**Write to your MP template:** [please include your address here so that the MP is aware you are in their constituency]

Dear [insert MPs name here],

I am writing to you today as one of your constituents and as a supporter of the refugee and asylum seeker community. I am getting in touch due to my growing concern about the digital exclusion faced by the asylum seeker and refugee community. Over a year ago, the decision was made to put the country into a national lockdown. This resulted in all services being halted and later moved online. However, despite restrictions easing the problem of digital exclusion remains. Further, temporary accommodation for refugee and asylum seekers do not come with WIFI and devices that are able to access the internet as standard. Whilst this has been a challenge faced by a large part of the country, and an issue that needs to be addressed, it is predominantly a significant problem for refugee and asylum seekers. It is a hidden problem and very little support has been provided to remedy this.

Charities have stepped in to provide solutions and technology to those without. This has been an incredible feat and praise is due to these charities. But this should not be their job. This is a role that the Government should have fulfilled. Charities only have limited means and resources, despite this they have done an outstanding job and the support they have provided is incredible, but we should not have to rely on charities to perform governmental roles.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an unimaginable shift in digitalisation. The rapid improvement of online services is one of the few positives from the pandemic. However, these innovations are not being utilised to help those most in need. Refugees and asylum seekers are currently suffering the brunt of social isolation and exclusion because of the Government’s failure to provide them with adequate digital services. The recent digital acceleration should increase the efficiency of the asylum process. However, if refugees and asylum seekers are not adequately equipped then the Government is responsible for providing another barrier to the already arduous process.

The Government is currently providing internet access in some Initial Accommodation. But this is only due to the recommendations of Public Health England and will only continue to be provided as long as they continue to make this recommendation. Therefore, providing no long-term provision and protection of access to the internet. Where WIFI has not be installed refugee and asylum seekers have been given SIM cards, which are only retained while they are in residency of that accommodation. When they leave these SIM cards are recovered, leaving individuals without access to the internet. Moreover, this does not consider the fact that they might not have a phone, let alone a smart phone to properly be able to access services and thrive in today’s society.

I urge you to please write to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, and the Minister of State for Immigration and ask them to reconsider their stance on digital exclusion and the limited action that they have taken on this issue. To ensure that there are devices and suitable internet access is provided in all initial accommodation and beyond. We are a liberal and forward-thinking nation, inclusive and accepting. Yet, as the country went into lockdown and services moved online, limited provisions were made for asylum seekers and refugees to access these services. This has left many without access to essential services online or reliant on a charity. Thank you for taking the time to read this and I am counting on you to support the end of digital exclusion.

Yours Sincerely,

[insert name]