

# **REFLECTION EXERCISE ON THE RIGHT TO REMAIN TOOLKIT: A GUIDE TO THE UK IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM SYSTEM**

**JULY 2023**

**RIGHT  
TO REMAIN**

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# ABOUT RIGHT TO REMAIN

Right to Remain is a national migration justice organisation, which builds a world where everyone can exercise their right to remain where they need to be with dignity and humanity. We work with communities, groups and organisations across the UK. We provide information, resources, training and assistance to help people to establish their right to remain. We boost our community's power to challenge injustice in the immigration and asylum system and create an alternative world.

The organisation was founded as the National Coalition of Anti Deportation Campaigns in 1995, a coalition of grassroots groups fighting against deportation of their friends, family members, neighbours and co-workers across the UK. We became a registered charity (1192934) in December 2020. In the last 12 months, our staff team size has grown from five to eight: four in London and the others in Birmingham, Manchester, Halifax and Glasgow.

Our name changed in 2014 to reflect the expanded scope of the organisation's work in response to our community's changing needs born out of harsher asylum and migration law, policies and landscape. Our community said they must understand the asylum and immigration law and system better so that they can support each other to secure their immigration status proactively from the very beginning of the process, in order to proactively protect the community from the risks of the violence and trauma of detention and deportation and, most importantly, to fight the system.

Since then the main resource of our public legal education work about the asylum and immigration system, our [Right to Remain Toolkit](#), has become the critical infrastructure for the entire asylum and migration field. It is the lifeline for many who are stuck in a Kafkaesque system: in 2022/23, it was used by 321,997 people online. People use the Toolkit to practise for their asylum interviews, gather their own evidence, prepare for their own appeals when they cannot find a lawyer to represent them, and exercise agency by equipping themselves with the knowledge of what could happen to them and options they have. Many groups, large and small, use it for their staff and volunteer training and for their work at large. Lawyers and students use it as a reference point and other professionals such as youth workers, ESOL teachers, and doctors use it to support people going through the system.

This popularity is due to the fact our resources, workshops and outreach are accessible, practical and empowering. It is accessible because it is designed specifically for non-specialists and people going through the system, based on our community's feedback collected over the years. It is practical and empowering because it includes information about specific steps people can take to improve their chance of securing their right to remain (based on the tips contributed by our community) and helps people to

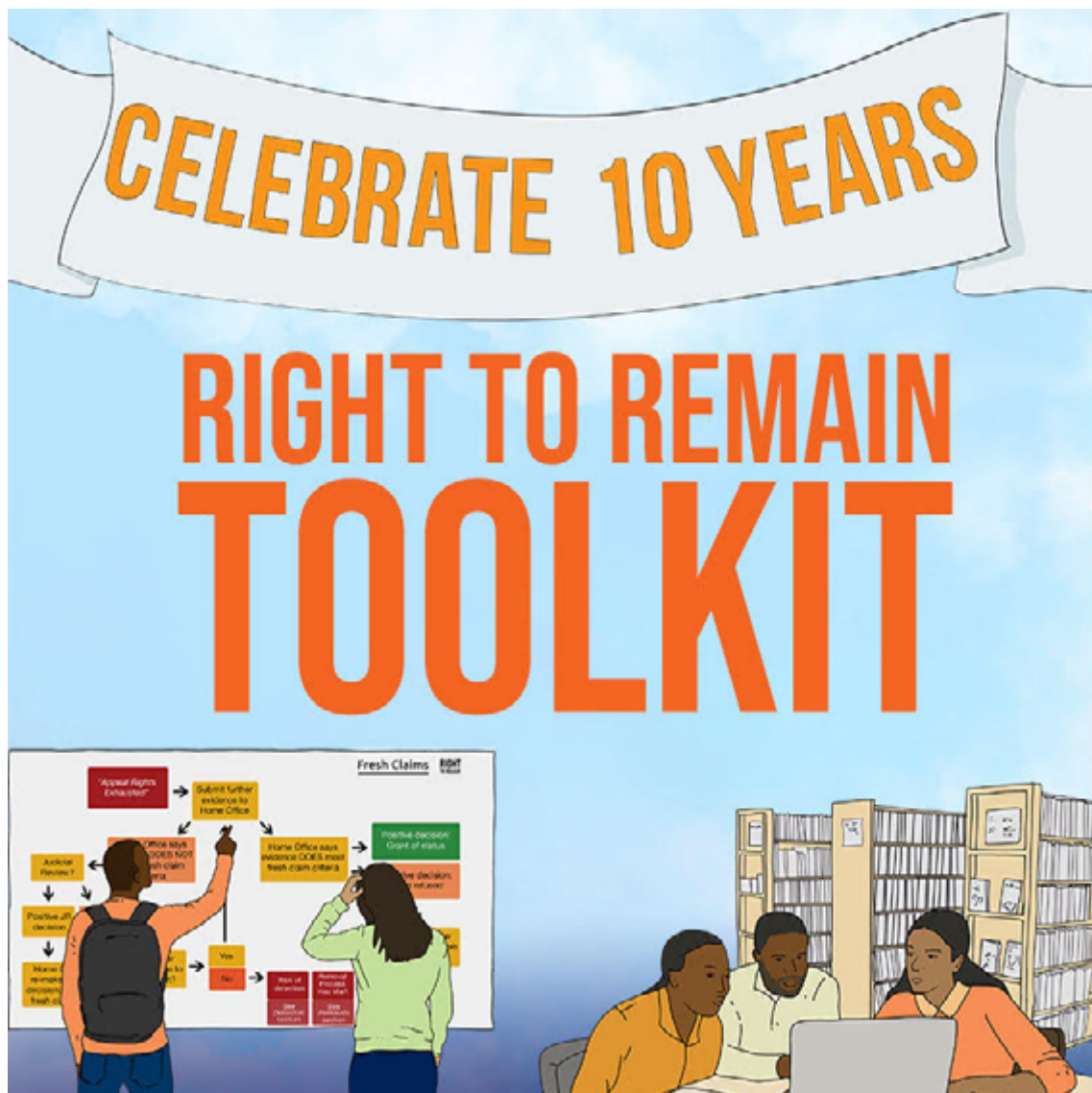
understand what might happen to them to help prepare for all scenarios (an example would be our ‘how to prepare for detention’ Toolkit pages) to take better control of their lives with or without the help of legal advisors and solicitors. We also demystify legal support, explaining clearly how allies and supporters who are not accredited to give legal advice and afraid to help others can still safely provide vital support in our community. Our work scales up the amount of legal support (as opposed to legal advice) available in the community, alleviating the pressure faced by the struggling legal advice sector. It connects people in the system with their supporters, giving them knowledge and confidence to fight for the right to remain together and seek ways to survive the system within their local community. This knowledge of the system will remain central to our movement.

In fact, our legal education work goes beyond a simple gesture of information provision. Our work is relational. We carefully and consciously do this in a way that calls for solidarity to bring in more people and groups into the movement and focuses on building power in our community. The Toolkit and our workshops act as a portal through which people can enter the shared struggle for migration justice and start taking collective action to change the system – because you need to understand the system to fight it, just as our community said when we developed the Toolkit over ten years ago. The Toolkit is therefore the basis of our strategic convening and campaigning, including our experience-led community organising work, [These Walls Must Fall](#).

# INTRODUCTION

This year, as we [celebrate](#) 10 years of the Right to Remain Toolkit, we are also taking the time to reflect and contemplate the future of this invaluable resource.

The Toolkit exists to promote migration justice by empowering people in the asylum and immigration system (and those supporting them) to better understand the process and to take proactive steps to further their applications. It is a community resource: for the community, and by the community. The richness of the Toolkit is attributable to the feedback, tips, and experience of numerous people who are currently in the system, have been through it, or work on the frontline. Without our community, there would be no Toolkit.



In light of this, and as our world and the contours of the Hostile Environment rapidly shift, we want to ensure that the Toolkit continues to guide and support people through their journeys. Importantly, we want to know how best to do this.

So, we sought support from a closed group of trusted colleagues and organisations whom we know are regular users of the Toolkit – both old and new, across the UK and even beyond into Calais – to share their current thoughts about the asylum sections of the Toolkit in 4 key areas:

- 1. THEIR EXPERIENCE OF NAVIGATING THE (ONLINE) TOOLKIT**
- 2. THEIR HABITS WHEN USING AND SHARING THE TOOLKIT**
- 3. THE POSITIVE IMPACT THAT THE TOOLKIT HAS HAD UPON THEIR WORK AND/OR COMMUNITY**
- 4. HOW THEY THINK WE CAN DO BETTER**

In true Right to Remain fashion, this is not ‘our’ project – it is a community project. Through the responses drawn from our co-collaborators [Asylum Link](#), [Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees \(EVWR\)](#), [Channel Info Project – L’Auberge des Migrants](#), the [Migration Justice Project](#) at the [Law Centre NI](#), the [No Accommodation Network \(NACCOM\)](#) and [Refugees at Home](#), we have learned about the strengths, weaknesses, and continued potential of the Toolkit.

In this report, we share their findings, our lessons learned, and our pledges for the future of the Toolkit. As always, we are grateful to our co-collaborators and to our wider community. Thank you for making our work possible, and for supporting us as we embark upon a new decade of the Toolkit.

# METHODOLOGY

Between May and June 2023, Right to Remain asked our co-collaborators – 8 groups and networks that we have closely worked with – to answer a series of questions about the asylum section of the Toolkit, clustered around the 4 key areas:

1. **THEIR EXPERIENCE OF NAVIGATING THE (ONLINE) TOOLKIT**
2. **THEIR HABITS WHEN USING AND SHARING THE TOOLKIT**
3. **THE POSITIVE IMPACT THAT THE TOOLKIT HAS HAD UPON THEIR WORK AND/OR COMMUNITY**
4. **HOW THEY THINK WE CAN DO BETTER**

Narrative answers provided by the co-collaborators were analysed by Right to Remain staff, to pull out some trends and themes that stood out from the answers. A draft version of this document was shared with co-collaborators for comments, and staff members subsequently identified action(able) points and incorporated them into our work plan.

We make no pretence that this is an exhaustive evaluation exercise to capture the impact of the Toolkit: Right to Remain Toolkit is used by a hub of hundreds of groups and networks across the UK, and this small cohort of 8 groups and networks can in no way represent the entire spectrum of our community's views on and experience of the Toolkit. Most critically, we did not investigate directly how the individuals going through the system are using the Toolkit – instead, we are relying upon the co-collaborators' observations to have a glimpse into that.

However, for the purpose of checking if the Right to Remain Toolkit is on the right track right now and guiding our immediate orientation and workstream for 2023/24 as we deliberate the future of the Toolkit, we deem this exercise to be sufficient. Needless to say, a much larger scale and far more in-depth evaluation of the impact of the Toolkit is absolutely overdue – something we at Right to Remain have been wanting to do for a number of years, and we welcome any funders' support in doing so.

# CONTEXT

It is safe to say that immigration law and policy, and the world at large, have changed significantly since the Toolkit was first published. Arguably, the most drastic changes have occurred in the last few years and even months.

The COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying lockdowns pushed Right to Remain into an almost entirely digital existence, as we had to keep the majority of our community informed of constant changes despite the lack of physical contact. We moved away from printing copies of our much loved Toolkit books for the same reason: changes became so frequent that it became impossible to keep physical resources up to date, though demand for them has continued steadily.

Also during the pandemic, there was a sharp increase in Channel crossings and clandestine entry to the UK. Hotel accommodation was introduced to meet the need caused by overflowing Home Office accommodation, which soon gave rise to [several issues](#).

The shutting down of the courts for a period of time combined with the number of people entering the UK began what is now a [notorious Home Office backlog](#) of asylum (and other immigration) decisions yet to be made, characterised by outrageous delays.

These delays have exacerbated another major issue: a lack of legal representation, and in particular, access to [Legal Aid](#) for immigration matters. The number of people who need a lawyer exceeds the number of lawyers significantly. Whereas in the past, lawyers had a quicker turnover of clients (because they would typically get through the system and get status within a reasonable period of time), Home Office delays now mean that lawyers have retained the same clients who have been stuck in the system for years as they wait for interviews, decisions, appeal or judicial review hearing dates. Legal aid lawyers are working at overcapacity, and cannot take on any more clients. **For the first time, most people are facing the reality of going through the entire asylum process without any legal advice or representation.**

Simultaneously, more people continue to be trapped in limbo – physically stuck in asylum accommodation, or without the right to work because of [no recourse to public funds](#), and stuck in the system without while their cases stagnate due to the backlog and a lack of resources.

In response to all of this, we have been encouraging a movement of [legal support](#): empowering and educating people in the asylum and immigration system (and those who support them and who are not legally trained) to better understand their situation and to take proactive steps in navigating their journey, whether or not they have a lawyer. **Legal support is about doing everything you possibly can to further an immigration application, without crossing over into legal advice – which is**



**something that only those with an accreditation can provide.** This is not a magic fix to the lack of legal representation, but it is better than passively waiting for the Legal Aid crisis to improve.

Towards the end of 2020, as the inevitability of Brexit loomed on the horizon of 2021, the needs of members of our community who are (or have relatives who are) EEA citizens increased sharply as they scrambled to understand and apply to the [EUSS scheme](#).

At the very beginning of 2021, as a result of the UK's withdrawal from the Dublin III agreement, the impractical [Inadmissibility Rules](#) began to wreak fear and chaos in the lives of many who had sought asylum, and this was worsened by the lack of clear information and advice surrounding notices and the pausing of claims. That summer, the fall of Kabul led to an increase of queries and the need to support those fleeing [Afghanistan](#) fearing for their lives. Much of this support has been provided by the migration justice sector, as the [government schemes continue to underperform and even fail](#).

In 2022, the invasion of Ukraine led the sector (yet again) and the country as a whole to mobilise in solidarity with the population of a nation under attack. The introduction of 3 different Ukraine schemes – separate to the asylum process – made for rapid learning, information sharing, and support systems being created overnight. The sheer number of arrivals added to the existing Home Office backlog, and took precedence over other schemes and immigration pathways, with Home Office resources and staff being reallocated to Ukraine schemes.

The introduction of the [Nationality and Borders Act](#) into Parliament a few months later left the migration justice (and wider human rights) sector rushing to respond to panic and alienation as the notion of 'illegality' was codified, and the [now-defunct differentiation policy](#) (between Group 1 and Group 2 refugees) was introduced. The fear that this Act introduced into migrant communities in the UK cannot be emphasised enough; and the repercussions of this continue to sting.

To add insult to injury, the – to date, unimplemented – [Rwanda plan](#) was announced in April 2022, and it was no coincidence that the fight to stop the first flight and the policy as a whole almost depleted the legal and NGO sector of their already dwindling resources and energy.

At the beginning of 2023, on the eve of our inaugural [#Toolkit10 festival in Belfast](#), the [Streamlined Asylum Processing \(SAP\) policy](#) and questionnaire were introduced, creating even more frenzy and confusion for a community and sector already on the brink. The introduction of SAP sharpened the need for and awareness of legal support. The foundational work we had been doing for some time enabled us to step into action immediately.



Participants at our Belfast Toolkit Festival discussing the differences between legal advice and legal support. February 2023

Most recently, the [passage of the “Illegal” Migration Bill through Parliament](#) poses questions not just about how to provide legal support to people who will effectively be banned from accessing the legal system and wider welfare state, but also about how an entire population will be forced into the shadows.

What does this mean for us?

And so, with all of this in mind, the Right to Remain team has had plenty to think about as we look back at the lifespan of the Toolkit, and ahead to its future.

Our [Toolkit festivals](#) have allowed us to engage with our community in person once more as we emerge from lockdown (though we are aware that the threat of COVID-19 prevails). We are faced with the opportunity to (re)introduce ourselves to longtime comrades and new grassroots movements.





Participants at our London Toolkit festival. May 2023

The kaleidoscope of threats and opportunities outlined here has led us to contemplate this question: how can we, and the Toolkit, continue to serve our community?

The findings of this report are a first step towards a year of deep reflection upon the various answers to this question.

## SOME NUMBERS

- In 2022/23, 321,997 people used the Toolkit online. **This represents a 22% increase compared to the previous year:** the number of users was 263,368 people in 2021/22.
- Right to Remain connected with approximately 800 people in 2022/23, the majority of whom are people who are working or volunteering in groups in solidarity with people going through the asylum and immigration system. We ran 20 workshops across the UK, including our regular [Knowledge is Power](#) online workshops, tailor made, commissioned workshops, and other groups' conferences.

- In 2022/23, we spent a lot of energy updating our Toolkit in light of the Nationality and Borders Act, and continue to do so. We published 18 legal updates on our website and produced 24 legal updates newsletters.
- During the majority of 2022/23, Right to Remain employed 7 staff members, which increased to 8 in February 2023, with the addition of the Engagement Officer. One full-time and one part-time Legal Education Officers are responsible for maintaining and expanding the Toolkit, producing legal blogs and delivering workshops. Our Engagement Officer coordinates publicity, hub database and networking as well as managing the logistics of workshops. Additional communications work is provided by the Communications and Campaigns Assistant (intern). The Coordinator provides technical and system support that maintains the Toolkit and our hub, and the Director oversees the programme. Two staff members who are Organisers regularly support These Walls Must Fall campaigners to use the Toolkit, as they navigate their asylum claims.

Feedback on sticky notes provided by participants after our London Toolkit festival.

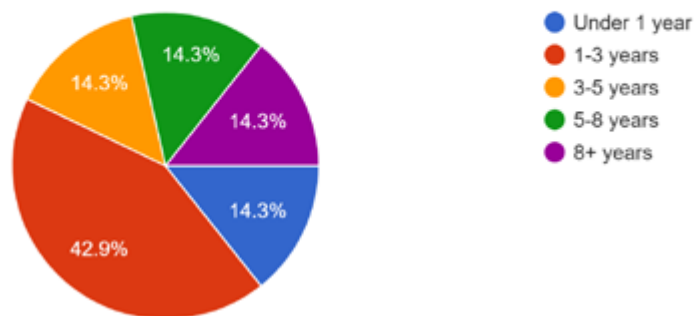


# FINDINGS

**“The Toolkit is an invaluable resource. It is doing some seriously heavy-lifting and that this work is done by fewer than 10 people really shows the impact of accessible technology in rights realisation in an increasingly hostile environment.”**

5. How long have you been using the Toolkit?

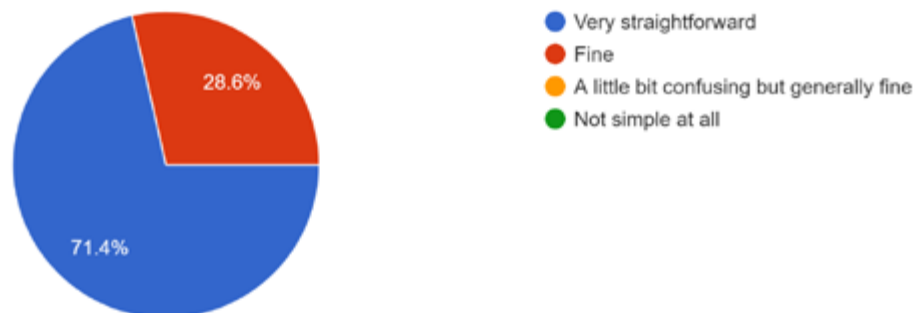
7 responses



## 1. NAVIGATING THE TOOLKIT

1. How simple is the Toolkit to navigate (via computer screen)?

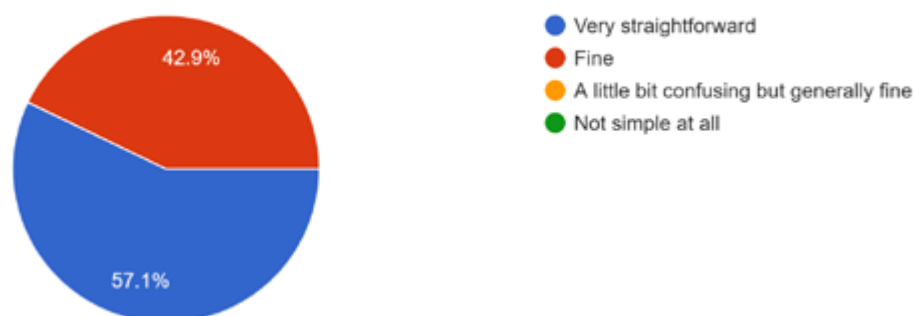
7 responses





### 3. How simple is the Toolkit to navigate (via smartphone screen)?

7 responses



A vital element of the Toolkit is its simplicity, particularly through navigation. We wanted to ensure that the Toolkit is presented in a way that is logical and easy to understand for English speakers, and importantly for communities who use the Google translation function.

Due to the vastness of the resource, and the scrolling function of smartphones, general feedback over the years has been that the Toolkit lends itself better to use on a phone. Our collaborators agreed, with 57.1% noting use via smartphone screen was ‘very straightforward’, and 42.9% marking this navigation as ‘fine’. The portrait function, as well as the downward nature of scrolling, as opposed to across, were factors in making this format preferable.

We also wanted to know how we could improve the Toolkit for those users who access it from a computer. We received positive feedback on the order in which topics are presented in the guide (which mirrors one’s journey through the asylum system), as well as the usefulness of the hyperlinked menu at the top of each Toolkit page. Reference was also made to the helpfulness of the Action Sections included on almost every Toolkit page. In terms of layout and design, suggestions included the addition of more infographics or colourful images, to break up the “wordiness” of the pages to make them less daunting, and slightly smaller banners to streamline the overall layout of each page. It was also suggested that for accessibility purposes, it would make sense for the text size to be adjustable.

While our collaborators agreed that the format was “clear and helpful” for fluent English speakers, we received suggestions for ways in which the Toolkit could be improved for those for whom English is not their first language (particularly when it comes to reading), including moving the different language options higher up the page so they are more visible.

Core pages of the Toolkit ([What is Asylum?](#), [Asylum Screening Interview](#), [Asylum Substantive Interview](#), [Home Office Asylum Decisions](#), [Evidence for asylum, immigration and human rights cases](#)) have been officially translated into some or all of the key languages commonly spoken by people seeking asylum in the UK: Amharic, Arabic, Farsi, French, Oromo, Pashto, Sorani, Spanish, and Tigrinya.

However we are still relying on Google Translate to fill in the gaps for the rest of our pages and users who speak other languages. One collaborator pointed out that these translated summaries are shorter than the English webpages, meaning that those using the translated summaries may not have access to the full breadth of information. We acknowledge and agree with this observation. Unfortunately, the rapidness with which changes are made to law and policy, in addition to the time and expense of commissioning official translations means that the safest option to date has been to allow for more general official translated summaries (to avoid relaying outdated or incorrect information).

Another concern was that printing is not possible once a page has been translated by Google, which makes it difficult for those without smartphones or data to access information in their own language frequently. Another concern was that Google Translate is not always accurate, and can mis-translate words, which is something that might be vital when navigating the complexity of the UK asylum system. The automatic translation (for Arabic in particular, which reads from right to left) also does not change the text direction settings, pushing punctuation into the wrong place, and leaving the whole text looking clunky and uncomfortable. It was recommended that a native speaker look more closely at the way we can mitigate this, or to have all pages fully translated into the common languages spoken by people seeking asylum at some point in the future.

## 2. HABITS IN USING AND SHARING THE TOOLKIT

### **“It was a reliable friend that I could dip in and out of”**

With some collaborators using the Toolkit for over 5 years, we wanted to understand both the scope and broadness of its use, and whether this had changed over the years, be it due to differing needs, or a change in role. The answers were varied; two collaborators who are former caseworkers used to treat the Toolkit as a “teaching tool”, to supplement their existing understanding of the asylum process, ensuring the accuracy of the information they provided to their clients. Both have since moved into positions where less direct work with people in the system is required, and so the Toolkit has become a personal resource that keeps them updated on changes to asylum and immigration procedures, such as the Nationality and Borders Act.

Our collaborators termed the Toolkit:

- a “permanent reference”
- a training resource for new stakeholders,
- mandatory reading for induction processes,
- a resource for staff members to check certain elements of the law, and
- a guide to regularly share with others supporting people within the asylum system.

Additionally, our [Legal Updates](#) were deemed “useful”, despite a small percentage of our collaborators not engaging with them on a regular basis. One collaborator told us that the information from these updates is often included in their organisations’ newsletter, citing that it offers information in a way that is “legible for non-legal experts”. The updates were also praised for sharing information about a change in law or policy quickly and directly.

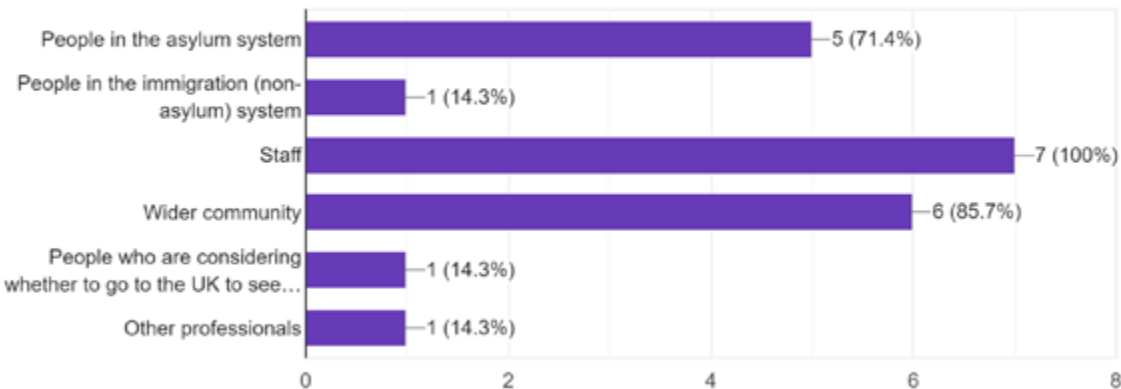
7. How often do you encourage / show people in the asylum or immigration system how to use the Toolkit?

7 responses



8. Whom do you share the Toolkit with? (you can select more than one option)

7 responses



For those individual collaborators who do not engage in front line work, it is clear that the Toolkit is a reference tool to be shared with those staff members/volunteers who do have direct contact with those in the system, with its uptake regularly encouraged. One collaborator, who in their role works with many organisations in the sector, noted that they “make a point of asking new members if they are familiar with the Toolkit”, to ensure its usage for those who could really benefit from it. The same organisation has cited the Toolkit in research reports as evidence of how the asylum system currently works.



Specifically, we were interested in how our collaborators used the Toolkit with people in the system, both in the way they show it how to navigate it, and encourage its use. Responses included sending out links to relevant pages, as well as directing them to videos when applicable in their own language. While one collaborator deemed ‘show and tell’ the most effective way of sharing the Toolkit, others agreed that the translation tool was important to point out, so those in the system are empowered to navigate the resource themselves. One front-line organisation includes the Toolkit in its new arrival guides, which are published every month in multiple languages.

Our Toolkit [flyers](#) were also identified as a method of promoting the resource to service users, as they include QR codes that, if scanned, link directly to relevant web pages.

Our Legal Education Officers, Yumna and Leah, hold up both sides of our new flyers.



In order to understand how to better support our community, we asked our collaborators to identify the key challenges and obstacles in demonstrating how to use the Toolkit to those in the system. A key issue that was identified – perhaps less related to the Toolkit itself – is the need to reach people earlier in their asylum process, to ensure they have the knowledge as soon as possible. This can be done by going upstream to hotels, to disseminate this information to people at this initial stage.

Common concerns included language barriers, and the anxiousness experienced by those in the system. There is a lot of information to absorb in the Toolkit, which is seen as a “major challenge” for those in an understandably distressed state of mind. Time is another problem; front line workers manage large caseloads, with much of their time spent responding to immediate needs. This means they often don’t have the capacity to sit and go through each section of the Toolkit slowly and clearly with their service users.

Issues around limited digital access and digital exclusion more generally were recognised, particularly around literacy. This is exacerbated due to the complexity of the law and policy that the Toolkit is trying to simplify. There are also discrepancies when looking at the Toolkit from a Northern Irish perspective, as the legal aid system there differs slightly, meaning that some sections are not relevant or factually correct for those accessing the Toolkit there.

Despite these obstacles, our collaborators also recognised what made the Toolkit a helpful and useful resource. Many commended its accessibility, deeming it “user friendly”, “simple” and “clear”. Its comprehensiveness was also praised, with participants recognising that the Toolkit covers almost every aspect of the asylum process, and an appreciation for the fact that it is a central resource with all the information in one place, rather than requiring users to navigate many sources and websites for each topic. That the Toolkit is regularly updated following any policy changes makes it both legitimate and reliable.

Furthermore, the [search function](#), translations, and [YouTube videos](#) were also cited, with the videos in particular allowing for a different mode of learning; one collaborator noted that “videos also provide images that help people to imagine certain situations, e.g. interviews, and therefore feel more at ease when the situation arises”.

### 3. IMPACT FROM OUR COLLABORATORS' POINT OF VIEW

With 321,997 people accessing the Toolkit in 2022/23, we are aware of the scale of its use and its importance. But what do our collaborators observe as the impact of the Toolkit?

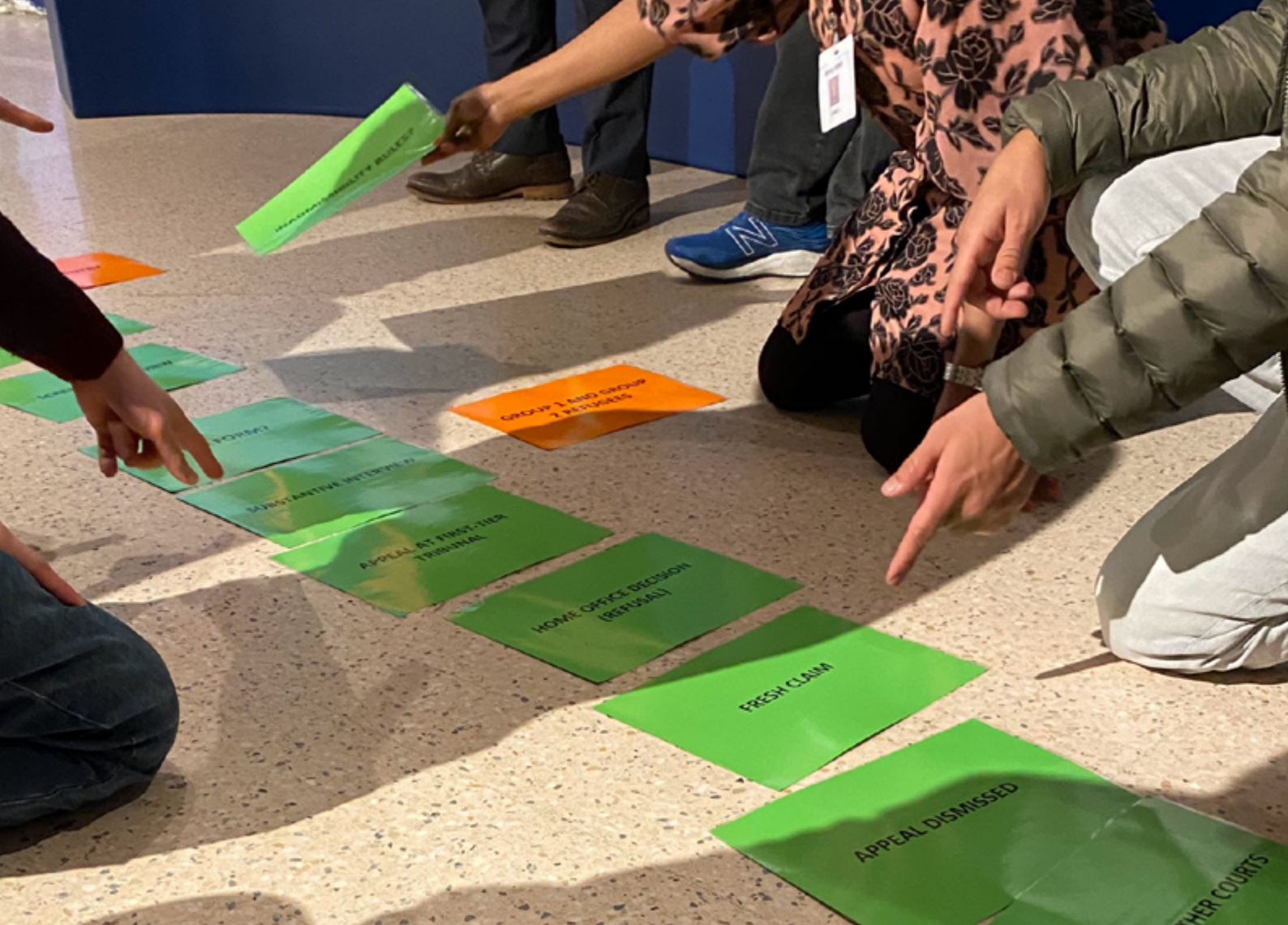
**The Toolkit boosts knowledge and level of understanding in their staff and volunteers, – both within their organisations and across the wider sector – supporting our field's capacity to create impact.** Our collaborators were in strong agreement in their view that the Right to Remain Toolkit plays an integral role in maintaining this community of praxis and enabling our field to do what we do. Our collaborators noted, for example, when the Nationality and Borders Act came into force, the Toolkit provided up to date information of the implication of these changes on the system. They also pointed out that it has been a significant resource for those who work on the periphery of asylum work, or those who may not have comprehensive knowledge of the asylum/legal system due to the nature of their role (part-time, voluntary) – expanding the community that can support people going through the system. Increased confidence is another tangible impact of the Toolkit that our collaborators mentioned – that people in the migration justice sector who are not legally trained can feel confident that they are providing correct and up to date information through direct links to relevant Toolkit pages and actually make a difference in someone else's life.

**The Toolkit directly assists the groups' work, including their interaction with people going through the system.** Specific examples included providing guidance to a service user in a very difficult legal situation, to one organisation updating its information on work permissions to be shared with its wider community.

**The Toolkit leads to positive and valued activities and experiences for the groups through interactions with Right to Remain.** Our collaborators noted the impact of opportunities to connect with Right to Remain through our Toolkit festivals and encouragement to book into our workshops. We were extremely heartened to know the value our collaborators place on their direct interactions with us, something we have long recognised as a critical method in equipping and galvanising our colleagues to build more solidarity in and out of our community. Our work is relational and people and groups who come into direct contact with us recognise its power.

**The Toolkit acts as a general educational tool.** One person referred to the sharing of the Toolkit as the “penny dropping” moment, particularly for people who have less experience in the migration justice sector when they begin to understand the restrictiveness of the asylum system, and the impact this has on people seeking safety. This demonstrates that the Toolkit is functioning as intended: a portal to bring more people who are unfamiliar with the issue into our migration justice movement.





Participants at our Belfast Toolkit Festival putting stages of the asylum process in order.

The following two anecdotes recount some of our collaborators' particularly memorable instances of using the Toolkit:

**“Having a repeated caller into our phone line, who wanted to be hosted, but as we don’t accept self-referrals from those in the asylum process, we couldn’t help him. He struggled to understand what he was entitled to, and the help he was provided by Migrant Help was – well, you know. Using parts of the toolkit and sending over Whatsapp helped me to calm him down enough to understand what he needed to do; 2 weeks later he sent a text back to say he was now in NASS. Wouldn’t have been able to do it without the Toolkit. Even though we couldn’t help, because of the toolkit, we were some help”.**

**“Sharing the information videos with Oromo speakers during a charging session ...and their surprise and delight that there was accessible information in Oromo”.**

With nearly a third of a million people accessing the Toolkit online, we assume there must be more similar stories out there. We would love to hear from others about what they see as the Toolkit’s impact in the future.

## 4. HOW CAN WE DO BETTER?

To round off our evaluation exercise, we asked our collaborators to look to the future of the Toolkit. How can Right to Remain better this resource and ensure its value moving forward?

A common theme shared by our collaborators was **timing** – people seeking asylum need to be accessing the Toolkit as soon as possible in their journey, particularly new arrivals. Our collaborators had worked with people who were Appeal Rights Exhausted, and were not aware of the Toolkit. Had they known about it sooner in their process, they may have made better use of it and benefited more from its information.

This finding was interesting for our future, but also with a nod to our history. The origins of the Toolkit stem from our community – which formed back when we were the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) – wanting to intervene earlier in their own cases (prior to the deportation stage) by gaining a better understanding of the system. This formed what remains our present-day philosophy: your campaign to remain where you want to be must start from day one; you need to know your rights, build a community around you, and fight for those rights together.

Similarly, this can be extended to organisations who use our Toolkit. They too need to be aware of the Toolkit in order to share it. Although we have been remedying this somewhat through our Toolkit Festivals in areas known as ‘advice deserts’, with the aim of reaching new audiences, we still have work to do in order to widen the reach of the Toolkit as much as possible.

Another trend identified was the need to strengthen the non-text sections of the Toolkit, for those who find the volume of words difficult to digest, or with differing accessibility needs. Suggestions included increasing the use of animations on our Toolkit pages – animations can be simple to edit if a policy changes, as well as offering a different method of learning. Another idea was to include more bite-sized YouTube videos on each section or page of the Toolkit, and to ensure our current videos are linked in the most accessible way; presented in order or by language. A ‘read aloud’ function also was proposed, to increase and diversify the accessibility of the Toolkit.

The Toolkit is lauded for its comprehensiveness and its ability to present large amounts of complex information in a digestible way. However, sometimes the sheer size of the resource can be overwhelming. There were calls for a shorter, more concise, page on the asylum system, as well as a summary of the basic rights that people seeking asylum are entitled to. This could include average time for certain stages, which would allow those accessing the Toolkit to understand how these processes work in practise. Another collaborator proposed that the Toolkit include a quiz on its different scenarios or case studies found within, for staff and volunteers to solidify their knowledge, and to encourage people to become acquainted with its content in a proactive and fun ‘self-study’ way.



Other ideas included creating a list of the most recently updated Toolkit pages for those who may miss our [Newsletter](#), as well as the facilitation of a Google Group for non-lawyers working in migration justice. The groups would be determined by geographical location, for people to connect, stay informed and support each other locally.

Finally, we asked collaborators to share their top tips for individuals and other groups to best use the Toolkit – “bookmark it!” was the advice shared by many!

Mary Brandon (Asylum Matters) and Alice Garrod (Fisherstone Solicitors) speaking on a panel at our Bradford Toolkit festival.



# ACTIONS MOVING FORWARD

Sifting through collaborators' answers and feedback reaffirmed Right to Remain's conviction that we are doing the right thing for our community. We feel the heavy weight of responsibility and expectations that falls on our micro team, as one of the key anchor organisations in this field. We also appreciate the breadth of suggestions, which were submitted to us.

Because the Toolkit lives in the ether of the Internet, our work is sometimes mistaken as 'digital'. However, as we stated at the start of this report, our legal education work goes beyond a simple gesture of information provision. Our work is relational. We carefully and consciously do this in a way that calls for solidarity to bring in more people and groups into the movement and focuses on building power in our community. The Toolkit and our workshops act as a portal through which people can enter the shared struggle for migration justice and start taking collective action to change the system – because you need to understand the system to fight it, just as our community said when we developed the Toolkit over ten years ago.

We are very clear that the Toolkit will not replace high quality legal advice or representation: it is not produced as a digital solution to the now-permanent legal aid crisis. It can and must, however, act as a tool to help people navigate the process, ideally with the support of their communities. In reality, while individuals do access the Toolkit, many people use it with other people. The Toolkit is an instigator of and in itself legal support.

With those points in mind, some of the actions that Right to Remain would like to consider going forward are as follows.

## **Stress the agency of people going through the asylum system in everything we do.**

We need to be better at disseminating our message, 'You must focus on your campaign to remain where you want to be from day one; you need to know your rights, build a community around you, and fight for those rights together.' We need to also encourage groups using the Toolkit to cascade this message wide and far, so that we can 'get in there early'.

**Shift our efforts upstream.** We need to reach out to and build relationships with communities and the support groups that emerge to meet new arrivals as soon as possible. This will mean that they become aware of the Toolkit's existence, know how to use and share it, and feel more confident to offer legal support to the new arrivals. This will be critical as the speed and unpredictability of the new 'full dispersal' policy picks up.

**Promote the Toolkit as a human, not digital, solution.** We want to run more workshops and engage with groups directly. This way, not only will we reach more organisations and individuals, expand our community of practice, and connect with

those on the ground, people will also be more inclined to stay in touch, receive our updates and regular reminders about how to use and share the Toolkit to offer legal support. This will also be helpful for us to get more meaningful feedback, just as this reflection exercise has shown.

**Locate the Toolkit directly in the lived-experience community.** We constantly receive requests for our material to be translated, so this comes as no surprise for us. For a tiny organisation maintaining the entire field's infrastructure with an insecure funding base, the cost of translation is prohibitively high. Coordinating translation projects also uses up a vast amount of staff time, potentially to the detriment of other vital work. Unless we receive funding and donations to pay for further and improved translation of resources and manage the process, it is unlikely we can embark upon further translation. Instead, and in order to meet the clear need for translated material, we could explore reaching out to lived experience groups who operate in the language that people seeking asylum speak and offer them workshops and training so that the information can be cascaded among their community members. This can empower refugee groups, democratise knowledge further and can potentially combat misinformation that we often hear circulates in refugee communities.

**Bring the Toolkit pages to life.** For the last 1.5 years, we have been busy reviewing the entirety of the Toolkit and updating it in light of the Nationality and Borders Act. We now anticipate further changes in response to the Illegal Migration Bill becoming an Act, and have started to develop more Toolkit pages on non-asylum topics. Truth be told, we ourselves have been amazed by the vastness of the Toolkit while doing this review, and we do have plans to (re)introduce some of the pages in bite-sized chunks. We would also like to add more visual material such as videos and develop more workshops on further topics accordingly, pending our resource level. At the moment, we are not contemplating an overhaul of the Toolkit: but we will consider some of the suggestions to see what is feasible at this point in time.

Most importantly, we would like to facilitate more interactions with Toolkit users so that we remain attuned to what is happening on the ground and galvanise as many people as possible to join the migration justice movement, for a world where no one is illegal.



# THANK YOU

We would like to thank our collaborators who shared with us valuable comments and insights which made our reflection possible. We have valued your companionship and solidarity in our journey together for migration justice. And we look forward to fighting with you in the future.

Leon Elliott, **NACCOM**

Tom MacPherson, **NACCOM**

Carly Whyborn, **Refugees at Home**

Niamh Rowan, **Migration Justice Project**

Aya Khedairi, **Channel Info Project, l'Auberge des Migrants**

Ros Gowers, **Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees**

Phillipa Thapa Magar, **Asylum Link Merseyside**

One collaborator who wishes to remain anonymous.



- Offering practical support and friendship to refugees and asylum seekers -

**Asylum Link Merseyside**



# RIGHT TO REMAIN

[www.righttoremain.org.uk](http://www.righttoremain.org.uk)

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