

Challenging Issues: Changing Lives

Case Work Report
2018

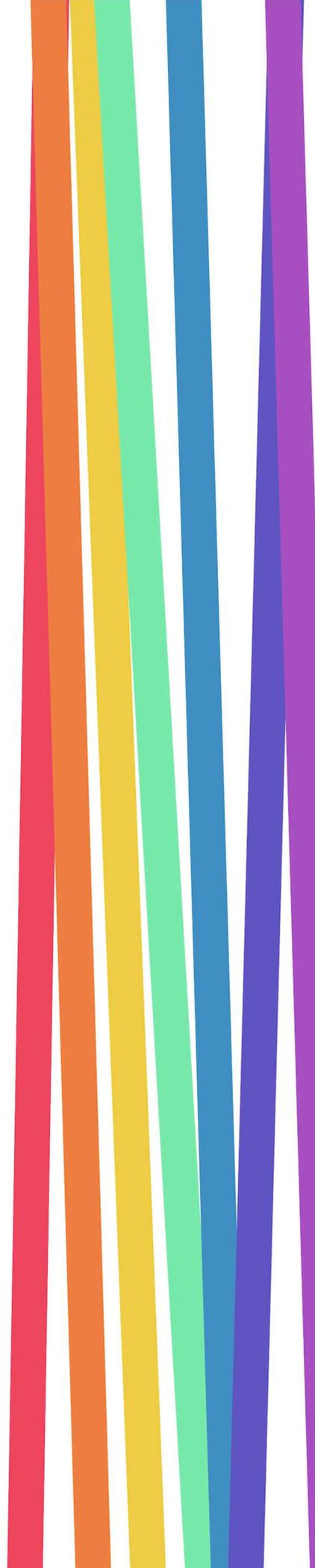


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Foreword

It is my pleasure to present the Peter Tatchell Foundation's case work report for 2018 – Challenging Issues: Changing Lives.

It documents our work giving advice, support and practical aid to individuals who are victims of injustices, such as discrimination and hate crime.

We are particularly proud of our success in helping to win asylum in the UK for refugees fleeing persecution by repressive regimes.

Despite our limited size and funding, the Peter Tatchell Foundation still manages to make a positive difference to the lives of many people every year. Since 2012, we have helped over 1,200 people. Special thanks to Pliny Soocoormanee, Executive Assistant, and to our volunteer Jonathan.

If you feel touched by what you read in this report, please consider [making a gift](#) to help us continue this work. All of this was only made possible with the incredible support of our amazing donors – our success starts with your generosity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy N. Hooke'.

Jeremy N. Hooke Esq. DipFA MLIBF
Chairman, Peter Tatchell Foundation

1. About us:

The Peter Tatchell Foundation (PTF) works for universal human rights, including, very importantly, LGBT+ human rights.

The aims and objectives of the PTF are to increase awareness, understanding, protection and implementation of human rights, in the UK and worldwide. This involves research, education, advice, case work, publicity, lobbying and advocacy for the enforcement and furtherance of human rights law.

Through our case work, we are making a tangible, positive difference to the lives of people who have suffered discrimination and hate crime and those who are seeking refugee status. One of our great strengths is our ability to respond professionally and compassionately to calls for help wherever they are from.

2. Requests for help:

The Peter Tatchell Foundation receives requests for help from all over the UK and around the world.

Very often people contacting us are depressed, harassed and emotionally drained. The PTF is a small organisation with limited resources. Despite this, we assist people in a number of ways (see diagram right).

This case work service is provided free of charge and funded by our donors, to whom we are very grateful.

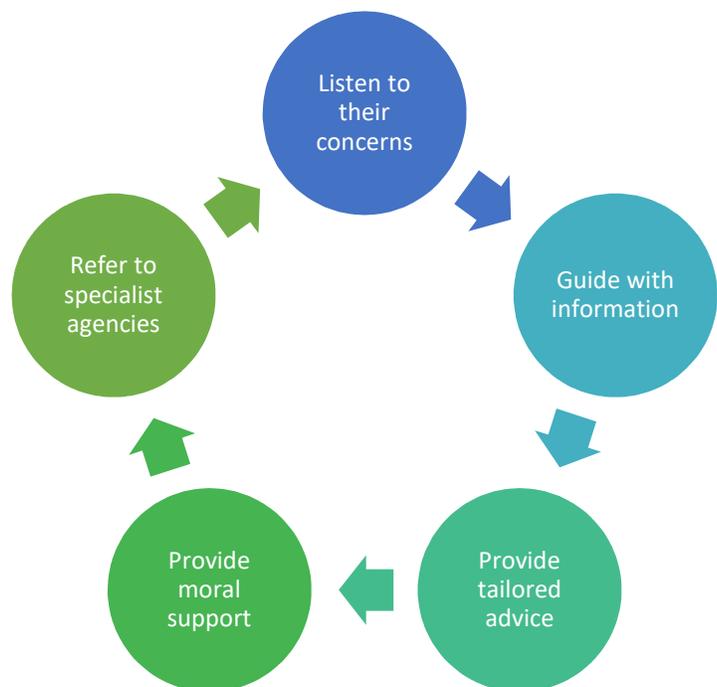


Fig 1. How We Help

3. Key facts:

Case work 2018

We receive requests for help from all over the UK and around the world and despite our small size and limited resources we assist people by listening to their concerns, providing moral support & hope, guiding them with information and advice and referring them to appropriate specialist agencies

Our Reach Over Time



Since 2012 we have helped over 1200 people

Global Reach



In 2018 we helped 171 people from 37 countries

The Commonwealth



53 countries

35 criminalise homosexuality



9 Countries impose life imprisonment



In parts of Nigeria and Pakistan there is the death penalty



123 people were from the Commonwealth



53 UK



17 Pakistan



18 Uganda

The People We Help

The biggest single category of people contacting us are those seeking asylum because they are being persecuted for being LGBT+.



■ LGBT asylum issues (57.89%) ■ Other issues (42.11%)



We assisted people facing a number of human rights issues such as discrimination, hate crime, harassment and police malpractice.

4. Why do people come to us:

We are known for getting things done. Peter Tatchell is a nationally and internationally renowned human rights defender with over fifty-one years' experience. It is this high profile that makes the Peter Tatchell Foundation the first point of contact for help on issues such as discrimination, asylum, harassment and hate crime.

5. Some of the people we helped:

Azam, Background: Although press freedom is guaranteed by the constitution of Pakistan, the reality is widespread intimidation of journalists is common. The Pakistani military and security services target individuals who advocate for liberal values and human rights. In the past five years, twenty-six journalists have been killed in Pakistan.

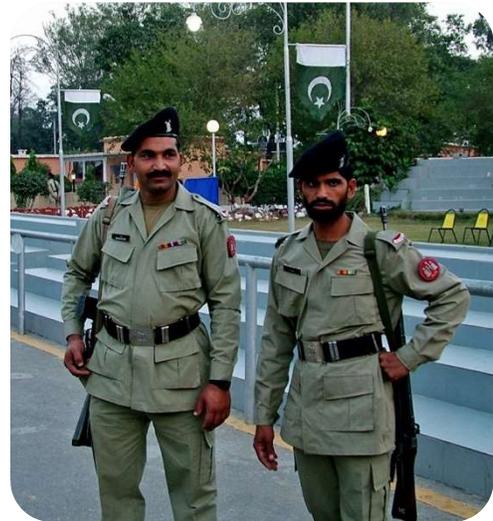


Azam's own words:

I am a journalist from Pakistan and have been reporting on the persecution faced by religious and ethnic minorities. My work has focused especially on security agencies' role in extrajudicial crimes like disappearances and killings in the FATA [Federally Administered Tribal Areas] and the patronage of extremists like the Taliban by the all-powerful Pakistan's intelligence agency.

Pakistan for journalists is one of the most dangerous countries in the world. One of the most sensitive areas is working on blasphemy law and even more so on disappearances, as it directly implicates the security agencies. I was determined to work on this as silence would only make the situation worse. I paid the price by being

detained and interrogated many times and faced regular harassment at check posts. I was threatened directly many times to stop my work or face death. My family has also been approached many times, being threatened with dire consequences if I did not stop my work.



I was working on a project in the UK for a year and during this time, the situation in Pakistan for journalists got worse. My friends started advising me not to return to Pakistan. Obviously, this decision was

a big one that would change my life, so I was initially reluctant, as well as being very confused. Also, the UK asylum seeking process has been made so difficult and scary, making the issues I faced much more difficult.

In this confusion I reached out to the Peter Tatchell Foundation. I had absolutely no idea how to go about it but then the Foundation connected me with relevant legal firms and solicitors who helped me in claiming asylum. The Foundation was there during this long asylum-seeking process and advised me how to prepare the case. Emotional support was extremely important as the process is extremely stressful. I always felt that if things were to go wrong, I could count on the support of Pliny, Peter and the Foundation.

After a few months of preparing the case I was called by the Home Office for the substantive interview. This is a gruelling six to seven hours of questioning and evidence checking – very stressful. Luckily, my case was well prepared and I was granted asylum. It was helpful to have a supporting statement from the Peter Tatchell Foundation that included the current situation in Pakistan and details of my work. Being away from one's home is extremely painful, but at least now I won't be killed or tortured for telling the truth.

Now that my mind is at peace I can start working again without any fear of torture or being killed. Now I can write about the horrors faced by persecuted people while they are still in the air. The quote from Henry Grunwald resonates with me. He said, Journalism can never be silent... It must speak, and speak immediately, while the echoes of wonder, the claims of triumph and the signs of horror are still in the air.

Espoir, Background: Cameroon is one of the 35 countries of the Commonwealth that still criminalise homosexuality. Same sex sexual activity can be punished by up to five years of imprisonment. The law applies to both men and women. In 2018, the police in Cameroon arrested and tortured 25 men for being gay. Espoir fled Cameroon because she was persecuted and feared for her life.



Espoir's story:

“I always felt I was different but I could not articulate my feelings. One day a girl from my school came and talked to me. She was just a friend but over time I realised I was attracted to her, I felt comfortable with her.

“It felt so good to be understood and loved. It felt so right. On a fateful occasion, we were at an event in the town. I wanted to be with her. We hugged and kissed when we

thought we were out of sight. It was a terrible mistake. Someone saw us and begun shouting.

“They were saying we were an abomination and that we should be punished. We were both petrified, unable to move. In a few moments a small crowd gathered and became increasingly hostile. We knew then we had to run for our lives.

“My girlfriend escaped but I was cornered by the crowd. I was terrified. The people insulted me, pushed me to the ground, kicked me, punched me and spat on me. I did not know how this could happen to me. These people were people who knew me. How come they had so much hate towards me?

“My whole body was in pain. Then the crowd decided to take me to the police station. There I was shoved in to a cold cell. I thought I might have some respite, but I was wrong,

so wrong. Two of the policemen came into the cell and said 'we have heard that you like women, we will correct you'.

"I was pushed onto to the cold concrete floor of the cell. They pinned me down so that I could not move and both raped me. There was nothing I could do. I was defenceless and even today remembering this is so hard. This ordeal continued for five days, during which my whole body was in pain. My soul was broken. I just wanted to die.



"After five days my father took me home; I suspect he bribed the policeman. I thought my parents would listen to me, but this was not the case. I was insulted and locked into a room without food. My sister took pity on me and fed me, but I felt as though I had left one prison for another.

"My parents then decided to marry me against my will to a man – it was a forced marriage. My life was in tatters. My husband forced me to have sex with him. It was never consensual. I had no choice, what else could I do. When he was in a bad mood, he would beat me ceaselessly.

"I lost all hope until I met another woman, Grace. She was a lesbian in the same situation as me. Grace and I agreed that we could no longer endure this life, so we decided to leave Cameroon. We thought anywhere would be better than this hell. We managed to get a visa to Malaysia. We escaped and we were going to fly away.

"However, on the eve of getting the visa I saw Grace's husband and brother near our hotel. I tried to phone her but she was not answering. I was too afraid to go back.

"I departed for Malaysia. It was only later that I learnt Grace was brutally assaulted by her husband and her brother. She was so severely beaten that she did not live another day. I was devastated as we had plans to make a new life.

“In Malaysia, I realised that it was only marginally better for people like me and I managed to obtain a visa for the UK. I reached the UK in 2016, where I was still very afraid to disclose my sexuality as I was still shocked and traumatised. I did not feel confident enough to mention that I was a lesbian.



“It was so hard for me to share my story with officers of the Home Office. At every sentence I uttered, they questioned me. My application was rejected and I was terrified of being deported back to Cameroon. This would have been a death sentence for me. Fortunately, I was able to make an appeal and my case is still under consideration. My life is still on hold, but I am optimistic. This optimism stems from my involvement with Pliny and the Foundation. I thank them.”

Mohammed, Background: Pakistan is one of the countries in the Commonwealth that still criminalise homosexuality. In terms of legislation, Pakistan has one of the harshest anti-gay regimes in the world. The maximum penalty for homosexuality is life imprisonment. Homophobia and discrimination are tolerated and frequently encouraged by the state authorities.



Mohammed's story:

“I am from a very conservative family in Pakistan and when my mother passed away, my father threw me out of the house. My maternal uncle and aunt looked after me; I was only 15 and found a job whilst studying. I was attracted to men and tried to fight it, as I thought it was unnatural and worst of all, frowned upon by God. I struggled with my sexuality all the time and I was hating myself.

“In 2010 I came to the UK to further my studies, but even here I was struggling to accept who I was. I was pressured and forced into marriage by my family. I was terribly unhappy and still struggling with my sexuality. I tried every possible way to escape this marriage. I even phoned the police asking them to arrest me, claiming that I had stolen my wife's money. In the end, I had no other option to tell my wife that I was gay.

“Suddenly, my whole world crumbled and everyone that I knew turned their back on me. Worst, my family and that of my wife got extremely aggressive and I received numerous threats that they would be looking for me.

“My family in Pakistan made it clear that if ever I was to return, they would hunt me down like an animal and kill me because I was dirty, sinful and brought ‘dishonour’ to them. I finally got some help and applied for asylum.



“Being without resources, I was offered some accommodation, but I barely ever left my room in the first year. I only went to the kitchen and made dinner. It was a very hard time and I felt isolated. My time was spent only watching the cars passing by. My mental health suffered and I tried to kill myself. I was told ‘you are a waste of public funds’, that I did not deserve to be helped. I was so afraid of being deported and be killed in Pakistan that I moved away from the accommodation provided by the Government. For 6 months, I was homeless. I lived in the bus station, under bridges, wherever I could. I had given up on life. It took me some time and lots of support to go back and undertake the asylum process again.

“Luckily in 2019, I was granted refugee status. It is very difficult for me to explain how I felt when I received the news. Initially I thought it might not be real, that the Home Office would come in the night and ship me back to Pakistan. Then I realised that actually I was able to stay here. It meant I could now start my life again. I was ecstatic and felt so much joy when I knew that I would not be sent back to Pakistan, which would have meant death.

“Now I have turned a new page in my life and I am ever grateful that I am now able to be myself as a gay man. Today, I am comfortable with my sexuality and eager to grasp at any opportunities that may come my way. Today is a new beginning for me and I am so grateful to those who believed in me and supported me when it seemed as though very few did. Thank you so much for giving me a new life.”

6. Case work in brief:

In 2018, we dealt with 171 individuals who requested assistance. Many of these individuals required extensive multiple correspondence and support. This is illustrated in Fig 2. Case work over the years.

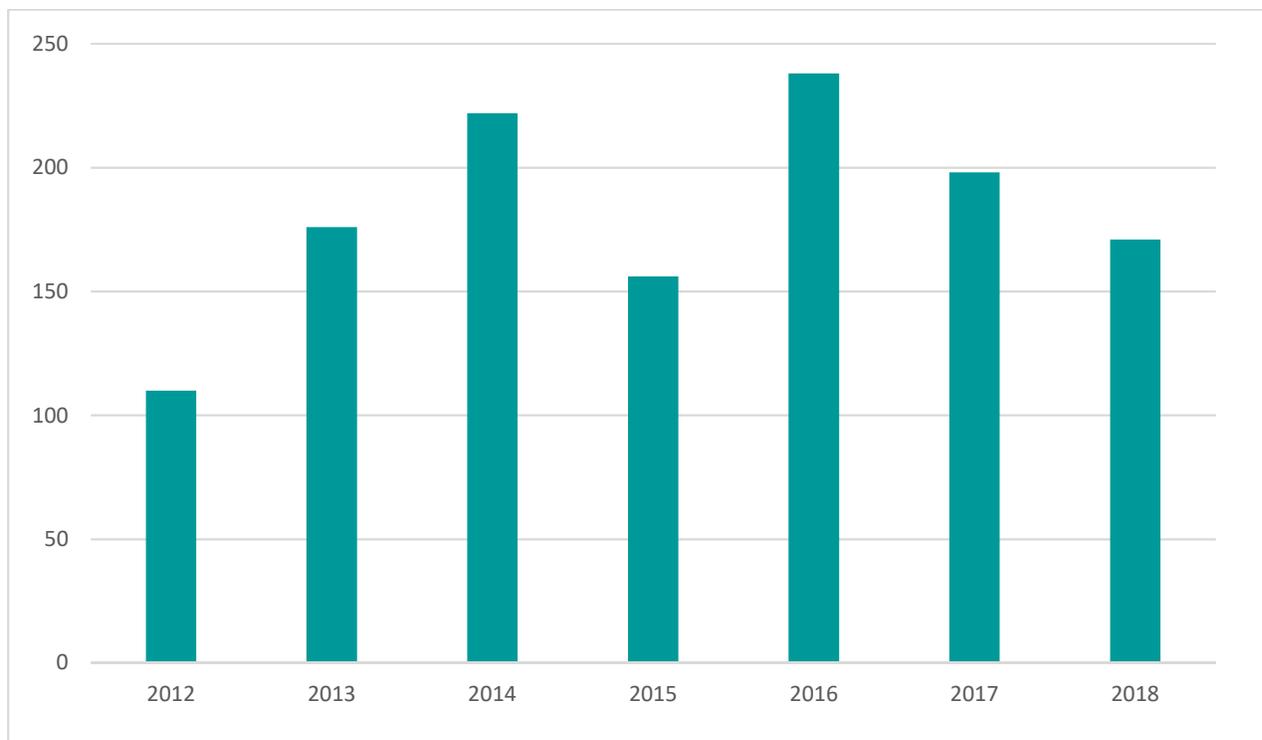


Fig 2. Case Work Over the Years

Since 2012, we have assisted over 1,200 people.

7. Global reach:

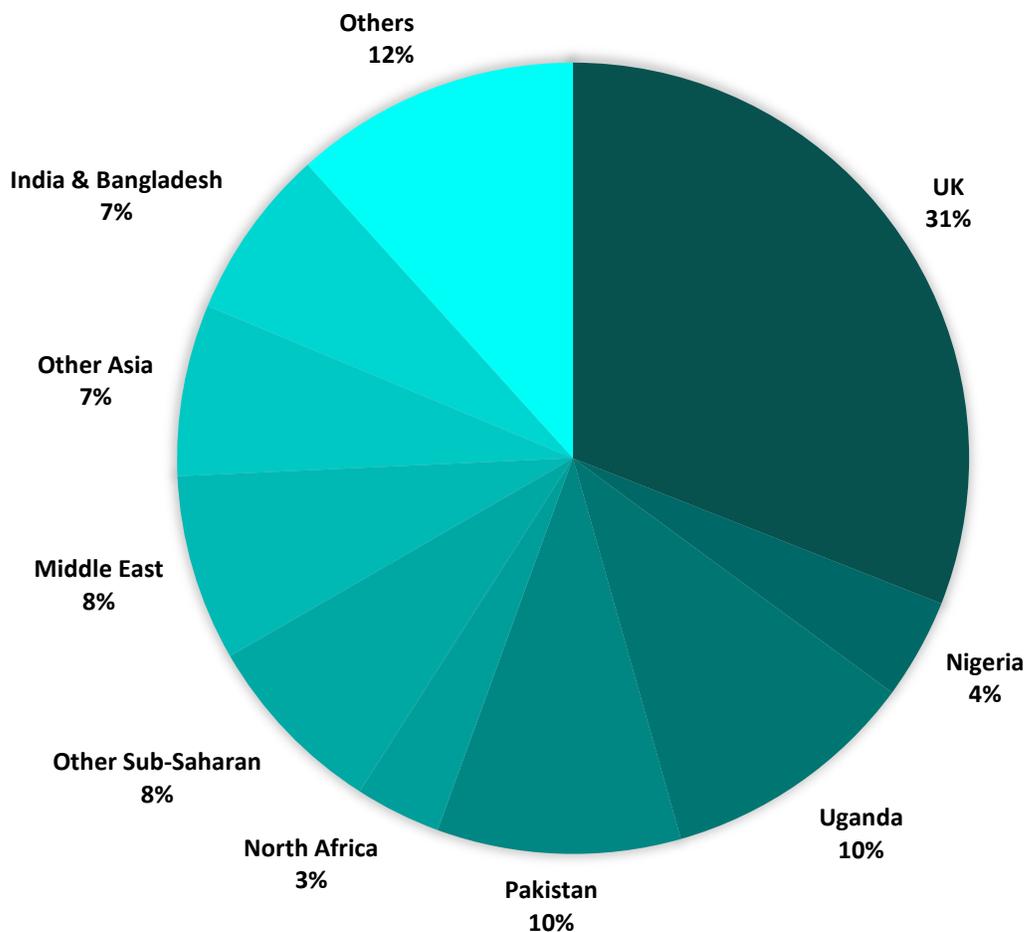


Fig 3. Case Work: Requests for Help by Country of Origin

Around 70% of people we help have an international background. Three quarters of the people we help are from the Commonwealth, which remains a bastion of homophobia with 35 out of 53 countries still criminalising homosexuality. Nine impose life imprisonment. In parts of two Commonwealth countries, Nigeria and Pakistan, homosexuality can result in a death sentence.

We have helped people from 37 different countries, namely: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Chechnya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Libya, Macedonia, Malaysia,

Mauritius, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi-Arabia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, UAE, Uganda, UK, USA, Zimbabwe.

8. The range of issues:

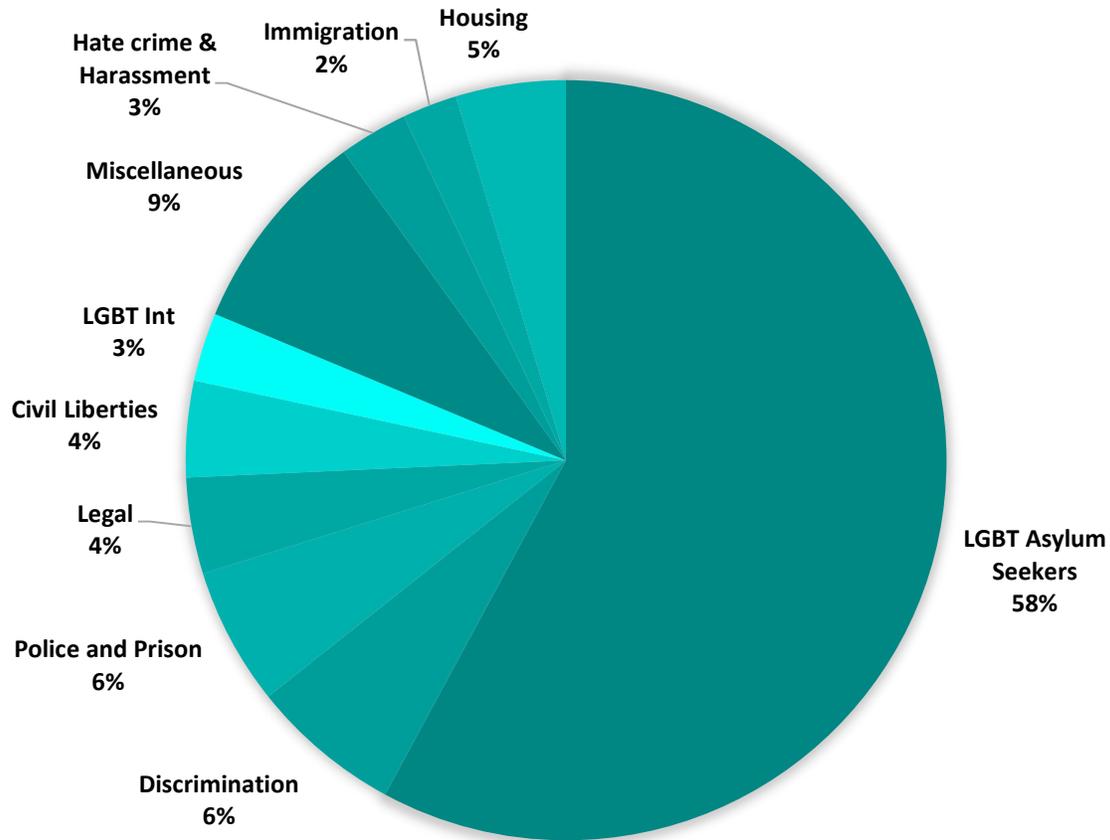


Fig 4. Case Work: the Range of Issues

A significant number of calls for help we receive are from people seeking asylum based on their sexual orientation.

LGBT+ asylum seekers face a number of challenges if they are to obtain refugee status.

One of the requirements of the Home Office is that LGBT+ asylum seekers provide evidence of their sexuality. Very often there is minimal guidance on how this can be achieved.

LGBT+ asylum seekers often describe the stress they undergo during their interviews with staff of the Home Office.

While their case is being processed, they are not allowed to work and very often there is a huge delay in processing their applications. In extreme cases, it has been known to take up to thirteen years.

They often fear being put in detention or, worse being deported.

As reported by The Guardian in 2018, the

UK has one of the biggest detention systems in Europe and there is currently no time limit on the length of detention. Many asylum seekers are fearful of deportation as they rightly assume that it could well mean a death sentence.

The Foundation has also assisted people on many different issues including discrimination, hate crime, homophobic hate crime and civil liberties. The category LGBT-int represents LGBT+ people from different countries seeking non-asylum advice.



9. What they say:

“Thank you so much for the support and advice. Please keep giving the love and care to other people who are in a similar situation as me.” **Gamesh**



“In my hour of need, when I did not know what to do, I approached the Foundation seeking support and advice. I am ever so thankful to reach someone who finally was willing to listen to my issues and advise me.” **John**

“Your support has been essential in helping me to get my refugee status. Thank you for being present at that difficult time. I am grateful.” **Kiran**



“Your advice was really useful. I felt empowered with your suggestions and confident to have my issues solved.” **Naz**

“I would like to thank you for your help. It helped me understand what my options are and how to solve my problem.” **Johanna**



“It was not an easy journey but you guys helped me a lot and was happy to listen to what I had gone through. You helped me to stand up for my rights! Thank you.” **Kizza**

10. Support our work:

Please consider donating to the Peter Tatchell Foundation to cover the cost of helping someone who comes to us in need.

The Peter Tatchell Foundation depends entirely on individual donations. We do not receive any statutory funding. Whatever you can give is greatly appreciated. No donation is too small for us.

Everything we have done to support these people is thanks to our amazing supporters.

You can make a donation by visiting our website:
www.PeterTatchellFoundation.org/donate

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