

# Independent Asylum Commission

CONDUCTING A NATIONWIDE REVIEW OF THE UK ASYLUM SYSTEM

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE **CITIZEN** ORGANISING FOUNDATION

## Independent Asylum Commission Local Advocate Resource Pack 1

Thank you for your interest in the Independent Asylum Commission.

Asylum is one of the most contentious issues in contemporary politics. It is consistently at the top of the public's list of political concerns. Never far from the headlines, there is a widespread belief that the system is not "fit for purpose".

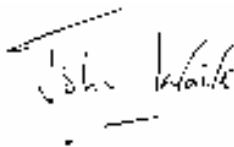
Meanwhile, there are many reports of asylum seekers facing unfair treatment, destitution and a loss of dignity. And a recent citizens' commission into conditions at Lunar House, the headquarters of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate, called for an independent review of national asylum policies.

The commissioners will be investigating our asylum system on behalf of a whole range of citizens - from those who believe that asylum seekers are not being treated with humanity, to those who believe our asylum system is too generous.

The Independent Asylum Commission is keen to hear the views of as many people across the country as possible. But we have a very limited budget, and cannot afford to pay for adverts or marketing campaigns. There are a number of ways you can help us reach more people – and this first Local Advocate Resource Pack will tell you how to:

- Write to a national newspaper
- Write to your local newspaper
- Write to your local MP

Thanks for your support.



**Sir John Waite**



**Ifath Nawaz**

**Co-chairs, Independent Asylum Commission**

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## Activity 1: Write to a national newspaper

Please write to the editor of any national newspaper that you read and let people know about the work of the Commission and encourage them to submit evidence. You can adapt the template below to suit you.

Tips:

- Make it short - 150 to 250 words as the maximum
- Get to the point and stick to it
- Don't give up, if you don't get published write again; but do not just keep sending in the same letter!
- Use topical reports on asylum issues as a 'hook' – your letter is more likely to get published
- Try to personalise the letter whilst getting the key points across

Please check that the letter was published, and let us know by emailing [jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk](mailto:jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk). Or even better, you can send us a copy to Independent Asylum Commission, 112 Cavell St, London, E1 2JA.

*Dear Sir,*

*I am writing to inform my fellow [name of newspaper] readers of a nationwide citizens' enquiry into the UK asylum system that is asking for the views of people from across the UK.*

*There is a widespread belief that the asylum system is not "fit for purpose". So on behalf of concerned citizens across the country, a team of commissioners - chaired by Sir John Waite and Ifath Nawaz and including three peers, a bishop, a former high court judge and human rights experts - are conducting a truly independent review of the UK asylum system, from beginning to end. They will make recommendations for reform that are fair as well as forceful, and realistic as well as humane.*

*The commissioners want to hear from all citizens - from those who believe that asylum seekers are not being treated with humanity, to those who believe our asylum system is too generous.*

*You can send your views to 112 Cavell St, London, E1 2JA or visit the website – [www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk](http://www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk) – which shows you how [name of newspaper] readers can report an abuse of the system or give their views on how the system has not worked.*

*I will be sending in my views – and I encourage other readers to do the same.*

*Yours sincerely,*  
[Your name]

- Independent Asylum Commission, 112 Cavell St, London, E1 2JA. □
- 020 7375 1658 □ [jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk](mailto:jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk) □
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## Activity 2: Write to your local newspaper

Please write to your local newspaper and let people know about the work of the Commission and encourage them to submit evidence, using the template below. You can adapt the template to suit you.

Tips:

- Make it short - 150 to 250 words as the maximum
- Get to the point and stick to it
- Don't give up, if you don't get published write again; do not just keep sending in the same letter!
- Cultivate a good relationship with a local journalist.

Please check that the letter was published, and let us know by emailing [jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk](mailto:jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk). Or even better, you can send us a copy to Independent Asylum Commission, 112 Cavell St, London, E1 2JA.

*Dear Sir,*

*I am writing to inform your readers of a nationwide citizens' enquiry into the UK asylum system that is asking for the views of people from [enter name of your local area].*

*There is a widespread belief that the asylum system is not "fit for purpose". So on behalf of concerned citizens across the country, a team of commissioners - chaired by Sir John Waite and Ifath Nawaz and including three peers, a bishop, a former high court judge and human rights experts - are conducting a truly independent review of the UK asylum system, from beginning to end. They will make recommendations for reform that are fair as well as forceful, and realistic as well as humane.*

*The commissioners want to hear from all citizens - from those who believe that asylum seekers are not being treated with humanity, to those who believe our asylum system is too generous.*

*You can send your views to 112 Cavell St, London, E1 2JA or visit the website – [www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk](http://www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk) – which shows you how [name of newspaper] readers can report an abuse of the system or give their views on how the system has not worked.*

*I will be sending in my views – and I encourage my fellow citizens to do the same.*

*Yours sincerely,*

[Your name]

□ Independent Asylum Commission, 112 Cavell St, London, E1 2JA. □

□ 020 7375 1658 □ [jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk](mailto:jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk) □

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## Activity 3: Write to your local MP

Your MP has a duty to listen to your concerns. MPs will often give more attention to the views of a constituent than of an organisation - even those they support. They are sensitive to the opinion of their electorate. Few MPs have such large majorities that they can take voters for granted, and most want a reputation as a good constituency MP. Your letter is a good way of engaging an MP in the work of the Commission.

Visit <http://www.locata.co.uk/commons> to find the name of your MP. If you cannot find the name and contact details of your local MP on the internet, you can always phone the House of Commons information desk on: 020 7219 4272.

Why not use the template letter below to let your MP know about the Commission and to encourage them to contribute their experience of the asylum system?

Tips:

- Get to the point and stick to it
- Don't give up, if you don't get a response within a fortnight call the MP's office.
- Be courteous - cultivate a good relationship with your local MP.

Please send your MP's response to [jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk](mailto:jonathan.cox@cof.org.uk). Or even better, you can send us a copy to Independent Asylum Commission, 112 Cavell St, London, E1 2JA.

### Template letter to local MP

Dear [name of MP],

*I am writing as your constituent to draw your attention to a new independent citizens' enquiry into the UK asylum system.*

*There is a widespread belief that the asylum system is not "fit for purpose". So on behalf of concerned citizens across the country, the Independent Asylum Commission - chaired by Sir John Waite and Ifath Nawaz and including three peers, a bishop, a former high court judge and human rights experts - is conducting a truly independent review of the UK asylum system, from beginning to end. They will make recommendations for reform that are fair as well as forceful, and realistic as well as humane.*

*The commissioners want to hear from all citizens - from those who believe that asylum seekers are not being treated with humanity, to those who believe our asylum system is too generous.*

The website – [www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk](http://www.independentasylumcommission.org.uk) - has details of their call

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*for evidence and shows you how citizens can report an abuse of the system or give their views on how the system has not worked.*

*I will be sending in my views – and I am encouraging my fellow citizens to do the same.*

*I know that MPs often have great experience in working with asylum cases, and that is why the Independent Asylum Commission is asking MPs to contribute to the enquiry by asking them to list the problems with the UK asylum system and their suggested recommendations for reform.*

*I would be grateful if you could take part in this important work by sending an email to [evidence@cof.org.uk](mailto:evidence@cof.org.uk) using the 'Survey of MPs' template attached. Alternatively you can send it to IAC, 112 Cavell St, London, E1 2JA. You can do this anonymously if you wish.*

*I would be grateful if you could let me know whether you have submitted evidence to the Commission and whether you support the Commission's work.*

*I will write to you again when the Independent Asylum Commission has produced its final report.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*[Your name]*

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## **Appendix: Independent Asylum Commission Survey of MPs**

Name of MP:

Constituency:

*Is the UK asylum system functioning properly in regard to protecting refugees and preserving the integrity of the UK's borders?*

Yes / No

*Top four problems with the UK asylum system:*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

*Top four recommendations for reform:*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Any further comments for the consideration of the Independent Asylum Commission.

I am/am not happy for this information to be published in the final report. *(delete as appropriate)*

Please return this survey to [evidence@cof.org.uk](mailto:evidence@cof.org.uk) or to Independent Asylum Commission, 112 Cavell St, London, E1 2JA.

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