothers. It works with networks of like-minded organizations and in the countries where the two Congregations are present. ERI has a special interest in the rights of the child, the right to education and in eco-justice.

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International Presentation Association is a network of Catholic religious congregations of Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, friends, and associates who work for personal and systemic change for People and Earth. It is accredited with the United Nations Department of Public Information and with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

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The Westcourt Centre is a subcommittee of the Congregation of Christian Brothers, Northern Ireland (Registered Charity No: NIC102236). The charity operates a centre, which is

committed to reducing disadvantage and promoting social inclusion through education. <http://www.westcourtcentre.org/> The Westourt Centre, 8 - 30 Barrack Street, Belfast BT12 4AH, Tel: 02890 323009. Email westcourtcentre@gmail.com

Homeless Connect (previously known as Council for the Homeless NI) has been working to prevent and alleviate homelessness in Northern Ireland since 1983. Homeless Connect is the representative body for the homelessness sector in NI, working to represent organisations working with people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. Homeless Connect further provide direct support to service users through our projects.

REVIVE UK is an independent Community Project that provides practical support , services and advocacy for refugees and people seeking asylum, regardless of race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability or age. Tel +44 0161 2235668 Email info@revive-uk.org <https://www.revive-uk.org/>

Caritas Shrewsbury is the social action and social justice agency of the Catholic Diocese of Shrewsbury. We provide a range of support and services to help those in the most vulnerable situations. Together we speak up about the causes of poverty and exclusion to bring about change. Telephone: 0151 652 1281 Email: info@caritasshrewsbury.org.uk Twitter: @caritasdio www.caritasshrewsbury.org.uk

Asylum Link <https://www.asylumlink.org.uk/> Merseyside is based in St Anne's presbytery next to St Anne's Church in Overbury Street, Wavertree, Liverpool, L7 3HJ, United Kingdom. It is a safe space for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, to meet, relax and find out about the community they have been dropped into. We offer a wide range of [services](#) which are centred on the principles of Friendship and Welcome. These include access to other agencies delivering refugee services on site, the Merseyside Refugee Support Network MRSN, Merseyside Network for Change, MNfC, and the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, GMIAU. Telephone 0151 709 1713 – or contact us by email: info@asylumlink.org.uk,

Red Dot Foundation Global was founded in 2017 in the United States to support the work on sexual violence. The mission of the Red Dot Foundation is to work towards ending violence against women and girls using crowdsourced data, community engagement and institutional accountability using their Safecity App. Red Dot Foundation Global, 5217 Lightning View Road, Columbia MD 21045 USA. Email info@reddotfoundation.org Website <https://reddotfoundation.org/>

European Province of the Christian Brothers is a charitable trust that supports the mission and ministry of the Christian Brothers in Ireland. The promotion of social justice and human rights is a core element of corporate social responsibility and is expressed, in particular, in supporting integration and inclusion initiatives for migrants and refugees in Ireland.

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INTRODUCTION

1. This joint stakeholder submission to the Universal Periodic Review is made by a coalition of faith-based and civil society groups including Edmund Rice International (ERI), the International Presentation Association (IPA) supported by local grassroots groups and national and international organisations.
2. The submitting organisations respect the progress made by the UK in promoting and safeguarding human rights and the commitments made in relation to previous UPR cycles but believe there are areas requiring further attention. This joint submission focuses on two specific areas of concern in the United Kingdom: homelessness in Northern Ireland, the rights of migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum in Northern England.

METHODOLOGY

A. Homelessness in Northern Ireland

3. The section dealing with homelessness has been prepared from consultations with civil society groups working to combat homelessness, most notably The Westcourt Centre in Belfast, Northern Ireland¹ and Homeless Connect². Since 2008 The Westcourt Centre has been working with a number of local service providers for people experiencing homelessness in the Belfast area and has developed a strong relationship with the homeless sector. A key feature of the work of the Westcourt Centre is its focus on providing an advocacy platform for people experiencing homelessness in the city by giving voice to their personal experiences of homelessness.

B. The Rights of Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

4. The section dealing with issues facing migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum has been prepared from consultations with stakeholder groups represented in the European Province Refugee Group and data compiled from research conducted by civil society groups such as the Revive UK. Information for this submission has been developed from narrative reports by volunteers and professionals working with people seeking asylum and refugees in various settings and is supported by the personal testimony of a journey through the asylum system.

A. Homelessness in Northern Ireland (NI): Concerns and Recommendations

5. As with many jurisdictions in Europe⁴ NI is currently experiencing difficult and ongoing challenges regarding housing and homelessness.⁵ Since the last UPR of the GB and NI⁶ the situation has not improved. Despite the fact that access to housing is a fundamental human right and social need (Article 25.1 UDHR, Article 11.1 of ICESCR, UN OHCHR Fact Sheet 21), many individuals and families living here struggle to access safe, secure and affordable housing suitable to their needs.⁷
6. With the advent of the Covid pandemic, trends which were already heading in the wrong direction have been exacerbated further. Too many individuals and families continue to experience homelessness in this society with all of the concomitant consequences this has for their health and wellbeing.⁸

Institutional and human rights infrastructure and policy Measures

Article 25.1 UDHR Right to Adequate Standard of Living⁹

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Article

11.1¹⁰

7. In NI, homelessness does not consist solely of those engaging in ‘rough sleeping’¹¹. The legal definition of homelessness includes not only this group but also those who are at risk of becoming homeless within twenty-eight days and those who are living in properties which are not reasonable for them to continue to occupy.¹² This wider understanding of homelessness is, in practice, useful because it facilitates the prevention of a household from becoming homeless.
8. In order to qualify as legally homeless, applicants must present themselves to the NIHE¹³ for assessment. The NIHE assess every household¹⁴ on four criteria: eligibility, homelessness, priority need and intentionality.
9. If a household fulfills all four criteria they are deemed to be statutorily homeless and they are owed a full duty by the NIHE.¹⁵ This duty requires NIHE to secure accommodation for the household concerned. If such accommodation is not immediately available, they are required to offer temporary accommodation to the household until a suitable property can be allocated to them.

CONCERNS

10. **Failure to address effectively the needs of households experiencing homelessness as had been previously identified in our UK UPR Submission 2017¹⁶.**
11. **Failure of the NIHE to address effectively the supply of sufficient safe, secure and affordable housing that has resulted in the lengthening of the social housing list.**
12. When considering and analysing the statistics on homelessness it must be remembered that different jurisdictions define homelessness in a variety of ways and can have different measures for establishing who is and is not experiencing homelessness. For this reason comparisons between NI and other jurisdictions need to be undertaken with care. One notable and relevant aspect of the figures for NI is that they involve counting households, rather than individuals. While a significant proportion of households experiencing homelessness here consist of single individuals, the true number of persons in this position is higher than the number of households recorded.¹⁷
13. In 2021, 16,027 households presented to NIHE as homeless with 10,361 of these households accepted as homeless towards whom the NIHE have a statutory duty. 52.5% of households presenting were single people, while 29.7% were families.¹⁸ These figures are lower than those recorded before the advent of the Covid pandemic. However, it is widely accepted that one of the many impacts of the pandemic was a reduction in the numbers experiencing homelessness coming forward. One significant factor accounting for a fall in the numbers coming forward arose because some households chose to endure unsuitable accommodation rather than risk moving during the pandemic despite the fact that their property has been deemed unsuitable for occupation¹⁹. At the point in time when COVID-19 started to impact homeless services, temporary accommodation provision was already under pressure.²⁰ There is a widespread expectation that the figure for homelessness will rise as NI emerges from the pandemic²¹. It should also be noted that the Northern Ireland House Condition Survey (NIHCS) was postponed for a year due to Covid-19.²²

14. While the number of persons presenting as homeless may have reduced, the numbers in temporary accommodation have sharply increased since the start of the pandemic in 2020. In January 2019, 2065 households were in temporary accommodation in NI. By February 2022 this figure had increased by 74% to 3596 households.²³ 1512 of these households have been in temporary accommodation for over a year, with 162 in such accommodation for over five years.²⁴ In January 2019, 2,433 children were living in temporary accommodation. By February 2022, this figure had increased to 3,763 children with 67.7% of these children aged nine and under.²⁵
15. The issue of homelessness cannot be addressed effectively in the absence of an adequate supply of decent housing²⁶. One of the factors contributing to this rise in the numbers needing temporary accommodation is the lengthening waiting list for social housing in Northern Ireland²⁷. Any household can apply for social housing which is allocated on the basis of need through a Housing Selection Scheme. Households who are found to be homeless gain a substantial number of points for the purposes of allocation. On 31 December 2021, the social housing waiting list stood at 44,405 households with 23,634 households deemed to be full duty applicants.²⁸ It's worth noting that the equivalent figures in 2002/3 stood at 26,248 applicants on the waiting list.²⁹ Since then, the social housing waiting list has grown by 71%.
16. Irrespective of the implementation of better legislation, improved policy and better services, homelessness will persist without a greater supply of housing. The NI Executive must take measures to increase housing supply. As outlined above, the social housing waiting list has grown substantially and the trend looks set to continue without well-planned, consistent action and investment from the NI Executive.

RECOMMENDATION

17. **That the Northern Ireland Housing Executive increase the supply of safe, secure and affordable housing in Northern Ireland.**

CONCERNS

18. **The absence of a stand alone housing and homelessness outcome in the programme for government for the NI Executive inhibits effective policy.**
19. A significant issue in preventing and reducing homelessness in NI has been a lack of strategic coordination across the NI Executive. This has been recognised by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) in 2017 when it stated that “the strategic approach to homelessness in Northern Ireland must also shift towards a cross-departmental strategy with those involved committing to a common goal. Until homelessness is a strategic priority for all the relevant departments and agencies in Northern Ireland it will continue to be viewed mainly as a housing issue and suffer because of conflicting priorities.”³⁰ A specific standalone housing and homelessness outcome in the Programme for Government for the NI Executive would help develop the interdepartmental approach to homelessness that is required if we are to respond to the issue of homelessness in a proactive and effective manner.

RECOMMENDATION

20. **That the United Kingdom government address the issue of homelessness in Northern Ireland by ensuring the inclusion of a standalone housing and homelessness outcome in the Programme for Government for the NI Executive.**

CONCERN

21. **That Northern Ireland legislation that aims to reduce and prevent the incidences of homelessness should be updated, as has been the case in England and Wales.**
22. Legislation governing homelessness in NI needs to be fundamentally reviewed and reformed. Current legislation only allows intervention when homelessness occurs. The Housing Executive (NI) Order 1988 sets out the duties and obligations of the Housing Executive towards people who become homeless or are threatened with homelessness³¹. In other UK jurisdictions, there has been substantial and progressive policy reform with the introduction of new legislation³². In England and Wales the law has been changed and updated allowing for a greater emphasis on the reduction and prevention of homelessness. In Scotland the distinction between ‘priority’ and ‘non-priority’ need has been removed³³. While legislative reform alone will not solve our homelessness crisis, it can provide better legal protection for those experiencing homelessness and ultimately lead to better outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION

23. **That the NI Executive introduce similar legislation (to that in England and Wales) that will reform current policies intended to reduce the incidence of homelessness in Northern Ireland.**

B: The Rights of Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

24. The current pandemic has exacerbated already existing problems for people seeking asylum and refugees in Northern England. This is well documented by civil society groups such as Revive UK and by state agencies such as the Home Office

C: The Right to Life, Liberty and Security of Person

CONCERNS

25. **That the current asylum process in the UK is under-resourced and overwhelmed.**
26. The UK asylum determination system stands accused of being not fit for purpose and failing to meet accepted human right standards and norms. “The UK asylum determination system is both inhumane and inefficient; people often face further suffering once they come to the UK. Poor Home Office decision-making on asylum claims is widespread, with almost two in five asylum refusals corrected on appeal.”³⁴ A wide range of credible organisations have researched and analysed the problems with Home Office decision-making in the asylum context. Practical recommendations that have been accepted in principle have not been implemented.³⁵
27. There were 37,562 asylum applications (main applicants only) in the UK in the year ending September 2021, an 18% increase on the previous year. This still only makes up 6% of the total number of immigrants into the UK³⁷.
28. Currently, thousands of these asylum applicants have to wait years for a final decision on their claim; this means they are left in limbo and unable to plan for their futures³⁸.
29. The backlog of cases awaiting an initial decision continued to rise to another record high. At the end of September 2021, 83,733 people were waiting for an outcome on their initial claim

for asylum. Of these, 56,520 (68%) have been waiting for more than 6 months, up from 46,108 this time last year.³⁹ “The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic led to a number of changes in Home Office practice, which essentially slowed down the decisions making process as interviews were suspended during the first lockdown and then recommenced via video conferencing, leading to a 31% reduction in the number of decisions made from 20,766 in 2019 to 14,365 in 2020.”⁴⁰ Each one of these represents a person anxiously awaiting news of their fate, with no idea how much longer they will be forced to live in poverty and uncertainty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

30. **That the Government introduce a cross-departmental National Refugee Integration Strategy that is applicable to all refugees in the UK⁴¹ together with the appointment of a Minister for Refugees.⁴²**
31. **The Home Office need to take urgent action to address the backlog going forward.⁴³**

CONCERN

32. **That the current asylum system greets people seeking asylum and migrants with hostility and disbelief: enforced destitution and detention and that new proposals would deepen this hostility.⁴⁴**
33. The exposure in April 2018 of the Windrush scandal has drawn attention to current immigration policy and practice that has devastating and sometimes tragic consequences.⁴⁵ More would claim that what is in place is an intentional and planned hostility towards those who arrive in the UK in the hope of a better life for them and for their families.⁴⁶ In 2012 Teresa May, the then Home Secretary was quoted as saying: “The aim is to create here in Britain a really hostile environment for illegal migration.”⁴⁷

RECOMMENDATION

34. **That any new system of asylum would adhere to the highest human rights standards.^{49 50}**

CONCERN

35. **We are concerned that the “move-on” period of 28 days which allows for the continuation of Section 95 support is too short.**
36. “It is government policy not to prepare applicants for life in the UK prior to the decision on their asylum applications, in case such preparations make it more difficult to remove them in the event of a negative decision.”⁵¹ And, when people seeking asylum are given the right to remain in the UK, they are afforded just 28 days support during which they must become employed and access accommodation. It is not only more compassionate but it also makes economic sense⁵² to extend this “moving - on” period to 56 days support . Without such an extension, many find themselves homeless and destitute making it even more difficult to access accommodation or gain employment. Their journey to the UK may have been traumatic and long. They may have suffered what has been termed the “seven D’s”: discrimination, detention, dispersal, destitution, denial of the right to work, denial of healthcare, and delayed decisions.⁵³ Indeed, 57% of refugees end up sleeping rough or in a hostel or night shelter when they leave asylum accommodation.⁵⁴

37. The Home Office provides housing and financial support to a person who has claimed asylum if they do not have accommodation and / or cannot afford to meet their essential living needs. This support is provided under Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and continues until the person's asylum claim is finally determined by the Home Office or appeal courts.⁵⁵ Section 95 support will be withdrawn if a person is granted leave to remain. A 28-day notice period will be provided to enable the person to make a claim for benefits and access housing assistance from their local council. For many who may have been 10 years or longer in the asylum process the 28 day "move on" period is far too short to find accommodation, a job and to register for entitlements and many have been forced into destitution resulting from this 28 day rule.⁵⁶ Recent research into the challenges faced by refugees during this "move on" period found that they can lead to deteriorating mental health and subsequently damage the ability of the newly recognised refugee to rebuild their lives in the UK.⁵⁷

RECOMMENDATION

38. **That the current "move-on" period of 28 days be extended to 56 days.**

CONCERNS

39. **That the current system prioritises some refugees over others and manifests itself as an unjust "two-tier" system.**
40. **That this emerging "two-tier" system will be reinforced should the new Borders and Nationality Bill be passed into law as it is currently proposed.**
41. In 2017 an All Party Parliamentary Group report entitled Refugees Welcome concluded that there is "a clear two-tier system in how we treat refugees which is leaving thousands homeless and destitute."⁵⁸
42. Many who arrive in Britain through a resettlement scheme receive more support than those who are given refugee status after they arrive as people seeking asylum. "Refugees often struggle to access employment, training, healthcare and other services, resettled refugees are far more likely to be able to gain support to overcome any barriers from their caseworker."⁵⁹ Refugees who have come through the asylum route are more likely to need to rely on the limited resources of charities, faith based organisations and individuals.^{60 61}
43. Clause 11 in the Nationality and Borders Bill sets out the differential treatment of refugees and threatens to undermine the longstanding and widely understood expectation that a person's asylum application is decided on the individual merits of their case and whether they would face serious threats to their life or freedom if they were not to be granted refugee status. The artificial manufacture of a two-tier system creates two different classes of refugees. This would not be based on needs or merits but would depend on the ability of a person to arrive in the UK via a 'regular' route of travel. This is a clear breach of the principles of the Refugee Convention, and we have seen no credible evidence that it will stop irregular migration across the English Channel; it is therefore, policy made without a basis in evidence or morality. Criminalising and punishing vulnerable people seeking asylum who have little choice but to arrive in the UK through 'irregular routes', when the majority⁶² are subsequently able to prove that they have a legitimate basis for their asylum claim, is a disgraceful, hostile and dishonourable policy, and should be abandoned.

RECOMMENDATION

44. **That the government would look afresh at the statutory provision for refugees and people seeking asylum who seek sanctuary in the UK to ensure a more humane and just approach to the fulfilment of the UK's human rights obligations.⁶⁴**

CONCERN

45. **Our concern is that, with the passing of current legislation as proposed in the Borders and Nationality Bill, people seeking asylum in the UK will be criminalised.**
46. **That arriving in the UK without documents would not only criminalise those seeking asylum but would significantly discriminate against a person's right to access the necessary and relevant supports.**
47. Other than the government resettlement schemes people have no formal way to seek asylum in the UK. The new Borders and Nationality Bill will not create one. In fact, creating more stringent border controls will merely encourage people seeking asylum to enter the UK by informal (and often more dangerous) routes.
48. In January 2021, the UK government introduced new rules through which they can decide that an asylum claim is “inadmissible”, meaning it won’t be considered in the UK. The inadmissibility rules are part of the new Nationality and Borders Bill currently going through parliament. However, these rules have been in place and have been used by the Home Office since January last year. The 2021 inadmissibility rules replaced the Dublin Regulations⁶⁵, which no longer applied in the UK once the UK left the EU.
49. Despite the fact that the Refugee Convention explicitly allows people to seek asylum without official documents, those who arrive without official documentation will be punished and may even face criminal charges. However, the new Borders and Nationality Bill will create increased opportunities for traffickers who are less likely to be reported by those for whom they offer one of the few opportunities for entry into the UK. “By making it riskier for any migrant without documents to present to the authorities, it plays into traffickers’ hands. The UK government argues that the Bill combats trafficking but, in fact this Bill merely serves as a charter for traffickers.”⁶⁶
50. The new Borders and Nationality Bill is extremely wide ranging, and makes sweeping changes to the UK asylum system. However, it lacks detail in many areas and gives the Home Secretary a huge amount of discretion over how many key proposals will be put into practice.⁶⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS

51. **That any new legislation for the reception and integration of refugees and people seeking asylum would be properly resourced and identify and create safe routes for those who wish to travel to the UK.**
52. **That arrival without documents would not be prejudicial to the application of any person who seeks asylum in the UK.**

CONCERNS

53. **That the UK government is becoming increasingly dependent upon detention in the immigration removal centres, including the detention of children.**

54. The UK Government already has the power to detain people who are seeking refuge. Sometimes this even includes children. There is no maximum time limit for people held in detention, meaning people are held indefinitely. The latest statistics show that there were 1,410 people in detention in immigration removal centres at the end of September 2021; among them were 881 people seeking asylum. This equates to a 56% increase from the previous year. The Refugee Council estimates that the new Borders and Nationality Bill would mean up to 14,000 would potentially be accommodated in reception centres after its implementation.⁶⁸
55. In the same period, there were 17,499 occurrences of people being released back into the community, indicating flaws in the Government's detention regime.⁶⁹
56. Despite a Government promise in 2010 to end the practice of detaining children, there were still 112 occurrences of children entering immigration detention in the year ending September 2021.⁷⁰

RECOMMENDATION

57. **That any new legislation would include new provisions that are likely to see a significant decrease in numbers detained in immigration centres and that the detention of children in immigration centres ceases immediately as per government assurances⁷¹.**

CONCERN

58. **That people seeking asylum, refugees and migrants be adequately supported, in accordance with their needs, at all stages of their application to claim asylum.**
59. Rejected asylum-seekers are denied all statutory support. The eligibility criteria for Section 4⁷² support are intentionally narrow. The lack of other statutory provision for refused asylum seekers is intended to reinforce the expectation that they leave the UK⁷³. "Cashless, prohibited from working, unwilling to face return, or unable to return, or unreturnable, they are denied basic human rights of food, shelter, and medical care, and consigned to a limbo of street destitution which drives many into illegal or exploitative survival strategies."⁷⁴
60. A limited number are provided with Section 4 support consisting of a cashless weekly allowance and accommodation in a location beyond the control of the applicant. The person must also be destitute or about to become destitute in order to qualify for Section 4 support. If the Home Office rejects an application for Section 4 support, and that decision is upheld on appeal, the person will then have no access to any form of support⁷⁵.
61. "What happens while awaiting a decision on an application can have a significant impact on the future prospects of successfully integrating. The asylum system can be very stressful for applicants."⁷⁶
62. Asylum claims are often subject to an excessive standard of proof and claimants have to overcome significant doubt and scepticism.⁷⁸
63. Inevitably, this leads to wrongful refusals. In fact, "approximately 40% of refusals are overturned on appeal to the courts, indicating a serious systemic flaw in initial decision-making. Rather than solving the problem, it should be noted that the new Borders and Nationality Bill will further formalise and entrench suspicion of people seeking asylum in law."⁸⁰

RECOMMENDATION

64. **That Section 4 support be extended to prevent incidences of destitution among asylum seekers.**

D. THE RIGHT TO WORK

CONCERN

65. **That the opportunity to work and contribute is denied to a person seeking asylum and that this contributes to their inability to integrate fully, maintain their mental health, learn English and access education.**
66. People claiming asylum are not eligible for mainstream welfare benefits and are not usually allowed to work. A person granted asylum becomes eligible to work in the UK without restrictions.⁸² The policy restricting asylum seekers' rights to work has been under review since 2018. The current position is that people seeking asylum are not allowed to work whilst waiting for a decision on their asylum claim. However, they can apply for permission to work if they have waited for over 12 months for an initial decision on their asylum claim and are not considered responsible for the delay in decision-making.⁸³ They can access employment only from the shortage occupation list which is extremely restrictive.⁸⁴

RECOMMENDATION

67. **That people seeking asylum irrespective of any decision on their asylum determination would after one year, become eligible to work and not be confined in their choice of employment by the “shortage occupation list”.⁸⁵**

Endnotes

¹The Westcourt Centre in Belfast aims to promote social inclusion and reduce disadvantage through education. As part of the Edmund Rice Network, Westcourt is committed to working towards social justice by giving voice and support to people on the margins. Since 2008, Westcourt has been working with a number of local service providers for the homeless to support people experiencing homelessness and help raise awareness of the issue of homelessness www.stillsomebody.org

²Homeless Connect (previously known as Council for the Homeless NI) has been working to prevent and alleviate homelessness in Northern Ireland since 1983. Homeless Connect is the representative body for the homelessness sector in NI, working to represent organisations working with people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. Homeless Connect further provide direct support to service users through our projects.

³European Province Refugee Group was set up by people associated with the European Province of the Christian Brothers as a response to the 2015 refugee crisis. It sponsored a number of seminars and briefing meetings for the wider Edmund Rice Network in Ireland and the UK. Volunteers work on a one-to-one basis with refugees who are currently in Direct Provision. A refugee housing project is currently underway with the Irish Refugee Council.

⁴<https://www.euronews.com/2020/12/28/covid-19-helped-cut-homelessness-in-europe-but-what-about-after-the-pandemic>

⁵<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/ni-public-urged-to-start-the-conversation-on-homelessness-this-christmas-41120555.html>

⁶https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/document/united_kingdom/session_27_-_may_2017/js12_upr27_gbr_e_main.pdf

⁷<https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/northern-ireland-homelessness-body-undergoes-name-change-to-change-narrative-73021#:~:text=Figures%20released%20by%20Northern%20Ireland's,two%20and%20a%20half%20years> .

⁸<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-58602977>

⁹Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

¹⁰The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.

¹¹“People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places, not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or ‘bashes’)”

<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Rough-Sleeping/2020-rough-sleeping-snapshot-statistics.aspx> Page 1

¹²See Article 3 of the The Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1988/1990/article/3>

¹³NIHE: Northern Ireland Housing Executive

¹⁴A single person is also classed as a household

¹⁵See Housing Executive, “Are you homeless?” for a brief explanation of the four criteria, accessed 17 January 2022: <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Housing-Help/Homelessness/Are-you-homeless>

¹⁶https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/document/united_kingdom/session_27_-_may_2017/js12_upr27_gbr_e_main.pdf

¹⁷During 2017-18, 18,180 households presented as homeless to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (The Northern Ireland Housing Statistics 2017-18). If each household was to consist of three individuals on average, this would produce a figure of over 55,000 individuals. <https://simoncommunity.org/homelessness/knowledge-hub/homelessness-in-ni>

¹⁸See Department for Communities, “Northern Ireland Homelessness Bulletin”, tables 1.1 and 1.2.

¹⁹<https://rupture.ie/articles/norths-housing-crisis>

²⁰<https://nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Homelessness/homelessness-reset-plan-the-way-home.aspx?ext P.9>.

²¹<https://www.agendani.com/homelessness-crisis/>

²²<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey>

²³Department for Communities, “Northern Ireland Homelessness Bulletin July - Dec 2021,” accessed March 11 2022, Table 3.5, <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/ni-homelessness-bulletin-jul-dec-2021-tables.ods>

²⁴Department for Communities, “Northern Ireland Homelessness Bulletin July – Dec 2021,” Table 3.5.

²⁵Department for Communities, “Northern Ireland Homelessness Bulletin July – Dec 2021,” Table 3.4

²⁶<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/northern-ireland/housing-demand-in-ni-remains-much-greater-than-supply-and-is-impacting-sales-and-prices-survey-reveals-41145507.html>

²⁷<https://www.thedetail.tv/articles/social-housing-waiting-list-10-higher-since-start-of-pandemic#:~:text=THE%20Northern%20Ireland%20social%20housing,the%20impact%20of%20the%20pandemic.>

²⁸Figures provided by the Housing Executive to Homeless Connect. Full Duty Applicants are households who have been accepted as legally homeless and granted points accordingly in the Housing Selection Scheme.

²⁹Department for Communities, “Northern Ireland Housing Statistics 2020-21”, Table 3.5 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/ni-housing-stats-20-21-tables3.ods>

³⁰Northern Ireland Audit Office, “Homelessness in Northern Ireland”, 21 November 2017, Homelessness in Northern Ireland Full Report_0.pdf (niauditoffice.gov.uk) Paragraph 21

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71https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257654/child-detention-conclusions.pdf Page 3 One of this Government's first acts was to commit to ending the detention of children for immigration purposes.

72Section 4 support is only given to people meeting one of a small number of tightly defined conditions. These include demonstrating willingness to leave the UK, having a medical reason not to travel, or being unable to travel because there is no safe route of return.

<https://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/information-and-resources/rights-and-entitlements/support-options-for-people-with-nrpf/home-office-support/section-4-asylum-support#guide-sections>

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APPENDICES

We include three different and powerful testimonies below that offer detail of the personal experiences of those who are claiming asylum in Northern England and of their family situations in their home countries. In each case we obscure the identity of those making the testimonies at their request for fear that any comment or criticism that they make may jeopardise their application for leave to remain in the UK.

TESTIMONY 1:

Testimony of Sarah B.

Congolese Refugee, former Asylum Seeker

Resident now in Liverpool and aided by Asylum Link Merseyside in her asylum claims.

Time in UK: 13 years

Time as refused asylum seeker (destitute) 10 years.

Contact



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Permission has been sought and granted for the publication of this written testimony which is now archived by Edmund Rice Trust England.

Destitution

I was sent to the UK by an uncle. I never intended to come to the UK. My family were separated and many 'lost' in Congo due to political unrest and persecution of my father. At age 19 I arrived having been put on a flight but had no idea where I was when I arrived or even the name of the airport. As a Congolese I knew French but spoke no English. I was sick when I arrived both physically and mentally. I was put straight into a detention centre. From there she was transferred to Liverpool, alone.

I told my story when interviewed by Home Office officials but didn't realise this was what would become my official asylum claim, I knew nothing of this system or process. I was traumatised by my experiences at home, my current situation, totally alone, scared and unable to communicate with people.

Within 2 months I was called to court, but my claim was rejected. This was despite the fact that the reports on my case were from the UK hospitals that had been treating me for psychological illness. Sarah had to attend this hearing totally alone.

So, I became destitute. This situation is terrible. It is extremely distressing, I slept outside, in train stations etc. I had mental health problems. I had no support, no food, no money and no place to sleep.

I was exploited and abused. I had to stay with friends as I had no choice, males in these households, friends' brothers and husbands took advantage of me. When you are living with someone, you become like a slave. I was like I didn't exist, it was like no-one cared about me or the fact that I was sick and vulnerable.

For 2 years this continued and even though I was receiving treatment for mental health problems I had to sign weekly at the Home Office. This in itself is a very traumatising experience as you are scared when you have to go to sign. You are searched, people can detain you when you are there.

People like me from countries where police and authorities cannot be trusted find these environments, officials, police and security very frightening.

Putting a case back together takes a long time and you need help. I didn't know them where to access that help or support.

After the case was submitted again to be reconsidered, it was thrown out within 3 months and I became destitute for another 4 years.

Asylum Link, a charity gave me a place to sleep. I took an overdose and was about to lose my life.

I didn't have anybody, the Home Office are leaving you out in danger, at risk of abuse, enforced prostitution etc.

I can't remember everything as I was so traumatised. There were times I couldn't have a shower. People who knew me didn't recognise me as I looked so bad.

The reason I was refused was that the authorities weren't sure she was from Congo amongst other reasons. Even though I was sick and vulnerable, and my family have disappeared. The first judge's decision stands even though it was later proved that my case was valid. I went through 10 years of uncertainty, illness, abuse, trauma and eventually the last judge to see my 5th claim understood the situation in Congo, said my first evidence was all valid and recommended I be granted refugee status after all this time. The judge accused the Home Office had no reason to refuse her case, she should have been given status immediately when she arrived. Imagine how different my life could have been. If I had had a solicitor at the first hearing I would have been given status.

I wish I had never come; I would never choose this. I would say to anyone considering this don't do it. The last 10 years have ruined me. I have physical health issues because of extreme anxiety over prolonged periods of time. I have trouble eating because of reflux and heartburn, this is because of anxiety. I have back problems and pain because of poor living conditions and diet.

A woman's 20s are usually a time when she has a career, she considers marriage etc. I have not been able to do this as I was focussed solely on my case and on survival. It becomes an obsession. When you see an asylum seeker with suitcases, they are full of papers not possessions or clothes. You must keep every bit of paper, letters etc even though you cannot understand them. Many people

who are native English people have helped me and are unable to interpret what is written by the Home Office.

The home office have made many mistakes in their version of my story and in their correspondence, putting things in that I have never said.

They make many mistakes but we as very traumatised, vulnerable and scared asylum claimants cannot make even a small error, if we do, we are disbelieved.

I have been put into detention twice just because I am a person claiming asylum.

Once you have status granted after all this time, the authorities then hound you and put pressure on you about getting a job. How can a person work after having lived almost underground for 10 years? The person has no place to live yet, no confidence, no skills, probably little English, poor health.

Everything is shattered, you are dependent on other people and dependent on medication.

So even people who are granted status can end up destitute as they are so vulnerable and unwell that they are unable to fulfil all the responsibilities now put onto them such as finding a job, claiming benefits, finding accommodation. After being invisible and marginalized for such a long time you cannot just miraculously step up and become an active citizen. You suddenly you have to live a different life, but you don't know what is going to happen. It's not explained. You enter a new system and the people in the housing authority don't know you or how to explain. You have no money whilst waiting for these claims to come through. The only help is through charities. But to get to the office of the charity can be impossible as you have no money to pay for public transport.

Many people seeking asylum have health issues and mental health issues, doctors prescribe them more and more medication.

We are running away from our countries because we think that we are going to be safe in another country. You go through a lot, you miss your family, I was very young. People are traumatized and anyone you meet doesn't know this.

The way the refusal is made is heartless. A letter arrives and you are alone, very upset and no idea what will happen or what to do next.

You can be moved anywhere. I had been sent to live in Manchester, didn't know anyone, then my case was refused, and I had no idea where to go or how to get help. I had 3 weeks to get out of the accommodation. You have nowhere to put your belongings. A destitute friend had left her case files with someone for safe keeping but they left the boxes out in the rain and ruined all her evidence.

I know a lady who has been waiting in this system for more than 20 years. The promise is that after 20 years an asylum seeker can be granted status. The problem is that lots of people don't register a claim straight away as they had no idea what they had to do when they arrived so there is no way to prove that you have been here for 20 years.

The time an asylum seeker is waiting creates so many problems. The insecurity of how to live, threat of detention, fear of authorities, not knowing the language or culture, living in fear.

Hostile environment

The area where asylum seekers are housed are areas where people mistrust outsiders, it makes us scared. Only charities like Asylum Link do events and campaigns to break down barriers and try to educate native English people about asylum seekers. I have been surprised what people didn't know about Africa assuming I came from a jungle didn't have education or even electric light. Choosing these areas creates difficulties for populations.

We are mistrusted in shops; I have to be patient.

The news reports very negative aspects of asylum seekers. I met an English woman at a campaign 'These Walls Must Fall' to stop detention who told me she believed it was illegal to help asylum seekers. So many English people don't know about our situation or stories.

I wish I could go back to my country, but I cannot.

If destitute refused asylum seeker is ill, for example I know a very sick lady in this position with diabetes she cannot get help. She cannot afford transport costs to go to appointments at the Home Office, but she is refused any help. She is very ill when she needs to walk huge distances to these appointments.

Going in to sign at appointments at the Home Office is so stressful, going in you don't know if you will be coming back out. You can just be detained. A lot of people are detained there.

The Right to Work

This is so important.

If asylum seekers had a work permit, things would be ok. You could be trained, meet people, integrated, learn English, earn your own living, avoid mental health issues, avoid over medication.

Integration

When you are asylum seeking or destitute you cannot learn, you are too stressed. So you can't learn English or make friends. By the time you get status they want you to work. They want you to give 100% to a job but if you don't have it, you can't give it. This system has taken away the ability to function as normal human being.

People never plan to be a refugee. I had to leave a place that is torn apart, a huge place with very little resources, no health care, hardly any transport. No peace, a terrible war. My city of Kinshasa is full of orphans, violence, child soldiers, rapes, no order etc.

Many issues there are caused by the developed world such as Europe, we have minerals and reserves of Lithium so conflict and corruption are rife due to the exploitation of Congo's resources.

I agree with Ewan Roberts, the director of Asylum Link, we are not opposed to there being an asylum system but why isn't there a way of assessing claims that is fair? A system that when the case is clearly false helps the person back to their country? Leaving people stuck in destitution, inflicting suffering for a long, long time is very bad, it is cruel. People waste most of their lives, your life stops. You are in a sleep walk, you dream the same things.

verbatim

TESTIMONY 2:

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Permission has been sought and granted for the publication of this testimony which is now archived by Edmund Rice Trust England.

Yaman, aged 27, from Syria

Interviewer/s: I'll start. My name's Niall. I was going to start with the first question. Just basically, plain and simple; how was your journey to the UK? Was there anything wrong with it? Was it troublesome? Just describe it.

Testimony A: Well, my journey wasn't that long wasn't really that hard. I came straight from a Gulf country to the UK, and then I applied for asylum at some point.

Interviewer/s: Okay. So was there no difficulty there; it was quite simple?

Testimony A: In my personal experience, no.

Interviewer/s: Okay. Is there anything you've seen on your journey? Maybe it wasn't difficult for you, but did you encounter anybody else that was struggling a bit more or was it sort of solitary?

Testimony A: The way I came to the UK, which was through a student visa, it was fairly easy to get this kind of visa. I worked hard for it and, you know, UK is such a really hard country to get there, regardless of the type of the visa, but I managed. I was lucky to be able to get the student visa.

Interviewer/s: Yes, that sounds great. Do you think it would have been a lot different if you weren't applying as a student?

Testimony A: Yeah, I believe it would have been really different if let's say if I applied for a visitor visa, especially being a Syrian. The current situation that is going on in Syria, they really put that into consideration this year when applying for a visitor. They considered the current situation in Syria hence that would greatly impact the result of the application, how do they, you know, answer your application? How do they judge? It depends.

Interviewer/s: Are you in the process of seeking asylum?

Testimony A: Yeah.

Interviewer/s: Okay. So how long, how long have you been waiting for a decision?

Testimony A: Well, I arrived in the UK in September. I applied a few days later, so I've spent six months.

Interviewer/s: Six months waiting for a decision?

Testimony A: Yes. I have no idea when I will have this decision.

Interviewer/s: And do you know what stage you're up to with you with your application? Do you receive any indication of that or is it, or do you just have to wait?

Testimony A: No, not really. That's the bad part about the asylum process. You have no clue what is going on. It's usually organized as an, uh, first interview and then another big interview - that is how they call it: a big interview. And then you wait for a decision. So basically three or four steps, but you don't know how long each step of these takes. So, I've been here for six months after my screening interview. I don't know where my second big interview will take place. I then don't know, uh, how long is the wait for the decision. It's completely disorganized when it comes to timeframe.

Interviewer/s: Okay. So you, so you haven't even had that second interview yet?

Testimony A: No. I haven't.

Interviewer/s: Okay. Excellent. I'm Rodney. What support from the government do you see at this moment in time? Is there anything or is there none at all?

Testimony A: So in addition to housing, which is, um, a bed and breakfast for the time being, um, there's financial aid. Which is eight pounds a week and that's all.

Interviewer/s: Would you say that's sustainable or nowhere near enough?

Testimony A: It really depends, but I wouldn't say it is enough, no. It really depends on the person.

Interviewer/s: What are some of the things that you need to spend money on every week? Do you need to buy mobile phone top or toiletries? Where does that £8 go?

Testimony A: Yeah. Things like that, essentials.

Interviewer/s: Is the housing good or is that not up to standard?

Testimony A: It is good. It is good. It's a three star hotel. So can't complain, really. It is good.

Interviewer/s: I'm Jacob. I'm just going to ask this question about, so what difficulties have you faced? What difficulties have you faced in presenting evidence to support your case?

Testimony A: As I said, I still haven't had the big interview or the substantive interview. So, at this point, I haven't presented any evidence and I don't think I'll have to face problems providing these.

Interviewer/s: Oh, okay. I see. Okay. Is that because you are from Syria and there's an agreement between the UK government and Syria to receive asylum seekers from that part of the world?

Testimony A: No, it's really personal. So, regarding my case and my situation, I don't think I'll be facing a problem. You know, providing the evidence I have, I don't know about the other Syrians though.

Interviewer/s: Okay.

Testimony A: Because every case is different.

Interviewer/s: How welcomed do you feel in the United Kingdom? How do people respond to you when you, when you're out and about?

Testimony A: I feel so welcome. I've already made a lot of friends. I'm involved in a lot of activities, a lot of volunteering. I'm playing for a football team, so yeah. I say I I'm feeling really welcomed.

Interviewer/s: This one is a bit of a personal one, so feel free to, if you don't want to answer it, but we'll ask it just anyway for this article. Have you been separated from immediate family? And if so, like what was the situation regarding that?

Testimony A: Well, I've come alone to the UK, so it doesn't apply to me.

Interviewer/s: Have you got any family still back in Syria?

Testimony A: Yes, I do.

Interviewer/s: But they wouldn't have any, any plans to come over to the UK with you?

Testimony A: It would be really difficult for them to move to the UK, but I don't know. I don't know if they have any intentions of doing that.

Interviewer/s: Okay. And if you don't mind me asking, are you working currently in the UK or have you got a work visa?

Testimony A: Well, as an asylum seeker, I'm not allowed to work, not allowed to study, so no.

Interviewer/s: You're not allowed to study?

Testimony A: Just voluntary work, you know, I can't study, I can't work. But I'm just doing this voluntary work.

Interviewer/s: Yeah. So the only income you have is given by the government?

Testimony A: Yes.

Interviewer/s: How old are you Yaman if you don't mind me asking?

Testimony A: I'm 27.

Interviewer/s: Okay. And I just asked the boys here if they've got anything else that they'd like to ask you. Um, because I know we've got Samad in the waiting room. You said you feel welcomed. What do you think, like on a bigger scale, do you think the government is doing enough? Do you think there's anything they can do to improve how they handle asylum cases?

Testimony A: Yeah, of course. There's a lot, a lot to do, always for everyone, for everyone that's involved. As I've said, the system, we need a structure. Because me as an asylum seeker, I've been waiting for six months and only God knows how long it's taking. I know it's, it's true that the number of refugees and those who are applying for asylum and the Ukraine crisis, I know it's overwhelming, but still me as an asylum seeker, I need a structure. Just tell me, uh, you'll do the first interview and then we'll see if you're eligible or not. If I am eligible, then you'll have another interview in six weeks, eight. Two months, three months. No, it's up to the government. And then if you're okay, you're eligible you deserve to be granted asylum then. Yeah. You'll take it to them two weeks, three weeks, I don't know about the time frames, but there must be a time frame. That's one

thing the government should have. And also, work permits, because I'm a pharmacist and, um, I'm an overseas pharmacy graduate. So for me to practice as a pharmacist in the UK, uh, uh, there's a process that takes around two years, no less than two years. So why not, uh, make use of this time, the time I'm waiting for, uh, my asylum application to be processed, in study? In two years I could be a recognized pharmacist in the UK. Why would I just be waiting all this time? Doing absolutely nothing. And then, well, you got my point.

Interviewer/s: Yeah. So it's a missed opportunity, isn't it, from the British government, because they could have someone who's contributing to society?

Testimony A: Yeah.

TESTIMONY 3:

Edmund Rice England

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Permission has been sought and granted for the publication of this written testimony which is now archived by Edmund Rice Trust England.

Sarmad, from Iraq

Interviewer/s: Sarmad, can I just explain a little bit about the way it's going to work?

Testimony B: So can I turn off my camera?

Interviewer/s: Yes, of course.

Testimony B: Yeah, continue.

Interviewer/s: Okay. So the way this is going to work is that we've got some specific questions that the students would like to ask you. Have you seen those questions?

Testimony B: No.

Interviewer/s: Okay. I gave these questions to Mona. I think the best thing to do is just before we start, just to, just to tell you what those questions are, and if there's any that you feel like you don't want to answer, then you can tell me that you'd rather not answer those. So we'll be asking about how you came to the United Kingdom. We'll be asking about how long you've been waiting for a decision on your asylum claim. We'll be asking about what level of government support you receive. We'll be asking about any difficulties that you've had going through the process, and we'll be asking if you're separated from any immediate family members. Are all those questions ok?

Testimony B: Yes.

Interviewer/s: Okay. Brilliant. Alright. Well, the students are going to ask the questions. We'll all be making notes. We are recording the zoom call, but we're not sharing that with anyone. It's just so that I can go back later and listen to what you've said and put it into the report. Is that okay?

Testimony B: Yes.

Interviewer/s: Okay. My name's Niall. Just give as much detail as you can about the journey to the UK.

Testimony B: Do you want me to tell the whole story? I studied PhD in university of Sheffield, 2019. Electronic engineering. When I finished my studies I went back to my country, Iraq, and then I started to look for a job, but I couldn't find any job until one of my friends contacted me and told me that there is a job for me. I need to contact someone that he recommended me. So I went to that person and after many meetings with him, I understand that he is working with the militias in Iraq. That's the Shia militias. And they requested me to, program bombing drawings. They were having a plan to do. And I refused that. They threatened me to kill me and my family. They put a letter for me in my house with a bullet and a threatening letter. And then there were many bad things happening to me. So, fortunately I had a UK visa for myself and my family, so I decided to go to the UK as soon as possible. And after this happened, within a week, I left everything in Iraq and I came

to the UK by visa, by plane. I landed in Manchester, and then I claimed asylum. This was a short story!

Interviewer/s: Yeah. That's perfect. Can I just ask was it a student visa or a tourist visa?

Testimony B: I had a Post-Study work visa. I applied for that before returning back to my country and also I'd been searching for work in the UK at that time.

Interviewer/s: Okay. Are you still currently seeking asylum?

Testimony B: Yes.

Interviewer/s: Okay. And how long was that? How long have you been seeking to stay?

Testimony B: Since September 2021, I've been in a hotel with my family.

Interviewer/s: Okay. Have there been any issues while you've been waiting for a decision? Have you been told anything?

Testimony B: Sorry. The issue is very hard and difficult because in the hotel we are living in one room. I have two children. When first we came they didn't go to school for nearly four months. Food is very bad. Every day, the kids are eating chips and chicken nuggets that are even not the same as children anywhere else. It's very bad quality. And also for myself and my wife, we can't eat that food so many days we slept without anything. And we have been given only 5 pounds per person per week. So we got 20 pounds a week and then after two months when I arrived there, they didn't give us anything. They cut that support. So they left without money just depending on the food service. So this was very difficult for me. And I should then apply for Section 95 to get house support and income support. This, I wait nearly six months until I get Section 95. And after I got that, I got a card which now I am getting 8 pound a week for each person, which is 32 pounds. Again, this not enough for me. There's also many difficulties. Well, an example, my wife is starting to have mental issues because of all the, issues that's happened to us since we left our home country and then came to the hotel.

Interviewer/s: Sarmad do you mind me asking, what was the delay in you receiving Section 95 support? Why did it take six months?

Testimony B: There's Migrant Help. I think the first one I applied, Home Office asked me for bank statements. I sent that. There was transactions and they required explanation of that transaction. I sent that by post because I thought that was faster than email. And the same time I sent email. And I keep asking Migrant Help every week. I call them four, five times to send the information to Home Office and they confirmed that they sent it but after four months. In December I got a post from Home Office telling me that they didn't get any reply from me. I call Migrant Help. They told me they sent it. So I'm lost between Migrant Help and Home Office until I contacted Mona in the hotel. I think the problem was with the Migrant Help.

Interviewer/s: I'm Rodney. What difficulties have you faced presenting the evidence to support your case as to how you become an asylum seeker.

Testimony B: Until now I don't have any information from Home Office about when is my second interview? I don't know anything. I'm just waiting for, I say infinite time. I don't know when will be my second interview. That's very hard for me because also I need to work. I'm an educated person. I

don't like to get benefits. I want to work. Because I spent all my life studying and now I want to get the job that I deserve. So for me, just sitting like that and I waiting for nothing, it's very hard for me. Also, we didn't get any ID cards, just myself. It's called ARK Card. I've applied many times for my wife and my kids. They didn't get it until now. So I feel that the process it's taking a long time and not everyone's the same. You see some people get this card second day; you see someone get it after one year. And also for the second interview, there is no system that they can follow, for example, a queue or priority. I don't know how they make decisions for the interviews and to send the ID cards. So for me, the process is very hard and there's a big uncertainty.

Interviewer/s: Yeah. So at that second interview. Will you be expected to find evidence for why you left Iraq?

Testimony B: Yes. I have evidence because before I left Iraq, I reported what happened to me to the police, to the courts and I have the papers from police and from the courts that explained all the situation. I have that. I have these papers and evidence. Yeah.

Interviewer/s: Have you been separated from any of your immediate family in Iraq?

Testimony B: My family is still there; my mum and dad.

Interviewer/s: Okay. How are they doing?

Testimony B: They are very sad because I left and they also got some things sent to them. And then everyday someone keeps asking where I lived, why I'm not working with them. And I'm very worried about them. Yeah, of course, there is nothing I can do for them now. And it's very hard for me that I left them. I can't express my feeling here.

Interviewer/s: Are they safe staying in Iraq or have they thought about seeking asylum as well?

Testimony B: Well, no, there are not safe. I can't say they're safe, but I think their problem will be maybe in the future they will try to do something with them, trying to force me to go. And I don't know what will happen, but until now I can't say they are safe. No, they are not safe.

Interviewer/s: Anyone else got anything you'd like to ask Sarmad or are you finished? Okay, well, Sarmad, thank you so much for your time. And thanks for being prepared to talk to us. I know it's not easy to talk about those things.