Introduction
Migration presents opportunities for improved employment, educational resources, and an escape from political persecution and natural disasters. Factors such as poor economic conditions and political/religious conflict can ‘push’ migrants to leave their own countries in favour of those that attract and ‘pull’ immigrants due to high demand for labour, that indigenous populations refuse to fill, better employment conditions and pay. The exchange of labour between countries, however, is not equal. As labour-intensive production has moved South, a segmentation of the labour force has occurred along the lines of gender, age, origin, location, legal status and ‘race’/ethnicity. The North attracts a highly skilled, young, secure labour force on the one hand (usually educated men), draining the South of its skilled workforce, whilst also maintaining a demand for low skilled, low paid casualised, guestworkers on the other. Simultaneously, increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers (AS), propelled by political conflict and natural disasters, have been systematically excluded and criminalised by draconian immigration legislation. With the associated threats of terrorism, and surrounded by a culture of mistrust, these refugees and AS are subjected to biometric tests, x-rays for age-assessments, detention, destitution and surveillance. Whilst undocumented workers, refugees and AS are often vilified and held culpable for increased levels of unemployment, crime, low wages, welfare abuse and threats to national security, the welfare and care sectors continue to be supported by work provided by migrants.

Migrants, refugees and AS often come into contact with social workers due to adverse circumstances. Since the professional values of social work embody the promotion of social justice, inclusion and equality, effective work with this group is an important area for social work students to address.

Terminology
An asylum seeker is a person seeking protection from persecution and serious harm from his/her country of origin; a refugee is a person who has been granted such protection by another country. The plight of ‘economic’ immigrants and ‘political’ refugees tends to be constructed discretely in social policy; however, these are often intertwined in lived experiences.

Key curriculum issues
- A safe environment for an open, honest discussion of views is necessary.
- AS and refugees should be included in the planning and delivery of sessions where possible.
- A brief history of British immigration should be provided including ‘push’ and ‘pull factors’.
- The residual nature of welfare for AS can be linked to wider debates of neo-liberalism and historically to the poor laws, highlighting the continuities in notions of the ‘deserving’/‘undeserving’, as well as to anti-oppressive and anti-discrimination practice (AOP/ADP) and international social work perspectives.

Key content areas
Experiences of immigration
1. Whilst white, Western emigrants from advanced capitalist countries are likely to hold privileged and powerful positions as immigrants, those from former and current Commonwealth countries are often treated with derision. Many live in fear of detention, deportation and increased surveillance. Their access to economic and political resources is limited by discrimination in employment, housing, education and health, and by negative media portrayals and hate crimes. Where socio-economic and political conditions permit, some migrants may happily return ‘home’; others may find this impossible due to family ties and/or poverty.

2. Experiences of refugees and AS are frequently marred by violence, poverty, rape and trauma, incurred before, during or after their exodus from political conflict/persecution. These are exacerbated by immigration legislation that prevents AS from employment and...
impoverishes lives with miniscule levels of income and welfare support, amidst a hostile environment that treats them as ‘bogus’ claimants. Language barriers also make life difficult to negotiate. Such pressures have a devastating impact on physical and mental wellbeing; these, combined with particular harmful cultural practices (e.g. female genital mutilation), may cause child protection concerns.

3. The increasing ‘feminisation’ of migration exposes women to ‘invisible’, marginalised, casualised spheres of the economy in domestic work and the sex industry, making them vulnerable to physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Often used as a weapon of war, women are particularly susceptible to sexual violence, which is also encountered during the quest for safety as they may be raped or forced to ‘exchange’ sex for passage by smugglers. This may result in traumatisation and rejection by their communities, where sex outside marriage is heavily stigmatised.

4. Many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) face issues arising from pre-arrival experiences of poverty, war, violence, death and sexual abuse. These are compounded by post-arrival concerns over their eligibility (e.g. age assessments), detention and the poor quality of services available. They tend to be treated as AS, rather than as children first; such treatment has often contravened ethical principles of professionals and local authority obligations to act in the ‘best interest of the child’ as there is reluctance to provide appropriate care and accommodation for young people.

5. The lack of appropriate and adequate mental health services capable of addressing the specific experiences of AS and refugees is a major concern within the welfare sector.

Legal and policy context

- Since the British Nationality Act 1981 successive legislation has restricted welfare provision to immigrants (e.g. Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993, Asylum and Immigration Act 1996). In 2004 the National Asylum Support Service was created, which together with UK Border Agency, is now responsible for the majority of welfare and surveillance of AS, including detention, tagging, provision of voucher systems and requirements for agencies to report illegal immigrants.

- Welfare provision for AS is extremely poor but access to services can be gained through other legislation such as National Assistance Act 1948 (section 21) (clarified by the Hillingdon Judgment and Slough Judgment – 2008), Human Rights Act 1998, Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Children Act 1989, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, and other policies such as Putting People First (2007), Carers Strategy, Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

Citizenship

- The treatment of refugees contradicts notions of universality embedded in concepts of citizenship, highlighting the active role of the state in excluding some groups from the national ‘imagined community’, whilst simultaneously promoting discourses of ‘integration’ and ‘assimilation’. Discourses of universalism and relativism link into notions of ‘nationhood’ and attempts by the state, and by some minority groups, to justify abusive practices through ‘cultural autonomy’.

- ‘Fortress Europe’ constructs ethnic minorities as ‘dangerous’, a ‘threat’, the ‘uncivilized’, ‘other’, presenting a ‘clash of civilisations’ from whom the ‘nation’ and welfare provision should be protected; it serves to justify human rights violations whereby AS can be detained and/or deported to countries exercising torture.

- The creation of a separate (‘apartheid’) system of welfare for AS, where welfare agencies are increasingly drawn to collude with oppressive/repressive state practices, results in
crucial issues for ‘citizenship’, producing dilemmas for practitioners whose professional values may conflict with state policies.

- Definitions of ‘political’ activity disadvantage women who often refused refugee status in their own right. The ‘domestic’ nature of women’s protests (e.g. against domestic violence, dowry giving) are not always recognised by the international community as ‘political’.

- By augmenting the category of ‘unauthorised (undocumented) immigrant’ the state has criminalised AS and refugees and placed them at greater risk of debt, bondage and exploitation within a burgeoning ‘refugee industry’ of people traffickers and gang-masters.

- These policies and practices, present ongoing challenges for social care professionals. However, they also bring with them forms of resistance and resilience ‘from below’ which include anti-deportation campaigns, employment rights struggles, anti-racist and anti-national strategies providing sanctuary for AS; these present new opportunities for community action and transnational collaborations.

**Effective practice**
The most helpful factors in addressing need are: taking migrants as competent interpreters of their own experiences; appropriate assessment; language, financial, legal, therapeutic and emotional support; suitable accommodation (and placement in the case of UASC); employment and training and the identification of key workers. Whether social workers support migrant workers in attaining their rights as employees, or support refugees, AS and children in accessing housing, legal, financial and therapeutic sources of support, or assisting children through age assessments, an understanding of the effects of global issues on local communities and cultural competence is imperative. According to the International Federation of Social Work, social workers have a duty to bring to the attention of the general public, policy makers and practitioners the oppressive, harmful and unfair practices and policies. National Service Frameworks, setting minimum standards for training and provision based on good practice are ways forward.

**Key resources**
10. Websites
   - Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre [http://ceop.police.uk/](http://ceop.police.uk/)

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o Institute of Race Relations http://www.irr.org.uk/2006/december/ak000016.html
o Kalayaan: Justice for migrant domestic workers http://www.kalayaan.org.uk/
o Migration Policy Group http://www.migpolgroup.com/
o Refugee Council Online http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/