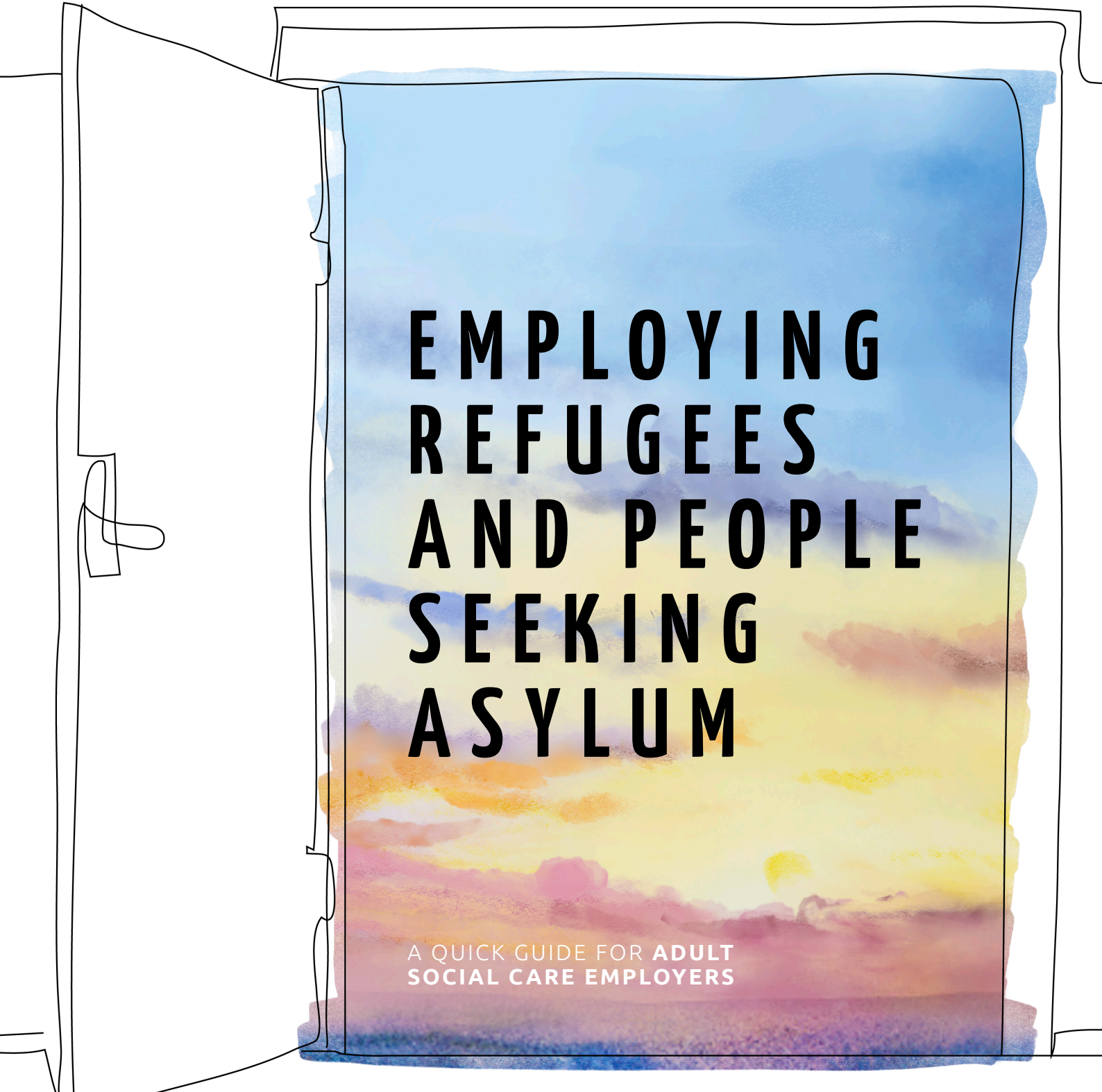


April 2026



EMPLOYING REFUGEES AND PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

A QUICK GUIDE FOR ADULT
SOCIAL CARE EMPLOYERS



INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is based on research interviews with people who have worked in adult social care while seeking asylum.

It has been co-designed with people involved in recruiting and employing care workers, including employers with experience of employing both asylum seekers and refugees.

IT AIMS TO

- Address common questions from adult social care employers
- Clarify recruitment processes
- Signpost to further information and support

Interviews by Lilly Trapp

People who are seeking or have been granted asylum bring a wealth of **skills, compassion, talent and resilience**, and are often highly motivated to work.

Many have previous caring experience from their home countries or from supporting family and community members, and some are drawn to caring professions because of their lived experiences.

At the same time, people from asylum seeking and refugee backgrounds can face additional barriers to employment, including:



Restrictions on the right to work while seeking asylum and lack of UK work history or references.



Limited access to proof of identity and qualifications.



Language barriers and unfamiliarity with UK recruitment processes.



Uncertainty and stress linked to immigration status.



Assumptions about their experiences and capacity to cope with the demands of the role.

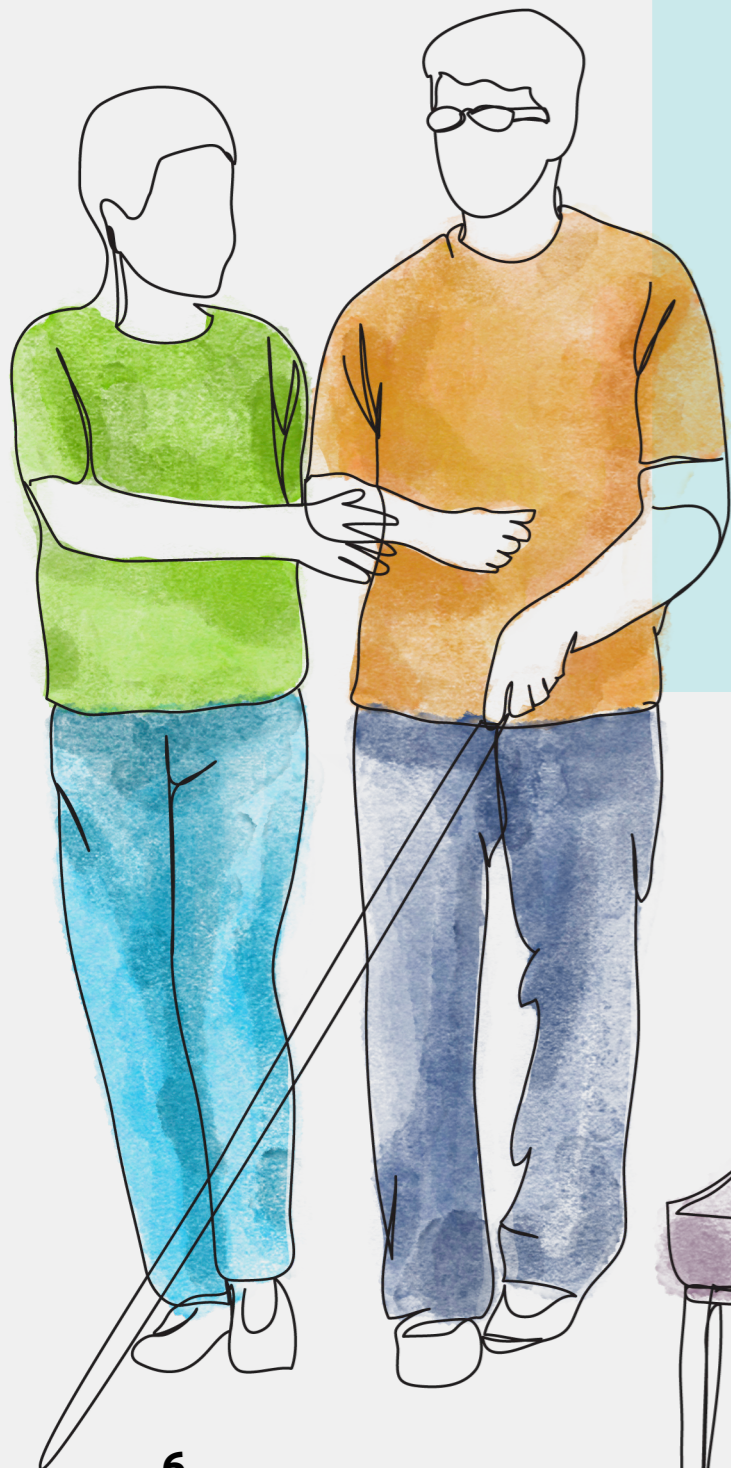


“PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED [IN SOCIAL CARE JOBS], IT’S JUST HARD FOR THEM TO GET IN, THEY GIVE UP BECAUSE THEY KNOW YOU HAVE TO BE VERY, VERY RESILIENT TO GET WHERE YOU WANT TO BE AS AN ASYLUM SEEKER.”

Asylum-seeking care worker, London



This guide is designed to help employers overcome barriers to successfully employing people from an asylum seeking or refugee background while maintaining safe and inclusive recruitment practices.



“THIS LADY WHO I’VE EMPLOYED, SHE WAS A DEPENDENT OF AN ASYLUM SEEKER. [...] WHEN YOU DO THE RIGHT TO WORK CHECK ONLINE, IT IS A SPECIAL ONE THAT WE NEED TO DO FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS, AND I THINK LOTS OF HOME CARE COMPANIES ARE NOT AWARE ABOUT THAT.”

Managing Director of home care company, Southeast England



KEY DEFINITIONS

ASYLUM SEEKER

An asylum seeker is someone who has arrived in the UK and made an application for asylum or is the dependant of someone who has made an application. They are waiting for a final decision on whether their claim meets the legal threshold for protection.

This process can be very fast or can take many years, depending on the complexity of the case and availability of evidence.

If successful, a person may be granted **refugee status**, **humanitarian protection** or some other form of leave to remain.

REFUGEE

The term “refugee” has both a general and a legal meaning.

- **General meaning:** anyone who has fled their country to seek safety elsewhere, regardless of the route used. For example, people who came to the UK on the Ukraine visa are typically described as refugees despite not having been through the asylum process or granted refugee status.
- **Legal meaning:** someone who has been granted refugee status following an assessment through the asylum process.

1

CHECK THEIR RIGHT TO WORK STATUS

Do refugees and asylum seekers have the right to work?

ASYLUM SEEKER

NO

Most people seeking asylum do not have the right to work.

HOWEVER

There are two main exceptions:

1. **People who claimed asylum while holding a valid visa** (for example, a student or work visa) may retain the work conditions attached to that visa, such as working up to a set number of hours per week.
2. **People who have waited more than 12 months** for an initial or fresh asylum decision can apply for permission to work.

If granted, they are restricted to jobs on the **Immigration Salary List**, which currently includes **care worker roles**.

REFUGEE

YES

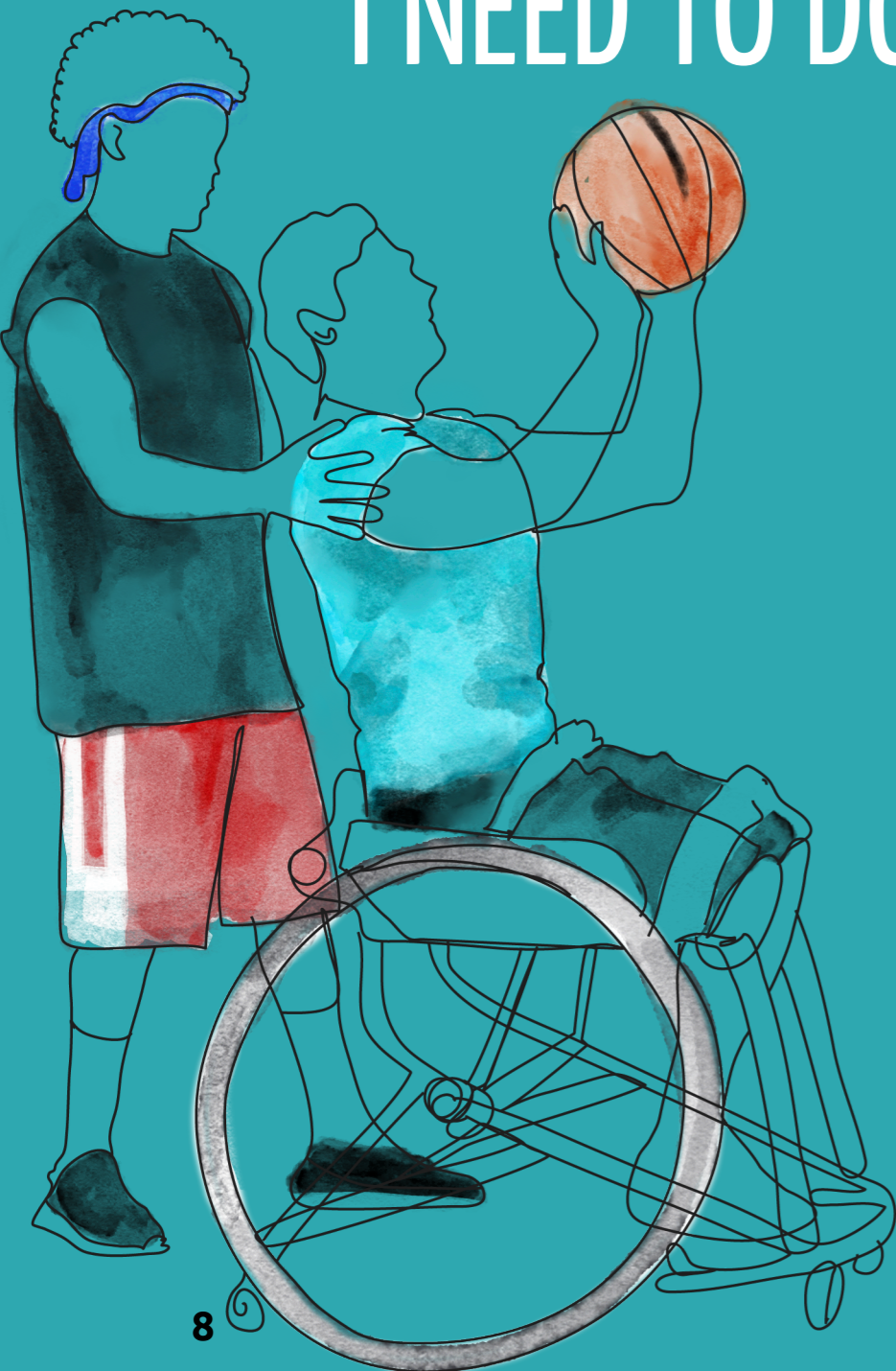
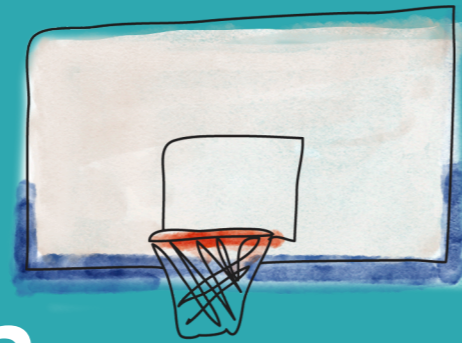
Refugees have an **unrestricted right to work** in the UK.

Before March 2026, refugees were granted permission to stay for 5 years and can then apply for indefinite leave to remain.

However, people who make an asylum claim after March 2026 are likely to be granted a shorter leave to remain period of 30 months which will need to be reviewed several times before someone can apply for indefinite leave to remain.

RECRUITMENT

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?



2 REQUEST THE RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

What documents do refugees and asylum seekers have?

ASYLUM SEEKER



An **Application Registration Card (ARC)**, a photo ID similar to a driving licence which states whether the holder has permission to work and any restrictions: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-registration-card-arc/application-registration-card-arc>.



Home Office paperwork, such as an **Immigration Bail 201 form**, which sets out bail conditions related to work and study.



In some cases, an **e-visa** and access to a Home Office share code if the person initially travelled on a valid visa.

REFUGEE



An **e-visa** confirming their status and right to work.

Often no other physical ID, as Biometric Residence Permits have been phased out.

In some cases, a national passport (which should not be used, as it can undermine their protection claim if they have refugee status). Refugees can apply for a Refugee Travel Document instead.

We said, “We don’t have a Share code, but there’s a way around it. You have a letter from the Home Office [...] that we have the right to work. We have our ARC card [...]. Or you can – you, as the employer, you can contact the Home Office and they will tell you.”

But they didn’t want to hear us.

Asylum-seeking care worker, Northwest England

3 CARRY OUT CHECKS

REFUGEE

How do I check an applicant's right to work?

Refugees will have an e-visa so their right to work can be checked using the usual route: <https://www.gov.uk/view-right-to-work>.

[View Right to Work](#)

ASYLUM SEEKER

For **asylum seekers**, use the Employer Checking Service to check using their application registration card (ARC): <https://www.gov.uk/employee-immigration-employment-status>

[Employer Checking Service](#)

Note: this check must be repeated every six months to remain valid.

How do I carry out DBS and overseas police checks?

People seeking asylum and refugees can apply for DBS checks in the UK.

However, it is common for applicants to:

- Have limited UK address history and a lack of accepted ID so they may need to use the fingerprint route for verifying identity.
- Be unable to obtain overseas police certificates from countries they fled. This is often because they do not want the authorities to know their whereabouts and contacting their state undermines their claim, but can also be because some countries don't maintain a criminal records regime or don't provide them to non-citizens – especially relevant for people who may have spent more than 12 months in a third country on their way to the UK.

DBS guidance and **guidance on criminal record certificates for applicants who have spent time overseas** allows employers to make proportionate, risk-based decisions where checks are incomplete due to circumstances outside the applicant's control, even when roles (such as care worker) are on the list of occupation codes subject to the record check requirement.

This does **not** automatically prevent employment.

[Guidance on the application process for criminal records checks overseas](#)

“I CAN'T GET THE POLICE CRIMINAL [CHECK] FROM MY COUNTRY BECAUSE I DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO KNOW THAT I'M HERE.”

Asylum-seeking care worker, London

GOOD PRACTICE

Good practice includes:

- Clearly recording what checks have been completed, and an explanation of why it has not been possible to obtain a certificate from a certain country.
- Considering alternative sources of information, such as an additional reference.
- Using supervision, training, and probationary periods to ensure that the employee is suitable for the role.

NOTE

People seeking asylum provide their biometric information when they make their asylum claim.

This data is checked against a range of domestic and international databases to check for any outstanding immigration and criminal breaches.

The asylum process consists of a screening interview and a substantive interview, and applicants are required to provide supporting evidence, so their identities and histories are assessed at several points during this process.

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HOW DO I SUPPORT REFUGEE WORKERS IN MY ORGANISATION?

BE WELCOMING

People seeking asylum and refugees are often wary about how they will be received, so small signs of welcome can go a long way. Employers could also be explicit about welcoming applications from international staff, including refugees.

[The manager] was a really nice lady, who was welcoming, knowing like I am asylum seeker here, so she was welcoming me.

Refugee care worker, Southeast England

You are being filled with knowledge, you get confidence, and you just can't wait, when you are shadowing, to practically do [the work].

Refugee care worker, Southeast England

OFFER EARLY SUPPORT

Don't underestimate the importance of support, induction, training and shadowing.

BE PROACTIVE

Take a proactive approach to informing employees about how to report and access support if they experience any discrimination based on their race or ethnicity, immigration status, religion, or any other characteristic.

My work was a healing therapy [...] Even if you come from a war or from whatever, I look forward, I look in the nice future, I want to be like a successful person.

Asylum-seeking care worker, London

AVOID ASSUMPTIONS

Avoid assumptions about people's abilities, experiences, or trauma – refugees are, by definition, resilient and often find that work and supporting others is positive for their wellbeing. They also noted that people from other groups could have experienced trauma and that they are best placed to know whether they can cope with the demands of the role.

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE

Focus on strengths, values, and transferable skills – whether related to previous experiences, language skills or other attributes.

Back home I was physiotherapist. [...] I'm helping, I'm using my skills.

Asylum-seeking care worker, London

When you tend to work in care, you've got people that want to know you a bit more. They ask about your family – it can be very hard. So I just say, "Oh, my family, they are fine."

Asylum-seeking care worker, Northwest England

RESPECT THEIR BOUNDARIES

Be aware that workers may not want colleagues or residents to know their immigration status due to stigma and concerns about hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers. They also may want to protect their boundaries around sharing aspects of their personal lives.

BE MINDFUL

Ensure key staff such as managers have an understanding of the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees and particular challenges they may face, such as living in Home Office accommodation on a 'no-choice' basis, only having 28 days to find accommodation for themselves once their claim is successfully granted, and managing stress at key points during the asylum process, especially the substantive interview or an appeal hearing

Employers should educate and train the staff [...] People just know asylum seekers as "immigrants" or "illegal immigrants". They don't really know the whole thing.

Asylum-seeking care worker, Northwest England



FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

[Home Office guidance on right to work for asylum seekers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-applications-for-permission-to-take-employment-instruction/permission-to-work-and-volunteering-for-asylum-seekers-accessible#enquiries-from-employers-and-voluntary-organisations)

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[Skills for Care resources on safe and inclusive employment](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Recruitment-support/Safer-employment/Safer-employment.aspx)

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Recruitment-support/Safer-employment/Safer-employment.aspx>

[Skills for Care guide to gathering and assessing criminal record information for UK and non-UK nationals, including displaced people](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/resources/documents/Recruitment-support/Widen-your-talent-pool/International-recruitment/safer-recruitment.pdf)

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/resources/documents/Recruitment-support/Widen-your-talent-pool/International-recruitment/safer-recruitment.pdf>

[National Care Forum resources on employment and pastoral care for refugees](https://www.nationalcareforum.org.uk/projects/care-employers-together-for-ukraine/)

<https://www.nationalcareforum.org.uk/projects/care-employers-together-for-ukraine/>

[Refugee Employment Network](https://refugeeemploymentnetwork.org/)

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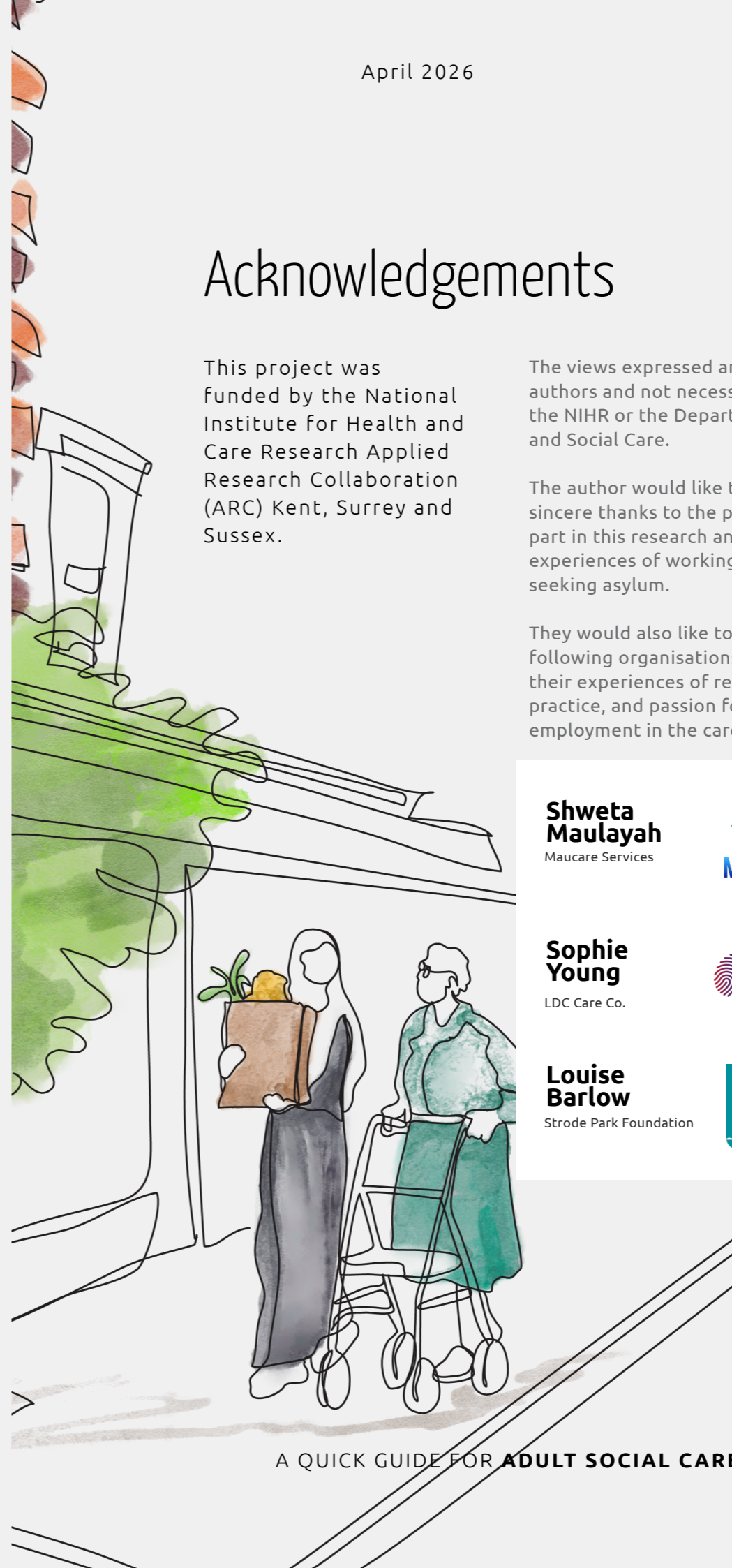
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