

An introduction to Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network

August 2017

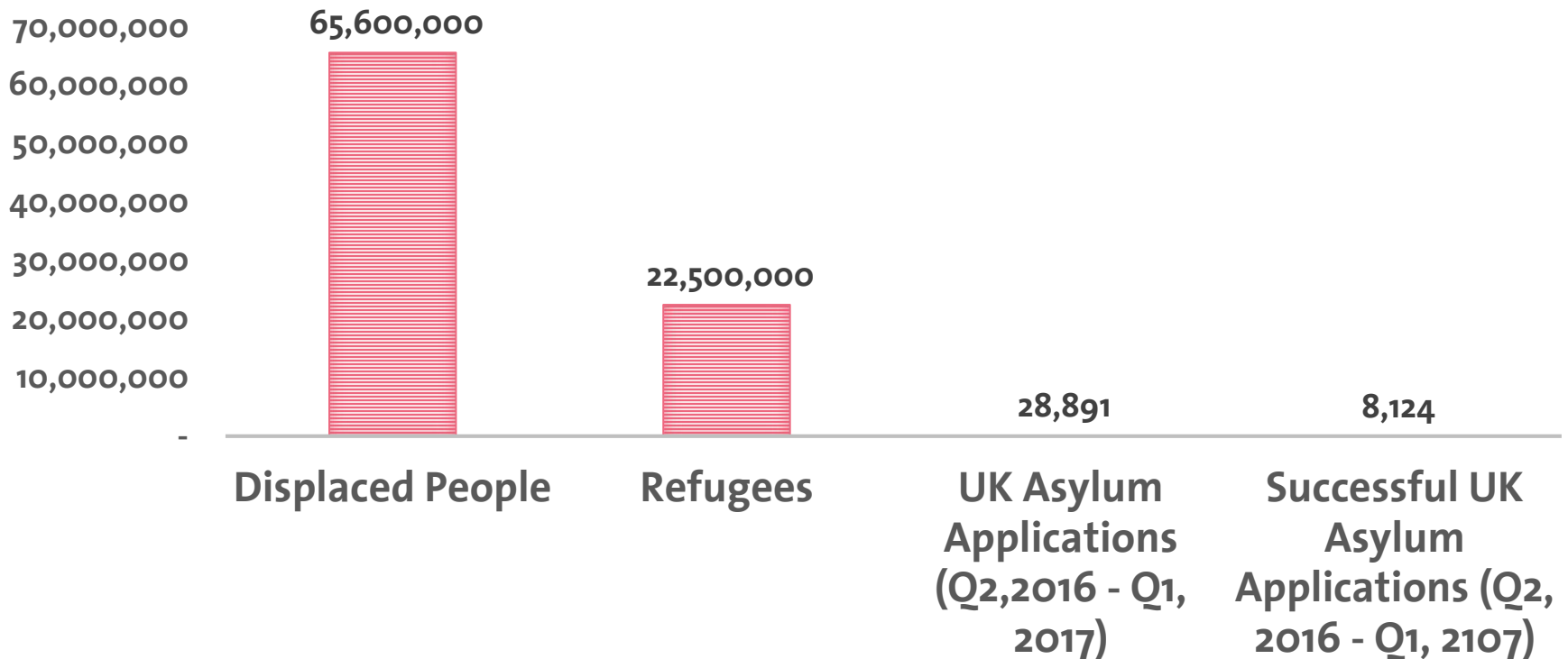
Who is a refugee?

A refugee is as a person who has fled ... due to a **well-founded fear of persecution** for reasons of

- race
- religion
- nationality
- membership of a particular social group
- or political opinion

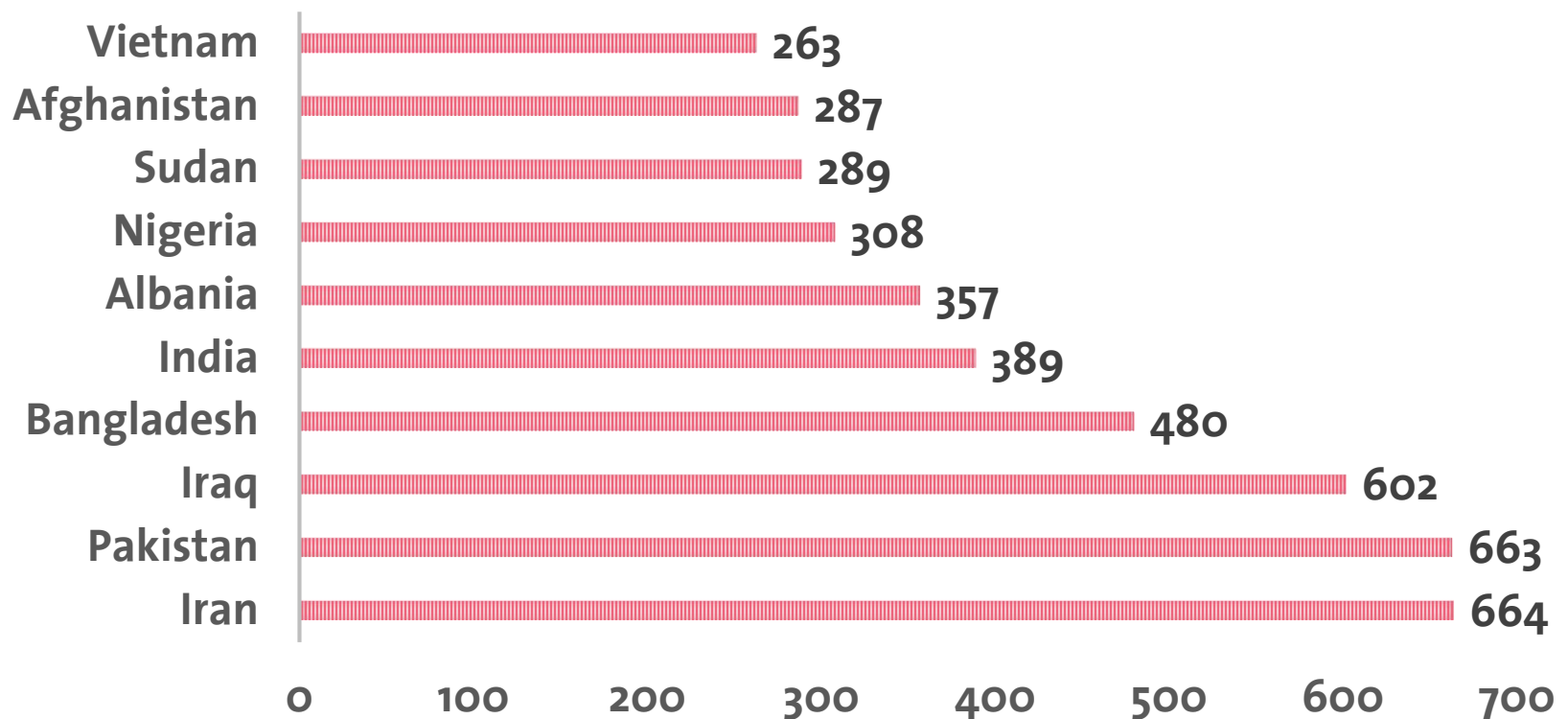
Article 1, The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

How many people are we talking about?



Source: UNHCR, 2017; Home Office, 2017

UK Asylum claims by country: top 10

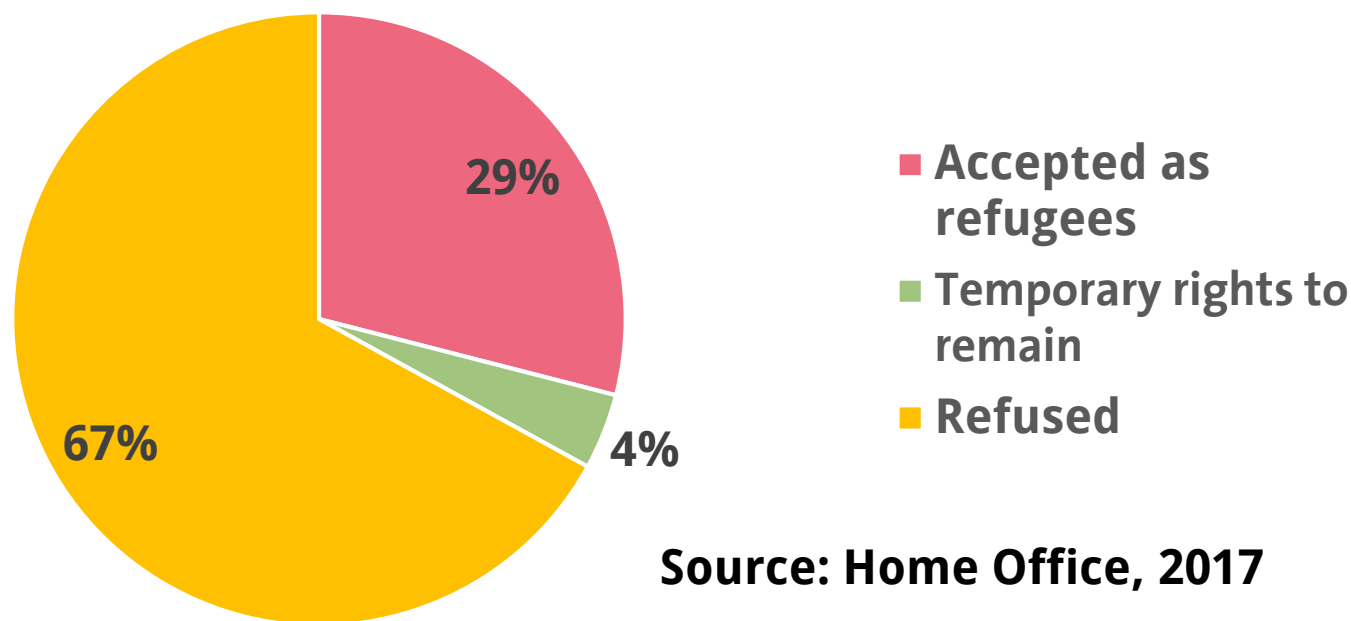


Source: Home Office, Q1 2017

How are asylum seekers, refugees (& EU Migrants) different?

	Asylum seeker	Refugee	EU migrants
UK Govt have accepted their right to stay in UK	x	✓	✓
Permission to Work	x	✓	✓
Access to mainstream welfare systems	x	✓	✓
Permissions to travel abroad	x	✓	✓
Choose where to live	x	✓	✓
Ability to use NHS for free	✓ / ?	✓	✓ / ?
<i>Nb: There are some exceptions to this picture, but this is the simplified version</i>			

Who ends up staying?



About a third (35%) of appeals are successful

Where do people end up?

- In Q1, 2017 about 39,000 destitute asylum seekers were supported by the UK Govt
- North West is largest dispersal area where 1 in 4 asylum seekers are placed, pending decisions
- In May 2017, Leeds had 850 asylum seekers

Who are LASSN & what do we do?

- We started in 2000
- 7 part time members of staff
- 275 volunteers
- All our work is about
 - Supporting
 - Empowering
 - Integrating



Our work is based on the power of relationships

We help ordinary people to do amazing things by

- **Opening their homes**
- **Sharing a meal**
- **Spending time with someone**
- **Listening**
- **Having conversations**
- **Sharing stories and experiences**

Our volunteers get back as much as they give



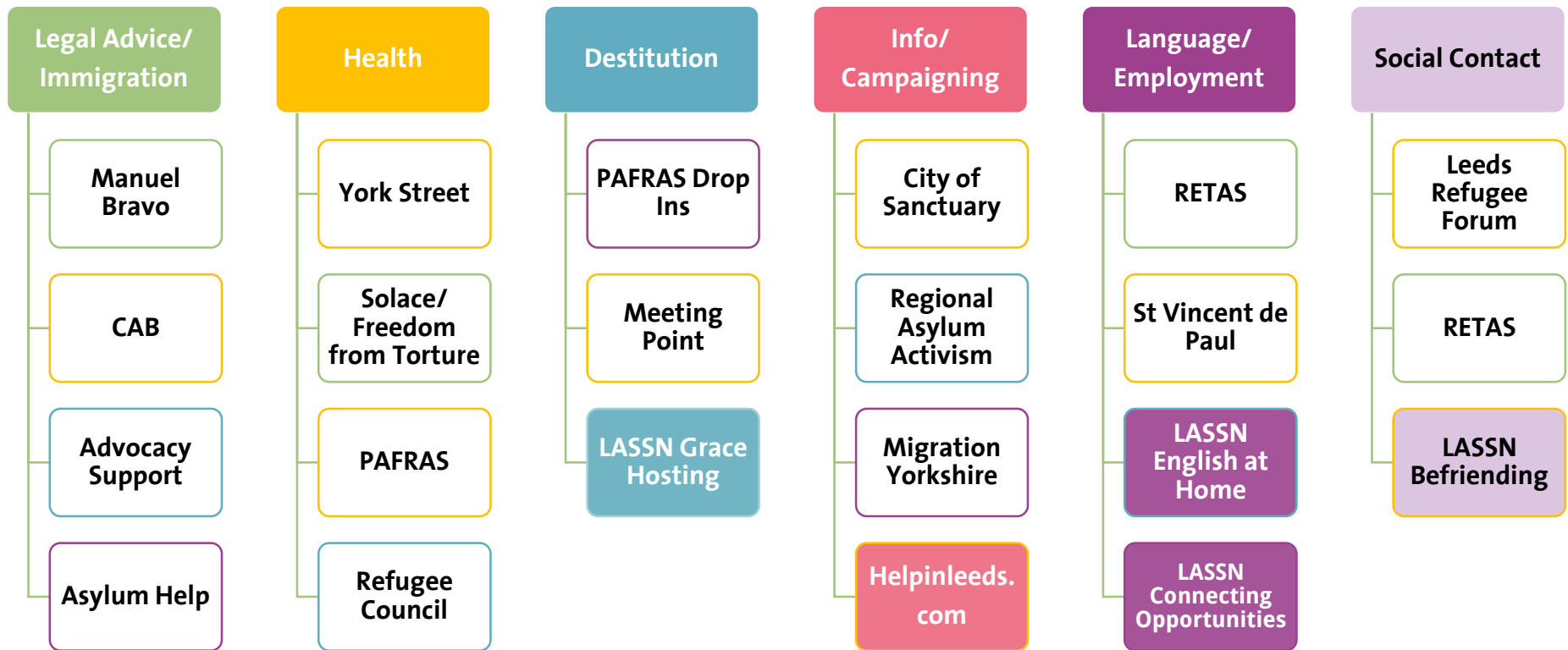
In 2016/17 LASSN supported 306 people

- To learn English in their own homes
 - 161 different people
- To meet people through our Befriending scheme
 - 56 different people
- To find somewhere to stay through Grace Hosting
 - 4,278 nights stayed by 89 different people

Information and Awareness

- We trained **106 new volunteers**
- We reached more than **30,000 people via social media**
- We shared all our policies, procedures and **developed how-to guides** for groups wanting to set up LASSN-like services
- helpinleeds.com our online directory of services was used **14,600 times**
- leedsmultiagency.org.uk **published 384 news stories & reached 8,500 users**
- a Grace Guest completed a short film, describing the experience of Hosting, which we now use to train volunteers

Where does LASSN fit in Leeds?



Some recent changes that are on our mind

- **UK asylum figures still do not reflect the Refugee Crisis in Europe: more council want to offer help than the Government will allow**
- **Asylum and refugee support is not spread equitably across the UK**
- **Uncertainty about the implementation of the Immigration Act makes planning our response very hard**
- **NHS registration remains a problem for some groups (especially destitute asylum seekers), as well as charging for some treatment**
- **A two-tier system of refugee support has emerged with greater support for refugees arriving as part of Government programmes**
- **Limiting refugee status to 5 years increases uncertainty**

Things you can do to help?

- Understand more about the reality of refugees and people seeking asylum - and share this with people you know
- How could your church be more welcoming to people seeking refuge?
- Ask us to come and speak to your church or group
- Volunteer – there's a list of opportunities at helpinleeds.com
- Support us financially – donations make up 20 percent of our income
- Support our friends eg PAFRAS with Harvest Festival donations to their food bank/clothing store
- Assist us to lobby for change at a local level
 - Make contact with City of Sanctuary
 - Lobby for change through your local councillors & MPs

Q&A

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