



Are you stuck at home but keen to help refugees and asylum-seekers? Here are some ways to help.

- **Lend a hand with specific needs.** Being a refugee doesn't dictate what you might need, every human is different and we are forever in different situations at different times. If you join local mutual aid groups on social media, you'll find that 'refugee needs' are ad hoc and you or a friend might be able to help in an unexpected way. Someone needs a fridge. Someone needs a pram. Someone needs a microwave. The most active group is [this one](#), and it also features a list of local mutual aid general Covid groups.
- **Donate your old tech.** Not everyone has a laptop or access to the internet. There are a few great organisations who will refurbish your old laptop or pass on your mouse/keyboard to those who really need it. Most will sort out delivery, too. At the moment, more than half of the young people RSN supports through the specialist educational and wellbeing support stream are without a laptop. Their education has been disrupted enough already and now they are excluded from remote learning. Your first port of call should be [Social Box](#), but Hope for the Young and Barnet Refugee Service are also providing this service.
- **Send Solidarity.** As part of Refugee Support Network's [ConnectedThroughCovid](#) campaign, you can send a letter, a poem, a piece of art, a story, anything really in the post and we will pass it on. Have you received a letter before? Isn't it nice? A physical letter can make such a difference to the mental health of someone struggling. We've also been encouraging the young people who receive them to [send things back](#) to help with their English, confidence and to give them something to do. Refugee Council are also running a similar service to get messages to refugees.
- **Fundraise for refugee charities.** That sentiment has been working and we are seeing a significant improvement in the moods and welfare of many, but its nothing like keeping services running. Most small and medium sized charities in the sector are heavily reliant on trusts and foundations, many of whom have shut their doors at this time because of the economic uncertainty. Our services, as well as those of many others, are critically endangered, and so donating or fundraising for them is really important. We are trying to introduce new, creative and fun ways to keep refugees connected and on track with their education, but the reality is that the existing work that many charities are doing are bringing real progress through regular programming, which now heavily rely on your support. £20 goes a really long way. We need funds for mobile data, for hygiene packages and to keep our 24-hour wellbeing support available. Helping

in this way will make the most difference. Or, think outside the box. Do you have a spare bike? Get in touch with the [Bike Project](#) who will refurbish it and pass it on.

- **Support Refugee Businesses.** Want to help people but the adulation of being a good person just doesn't cut it? [Buy something from a refugee!](#)
- **Get in touch with your local council.** Local councils have been tasked with housing the homeless. Many are facilitating contact-free support for community members who are in difficult situations. This often includes destitute asylum-seekers. Get in touch with them directly asking how you can help. That may look like preparing and delivering food to rough sleepers – many of whom will unfortunately be asylum-seekers
- **Offer Accommodation.** Some refugees and asylum-seekers are living in precarious or unsuitable housing. If you have a spare room or know someone that does, or a property which isn't being used, get in touch with [Refugees at Home](#). Unlikely, fine, but true, yes.
- **'Keep Talking'.** Our friends at Big Leaf Foundation have launched the ['Keep Talking'](#) initiative which is definitely worth checking out, especially if you would like to create your own resources. They are sharing and translating resource sheets and activities related to Arts & Crafts, Music, Photography and Health and Fitness. If you can help with remote learning in the form of resource sheets, webinars or videos, many charities are keen to share them with their service users, including us!
- **Offer your skills to local migrant services.** What do they need? What have you got? Here is a [list](#) of London-based migrant services, who are offering contact-free support. Let them know what skills you have that may be able to help – we've seen Zoom yoga classes, technology tips for those connected, language classes. The only real limit to how you can help is your own creativity.
- **Become an Activist.** Various different organisations are calling on the government to make things easier for refugees and asylum-seekers. Freedom from Torture, for example, are running an [asylum support campaign](#), calling for an increase in financial support given to asylum-seekers who need it by £20 a week. Sign their letter and spread the word with the hashtag #covidsolidarity. Sadiq Kahn has called for [migrants to be able to access Universal Credit](#), and [Detention Action](#) are pushing as ever to protect migrants in immigration detention. Your support of these campaigns make a difference – the government have [stopped evictions from its asylum accommodations](#) and [released some in detention](#). So it works. Be there.
- And if you're in, **get your friends involved.** Hold information sessions on Zoom, write a blog or record a video about why people should care about the welfare of refugees. Make Priti Patel know that when she googles 'asylum-seekers' the first thing that comes up is a news article about how your university or church or synagogue or mosque or wherever have come out in support of refugees. Know someone who won't listen? Change their mind, so that when the public's feelings about refugees are assessed by politicians, yours will be noted.

- **Develop your knowledge.** Read books about displacement, watch *For Sama*, enjoy the work of Phosphorous Theatre and get informed about the rights to which refugees are entitled. Do you actually know how the asylum system works? Neither do I, but it's a process. It's not difficult to find out, and we need to be prepared practically and emotionally when we can help in more direct ways again. Make sure you leave lockdown with more knowledge than you started. Be ready to back-up your position with evidence and reason rather than a woolly sense of being nice to the stranger.

That should keep us all busy. Stay hopeful, stay helpful, stay human!