



# Housing Rights

Your quarterly newsletter from the Housing Rights website

Spring 2025

**O**ur Spring 2025 newsletter looks at a range of ways in which the government is toughening its migration policies – one is new guidance which would make it difficult or impossible for migrants who arrive by irregular routes to ever become citizens. Plenty of criticism has followed the announcement.

Five feature articles in this edition cover different issues. Two concern what happens when asylum seekers who are granted status leave Home Office supported accommodation. Two articles look at how best to meet the needs of migrant children and young people. And the fifth looks at how migration is influencing population growth and housing demand.

We also have the latest news on refugees fleeing from world crises and, at home, on the ongoing problems in the asylum accommodation system.

Regular items include news on tackling domestic abuse and on the government's problematic use of eVisas.

And we wrap up with the usual miscellany of news items and local stories.

Our thanks to all the contributors to this issue. If anyone is interested in contributing to future issues, please email [john.perry@cih.org](mailto:john.perry@cih.org). And, as ever, a special thanks to our sponsors Metropolitan Thames Valley.

Please share this edition with anyone you know who works in this area. And if you haven't already, please click [here](#) to subscribe and receive the newsletter direct to your email inbox each quarter.

*The Housing Rights team*

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## Government immigration policy toughens up

So far this year there have been several indications that government immigration policy – especially in relation to “small boat” arrivals, is toughening up. Among the measures discussed below are more limited rights for asylum seekers who arrive through irregular routes, sending failed asylum seekers abroad (but not to Rwanda) and a new “Border Security Command” heralded in a Bill going through parliament.

Meanwhile, there is little evidence that the deterrents are working. Small boat arrivals for the first four months of this year – even before the end of April – are running [at record levels](#).

### Reduced rights for asylum seekers who arrive irregularly

In February, the government amended the “good character” [guidance](#) for handling citizenship applications so that individuals who arrived in the UK “illegally”, especially via “dangerous journeys” like small boat arrivals, will “normally” be refused citizenship, though exceptions and discretion can be applied.

Most affected are thousands of people already in the UK who have endured the asylum system and were eventually recognised by the Home Office as in need of protection. They have then held refugee status for five years before successfully applying for settlement in the UK. Some will have saved towards the huge fee to apply for naturalisation. Only now do they find that their applications will be blocked.

One of these is a 21-year-old Afghan refugee who arrived in the UK aged 14, after fleeing the Taliban and being smuggled to Britain in the back of a lorry. He is making the [first legal challenge](#) to the new rules. The Home Office continues to be vague about “[mitigating circumstances](#)” which would allow applications to be granted. Clearly, without a clear indication of whether an application will be successful or not, people will simply not be prepared to risk the extortionate fee to apply.

Solicitor Colin Yeo explains why denying citizenship to refugees matters so much: “It denies equality and integration. It means refugees can never be one of us.” He adds: “It is a betrayal of the fundamental principle of equality. It says to refugees ‘you can never be equal, you will always be less than the rest of us’. No matter how long they live in our country, they can never be one of us. It is the ultimate anti-integration measure.”

The backlash to the change was massive, including international coverage and editorials in the [Observer](#) and [Independent](#). A [letter with 147 signatories](#) including the Unison general secretary was sent to the Home Secretary asking her to reconsider.

The *British Medical Journal*, in an opinion piece, [said](#) that “Preventing refugees from being recognised as British citizens is a regressive step for the UK.” It adds: “Imposing this policy change means the government is effectively handpicking who is allowed to be an equal member of our society and who will be excluded from ever truly belonging. By refusing refugees citizenship the government will be removing a vital element of long-term stability and protection. This will likely have a detrimental impact on their health and exacerbate inequities.”

**“Denying refugees British citizenship is a shameful step backwards” BMJ**

In the *London Review of Books*, Christopher Bertram [points out](#) this ban on naturalisation seems inconsistent with the Refugee Convention, which requires that no penalty be imposed on refugees for unauthorised entry (article 31) and under which states undertake to facilitate naturalisation (article 34). He also notes that a person will be penalised for something done years before.

The Migrants Champions Network prepared [a model motion](#) for councils to pass if they disagree with the government proposals.

## Yvette Cooper reviews rights to family life and refuses to allow asylum seekers to work

Ministers are also [reviewing](#) how international human rights law is being applied to allow people to stay in the UK after entering by irregular means, Yvette Cooper MP said on 30 March. She is looking into the implementation of article 8 of the Human Rights Act, which protects the right to a family life and has been used by people to argue for their right to stay in the UK.

Article 8 has been at the centre of a number of controversial asylum cases, including one earlier this year when a Palestinian family was allowed to remain in the UK having first made their application through the Ukrainian Family Scheme.

In a separate development, the Home Office [replied](#) to a letter from the Glasgow City Council leader Susan Aitken saying that the government refuses to let asylum seekers work despite the economic cost. Robina Qureshi, CEO of the Glasgow-based charity Positive Action in Housing, said the government’s approach was economically self-defeating. Removing the ban on working would have alleviated poverty in Glasgow and across the UK.

Liberal Democrat MP Brian Mathew [said](#) that asylum seekers should be able to work “instead of leaving them in administrative limbo in hotels around the country costing the taxpayer millions.”

### Government considering sending failed asylum seekers to Balkans

Failed asylum seekers could be sent to the Balkans under plans being considered by the government, the *BBC* [reported](#) on 22 March. Home Office officials have discussed proposals, which are at a “very early stage”, to set up overseas “return hubs” to house asylum seekers who have had their claims rejected and all appeals exhausted.

The government is also talking to authorities in France about a [migrant return agreement](#) – deporting people arriving in the UK in return for accepting people who have a family connection with the UK.

### New government legislation reaches report stage

The Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill has [completed committee stage](#); next will be the report stage. The Joint Committee on Human Rights had a [call for evidence](#) for its legislative scrutiny of the Bill. *Free Movement’s* summary of the Bill is [here](#) and AOL’s is [here](#). The Law Society published an [updated briefing](#) on the Bill in March.

Solicitor Colin Yeo considers [what amendments have been made](#) to the Bill at committee stage, when the government gave itself wide new powers to impose conditions on a person who holds lawful leave in the UK, including electronic monitoring and other conditions.

[Together with Refugees](#) argues that “The Bill’s narrow focus on measures to ‘crack down on the people smugglers’ is unlikely to succeed even in its own terms of cutting the numbers of people crossing the Channel in small boats. And at its worst it risks prosecuting desperate people for trying to find safety in the UK.”

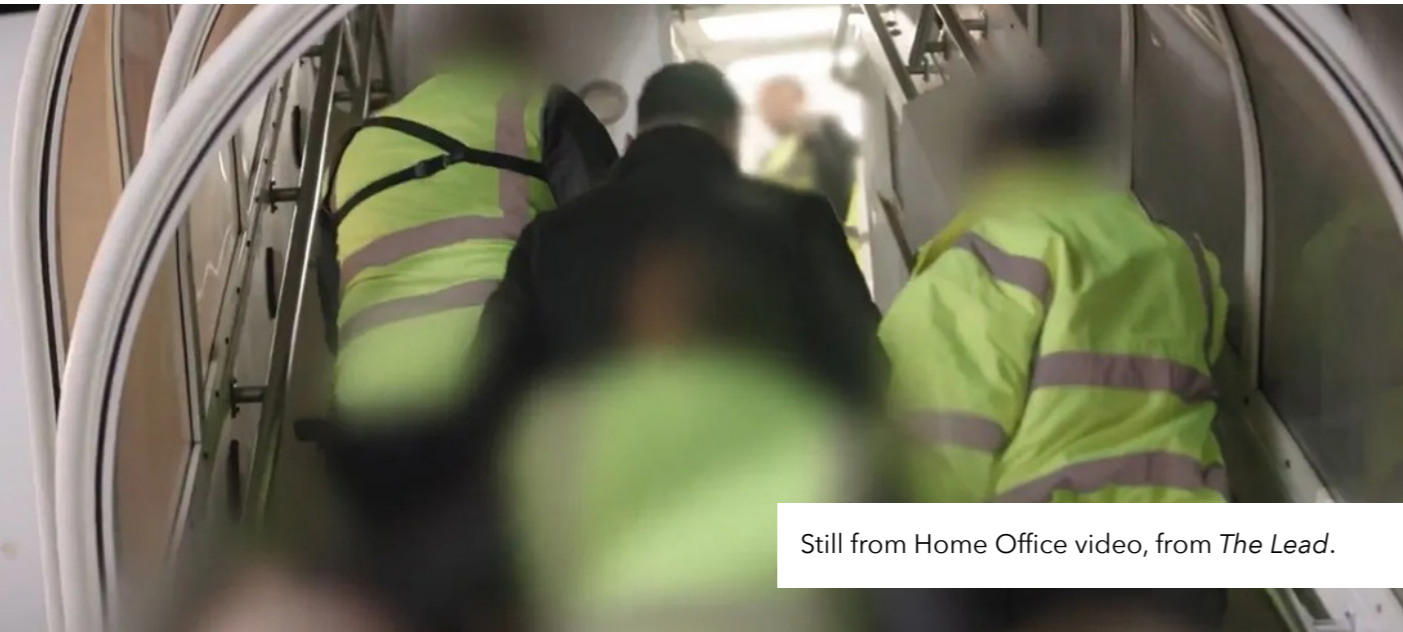
Back in January, the *ipaper* [carried reports](#) from “inside the Home Office” that mistrust had grown over Labour’s small boats plan. Insiders warned that “nobody” understood how the much-vaunted Border Security Command – that the government says will take the lead on combating people smugglers launching small boats – would operate.



## Little hope for changes in the 'hostile environment'

In April, the Home Office published a [report](#) looking at the impact of the hostile environment (officially the "compliant environment"). The report looks at the period 2021-23 and found that it was difficult to say what role Home Office activity played in people's decisions to regularise their status or leave the UK. The report gave no indication of any government intent to reduce the hostility of the "compliant environment".

The report included information on implementing "right to rent" checks on private tenancies in England. It says that 78 per cent of landlords had carried out checks on their recent lettings (by implications, 22 per cent failed to do so). In 2023, there were almost one million digital checks (and presumably many more non-digital ones); they led to just 155 civil penalties. The report is dismissive of concerns about the discriminatory effects on those with non-UK passports.



Still from Home Office video, from *The Lead*.

*The Lead* remarked on what it called "**Labour's 'Go Home Van' moment**": the Home Office released a [video showing deportees](#) – including one who was shackled – being taken from a detention centre and escorted onto a plane, then removed from the country. "We know nothing about them: not their names, their offences or where they were being taken to."

## Reactions to the direction of Labour government policy

In the *London Review of Books*, Daniel Trilling [considers](#) the evolution of Labour policy on immigration, contrasting the present day with a Labour policy statement in 2010, which asserted: "Every one of us needs to roll up our sleeves and get to work to build strong and tolerant communities, arguing the case for the politics of solidarity and hope, as opposed to the politics of division and defeat."

In the *Financial Times*, Lord Dubs [argues](#) that "protections afforded to refugees benefit us all".

But now, he says, "Labour believes that convincing voters it has regained control over illegal immigration is the only way to build support for a more generous system in future."

Labour-leaning think tank the ippr [warned](#) of a "race to the bottom" on immigration policy. "Instead of deterring migration, they create long-term exclusion and insecurity for those already settled," ippr argues. "The approach satisfies no one."

*Bylines Scotland* also [weighed in](#): "How we treat refugees matters more than ever," it argued. "Being kind to others is a strength. It makes us happier. It's good for the soul. Being unkind to others is a weakness. It makes us angrier. It withers the soul."

*The Morning Star* [quoted](#) Public and Commercial Services union general secretary Fran Heathcote, who said: "The Home Secretary is obviously looking for ways to bring down the number of small boat crossings. The answer is to adopt, or at the very least trial, our Safe Routes policy, based on the Ukrainian style-visa system of assessing claims after people have arrived in the UK. It would destroy smuggling gangs overnight by taking away the need for refugees to take risks crossing the Channel, reducing crossings to almost zero. We stand ready to assist."

## How can immigration reform campaigners best engage with the Labour government?

Solicitor Colin Yeo, in a slightly despairing [review](#) of the prospects for influencing the government, concludes that ministers, special advisers and civil servants need practical, deliverable, politically feasible ideas. "But our tiny sector just isn't structured to deliver those ideas in a convincing way," he suggests. "We just have to leave it to the wide and diverse range of organisations each working in their little silo."

Martha Gill, in *The Guardian*, [argues](#) that we should present immigration as a success story. For example, employment rates for migrant men of working age [stand at 82 per cent](#), higher than for UK-born men, at 78 per cent. And a 2023 study found 39 per cent of the 100 fastest-growing companies in Britain have an immigrant founder or co-founder, even though the group makes up just 14.5 per cent of the population. There is less segregation than there used to be, and more multi-ethnic families. Foreign-born people are less likely to be in prison. With more examples cited.



## Asylum accommodation and local connection: it's complicated!

In response to recent queries about establishing a "local connection" for those leaving asylum accommodation, Housing Rights contributor Sue Lukes offers this guidance, with input from [The Refugee Buddy Project](#).

The asylum accommodation system is still in flux. The Home Office pilot of offering 56 days accommodation after a favourable decision on the asylum case is certainly creating some of the space needed for people to avoid becoming physically homeless (especially if they can get good advice and support from the overstretched organisations trying to offer it). But alongside this the Home Office is also under pressure to cut costs and source cheaper accommodation (like the Wethersfield former military base plus dispersed accommodation), standing down some more expensive options like hotels and seeking better value for money. One large sub-contract (with Stay Belvedere Hotels) has been terminated. There is a logic to it all, but the actual experience of asylum seekers and newly recognised refugees is often one of seemingly rushed and arbitrary decisions that take no account of their needs.

Local authorities have also often expressed concern. While asylum support accommodation is not their responsibility, the people living there are residents with needs to access services, and Home Office grants rarely cover them. And when people finally get their refugee status the housing authority then has a homeless application to deal with. The Home Office has told councils in areas where it develops "large scale" sites that it will not move people out before they get a decision, but does not seem to adhere to this completely. Of course, the effect may be that the refugee will get their decision very soon after they have moved into a completely unfamiliar area, after spending months or years in other accommodation.

But what happens when a refugee has their status confirmed? Again, it often feels chaotic. Some get given 56 days' notice immediately, some do not and are left in limbo for weeks or longer. Sometimes they are told to move to other asylum accommodation after their decision but before they have been given notice, or even after they have been given notice. With the notice, the refugee can then go to the local housing authority and ask for help, as someone threatened with homelessness. Leaving to one side the other issues, one that often comes up once priority need has been determined, is local connection.

Generally, because the refugee has no choice about asylum accommodation, this does not create a residential local connection with the area(s) where it is provided. The refugee or members of their household may have local connections with an area: a job, a family member resident there for five years, or residence there by choice (e.g. with family or friends) for six months out of the last 12 or three years out of the last five. If the refugee has no local connection anywhere, then the

authority where they apply as homeless will have the duty to secure housing.

But there is a specific local connection created by asylum accommodation: with the area where the refugee last lived in accommodation provided under s95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. This is not all asylum accommodation! When people first claim asylum they are placed in "initial accommodation" under s98 of the Act, which does not create a local connection, and then moved on into "dispersed" accommodation under s95. However, over the last five years things have got quite muddled. The pandemic and the failure to make timely decisions on asylum claims created a massive backlog of asylum applicants, many of whom are still accommodated in "contingency accommodation", mostly hotels and some larger sites. Contingency accommodation may be under either s98 or s95: s98 accommodation is meant to be only short term but people may find that they are simply "moved" to s95 but stay in the same hotel.

So a refugee who has got their asylum decision can go to the local council and ask for help, and will be defined as "threatened with homelessness" if they have received the 56-day notice. If they have no other local connection and they go to the council where they are now living then it will be that council that has the homeless duties towards them, either because they have a local connection because they are in s95 accommodation or because they are in s98 accommodation and have no connection with any local authority.

But what about these cases? The scramble to close accommodation is causing some problems:

*This client has lived in a hotel in (area A) since August 2022, and was granted leave at earlier this year. He has got a range of needs and is well connected to services in the area. He has not yet had notice to leave. The hotel itself is closing mid-April, and people are being moved from it very soon. He has been in touch with the local authority, but what happens if he moves?*

Unfortunately, it is pretty clear that unless the local authority in the area has accepted it has a full homelessness duty towards him before he moves to area B, then he will no longer have a connection with that area when he moves. Even if he was in s98 accommodation, once he gets his notice to leave (the 56 days) that is treated as s95 and will create a connection with the area he is moved to and so area A can refer him to B. Although the power to do this is discretionary, most local authorities will make such referrals unless there are special circumstances (and the courts have tended to interpret this very strictly).

But it doesn't have to be this way:

*A family in Hastings contacted the [Hastings Buddy Project](#) one Friday afternoon. After two years in their dispersed accommodation, with children at a local school, they won their asylum appeal, and were about to make a homeless application, although they had received no 56-day notice. But **that day** the housing contractor turned up on the doorstep, with a policeman and a notice to move that day to an address marked simply as "TBA". The letter said they could question the choice of accommodation within the next 21 days. Rossana Leal, chief executive of The Buddy Project phoned for advice and got the local migrant champion councillor involved, and he turned up. After a tense negotiation, the contractor agreed they could postpone moving until Tuesday and gave them the address, in another area a long way away. Rossana promised to continue supporting the family, and councillor Yunis Smith got on the case and persuaded Hastings Borough Council to accommodate the family. And, he reports, "Mashallah, due to the hard-working council officers, the council got the Home Office to agree to pay."*

Of course the contractor was in trouble for failing to give any notice and arriving with the ridiculous letter with no new address on it. The moral of this is that you can win in this sort of case, but you need a good local organisation to push your case and stand-off with the contractor and the police, and ideally a [migrant champion councillor](#) or, if not, just a good one that you can contact easily. Alongside a firm belief that people should be treated with dignity and welcomed into our communities.

Housing shortages would not disappear if migration were halted tomorrow. Read the article [here](#).



# New refugees need help to find secure housing – London’s asylum move-on liaison officers are a step in the right direction

Anna Yassin, Migrant Services and Advocacy Manager at the [Glass Door Homeless Charity](#), writes about refugee homelessness and how to tackle it.

Glass Door Homeless Charity has been providing support to individuals experiencing homelessness in London for 25 years, running the largest winter night shelter circuit in the UK and offering year-round casework provision. Our services are open to anyone, regardless of their immigration status.

Since winter 2023, we have seen an unprecedented increase in numbers of newly recognised refugees experiencing homelessness and seeking our support. During our winter night shelters between November 2023 and April 2024, referrals were 80 per cent higher than the previous year. Among the 393 shelter guests who engaged with caseworkers, the most common cause of homelessness was eviction from Home Office accommodation. This year, the trend continues. Although our winter night shelters close in April, the demand for spaces remains high.

While the broader housing and cost of living crisis in London affects all homeless individuals, refugees face unique challenges. Many struggle to navigate the complexities of the housing system, often exacerbated by the trauma of forced displacement, family separation, and the stress of unfamiliar bureaucratic processes. These difficulties can leave them particularly vulnerable to homelessness. While some refugees initially find refuge in shelter services, many continue to face the harsh reality of rough sleeping, sometimes long after they should have transitioned into stable housing.

The reduction in refugee integration services has left a big gap, which frontline homelessness charities like Glass Door have stepped in to fill. Over time, we have developed expertise in providing culturally aware, trauma-informed, and gender-sensitive advice and support for refugees. In light of this, we welcome the Home Office’s recent initiative offering integration support to newly recognised refugees through the asylum move-on liaison officer (AMLO) programme in London.

Currently operating in Barnet, Brent, Hounslow, and Hillingdon, the programme focuses on assisting refugees with their “move-on” process from asylum hotels. AMLOs, based within the hotels, assist refugees with Home Office documentation, applying for refugee integration loans, linking people in with local authorities for housing and homelessness advice, assisting with universal credit and advising on opening bank accounts.

The trial extension of the move-on period from 28 days to 56 days, running till June 2025, provides crucial extra time for more comprehensive interventions and support for individuals transitioning from asylum accommodation.

The future success of the AMLO programme hinges on greater collaboration between the Home Office, local authorities, and frontline homelessness services. By working together, we can help policymakers understand the gaps in the current system and find effective solutions to prevent refugees from being left destitute. The first meeting of the London Asylum Move-On Working Group laid out a commitment to effective partnership working, with a focus on sharing insights, good practice, and supporting the success of the initiative.

We are particularly eager to learn how the experiences of AMLOs reflect the challenges faced by frontline workers within overstretched and underfunded services. Understanding these shared difficulties will help shape policies and decision-making across the spectrum of services tackling homelessness and destitution.

As the housing crisis deepens, it is crucial that we continue to provide comprehensive, compassionate, and coordinated support to refugees and all individuals experiencing homelessness in London. At Glass Door, we remain committed to ensuring that no one is left without shelter, and we will continue to advocate for the policies and services needed to make this a reality.



# Specialist supported housing: A safety net for separated migrant children

Spiros Georgiou, head of care and supported housing (homelessness and mental health) at [Hightown Housing Association](#), explains why dedicated, specialist supported housing services can be the most appropriate setting for separated migrant children.

It is not just adults and families who come to the UK to seek sanctuary: in 2024, four per cent (4,104) of [asylum applications](#) came from unaccompanied children, young people fleeing conflict, persecution and hardship who reached the UK alone with no parent or guardian.

Under the Children Act, local authorities have a legal duty to provide accommodation for these children, ensuring they receive the care and support they need, regardless of their immigration status. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) - also referred to as separated migrant children - accounted for [nine per cent](#) (7,380) of the 83,630 looked after children in England in 2024, up from six per cent in 2020. Numbers have increased steadily since the Covid pandemic, peaking at 7,410 in 2023.

To alleviate pressure on “entry” local authorities - which are typically near major ports and areas with significant immigration facilities - the government has mandated a dispersal programme, the National Transfer Scheme (NTS), whereby unaccompanied children are safely referred to a “receiving” local authority. Most UASCs are aged 16-17 and local authority placements for them tend to reflect this - 37 per cent are placed in foster care and a further 44 per cent are accommodated in supported housing schemes.

In Hertfordshire, Hightown is commissioned by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to provide supported housing for up to 28 16-17 year-old UASCs at any one time, spread across four schemes in Hemel Hempstead, Radlett and St Albans. Rated “excellent” by HCC, the service provides a safe, stable and nurturing environment with 24/7 specialist support where young migrants can begin to rebuild their lives. The young people have often experienced the most extreme forms of trauma, making them highly vulnerable and with very specific, complex needs; dedicated, specialist services such as ours can therefore help to minimise the welfare and safeguarding risks that can arise when young migrants are placed in settings with non-migrant looked-after children.

To meet the complex needs of the young people we support, we adopt a person-centred, psychologically and trauma-informed approach, understanding the emotional and psychological experiences of each individual, in order to break down barriers and facilitate their recovery.

One of the hardest challenges for the young people we support is the lengthy and complicated process of applying for asylum; without a trusted adult to explain the process, complex immigration and legal systems are almost impossible to understand, so we work closely with the Refugee Council, who have the specialist knowledge to guide them through. Almost a third of the young people in our care do not get a decision on their asylum application until after they have turned 18, which means they are unable to access supported accommodation; this can be quite challenging for some young people, as they must live with the uncertainty.

Aside from the emotional challenges, there are also many practical difficulties to overcome. Our staff empower the young people in our care to develop essential life skills such as cooking and budgeting and support them to access education, learn English and develop social skills. However, many come from diverse backgrounds and cultural “norms”, so it is vital to help them develop an understanding of the local culture, whilst supporting them to embrace their own cultural background and customs, such as attending mosque or buying Halal food.

Most importantly, we go the extra mile to build each young person’s trust; as a result, we see their confidence and ability to live independently grow hugely over time, so that when they move on from the service, they are ready to start living the life that every young person deserves.

Contact Hightown via the following email, for more information on their work: [cash.services@hightownha.org.uk](mailto:cash.services@hightownha.org.uk)



Photo caption: Hightown’s separated migrant children service provides housing and support for 16-17 year-olds in Hertfordshire

# Building futures: Supporting refugee and asylum-seeking families to thrive

Professor Monica Lakhanpaul of University College London (UCL) describes the work of the PSP-REFUGEE research programme.

As readers are aware, housing insecurity significantly affects refugee and asylum-seeking children. The reality of living in temporary accommodation often means families are confined to small, overcrowded spaces with poor ventilation and limited privacy. Limited kitchen facilities and financial constraints make it difficult for parents to prepare nutritious meals, which in turn affects children's ability to focus and succeed in school. For young children, this can lead to a range of health issues, and impact their development, education and long-term wellbeing.

Families from these backgrounds often face additional barriers, such as language differences, unfamiliar healthcare systems and discrimination – all of which make it harder to access the support they need.

The PSP-REFUGEE project, a collaboration between UCL, De Montfort University, National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) North Thames, Happy Baby and Response Ability Theatre, is working to address these challenges. The programme's team is developing parenting-support programmes for refugee and asylum-seeking families with children under five who are living in resource-limited settings like temporary accommodation.

The project recognises that families are not just defined by their challenges – they also bring cultural strengths and parenting practices that can support their children's development. The project is focused on working with parents to understand these strengths and explore how they can adapt to their current circumstances. Through research, workshops, and trauma-informed theatre, the project creates spaces for parents to share their experiences and explore creative approaches to parenting.

By working directly with parents, the project aims to develop culturally-sensitive and relevant support that builds on the strengths families already have – helping them navigate these difficult circumstances while promoting better health and developmental outcomes for their children. So far, our theatre-based methods are helping families process their experiences and find new ways to respond to parenting challenges. This helps build confidence and emotional resilience while reinforcing parent-child relationships.

Insights gained from the PSP-REFUGEE project could inform broader policy reforms. Key areas of focus include improving housing standards, ensuring better access to culturally competent health and social care services, integrating trauma-informed approaches into public support systems, and limiting top-down interventions in favour of co-produced models.

The programme is using frameworks such as the Healthy Child Programme (HCP) and CHAMPIONS Safe, Health, Educated (SHE) Framework to create a parenting support programme that aligns with UK health standards – while still acknowledging cultural differences

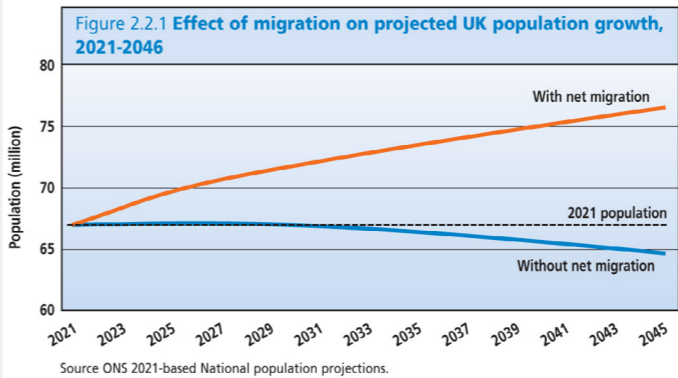
Housing insecurity poses significant risks to the health, education and development of migrant children. Addressing these challenges requires systemic reforms and interventions tailored to the cultural and environmental contexts of refugee families. Through culturally responsive, co-designed support, families can feel more empowered to navigate these challenges and help their children thrive. This has the potential to not only address immediate needs but to help to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all families.



# Population growth now depends upon migration – how does this affect housing demand?

John Perry writes about the findings of the UK Housing Review 2025. This article first appeared in [Housing Today](#).

Just as we were putting the finishing touches to the UK Housing Review 2025, new population projections came out. Over the next 10 years, they projected the UK population to increase by almost five million people. Furthermore, with births and deaths expected to be in balance, as the chart from the Review shows, all of this increase results from net migration. This peaked at 906,000 in the year ending June 2023, but is now falling and is projected to level out at 340,000 annually.



How will this affect housing demand? As the Review points out, one key question is how many new households are likely to form, and we still await official projections based on recent migration figures. But a calculation by economist Ian Mulheirn suggests that current output of new homes in England is only a little below the required level, and indeed it will be exceeded if Labour's target of building 1.5 million homes in five years is met. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, new needs are also close to being met.

The problem, of course, is that new homes are required not only for new needs, but to address the backlog of old needs. The Review points out that "core homelessness" in England (which includes everyone living in insecure accommodation) has reached over 240,000 households and is rising again, after a temporary halt during the pandemic. So the longstanding projection by Glen Bramley that in England we need to build as many as 340,000 homes annually, revisited in last year's Review, still stands.

Another key question is what impact higher migration has on demand for social housing. This is much less easy to project, as the 2021 Census showed that – even in the case of migrants who have been here for a decade – well over half are still in the private rented sector. In the long run, of course, migrants gain permanent residency and become eligible for social housing. However, analysis of Census figures by the Migration Observatory shows that, while 17 per cent of all households in England and Wales are non-UK born, the proportion in social housing is slightly lower, at 14 per cent. In London, where 41 per cent of households are classified as non-UK born, they occupy one-third of social housing, also lower than might be expected.

According to the 2021 Census, just seven per cent of social tenants in England and Wales had a non-UK passport. These figures give the lie to recent [social media claims](#) that (especially in London) migrants are disproportionately granted social housing tenancies.

In reality, migrants who have been here for 20 years or more have slightly higher homeownership rates than the UK average. So this raises a different question – does migration push up house prices? The evidence is mixed and far from clear, and much of it comes from studies in other countries. The Economist recently concluded that the overall impact of migrants on property prices is small. In industrialised countries, the share of the population that is foreign-born rose from nine per cent in 2013 to 11 per cent in 2023. Evidence suggests that such a rise will have lifted prices by around four per cent. In fact, real house prices have risen by 39 per cent, indicating that other factors play a much bigger role.

What conclusions do we draw? Migration is known to have economic advantages, especially where migrants are skilled and in higher-paid jobs. The UK's population would decline without migration, and housing-related jobs like construction and social care would see even bigger labour shortages. So, yes, migrants need accommodation, but their impact on the UK's housing system is limited. Housing shortages would not disappear if migration were halted tomorrow.

## The asylum claims backlog and prospects for clearing it

### Another increase in new asylum claims

Asylum statistics published at the end of February included the [number of claims](#), [number of grants](#), and [number of cases in the asylum system](#). On the number of claims, 2024 saw a record high of 108,138 people claiming asylum in the UK, 84,231 of those were main applicants and 23,907 were dependants. The total was 18 per cent more than in 2023 and five per cent more than the previous high of 103,081 in 2002. This is still far below countries many other European countries, however, especially Germany.

At the same time, visa grants to live in the UK dropped by a third over the past year, driven by a policy clampdown and labour market slowdown. This suggests that projections of a decline in net migration (see article above) might be realistic. The biggest falls were in visas for health and social care work.

### Labour 'will never clear' Britain's asylum claims backlog

The figures show that at the end of 2024 there were 41,987 asylum appeals in the tribunal courts' backlog, up from 7,173 at the start of 2023 (see chart). Solicitor Colin Yeo [projects](#) the backlog to reach 100,000 cases by the end of 2025.

*Free Movement* comments that the appeals backlog is the predictable outcome of a huge increase in refusals, as the [grant rate in 2024](#) fell to 47 per cent, down 20 per cent on the year before, meaning that most asylum cases are now refused.

Almost half of the asylum appeals to the First-tier Tribunal are successful (46 per cent in the period October to December 2024), so poor Home Office decision-making is to blame, exacerbated by the lack of legal aid lawyers available to help people through the system.

Writing in *UnHerd*, Henry Hill [argues](#) that the backlog of asylum appeals is the result of a generation of politicians failing to tackle the fundamental causes of the problem. Increasing legal aid fees may help bring more lawyers in to work on the cases. But the flagship announcement – that “ministers are planning to change the law to introduce a mandatory 24-week legal deadline for all asylum appeals” – is probably meaningless.

Hill argues that: “For Labour’s proposal to have any teeth, there would need to be actual consequences for missing the deadline, at least for institutions but ideally for specific individuals within those institutions whose duty it is to ensure the new law is complied with.

“Crucially, however, those institutions or individuals must also have it within their power to comply with the law, both to maximise the chances of driving the change required and as a matter of basic justice. You cannot fairly hold someone responsible for breaking a legal obligation they had no chance of upholding.”

### Thousands on axed Rwanda scheme list to have asylum claims processed in UK

Home Office issued [guidance](#) hours before a legal challenge on behalf of asylum seekers who were left in limbo when the Rwanda scheme was abandoned. Their delayed claims are expected to be dealt with by the end of 2025.

While this is good news, *Free Movement* points out that claimants from Afghanistan and Syria, whose claims can now proceed, face much higher rejection rates than would have applied if their claims had been dealt with earlier.

## Asylum system putting enormous pressure on Glasgow homelessness services

Glasgow City Council has expressed alarm at the impact of refugee homelessness in the city.

The asylum system risks “damaging social cohesion” with homeless refugees putting “unprecedented pressure” on Glasgow services, the city council has warned.

Glasgow City Council had welcomed asylum seekers for decades, [said](#) the city convener for homelessness, Allan Casey. But the “unique” circumstances of Scotland’s stronger housing rights, such as a statutory duty to accommodate single adult males, combined with the last Conservative government’s changes to batch-processing claims, means “the current cost to the city is running into the tens of millions, with no end in sight”.

“Glasgow is the largest dispersal area in the UK, and we currently house over 4,000 asylum seekers here, and [the housing services provider] Mears have capacity for over 7,000,” he wrote. “This is putting unprecedented pressure on our housing system. We will continue to believe that asylum dispersal is good for our city, and we have been enriched by it. But the system you are presiding over is damaging social cohesion here, and we want to meet with you to discuss that.”

Casey pointed out that the circumstances in Glasgow were unique “because of Scotland’s world leading homelessness legislation”.

The asylum system is pushing people into homelessness in England, too, Kirstie Cook, chief executive of the King’s Arms Project charity, [told Inside Housing](#). Despite the clear intersection between the asylum system and homelessness, funding streams for both remain largely separate and insufficient to meet growing demand.



Latest on refugees fleeing world crises

Still no UK help for refugees from Palestine

In January, the Upper Tribunal for Immigration and Asylum [granted](#) six displaced Palestinians entry into the UK to stay with a British family member, after their home in Gaza was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike. The Home Office had rejected their application and the [First-Tier Immigration Tribunal](#) dismissed their appeal. The Upper Tribunal reversed the decision, holding that the family were entitled to come to the UK under Article 8 of the [European Convention on Human Rights](#), which protects the right to family life.

According to the prime minister, this judgment was “wrong”. Asked about it by Kemi Badenoch at [Prime Minister’s Questions](#), Keir Starmer told the Commons: “I do not agree with the decision.”

This demonstrates double standards on Ukrainian and Palestinian refugees, [argues](#) *Declassified UK*. It points out that the Home Office itself [advises](#) applicants from abroad to “apply on the application form for the route which most closely matches their circumstances”. That is because there is no “form” for applications for entry clearance on the basis of family life outside the immigration rules, even though the Home Office knows that such applications are legitimate.

Applicants therefore have no alternative but to use the family migration routes available, legal practitioners told *Declassified*. It’s a procedural gateway online to a decision and nothing more. There is no “loophole”.

England and Wales’s most senior judge has [written](#) to Keir Starmer saying she is “deeply troubled” by his comments. “It is for the government visibly to respect and protect the independence of the judiciary. Where parties, including the government, disagree with their findings, they should do so through the appellate process.”

Robina Quereshi of Positive Action in Housing [commented](#): “The UK has extended compassion when politically convenient, yet closes its doors to Palestinians fleeing what Holocaust scholars, the United Nations, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch have warned is genocide and crimes against humanity, with calls for further investigations by international courts.”

Look [here](#) for the Refugee Council’s guidance on Palestinian refugees. See the [Autumn newsletter](#) for the limited UK help for evacuees from Lebanon.

Response to the crisis in Syria

Conditions in Syria continue to be very dangerous, with minorities being persecuted and even assassinated, and Israeli bombing of cities such as Damascus. *The Conversation* [explains the barriers](#) to Syrian refugees in the UK – of whom there are about 30,000 – returning home.

The UN refugee commissioner has reported on [the difficulties faced by those who have been internally relocated](#), there have been [reports of hundreds of people killed by landmines and also by militant groups](#). It is highly unlikely that safe conditions will return to Syria soon, leaving [around 6,600 Syrians](#) in limbo as the Home Office freezes asylum claims.

Problems for Ukrainians on expiry of their leave

Ukrainians in the UK under one of the government’s three schemes are, from 4 February, able to [apply](#) for a further 18 months permission to stay. *Free Movement* [explains the changes](#).

However, a [BBC survey](#) shows that a high proportion of Ukrainians have problems relating to jobs or accommodation because of the imminent expiry of their leave. One had been told that her universal credit could be stopped. “Ukrainians in Britain are weighing up their future as visas expire,” [says](#) the *Financial Times*.

The government’s response has been to say that people will have “section 3C leave” which, as *Free Movement* commented in [last year’s RAMFEL case](#), makes life even more difficult, with Ukrainians facing [losing jobs](#) as a result.

Help to bring Ukrainian families together

[Settled](#) has been supporting Ukrainians across the UK since March 2022. They were delighted when the Home Office issued [new guidance](#) in January following Settled’s [letter](#) to the Home Secretary, that under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, parents can sponsor their own children to join them in the UK, overturning a rule change which prevented this.

However, a Work Rights Centre’s [report](#), ‘Still apart: The impact of Ukraine Scheme changes on families one year later’, explains that while this guidance changes matters, further concessions are still needed.

Ukrainian refugees in the UK – latest figures

The government’s [three schemes](#) have brought over 250,000 Ukrainians to the UK. You can see details of the help available on the [Housing Rights website](#).

Data on homelessness among those housed under the Homes for Ukraine (HFU) or family schemes in England are provided [here](#). By the end of January, 11,330 households had been dealt with as homeless, two-thirds of them (around 7,600) because hosting arrangements under the HFU broke down or ended (the figures are likely to be underestimates, as many councils are not submitting data).

The government is also [producing statistics](#) on Ukrainians in employment. By December 2024, some 49,450 were in work.

News on Afghan refugees and asylum seekers

Revised [guidance](#) sets out details of the Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP), which brings together existing Afghan resettlement schemes in to a single programme including the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

From the spring 2025, all arrivals on the Afghan Resettlement Programme will be provided with transitional accommodation for up to nine months. This will be a mixture of serviced accommodation, hotels, and the continued but reduced use of military barracks across the country (news from the East of England [Newsflash](#) on migration issues).

The Home Office is leaving thousands of Afghans “in limbo” in the UK, [argues](#) *Free Movement*. Until the end of 2023, over 98 per cent of asylum claims from Afghanistan were approved. But in the last quarter of 2024, following the publication of a new country policy and information note, over 2,050 Afghans had their asylum claims refused compared to 1,859 who were granted protection.

Surprisingly, given the Taliban’s position on women, the figures also indicate that 26 women had their asylum claims refused. An Afghan rights defender was [told](#) in April that she faces “no risk” from the Taliban as the Home Office denied her asylum claim. The woman had worked with western governments in her home country before fleeing the Taliban.

Working it out: Hong Kongers, employment and the cost of living

British Future have produced a [report](#) drawing on detailed interviews with recently arrived BN(O) Hong Kongers. It examines the challenges that some face in finding employment and coping with rising living costs. The *Financial Times* [says](#) that barriers to employment for new migrants from Hong Kong mean many are overqualified for the jobs that might be available.

Hong Kongers also face destitution in a small number of cases, according to [new research](#). 510 Hong Kong BN(O) status holders have applied to have the NRPF visa condition lifted since 2021, indicating higher levels of financial insecurity than previously thought.



Hotels – still in use for asylum accommodation

Select committee receives evidence on asylum accommodation

In March, the Home Affairs Select Committee [heard oral evidence](#) for their inquiry into asylum accommodation from witnesses including David Bolt, the interim independent chief inspector of borders and immigration. The [written evidence](#) has also been published; perhaps surprisingly, [this comment on the lack of support](#) to help people integrate into the UK came from accommodation contractors, Serco. The Chartered Institute of Housing submitted evidence and you can read it [here](#), and here is the [link](#) to evidence from the Helen Bamber Foundation and Asylum Aid.

The CIH evidence focussed on the possible use of homes acquired by local authorities as asylum accommodation. *The Guardian* carried [encouraging](#) news that councils are keen to help accommodate asylum seekers as the government attempts to move as many as possible out of hotels, in part to try to ease community tensions. While the process is at an early stage, the Home Office is also keen on the idea of councils stepping in, which would save money and could help to distribute asylum seekers more widely.

Building more welcoming communities for asylum seekers

NACCOM, along with [Good Faith Partnership](#), has [new research](#) exploring how to build stronger, more welcoming communities for people seeking asylum in the UK. *Treat us like Humans: a report on the lived experience of the asylum system* examines people's experiences of moving to an area when in the asylum system and what could make regions more welcoming for people in their situation.

Published as part of the [Welcoming Mayors project](#), the report is based on focus groups conducted in three key regions: Greater Manchester, London and the North East. It looks particularly at the potential for mayors and combined authorities to play a role to build more welcoming communities.

The project lends support to a growing call for the Home Office to use the 2026 break clause in asylum accommodation contracts to pilot a decentralised model of asylum housing.

BME National and other organisations signed a [statement](#) which listed a number of actions that should be taken to avoid further right-wing confrontations, including ending the use of inappropriate and unsafe asylum accommodation and providing infrastructure for a community welcome for all.

Continuing use of hotels for asylum accommodation

At the end of 2024, 38,079 people were being accommodated in hotels, well below the peak of 56,042 in September 2023 but almost 30 per cent up from 29,600 when Labour won the general election in July 2024. The Refugee Council [estimates](#) that if those numbers were to remain the same throughout 2025, the annual cost could reach nearly £1.5 billion. However, in April, *The Guardian* [reported](#) that "hundreds" of asylum seekers are soon to be removed from hotels.

Close to half of the newly reduced UK aid budget is in line to be spent on housing asylum seekers in Britain, according to a *Financial Times* [analysis](#) of government spending plans.

MPs have [called on the government](#) to launch an urgent investigation into millions of pounds in offshore transactions made by one of the largest accommodation providers. Clearsprings' parent company has reported paying £17.1 million in consultancy fees to Bespoke Strategy Solutions, a United Arab Emirates-based consultancy firm that it says is owned at least in part by Clearsprings founder Graham King.

Home Office axes asylum hotel contract and hands it to Bibby Stockholm firm

*The Guardian* [reports](#) that a company managing hotel accommodation has been axed by the Home Office due to performance concerns and replaced by the firm that ran the Bibby Stockholm barge. As a result, the 51 hotels run by Stay Belvedere Hotels (SBHL) will close.

SBHL is a subcontractor of Clearsprings Ready Homes. In February 2021, a [joint investigation](#) by the *Observer* and *ITV* revealed there were allegations of sexual harassment and intimidation in accommodation run by SBHL along with claims that staff were paid below the minimum wage.

Asylum accommodation and the Renters' Rights Bill

London Councils and the Chartered Institute of Housing wrote jointly to housing minister Matthew Pennycook on 14 January, urging the department to ensure that the [Renters' Rights Bill](#) (currently in the House of Lords) includes Home Office accommodation within its provisions, so that asylum seekers and refugees benefit from the same protections that all private and social renters will receive. It is important that the Bill does not give rise to a "two-tier" system in which a small minority of rogue landlords may be incentivised to procure poor quality PRS accommodation on behalf of Home Office providers for use as asylum accommodation.

A reply was received on 17 March expressing concern about the alleged standards of asylum accommodation and offering to meet the signatories of the letter. An officer-level meeting took place in April.



Experiences of living in hotels as asylum seekers

*There have been a number of media stories about life in hotels:*

- A "Nazi-obsessed white supremacist" who stabbed an asylum seeker in a terror attack has been jailed for attempted murder, [reports The Independent](#). He attacked the man in April last year at the Pear Tree Inn near Worcester in what he claimed was a "protest" against small-boat crossings.
- "I work at a migrant hotel. Many of them will never work a day in their lives," says a *Daily Telegraph* [article](#). The clinical lead in an asylum hotel in the north of England describes a dysfunctional system in which newly recognised refugees immediately go on benefits. But despite the pitch given by the *Telegraph*, the account of what asylum seekers endure in hotels is sympathetic and rings true.
- "Hotel Britannica" is an [anonymous report](#) from a clinician working inside one of Britain's asylum hotels (register to be able to read it).
- Women and girls seeking asylum have alleged that they were raped, sexually assaulted and harassed after being placed in mixed Home Office accommodation. An *Observer* [investigation](#) has uncovered claims of sexual violence at multiple Home Office hotels including allegations against fellow asylum seekers as well as hotel staff.
- In January, *The Guardian* [reported](#) a range of violent incidents in asylum accommodation, with calls from NACCOM, RAMFEL and Asylum Matters for the Home Office to respond. A record number of asylum seekers [died](#) in 2024 while in Home Office care.
- However, *The Guardian* [says](#) that, behind the closed doors of hotels are people who dream of work, wheels, security and the simple freedom to choose what they eat. Given half a chance, the people have a lot to offer, and will become care workers, academics, drivers, shopkeepers – like anyone else, except that they once escaped from danger, as people have throughout history. "This is not invading a country – this is finding a safe place for their lives. It's a different thing," says Muhammad, one of the hotel occupants.

Latest news on barracks and similar accommodation

Napier barracks to close, Wethersfield stays open

Napier barracks, one of the first mass accommodation sites opened to house asylum seekers, is to be closed in September after years of controversy about conditions there, including a mass Covid outbreak, decrepit facilities and far-right protests. A high court ruling in 2021 found that the site did not meet “minimum standards”. The Guardian has a readers’ letter explaining how volunteers have helped asylum seekers there.

Wethersfield, a remote military base in Essex, continues to operate without a confirmed end date. Three asylum seekers were found to have been accommodated there unlawfully in a recent high court ruling, although the judge found in the Home Office’s favour on most of the broader points of the challenge. The case is TG & Ors v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2025]. Free Movement has more details.

Meanwhile, the Home Office confirmed it is looking into ways to expand the base even though Keir Starmer vowed to close the Essex facility. RAF Wethersfield currently houses around 540 migrants.

Home Office settles Manston inquiry judicial review

The Home Office has settled the judicial review claims that sought an independent inquiry into events at Manston barracks in 2022. The claims were brought by individuals detained at Manston, when there were widespread concerns around overcrowding and poor conditions.

The claimants included families, lone women and people with various forms of trauma. The claims had been due to be heard in January 2025. A copy of the sealed order disposing of the claims is available from Free Movement here.

‘They wanted help, we gave them a prison boat’

In openDemocracy, Sian Norris talked to people about their experiences on the Bibby Stockholm barge, whose last asylum-seeker resident left in November.

“Bye bye, Bibby Stockholm,” says Right to Remain in a blog on the barge’s departure.



Changes in rules for migrant victims of domestic abuse

How migrant victims of domestic abuse can access their eVisa

Rights of Women explains how migrant victims of domestic abuse with immigration status under the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC) can access their eVisa to prove their status.

Rights of Women contacted the Home Office to address a systemic problem that meant victims of domestic abuse granted leave under the MVDAC were unable to access their eVisa to prove their immigration status. Anyone with such leave should now be able to access and share their immigration status using the “view and prove” service on gov.uk. The Home Office told us they will contact affected individuals to inform them of the resolution.

Those without a UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account when they are granted leave under the MVDAC will need to set one up and will be given instructions in their grant letter.

Anyone granted MVDAC leave who, before their three months’ leave expires, makes a valid application for further leave (e.g. an application for indefinite leave under Appendix Victim of Domestic Abuse (VDA) has their leave and related rights extended by section 3(c) of the Immigration Act 1971 – “3C leave”). Anyone with 3C leave should be able to view and share their eVisa to prove their status.

Rights of Women is gathering evidence on the operation of immigration policies for victims of domestic abuse: email them directly at nicole@row.org.uk.



Change to the MVDAC for those in the UK under the Ukraine Schemes

Victims of domestic abuse who were last granted leave as a partner under the Ukraine schemes because of their relationship with a Ukrainian national are now eligible to apply under the MVDAC and access three months leave outside the rules with access to public funds. The change took effect on 4 February.

Updated policy guidance relating to the MVDAC and reflecting the change can be found here.

Travelling outside the UK with MVDAC or section 3(c) leave

Anyone with MVDAC leave or section 3(c) leave should not travel outside the UK. That is because it would cause their leave to end immediately. It may also affect any pending application and mean they are unable to return to the UK. MVDAC leave eVisas state that people can “travel in and out of the country”, which is misleading. Rights of Women is reviewing MVDAC grant letters and information on MVDAC eVisas given concern that the risks are not adequately explained.

Issues around eVisas and section 3c leave

Section 3c leave and how to prove it

**R**AMFEL has provided [an update](#) on the section 3c case which was [successful in the High Court](#) last year. The Court of Appeal granted the Home Secretary permission to appeal and, in the meantime, also granted a stay on the requirement to roll out digital status to everyone with section 3C leave. The hearing is expected later this year.

The Home Office has useful [media guidance](#) on eVisas, an [eVisa Partner Pack](#) (pdf) and a [Transition to eVisas Local Authority FAQ Pack](#) (pdf) for local authorities.

New sanctions for failure to comply with biometric regulations in eVisas

Following a [consultation](#) that took place in 2023, some important changes are being made to eVisas via the [Immigration \(Biometric Information etc.\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2025](#), which came into force on 27 March (although not all powers will be used from then). The explanatory memorandum is [here](#) and *Free Movement* [sets out](#) some of the changes.

Migrants Organise to meet with ministers re eVisas

Migrants Organise and the3million wrote to ministers back in October, concerning reports of DWP decision makers being unaware of the Home Office’s transition to eVisas and curtailing benefits access as a result. They have been offered a meeting to discuss the issues, likely to take place in May, and would welcome evidence on:

- DWP reviewing benefits when someone is on 3C leave - this was always an issue, now manifested more starkly
- DWPs refusing eVisa/not doing direct checks/doing other things
- Issues with specific job centres
- Other issues affecting migrants with DWP, such as the lack of language line.

Please contact Brian Dikoff at Migrants Organise, [brian@migrantsorganise.org](mailto:brian@migrantsorganise.org).

Immigration rules keep changing, and the confusion can cause real problems for migrants

The Home Office says an online system will mean faster processing times and lower risk of fraud. However, the rollout of eVisas has created significant problems, with reports of non-citizens being denied entry to the UK after border agents did not accept their proof of status, [says Ben Brindle](#) in *The Conversation*.



New court cases on accommodation and other issues

Swindon’s prosecution of Clearsprings for failing to obtain an HMO licence

**T**here has been no major progression in Swindon’s [prosecution](#) of Clearsprings for failing to obtain an HMO licence for asylum support accommodation (see the [winter newsletter](#)). Swindon are applying to the Supreme Court for permission to appeal the decision that Clearsprings have not acted unlawfully and there is a hearing on May, 14. The case comes down to the question of whether asylum support meets the definition of an HMO requiring a licence, required if the landlord is a “person managing” or “in control”. It was found by the Divisional Court that to be a “person managing” there would need to be rent charged, which is not the case in asylum support, so Swindon’s prosecution for not having HMO licencing was struck out. But another question about the meaning of a “person in control” is ongoing. This may have wide implications.

Court case on support rates used by local authorities

In the case of [R \(LR\) v Coventry City Council \[2025\] EWHC 20 \(Admin\)](#), there a helpful judgment on how councils set their rates of support for NRPF cases involving children. The court quashed Coventry Council’s assessment of the level of support it made under section 17 of the Children Act to a family with NRPF, as inadequate, and required it to review its support policies.

Refusal to reinstate trafficking support was unlawful

The High Court has ruled that three Home Office decisions, each of which refused the claimant’s request for reinstated trafficking support via the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract, were unlawful. Judgment was handed down in [R \(ETX\) v Secretary of State for the Home Department](#) on 12 February.

High Court confirms ability to challenge lawfulness of withdrawal decision in asylum support appeal

**This case** clarified that the first-tier tribunal has the power to decide who is an asylum seeker (and so who qualifies for support) and whether or not their claim for asylum has been withdrawn or treated as having been withdrawn (which happens, for example, if they don’t provide all the information the Home Office asked for – in this case, the letter was in English and at least one of the respondents didn’t understand it). There is more from *Free Movement* [here](#).

Asylum seeker loses appeal against being denied local connection to London borough

The *Local Government Lawyer* [reports](#) that the Court of Appeal has rejected an appeal by an asylum seeker over a decision by Islington Council that he had no “local connection” with the area and so his application should be referred to another London borough.



## New research – and some myths - on migration issues

### New report on the quality of legal aid for migrants

Migrants Organise, Haringey Migrant Support Centre, NACCOM, South London Refugee Association and Refugee Action have published a [report on changing quality of immigration legal aid services](#). It highlights the combined impact of the destruction of publicly funded legal representation and of hostile immigration policies on people's experiences of the quality of immigration legal aid services.

Good legal advice is vital for anyone navigating Britain's hostile immigration system. But after 30 years of government neglect the legal aid system is in crisis, and reliable, publicly funded advice has become harder to find. Threadbare: The Quality of Immigration Legal Aid investigates the causes and shares the untold impact of the declining quality of legal aid services.



### Heritage and Home – a new report on ethnic inequalities in housing

The Resolution Foundation [published](#) Heritage and Home, which explores the stark inequalities in housing affordability faced by ethnic minorities in the UK. It reveals that ethnic minority households spend a greater share of their income on housing than White British households, yet they often receive poorer quality housing. A strong sense of belonging to certain areas may drive some groups to pay a premium, but racial and ethnic discrimination also plausibly plays a role in limiting access to housing, further exacerbating affordability challenges.

### Roma research project with Migration Yorkshire

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is conducting [research](#) into the lived experiences of Roma people in England and Wales. This study is being led by ONS in partnership with Migration Yorkshire, Roma Support Group, and the University of Sheffield. The findings could help inform future policy decisions, support the interpretation of existing statistics and contribute to enhancing the visibility and representation of Roma people in data.

### Foreign-born workers in the UK labour market

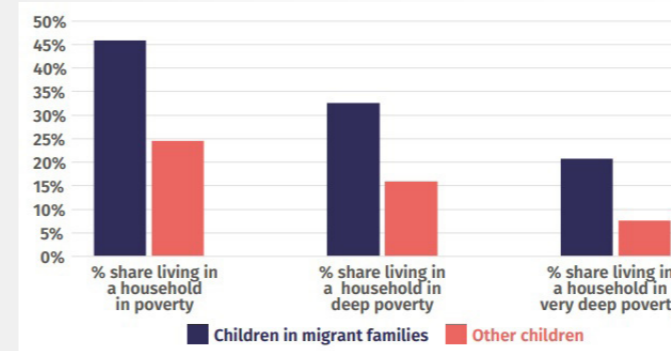
Foreign-born workers play a vital role in the UK labour market – but while many secure high-skilled, well-paid jobs, a substantial minority face precarity. New [research](#) by the Resolution Foundation analyses the issues faced by this precarious minority.

### New publications from the Migration Observatory

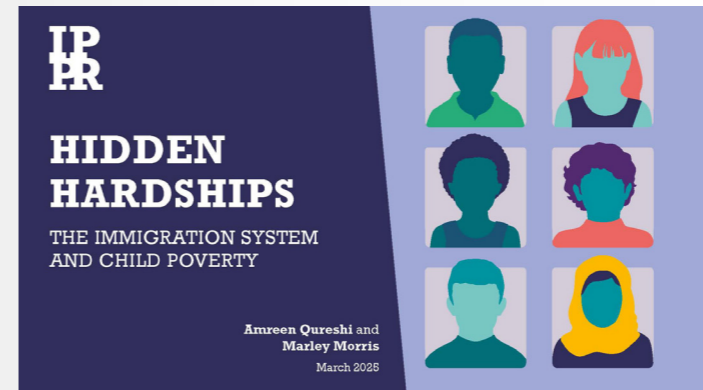
- Where do migrants live in the UK? This report has [new data](#) on the distribution of migrants across UK nations, regions and local authorities within the UK, providing data by country of birth, nationality and reason for migration (i.e. work, study, family and asylum).
- Unauthorised migration in the UK. [Explains](#) what we know about unauthorised migration in the UK, including the difficulties in defining and measuring it and evidence on its nature and scale.
- Deportation and removal: what is driving the numbers? A [new briefing](#) looks at why returns declined during the 2010s, why they started to increase again after 2021, and what factors affect the numbers.

### Hidden hardships: The immigration system and child poverty

In 2022/23 it was estimated that 4.3 million children live in relative poverty, and this number has risen in recent years. Among those disproportionately impacted are children from migrant families, a group often overlooked in public and policy debates. In 2022, migrants made up around a third of children in destitution.



In new research, ippr [explore](#) the unique barriers to escaping poverty while navigating the immigration system, and the enduring impact of immigration policies on children's lives. A fair and effective child poverty strategy must confront these issues to ensure that no child – regardless of their background – is left behind.



### New immigration raids, the hostile environment, and migrant women's human rights

Recent weeks have seen a surge in immigration raids in the UK targeting workers lacking permission to work, alongside broadcasting of deportation footage that has been condemned as an "act of performative cruelty". This [post](#) in *Dignity & Democracy* examines these actions against the background of the "hostile environment". It examines the gendered effect of the hostile environment on migrant women, focusing on susceptibility to domestic abuse and rights at work.

### Europeans have flexible views on how to respond to irregular migrants

The *Conversation* [reports](#) on new research that challenges the idea that public attitudes toward irregular migrants' rights are simply "for" or "against". Instead, it finds that variations in policy design matter – and when policies include both migration controls and protections for migrants, public support often increases.

The study surveyed 20,000 people across Austria, Italy, Poland, Sweden, and the UK to understand their preferences on policies regarding access to healthcare, social welfare and labour protections, as well as the granting of regular legal status to irregular migrants.

### Migrant myths in the press

"One in 12 in Londoners is illegal migrant" was a front-page splash in the *Telegraph*, picked up and repeated across not just the right-wing press but in "mainstream" publications and by various commentators.

In fact, this claim contained [not just one mistake but several](#), explains Jonathan Portes. It was based not on new research but on a rehash of existing and now outdated estimates for the UK's undocumented population. It took the upper limit of a wide estimate as fact—a more accurate description of this estimate would have been ["between one in 13 and one in 20"](#).

Worse still, it omitted to note that the higher estimates include a large number of people who have indefinite leave to remain, and so are not, and in most cases never have been, irregular migrants, as well as children born in the UK, who may indeed be irregular but are most certainly not migrants.

Zoe Gardner also examined the *Telegraph* story in this [video](#).

"Labour's new housing is liable to fill up with asylum seekers," [screamed](#) another *Telegraph* headline. The story was from the Prosperity Institute, a think tank funded by a hedge fund owner. A not dissimilar story, this time quoting the Chartered Institute of Housing, [appeared in the Daily Express](#).



Other migration news

New independent commission on community and cohesion

British Future is supporting a new independent commission on community and cohesion. The commission will seek to understand how to strengthen community connectedness, cohesion and resilience, developing recommendations for policymakers and a collective vision for the future of our communities. Evidence has been collected and the Chartered Institute of Housing made a brief submission based on its extensive earlier work on cohesion issues, especially as they relate to migrants.

EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) – conversion from pre-settled status

The Home Office has a new process to automatically convert eligible pre-settled status holders to settled status, without a further application (those affected will be notified by email). This will make the process of acquiring settled status (indefinite leave to enter or remain) far easier. It began in late January.

Roma in the UK continue to struggle with the EUSS

In February, the Roma Support Group hosted a parliamentary event on the ongoing challenges with the EUSS for Roma in the UK. The event saw Mihai Calin Bica (RSG) and Dr Owen Parker (University of Sheffield) present their research; Monique Hawkins (the3million), spoke about the implications of the EUSS digital status; Denisa Gannon (Immigration lawyer, New Europeans), on the challenges of switching from pre-settled to settled status; and Olga Fuseini (University of Sheffield), on the need for further support.

What is the Immigration Advice Authority, previously known as the OISC?

The Immigration Advice Authority, formerly known as the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, or “OISC”, regulates the provision of immigration advice and services throughout the UK. The newly named Immigration Advice Authority has information on its website. The housing rights website has been updated to refer to the new authority.

Home Office is recruiting a Windrush commissioner

Coin Yeo’s We Wanted Workers comments on the appointment of a Windrush commissioner, arguing that this is not what was recommended in Wendy Wilson’s inquiry into the Windrush scandal (covered extensively in past newsletters). Her recommendation was the appointment of a ‘migrants’ commissioner’, responsible for speaking up for migrants and those affected by the system directly or indirectly.

The point of this recommendation was forward-looking. It was intended to “make the department’s culture less inward-looking, make its processes less complex for both its staff and the public, and to make it better at giving support to people who need it most”.

'I don't want migrants to give up hope': Why Nicola Kelly 'betrayed' the Home Office

Kelly has been called a traitor for leaving her government job to write about immigration. But, she says, something has to be done about the chaos and injustice.

Home Office policy on the nationality good character requirement: Children and illegal entry

The Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens (PRCBC) has received a written answer (HL 5846) concerning recent changes to the policy guidance on the Nationality: good character requirement. The minister confirms that a breach of immigration law is normally to be disregarded if it is accepted the breach was outside the control of the person applying for citizenship; and specifically identifies that illegal entry is not normally to be regarded as within a child’s control.

This should assist children applying to be registered as British citizens and adults, who may have entered as children, applying to be naturalised. It may also assist people who entered as adults, who can demonstrate that any breach of immigration law on their part was beyond their control – such as for people trafficked to the UK.

PRCBC has an updated booklet on Children and their rights to British citizenship, with a foreword from the late Benjamin Zephaniah.

News from the NRPF Network

The NRPF Network has new web pages on specific topics for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. They also have a new briefing on support options for people with NRPF leaving UK prisons and have updated their benefits page for pre-settled status and pending EUSS applications.

The network has recently submitted evidence to the government's child poverty strategy showing that immigration-related restrictions can lead to children experiencing destitution. This and other policy submissions are here.

Winter shelters

Too late for this year, but here is an interactive map showing shelters that will be useful come the Autumn.

The real reason so many people are fleeing Vietnam for the UK

The BBC has a sympathetic explanation for Vietnamese emigration.

More news on 'no recourse'

Free Movement has a detailed briefing on how to make a change of conditions application and remove the “no recourse to public funds” restriction. For subscribers, Free Movement has also updated its guidance on NRPF rules: What is the no recourse to public funds condition?



Get organised!

News from the Migrant Champions Network

Local elections are set to take place across the UK on 1 May. The actual number of elections is relatively small - but given Reform UK's plans to contest nearly all 1,600 seats that are up for grabs, the [Migrant Champions Network](#) expects an uptick in anti-migrant rhetoric from candidates from a range of parties.

In the run-up to the elections, they are urging councillors and candidates to [sign their pledge](#) and commit to speaking out against anti-migrant rhetoric. Please take a look at the Network's [messaging guide for councillors](#), for tips on how to talk about migration persuasively, honestly and humanely.

The network has an [online event](#) on Thursday 8 May looking at how to deal with the expansion of the far right across Europe. Check out full line-up and register to attend [here](#).

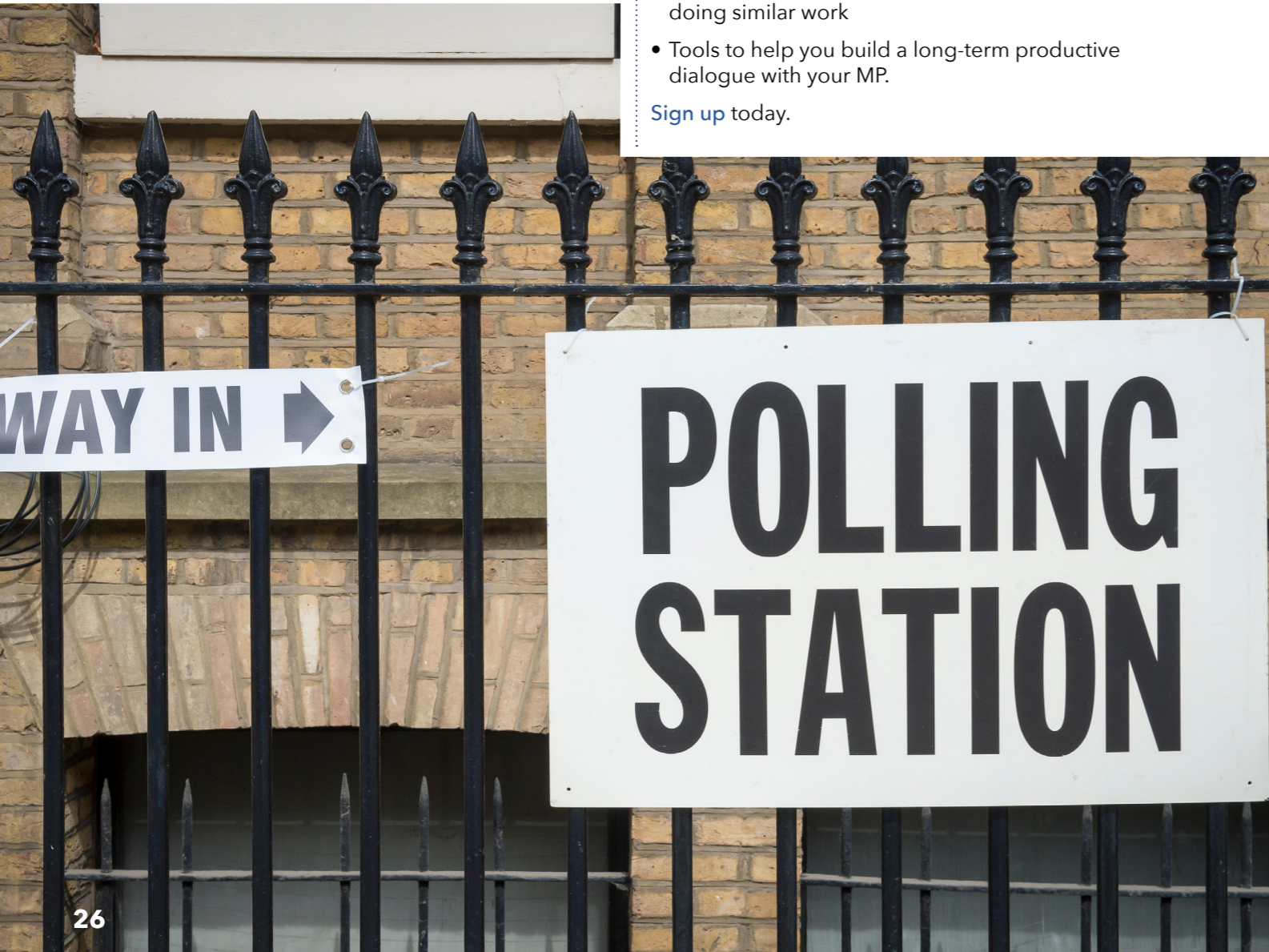
New opportunity: Learn with the Campaign Organising Network

[Together With Refugees](#) is a movement of over 600 groups and organisations, united by the call for a fair, compassionate new plan for refugees. Their new initiative, the Campaign Organising Network, is a way to provide people with the support to build power in our local communities and engage with MPs to demonstrate the strong local support for a fair new plan for refugees.

Whether you work in the migration sector and are keen to pick up new campaigning skills, or you're a student motivated to organise others on campus, or a volunteer with a refugee organisation looking for ideas to help you engage your neighbours on this issue. When you sign up you'll receive:

- Access to trainings to help you build a local campaign plan and rally others in your community and build a productive long-term dialogue
- Connections with others in your area and nationally doing similar work
- Tools to help you build a long-term productive dialogue with your MP.

[Sign up](#) today.



Local news corner

Resources for new arrivals experiencing stress or tension

Solace, a charity based in Leeds, provide psychotherapy to refugees and asylum seekers. They have produced a [number of videos](#) for new arrivals in English, Albanian, Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish Sorani, Pashto, Tigrinya and Urdu. The videos are aimed at supporting people experiencing stress or tension as a result of their asylum journey (this item is from the East of England Newsflash on migration issues).

Flourish Together

Hertfordshire Mind Network has a Flourish service which provides advice, information, onward referral and holistic support to refugees and asylum seekers who are experiencing mental ill health or need support with daily challenges. For information, email [Flourish@hertsmindnetwork.org](mailto:Flourish@hertsmindnetwork.org).

'It's helping me build my future': empowering migrant and refugee families in a London borough

In Islington, a panel of people with migrant and refugee backgrounds is allocating £500,000 in grants to directly help new arrivals who are where they once were, [reports The Guardian](#).

The initiative is part of the [Borough of Sanctuary grants programme](#). The council recruited 18 people living in the borough originally from countries including Afghanistan, Ukraine, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Iran and Sri Lanka to decide how the funds should be allocated.



Essex coffee shop run by refugees that supports asylum seekers

EssexLive carries the [story](#) about the shop in Walthamstow, a social enterprise run by refugees to support other refugees.

'She handed over her house key – I couldn't believe her trust in me, a complete stranger'

*The Standard*, which ran a Christmas appeal that brought in over £3 million, has [the story](#) of a beneficiary of Refugees at Home – a charity they funded.

Banned from work by an illogical rule, Leeds asylum seekers fight for dignity and hope

*Yorkshire Bylines* [reports](#) on a local campaign to get the right to work.

Second homeless camp set up after evictions as council accused of moving problem

Manchester City Council [moved a camp](#) of homeless people, mainly refugees, only to find it was set up elsewhere. Residents were handed plastic bags for their belongings as bailiffs "knocked on" tents and instructed those living in the camp to leave. Some of the tents were thrown into a bin lorry, but the council insists they were already abandoned.



# Do you have any comments on this newsletter?

Send them to [policyandpractice@cih.org](mailto:policyandpractice@cih.org)

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