



Free bus transport for people seeking asylum in Scotland

Our faith communities are united in welcoming those seeking sanctuary in Scotland. We believe that treating others as we would hope to be treated is not only a vital part of our faiths but also core to humane, just and cohesive communities.

More families and communities are being pushed into poverty, and destitution. Limited financial resources are restricting choices and opportunities to flourish in every area of people's lives.

Transport is often an insurmountable cost for low-income households. Not being able to travel limits people in their ability to access food and essentials, education, doctor's appointments and a large number of other services. It also restricts people in practicing their religion as travelling to a faith community becomes unaffordable.

In particular for people seeking asylum, surviving on a pitiful weekly allowance of £45 (much less in some cases) and not being permitted to work, these transport costs are simply unattainable.

People seeking asylum have shared testimonies with us about the impact of not being able to travel has on their mental health and well-being, being isolated and cut off from friends and communities by no fault of their own. The choice of buying a day bus ticket in Glasgow can leave a person seeking asylum with just over a pound for food and any other essentials that day – just enough to buy a carton of milk. We believe access to free bus travel is positively life-changing and mentally transformative for those otherwise stuck in an inadequate and slow asylum system. It would foster two-way integration and help build stronger and more resilient communities as it allows people to actively participate in activities such as English language practice, and religious worship and fellowship.

We add our voices to those of existing campaigners and urge the Scottish Government to extend concessionary bus travel to provide free bus transport for people seeking asylum in Scotland, and that this should be long-term and in the interests of integration. National free bus travel for people seeking asylum (an expansion of schemes for those aged 5-22 and 60+) would be a unique intervention the Scottish Government could deliver to effectively and immediately change the lives of people in our communities in the midst of an otherwise hostile policy environment towards those seeking asylum.

We applaud the work of the third sector across Scotland who work tirelessly to support the destitute and marginalised in our communities. We continue to commit to walk alongside refugees and people seeking asylum, to pray with and to support all those adversely impacted by inequality, poverty and systemic failures. We look hopeful to a future in Scotland where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to their communities.

List of Signatories (in alphabetical order)

Kate Arnot: Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) General Meeting, Scotland

Lieut-Colonel Carol Bailey: Secretary for Scotland, The Salvation Army

Shabir Beg: Chair of Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society

Allan Forsyth: Baha'i Office of Public Affairs (Scotland)

Rt Rev Sally Foster-Fulton: Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

Rev Bonnie Evans Hills: Convener Scottish Episcopal Church Interfaith Relations Committee

Madhu Jain: Hindu Mandir Glasgow

Ani Lhamo: Kagyu Samye Ling Buddhist Centre

Bishop Brian McGee: Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, Chair of the Catholic Bishops' Committee for Interreligious dialogue

Acharya Ji Mishra: Priest of Hindu Mandir Glasgow

Ravinder Kaur Nijjar: Advisor Sikhs in Scotland and Chair of Religions for Peace UK Women of Faith Network

Isadora Quay: Baha'i Office of Public Affairs (Scotland)

Imam Hassan Rabbani: Imam of Zia-Ul-Quran Mosque, Muslim Chaplain at Heriot-Watt University, Chair of Scottish Muslim Forum

Imam Sayed Razawi: Chief Imam and Director General, Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society

Lama Yeshe Losal Rinpoche: Abbot of Kagyu Samye Ling Buddhist Centre

Rabbi David Rose: Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation

Rabbi Moshe Rubin: Giffnock and Newlands Hebrew Congregation, Senior Rabbi of Scotland

Dr Maureen Sier: Director of Interfaith Scotland

Rev Mark Slaney: Chair of the Synod of the Methodist Church in Scotland

Rev Fiona Smith: Principal Clerk to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

Most Rev Mark Strange: Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

Linsay Taylor: Muslim, Chair of Interfaith Scotland and Chair of the Scottish Religious Leaders' Forum

Srihari Vallabhajousula: Priest of Hindu Temple of Scotland (South Indian Cultural Centre of Scotland Branch)

Rev Paul Whittle: Moderator of The United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees