

Hearing what's important through the hostility

You can't help but notice the attention that is focussed on the issue of asylum accommodation at the moment. Over the past few years, hostility has become more open and visible, as those with power and influence have increasingly directed public frustration about real community issues toward people seeking sanctuary.

This report by FFT is a powerful reminder of the impact on people's mental health, and their ability to recover from horrific experiences such as torture and abuse. I was also inspired by reading the Greater Manchester Asylum Hotels Group statement which sets out what it's really like living in asylum hotels. It's a compassionate and thoughtful explanation written by people who want to connect to the people living in the communities around them and not be seen as "outsiders" or a "threat".

This positive and respectful communication is what makes a difference. Not the divisive language which associates people with one group or another with no middle ground. This was why I was particularly moved to read an article about the people who go each week to one of the asylum hotels in Leeds show their support for a safe welcome for all through listening and handing out cakes. They make a point of talking to people who are protesting and those who are literally on the other side of the road supporting people living in the hotel.

They say "[these are] people who feel that they just haven't been listened to by successive governments for a long, long time. The far right thrives when people perceive themselves to be on one side of a them-and-us divide, and start to see the other side as inherently inferior or threatening." The simple act of listening is subtly taking the heat from the arguments and enabling new viewpoints to be possible.



Kathryn Ashworth
Solace CEO

Valuing people and hearing their worries and fears does not mean excusing racist and abusive viewpoints. Much of the hostility is anti Muslim, anti migrant, and racist and should be named as such. Everyone at Solace stands in solidarity with so many others who say “refugees are welcome here” and we will do all we can to help create a place of safety and welcome.

As a therapeutic organisation we spend much of our time listening to people. Our services have developed over the last 25 years based on what people tell us they find most helpful. But we do so much more than listen. Our therapists write letters of support outlining what we know about someone’s mental health that we know have made a real difference to their lives. We work closely with partners to advocate on behalf of clients, and to help them navigate the complex systems in the UK. We provide groups and activities where people can learn techniques to manage their wellbeing and where they can support and learn from each other.

We deliver training and support to other organisations so they are better able to provide effective support and we have a suite of video resources for people seeking sanctuary so they can understand some of the things they may be feeling and practice techniques to manage their symptoms. [Helpful resources for refugees and people seeking safety](#) | [Solace](#)



It’s easy to be distracted by the loud hostile voices and not hear the eloquent, powerful and quiet stories that are all around us if we are able to listen and act on what we hear.