

Guide for Refugees Receives Positive Feedback but highlights need for tools that serve all new arrivals to the UK, regardless of legal status.

***Life and Law in Britain: a guide for young asylum seekers and refugees* - received positive feedback and recommendations for development in its recent evaluation.**

The *Life and Law in Britain* guide arose from an apparent gap in the market for easy-to-use materials that would assist vulnerable newcomers to better negotiate day-to-day aspects of life in the UK.

During the 18 years since its founding, the Citizenship Foundation has focused on giving young people the tools they need to be informed and effective citizens of the UK. *Life and Law in Britain: a guide for young asylum seekers and refugees* is a starting point for a wide range of resources, projects and programmes that are crucial for enabling newcomers to integrate into British society. In clear and simple terms the *Guide* details essential cultural and legal norms to help both with short term needs, such as making sense of the legal processes for asylum, and also with long term integration. The *Guide* set out to inform newcomers with important information about life in Britain in a format that is accessible and easy to use. The vision behind the *Guide* was to help newcomers to become informed active citizens within their communities even while their legal citizenship status is pending.

Public opinion has been growing increasingly hostile towards asylum seekers and refugees. The Independent Asylum Commission's (IAC) recent report expressed concern about widespread misconceptions of the term 'asylum' and subsequently how asylum seekers are perceived and treated in the UK. The gap between newcomers and established residents seems to be wider than ever. In the struggle for more cohesive societies integration is key; however the tools available to enable this are limited. There is a serious lack of clear and comprehensive resources available to newcomers and this is something that the Citizenship Foundation believes needs to be addressed if we are to see any concrete steps towards cohesion.

The particular challenge of the *Life and Law in Britain* guide came from the fact that it was designed to be mediated by professionals working with young asylum seekers and refugees, but also as a tool that young asylum seekers and refugees could take away to keep and use in the future.

Most of the evaluation results were enormously positive, and affirmed the decisions made by the Citizenship Foundation in the course of its development of the resource, and those people using it valued the resource. There were also significant messages for further work. In the interests of supporting other resource-writers and practitioners to avoid the pitfalls that we experienced, we draw out some of the key learning points:

1. Targeted distribution – the key access points for marginalised groups were case workers and community centres. The Citizenship Foundation had identified a partner to help in reaching these groups, but unfortunately the partner was unable to participate due to a lack of funding. Consequently the Citizenship Foundation relied on its traditional distribution mechanisms - largely its existing network through schools. This did not enable the *Guide* to have the reach that it had intended.
2. Content delivery – sending out a print resource was insufficient without systematic guidance on how to deliver it to its target audience. The Citizenship Foundation drew upon the experience of creating successful publications such as the *Young Citizen's Passport* to inform the development of the *Guide* (although content was created around issues of particular relevance to young asylum seekers and refugees). However the *Young Citizen's Passport* can be more easily used by young people without assistance, as young people are very often already native English speakers and are used to using such texts from their experience within the British

educational system. Practitioners who were mediating the *Life and Law* resource would in many cases have benefited from a supplement to the guide that would help them explain the content and the usage of the guide to their clients.

3. User-friendly design and content. The way in which content was written and laid out was designed for the resource to be accessible to people with low levels of ability in English language, and also for people who might be 'institution-averse' due to negative interactions with institutions. Making the text manageable, both through the language used and colour coding of sections was the key to the positive reactions that most users gave. The inherent challenges of conveying complex information where accuracy is paramount in simple and accessible ways require ongoing work. Some users suggested using illustrations rather than photographs as helping to explain the text better, and others suggested further areas that would benefit from explanation such as religion in the UK.

Further feedback has helped create plans for ongoing development. For example, following the evaluation, the idea of an emergency leaflet has been shelved but an online version was considered to be a useful area to develop if funding was forthcoming.

The publication was extremely well received with its first print run of 7,500 copies distributed within just six weeks. The Citizenship Foundation has a backlog of an additional 4,500 orders for the guide, and is currently seeking funding to fulfil them, and to take forward development plans.

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