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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP

### Key messages on asylum

**June 2022**

#### The right to asylum

Wherever we come from, we all have a right to feel safe. But the present UK Government and its supporters in the media are trying to turn us against people who come to the UK seeking safety.

After the horrors of the Second World War, the nations of the world came together in 1951 to sign the United Nations Refugee Convention. This is such an important part of international law because it gives everybody the right to seek safety when they are not safe in their own country. It means that everybody has the right to seek asylum, subject to proving a well-founded fear of persecution.

For people to use this right to seek asylum, there needs to be safe routes for people to travel to safe countries. But the UK Government has not established practical safe routes for many people seeking safety. Instead, they are forced to put their lives in the hands of people traffickers. We feel that it is wrong to criminalise people for using what are seen to be illegal routes to seek safety, when there are no safe routes.

We also know that it cannot be right that people seeking safety can only seek safety in the first safe country that they come to. That would result in people seeking safety staying in countries on the southern and eastern border of Europe. It is vital that the international community shares the responsibility for providing safety and welcome. And we also know that there are many good reasons for people to seek safety in the UK such as family relationships, historical and cultural connections and language.

We want to see safe routes to the UK that give people an opportunity to seek asylum here.

#### No Detention

It is wrong to detain people who are fleeing torture and persecution in their own country to find safety and freedom in another country. It is wrong to detain people while their asylum application is being processed.

We also know that for many reasons people are less able to make a case for their own safety while they are in detention. They are disconnected from their community, have limited opportunities to gather or access evidence for their asylum claims and are given access to only a restricted range of legal aid lawyers

Many people seeking asylum have suffered trauma, including torture or trafficking. Detention has proven to be very damaging for traumatised people.

There is also evidence of some people being particularly vulnerable to harm in detention, for instance LGBTQI+ people, who are often forced to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity for fear of abuse.

We also know that it is the prospect of being detained that fills many people seeking asylum with terror. All people seeking asylum have to live with the constant fear that they may at any time be arbitrarily detained because of their immigration status.

We want to end all immigration detention because it is unjust and inhumane. All people suffer from being held in immigration detention.

#### No offshore processing/third country asylum

We are totally opposed to people seeking safety in the UK being sent thousands of miles away to another country. The experience from Australia and Israel shows it is wrong to treat people in this manner.

#### In the Community

We want to see a just, humane asylum system which supports people as individual human beings to rebuild their lives in our communities. We want to see all people seeking asylum treated with dignity and respect as individuals.

We believe that people applying to become refugees in the UK should be able to live in the community whilst their application is being assessed. We believe integration should start on day one with their arrival in the UK.

We think it is wrong to cut people off from their communities. People seeking safety should be helped to rebuild their lives in a community. They want a chance to live in the safety of a community – both making a contribution and receiving support. We believe that people seeking asylum should have the right to work.

All people deserve the opportunity to rebuild their lives. We want to see a system of case management, where individuals are safe and supported in the community to work towards resolving their cases for themselves.