

The truth about immigration

Information and arguments for workers in the
North East and Cumbria

First Edition



“If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing”

Malcolm X

For centuries the North East and Cumbria has had a history of immigration and people from overseas who have contributed to our region's history, culture and industrial development.

Our region received Irish migrant workers in shipbuilding at the turn of the 20th Century, the North East enjoyed several hundred ice cream parlours and restaurants set up by Italians in the early 1900s, we have been the home to Yemenis who traded, sailed and settled in South Shields forming Britain's first Arab community in the 1800s and hosted the first Jewish congregations in Tyne and Wear in the 1700s. In the 16th

Century Keswick was home to 200 German miners invited to the area by Queen Elizabeth to apply their world-beating expertise in Cumbria's copper mines. 450 years later the Cumbria attracts millions of visitors from around the planet through tourism. Meanwhile our region's football supporters have adopted players from overseas such as Pavel Srnicek, Julio Arca and Juninho and made them regional heroes.

There have undoubtedly been times in the region's history where tensions between communities have increased either during wartime or times of greater hardship in the region. The current extreme cuts from the Conservative government and attacks on public services provide a new challenge. We need to

tackle some of the myths to stop those profiting from dividing our communities, promoting hatred and discrimination and blaming migrant workers or refugees for issues that are the fault of the rich and powerful.

Trade unions in the TUC's Northern Region have a strong commitment to anti-fascism and the North East is the only English region in which the fascist British National Party failed to win an election. Workers in the region will again be crucial to uniting communities and defeating prejudice.

Sanctuary for Asylum Seekers



Following the atrocities of the Second World War, the UK and 195 other countries signed up to the Geneva Conventions which include the provision of legal sanctuary to refugees.

A 'refugee' is the internationally defined legal

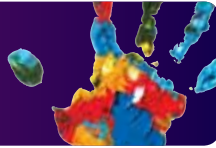
status of someone who has been forced to flee their country for another as a result of a proven fear of persecution, human rights violations and persecution, exploitation through trafficking, escaping extreme deprivation or war.

'Asylum' means 'protection' and an asylum seeker is someone who has lodged an application in a country to be recognised as a refugee and is waiting for it to be confirmed or rejected.

Asylum seekers are not able to work unless they have been waiting over a year for their claim to be processed. Just 2% of the world's asylum seekers come to the UK and many are refused refugee status because of the difficulty in trying to prove the threat to safety from their country of origin.

According to British Red Cross 52% of the world's refugees come from just 5 countries – Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. Most refugees flee to other developing countries. International investment in peace-keeping, conflict resolution, development and tackling climate change will all help reduce the number of refugees in the future.

Migrant Workers in Britain



Migrant workers pay income tax and National Insurance like any other UK workers. They contribute 37% more in taxes than was spent on the public services they access and make an overall net contribution of £3 billion to the UK economy per year.

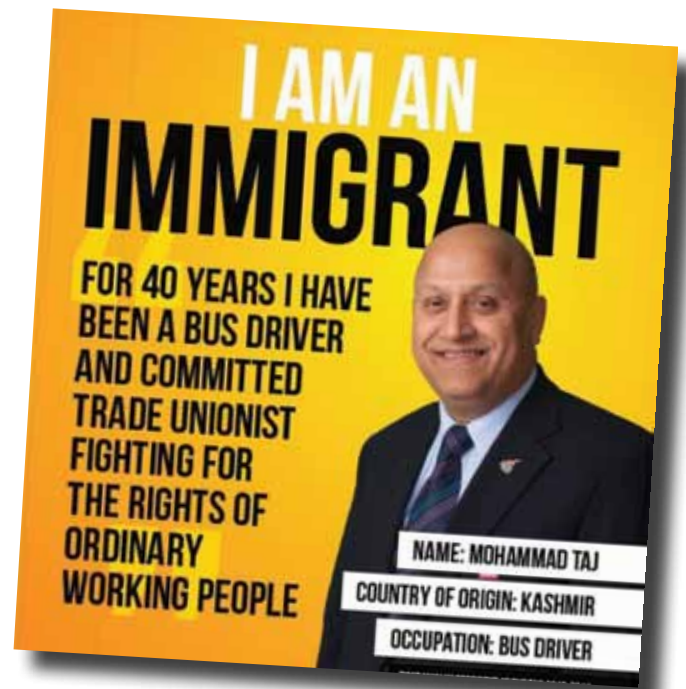
Pressure on public services is not due to migrant workers but to the political decisions taken by the Conservative government to cut them.

The proportion of people in the UK who were born overseas varies considerably throughout the UK. Figures from 2013 show that 1.8% of the North East's population were born abroad compared to 13.7% in the South East and 36.2% in London. A significant number of economists have made the link between immigration and economic growth.

Workers from overseas also play a vital

role delivering public services such as for our National Health Service. Reductions in immigration from outside the EU would risk NHS staff and skill shortages and cause services to deteriorate.

Mohammad Taj was President of the TUC between 2013-14 and starred in a poster campaign highlighting the everyday contribution to British working life from people born overseas. Visit: www.iamanimmigrant.net for more posters.



There are already shortages of many health professionals in the UK and Conservative government policies will further increase the

costs and debts incurred by UK workers from training to work in the NHS. It is Conservative government policies that are undermining public services like the NHS and certainly not workers from overseas who help prop it up.

Trade unions play a vital role to ensure that there is a level playing field for all workers and will challenge unscrupulous employers intending to undercut terms and conditions through agencies using migrant workers.

We believe unionised workplaces, transparency and strong employment rights benefit all workers. Trade unions will continue to fight for a fair deal for all workers and challenge those employers who behave unethically or illegally and profit from the abuse of immigration.

The Immigration Blame Game



Certain politicians and newspapers will repeatedly try to blame immigrants for problems in Britain to distract from the real causes.

Over time the daily propaganda and sensationalist language from certain newspapers creates a distorted view of the facts which can disorientate our understanding of immigration and different ethnic or faith groups.

A recent opinion poll by Ipsos Mori showed that on average people in the UK thought 21% of population was Muslim compared to the reality of 5%. The same poll showed that people thought 24% of people in Britain were immigrants when the reality is almost half that at 13%. The same newspapers take an identical approach with people requiring social security blaming poorest in the UK for economic problems.

The irony is that many of these anti-immigrant millionaire newspaper barons have their business affairs based overseas to minimise the amount of tax paid to the UK by their families and to maximise their personal wealth...

...Their taxes could and should be funding public services here in the United Kingdom.

The Role of Trade Unions



Many people in the UK have experienced reduced living standards and greater insecurity following the financial crash of 2008 and the Conservative government's decision to slash public services.

Some politicians will seek to increase prejudice and fears to win political support rather than highlight the need to tackle the financial institutions who caused the crash and increase taxes from big businesses and the wealthiest in society who've instead benefited from tax cuts.

Trade unions will continue to focus on the real causes of economic hardship and not blame people who have come from overseas to work or are feeling and are in need of protection. For generations trade unionists in the North East and Cumbria have played an important role in informing, uniting and empowering workplace and communities. We oppose those who seek to profit from dividing us.

Information and Resources



The following organisations play an important role in tackling myths and changing attitudes towards immigration and racism:



Hope Not Hate provide many tools, campaigns and resources to opposing the organisations who seek to divide communities.

www.hopenothate.org.uk



The Anne Frank Trust provide an excellent range of resources for schools, communities and workplaces to educate and challenge prejudice and hate crime and drawing on experiences from the Second World War.

www.annefrank.org.uk

Show Racism the **Red Card**

Show Racism the Red Card is a charity founded in the North East and working successfully across Britain to educate, inform young people and tackle racism through working in schools and communities with high profile footballers.

www.theredcard.org



The North of England Refugee Service is a charity with offices in Newcastle, Sunderland and Middlesbrough. It aims to provide information and support for refugees and help integrate them in communities.

www.refugee.org.uk



The Refugee Council is a national charity working with and for refugees and was created following the Geneva Conventions and provides information and support for refugees and those

seeking asylum in the UK.

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk



UNHCR – the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees provides information about international rights for refugees and useful facts and figures.

<http://www.unhcr.org>



The Northern Public Services Alliance (NPSA) campaigns against government austerity policies in the North East and Cumbria that cut, privatise and undermine public services.

Follow on facebook at:

www.facebook.com/northernpsa

Follow on twitter at:

[@northernpsa](https://twitter.com/northernpsa)

To find out details of your local Public Services Alliance next meeting email:

mlowden@tuc.org.uk



The truth about immigration

“ The North East and Cumbria has been hit hard by the government’s austerity agenda and as core services are cut, politicians often play on people’s anxieties and fears. Trade Unions play a key role in responding to the anti-immigration rhetoric and I am proud of the work this region does in challenging it.

“ I would encourage all workplace activists to share the information in this leaflet with members and friends to raise awareness, dispel myths and encourage community cohesion. ”

Nicky Ramanandi: Chair of the Northern TUC Race Advisory Group

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