

## What are Asylum Seeker and Refugee Children?

They are called scroungers and are accused of swamping the UK. This is not the reality, this is just papers doing what they do best, telling stories.

Unfortunately, this negativity affects both children and adults. This anti-asylum agenda by some papers and political parties does not take into account that children are physically and psychologically less able than adults to provide for their own needs or to protect themselves from harm. They must rely on the care and protection of adults, sometimes in a different country. This is important as half of the world's refugees are children and they need special protection and care.

### Definitions of Asylum Seekers and Refugees

An asylum seeker is a person who has applied for asylum in the UK and is awaiting a final decision on their claim from the Immigration & Nationality Department of the Home Office.

What is asylum? Legal protection granted by one country to someone fleeing persecution from another country. Anyone has the right to seek sanctuary in another country if they are suffering persecution in their home country. When claiming asylum the government looks at the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

If the UK government believes that they face persecution if they are returned to their country then they are granted refugee status. They then have the same rights regarding benefits and housing as a British citizen although they are unable to obtain British Citizenship until they have lived in the UK for a minimum of 5 years.

Refugee children share certain universal rights with all other people but have additional rights as children and particular rights as refugees. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a comprehensive framework to guide the development of policy and practices that relate to children. Many of these children have experienced violence, torture, detention and the death of parents, experiences that don't fit easily into the confines of the 1951 United Nations refugee convention and make it difficult for children claiming asylum to be granted refugee status.

Once the children have fled their country of origin and arrive in the UK they are often being dumped in unsuitable accommodation without proper support and face a lottery in access to services, due to a general lack of co-ordination in provision, a report by the Refugee Council found.

Nobody is more vulnerable than a child arriving alone as an asylum seeker. This child may have been a victim of trafficking or sent to the UK for safety reasons. There are 5,200 asylum seeker/refugee children in British social services care, but the systems for looking after them are seriously in need of review.

Some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may have to leave foster care at 16 and then go into shared housing or some sort of supported living. Many children, some as young as 15, are housed in bed and breakfasts and expected to look after themselves as adults.

Recently child asylum seekers have been cast as liars or economic migrants in a leaked government document. Some 95% of these children don't get granted asylum, and this figure is used as the basis for proof that these children don't need the protection young British citizens in care are entitled to. There seems to be an assumption that all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are economic migrants and not genuine refugees in need of sanctuary.

For further information on refugee and asylum seeker issues see the Refugee Council website <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

We have written a few more articles on Immigration Issues on our website.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

### About the Author

Davinos Greeno works for the [organic food](#) and [ethical clothes](#) directory that lists 100s of Organic and Ethical Companies and we also have

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