



NOTICE OF MOTION TO MORAY COUNCIL ON WEDNESDAY 6 DECEMBER 2023

Right to work for asylum seekers

[Lift the Ban](#) is campaigning to restore the right to work for everyone waiting for more than 6 months for a decision on their asylum claim.

People seeking protection in the UK should be able to work and make the most of their potential, to provide for themselves and their families, similar to Ukrainian refugees who do already have the right to work.

Restrictions on right to work can lead to extremely poor mental health outcomes and waste of potentially invaluable talents and skills, both for the local economy and wider society.

The Council's own risk register lists Human Resources (People) at [Very High](#) with a likelihood of 5 out of 5, and that it is "difficult to recruit in a range of areas including certain subject teachers, vehicle technicians, specialist professional posts, senior management, clerical and administrative roles, temporary and relief staff, and community care employees."

Allowing people seeking asylum the right to work would lead to positive outcomes for individuals as well as benefiting public and private sector organisations in the region who are struggling with recruitment and retention.

A [majority of Scots](#) believe that Scotland needs to attract more people through immigration to work in key industries and public services.

In 2022 the [Shortage Occupational List was expanded](#) to include positions like social care, nursing, opening the possibility of employment for people seeking asylum. Council welcomes the [UK Migration Advisory Council report in March 2023 into labour shortages in the construction and hospitality sectors](#) and the potential use of the immigration system as a response, with a further report following a call for evidence due to be published this autumn.

Action

Council therefore agrees:

- To confirm support for the Lift the Ban campaign and our belief that the right to work is a fundamental human right;

- To formally join the Lift the Ban coalition alongside other local authorities, following the lead of Glasgow who joined earlier this year; and
- To instruct the Council Leader to write to the UK Government urging that they introduce legislation giving people seeking asylum the right to work, setting out the significant workforce pressures Moray is currently facing.

Financial Consequences

- There are no financial consequences.

**Proposed by Councillor Fernandes
Seconded by Councillor Leadbitter**

Date Motion Submitted: 5 September 2023

Dear

I am writing on behalf of the Moray Council to ask that the UK Government restore the right to work for people seeking asylum who have been waiting for a decision on their asylum claim for six months.

Under the UK Government's current system people seeking asylum are effectively banned from working. They can only apply to the Home Office for permission to work if they have been waiting for a decision for over 12 months and only for jobs that are on the Government's restricted Shortage Occupation List.

This policy is in nobody's interest.

At present, people who have risked everything to find safety in the UK are forced to live on just £8.24 per week to meet all essential living costs, forcing them into destitution. Instead, people could be using their skills, contributing to the economy through increased tax revenue and consumer spending, and saving money spent on asylum support.

This is particularly the case in Moray where we are experiencing workforce shortages in various sectors such as transport, agriculture and the food and drink industry, as well as in the Moray Council itself, where we are struggling to recruit in a range of areas including certain subject teachers, vehicle technicians, specialist professional posts, senior management, clerical and administrative roles, temporary and relief staff, and community care employees.

You will be aware that there are currently around fifty people seeking asylum hosted in the Eight Acres Hotel in Elgin. They are not allowed to work while they are waiting for their claim to be processed.

There is significant public support for reform and the UK is currently a major outlier compared to other countries across North America and Europe, as in almost all other cases people are able to support themselves at an earlier stage with fewer restrictions.

People who have risked everything to find safety in the UK to have the best chance of contributing to society and integrating into our communities. It is not effective to waste the talents of our population.

I would be grateful to hear your views on this matter, and I am looking forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,