

Top Tips For Supporting Asylum Seekers & Refugees

At Solace we hear a lot about how professionals working in the migration sector are increasingly frustrated with the asylum system that doesn't make sense and is incredibly difficult to navigate. People coming to the UK to find safety face tremendous challenges just to make their case and explain what has happened to them. The people working alongside them trying to help also feel the impact of these challenges, and as services face funding reductions these pressures are intensified.



Kathryn Ashworth
Solace CEO

Our Therapist's Top Tips:

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As a professional you may feel powerless at times, but there are lots of things you can do to help. Engaging in conversations with others, being explicit in challenging racism, donating to causes which support refugees all help challenge the hostile environment and can collectively bring about change.

If you are concerned about an individual, find out if they have a caseworker / social worker / support worker. Often lots of work is going on that the individual may be unaware of, or hasn't understood. Joining up with others who are supporting the person and giving consistent explanations can be very helpful to people. You are never on your own, other services are there to support you.

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Writing a letter of support setting out your professional opinion is very powerful (Always share it with the person first).

Being there alongside someone, believing what they tell you and “bearing witness” to someone’s distress is very powerful. Sometimes when you can’t make things OK this can be enough to make a huge difference.

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Remind yourself that systems and structures encourage passivity and takes control away from people. It’s not your fault or failure, and it’s not the fault or failure of the person you are supporting. Acknowledge this to yourself and demonstrate empathy and understanding to the person so they know you recognise how hard it is for them.

Recognise that working with people seeking sanctuary, and within such a difficult system has an impact on your own wellbeing. Give yourself permission to look after yourself. Appreciate and enjoy the abundance and safety we do have.

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Make sure you know about services available locally offering practical and emotional support. Work to develop relationships with others. Signposting rarely works well, but a “warm referral” often does. If you can discuss someone’s needs, check if a service is appropriate and then tell the person you are supporting who they need to speak to when they arrive and that person is expecting them, it provides much needed safety, and is more likely to be successful.

Remember that being a welcoming, warm authentic human being in a world of hostility can go a long way towards people feeling welcomed, cared for and respected. This can sometimes take a little extra time, particularly if you feel stressed yourself, but the impact is huge.

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Develop good relationships with your interpreter. They are the conduit which connects you to the client and can act as a cultural broker re cultural norms and values.