

# *How do the UK's rules affect refugee family reunion?*

Read the case studies and make notes to explain;

- why each family is separated from one another
- what the UK's rules say about each case
- the changes to the rules the Families Together campaign would like to see so each family is reunited
- Your opinion about what should happen next to change the rules

Be prepared to explain and discuss your ideas

## DEFINITIONS

**A person seeking asylum** is a person who has crossed the border into another country to request protection from persecution. In the UK it can take many months or longer for claims for asylum to be decided. While they wait, people seeking asylum in the UK are not permitted to work to earn money, and must live where they are told.

**A refugee** is a person whose claim for asylum has been granted. Refugees are given many similar rights to citizens of their host country, are permitted to work and may live where they wish. However they are only usually allowed to bring children under 18 and their partner to live in the UK.

# Case Study 1

## Mariam Syria



"My name is Mariam. When the war began it was close to our house. We could no longer stay. After a long and difficult journey I managed to come to the UK with my husband Amal and my two youngest children. We were granted refugee status. However I have another son and daughter aged 19 and 20 who I had to leave behind in Syria. My little kids ask me every day: 'Mum, what happened to Kusai and Athar? When are they coming? When will we see them and talk with them?'

### UK rules

Adult refugees may apply to have their closest family members join them in the UK. This includes partners and children under 18.

In 2022 the rules were changed so that refugees could sponsor adult children to join them. However refugees are required to prove dependency and that the family cannot reunite elsewhere. This may be complicated to do.

### My notes

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# Case Study 2

## Nabil Syria



"My name is Nabil, I am 16 years old and I am from Syria. When the bombs started falling I escaped by myself to Lebanon. All my family were killed, except my older brother who survived. He is now safe in Scotland and was granted refugee status. I want to join him but this is very difficult. I travelled alone by land and sea from Lebanon to France. I nearly drowned when the boat I was on capsized in the Aegean Sea. Now I am sleeping rough in the woods outside Calais, waiting for my chance to cross the sea to England and be reunited with my brother."

### UK rules

Only parents can sponsor a child under 18 to join them in the UK

### My notes

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# Case Study 3

## Tesfa Eritrea



"My name is Tesfa and I am 17 years old. I am from Eritrea. In Eritrea boys are often forced to join the army. My brother was taken by soldiers and we never heard from him again. Soldiers started coming to my school, so I decided to stop going. Finally I decided I had to leave. I didn't have a plan. All I knew was I had to keep moving. I passed through Sudan and Libya and ended up in the UK by chance. I didn't even know where the lorry I hid on was going. After one and a half years on the move I finally spoke to my mum on the phone. It was the best moment ever. I desperately want to see my mum and my kid brothers and sisters again but I can't. I live with foster parents. They're kind and try their best, but it's not the same as my family."

### UK rules

Adult refugees in the UK are permitted to sponsor their children under 18 to join them.

However unaccompanied child refugees are not allowed to sponsor their parents, or brothers or sisters to come to the UK.

Child refugees are placed in the care system and are denied a family life as is their right in the UN Convention on the Rights of The Child (UNCRC).

### My notes

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# Case Study 4

## Vimbai Zimbabwe



"My name is Vimbai and I am from Zimbabwe. I am a refugee in the UK. I could never have made the application for my family to join me by myself. I wouldn't know where to start, it's so complicated. And I don't have enough money to hire a lawyer. I just don't agree when they say it's straightforward. Like applying for family reunion. It may be your right, but it's a legal thing to get approval from the government. They want to see your case put across and you really need a lawyer for that. I've heard of people really struggling to bring their family over. It's very difficult.

### UK rules

Legal aid (free legal advice from a lawyer paid for by the government) is not granted to refugees applying for family reunion

Refugees must pay for their own lawyer, search for a volunteer lawyer who will help them for free or try to submit the complicated paperwork by themselves.

### My notes

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