Who are asylum seekers and refugees?
An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country of origin and has claimed asylum in another country. An unaccompanied asylum seeking child is an asylum applicant who is less than 18 years old and has no adult relative or guardian to look after them at the time of application.
Asylum seekers who receive a positive decision are known as refugees. A refugee is an individual who is outside their country of origin, has a well-founded fear of being persecuted and is unable to return, for fear of persecution.

Do asylum seekers and refugees get benefits and housing?
Asylum seekers cannot claim benefits, nor are they allowed to work. Whilst they are waiting for a decision on their claim, the Home Office provides them with £36.95 a week and houses them in the private sector, which is mostly shared accommodation. They do not get given extras such as mobile phones or TVs. Unaccompanied asylum seeking children are supported by the council until they reach the age of 18. The Home Office makes payments to the council to support this.
Refugees are permitted to work and can claim benefits. This entitlement is in accordance with the 1951 Geneva Convention, which gives refugees the same level of public relief, social security and labour market access as any other national of the country.

Are we overwhelmed with asylum seekers and refugees in Plymouth?
Asylum seekers in Plymouth make up only 0.1% of the local population (Feb 2016). The proportion of refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons in the UK is 0.2% of the total population.

Does Plymouth have to accept asylum seekers?
The dispersal of asylum seekers across the UK is undertaken nationally and Plymouth is one of the places required by the Home Office to receive them.

How do asylum seekers and refugees differ from foreign migrants?
Foreign migrants are foreign nationals who travel to the UK, mainly for work or study. Those from outside the EU have to satisfy certain requirements but migrants from the EU are able to travel and work freely across Europe. Those working in the UK are often referred to as ‘migrant workers’.

Has the council agreed to take Syrian refugees?
We welcomed three Syrian families to Plymouth just before Christmas 2015 and have agreed to accept approximately 25 more families over the next three years (0.05% of Plymouth’s total population). This is part of the government’s Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme.

Why does this Scheme exist?
The civil war in Syria has resulted in the world’s single largest refugee crisis. In the past five years over 50% of Syria’s population have fled their homes, five million of which are registered as refugees with the UNHCR living in camps. War crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed on a massive scale throughout the conflict, including massacres, murder, torture, enforced disappearance, rape and sexual violence. It is estimated that 470,000 people have been killed and 1.9 million injured.
A report backed by the UN says that as a result of the war, 80% of people in Syria live in poverty and struggle to meet their basic food needs. Life expectancy reduced sharply from 76 years in 2010 to an estimated 56 years by 2014. Almost three million Syrians lost their jobs during the conflict, meaning 12 million people lost their primary source of income; and unemployment increased significantly from 15% in 2011 to 58% by 2014.

The Syrian Scheme prioritises help for women, children, the elderly, survivors of torture and violence and those in need of medical care.

**How many Syrian refugees does the UK plan to accept under this scheme?**
20,000 Refugees over five years. This is 0.5% of the refugees displaced in Syria and will add 0.03% to the overall UK population.

**Who pays to support these refugees?**
Under this Scheme, the government provides funding to the council to support refugees for the first five years. Core education and health costs are also provided through the Department s of Education and Health.

**Do they get benefits and housing?**
Scheme participants are eligible to access benefits and social housing, and can work in the same way as UK residents. However, we intend to source private rented accommodation for them.

**What about access to other services like schools, medical and social care?**
We have adequate numbers of school places across the city and children on the scheme will be able to access these in the normal way. Because we currently have no places in our special schools we will not take any Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) whose needs cannot be met in mainstream schools.

The health and social care needs of participants are assessed before they arrive in Plymouth to consider whether we are able to support them. Social care needs will be met through our joint commissioning arrangements.

**How will they integrate into the community?**
On arrival, scheme participants will receive support with local orientation, interpretation, registering with a GP and accessing other services. They will also be assisted to access English classes and look for work. Most Syrian refugees will be Muslim, although there is a significant Christian minority. They will be supported to access places of worship and wider community groups.

**Are there any security concerns?**
All refugees are security checked prior to their departure, to ensure public safety and maintain appropriate safeguards. Like anyone else, refugees must abide by the laws of the country they are resident in and risk losing their status if they fail to do so.

**How can I help?**
Since September 2015, local community & voluntary groups have been accepting offers of cash, goods and support. For details of how you can help, please see [www.plymouth.gov.uk/refugees](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/refugees).
**Is the council involved in any other refugee schemes?**

We have volunteered to participate in the Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme which relocates Afghan civilian personnel, who served with our forces in Helmand.

Since 2014, we have taken 11 Families and four single people and have agreed to take about another 20 families. Scheme participants are not immediately entitled to benefits; the Home Office covers the initial costs of their support and they are accommodated in private housing until they are eligible to access work and mainstream support.