

Involving people with lived experience of the asylum system

If you are a refugee and/or your group is led by people with lived experience of the asylum system, it will help hugely in the planning and executing of your campaign activities. It will also help when organising meetings and events that require speakers.

People with direct experience of the asylum system are best placed to represent their concerns and aspirations for Government policy. And we know that audiences connect more with people and their stories, rather than dry facts and figures.

If you have lived experience of the asylum system and are thinking about speaking in public, here are some issues to consider:

- Could public appearances expose you to danger or affect your asylum claim?
- Would mentioning the country you come from expose family members to risk?
- If it is not safe or comfortable to speak publicly, how might you protect your identity (e.g. photos not allowed, your real name withheld, information limited so that it doesn't reveal your identity)?
- If you aren't comfortable speaking publicly, perhaps you could provide a statement to be read out.
- If you prefer not to appear on video, you can switch off the video if the event is happening via Zoom, Skype or Microsoft Teams.

If you don't have people with lived experience as part of your group, here are some issues to consider:

- When asking someone with lived experience to join an activity, ask them how they would like to be involved. For example, they may be happy to join planning meetings to help shape the approach your group takes.
- For speaking engagements:
 - Be clear about why you are asking them to speak and how it will help further your aims.
 - Ask them if they are comfortable / it is safe for them to use their real name, share details about their asylum claim or their country of origin. If there are any concerns, consider changing your request to one they are comfortable with and ask someone else to speak.
 - Ensure they aren't pressured to share anything they don't want to.
 - Brief them about the audience.
 - If required, support them to write a speech or statement and provide logistical support if needed.

- Give them the opportunity to share other expertise related to the topic – in addition to their lived experience.
- If you can, please offer travel and food expenses. Or if it's an online event, support them with internet connectivity.
- If you have permission, refer to them by their full name in publicity for the event. Only use descriptions such as 'asylum seeker' or 'refugee' alongside other descriptors like their job title (nurse) or family status (father-of-three).

Many thanks to the [One Strong Voice](#) network for advice on this document.