

# Challenging Issues, Changing Lives

2022 Case Work Report  
by Pliny Soocoormanee



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# Foreword



It is my pleasure to present our Charity Case work report for 2022 – Challenging Issues: Changing Lives.

The Peter Tatchell Foundation has remained a lifeline for many people, as an example, in 2022 we had an increasing number of calls for help from Afghanistan following the deterioration of the situation after the Taliban takeover.

This report 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 United Kingdom for refugees fleeing persecution by repressive regimes.

Despite our limited size and funding, our Charity, the Peter Tatchell Foundation still manages to make

a positive difference in many people's lives every year.

Since 2012, we have helped over 2,000 people through our casework. Special thanks to our Executive Officer, Pliny Soocoormanee, for his outstanding dedication and care in making this happen.

All of this was only made possible with the incredible support of our amazing donors – our success starts with your generosity.

If you feel touched by what you read in this report, please consider making a gift to help us continue this work.

**Jeremy N. Hooke Esq. DipFA MLIBF**  
**Chairperson, Peter Tatchell Foundation**



# 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. Casework involves research, education, advice, casework, publicity, lobbying and advocacy for the enforcement and furtherance of human rights law.

Through our casework, we are making a tangible, positive difference to the lives of people who have suffered discrimination, hate crime, miscarriages of justice, mental health issues 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.

## Requests for help

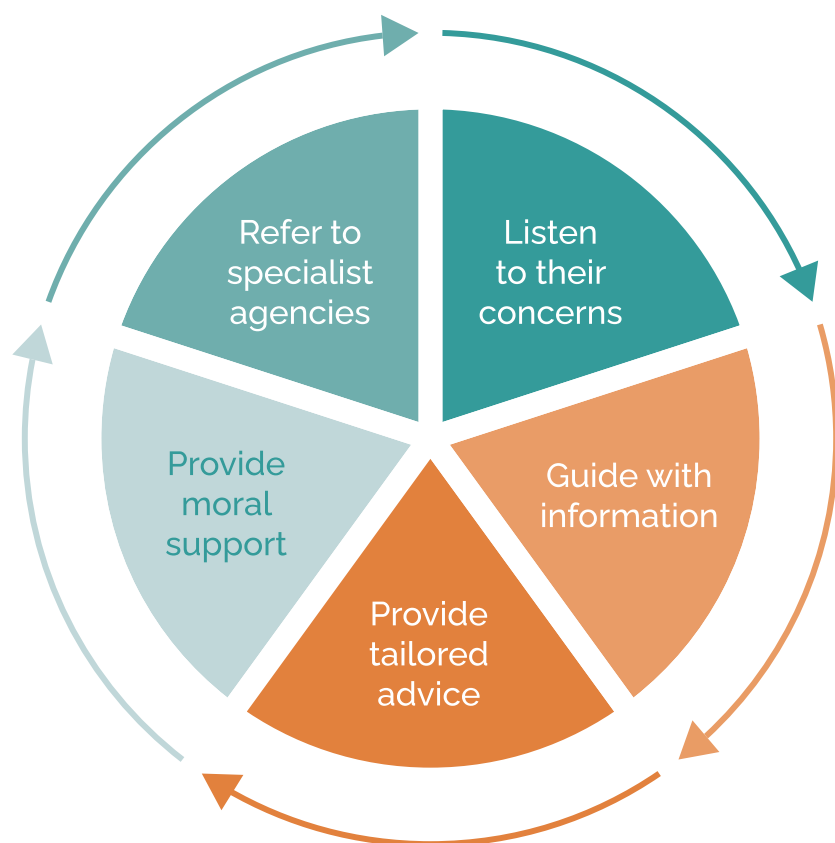


Fig. 1. How We Help



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.

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



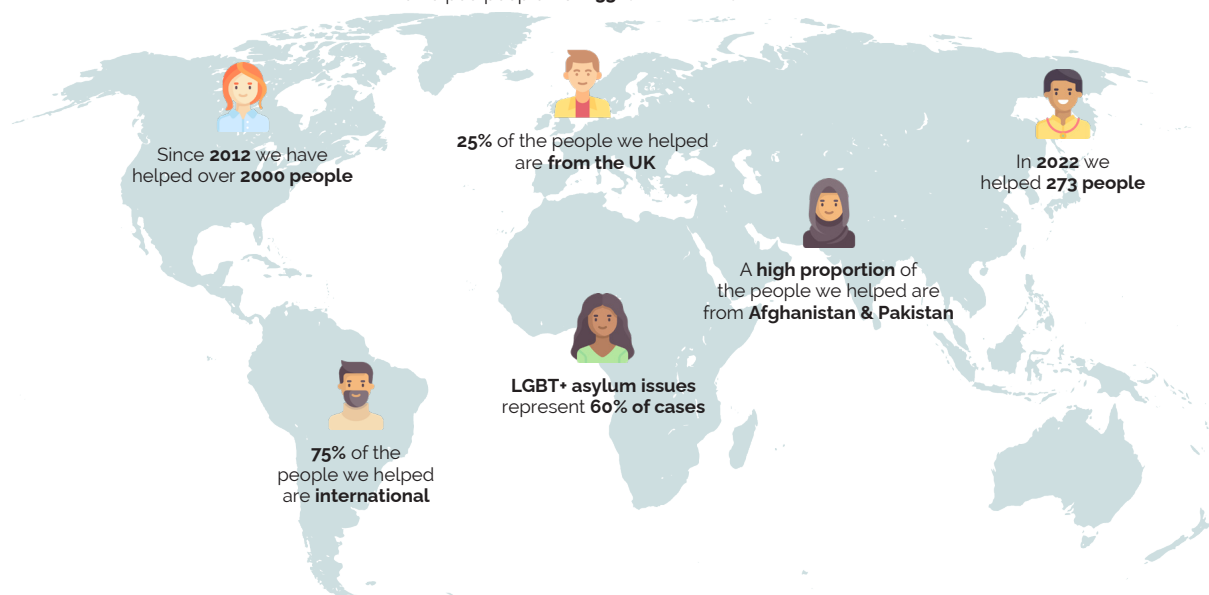
# Key facts:

## Case work 2022

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

We helped people from **33 different countries**

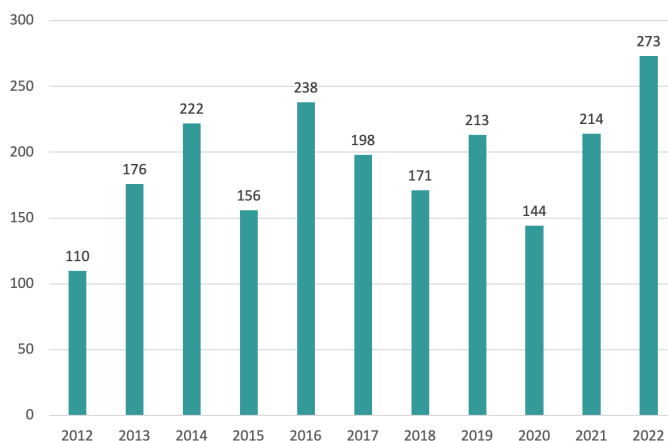


## The people we helped



In addition to LGBT+ asylum cases, we assisted people facing a number of human rights issues such as discrimination, hate crime, harassment, police malpractice and historic gay sex convictions.

## Case work over the years



## The Commonwealth



We helped **157 people** from The Commonwealth

32 out of 56 commonwealth countries criminalise homosexuality. Seven have life imprisonment. The Commonwealth's estimated 100-200 million LGBT+ citizens are treated as criminals.

## Crisis in Afghanistan



We helped **73 people** from Afghanistan

The Year 2022 saw an accentuation of the crisis in Afghanistan. We receive harrowing first-person accounts of the persecution of LGBT+ people, women, human rights defenders, and liberals. The barbaric repressive regime has enforced severe repression.

# Why people come to us

We are known for getting things done.

Peter Tatchell is a nationally and internationally renowned human rights defender with over 56 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, particularly for LGBT people.



## Some of the people we helped

**Omar\***

Nationality: Afghani



In 2022, Afghanistan's human rights situation was worsening under the Taliban.

The Taliban returned has once again doubled down on cracking on women's rights, protestors, liberals and LGBT+ people.

According to Human Dignity Trust "in July [2021], media reports showed a Taliban judge stating that gay men will be subjected to death by stoning or crushing under the strict sharia law imposed by the Taliban."

The Peter Tatchell Foundation has supported LGBT+ Afghans in close collaboration with Roshaniya Network and Behesht Collective. Nemat Sadat, who works with the Roshaniya Network, was awarded Campaigner of the Year at the Pink News Award 2022 in recognition of his work for the Afghan LGBT+ community and helping Afghan LGBT+ people find a safe refuge. Nevertheless, the needs of the LGBT+ community in Afghanistan remain massive.



# Omar\*

Nationality: Afghani

## Omar\* in his own words



**I write from a little room in Kabul, Afghanistan.  
I am Omar\*, 22 years old and gay.**

Since I was a kid, I felt I was different from others. I was more feminine. You can only imagine the hardship and difficulties facing people like me.

At school, I was constantly attacked verbally; sometimes, the verbal attacks turned physical. Sexual harassment was common. I was seen as deviant.

What was my fault? I was simply gay. I was born this way.

Even before the Taliban took over, being gay was prohibited. Being gay was seen as taboo. It is considered an illness by some, a fault of character that can be corrected. I know people who have been forced into

heterosexual marriage to "correct" them. Others had threats from their family, some unfortunates one even faced so-called "honour" killing.

Yet, before the time of the Taliban, we had a glimpse of freedom. We could get away with wearing western-style clothing. We could get away with holding hands. The air itself was more breathable.

The Taliban takeover was a total disaster for people like me. The days before the Taliban almost felt like paradise. Now, it feels like I lost the little freedom I had. I am not even free to wear the clothes that I want. I am a prisoner in my own country. I feel

the Taliban gaze on me and my every move for a good reason.

One day, when I went to one of the offices to sort some paperwork, a guard picked on me because I looked effeminate. I was standing in line. He shouted at me for no reason. I was dragged like a sack of potatoes. I did not know what was happening to me. First, he accused me of not being religious and not wearing a beard.

Then, he started whipping me and telling me I should act like a man. He beat me so many times that I nearly fainted. The pain was unbearable.

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I thought they would kill me, but luckily, they let me leave after some onlookers pleaded to let me go.

I have been petrified to step out of my own house. Hiding was my only option.

Whenever I was on the street, seeing the Taliban left me in terror. Then, the questions started racing in my mind. Would they check my phone? Would they whip again? Would they rape me? Would they torture me? Would they make an example of me?

Every day was a struggle. Every day, I lived in the constant fear of being found out. Even the simple act of going to the shop to buy food became a struggle.

Words alone cannot describe what it felt like to live under such a repressive regime. Besides, I am a civic activist and human rights defender. I worked mainly in women's and children's rights.

This led to me being at a greater risk of being targeted.

Some of my lucky gay friends left the country, but I lost contact with many still stuck here. I don't know whether they are alive. One day their phones just stopped working. The Taliban probably got hold of them and killed them. I know of people who had faced entrapment by the Taliban, and I find it increasingly difficult to trust anyone.

I have done numerous interviews with charities and with journalists. But increasingly, it felt like a waste of time as nobody else seemed to care enough for my situation to change.

Everyone has forgotten about me. There have been days when living a life like that is not worth living. So, I contacted the Peter Tatchell Foundation which is now a lifeline.



**Public whipping of women in Afghanistan by the Taliban**

**Nevertheless, I hope one day I can leave this hell of a country, this deep dark hole and open a new chapter of life in a free society where I can be myself. Please don't forget about me. I am still stuck in Afghanistan.**



## Jacqui De La Maziere

Nationality: British

**Jacqui De La Maziere\***

Nationality: British



Until January 2000, LGBT+ people were officially banned from serving openly in the British military. A policy that drew criticism both within and outside of the armed forces. Thousands of service members were forcibly removed from their roles. Some of them even faced court martial.

The ban was lifted in 2000, but it took another eight years before the British army and the RAF personnel were allowed in full uniform at Pride

marches. Nevertheless, this anti-LGBT+ policy has destroyed many service members' lives and careers.

The Foundation has been working with Fighting with Pride to support LGBT+ Veterans, service personnel and their families – particularly those most impacted by the ban on LGBT+ personnel serving in the Armed Forces. Unfortunately, despite the passing of over 20 years since the 'gay ban' was finally lifted, no attempt has been made to support the recovery of the thousands of LGBT+ service personnel dismissed or forced from service before 2000. Jacqui is one of them.

## Jacqui's own words



## I joined the Royal Navy aged 18, in 1989, as a Radio Operator. I had no idea I was gay when I joined up.

I joined the Navy to escape the poverty I faced growing up. My time in the Navy was happy, winning training awards and being recommended for promotion.

Yet it all came to an end.

In 1990 and 1992, I was interrogated by the Special Investigation Branch

of the Naval Provost. At the time, the Armed Forces had a policy of dismissing those considered gay. Applying that policy led to dreadful consequences for me and countless others.

I was sleeping off a night shift in 1990 when I was dragged out of bed in the middle of the night by Naval police

and a warrant officer. I was marched out of my quarters and questioned for 18 hours. The interrogation was perverted and stereotyped. Some of the questions were: Did I fancy my friends? Did I fancy my Mum? Did I watch women in the shower? Did I penetrate women during sex?

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How many fingers did I use? Did I use sex toys?"

I had never even kissed a woman. I wasn't even sure I was gay at the time. I had my belongings searched, behind my posters, inside my duvet. I was asked why I read certain books and got a tattoo. They even wanted to know why I had incense!

I was terrified. Having worked hard to have the career I wanted, everything was collapsing. What followed after this was three years of agony, being followed into London, having my phone tapped, and mail ripped open. I endured all of this while still coming to terms with my sexuality. I couldn't go and talk to a counsellor or chaplain because they, too, were under a duty to out me.

I was discharged on 17th November 1992 after a second investigation. This time I had had enough and told them I was. I had had enough of living a double life, in fear, unable to be me at work and having incredible intrusion into my private life.

The consequences were devastating. I have never recovered emotionally or financially since then. I did not have the support of a gay community during

my coming out. I was made homeless and lost my pension. I returned to the tiny council flat my parents shared, with no community, work or future for me.

I have stumbled from job to job. I found it hard to settle in the workplace—the sense of shame instilled in me since then has been debilitating. As a result, I struggled even for a long time to venture into a gay venue.

Despite MOD assurances that everything is fine now, we have never had an apology. Instead, I have been homeless, and worst of all, when diagnosed as being autistic in 2012 at age 41, I realised just why the highly structured environment of the Royal Navy was so suitable for me.

I want to know who sanctioned these actions. Who allowed the military to ask these disgusting questions, scream at me, search my belongings and ask me what I did in bed? These are human rights abuses and acts of aggression. I want to know why no one has held to account for what they did to me and others.

How can I go overnight from being someone with the potential to someone made to feel unworthy, dirty and less of a sailor than others who met the



same standards as me? What about the double standards of heterosexual couples who flouted military rules by having their partners in their rooms?

For me, we must provide adequate compensation for abuses, loss of income, loss of pension, loss of dignity and the broken life we had to endure.

**The Peter Tatchell Foundation and the charity *Fighting with Pride* are putting pressure on the authorities to right these wrongs. Jacqui has recently published a book, *MAZ*, relating her life journey and experience.**



**Mable\***

Nationality: Ugandan

**Mable**

Nationality: Ugandan



Uganda, part of the Commonwealth, has a long history of anti-LGBT+ climate, with discrimination and violence against the LGBT+ community being common.

In 2014, the country passed a law that criminalised homosexuality, later overturned on a technicality. The government has restricted the activities of non-governmental organisations, and in August 2022, the leading LGBT+ organisation: Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG),

was banned by the government. SMUG has provided education on sexuality and advocated for health services since 2004. Local activists have reported that this is akin to a 'witch hunt' against the LGBT+ community.

When writing this report, the Uganda parliament passed sweeping legislation introducing a draconian Anti-Homosexuality Bill. It is one of the most repressive laws in the world. The bill stipulates ten years in jail for male & female homosexuality or for professing an LGBT+ identity and ten years for claiming marriage to a same-sex partner. The tabling of such a bill increased the vulnerability of the LGBT+ community. Mable has been able to escape from the hostile environment of Uganda.

## Mable\*

### in her own words



## I grew up in a strict, conservative and religious family in Uganda.

When I reached puberty, I realised I was attracted to women, which was taboo in our conservative community and with my religious Reverend father.

For a long time, I struggled with my sexuality, unsure how to reconcile my feelings with my religious and cultural beliefs. However, at no point

did I even consider myself a lesbian. Finally, I confided in a close friend who shared the same feelings, and we started a romantic relationship.

However, our secret was soon discovered when we were caught in bed together at our boarding school.

I was terrified as my parents were called. My father, deeply ashamed and disappointed, was in a furious rage. He threw me in the car and drove away. I did not know where he was taking me as we drove past our house.

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I was dumbfounded when the car stopped in front of the police station. There he dragged me and left me in the hands of homophobic police officers.

The police officers listened to my father. I was too terrified to say anything. My father left. I was alone with these men at the police station. Since my father was the reverend, they knew him, and at worse, I thought they would scare me.

I was so wrong. It hurts me even today knowing that my father was complicit in what happened.

These men behaved like monsters. I was beaten up in the police station, punched, my hair pulled and mercilessly kicked on the floor. They said they were doing it for my own good. They said they were correcting me. They said I should thank them for putting me on the right path. These policemen were meant to protect me, yet they abused me senselessly. My whole body was in pain, my mind was confused, and all I wanted was for the pain to stop. Who could I trust now when my father let something like this happen?

All this happened at the height of the homophobia craze in Uganda when the tabloid newspaper "Red Pepper" published photos of homosexuals on its front page. Many people were chased and hounded following the publications. It was a hard time to be around. I was terrified that I might see my photo in print. What would then happen to me?

When I got back home, I felt no longer welcome. It felt like a dark, cold place. Some days, I was locked in my room



without food, almost like a prison. Only my elder sister showed some understanding and pity for me. For that, I would be ever grateful to her. My father, claiming to be a man of God, said that I was an abomination. He said he would not hesitate to kill me numerous times, that I brought terrible shame on the family, and that I was heartless to bring that sin into our family. I felt threatened every day. I was desperate to find a sanctuary where I could be myself.

Fearing for my safety and receiving death threats, I moved away. I felt compelled to leave everything behind. Leaving was so hard for me. I was even ready to go anywhere. I was desperate.

I finally reached the UK in 2018 and applied for asylum. I felt so lonely in

the UK. However, I built my network over the years and made new friends. I now run an LGBT+ podcast and interviews with the Out and Proud African LGBTI group. They and the Peter Tatchell Foundation helped me to feel welcome and gave me the feeling of being at home. Somewhere, I was accepted.

The years went by. I kept waiting. My whole life was in limbo. I was unable to work. While my case was being processed, I was requested to sign in at a reporting centre with the Home Office so they could keep track of my whereabouts. Each time I went there, I was assailed with tremors as I did not know what would happen then.

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Would they let me go? Would they send me to detention? I heard from many about their horrific experience of being placed in confinement. I knew that some people had died there. Others had been raped or faced homophobic bullying. Worse of all, I was afraid I might be deported. If I was to be sent to Uganda, I am sure I would have been lynched. I lived in utter fear during that time.

Eventually, four years later, I received an e-mail from the Home Office confirming my refugee status. For half an hour, I sat in the corner, thinking that I was about to wake up and this was a dream. I kept asking the people around me to read the e-mail just in case I had misunderstood it. Again, I tried hard to convince myself I had finally been granted refugee status. But, again, I could not believe it.

Now, this is a new life for me in the UK. It is a fresh start. But I am determined to make the most of it. I am so thankful that my life has been saved and can now look to the future.

I am still determining what my next move would be. I have been waiting so long that I still think it is a dream. Some days I worry that someone might come around and tell me there was a mistake and I must leave. But it does



feel a heavy weight has been removed from my shoulders.

One of the first things I would still like to do is to help others going through a similar journey. I felt so alone before, and I would hate anyone to go through what I have gone through. Perhaps, at a later stage, I would like to continue my studies. I had put everything on hold, and now I can pick it up.

**It is a new journey I am embarking on,  
 full of opportunities and hope.  
 It is a new life for me. THANK YOU.**

# Case work in brief

## 273 individual cases in 2022

In 2022, we assisted 273 individuals. Many of these individuals required extensive correspondence and support. This is illustrated in **Fig 2. Case work over the years.**



Since 2012, we have assisted over 2,000 people.

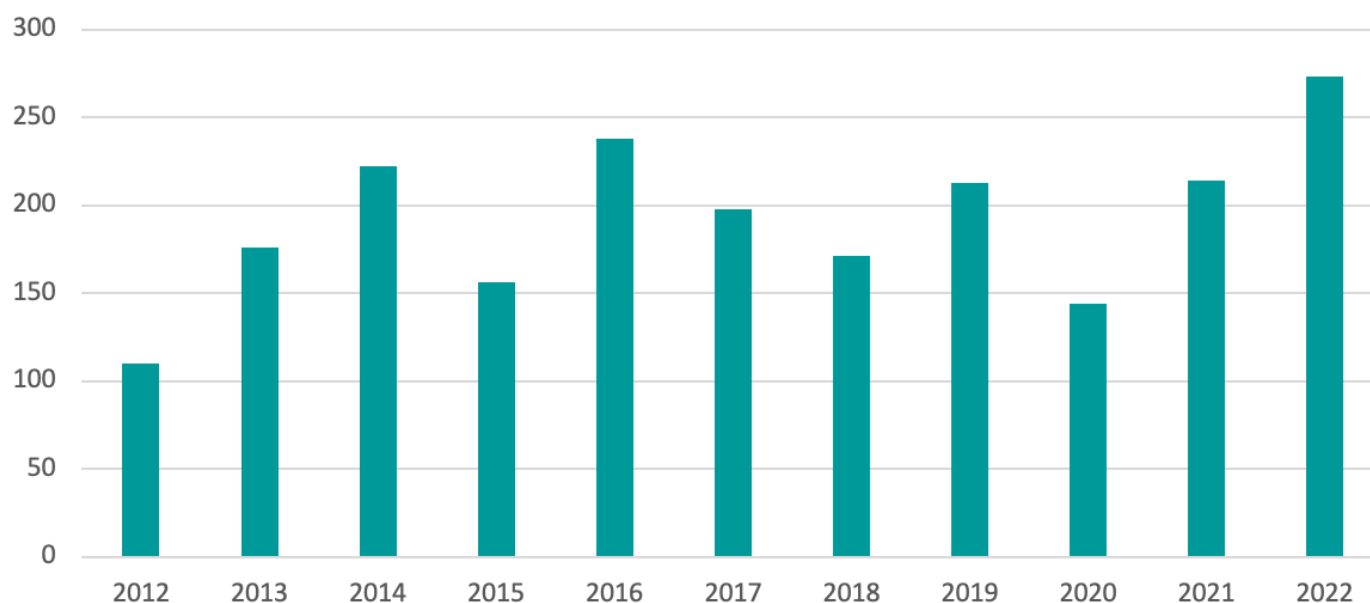


Fig 2. Case work over the years

# Global reach

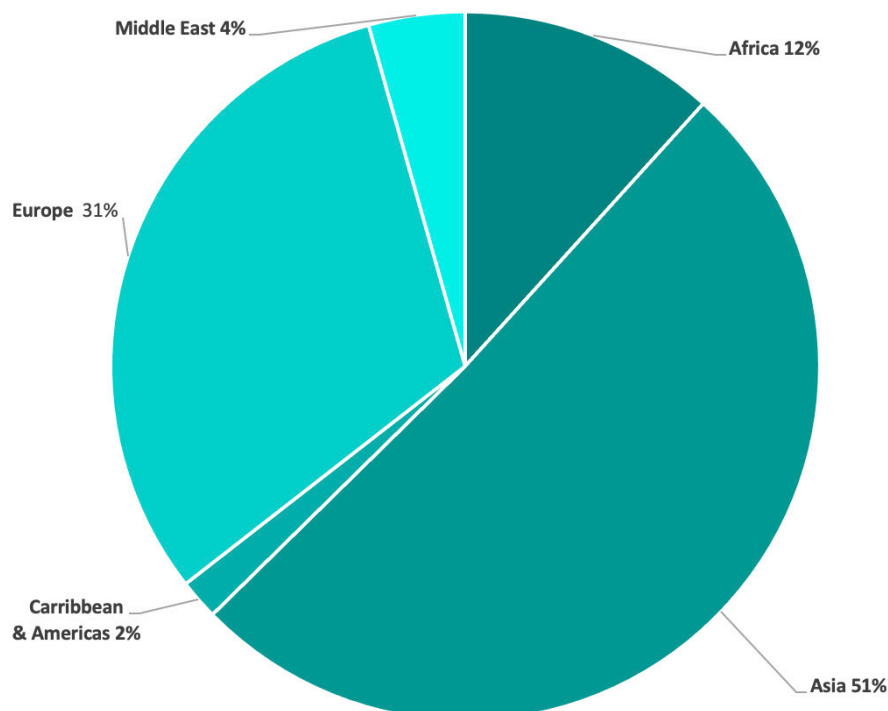
**Around 70% of the people we help have an international background.**

Approximately half of the people we assist are from the Commonwealth, which remains a bastion of homophobia, with 32 out of 56 countries still criminalising homosexuality. Many of the Commonwealth's estimated 100-200 million LGBT+ citizens are considered criminals. These anti-LGBT+ laws violate the Commonwealth Charter, which pledges that all member states are 'committed to equality' and 'opposed to all forms of discrimination'. The anti-LGBT+ laws in the Commonwealth are a relic of rules imposed by Britain, a relic of colonisation. Britain introduced these homophobic laws, but these now independent countries have chosen to keep these laws.

The seven Commonwealth countries with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment for same-sex acts are Bangladesh, Barbados, Guyana, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Uganda. In Brunei, the death sentence has been suspended but not repealed. In parts of two Commonwealth countries, Nigeria and Pakistan, homosexuality can result in a death sentence. The Peter Tatchell Foundation recommends that countries

that criminalise LGBT+ people should be suspended from the Commonwealth.

**We have helped people from 36 different countries, namely:** Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Brunei, Russia, China, DRC, Ghana, India, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Trinidad & Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, the UK, Ukraine, the USA, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe.



**Fig 3. Case work: requests for help by country of origin & region**



# The range of issues

Many calls for help we receive are from people seeking asylum based on their **sexual orientation** or **gender identity**.

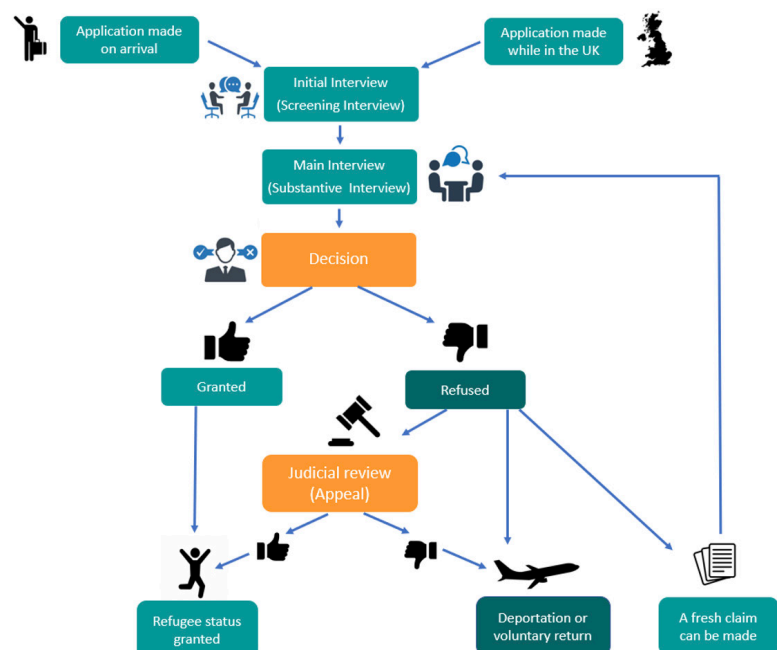
In supporting LGBT+ refugees, we have collaborated closely with Out and Proud African LGBTI group (OPAL), African Equality Foundation, Let Voice Be Heard, Rainbow Tree, Out in the UK and the Gay Indian Network (GIN). OPAL and GIN are award-winning organisations for their contribution to the LGBT+ community.

LGBT+ people seeking asylum face several challenges in obtaining refugee status. The journey for claiming asylum is presented in **Fig 5. The journey for claiming asylum**.

One of the requirements of the Home Office is that LGBT+ asylum seekers provide evidence of their sexuality. However, very often, there is minimal guidance on to achieve this.

They often describe the stress they undergo during their interviews with staff of the Home Office. The Home Office would usually conduct an initial consultation, known as a screening interview, and then its primary interview at a later date, a substantive discussion. The time gap between the two can vary enormously. For example, one asylum seeker reported waiting four years before the substantive interview.

While their case is being processed, they are not allowed to work, and very often, there is a considerable delay in processing their applications. It has been known to take up to thirteen years in extreme cases. The Peter Tatchell Foundation is part of a coalition of 280 organisations – Lift the Ban – from across the UK that have come together to call on the government to give people seeking asylum the right to work.



**Fig 5. The journey for claiming asylum**

(Continued from page 16)

Furthermore, the authorities can send asylum seekers to detention. A detention centre is nothing more than a euphemism for a prison. Often LGBT+ asylum seekers are put in a homophobic environment in a detention centre. Many people feel they are treated as criminals when sent to a detention centre. The UK has one of the most extensive detention systems in Europe, and there is currently no time limit on the length of detention. Many asylum seekers fear deportation as they rightly assume it could mean a death sentence.

In 2022, the Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, embarked on a vanity project to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda. At the time of writing this report, the Home Secretary has doubled down and has been visiting Rwanda to discuss the agreement. The decision of the Home Secretary has been widely criticised as inhumane and irresponsible. This policy violates the fundamental human rights of asylum seekers fleeing persecution. This policy is another example of the UK government's callous and punitive approach towards refugees.

The Foundation has also assisted people on many issues, including discrimination, hate crimes, and civil liberties. Additionally, we have also helped people facing police malpractice and those people in prison.

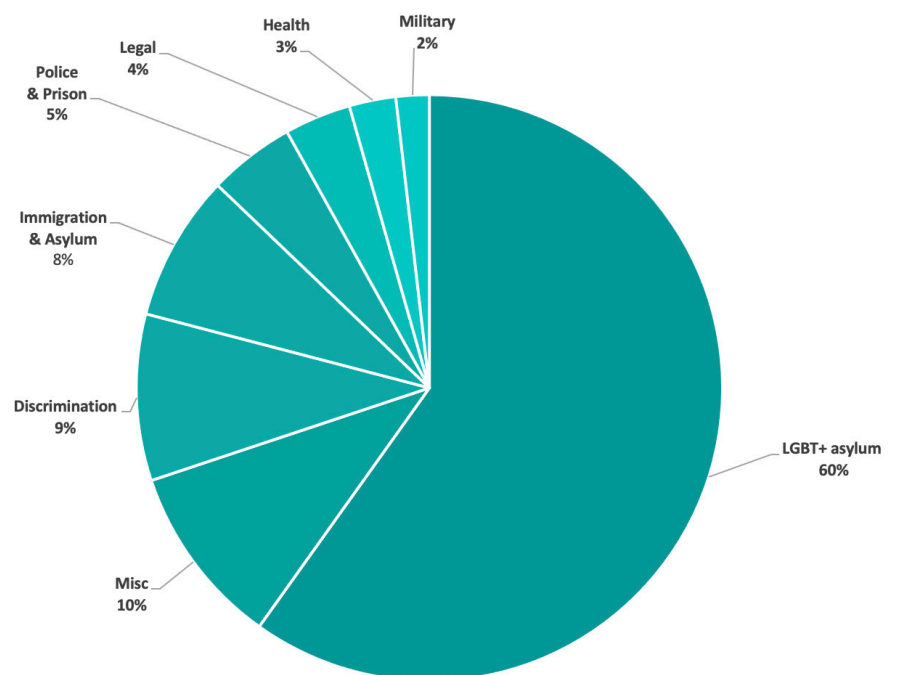


Fig 5. Case work: the range of issues

# 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](http://www.PeterTatchellFoundation.org/donate)**

Special thanks to Ferdinand Lu and Simon Harris

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