



BASW
The professional association for
social work and social workers

Human Rights and Children Seeking Asylum

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The logo for BASW, featuring the letters 'BASW' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

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social work and social workers

A shift to the right..

- Viktor Orban
- Giorgia Meloni
- Geert Wilders

The logo for BASW (British Association of Social Workers) is located in the top left corner. It consists of the letters "BASW" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

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The UK too

- Brexit
- Culture Wars
- Immigration & Asylum

‘Stop the small boats!’

- Since other routes shut down (e.g. Channel Tunnel) asylum seekers been using small boats to cross Channel



- ‘Stop the small boats’ is one of 5 pledges by (the latest) UK Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

Significant changes to UK immigration and asylum law # 1

- Immigration legislation covers ‘formal’ routes into the UK, for example student visas, work visas, holiday visas, family reunion etc etc.
- Asylum legislation covers asylum seekers who arrive in the UK and then claim asylum – with the hope of being granted refugee status, right to remain and eventually citizenship.

Significant changes to UK immigration and asylum law # 2

- For asylum seekers who now travel by 'illegal' routes their claims are 'invalid'. This includes small boat crossings.
- If over 18 liable for immediate deportation either to their home country or 'a safe third country' (Rwanda).
- If a child (under 18) you *may* be deported - once you reach 18 you *will* be deported.

OK, so I'm asylum seeker - how do I make a claim in the UK?

- With very few exceptions you need to be in the UK to claim asylum.
- So, you need an air ticket or ferry ticket, passport and a visa. Once you get to the UK you can claim asylum.
- But I don't have any of those! Then you can't enter!
- There are some approved schemes e.g. from Afghanistan. But they don't work. Oh, and you need to go back to Afghanistan first.
- So - I'll cross on a small boat! This is an 'illegal route', so your claim is 'invalid' - and you are liable for immediate deportation.

Note in passing that...



- The Home Secretary (Interior Minister) Priti Patel (2019-2022) is a first-generation migrant and child of refugees;
- The Home Secretary Suella Braverman (2022-2023) is a first-generation migrant;
- The current Home Secretary's James Cleverley (2023-) mother is a migrant; and,
- The Prime Minister is a first-generation migrant.

In the UK social workers have legal responsibilities to children seeking asylum – so will now focus on this.

- Children - i.e. under 18 - who are not with parents or other adult carers.
- In the jargon: UASC – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.
- Undertake age assessments (more on this later)
- Accommodate and support children (foster care)

Should social workers be doing age assessment?

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- Children have different needs to adults – the age of the child matters! It's about meeting the needs of the child.
- Was always the case that children got better protection than adults in the asylum system.
- Under new legislation might be the only thing that stops a child being deported
- Open borders may be a long-term aspiration for some: but we are going backwards we *had* open borders with the EU until Brexit...

Other legislative changes

- The National Age Assessment Board (NAAB) age assessment done by social workers but working as part of the Home Office. BASW discouraging social workers from working from the NAAB.
- ‘Scientific Assessments’ using x-rays and scans to determine age. Involves doctors and dentists (x-rays and scans)

These legislative changes are...

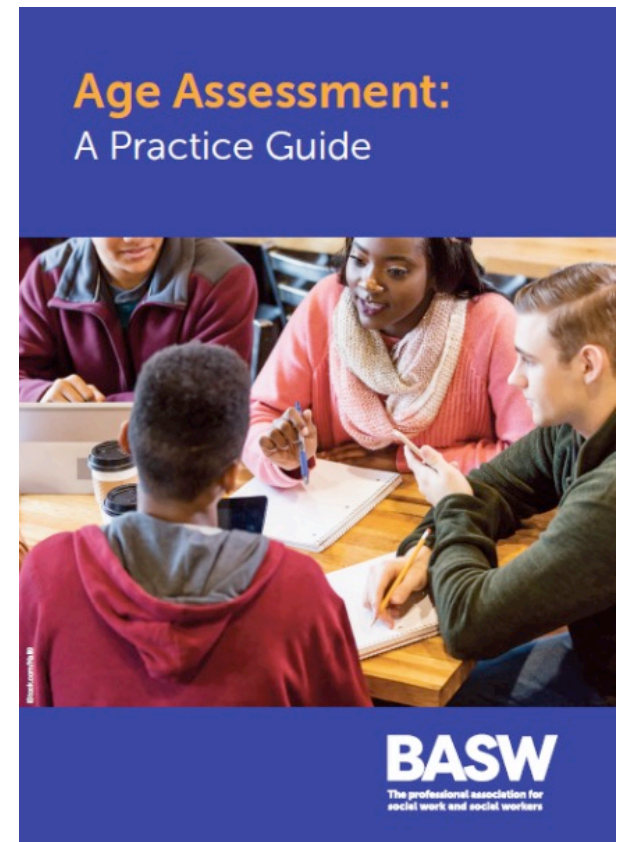
- Complex. Law and policy so complex that often people don't understand – including decision makers themselves.
- Chaotic. Often the implications of how the new scheme will work not thought through...
- Contested. Both politically and legally (both under group action and individual cases)
- Involves multiple stakeholders (doctors, dentists, refugee NGOs...)

Campaigning against...

- Using plain English to explain to politicians and media what the implications are
- Being clear about what social workers do and what expertise they bring.
- Which helps with campaigning with other groups
- Using a variety of tools: Parliamentary questions, briefings for Members of Parliament, giving evidence to committees, open letters...
- Boycotting the NAAB

Campaigning for....

- Setting up best practice around age assessment
- This is about the needs of the child.
- Regular briefings of social workers (one of many changes they are having to deal with)
- Developing a manifesto for what a new Government might do differently



Breaking news

- UK Supreme Court declares Rwanda is not 'a safe third country' and therefore Government cannot deport asylum seekers there.
- UK Government declares Rwanda is safe country and plans to pass law that declares Rwanda safe.
- First vote on this absurd law - Tuesday 12 December.

Final thoughts

- Immigration and asylum aren't new issues.
- Immigration and asylum issues aren't unique to the UK: EU, USA / Latin America, East Asia / Australia etc.
- Unless we move quickly to slow and then halt, for example, global warming many more people will be forced to leave their homelands...

Credits

- Slide 4 Photo source BBC
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- Slide 8 Rishi Sunak Source UK Houses of Parliament Official Portrait via Wikipedia.