

# Asylum Seekers in Immigration Detention

## A Call to Action for Social Work

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### INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Studies show how immigration detention has a negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of asylum seekers. One major cause being the inadequate services and support available in detention centres in the UK. Since neither immigration detention nor adult asylum seekers are in the general remit of social workers, the purpose of this paper was to identify the gaps in social work practice in this area. A literature review was conducted to understand how a social work model of intervention can be implemented within immigration detention for asylum seekers.

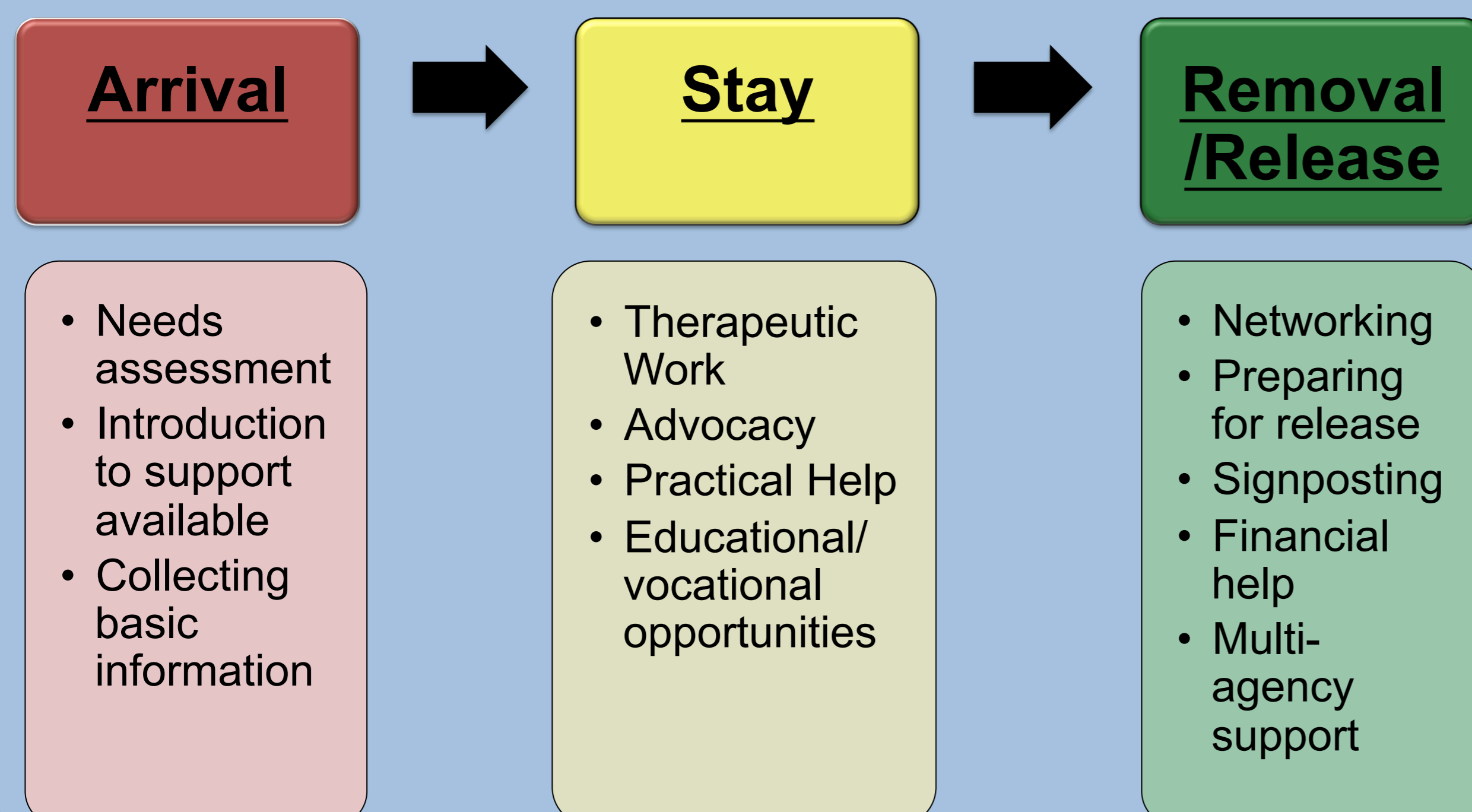
### ETHICAL DILEMMA FOR SOCIAL WORK?

Social Work as a profession adheres to values of social justice, human rights and equality. Therefore, immigration detention without a time limit and the lack of available support, goes explicitly against the values of social work.

### KEY FINDINGS

- UK is the only country in Europe that detains asylum seekers for an indefinite period of time (Welch and Schuster, 2005).
- Mind's research (2009) found that 'many individuals with severe and enduring mental health problems are being detained' and that 'mental healthcare within detention centres is inadequate to deal with the high levels of mental distress experienced by detainees...' (2009: 3)
- The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 excludes any person under 'immigration control' from the welfare state. This removes them automatically from the statutory remit of social workers.
- The statutory powers to detain asylum seekers comes from the Immigration and Asylum Appeals Act 1993 – this is often used as a way of speeding up the asylum process. In practice, however, the majority of asylum seekers are released with their cases pending (Bosworth, 2014).

### Model of Intervention



### Asylum Welcome – An Example of Good Practice

Oxford-based charity Asylum Welcome provides a detention support service at Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre. They provide 'weekly assessment visits', offering 'regular one-to-one conversation' by an allocated visitor to 'liaise with other service providers on behalf of detainees' to help meet their needs. Humphries (2004: 37) explains how 'the possibilities for innovation, identifying gaps in services and radical approaches to practice have always been important functions of the voluntary sector'.

#### References:

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