

Challenging Issues, Changing Lives

Case Work Report 2021
by Pliny Soocoormanee



Contents



Foreword	03
In Memoriam	04
About us	05
Requests for help	05
Key facts	06
Why do people come to us	07
Some of the people we helped	08
Case work in brief	13
Global reach	14
The range of issues	15
Support our work	16

Foreword



It is my pleasure to present the Peter Tatchell Foundation's case work report for 2021 – Challenging Issues: Changing Lives. The Peter Tatchell Foundation has remained a lifeline for many during the coronavirus pandemic and especially after the Taliban retook control of Afghanistan.

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 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

in many people's lives every year. Since 2012, we have helped over 1,800 people through our case work. Special thanks to our Executive Officer, Pliny Soocoormanee, for his outstanding dedication and effort 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



In memoriam

Ted Vidler

1950 – 2021



We would like to dedicate this report to our friend and fearless activist, Ted Vidler.

When he had a chance to attend a demonstration, Ted always did so with joy, love, and appreciation for those around him.

Ted's motto was 'not in my name.' Ted fully claimed his identity as a gay man and used it as a force to help others. Ted was more than a protester - He dedicated himself to the lives of many gay men he met over the years.

He supported several charities that made a change in the lives of LGBT+ people. In his own time, he organised and led dozens of gay Men's residential events, mainly through the Edward Carpenter Community,

where he was much loved and valued as a teacher and leader.

In his later years when he could barely get up and downstairs, he would still open his flat in Kennington, as a safe crash-pad for Extinction Rebellion protesters. They would be in their sleeping bags on any bit of floor space.

In summary, Ted was dedicated to improving the world right up to the end.

Thank YOU, Ted.

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, 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

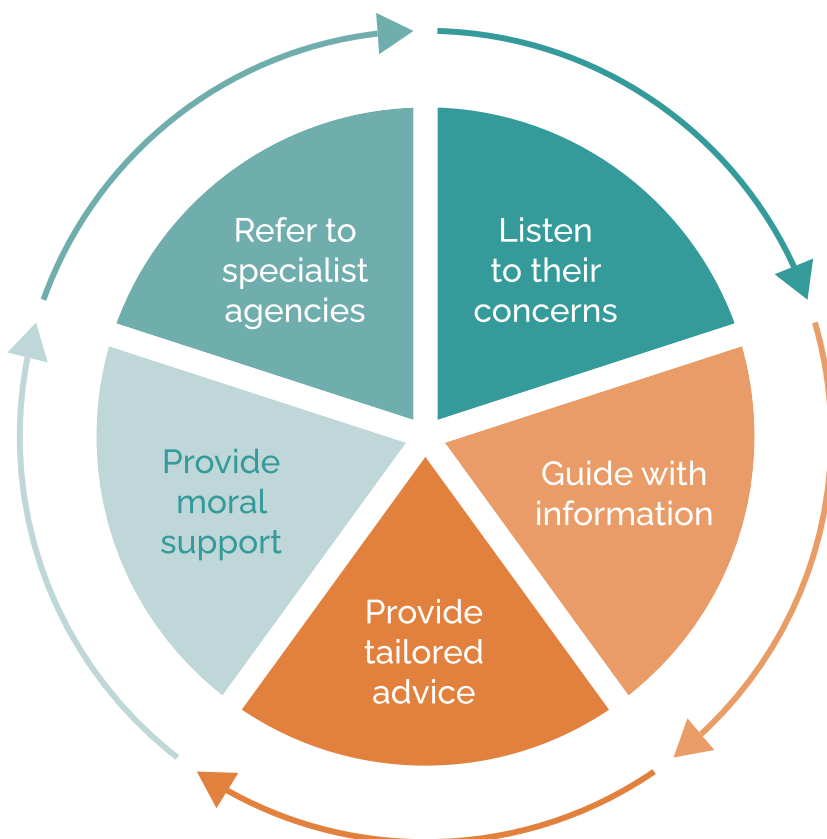


Fig. 1. How We Help



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.

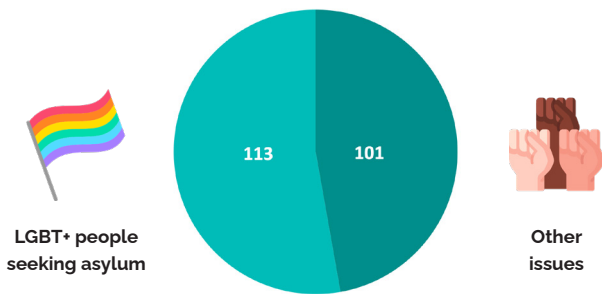
Key facts:

Case work 2021

In 2021, we were emerging out of the Covid 19 pandemic and this was shown as our increased activity. We receive requests for help from all over the UK and around the world. Despite our small size and limited resources, we assist people by listening to their concerns, providing moral support & hope, guiding them with information & advice and referring them to appropriate specialist agencies.

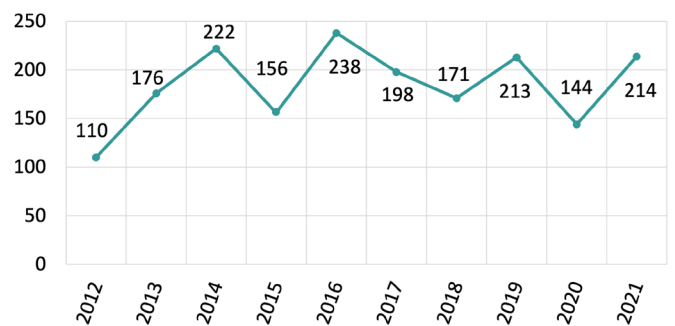
The people we help

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



Case work over the years

Since 2012, we have assisted over **1800 people.**



The Commonwealth



34 out of 54 commonwealth countries criminalise homosexuality. Seven have life imprisonment. The commonwealth's estimated 100-200 million LGBT+ citizens are treated as criminals.

We helped 143 people from The Commonwealth.

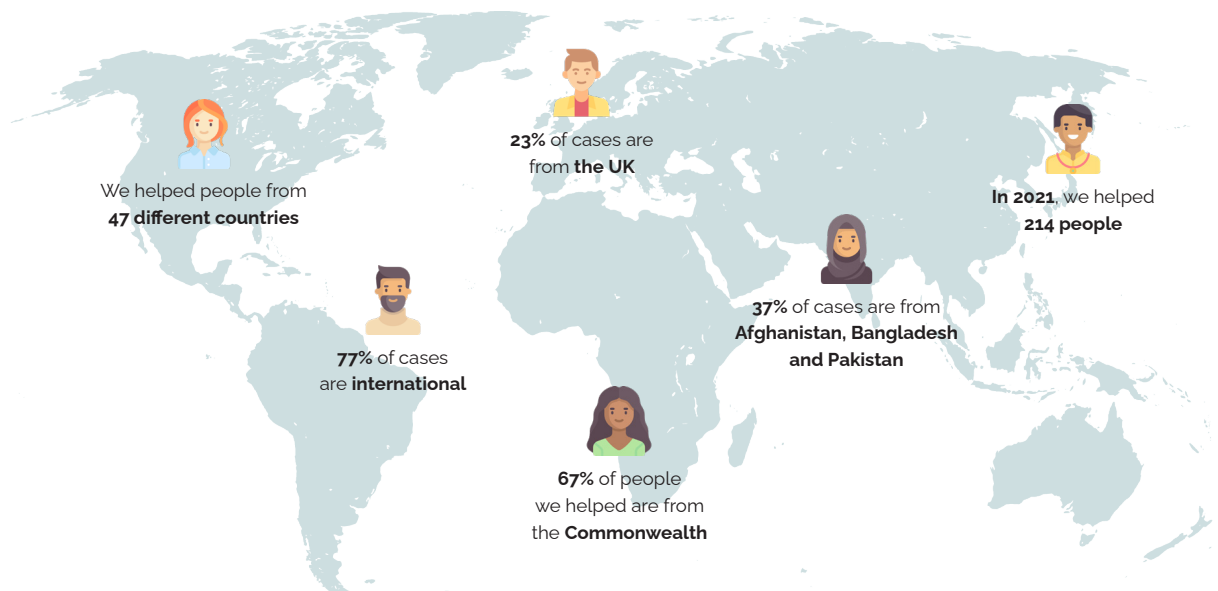
LGBT+ crisis in Afghanistan



Following the withdrawal of US and coalition forces in May 2021, a fundamentalist group, the Taliban, took over the country and started persecuting LGBT+ people, minorities and liberals.

We helped 14 people from Afghanistan.

Our reach



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 55 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

Kamshad and Adela*
 Nationality: Afghani



In 2021, following the withdrawal of US and coalition forces, the Taliban, once again took control of Afghanistan. Horrific scenes of people filled the airwaves and thousands attempted to escape the wrath of returning illiberal regime, some people even hung to the landing gears of planes or aircraft wings only to fall off the planes.

The Taliban has returned to type by once again cracking down on women's right, 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 been in contact with several activists and of people on the ground and they all unanimously reported the dire situation for Afghan's beleaguered LGBT+ community.

In this report, we have decided to expose the difficulties and challenges faced by a gay man and a lesbian woman. We have omitted explicit photos of violence and used a pseudonym to protect their identity.

Kamshad*

Nationality: Afghani

Kamshad

in his own words



I started feeling attracted to people of the same sex when I was 13. It felt natural to me. However, society in Afghanistan is very conservative and I knew it would not be easy.

Over time, my family discovered that I was gay. This provoked a big confrontation, especially with my father who was the most vocal of all. He said that I "brought shame to the family", that he "regretted having me as a son". I was kicked out of the family home and left to fend for myself. I was only 13 and did not know how to survive.

My only option was to be a 'bacha bazi'. This meant I had to wear female clothing and offer sexual favours to men. This was my only way to remain alive.

My mother and my sister cared for me. My mother knew that I would be in danger if I remained in Afghanistan.

She gave me some money. At that time, my only escape route was through Iran. It was a risky attempt, but I thought it was worth the risk. Little did I know that the smugglers would detain me and use me as a sex slave. After 10 days, my ordeal got worse when they sold me to Iranian sex traffickers.

I was kept for 10 months in inhumane conditions. These men behaved like beasts. They assaulted me, raped me and abused me in unimaginable ways. Remembering these moments are extremely difficult. I am not sure how I managed to survive despite the bodily harm. Even when I was bleeding, no one cared about me. I was alone and wished for a miracle.

I tried several times to escape, but I was unsuccessful. They beat me up whenever they caught me. Finally, I managed to escape and got back to Afghanistan.

It was hard trying to survive. With the Taliban around, it was increasingly risky. I knew they were persecuting people like me. But what other choice did I have but to return to Afghanistan?

One day, I left my room to get food and credit for my phone. Some people got out of a car brandishing knives and guns. They were coming for me. I thought they wanted my money and phone.

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from page 08)

I was terrified. I emptied my pockets and implored them not to hurt me.

One of the men, their leader, ordered the others not to shoot me but to beat me. They wanted to make me suffer. I was a "virus to [their] Islamic society" to them. They said they were only "doing god's work by killing me". They said they were only "cleaning the society of a disease".

Then came the punches. It was only the beginning. Soon they use their knives to attack me. They hit me everywhere. There was no escape. I was soon lying in a pool of blood. It was horrific. Being in enormous pain and having lost a lot of blood, I could no longer keep my eyes open. I thought this was the end for me.

I later learned that people on the street took pity on me when my attackers left. They took me to the hospital and into surgery.

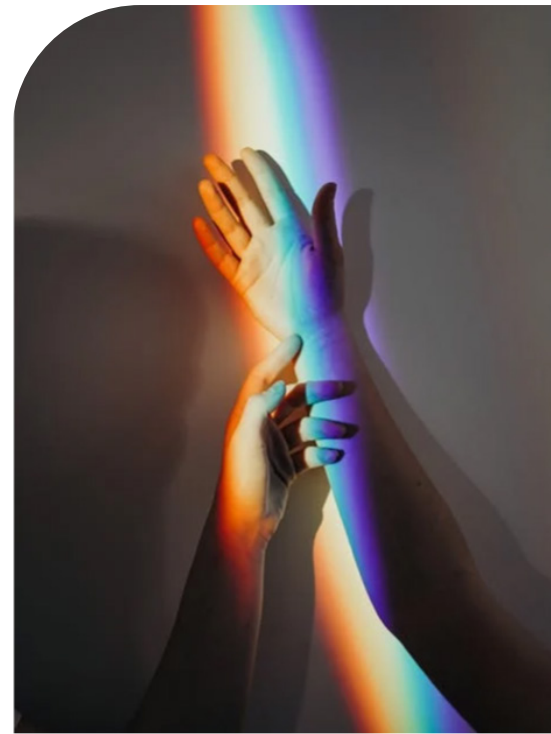
However, no one close to me came to visit me. Instead, my family sent someone to give me some money, equivalent to £12 and a message from my dad that he did not want to see my face because I shamed the family. I was emotionally and physically broken.

Finally, after 26 days, I left the hospital and was able to find refuge in my sister's house. Her husband was in Pakistan, and she was able to hide and protect me. I knew it was only temporary, but it gave me some hope.

After some time, fortunately, I crossed the Pakistani border and resettled temporarily in a guest house. However, I didn't feel safe in Pakistan but at least, I am no longer living under the Taliban.

I got in touch with Nemat Sadat and the Peter Tatchell Foundation. They have assisted me so far in my journey.

**I hope, one day, I will escape
and be finally free, living openly
as a gay man.**



Adela*

Nationality: Afghani

Adela

in her own words



My name is Adela. I am a Lesbian from Afghanistan. I would like to share my story with you, hoping that you will help me.

When I was a student at school, I was not interested in the opposite sex, and I spent most of my time with my classmates, all of whom were girls.

When I expressed a romantic interest in girls at school, I lost many of my friends. However, one of my classmates liked me and we always sat together.

After a few months, our classmates noticed our friendship and reported us to the school principal.

The school principal was aghast and called our mothers. The choice we had was clear: cease this behaviour or face expulsion. But how could he stop love? We continue to see

each other discreetly. Despite our best attempts, he found out and we were expelled from the school. I never saw my loved one again.

Because my mother knew my situation, she organised a marriage to a man, thinking it might cure me of this 'deviance'. I told my mother many times that I hate the opposite sex but to no avail. She implored me to be quiet as voicing such opinions could kill me.

I was terrified. But what could I do?

Our society is Islamic and traditional. I felt trapped. Women here do not have the right to live according to their own will. I had to listen to my parent's will.

Finally, I was forced into a marriage. After the wedding, my husband beat me every day because I was not interested in him.

He wanted me to bear his children. On many occasions, he raped me. I was defenceless, begging him to stop. He did not care. I still feel traumatised thinking of these moments. I never wanted to get pregnant.

I took birth control pills until my husband found out one day and he flew into a violent and brutal rage. Nothing I could say would calm him down. He punched and kicked me as I lay on the ground. I implored him to stop. He did not care.

(Continued from page 10)

I was beaten so much that I fainted. When I regained consciousness, I could not see anything, and my hands and feet were tied up. He would feed me only bread and water and told me that I would not be released unless I had sex with him and bore his children.

I tried to resist for some time, but I was alone, with no hope. No one was there to help me to get out of this hell. I was desperate. Hence, I accepted his offer.

But I did not want that life. So, when he let me out, I felt I had no other option than to eat rat poison to end my life; I fainted.

When I regained consciousness. I was in the hospital, my mother by

my side in tears. Then, finally, she relented and told me to escape to neighbouring Iran. At least I would be far from my 'husband.' I now live in Iran in challenging conditions and illegally. I work hard to earn money for water, bread, and a horrible shelter. I am just surviving.

Iran is not the best place to be if you are a lesbian, but I was desperate to get out of Afghanistan since my husband joined the Taliban.

Word has come to him that I am a lesbian, and he is harassing my family in Afghanistan. He has vowed to kill me saying that I had embarrassed and humiliated him in front of his relatives. He wants me dead.



I was desperate so I contacted the Peter Tatchell Foundation. Their help and support gave me hope and the desire to keep fighting. As a result, I am building a support network, and I hope I will be free one day.

Christine

Nationality: Ugandan



Uganda is one of the Commonwealth countries that still criminalise homosexuality with life imprisonment. Furthermore, Section 148 of the penal code prohibits acts of "gross indecency", punishable with seven years' imprisonment. The provision is gender-neutral, applicable to acts between men and between women. In 2019, police raided an LGBT+ bar in Kampala and charged 67 persons with nuisance offence. Furthermore, activists were arrested in the same year on

suspicion of engaging in same-sex sexual activity. LGBT+ people are ostracised by society in Uganda.

We featured the struggles of Christine in our 2016 report. It has been a long journey for Christine and we are pleased to announce that she has finally been granted refugee status. Christine claimed asylum in 2015. The Peter Tatchell Foundation has supported her on this journey; we are delighted that she is free to be herself.

Christine

Nationality: Ugandan

Christine

in her own words



It is very difficult for to express how happy I finally am. I applied for asylum in 2015 and it seemed like a never-ending process. The wait was difficult for me as I was unsure of my future.

I heard stories of people who went to a reporting centre and was then put in detention or deported. Thinking of being sent into detention was awful as I was not a criminal, and I could be put into a homophobic environment. Deportation was the worst of my fear. That would have severed my bond with my partner Teddy here and my life would have been in danger in Uganda. I would have been persecuted, beaten up and probably killed by the intolerant people there.

When I received the news that I was granted refugee status, I could not believe that it was real. I read it several times to make sure I had not misunderstood the letter. I called

my partner, who was in another room, to give her the good news. But I had no voice then and starting sobbing while holding the letter. She did not understand what was happening and thought I got some bad news. She gave me a hug and asked me several times to speak to her and to tell her what happed. Still, no voice came out as I was still getting to terms with the news. This was life changing for me. I kept the letter close with me for a few days and keep reading it over and over. I just could not believe that I was finally safe now.

Now I was able to start my new life free of the fear of being sent back to Uganda. I am grateful to the Peter

Tatchell Foundation staff who have always been by my side over the years and making me feel included at events such as Pride in London.

Since being granted refugee status, my anxiety has vanished and I feel so much better. It has been a long journey for me and finally I can be a proud out Lesbian with my partner Teddy. It is a dream come true. Everyone that I know told me that I am now a changed person, a lot happier. I am now more confident about my future. I am ever grateful to have been offered this second chance, this new life. Thank you.

Case work in brief

214 individual cases in 2021

In 2021, despite the coronavirus pandemic, we have reached out to 214 individuals who requested assistance. 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 **1,800** people.

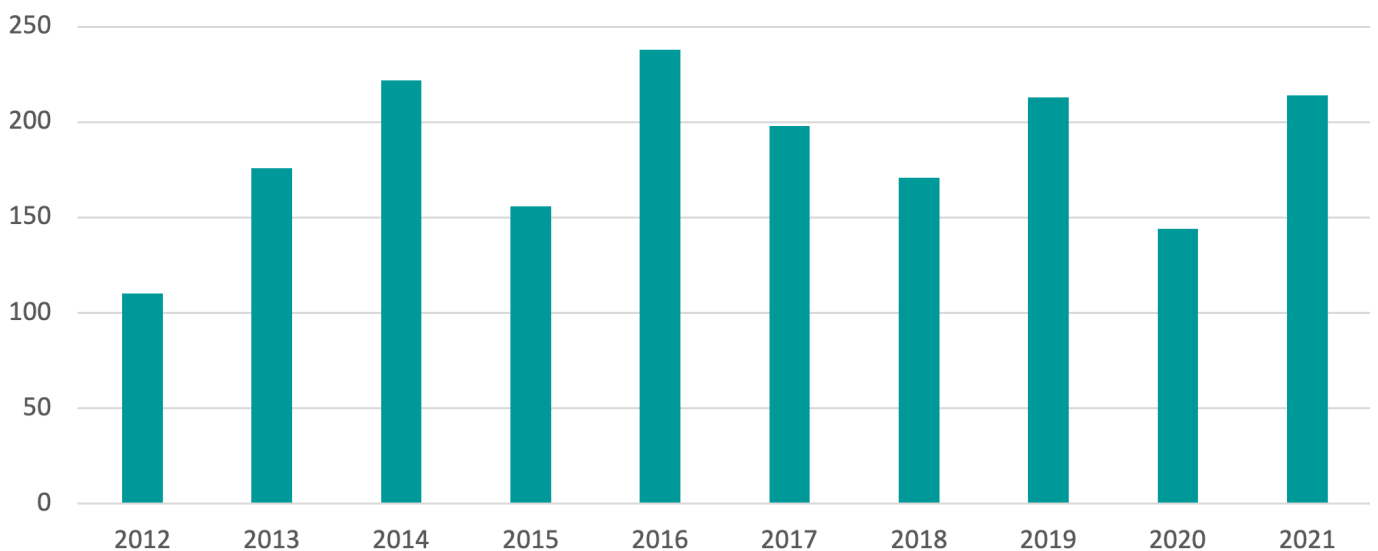


Fig 2. Case Work Over the Years

Global reach

Around **75%** of people we help have an **international background.**

Six in ten people that we assist are from the Commonwealth, which remains a bastion of homophobia with 34 out of 54 countries still criminalising homosexuality. The Commonwealth's estimated 100-200 million LGBT+ citizens are treated as 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 seven Commonwealth countries that have 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 47 different countries, namely: Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Burundi, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, El Salvador, Germany, Ghana, India, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, UK, USA, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

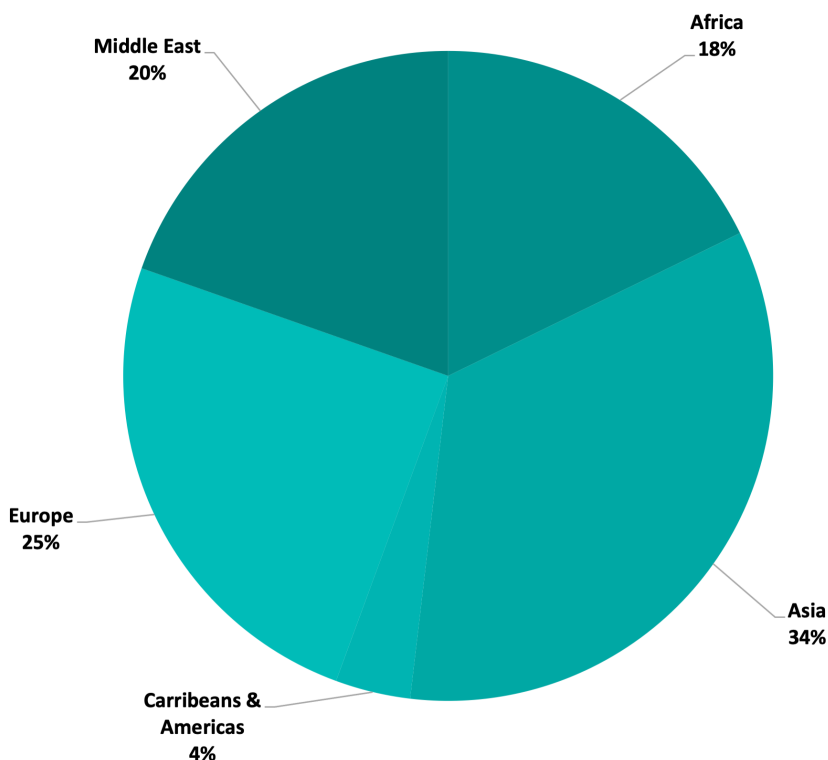


Fig 3. Case Work: Requests for Help by Country of Origin & region

The range of issues

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

LGBT+ people seeking asylum face several 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.

They 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 13 years.

Furthermore, 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.

2021 has also been marked by our campaign to push for compensation for servicemen who were dishonourably discharged from the army and who had their medals taken away. In 2021, after several years of campaigning, a rainbow wreath was laid at the cenotaph by the charity Fighting with Pride, with whom we have been in close collaboration.

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 related advice. Additionally, we have also assisted people facing police malpractice and those people in prison.

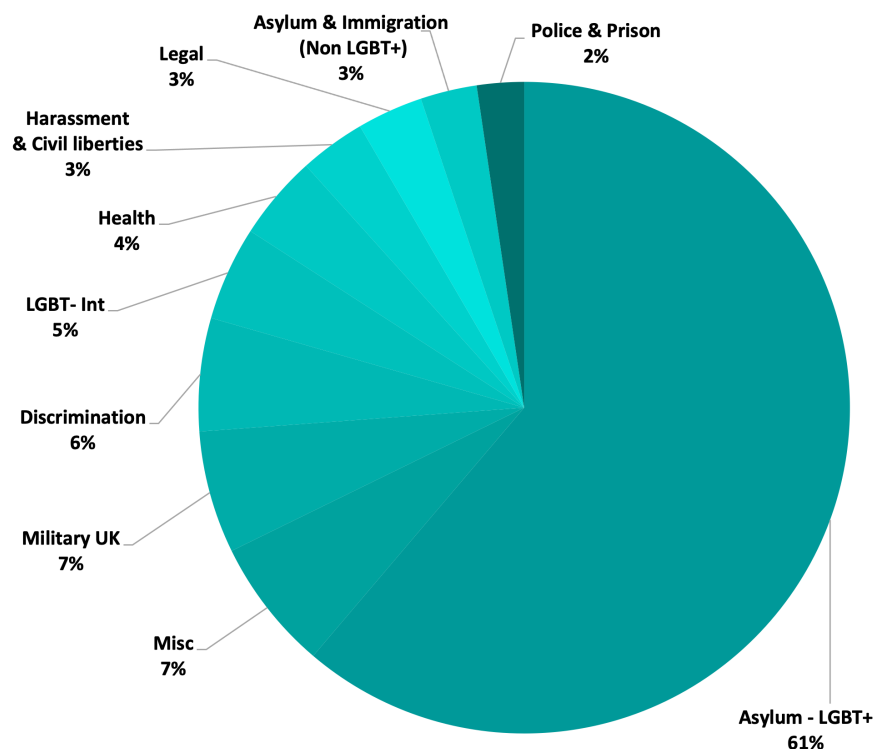


Fig 4. Case Work: the Range of Issues

Global reach

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

14th April 2022 © Peter Tatchell Foundation

Peter Tatchell Foundation, Signpost House, Ambassador Way, Greens Road, Dereham, Norfolk, NR20 3TL
Registered Charity number: 1178107

E-mail: Info@PeterTatchellFoundation.org