



Housing rights

Your quarterly newsletter from the housing rights website

Autumn 2023

Our autumn newsletter kicks off with news of a joint letter initiated by the Refugee Council with help from CIH - to persuade the government to allow more time to house people who are being told to leave asylum accommodation. Some 140 organisations signed the letter. And in response to this issue, the housing rights website has a new guide on how to help those affected.

The newsletter also covers the passing of the government's Illegal Migration Act and what Labour's alternative policy is starting to look like. The home secretary has recently set out her own ideas for the future of immigration policy, and (as we explain) these are quite different from Labour's.

We report on the latest news on refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine. We have a set of newly drawn maps showing where Ukrainian and Afghan refugees are being housed across the UK, comparing their situation with that of asylum seekers.

We take our regular look at the state of the asylum system - the claims backlog, the use of hotels, and the other (sometimes bizarre) alternatives the government is considering to house asylum seekers. A new slot looks at the most severe deterrence methods the government is using, including using these to deter children who seek asylum.

We wrap up with the usual miscellany of advice services, legal cases and other news items.

A special thanks to our sponsors Metropolitan Thames Valley, Innisfree, and Tamil Housing. Thanks also to all the contributors to this issue, named in each of the articles. If anyone is interested in contributing to future issues, please email john.perry@cih.org.

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

The Housing rights team

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Government is forcing hundreds of new refugees to sleep on the streets

"Thousands of refugees could face homelessness after Home Office policy change" was the headline in the *Guardian* on August 15. It alerted CIH and others to a sudden change in Home Office practice, whereby it now gives asylum seekers whose claims are approved only a few days' notice to leave asylum accommodation. Instead of the customary 28 days' notice (itself regarded as too little), organisations working with asylum seekers discovered they had to help people find somewhere to live in a far shorter time.

"It's such an appalling, self-defeating way of granting someone refugee status: to immediately make them homeless, after years on destitution-level asylum support." (Colin Yeo, solicitor)

Here are just a few early examples of the massive problems being caused:

- An asylum seeker with an approved claim received his discontinuation letter on September 1, with an eviction date eleven days later. He didn't have his biometric residence permit so was unable to apply for benefits or approach the local authority for housing or provide any ID to find private rented accommodation.
- Another successful asylum seeker was given a week to leave the hotel where she was accommodated. She was refused accommodation

by the local council as she was not in "priority need". However, she is a victim of abuse and suffers from PTSD. She was physically assaulted by a live-in landlord, who was sentenced for grievous bodily harm. She also has asthma and had already suffered an asthma attack due to the stress of being destitute.

- Sam, a Sudanese refugee supported by [Care4Calais](#) who has leave to remain, ended up sleeping in a park in London. He was robbed at knifepoint - bad enough for anyone, but Sam had previously seen his father violently killed in front of him, and this attack triggered horrific memories.

Channel 4 News interviewed [Ali Ibrahim](#), who had just been granted asylum, the start of his new life here. But he's sleeping in a tent, relying on charity (see picture below). *The Guardian* warned that "Makeshift refugee camps are likely to spring up across England this winter".

The Red Cross later warned that as many as 50,000 refugees could be made homeless by the end of the year across the UK, unless ministers take urgent steps to support them as it clears the asylum backlog. It is calling on the government to immediately reverse changes to the move-on period and extend it to 56 days.

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CIH joins the Refugee Council and other charities in writing to the Home Secretary

Shorter notice periods for people to leave asylum support accommodation after being granted refugee status are driving some into "destitution and homelessness", CIH and other charities have warned.

In a letter to home secretary [Suella Braverman](#) and housing secretary [Michael Gove](#), CIH joined with the Refugee Council and 140 other bodies in claiming that "This is causing severe hardship for refugees, as well as placing unnecessary pressures on local authorities who are already facing challenges finding accommodation for other groups."

"We are finding that local authorities have not been told of the new arrangements, meaning that they are not ready to respond quickly."

The Refugee Council said the 28-day "move-on" period had previously started from when a person received their Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). But they said that recent changes have seen the 28-day period instead begin when someone receives a grant letter telling them their protection claim has been accepted, rather than when they receive their BRP.

Due to delays between people receiving the grant letter and a BRP being delivered, many can end up "already ... well into the 28 days before they can even start to engage with the processes that are vital for them to avoid homelessness and destitution", the Refugee Council added.

They said the changes "are already driving people who have recently received their refugee status into destitution and homelessness, instead of getting the support and protection they are entitled to".

Among their requests in the letter, CIH and other charities called for people to get their refugee grant letter, BRP, letter containing the date when their

asylum support will end, and the notice to quit their accommodation all on the same day, adding that the 28-day notice period "should never begin before someone has received their BRP".

They also called for the move-on period to be extended to at least 56 days in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act and an application for universal credit.

The government said when someone is given notice that their asylum claim has been granted, they are told that the prescribed period is 28 days and will get a "notice to quit" support letter in writing at least seven days before their accommodation and support payments are due to end.

The Home Office claimed that support is offered to newly recognised refugees during the 28-day period, including advice on accessing the labour market, applying for universal credit and signposting to local authorities for assistance with housing.

A Home Office spokesperson said: "The pressure on the asylum system has continued to grow, with hotel accommodation costing an unacceptable £6 million a day. We encourage individuals to make their onward plans as soon as possible after receiving their decision, whether that is leaving the UK following a refusal, or taking steps to integrate in the UK following a grant."

"Being granted refugee status should be a happy moment. Instead, hundreds, if not thousands, of refugees are facing homelessness and destitution. Refugees are telling us they are being forced to buy tents and sleep rough in the streets. Is this really how the UK should be treating the survivors of war, torture and modern slavery?" (Refugee charity Care4Calais)



New guidance from the housing rights website and elsewhere

Housing rights website guide

In response to the change, Sue Lukes, a principal author for the CIH's housing rights website, quickly wrote a guide for those helping people affected by the change, especially those being evicted from hotels. It's a short and simple briefing on things to think about when people get notice to leave, for use by people who don't necessarily know "the legal background" (volunteers, councillors, English teachers, etc.). It covers what notice should be given, when people can ask for an extension, appealing against discontinuation, what help they can get from local authority housing/homelessness departments or social services and where to get advice.

The [briefing](#) (pdf), launched in September, will be updated as needed.

London Strategic Migration Partnership guidance

The London Strategic Migration Partnership (LSMP) also told the newsletter that they are working to ensure that operationally, local authorities and partners are better equipped to react to the changes. They have set up two workshops alongside Clearsprings Ready Homes (CRH, the Home Office contractor) for local authorities to understand their portal. This will enable them to understand how to access and navigate the portal and to be able to identify individuals who will require support imminently. LSMP are also working with the Home Office and CRH to enable local authorities to access data on decisions, so councils will be informed even before a notice to leave is issued.

LSMP and London Councils have sent the message to all local authorities to treat a decision on a person's asylum claim as their notice to vacate and for all outreach work to begin from that point. London Councils has similarly shared a letter with local authorities, after consultation with Shelter, to suggest that an eviction notice is not required to accept a homelessness application, nor to trigger the duty to assess under the Housing Act 1996.

Updated guidance from ASAP

After the recent speeding-up of evictions from asylum support accommodation, ASAP has updated its guidance. The new version (available [here](#)) reflects the recent changes.

ASAP points out that, as a general principle, the Home Office should give people notice that their support is going to stop so they can plan what they will do next. On 1 August 2023, the Home Office announced a change in procedure for the discontinuation of asylum support for people who have received a decision on their asylum claim. Previously, individuals would be given either 28- or 21-days' notice that their support was going to end. Under the new policy, in practice most people will probably only ever get seven days' notice.

The briefing note explains the law around cessation of support and outlines the different notice periods depending on the circumstances. References to a person should be read as including any dependants included in their grant of support.

In *Free Movement*, Sue Lenegan [explains](#) the implications of the changed policy and the steps which should be taken when asylum seekers receive a positive decision on their claims.

Why the new seven day notice to quit policy puts migrant women at risk

Ghadah Alnasseri, head of policy and public affairs at Hibiscus Initiatives, wrote for Inside Housing on the effects of the new policy on women refugees.

When asylum seekers gain refugee status, usually after a long and arduous process, their challenges are far from over. Having been prevented from working legally, claiming benefits or renting their own property while their claim was considered, they are expected to become self-sufficient within a matter of days.

The government provides very basic accommodation and financial assistance to eligible asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. When asylum seekers gain refugee status, they lose their right to this accommodation. Until recently, refugees in this situation were – in theory at least – given 28 days' notice to quit. This is far from long enough, and there have long been calls to extend the notice period. However, the situation is now much worse.

The Home Office recently [changed its practice](#) so that asylum seekers receive only seven days' notice to leave their accommodation, having previously been granted refugee status but not received notice to quit. Charities including Hibiscus have [written](#) to the government, urging them to reverse this change in practice and extend the move-on period to 56 days.

I can empathise with the challenges that individuals face when trying to establish themselves after being granted refugee status. When I received my refugee status several years ago, I was given 28 days' notice to vacate my accommodation. This was not enough time to obtain essential documents so that I could access support and find suitable housing.

In desperation, I approached my local council. However, as a single woman without children and with no critical medical conditions, I didn't qualify for help. They handed me a sleeping bag and suggested I look for a homeless shelter.

I had fled a war-torn homeland, seeking sanctuary in the UK. I was struggling with the debilitating effects of post-traumatic stress disorder and needed support to help me rebuild my life. None of this seemed to matter. I felt overwhelmed, abandoned, and was forced to confront homelessness.

I now work for Hibiscus, a national charity which has been delivering support and advocacy services to Black, Asian, minoritised and migrant women in contact with the criminal justice and immigration systems for over 30 years. Many of our clients are victims of trafficking.

The new seven-day policy piles further pressure onto an already desperate situation for many of our clients. Homelessness is a significant and growing problem for women – and often a hidden problem due to the different coping strategies homeless women use. For migrant women, the situation is even worse.

Due to a combination of "hostile environment" policies, migrants are more likely to live in unsafe and overcrowded housing and have less access to safe and suitable housing. This makes migrant women more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, criminalisation and poor mental health outcomes, as shown in our recent [research](#) on race, migration, mental health and criminalisation. Earlier [research](#) by Hibiscus has shown that migrant women who are victims of trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence face multiple barriers to safe and suitable housing.

Some of our clients have already been affected by the Home Office's change in practice. Adeela (not her real name) lives in asylum accommodation with her partner and their two children, who are in primary school. In August, they were refused asylum, but were granted permission to stay in the UK on the basis of their right to family life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Adeela immediately approached her local council to start a homelessness application, but they said that they would not be able to proceed until she receives an eviction notice. Her asylum support provider is not able to provide documentation about her imminent eviction until it is formally confirmed by the Home Office.

Adeela's family is stuck in limbo: there is nothing she can do to prepare for their imminent eviction. In the meantime, Adeela's children have already started the school term. Adeela says: "This has had a negative impact on my children. I've had to buy their uniforms, but I don't know when and where they will be transferred to once we're homeless. My son asks me how long he will be able to stay with his friends, but I just don't know."

Hibiscus has called for a transformation in the government's response to marginalised migrant women and their children in the UK, instead of the increasingly callous policies and practices we are seeing. A first step would be to reverse the seven-day policy and instead extend the move-on period for refugees to at least 56 days.

Ghadah has written another article for Hibiscus [here](#). For more information follow Hibiscus on X, formerly known as Twitter, @hibiscuscharity or contact: ghadah@hibiscus.org.uk.



The Illegal Migration Act becomes law - what's next?

The government's latest plans for immigration became law on July 20 with the passing of the **Illegal Migration Act**. The government explains the Act and how it is intended to work in [a set of factsheets on gov.uk](#). There are also new, [monthly summaries of statistics](#) relating to the implementation of the Act (although the statistics themselves are not new).

The Secretary of State reduced judicial oversight of detention and increased her detention powers after part of the Act came into force on 28 September. Those and other changes are set out in the **Illegal Migration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 1) Regulations 2023**.

Free Movement gives [a rundown of the changes](#) made before the legislation received Royal Assent. Some of the provisions came into effect immediately, most require further regulations before they become law.

Robert Jenrick defends the lawfulness of the Illegal Migration Act

In [response to an open letter](#) from Public Law Project and other European human rights organisations, the minister asserted that "the government is satisfied that the provisions of the Act are capable of being applied compatibly with the convention rights, and we continue our work with European counterparts."

But the Public Law Project [says that there are four ways](#) in which the Act fails to meet legal requirements:

- As the [United Nations refugee agency stated](#), the Act punishes refugees based on how they arrive, which violates Article 31 of the Refugee Convention.
- By detaining refugees of all ages [indefinitely and arbitrarily](#), the Act breaches Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which protects the right to liberty.
- By deporting victims of [human trafficking and modern slavery](#) without any period of recovery, the Act violates Article 13 of the European Convention on Action Against Trafficking.
- By completely ignoring the best interests of refugee children and detaining them, the Act disregards Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and was therefore [condemned](#) by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Reactions to the new legislation

The *Financial Times* [quoted](#) Volker Türk, UN high commissioner for human rights, saying that the legislation "Sets a worrying precedent for dismantling asylum-related obligations that other countries, including in Europe, may be tempted to follow".

He added this could have "A potentially adverse effect on the international refugee and human rights protection system as a whole". Türk urged the UK government to reverse the law and increase the availability of safe pathways for legal migration in order to limit the use of irregular and illegal routes.

Zoe Gardner had a [two-minute slot](#) on *LBC* to explain how the new Act will slash trafficking protection, trap low-paid workers in exploitation by restricting their visas and affect the enforcement of labour standards.

Eduardo Reyes, [writing](#) in the *Law Society Gazette*, says that "The new phase of asylum policy is uniquely, universally, criticised by lawyers who handle immigration work as unworkable. Not hardline, yet effective, but a total failure."

What should local authorities expect as the new legislation takes effect?

The NRP Network has some [advice for local authorities](#) on what they should expect and what action they can take.

What are the potential consequences for local authorities and their residents?

Harm to individuals Genuine protection needs not being considered whilst in the UK, indefinite limbo or detention for those who cannot be removed, and bars on support for victims of trafficking and care leavers, are just some of the possible outcomes which could be detrimental to people's welfare. The reticence to engage with formal services that deterrence measures create could also significantly affect the uptake of vital support for people at risk of exploitation or abuse.

Increased demand for local authority support If people continue to seek protection from the UK at current rates, many thousands of people could be subject to the exclusions outlined for those that arrive via "unsafe and illegal routes". There is currently no clarity on how people subject to these exclusions will be housed or supported. Whether you are working with asylum seekers in asylum contingency hotels, unaccompanied children, or families and adults with no recourse to public funds, the scale of people affected is significant and a rise in people requiring specialist interventions likely.

Decision-making bottlenecks Delays in Home Office decision-making on immigration-related matters lead to long waiting times for the children, families, and adults supported by councils under social services legislation. Protracted litigation on contentious elements of law and other tensions between immigration advisers and the immigration authority will further deplete already limited advice capacity. With no plan published to increase Home Office casework capacity and with expansive legal aid restrictions, waiting times for decisions across the immigration system could increase further.

Increasing costs The [NRP Network reported](#) a cost to 72 local authorities of £64 million over 3,423 households in 2021/22, there is no capacity for local government to absorb additional costs as a result of immigration legislation, and yet, more categories of exclusions are being created.

Time lost reskilling staff The constantly changing landscape of government policy is placing considerable pressure on council services across the country as hard-learned expertise can be quickly nullified by changing rules and regulations. Time previously designated to direct support and service development will be spent upskilling staff on the implications of new exclusions and exceptions whilst there remains no guarantee that the desired aims of the Act will be workable in practice.



How can local authorities respond?

Evidencing NRPF Support

A collective response will be needed to mitigate the impacts of the Act and the NRPF sector must be in a position to rapidly evidence increasing financial and humanitarian pressures. Identifying future changes in service provision requires a baseline of cost pressures; a view of service requirement before any significant legislative changes.

We are calling on local authorities to ensure that the support they are providing to people with NRPF (“no recourse to public funds”) is being recorded regularly, in a way that allows for easy extraction of data insights. Many NRPF Network members already use [NRPF Connect](#) for this purpose and if you would like to sign up to Connect or get some training on how to better make use of Connect then please contact nrpfconnect@islington.gov.uk.

Maximising immigration advice provision

Legal advice and representation are vital elements of an efficient service since grants of leave to remain allowing access to public funds are the most common route off local authority support. New pressures in the immigration system may make it harder to obtain high quality legal support and a good way to reduce ongoing spend is to identify the existing cases that would benefit from progression now.

NRPF teams, adult and children’s social care departments should ensure that they build strong working relationships with immigration advice providers so that referrals or in-house support can be provided quickly once needs are identified. An [excellent report by Jo Wilding for Justice Together](#) sets out different

models of local authority funded immigration advice. You can view the NRPF Network’s website [for more information on immigration and asylum advice](#).

Building sustainable migrant and refugee teams

Local authorities have been called upon to participate in an array of funded resettlement schemes, including for Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine, whilst also managing pressures in the asylum support system relating to dispersal and asylum contingency accommodation. Councils have risen to these challenges and council officers and partners have learnt new areas of expertise whilst carrying out their duties and making best use of the funding received.

Local authorities must harness the lessons learnt, expertise gained, and partnerships created by these crises to create sustainable migrant and refugee services in their organisations. Building on specialisms and facilitating relationships between social services and migrant and refugee teams will create better council services in the long-term and ensure a positive legacy for all.

Staying aware of national changes

It is the responsibility of each local authority to set a direction of travel and work out how best to meet the needs of the community they serve. To plan local services, it is important to stay up to date with national changes that may impact residents. The NRPF Network will monitor legislative changes that may affect practice and will keep members informed as more detail about the implementation of the Illegal Migration Act is known.



Will the Illegal Migration Act save money - or will it cost more?

The government’s economic impact assessment of the Act tells us little

The Migration Observatory [looks at](#) the government’s [impact assessment](#) and its inadequacies. In June 2023, the Home Office published its long-awaited impact assessment (IA) of the legislation, which focused on economic costs.

Calculating the financial implications of complicated policies is difficult, it argues. This is especially the case when a policy is novel, untested, and has yet to be implemented. While a fuller accounting of the Illegal Migration Act’s implementation costs may be possible in time, it is likely that the overall economic impact will never be assessed properly because the number of people deterred will not necessarily be clear.

Asylum applications go up and down for different reasons. It will not be easy to disentangle the deterrent effect asylum policies from the range of other factors that affect the number of people crossing the Channel, such as geopolitical developments or operational

cooperation on enforcement (e.g., with France or Albania) that are not part of the policy package. In Australia, for example, there is still substantial debate about whether deterrence policies or physical enforcement (pushbacks at sea) were primarily responsible for the large decline in boat arrivals.

If the number of people crossing the channel in small boats declines in future, we will not necessarily know how much is due to the Act. If it does not decline, we will not know whether the number would have been even higher without the new policy.

In other words, because the government’s position is that it is cheaper to keep people in the UK than send them to Rwanda, the cost-effectiveness of the Illegal Migration Act will depend fundamentally upon its deterrent effect. And it is quite possible that the size of this effect will never be known.

Government plan to clamp down on “illegal” migration could cost £6 billion a year

[Sky News covers a new report from IPPR](#) which warns that the closure of legal pathways for asylum seekers could result in thousands left in limbo and reliant on government housing and support. The IPPR claims that - even if the Supreme Court deems the Rwanda deal lawful - deportations are likely to be on such a small scale that arrivals will still outpace the number of people who are removed.

With an inability to work or claim asylum legally, those left in limbo will be reliant on costly government support and housing, while there is also the risk of an expanding undocumented population that is vulnerable to destitution.

The report says that only if the full provisions of the Illegal Migration Act are not put into effect will there be no “perma-backlog” - but that would mean a continuation of the status quo, with the government’s plan for small boats having stalled. It said that even if 500 people are removed per month, annual housing costs of those in limbo could exceed £5 billion at current prices within five years.

Marley Morris, IPPR’s associate director for migration, trade and communities, said:

“There is only a very narrow window for government success on asylum, based on its current plan to forge ahead with the Rwanda deal and the Illegal Migration Act. Even with the Act fully implemented, under most plausible scenarios arrivals will still outpace removals.

“This will mean a growing population of people permanently in limbo, putting huge pressure on Home Office accommodation and support systems - plus a risk of thousands of people who vanish from the official system and are at risk of exploitation and destitution.

“Any incoming government would be likely to face a dire and increasingly costly challenge which it would need to address urgently from the outset - there will be no option to ignore or sideline the crisis it inherits.”

There is more on the IPPR report [later in the newsletter](#).

Illegal Migration Act could be an “own goal” for the Home Office budget

The Home Office may no longer be able to meet the rules it currently relies on to use the international aid budget to support people in their first year in the UK, if the government brings more of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 into force. This is according to a new report, [UK aid to refugees in the UK](#), from the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI), the international aid spending watchdog.

International aid rules allow the cost of supporting asylum seekers and refugees for their first year after arrival to count as for such spending. With a fixed target for international aid spending, means that some of the money allocated towards international aid ends up actually being spent here in the UK.

If asylum seekers who arrive in the UK via irregular routes are deemed illegal and due for removal by the Act – and so are barred from receiving asylum in the country – they would not be eligible for accommodation and support funded from international aid, the report suggests.

The Home Office spent around £2.4 billion of development assistance in the UK in 2022, of which £1.86 billion went on hotel accommodation for asylum seekers and refugees. The government has rejected ICAI’s recommendation to introduce a cap on the proportion of the aid budget that can be used in this way.



Labour’s alternative to the Act – will it be better?

Labour has started to sketch out its rival immigration policy, claiming that it will be more effective in dealing with small boats and in processing asylum claims, including removing more people who are found to be ineligible. Will it work? Here we bring together some of the views expressed after the Labour leader’s announcement.

“Our cruel, unworkable asylum policy”

The Observer welcomed the policy as a [very different approach](#) from “our cruel, unworkable asylum policy”. The real difference, it argues, is that Labour would scrap the government’s unworkable and cruel detention and deportation policies, restoring the right of people to claim asylum in the UK established in the 1951 refugee convention. Instead, Labour will invest in 1,000 extra case workers and a returns unit of 1,000 staff to process claims much more quickly and deport those whose claims are rejected. “That is a far better approach.”

Starmer will also try to negotiate an agreement with the EU in which the UK would accept a quota of refugees in exchange for being able to return those who cross the Channel in small boats, *The Observer* says. The government has attacked Labour for this pragmatic stance, although it has previously unsuccessfully tried to negotiate [just such a deal](#).

“This is perhaps the part of Labour’s plan least likely to succeed; pan-European cooperation has never worked well in the bloc and has broken down further in recent years. But it is the right approach: irregular migration will be a growing global phenomenon, driven by political instability, economic poverty and the climate crisis. Countries such as Italy and Greece cannot be left to cope unilaterally; the problem requires a coordinated response from Europe, and the UK should be part of that.”

“So, Labour has carved out a different and distinctive approach from the government, which is pursuing an unworkable policy in the hope of fooling voters into thinking it has the solution. This commonsense, humane pragmatism from Labour makes for a refreshing change from the populist promises from Conservative politicians pretending there are easy answers to complex problems.”

Writing in *The Guardian*, Thom Brooks, professor of law and government at Durham University, who first put forward [a new migration policy for Labour](#) in 2022, [explains](#) why, despite the problems, he thinks it will work. He argues that Starmer’s plan provides “competence with compassion”.

Immigration expert Colin Yeo, in his blog [We Wanted Workers](#), also looks at Labour’s policy in detail and offers his own proposals for a better system. In a [different article](#), Yeo also points out that, years ago, the Home Office had a refugee integration strategy, which fell well short of what was needed but at least recognised that action was required, including funding for local integration work. Today there is no such strategy. Yeo argues that one is now urgently needed.

“Starmer’s gamble”

Writing in the *Financial Times*, Stephen Bush considered what he calls “[Starmer’s gamble](#)”. What is the cause of the government’s political difficulties over cross-channel migration in small boats? Is it a problem of numbers, he asks, or a problem of control?

If the problem is numbers – too many people are trying to seek a better life in the UK – then the bad news for British governments is that the small boats issue is a product of the fact the UK has already done an awful lot to reduce irregular migration into the country.

Changes in enforcement mean that people who used to come to the UK by hiding in lorries now can’t. Since crossing the Channel, the world’s busiest shipping lane, is much more dangerous than coming via lorry, fewer people attempt the journey. In addition, the UK has successfully forced a lot of people smugglers from the industry.

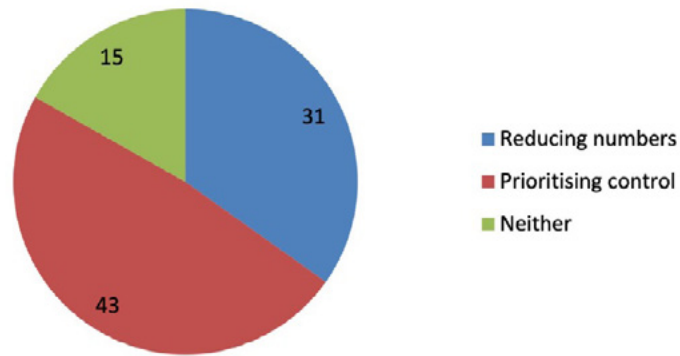
All of this decreases the number of people coming to the UK without a visa, but it also increases the proportion who come via small boats. So, if the reason why voters are cross with ministers about small boats is the number of people coming via that route, there isn’t a politically useful solution here. Every country in the world has some irregular migration into or out of it, and the UK is not going to become an exception no matter what Rishi Sunak or Keir Starmer do.

But if the problem is control – that what makes the matter of small boats politically toxic is that it is a visible sign that the government is not in control of the issue – then Sunak and Starmer do have more options.

Starmer’s proposals have the advantage that the UK would be able to have a greater degree of control, but they sacrifice any idea that you might one day “stop” the movement of people into the UK.

The answer to the question on the previous page is that some voters care about control, some voters care about numbers, and some voters aren't bothered at all. Here's the key chart from think-tank British Future's [most recent report](#) on the state of public opinion on migration:

British Futures asks: which is more important, controlling numbers or reducing immigration?



Further analysis shows that Labour voters are less worried about the total immigration figures. Starmer's gamble with Labour's new position is that the voters he needs to worry about care about control, not numbers. Will it work? One thing in his favour is that the Conservative party's strategy on small boats means that while Labour is not trusted on the issue, the Conservative party is even less trusted. This may mean that the Conservative lines about Labour's deficiencies don't land because the Tory party simply isn't a trusted messenger for it.

There's an important "but" here, Bush adds, which is that it is only in the past few years that the Conservative party has eroded its historic advantage on immigration issues. Labour trailed on this issue even during their 1990s and 2000s heyday. So maybe it takes only the smallest of pushes for the Conservatives to regain the upper hand on this topic.

"Labour must end the demonisation of economic migrants"

In *openDemocracy*, Zoe Gardner [argues](#) that Labour has a real opportunity to propose compassionate immigration policies in its election manifesto. She calls on it to recognise that more immigration is needed to have a healthier economy, by:

- Reducing visa fees and scrapping the unjust "health surcharge" - in particular, stop requiring migrant workers to renew their visas and pay these costs repeatedly every couple of years.
- Untying low-paid migrant workers from exploitative employers by ensuring no visa traps someone in a particular workplace or industry.
- Introducing more genuinely flexible pathways to enter and remain in the country for people seeking work in our essential industries, without requiring a highly paid contract in advance of arrival. These should allow people to switch onto alternative visa pathways if they wish to pursue new employment, training or study opportunities once they are in the UK.
- Refocusing attention on measures to enforce minimum pay and conditions for all workers, including those in harder-to-reach industries such as farming and domestic work.

But the home secretary wants to take immigration policy in the opposite direction

In sharp contrast to Labour's approach, home secretary Suella Braverman [called for sweeping changes](#) in international law on migration, citing a UK analysis which claims that 780 million people could notionally have the "right" to seek asylum in another country.

She asks: "It is therefore incumbent upon politicians and thought leaders to ask whether the Refugee Convention, and the way it has come to be interpreted through our courts, is fit for our modern age? Or whether it is in need of reform?" The Refugee Council's Enver Solomon responded: "After the horror of the Second World War, the international community chose to stand up for those principles which are just as important today as they have ever been. Abandoning them is not an option."

The home secretary also said that "being gay or a woman isn't reason enough to claim asylum", and that the "persecution" requirement to seek asylum has been watered down so that merely claiming "discrimination" is sufficient. Later [she told ITV](#) that "They come to the UK, they purport to be homosexual in the effort to game our system, in the effort to get special treatment." *Huffington Post* reported [a number of angry responses](#) to Braverman's arguments. And in *The Independent*, Moud Goba [asks](#), "I'm a lesbian from Zimbabwe - was I wrong to claim asylum, home secretary?"

On X, Colin Yeo [has a thread](#) saying why the home secretary's ideas won't work, principally because she would need agreement from other European countries that already accept more refugees than the UK does.

The Financial Times [argues](#) that the recent mass arrival of migrants in southern Europe is hindering an important debate about the role of migration:

"The facts, documented by statistics, are there for everybody to see: migration, constantly increasing since 2000, is a global phenomenon which will not be stopped. It is not limited to Europe. In the US, illegal border crossings have quadrupled since Joe Biden became president; the biggest movements of populations actually happen within Asia and Africa. Europe, meanwhile, is experiencing a demographic decline which is also a long-term trend. With an ageing population, its economic growth is hampered by labour shortages. Most economists agree that it can only be fuelled by productivity gains or immigration."

"So rather than trying to block immigration," it adds, "...a sensible remedy seems to be to regulate and organise it."



Small boats, deportations to Rwanda and "safe and legal" routes

What safe and legal routes are available for refugees to come to the United Kingdom?

Sonia Lenegan [explains](#) in *Free Movement* what the safe and legal routes are, and who can access them. She provides a useful table to compare the different routes.

Scheme comparison table

	Length of leave granted?	How long until settlement?	Refugee status?	Application process?	Refugee family reunion available?
UK Resettlement	Six months leave outside the immigration rules (LOTR)	Indefinite leave to remain (ILR) granted on arrival	Yes	No	Yes
Family reunion	In line with refugee sponsor	In line with refugee sponsor	No	Yes	No
Hong Kong	Two and a half or five years	After continuous residence in the UK of five years	No	Yes (£)	No but people can apply to bring dependants
ARAP	Six months LOTR	ILR granted on arrival	No	Can submit a request for eligibility assessment	No
ACRS	Six months LOTR	ILR granted on arrival	No	No	No
Homes for Ukraine	Three years	N/A, settlement is not available	No	Yes	No but people can apply to bring in dependants
Ukraine Family Scheme	Three years	N/A, settlement is not available	No	Yes	No but people can apply to bring in dependants

We need to confront the lie that there are "safe routes" for refugees to come to the UK

Zoe Gardner [argues](#) in the *Byline Times* that we are encouraged to believe that the government has made available safe, formal routes to the UK that refugees are able to access, and that many choose instead, out of some perverse thrill-seeking urge, to "jump the queue" and take incredibly dangerous, irregular journeys across the Channel facilitated by smugglers. It's time we confront this absurdity head on, she says: "the availability of safe routes to the UK for refugees is a lie".

She points out that there is no way to apply for asylum from a British embassy or anywhere else abroad, or to obtain a visa to enter the UK for the purpose of claiming asylum. This is, in fact, the very reason why international law permits people who make it to the UK to request asylum, and the very reason why the Refugee Convention states that refugees must not be penalised for taking irregular routes to reach a country of asylum. The only way to legally claim asylum is to already be in the UK - and for most people that involves taking an illegal route. As Gardner says, "it's a catch-22".

She goes on to say that:

- The "pathetically small number of good refugees" who come through these routes includes just 2,570 Afghans, who have benefited from a variety of routes, only one of which remains open to this day (and which it is not possible to apply for) which has so far helped just 54 people to reach us.
- 374 people from Syria and a mere 136 people from Sudan - two of the world's most currently dangerous countries - have obtained passage to the UK through resettlement in the last year.
- The specific Syrian relocation scheme in fact did enable 20,000 people to travel safely to the UK. "But it was introduced in 2015 by David Cameron, literally five Conservative Prime Ministers ago, and has been closed since early 2021." There is no meaningful way for a Syrian person - regardless of their connections to the UK - to apply for passage to this country if their life is in danger now. "But those 374 people allow the government to keep peddling the lie."
- Meanwhile, over 8,000 Afghans have made it to the UK in the past 12 months by taking a small boat and risking their lives in the Channel. Six tragically died in August making the attempt. Unknown thousands more have died at earlier stages along the dangerous journey to escape from danger.

In *openDemocracy*, Adam Bychawski [interviews](#) Iraqi refugees in Turkey who have been accepted for help through one of the UK's "safe and legal routes". In some cases, they have been waiting almost a decade to be resettled in the UK.

How "stopping the boats" will boost the black economy and criminal underworld

Nick Cohen has [a post](#) (paywall) on some implications of the new legislation. Here is an extract:

To stop the boats, the government will exacerbate the UK's least discussed social problem: undocumented migrants living in the shadows beyond the reach of the state. The social consequences are grim. The consequences for ministers, however, are marvellous. Out of sight and out of mind, migrants will be hidden from the television cameras, and politically a successful cover-up is all that matters.

Until now most "illegals" arriving in the UK have been the world's most unusual criminals. They positively wanted the police to catch them. They got off their boats and searched for anyone in authority. "Illegals" did not evade law enforcement. They embraced it. Contrary to conservative myths, most were refugees who could show they were fleeing from a genuine fear of persecution. They handed themselves in and cooperated with the authorities because they knew there was a good chance that their claim to asylum would be accepted.

In the year ending March 2023, almost three quarters had [initial decisions](#) to grant them protection fall in their favour (and those who did not could appeal). However long the delays a [backlog](#) of 173,000 undecided cases imposed, however miserable living conditions in cramped hotel rooms might be, people stayed in contact with the authorities because there was an excellent chance that they would secure the right to remain legally in the UK at the end of the process.

And now they will withdraw their cooperation.

Home Office backs away from the lessons from the Windrush scandal

Home Office post-Windrush "transformation team" disbanded

The Guardian's Amelia Gentleman, responsible for much of the reporting on the Windrush scandal, **confirms** that the team set up to implement the wide-ranging reforms promised by the Windrush Review, has now been disbanded. The Home Office claims this is "due to the significant progress we have made". However, campaigners working to secure justice for those affected by the Home Office scandal, in which thousands of people were wrongly classified as illegal immigrants, rejected the justification and described the news as insulting.

"It's upsetting to see things being rolled back like this. It feels like Suella Braverman doesn't understand how badly we were affected," said Anthony Bryan, who spent five weeks in immigration detention awaiting deportation after being mistakenly classified as an immigration offender, 52 years after he moved from Jamaica to the UK as an eight-year-old. "It's more than an insult."

The report goes on to say that a cross-departmental working group on the issue has held its final meeting. Although the Home Office had appointed an ethics adviser, to "champion, advise and challenge on ethical behaviour", the person appointed has just left.

Jacqueline McKenzie, a solicitor with Leigh Day, who has handled more than 100 Windrush compensation cases, said she saw little evidence in daily casework-related calls with Home Office staff to suggest the department had introduced significant cultural change. "In terms of its attitudes towards asylum cases, deportation and refugees the department is as hostile as ever. Things have gone backwards in terms of poor decision-making and lack of humanity," she said.

Confirmed: Windrush compensation scheme to be "scaled back"

Action for Race Equality (ARE) is **concerned** to hear of the Home Office's plans to scale back its Windrush compensation scheme intended to help the thousands of people hit by the Windrush scandal. The scheme was set up to compensate for the hardship suffered. Now, the number of payments to victims is to be reduced, Home Office minister Lord Simon Murray **confirmed**, because of "low application numbers".

The Home Office know that some victims are very reluctant to come forward because of their hardline approach to immigration. It takes a long time to establish trust and confidence amongst people that faced such egregious treatment from the department.

ARE's Chief Executive Jeremy Crook said:

"ARE strongly urges Lord Murray, not to close the compensation door on the victims of the Windrush scandal. ARE has been funded to find community-based advocacy organisations across the UK and support them to provide practical help to victims so they can get the justice, citizenship, and compensation they deserve."

"We have £1.3 million to fund these advocacy support groups. In the past 12 months we have funded 12 groups and will shortly fund another eight, taking the total to 20. And through our work so far, we know there are large parts of the UK where potential victims have no access to advocacy support such Bristol, Cardiff, and Leeds."

Dr Wanda Wyporska, chief executive of the Black Equity Organisation, **told The Independent** the Home Office had overseen a compensation scheme "so bureaucratic and complicated" that some victims had died before their cases could be resolved, while others had been too "traumatised and intimidated" to apply.

Lord Murray's letter also appeared to downplay the impact of the scandal on victims, suggesting that thousands of claimants did not suffer as a result of the discrimination and so needn't apply for compensation.



Jamaican pensioner, 92, among overseas NatWest customers to have accounts axed by bank

Meanwhile, the problems suffered by the Windrush generation continue. A 92-year-old Windrush pensioner is among "hundreds" of NatWest bank account holders living overseas to have their accounts axed, *The Independent* **reveals**. Philip Cato, who lived in Britain for over 50 years but has since retired to Jamaica, was not able to access his UK state pension for seven months due to the closure in January this year.

Mr Cato's daughter Judy said the "stressful" situation had impacted him, his 82-year-old wife and their family, who found it impossible to get help from the bank to access the thousands of pounds it had withheld.

Even now, Theresa May "doesn't understand why the Windrush scandal happened"

Writing in *Free Movement*, Colin Yeo **reviews** parts of May's new book, *The Abuse of Power*, and says that she has produced "a classic non-apology. It was anyone's fault but hers", in writing about the Windrush scandal. On the Windrush generation's immigration status, May says that "no-one had given them any papers to confirm this", but of course such papers only became necessary when Theresa May abandoned identity cards and then instituted the "hostile environment" which required everyone to be able to prove their entitlement to be in the UK, even if they had lived here for decades. Only then did the Windrush generation's lack of papers to confirm their arrival become a barrier preventing them from keeping their jobs and housing.

"She does not seem to grasp that the Windrush generation usually did not really need papers proving their status until she, Theresa May, came along and created the hostile environment."
Colin Yeo



Refugees from Afghanistan become homeless as they are forced to leave hotels

The housing rights website is updated as policies for dealing with new refugee groups change. Details of housing and benefits eligibility for refugees from Afghanistan and elsewhere are posted on the [page advising migrants](#) and the more detailed page for [advisers](#). See also the equivalent pages for Scotland [here](#) and [here](#).

Afghan homelessness in UK rises and over 4,200 still can't get here

As the end of August deadline loomed, by which hotel accommodation for Afghan refugees would be ended, it became clear that many faced homelessness. Official figures [published for the first time](#) showed that, even by August 31, 476 families had presented as homeless, of whom 446 had just left hotels. The government was urged to [extend hotel eviction deadline](#), but did not.

Councils told the [BBC](#) that Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire were particularly affected, but Southampton, Basingstoke, Devon and Essex would also be impacted in the coming weeks and months. One authority in Essex said it had nine families facing homelessness. In Milton Keynes, the council had received 32 homelessness applications. Councils fear more will follow, putting pressure on already squeezed local authorities, who have a legal duty to find accommodation for homeless people.

Meanwhile, families still in hotels after the deadline [stopped receiving food](#), according to [openDemocracy](#). One man they spoke to in Bradford said there were no fridges or cooking facilities, meaning he and his family have to rely on takeaways for hot food.

"We are far from the centre and there is nothing but pizza and burger takeaways nearby. I feel terrible that this is all my children eat now - it is not suitable for them."

Veterans minister Johnny Mercer [told ITV News](#) every Afghan resettled in the UK since the Taliban takeover in August 2021 had left taxpayer-funded hotels and were either already in suitable accommodation or would be "in the next month or two".

But the Local Government Association (LGA) said around a fifth of Afghan refugees who have been evicted from hotel accommodation have presented to councils as homeless in August. LGA chairman Shaun Davies described the "huge pressure" on councils who were already dealing with record numbers of households living in temporary accommodation and an acute shortage of housing across the country.

Mercer said he was proud of how the UK had helped resettle around 24,600 Afghans since the Taliban takeover but accepted more should be done to help the more than 4,200 eligible for UK refuge stranded in Afghanistan or neighbouring Pakistan. Asked if the UK had abandoned those people who had worked with British forces during the occupation of Afghanistan in the early 2000s, the minister said: "The government is well aware that there are people in Afghanistan who are eligible to be in the UK, who we owe, who are not here today. That is an ongoing issue which we are not blind to."



Councils reject funding to assist Afghan families

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities said a £500 million local authority housing fund (LAHF) announced in December was expected to provide up to 4,000 homes for Afghans and Ukrainians by next year. Funding was offered to 182 local authorities as they were 'deemed to have the greatest need' but one in five of these were not handed their allocation - worth more than £62 million - [according to analysis](#) by the *Municipal Journal*.

More than 25 authorities did not receive their full allocation when the first tranche was paid earlier this year. Councils including Luton BC and Epsom & Ewell BC complained the LAHF was unfair to the thousands of desperate families already on the housing waiting list because it prioritised refugees over their existing residents.

A Luton statement said accepting the LAHF would have pushed the "far too many disadvantaged families even further down its very long housing waiting list". It argued it should not have to choose between supporting residents in desperate housing need and those fleeing dangerous places around the world.

Sector sources suggested there were a number of other key reasons for the poor take up of the fund - including Whitehall's expectation for councils to part-fund or finance some of the required capital, a reluctance from local authorities without their own stock to create a

Housing Revenue Account just for this fund and the government's unrealistic timescales, with the money having to be spent by April 2024.

Wyre Forest DC chief executive, Ian Miller, said: "We've all got a moral duty and would love to help but neither councils nor housing associations are awash with cash. DLUHC could have funded 100 per cent grant instead of giving its underspends back to the Treasury."

Councils were told by the government to move Afghans evicted from hotels over the summer into housing. However, a number of local authorities did not have enough time to use the LAHF - under which they were urged to obtain and refurbish properties by November - before evictions took place.

The *Guardian* [reported in July](#) that hotels occupied by resettled Afghans were being cleared for small boat arrivals. Suella Braverman, the home secretary, sent letters threatening to remove Afghans from hotels, but the *Guardian* was told that many of those rooms will still be paid for by the UK taxpayer and are part of a 5,000-bed "buffer" for any surge in the number of people arriving by small boats this summer and autumn.

In at least three hotels where Afghans have been asked to leave - in Wetherby, West Yorkshire, and in Chelmsford and Colchester in Essex - the government is planning to use the accommodation to house people who have travelled to the UK in small boats.

The end of bridging accommodation is devastating for Afghan refugees

Helen White, chief executive of Taff Housing [told Inside Housing](#) that "It's a real juggling act, trying to find suitable homes for those most in need and avoid making people live in overcrowded conditions. For every home we provide to a person or family in crisis, we push other families that little bit closer to crisis point."

Taff has been supporting the resettlement of Afghan refugees for the past two years and has successfully found homes for over 500 during that time. Taff has been held up in the Welsh Parliament as a best-practice example of supporting refugees to resettle and thrive.

Now, Helen White says that "every council and support provider is under immense pressure to find a suitable home for those seeking refuge before they are forced into homelessness." Before the August deadline, there were reported to be 9,000 Afghan refugees still living in bridging accommodation, many of whom were children.

"Living in a crowded hotel can be detrimental to mental and physical health, causing anxiety and depression."

UK Government criticised for failing to deliver on promise of ‘warm welcome’ to Afghan refugees

A new report from the Refugee Council reveals how the UK government is failing to fulfil its promise of a “warm welcome” to Afghans who stood alongside British forces as Kabul fell to the Taliban two years ago.

The report, [What Happened to the Warm Welcome?](#), is based on Home Office data, policy analysis and testimonies. It highlights a series of failures of the so-called Operation Warm Welcome. The report coincides with the eviction of thousands of Afghan evacuees from hotels, leaving them to face the prospect of homelessness.

British forces depended on local people during the conflict in Afghanistan and committed to offer those it evacuated sanctuary in the UK. The government pledged to provide them with support to rebuild their lives. Now the government’s actions have left thousands of men, women and children trapped in limbo, with nowhere permanent to live, while thousands more remain stuck in Afghanistan or Pakistan unable to reach the UK safely.

The report exposes several key failures in the implementation of Operation Warm Welcome:

- Only 54 Afghans have been newly resettled under the flagship scheme, not the promised 5,000.
- This is compared to over 8,000 Afghans who arrived in the past year by crossing the Channel in small boats out of desperation. For every Afghan who managed to arrive through a resettlement scheme, about 90 resorted to risking their lives at sea.

- Thousands of Afghan evacuees initially housed in temporary hotel accommodation now face eviction, leaving many vulnerable to homelessness.
- Afghan families remain torn apart, as the Home Office has failed to establish a clear process for the majority of Afghan refugees to reunite with family members who were left behind in the evacuation.
- Afghans crossing by boat to reach safety in the UK will now be prohibited from ever claiming asylum in the UK and be subject to detention and removal.

The report calls on the government to urgently address these issues and fulfil its commitment to protect and house Afghan refugees.

Responding to another [report](#) on how hostile immigration policies are “piling misery on to children” coming from Afghanistan, Colin Yeo [says](#) that the government could surely have dealt with the consequences much, much better than this?

“Disruption to these families was obviously inevitable; it was inherent to their situation. Which made it all the more important to put proper resources and planning into helping them establish themselves here in the UK. They will be permanent residents and hopefully, one day, citizens. This is just a terrible start to their new lives here and it is not just bad for them but it is bad for society.”

One Afghan family that arrived by small boat told *The Independent* about [the panic attacks and malnutrition](#) they had suffered since arriving.

Rishi Sunak accused of having ‘no plan’ for Afghans in limbo two years after fall of Kabul

The Independent [accuses the government](#) of having “no plan” for Afghan refugees. It says that, speaking on the two-year anniversary of Operation Pitting – Britain’s biggest rescue mission since the Second World War – MPs and top military brass urged the PM to “urgently” help refugees who worked with the UK come to Britain.

Veterans minister Johnny Mercer, who is responsible for looking after Afghans brought to the UK, said he was determined to make resettlement schemes “work properly” as he acknowledged that things could have been done better since August 2021. But asked by *The Independent* what plans it had to speed up the process of bringing Afghans whom the UK has agreed to help to safety, the government did not say.

Around 1,950 Afghans, including family members of those who worked with British forces, who are eligible for relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocations

and Assistance Policy remain stuck in Afghanistan. A further 1,400 people who have been accepted to come to the UK are stuck in British High Commission hotels in Pakistan – with only 35 relocated since 1 December. At the moment, they are supposed to arrange for their own accommodation in the UK.

Lord Dannatt, the former head of the British Army, said he had been told by the MoD that the government was reluctant to help more people arrive until it had cleared the backlog of 8,000 already-accepted Afghans who have been living in Britain’s hotels.

Meanwhile the latest [quarterly immigration figures](#) show how many Afghans are arriving by so-called “illegal” routes: there were 898 arrivals from Afghanistan in January-March this year and 576 Afghans from April-June. The top nationality making channel crossings this year has been Afghans.

English language ‘bureaucracy’ stopping Afghan women from traveling to UK

The *Arab News* [reports](#) that lack of proficiency in English is stopping numerous women trapped in Afghanistan from being reunited with their husbands in the UK. The issue is particularly concerning given that the Taliban has banned women from leaving Afghanistan without a male companion, as well as prohibiting women’s education, making it very difficult for many to learn a second language.

Afghanistan has also closed all its English-language test centres, making it even harder to receive certification. Those wishing to do so must travel to neighbouring Pakistan, which is complicated further by the Taliban’s travel rules.

The Independent [reported](#) that one British-Afghan man struggled to secure a visa for his wife and daughter to travel to Pakistan to undergo further tests to facilitate their relocation to the UK. His wife had been studying English in preparation for applying for a UK spousal visa before the Taliban took control of the country in 2021, and she has subsequently been prevented from continuing her studies.

“I can’t see my baby, I have paid around £7,000-8,000 in Home Office and solicitor’s fees. A decision needs to be taken because if something happens to my wife, who is going to be responsible?”

On LBC, lawyer and campaigner Zehra Zaidi [told Rachel Johnson](#) that new barriers put in place by the Home Office for Afghan women wanting to be reunited with their partners already in the UK cause an “insurmountable burden”.

The Times described how the Home Office blocked a three-year old Afghan toddler from joining his parents in the UK even though his father worked as a British army interpreter. Larisa Brown, who is now the defence editor at *The Times* but was then working for the *Daily Mail*, played a major part in that paper’s campaign to secure asylum for those who had worked for the British during the 20 years of western presence in Afghanistan. Her account of what happened to one particular family – the father, who used to tend the gardens in a British compound at Lashkar Gah base, his son who worked with British soldiers as an interpreter, and the rest of their relatives – is told in her book, [The Gardener of Lashkar Gah](#).



Reforming the Afghanistan resettlement schemes

Two recent reports call for action to allow more people to come to the UK from Afghanistan.

JUSTICE [launched a report](#), *Reforming the Afghanistan Resettlement Schemes: the way forward for ARAP and ACRS*. This marks the two-year anniversary of the fall of Kabul and the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, marking the end of British Operations in the country.

Refugee Legal Support also has [a new report](#), *Two years of empty promises: the UK leaves Afghans stranded and at risk*. New research from the Afghan Pro Bono Initiative, a legal project working with Afghans to access the schemes, shines a light on the issues preventing people from relocation to the UK and makes recommendations for improvements.

The report exposes the often absurd requirements placed on people fleeing Afghanistan, for example requiring applicants to request passports from the very government they’re fleeing or have to dangerously cross borders in order to submit paperwork for the UK Government. The report also raises concerns about delays on people’s applications due to lack of proper resourcing by the government to make decisions quickly.

It makes a number of recommendations, including to provide safe and secure biometric enrolment, to expand concessions on document flexibility, to expand the scope for family reunion and to broaden the eligibility of ACRS.

Latest news on refugees from Ukraine

The housing rights website page on [Help for Ukrainian refugees](#) is being updated regularly with the latest government guidance and other news. Please check it to stay up to date (and let us know if anything needs changing by emailing policyandpractice@cih.org).

Note that the deadline for applying to the Ukraine extension scheme (for those in the UK already with other types of visa) has been extended to November 23, 2023. Ukrainians coming under the family and homes schemes don't have to get their biometrics done before arriving.

The government is trying to recruit more hosts for its Homes for Ukraine scheme. In August, the government began to appeal for new hosts for those who had left their previous accommodation. You can find more details about hosting on the [housing rights website](#).

More than 7,000 Ukrainian refugee households now homeless

The Ukraine Scheme homelessness statistics released each month give an update on the long-term consequences of accommodating Ukrainian refugees. The total number of Ukrainian households recorded by local authorities as owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty by the end of August was 7,760, more than half of them (4,890) because hosting arrangements under the Homes for Ukraine scheme had broken down or ended. Authorities with large numbers of homeless ranged from urban Wandsworth to rural Somerset.

More than half of Ukrainian refugees in the UK plan to stay here

The Migration Observatory has a [survey and statistics](#) on Ukrainians in the UK:

- Total weekly arrivals under the two main Ukraine visa schemes peaked at 10,000 in May 2022, and had fallen to 1,000 in March 2023.
- London had received around 18,000 arrivals under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme as of May 2023 – ten per cent of all arrivals.
- As of March 2023, 72 per cent of adult arrivals under the Ukraine Family Scheme and Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme were women, and 29 per cent of all arrivals were under 18.
- More than half (52 per cent) of adults surveyed who entered the UK under the Ukraine schemes said they intend to live in the UK most of the time, even when they feel it is safe to return to Ukraine.
- Of the roughly five million people who had left Ukraine for European countries by May 2023, four per cent had gone to the UK.
- In 2021 and 2022, Ukrainians were the most common recipients of seasonal worker visas, receiving 42 per cent.

DLUHC statistics show that 48,000 Ukrainian refugees were in employment in June 2023, and the majority of those with jobs are women.

Ukrainians in Herefordshire to get £500 transport grants

According to the BBC, transport grants worth £500 will be offered to Ukrainian refugees across Herefordshire due to a lack of public transport. The council said the lack of services in rural areas meant Ukrainian guests often had to rely on "others, particularly their hosts".

In total there are around 700 Ukrainians living with host families in Herefordshire. They can spend the grant on public transport, taxis, buying and running a vehicle or bike, or getting a driving licence. Herefordshire Council expects the maximum cost of the transport grants to be £330,000, equivalent to 600 guests taking one up plus 10 per cent for administration.

Meanwhile separate funding from the council to support groups helping integrate the Ukrainians, paid for out of the same government funding pot, has been extended for another year. The Support for Ukraine Community Integration Grant, which makes payments of up to £100,000 to community and voluntary groups, will now run to the end of January 2025.

What do we know about where refugees and asylum seekers live?

Derek Long, a CIH member who is senior vice president of Global Engagement of the Affordable Housing Institute, writing personally, looks at what the data tell us about where recent arrivals live.

The government's [latest immigration figures](#), broken down by local authority area, reveal a tapestry of different concentrations of Ukrainian and Afghan refugees and of supported asylum seekers. The concentrations are the interplay of government-organised allocations and private citizen initiatives. Although many individuals lack local authority addresses, this article and the maps are able to show that in-migration by different groups leads to concentrations in different and surprising places.

Altogether the location data log 265,513 people across the UK, made up from 126,537 hosted via the Homes for Ukraine scheme, 21,526 arrivals through the two resettlement schemes from Afghanistan and 117,450 supported asylum seekers (including those in support accommodation and those only receiving subsistence payments). The maps are based on these numbers. They exclude categories such as Syrian refugees for which we don't have comparable location data.

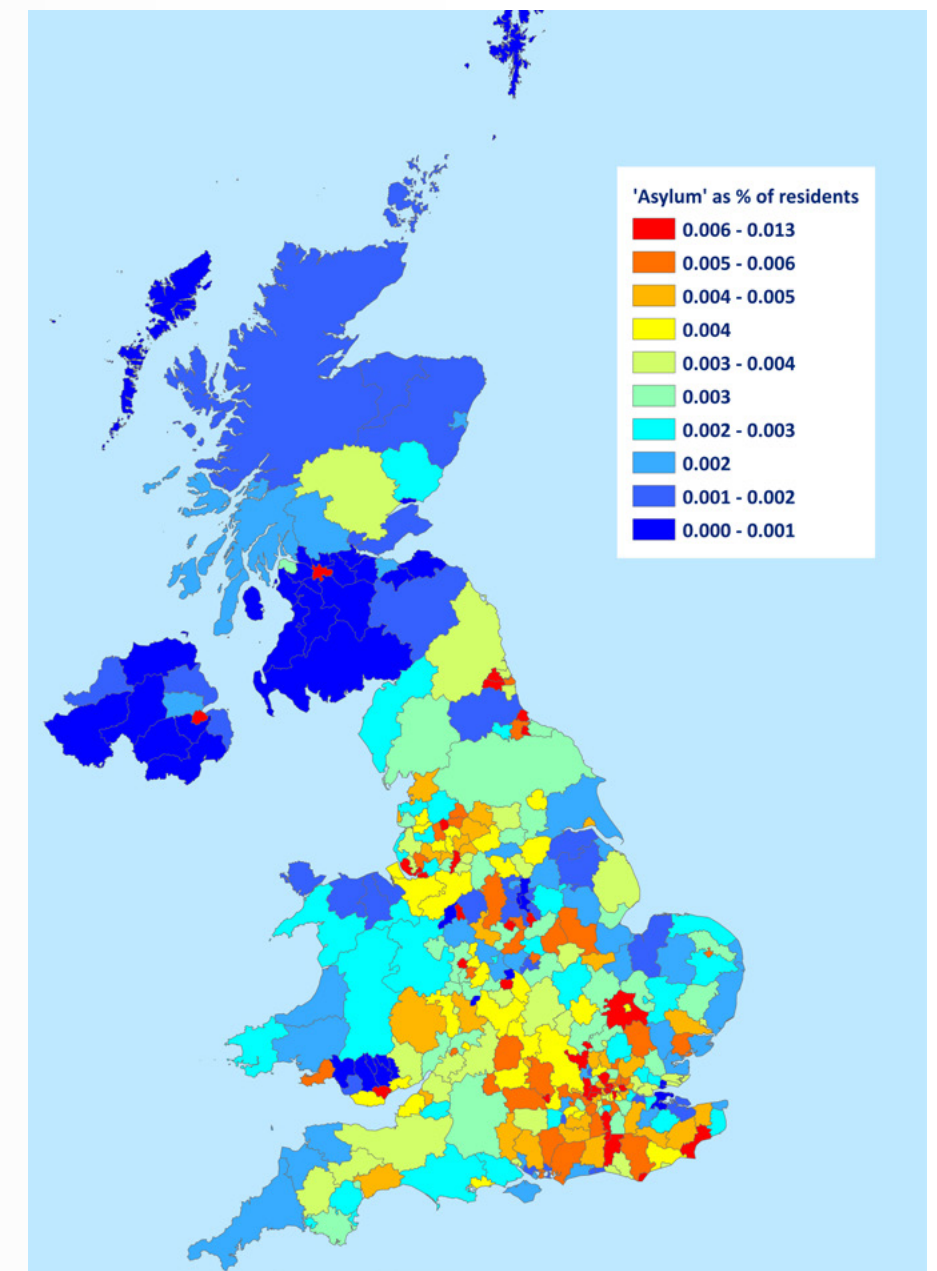
Where are Ukrainians going?

Up to June 2023, 300,319 applications had been made for visas under the two main schemes available to Ukrainian nationals to enter the UK (the figures omit visa extensions, granted to people already in the UK as workers, etc. prior to the conflict). Of these, 77.8 per cent were granted, of which 76.8 per cent resulted in 179,500 arrivals. Although much diminished from mid-2022, the flow was still 10,200 arrivals in Q2. Some 54,271 individuals (23.2 per cent) with visas who have not yet arrived may do so over the course of 2023.

Of the total numbers reported, only Buckinghamshire, Somerset, Wiltshire, North Yorkshire, Barnet, Cornwall currently host more than a thousand individuals.

Arrivals per 1,000 residents are shown in map 1. The average UK rate is 1.5 refugees per 1,000 residents. Arrivals are concentrated mainly in the South East and London. Exceptionally, in the top 20, Derbyshire Dales has the highest rate of 5.1 guests per 1,000 capita, with lower rates for South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge and Rutland. Locations largely correlate to less deprived areas, where presumably more residents have felt able to act as hosts.

Map 1: Ukrainian refugees per 1,000 residents in the UK, at June 2023



Note: All maps are shaded red for high, blue for low. The 361 LAs are divided into deciles.

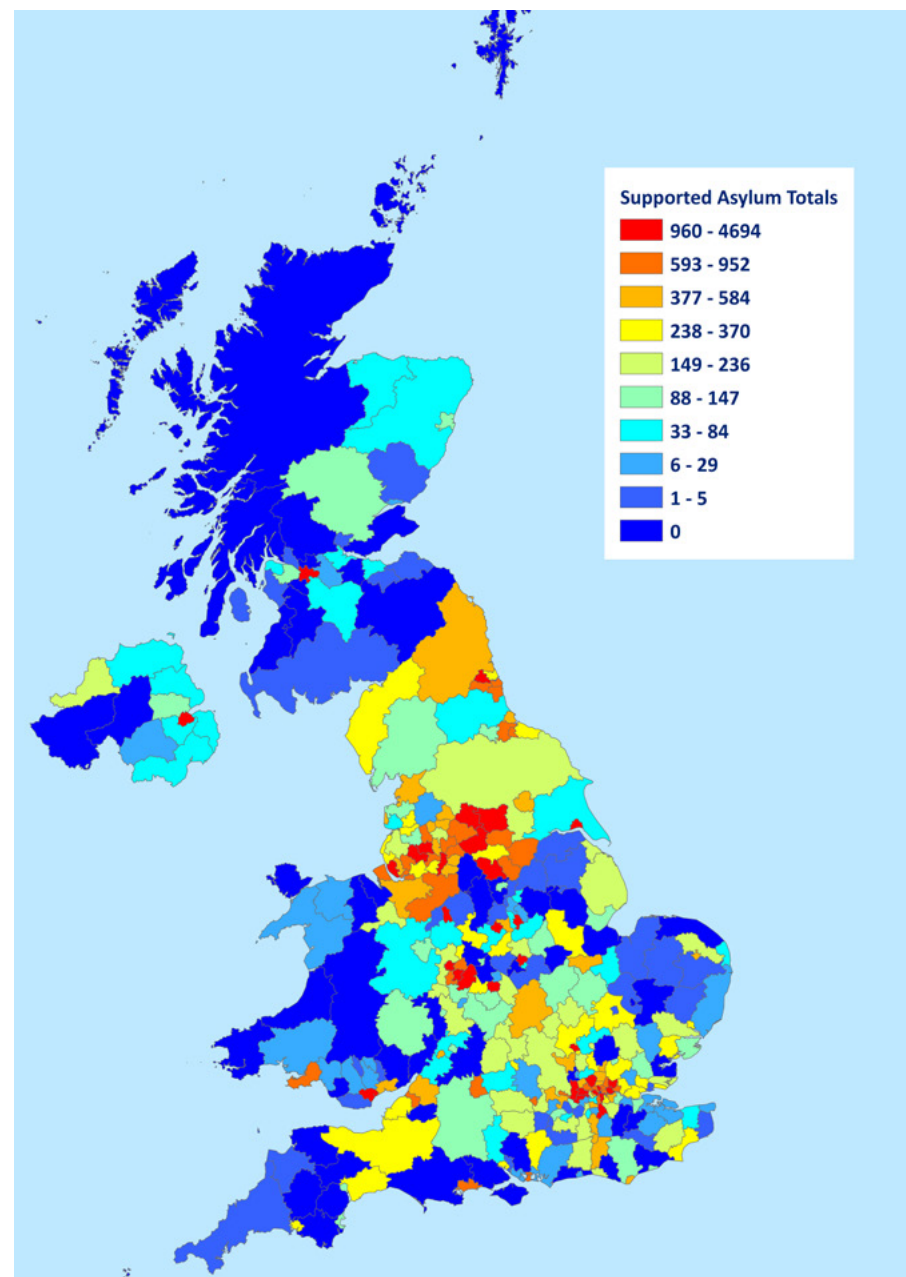
Where are Afghan refugees going?

Since the first arrivals in 2021, the Afghan schemes had resettled a total of 21,526 people by June 2023. The largest total population in-flows have been to Crawley (776), Manchester (756), Bristol (535) and Leeds (514). These four account for 14.8 per cent of the 17,409 individuals for which we have data on their locations. The per capita rate across the UK is 0.26 per 1,000 resident population. The Crawley figure is a significant outlier and appears related to "bridging accommodation" (principally hotels) near Gatwick Airport. Inflows have not initially been into existing Afghan population concentrations, but this may well change as more families leave bridging accommodation.

Supported asylum seekers are heavily concentrated in a few urban areas

At 117,285, supported asylum seekers constitute 1.75 per 1,000 population i.e., 0.175 per cent. They are heavily concentrated. Almost two-thirds (62.4 per cent) of LAs in the UK accommodate in total only 10 per cent of supported asylum seekers. The top 20 local authorities accommodate 35.1 per cent. The top-ten totals run in this order: Glasgow City, Birmingham, Hillingdon, Belfast, Liverpool, Coventry, Hounslow, Manchester, Barnet and Bradford. Glasgow has 4,694 individuals which is more than 50 per cent higher than second-placed Birmingham.

Map 2: Total numbers of supported asylum seekers

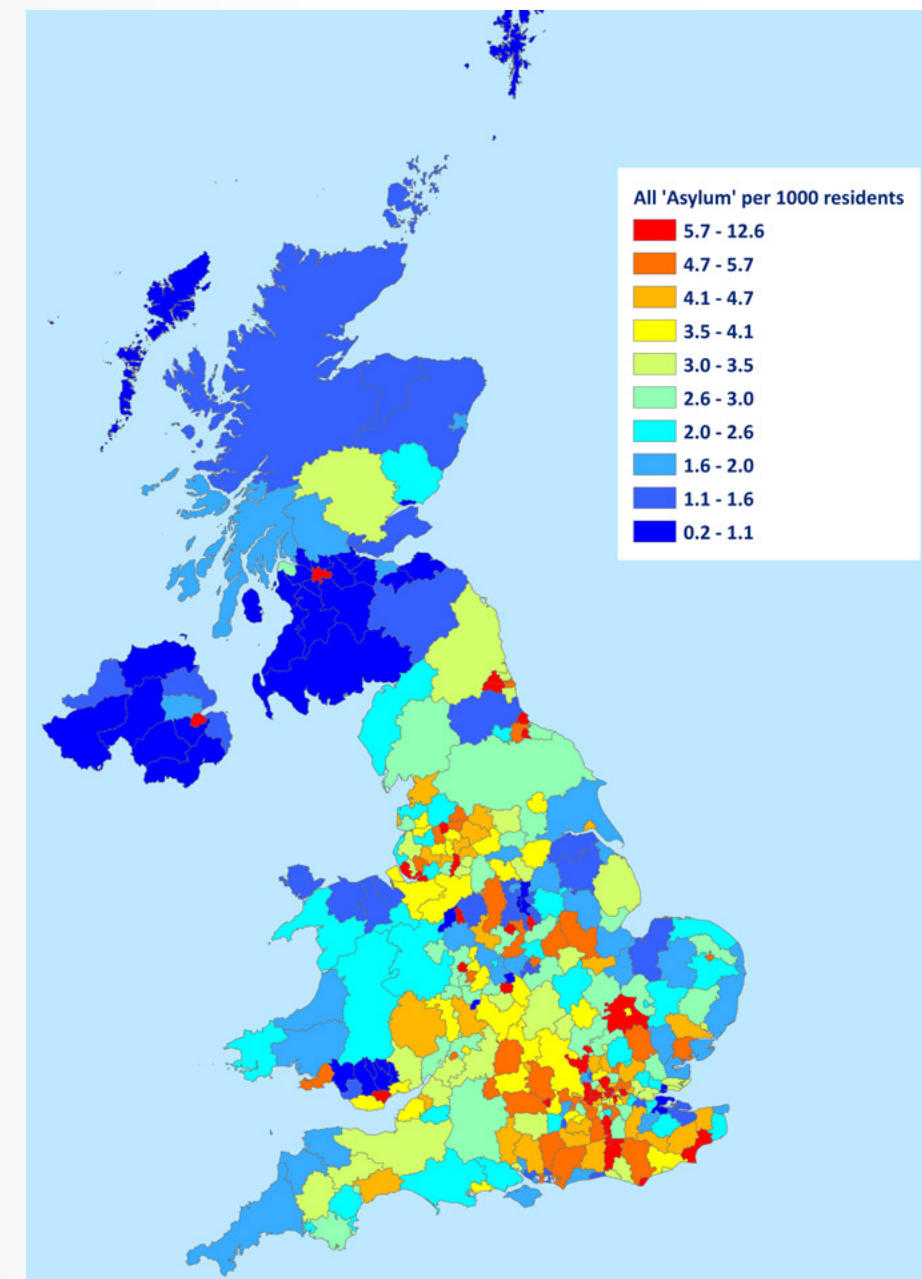


What does the map look like for all groups added together?

If we bracket together all three groups who can be broadly described as seeking "asylum" in the UK, they total three people per 1,000 residents, perhaps a surprisingly low figure bearing in mind the media coverage these groups receive. After Crawley's outlying 12.6 per 1,000 residents, London boroughs have the highest arrivals ratio to resident population. The "top" boroughs are Hillingdon, Hounslow, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea. Belfast, Glasgow and Coventry are the only non-London boroughs in the "top ten".

In map 3, the highest concentrations are the areas coloured red or orange. For the purpose of the map, "asylum" refers to three specific groups: currently supported asylum seekers in the UK, together with supported Ukrainian refugees (Homes for Ukraine scheme) and resettled refugees from Afghanistan.

Map 3: Number of total "asylum" arrivals per 1,000 resident population



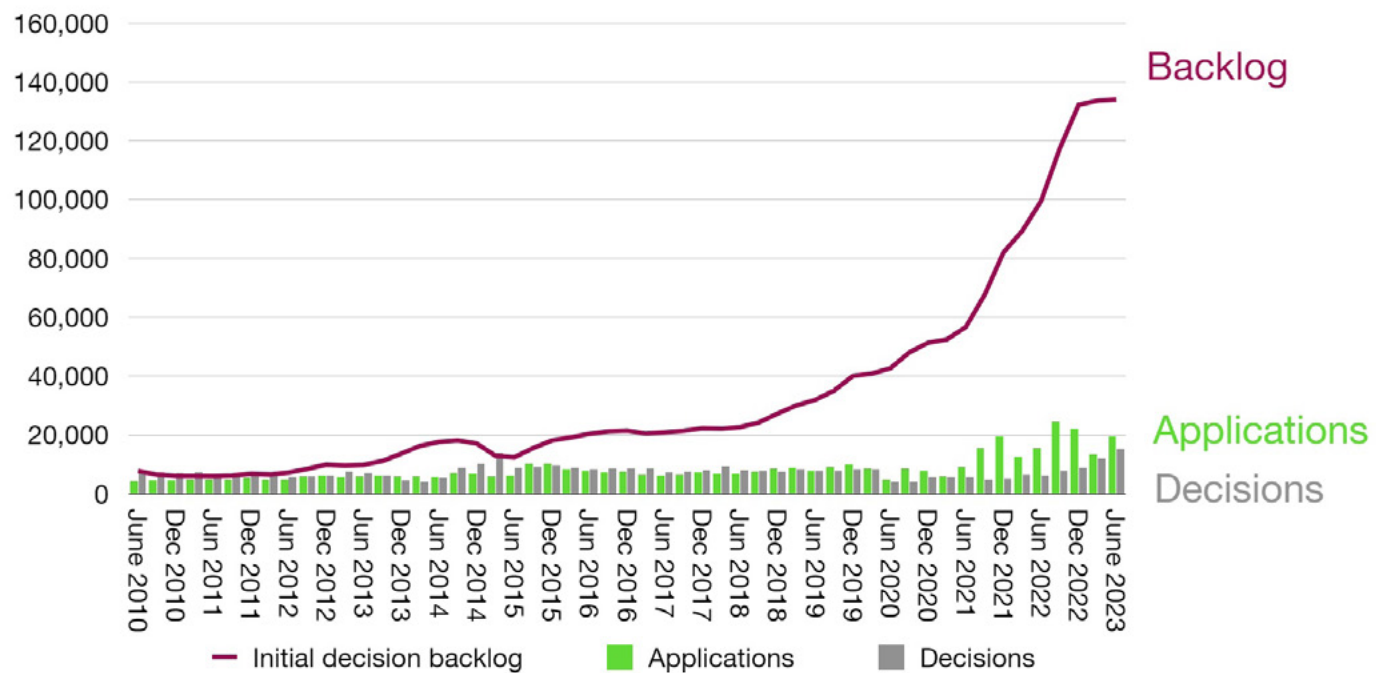
Note: All maps are shaded red for high, blue for low. The 361 LAs are divided into deciles.

Asylum claims - the backlog stabilises but doesn't fall

Backlog stabilises - for now?

The latest [quarterly immigration figures](#) (for June 2023) show that the backlog of undecided asylum claims in the system has levelled off, because for the last quarter the number of new cases was similar to the number of decisions made on old ones. *Free Movement* provides an updated chart.

Asylum applications vs asylum backlog



Source: Home Office statistics to June 2023, tables Asy_D01, Asy_D02 and Asy_04. 'Decisions' excludes resettlement decisions.



The number of asylum cases awaiting an initial decision was 134,046 (relating to 175,457 people), a rise of 35 per cent on the same period the previous year. The number of "legacy cases" (made before June 2022) stands at 67,870, down from 90,358 at the end of December when the prime minister made a commitment to clear them by the end of 2023. However, the rate of decision-making will have to improve significantly if his pledge is to be met. It's astonishing that 83 per cent of claims made in 2018 have not been processed five years later.

It's also notable that the level of approvals over the past 12 months (71 per cent) remains high. And this takes no account of approvals resulting from appeals. This again illustrates the futility and cruelty of lengthy decision-making processes, since by far the majority of asylum claims are eventually approved.

The Financial Times notes that the cost of the UK's asylum system has nearly doubled in the past year to almost £4 billion, according to official data that reveals huge increases associated with the record backlog in the processing of claims. Home Office figures released in August showed that costs reached £3.96 billion in the 12 months to the end of June 2023, up from £2.12 billion in the same period a year earlier, and more than six times the £0.63 billion in 2018 when the asylum backlog began to build.

UK law firms threaten to halt work on asylum cases without higher pay offer

The Financial Times says that lawyers are calling on government to improve the fees paid via legal aid. They warned the government that a 15 per cent rise in their hourly fees will fail to prevent a "catastrophic" breakdown in legal representation for asylum seekers.

Ministers put forward the increase in July to ensure there were enough lawyers willing to take on cases and to help clear the record backlog of asylum cases. But in a letter to justice secretary Alex Chalk, 66 law firms said they would reduce work on asylum claims and decline all new work under the Illegal Migration Act passed by parliament last month unless the government improved its offer.

The firms said hourly fees for immigration and asylum work had not increased since 1996 and were insufficient to cover costs. Now £52 per hour in London and £47 per hour outside the capital, they added that fees were half what they would be had they risen in line with inflation over the years and should rise to at least £100 per hour.

"If these changes are not brought about quickly, we will be forced to continue to reduce the amount of controlled work that we take on and will be unable to take on work under the IMA," the letter said, noting that 25,000 asylum seekers already in the UK lacked legal representation.



IPPR forecasts what the “asylum in-tray” will be at the time of the next election

IPPR’s [new report](#) *The Asylum In-Tray* in 2025 looks at the prognosis for the asylum system due to be inherited by the next government. IPPR research found the number of withdrawal decisions by claimants has soared in the first half of the year, making up 47 per cent of all initial asylum decisions. The think-tank concluded that the reduction in the backlog of people waiting for an asylum decision was not due to the Home Office’s efforts to improve its processes. The IPPR warned: “This risks pushing people underground and into the informal economy, while creating more work for the Home Office in the long run as people make fresh asylum claims.”

Asylum claimants joining the illegal economy will still add to demand on local services. They end up in houses of multiple occupancy or illegal dwellings – known as beds in sheds – and people will still access public services who are not registered and not paying into their provision.

IPPR’s Marley Morris said: “Many of the most recent decisions by the Home Office are withdrawals rather than grants or refusals. In the long run, this could backfire on the government, as people whose applications are withdrawn end up being pushed underground or make fresh asylum claims.

“Once the government implements the Illegal Migration Act, this could make matters even worse. Even if the Rwanda scheme is ruled to be lawful by the Supreme Court, it is likely that the number of arrivals will outpace the number of removals, creating a growing ‘perma-backlog’ of asylum seekers trapped in limbo. This could cost the Home Office billions each year.”

But the Home Office said it had taken action including ending the turnover of assessors.

A spokesperson said: “The Illegal Migration Act will help to clear the asylum backlog by allowing us to detain and swiftly remove those who arrive here illegally. While we operationalise the measures in the Act, we continue to remove those with no right to be here through existing powers.

“We are also on track to clear the ‘legacy’ backlog of asylum cases. It has been reduced by a nearly a third since the start of December and we have doubled the number of asylum decision makers in post over the past two years.”

The diagram shows IPPR’s forecast of the “state of the in-tray” by 2025.

Area of policy	The in-tray in 2025	The in-tray if the Illegal Migration Act is fully in force
Numbers of new arrivals	No reason to expect a significant decline by the next election	Illegal Migration Act and Rwanda plan unlikely to have a major deterrent effect. But migration patterns may shift, with more undetected arrivals who do not make asylum claims and a growing undocumented population
Processing of asylum claims	Overall backlog could still be significant by next election	The Act risks a ‘perma-backlog’ of people permanently inadmissible to the asylum system. Arrivals likely to outpace removals, even if Rwanda plan deemed lawful
Detention	Government plans to expand the detention estate will come with a considerable price tag	The Act expands detention powers and imposes limits on being granted bail. But given removals at scale are unlikely, more detention could mean a more costly, harmful and ineffectual system
Asylum accommodation and support	In June 2023, over 50,000 people were in hotels, etc. In 2022-23 around £2.3 billion was spent on hotels. Progress in finding alternatives has been slow, and so contingency accommodation such as hotels are likely to still be in use by the next election	The ‘perma-backlog’ of asylum applicants could increase accommodation costs as this group is accommodated indefinitely. Or people may avoid asylum accommodation and risk destitution and exploitation
Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)	Rising USAC numbers are being looked after by local authorities, putting pressures on children’s services. By the next election, the government is likely to need to respond to logistical, financial and safeguarding concerns from local councils	The Act allows for temporary leave for USAC until they turn 18. Then the duty to remove will apply. Allowing children to stay only temporarily makes it particularly challenging for local authorities to provide support
Removals	The government now seeks to implement removals to safe third countries. This is very challenging – only 12 people were removed to a third country via this process in 2022. Even the Rwanda plan would only allow removals on a small scale. By the next election, the returns system is therefore likely to be dysfunctional.	The Act prevents people arriving irregularly and claim asylum from being removed to their home country in most cases (with the exception “safe countries”). They therefore need to be removed to a safe “third country”, a challenging and convoluted approach to removals.

More ways to deter asylum claims: withdrawals, refusals, detentions, ankle tags and prison sentences

Why and how is the Home Office treating more asylum claims as “withdrawn”?

Statistics show that more asylum claims are being withdrawn. Free Movement explains why. This what they conclude:

“Treating asylum claims as withdrawn is not new. However, recent Home Office practice and the statement of changes to the Immigration Rules suggests these decisions are on the rise. Unfortunately, all this will likely achieve is to cause misery to those caught out, delay the eventual consideration of their claim and further burden decision-makers. The number of fresh asylum claims and judicial review claims will likely increase a significant proportion of which will be successful.”

“Treating an asylum claim as withdrawn does not magically make the person concerned disappear. They are still here. They will need to be dealt with some time. They cannot be removed without some assessment of whether it is safe to do so. The Home Office may be saving itself some effort in the short term and reducing the apparent asylum backlog. But they are doing so at the expense of creating more work in the long term.”

Tim Farron MP asked the Home Office how many people have had their asylum claim withdrawn because they did not complete the new streamlined asylum process questionnaire. The Home Office [did not know the answer](#).

Colombian migrant begged to be sent home - but died in UK detention

The [BBC told the sad story](#) of a Colombian engineer who came as a visitor to the UK and planned to study in Spain, but illegally took a short-term job before he started his course. He was arrested and sent to a detention centre, where his health deteriorated severely. He begged to be sent back to Colombia, but when his request was ignored, he committed suicide after only a month in detention. “The people who want to go, they won't give a ticket to,” an official at the centre said. “The ones who don't want to go, they are trying to deport.”

The story has been followed up by [openDemocracy](#), which cites [the desperation](#) at the Harmondsworth centre near Heathrow after Frank Ospina's suicide there, and the [Home Office's failure](#) to take steps to prevent more suicides.

Attention also focussed on the Brook House detention centre at Gatwick. It is run by Serco and previously by rival company G4S; it is constructed to Category B prison standards, the second highest level of security. A public inquiry whose findings were issued in September found a toxic culture with detainees forcibly moved while naked and some subjected to unnecessary pain, [reports the BBC](#). Migrants were subjected to degrading treatment and to racist and derogatory language by staff.

Even before the report was released, [Nicholas Reed Langen](#) commented: “Anyone paying attention knew what the government was permitting in centres like these.” He points out that “Abuse and neglect were so ingrained at Brook House, the inquiry found, that even those guards who did not want to humiliate and degrade the detainees ended up doing so in order to “fit in.”

David Neal, the independent chief inspector of borders and immigration, told [The Guardian how this came about](#). As he explained, “Rather than maintaining a sharp, clear-eyed focus on protecting the vulnerable, the department has been fixated on a narrative of abuse of the system by detainees and their legal advisers”.

The home secretary promised to “carefully consider the findings” of the inquiry, while its chair Kate Eves recommended that the government change the law to limit detention to a maximum of 28 days.

The charity Medical Justice has produced [a dossier](#) of 66 cases from detention centres, many of whom are torture victims, where it says that there have been failures to protect vulnerable people.

The government is reported to have [halted annual inspections of immigration detention centres](#) last year, shortly after ministers received direct warnings that vulnerable people such as torture victims had been left unprotected.

What happens to asylum seekers whose claims are rejected?

A [new report](#) from NACCOM (the No Accommodation Network), *Refused? Experiences following a negative asylum decision in the UK*, is based on research by NACCOM's volunteer community researchers, who all have lived experience of destitution and immigration control. Drawing on in-depth interviews with service-users, the research reveals the devastating personal impact that can follow a negative asylum decision.

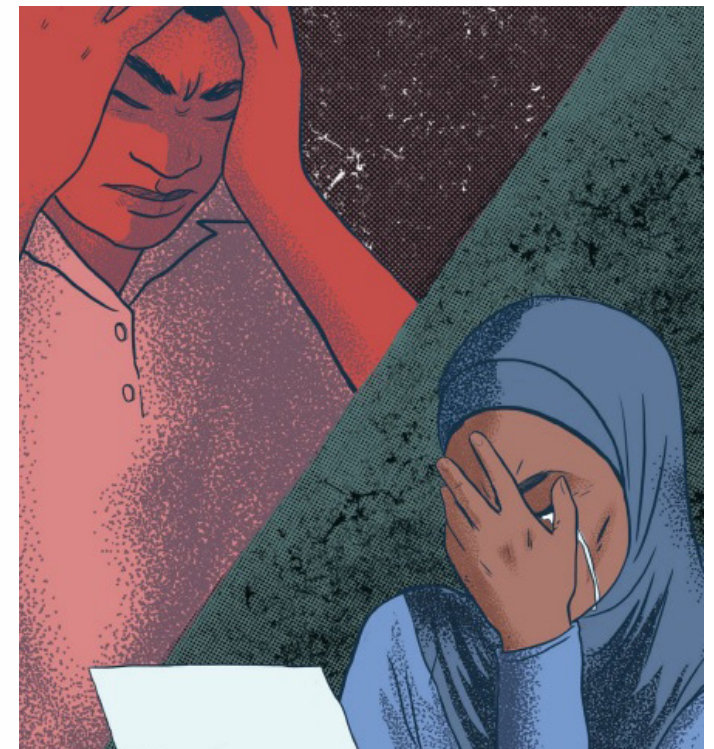
It highlights the challenges that many people face as the result of a refusal, including homelessness, destitution, and mental and physical health issues, as well as difficulties accessing support such as legal aid, all of which create barriers to people resolving their immigration status and moving forward with their lives.

A lack of safeguards, resources, and reliable, accessible information for those who have their asylum claim refused means that people are often pushed into destitution and homelessness, unaware of their legal options or the support available to help them move forward with their life. This takes an immense toll on the physical and mental wellbeing of people seeking sanctuary in the UK, who are often left feeling anxious, isolated, and dehumanised.

The report has recommendations for how the voluntary sector can develop more inclusive and effective services for people with restricted or no recourse to public funds (NRPF), including those who have received a negative decision on their asylum claim. It also offers policy recommendations towards a fairer asylum system which would improve access to justice, prevent people from experiencing homelessness and destitution and ensure people are able to go through the asylum process more quickly and with agency and dignity.

“The government should start listening to NACCOM service providers and the people they support as these are people who have the experience of how the system works.” (Nico, one of the community researchers)

The report comes at a time when tens of thousands more people could face homelessness and destitution as a result of the Illegal Migration Act.



Ankle tags - one person's experience

In June 2022, the Home Office rolled out a new pilot policy – to track migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Britain with GPS-powered ankle tags. The government argues that ankle tags could be necessary to stop people from absconding or disappearing into the country. Only one per cent of asylum seekers absconded in 2020. But that hasn't stopped the Home Office from expanding the pilot.

Sam came to the UK as a refugee when he was a small child and has lived in Britain ever since. Now in his thirties, he was recently threatened with deportation and was made to wear a GPS ankle tag while his case was in progress. Here is Sam's story, [as told to Isobel Cockerell at Coda](#).

Public Law Project, Bail for Immigration Detainees and Medical Justice are producing a second report on the

human impact of the use of electronic monitoring as a condition of immigration bail. This will build on their 2022 report by looking at developments such as the use of non-fitted devices and the operation of the three-monthly reviews.

To inform this 2023 report they hope to speak to people who have recent experience of tagging as a result of being on a non-fitted device. They are reaching out to advisors and support groups who may be able to put them in touch with potential interviewees.

If you think you could put them in touch with anyone who has had recent experience of tagging as an immigration bail condition, please email Jo Hynes (j.hynes@publiclawproject.org.uk) or fill in this [very short survey](#).

“I spent a day watching asylum seekers being jailed. Here’s what I learnt”

Benny Hunter tells *openDemocracy* about his [experiences](#) watching asylum seekers being imprisoned for entering the UK “illegally” - when there is no legal way of getting in. Hunter spends a day in court, listening to the judge passing sentence after (often bewildered) asylum seekers appear before him, remotely by video link.

“Judge Simon James begins his sentencing remarks at Canterbury Crown Court to a room empty of any defendants. Instead, the young person to whom the remarks are addressed is visible only on a small TV screen hanging in the corner. He’s actually in a prison elsewhere in Kent, slumped in a chair in a small room, connected to the court via a video link.”

Hunter concludes that the emotional impact of seeking sanctuary in the UK only to be locked up in prison will be severe. He says it is yet to be determined how being criminalised will affect their claims for asylum and their ability to remain here in the UK.

The Independent recounted the story of an 18-year-old sentenced to two years in prison. He [piloted a small boat across the channel](#) after learning how to do so from a TikTok video. Abdul Basset Ahmed, who planned to seek asylum from Sudan, agreed to pilot the boat as he had some previous experience on rivers in his home country. Charged with an offence as a result, he now faces a prison term before his asylum case will be considered. Most of the 58 people who travelled with him have since claimed asylum.



Asylum accommodation - hotels and HMOs

Voices from asylum hotels: Staff, rules, surveillance, and abandonment

Will Wheeler, researcher at the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, [writes about](#) the experiences of asylum seekers living in hotels. The blog is one of a series featuring the voices of those who are housed in hotels in the North West while waiting for their asylum claim to be processed.

Those interviewed describe aggressive staff (in some instances), oppressive rules and emergencies like the water supply being cut off.

"You know I'm afraid all the time, I'm not telling the Serco."

Previous blogs explored the [emergence and context of the hotels policy](#), and [food and living conditions in hotels](#). In this blog, we hear about the lack of privacy, arbitrary and opaque rules, and the difficulties of raising a complaint. The next blog dwells on [the sense of being stuck in limbo](#), while the final blog, drawing on these interviews, will outline our demands for dignified asylum accommodation - in communities, not camps.

Staff at a Home Office-funded hotel were accused of "treating a migrant like slave," [according to openDemocracy](#).

Among 11,800 calls made to the Home Office helpline Migrant Help last year were 1,400 complaints relating

to hotel accommodation. They included allegations of sexual assault within hotels; workers being racist, sexist, and violent; and a staff member "joking" about the Rwanda deportation scheme. Disease outbreaks, food, and a failure to meet basic needs such as arranging transport for medical appointments were also singled out.

Two-thirds (69 per cent) of complaints were made about hotels managed by Home Office subcontractor Clearsprings Ready Homes, one of the leading providers of asylum accommodation in the UK. Clearsprings Ready Homes has previously faced criticism for cramming asylum seeking people into tiny hotel rooms in London, and for its management of the controversial asylum accommodation at Napier Barracks in Kent, where there was evidence of "appalling treatment and conditions".

Sonis Sceats, chief executive of [Freedom from Torture](#), [said](#) "If you said to me five years ago that by 2023 swathes of torture survivors in treatment with Freedom from Torture would be languishing in hotels - I would not have believed it. The harm to their recovery is shocking. Our safeguarding register is now dominated by hotel-related risks."

The Big Issue also [carried a report](#) on conditions in hotels. It found families sharing a single room, plagued with damp and mould. One victim had lived in different hotels for over a year with her two small children.

Far reaching effects on refugees' mental health due to complicated asylum system

"Some people believe asylum seekers are living in 5-star hotels. They really aren't," [says Channel 4's Darshna Soni](#). Meanwhile private companies make millions from contracts to house them. It's traumatic enough to flee from a conflict zone, leaving behind your home, your family and everything you know. But facing a complicated asylum system, poor living conditions and cultural barriers can cause even more distress, according to recent research revealing the far-reaching effect on the mental health of refugees - and the struggle to find support.

The [full study](#) is *Humanising the migration crisis: designing front-line mental health services for refugees, asylum seekers and local populations at risk in the United Kingdom*.

In *The Guardian*, Frances Ryan [visits a centre for disabled asylum seekers](#) in Essex, and finds that very little attention is paid to their care needs. "Leaving disabled asylum seekers to rot in an old care home is

not an aberration", she says, "it is the system working exactly as intended."

The [Disability News Service reports the case](#) a man with significant long-term health conditions who is in the fourth week of a hunger strike over "inhuman" conditions at the centre. The Home Office has so far refused to take any action over the case of Basam Huzyene, originally from Jordan, who has diabetes and a serious heart condition. He is pleading with the government to intervene to provide humane conditions for himself and the other disabled people at the home.

The Home Office failed to turn up to a safeguarding meeting attended by local social services and NHS representatives, his solicitor, the voluntary organisation Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Migrant Action (RAMA) and Clearsprings Ready Homes, the contractor. Mr Huzyene has been in the home for eight months and says the conditions and the lack of nutritious food are putting his life at risk.

Convicted criminal obtains Home Office funding to house migrants in his hotel

A landlord jailed for forging documents related to illegal properties is to house migrants with government funding, [the BBC reports](#). Harben House hotel in Newport Pagnell is due to receive 270 asylum seekers, to be accommodated in about 150 rooms. The hotel's owner, Siddharth Mahajan, 42, from Ilford in east London, was convicted of offences linked to the operation of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs).

Milton Keynes Council leader Pete Marland, Labour, described the BBC's findings as "shocking". He said: "The Home Office are meant to be responsible for law and order, not paying convicted felons hundreds of thousands of pounds. It really does highlight a continued level of incompetence. I call on the Home Office to withdraw funding for the hotel and review why this was allowed to happen."

Shareholders have banked £120 million from asylum seeker accommodation

[PoliticsHome reports](#) that private companies contracted to run government-funded accommodation for asylum seekers have collectively paid £121 million in dividends to shareholders since securing the most recent contracts in 2019. Mears, Serco and Clearsprings, the three firms that run the vast majority of the UK's asylum seeker accommodation, also posted a collective profit of well over £800 million in that time:

- Since 2019, Clearsprings Ready Homes Ltd has posted profits of £42.7 million and paid £37.9 million in dividends, [according to Companies House filings](#). Clearsprings housing stock is mostly used for asylum seeker accommodation, but they also provide private rented accommodation as well as non-convention rentals, such as homes for ex-convicts.

- Mears, a social housing provider, has recorded net profits of £89 million from a combination of conventional rentals and asylum seeker accommodation. The company [won the contract](#) to provide asylum seeker accommodation in the North East and Yorkshire, Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2019 and has paid £26.27 million in dividends to its shareholders in that time.
- While Serco has posted profits of £729.6 million since 2019, the firm runs a wide array of other services meaning profit from housing asylum seekers only accounts for a fraction of this income. It also paid £56.8 million in shareholder dividends.

Could there be a successful legal challenge against the government's measures?

CIH has been working with solicitors Duncan Lewis and barristers Doughty Street Chambers to challenge the planned regulations which would allow houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) to be used as asylum accommodation, without being subject to local authority licensing (see the [summer edition of the newsletter](#)). CIH has provided a detailed witness statement for the case.

The challenge is on behalf of a group of asylum seekers who might be at risk if the protection given by the licensing of HMOs is removed from the accommodation they may occupy in future (if sent there on a "no choice" basis by the Home Office).

The legal action calls on government - both the home secretary, Suella Braverman, and the levelling up, housing and communities secretary, Michael Gove - to withdraw or suspend the draft regulations pending further inquiry into their impact.

The court has ruled that the case can proceed against the home secretary, although not against Michael Gove. The court has also directed that we can proceed with the majority of the grounds of the challenge.

The timetable for the next steps has not yet been confirmed, and the lawyers have asked the government whether it will agree to postpone putting the regulations before parliament for final approval. The earliest date when the regulations might be passed is sometime in October.

One council, Leominster in Hertfordshire, wants a hotel to be reused for asylum seekers after it was closed. [The BBC reports](#) that Tory councillors welcomed asylum seekers and wants them to return.

Asylum accommodation - barracks, cruise ships, barges and tents

Options the government is exploring

Press reports appear almost daily on the options the government is exploring – and then often rejecting – as it searches for alternatives to hotels yet cannot find sufficient normal housing in which to accommodate asylum seekers. It is publishing [factsheets](#) on each of the new sites being identified for asylum accommodation, so far covering:

- Northeye Residential and Training Establishment, on the outskirts of Bexhill
- The Ministry of Defence Wethersfield site in Braintree, Essex
- RAF Scampton, a Ministry of Defence site in Lincolnshire
- The Bibby Stockholm barge, to house 500 asylum seekers at Portland Port.

In addition, up to 2,000 asylum seekers could be housed in tents under Suella Braverman's plans to avoid hotel use, [reports The Independent](#). The home secretary apparently purchased the marquees to accommodate migrants on former military bases. It is not clear if they are yet in use.

Breach of planning law at RAF Scampton

Meanwhile at RAF Scampton, the Home Office [has been ordered to stop building work](#) on a base where it hoped to accommodate up to 2,000 asylum seekers in conditions widely condemned, for breaching planning rules.

West Lindsey district council served contractors with a temporary stop notice after a "breach of planning control" at RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire. The stop notice was pinned to the gates of the base in early September. Originally it was home to the 617 Squadron that carried out the Dambusters raid during the second world war and was also the base of the Red Arrows.

Council leader Trevor Young (Lib Dem) said: "It is incredibly disappointing that despite repeated assurances that the site would be safe, legal and compliant, the Home Office has failed to secure appropriate planning permission or to adequately assess the impact of their proposals."

First arrivals at Wethersfield

The first 46 asylum seekers arrived at the [Wethersfield site](#) in mid-July, with more arrivals expected afterwards.

Talking about Wethersfield and other new sites, Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick said:

"Those individuals who have entered the UK illegally shouldn't be given hotel accommodation at great expense to the taxpayer. That's why our large disused military sites and vessels will provide basic and functional accommodation for small boat arrivals whilst we pursue their removal."

"We have committed substantial financial support to local councils and we remain committed to working with key stakeholders to ensure these sites have as little impact as possible for communities."

However, Care4Calais visited Wethersfield and found hundreds of people packed into small spaces, inedible food and no medical care. One man told them that "it's like prison". Asylum seekers held there also told [openDemocracy](#) that if they were unwell, for example with depression, they were put into solitary confinement by those running the camp.

"It is an offence to contravene the stop notice and I urge the Home Office to cease all works in line with this legal action."

Youth worker Benny Hunter [comments](#) that a photograph published by the *Daily Mirror* of the partially constructed refugee camp on RAF Scampton looks like multiple portacabins on tarmac. "People are expected to live here, during all seasons, with nothing to do, until their asylum claim is finally decided?"

A local official [told The Independent](#) the government was seeing the "practical results" of its refusal not to consult authorities or go through the normal planning process, adding: "Most intelligent people would assess the situation first and then make a decision."



RAF Scampton

Bibby Stockholm barge is still unoccupied after legionella discovery

The Bibby Stockholm barge, moored in Dorset, is still unoccupied, after asylum seekers [were moved onto the vessel in early August](#) but then had to be moved away again due to the threat of legionella. According to [inews](#), those placed on the barge included [one asylum seeker suffering from TB](#) who then had to be [moved again](#) when legionella was discovered.

In the *London Review of Books*, Liam Shaw [writes](#) about the discovery of the bacterium that causes the form of pneumonia known as Legionnaires' disease. The 39 people were not evacuated until four days had elapsed. Shaw writes about the nature of the disease, the action needed to keep people safe from it and the tardy action by the Home Office.

"Behind the incompetence there is not only cruelty, but the desire to be seen enacting it."

Shaw adds that the evacuees are said to be afraid of drinking the tap water at the hotel they have been moved to and are spending their allowance of £9 a week on bottled water.

Then, in mid-September the barge [was declared safe](#), after levels of the bacteria in the water supply were found to be "satisfactory". Moving people onto the barge has yet to restart, however, but is said to be "imminent". A group of asylum seekers waiting to be returned there and who were originally on the barge in August [told the Dorset Echo](#) that it feels "like a prison" and that they "want to live like ordinary people". Currently in a hotel in the South West, the men say that the prospect of returning to the Bibby Stockholm is having a severe impact on their mental and physical health.

[LBC claimed](#) that the empty barge costs taxpayers more than £560,000 a month. Figures from the non-profit organisation [Reclaim the Sea](#) show that hiring out the vessel from Bibby Marine Limited and keeping it at Portland Port amount to £24,500 a day - £560,000 over four weeks. This sum could have been used to employ 20 asylum decision-makers at the Home Office for a whole year.

[The Independent says](#) that the barge will offer less living room than an average parking space when it reaches full capacity, with at least two people to be crammed into every cabin for the government to achieve its claimed capacity. When the Bibby Stockholm was used by the Dutch Government to detain asylum seekers in the 2000s, at least one person died and there were reports of rape and abuse on the vessel. One asylum seeker described "four people in a cell" on board, according to a 2008 Amnesty International report obtained by [The Independent](#).

"There is only a little daylight in the cells ... in the morning the guards would open the cell with their nose covered to protect themselves against the stench."

Nevertheless, the Daily Mail described the barge as [luxury living](#). But a councillor from Glasgow, who lived on the Bibby Stockholm while working in Shetland, [told X](#) that even with one person to a cabin it was not luxurious and with two people to a cabin and spending most/all day on board "it's a recipe for disaster".

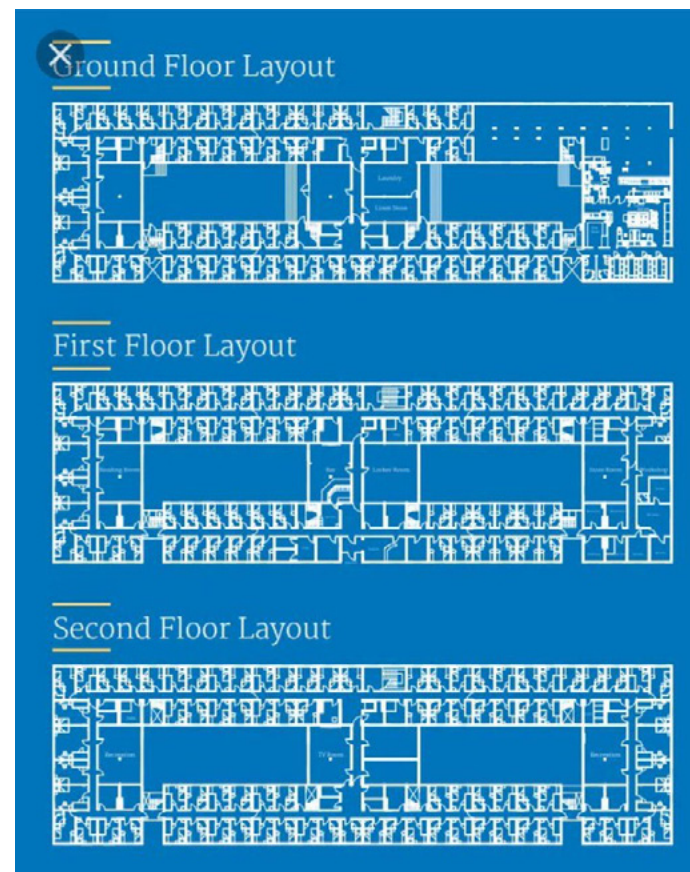
Safe in a fire?

Meanwhile, a local authority source warned the Dorset Eye that the Bibby Stockholm “could become a floating Grenfell” due to lack of safety protocols. Edwin Hayward tweets about the floor plan of the Bibby Stockholm.

“Now imagine trying to evacuate it during a fire, when there’s two people in each room meant for one, and most communal spaces have been commandeered and turned into dormitories.

“It may have been safe with 222 on board. But 500+?”

Bibby Stockholm floor plan.



The chequered past of Europe’s ‘floating prison’

Euronews covers the history of the barge. It has been used across Europe to house rough sleepers, as a floating detention centre and was even the subject of a bomb threat. Built in 1976 by the Dutch company Nederlandse Scheepsbouw, the ship was converted into an accommodation barge in 1992.

Current owners Bibby Lane – which has “well-evidenced historic ties” to the slave trade, according to the UK Refugee Council – say it can accommodate more than 500 people in “luxury”, but it was originally fitted out to house just 222.

More on the background to the Bibby Stockholm

“If the Bibby Stockholm isn’t a terrible threat, what’s the point of it?”

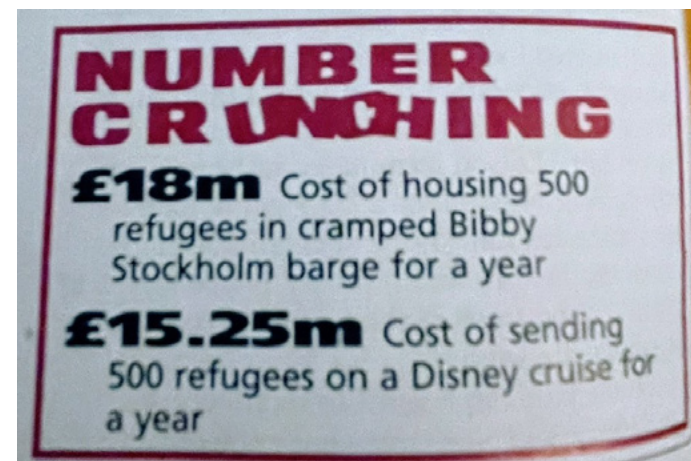
Tens of thousands of asylum seekers have arrived on the Kent coast in small boats already this year. They can’t all be sent to Rwanda, writes Tom Peck in *The Independent*. And they can’t all be stuffed on to overcrowded barges off the Dorset coast, even if the capacity is raised from its intended 200 to 500. When these basic numbers are put to anyone concerned, they will immediately respond by saying that they are not a solution in themselves but a “deterrent.”

All of which makes one wonder whether government minister Grant Shapps “...may have read his briefing notes wrong. Why exactly did he claim, several times, that the Bibby Stockholm, the floating barge on which not one asylum seeker has yet been housed for various legal reasons like it not being fit for human habitation, is ‘not a death trap’?”

Peck goes on to ask:

“If it doesn’t carry some kind of terrible threat, what exactly is the point? It’s not an actual, viable solution, to any problem whatsoever. It exists only to try and frighten people in to not coming to the country in the first place, and specifically via inflatable dinghies that really are a death trap. Surely Grant Shapps knows the last thing he should be doing is going on the radio and reassuring would be small boat passengers that there is safe accommodation waiting for them when they get here?”

Josiah Mortimer tweets, “The Bibby Stockholm plan was never about saving cash. It’s about conspicuous punishment.”



Migrants Organise has a guide to help those advising people who have been told they are being moved to the Bibby Stockholm and want to challenge the decision.

“All aboard the Bibby Stockholm”

In the *New Statesman*, Anoosh Chakelian talks to two asylum seekers who were placed in the barge before they were moved. She also talks to local people in Portland, which has some of England’s most deprived neighbourhoods. In the last five years the hospital lost its beds and minor injuries unit. Low-wage jobs compel the young to leave.

“To people hostile to the refugees,” said Philip Marfleet, a 75-year-old professor from nearby Poole, “we say focus your efforts on the government, which is responsible for running down the local economy, and 30 years of disinterest in the lives of local people.”

Chakelian watched two Bibby buses arrive in Weymouth while two local services were cancelled back-to-back, leaving a queue of sweltering pensioners waiting an hour at the same bus stop. A taxi driver told her that if asylum seekers miss the bus, they can call a number that goes through to local firms. “They’re getting everything for free and this is one of the poorest places in the country,” he said. “Drunk idiots might kick off; I told my Indian friend to be careful, in case he’s mistaken for a bargeman.”



Asylum-seeking children receive appalling treatment

Home Secretary's treatment of child asylum seekers ruled unlawful

Suella Braverman's "routine" placing of unaccompanied child asylum seekers in hotels is unlawful, [the High Court has ruled](#). In July, the court said the home secretary had "exceeded" her powers as children should only be housed in this way for "very short periods in true emergency situations".

The case was brought by Every Child Protected Against Trafficking (ECPAT). Patricia Durr, the charity's chief executive, said the ruling "powerfully" reaffirmed existing law that children could not be treated differently because of their immigration status.

"We will continue to defend the rights of every child in the UK to live free from exploitation and access the care they are entitled to under the law."

In its ruling, the High Court said: "The home secretary's provision of hotel accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children exceeded the proper limits of her powers and was unlawful. The practice of accommodating children in hotels, outside local authority care, was both systematic and routine and had become an established part of the procedure for dealing with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children."

Deborah Revill [argues](#) that the home secretary's use of hotels exclusively for children may actually be a criminal offence under section 11(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000. This turns on whether the hotels as currently run meet the legal definition of an unregistered children's

High Court demands radical change to Home Office asylum support

In a different case, the High Court [demanded changes](#) after several asylum-seeker residents of hotels were denied timely support payments and were left without resources, in some cases involving children and pregnant women.

Free Movement [comments](#) that the case is a shocking one. As the judge noted, the claimants faced an existence "Which was in many ways wretched, particularly for a young child who went without on many occasions", where the parent was "reduced to asking in shops for leftover food" and the children became "lethargic" and "visibly thinner".

The implications are clear: "The home secretary has been failing to meet the most basic needs of extremely vulnerable asylum seekers and wholesale systems changes are now required. It is sincerely hoped that the home secretary will heed this judgment and take her duties towards destitute asylum seekers seriously."

home. The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration [suggested](#) last year that they do.

The judge in this case didn't resolve the issue, saying it would be for a criminal court to determine. Under the Illegal Migration Act 2023, the home secretary will have an express [power](#) to provide accommodation and 'other types of support' to unaccompanied children. She will also be able to [direct](#) that a child is transferred between that accommodation and local authority care. The relevant sections are not yet in force. When they are, further judicial reviews will no doubt be brought to establish the scope of the new powers and how they interact with the Children Act.

This is one of several recent cases highlighting failures by the home secretary to meet asylum seekers' accommodation and support needs. As the judge said, "[e]nsuring the safety and welfare of children with no adult to look after them is among the most fundamental duties of any civilised state." Revill says that "It can only be hoped that the government makes more effort to comply with that duty in future."

The Guardian later [reported](#) that the Home Office defied the high court by placing 100 asylum-seeker children in hotels. One of the reasons is that Kent county council says it cannot cope with the number of children arriving. The council's geographical location means it has responsibility to take into care lone children who arrive in small boats. It has warned that they are struggling to meet their legal obligations to UK as well as asylum-seeker children.

Mother and four children spent over a year in "inadequate" hotel accommodation

Free Movement [has details](#) of a case where a family of five endured hotel accommodation for over a year. Ruling in the mother's favour, the judge commented on the "complete absence of any record-keeping or decision-making or evaluative assessment" in the papers presented to him by the Home Office. There was no evidence of the reasons behind the action (or inaction) taken in the case, and nothing to show that the Home Office had tried to gather relevant information about her circumstances. He ordered the Home Office to provide adequate dispersal accommodation to the mother and her children within one week of the judgment.

Children and families seeking asylum face dire conditions

Children and their families seeking asylum increasingly face inadequate living conditions in government-provided temporary housing, affecting their health, wellbeing, and access to education, Just Fair and Human Rights Watch said [in a new report](#).

The 100-page report, *'I Felt So Stuck': Inadequate Housing and Social Support for Families Seeking Asylum in the United Kingdom*, found that families seeking asylum face inhumane conditions, including rat infestation and mould. The families experience daily struggles to get food their children will eat, as well as mental and physical health problems and serious disruptions to their children's education.

"Government policy is directly damaging the health and well-being of vulnerable children and their families who have come to the UK seeking safety," said Jess McQuail, director of Just Fair. "Instead of pitting people seeking asylum against people already living in the UK, the government should use its available resources to ensure that everybody's rights are met."

The dire conditions are the result of longstanding policy failings, including an [inefficient and under-resourced decision-making system](#), the groups found. The government has wasted resources on its effort to send asylum seekers to Rwanda and has cut legal aid and [other funding](#). These choices have contributed to a huge backlog of asylum cases.

Human Rights Watch and Just Fair interviewed more than 50 people seeking asylum, including 27 children, who were living in or had recently left temporary housing in cities and towns across England. Under UK Home Office guidance, people seeking asylum should spend no more than 19 days in hotels or other initial accommodation before they receive suitable longer-term housing. But families said they had spent many months, in some cases well over a year, in temporary housing.

Home Office confirms that children might be sent to Rwanda

The government has refused to rule out the detention and removal of children to Rwanda, after facing pressure from a cross-party committee of MPs to abandon any intention to do so. The Home Office's response to the Women and Equalities Committee's report on [Equality and the UK asylum process](#), published on September 19, also rejects the committee's conclusion that the asylum system creates unnecessary harmful risks to the most vulnerable asylum seekers.

The committee's report urged the government to set out plans to mitigate the risks of harm to asylum seekers with protected characteristics, including women who have experienced sexual and gender-based violence, LGBT people, children and disabled people. After its in-depth inquiry, the committee found that risks of harm to vulnerable groups are likely to be exacerbated by the Nationality and Borders Act and Illegal Migration Act.

Instead, the government has defended its approach, including moving pregnant women, new mothers and babies between asylum accommodation settings, sometimes without clinical advice. The Home Office has also ignored MPs' plea for more data on the treatment of pregnant women and new mothers in the asylum system.

Women and Equalities Committee Chair, Conservative MP Caroline Nokes, [said](#):

"Today we hear the government remains unwilling to rule out entirely plans to detain child asylum seekers or their removal to Rwanda. It is deeply disappointing that the government has not listened to the concerns raised in our report on the risks of harm to children in the asylum system."

Children arriving in small boats sent to jail for adult sex offenders

[According to The Guardian](#), vulnerable children who arrive in Britain by small boat are being placed in an adult prison that holds significant numbers of sex offenders: HMP Elmley in Kent. According to the most recent inspection of Elmley, the block where foreign nationals are held also houses sex offenders.

Of the 14 unaccompanied children so far identified by staff at [Humans For Rights Network](#) as being sent to an adult prison, one is believed to have been 14 when they spent seven months in Elmley.

Most of the cases involve Sudanese or South Sudanese children who travelled to the UK via Libya, with most appearing to have been trafficked or having experienced some form of exploitation.

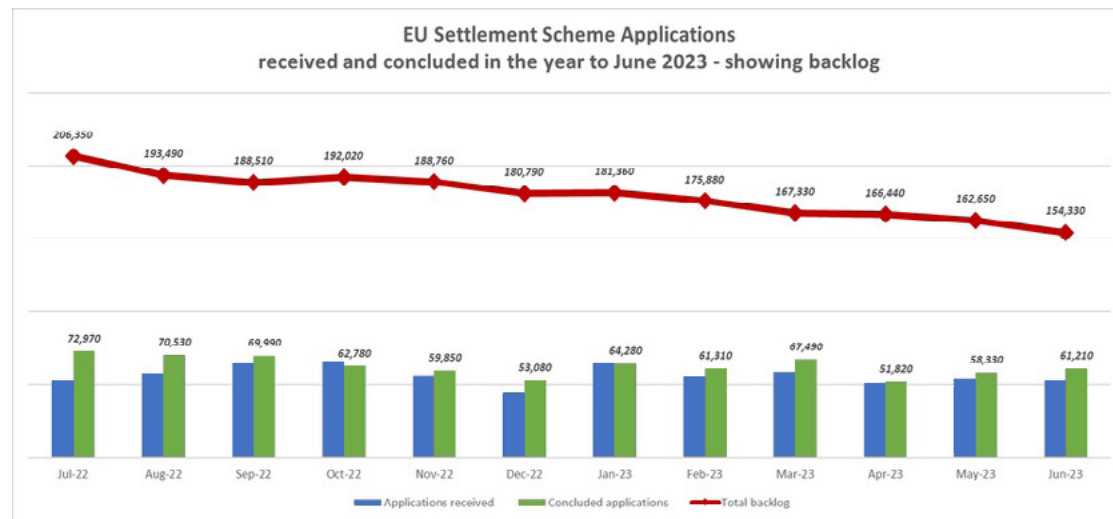


Latest news on the EU Settlement Scheme

Backlog of applications under the EUSS continues

The government has allowed the EU Settlement Scheme backlog to stand at 154,330, two years after the initial deadline. The Home Office is keeping people stuck for years in a perpetual waiting game. At the current rate, it will take another three years to clear the backlog, according to [The 3 million](#).

19,710 applications that were submitted in time, before the June 2021 deadline, are still awaiting a decision. The 3 million point out that every single one is a person in limbo, uncertain about their future in the UK, and having their rights questioned by employers, landlords, banks, airlines, and many others.



The Home Office claims they are "currently dealing with the unprecedented demand from EUSS applications". Yet the data clearly show applications have been steady and have not increased drastically. The 3 million add that they are still seeing cases where people simply have not realised, they have to apply for status but have permanent residency rights from their previous residency. In the last quarter, more than 15,000 late applications submitted were granted status.

Refusals are also showing a worrying trend. Many are being challenged, through administrative reviews and appeals - with high success rates. However, this is after people spend even more time waiting for another decision.

The 3 million also report a sharp increase in people being turned away at the border. "It's six times higher than in 2021, despite visa-free travel between the EU and the UK." There is a detailed analysis of the figures on [the 3 million website](#).

The Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements (IMA) has launched an inquiry into the delays. The IMA is calling on EU and EEA EFTA citizens and their family members who reside in the UK to share their experiences via an online survey. The IMA is keen to hear real life examples from citizens about their experiences in applying to the EUSS and about any delays they may have faced.

Rule changes that extend pre-settled status

The High Court found last December that the residence right of a person with pre-settled status under the EUSS (five years' limited leave to enter or remain) does not expire if they fail to make a second application to the scheme.

New rule changes extend pre-settled status in relevant cases without the need for an application, to ensure that nobody loses their immigration status because they have not made a second application to the EUSS.

Those pre-settled status holders who have not had it renewed when it is due to expire will have their pre-settled status automatically extended by two years and there is no need for them to contact the Home Office. They will be notified once the extension has been applied.

The judicial review judgment also concluded that a pre-settled status holder acquires the right of permanent residence automatically, once the conditions for it are met. Further changes will support this aspect of the judgment. A full letter explaining the changes is [here](#).

"Kicking the can down the road"

Writing in *UK in a Changing Europe*, Catherine Barnard and Fiona Costello [set out](#) why an automatic extension of EU pre-settled status for a further two years for those yet to "upgrade" will leave more vulnerable individuals in an ongoing precarious position.

The Home Office has announced a [two year automatic extension](#) for pre-settled status (PS) holders from September 2023. The High Court also said that once the relevant conditions are met the right of permanent residence under the EU Withdrawal Agreement is acquired automatically. These two statements have created some confusion, which [the Home Office](#) is yet to clear up - how does the two-year extension sit with the automatic accrual of permanent residency rights under the Withdrawal Agreement?

Further, if someone fails to upgrade after an initial two-year extension, what happens then? From 2024, the Home Office intends to convert some individuals automatically from PS to settled status (SS) via automated digital checks (e.g., HMRC records etc). But as the authors have [written elsewhere](#), for many low-paid migrant workers in precarious zero-hour or informal employment contexts, or those not working, this digital footprint is not being generated.

GYROS is a charity in Norfolk, assisting particularly low-paid migrant workers, the majority of whom work in local poultry and meat processing factories employed via an agency on zero-hour contracts. Of GYROS clients, [86 per cent self-report their English language skills](#) as either limited, very limited or none. [And more than 60 per cent](#) of their clients rate their IT skills as lower than five out of 10 (with one being non-existent and 10 being excellent). For this reason, the digital (English language) settlement scheme was always difficult to navigate.

GYROS' data show that the majority (62 per cent) of their clients have PS, which is much higher than the national figure of 38 per cent. When asked if they will need help to 'upgrade' to SS, 97 per cent say they will (and 87 per cent report that someone else completed their initial application for them).

While an automatic upgrade from PS to SS is undoubtedly helpful for many, automated checks will likely not generate sufficient evidence for more vulnerable groups, such as those that GYROS work with, where sporadic working hours and informal renting arrangements are common.

Given this, it is more likely that they will have PS extended (automatically) for a further two years, which will mean an extension in the hardship of many vulnerable individuals and families because, as the [Home Office's own literature says](#), "it's easier to prove your right to live in the UK permanently if you have settled status".

More news on European Union migrants

New funding to support vulnerable EUSS applicants

A further [tranche of funding](#) has been made available to organisations helping people get through the EUSS. An additional £2.5 million will go to 17 organisations across the UK that support vulnerable people. One of these is [Settled](#) (in Wales), whose project lead, Rhys Evans, said:

"Settled are delighted to have been granted Home Office funding for EUSS advice work in Wales, in conjunction with our new partners on this project, TGP Cymru. With both organisations already well established in Wales, the new grant will enable us to expand our much needed free, accredited, multilingual advice work to EU / EEA citizens living in Cymru; and especially to particularly vulnerable groups including Roma communities, people who are homeless or have suffered domestic abuse, individuals with physical or mental health conditions, and people with language, literacy, or digital exclusion barriers."

"England Took Us In": Polish rough sleepers speak back

The Public Interest Law Centre announces the [online publication](#) of the third and final part of PILC's [Other Voices](#) series. [England Took Us In: Polish Rough Sleepers Speak Back](#) takes the form of a dialogue between five Polish men with a history of rough sleeping. Albert, Andrzej ("Bieszczady"), Eugeniusz, Eryk ("Fragles") and Radek ("Fontanna") were members of a Polish-language coffee-mornings group run by PILC in 2021 and 2022. This was a space where Polish speakers who had been homeless could come together to share experiences and talk about issues that affected them.

'Zambrano carers' pages on the housing rights website

A 'Zambrano' carer is a person from a non-EEA state whose residence is required in order to enable a child or dependant adult, who is British, to live in the UK. It is a right derived from EU law, so it only applies to people who entered the UK on or before 31 December 2020.

Statistics show that the specialist pages on Zambrano carers, on the housing rights website, are surprisingly widely used. They have now been rewritten to bring them up to date and in line with recent developments with the EU Settlement Scheme. There are separate pages for [England & Wales](#) and for [Scotland](#).

New factsheet on EU citizens' rights in Wales

The Welsh Government has produced a useful factsheet setting out EU citizens' rights to access benefits and social work support as an EU citizen in Wales. It's available [here](#) as a pdf.

Other migration news

Government updates its asylum destitution guidance

The Home Office published an updated version of their [assessing destitution policy](#) in August. Marie-Anne Fishwick of the Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) points out that there have been a number of changes in policy (you can see the list of updates in the document). The two that are most relevant are:

1. Clarifying that backdated payments should be disregarded when considering destitution. This is a huge relief as there was some concern that a person receiving backdated support owed to them might find themselves with their support being discontinued.
2. Clarifying that a person does not need to have a screening interview to get asylum support, including section 98 support.

Point 2 is flagged in particular because ASAP has started to hear of cases of people refused section 98 support on the basis that they have not had a screening interview. Whilst a screening interview is not necessary, people do need to have a recorded asylum claim, so this still means that a person who wants to make an in-country asylum claim and who is destitute will need to present themselves to the National Intake Unit.

How are people with 'no recourse to public funds' managing in the cost of living crisis?

Praxis has a [briefing](#), "I don't know where to go, I just cry", that describes the plight of people with NRPF and how they are faring in the cost of living crisis. It draws on publicly available information on government support schemes, as well as information about the experiences of people with NRPF over the last six months of this crisis. This is drawn from a survey carried out by Praxis in April 2023, which was completed by 174 people subject to immigration control.

The briefing highlights that those who are denied access to the social safety net by the NRPF condition face significant financial challenges due to the current crisis yet are unable to access a significant proportion of the support rolled out by government since it began. This is exposing people with NRPF, including children and British citizens, to heightened risks of poverty, destitution and homelessness.

Praxis urges the government to amend eligibility criteria for targeted cost of living support schemes so that all people living on low incomes can access support if they need to. This can be done by making alternative eligibility criteria based on income and immigration status, rather than receipt of benefits, as has been done (for example) with recent changes to free school meals eligibility criteria.

For those not familiar with the "no recourse" rule, [Free Movement has a new article](#) explaining what it is and the legal basis for it. The article has a (long) list of items that constitute public funds and what services are still available to those affected by NRPF. It also describes the various legal challenges – several successful – which have taken place.

Strengthening energy advice and support for Gypsies, Travellers, Roma and Nomadic communities

In August, National Energy Action published [Plugged In: Strengthening Energy Advice and Support for Gypsies, Travellers, Roma, and Nomadic Communities](#). This work was supported by the expert guidance of [Friends, Families, Travellers](#) and funded by the Which? Fund.

The research found that:

- Almost half (43 per cent) of surveyed Gypsies, Travellers, Roma and Nomadic Communities have not received any government support through the energy crisis.
- Four out of five (80 per cent) households were turning the heating off to save money, with more than half (51 per cent) doing this "all of the time" or "some of the time".
- For more than 70 per cent of these households, energy/fuel is unaffordable, with 42 per cent able to "just about manage", 23 per cent finding costs "quite difficult" and 9 per cent finding costs "very difficult".
- More than half (61 per cent) reported borrowing money to pay for energy/fuel in the last 12 months, with nearly a third (29 per cent) reporting that they have needed to do this a lot.

Households said they were being frequently and unfairly excluded or made to meet requirements with additional steps compared to other households, such as those living in bricks and mortar and, or, not belonging to this ethnic group.

Challenging the government on lack of legal aid

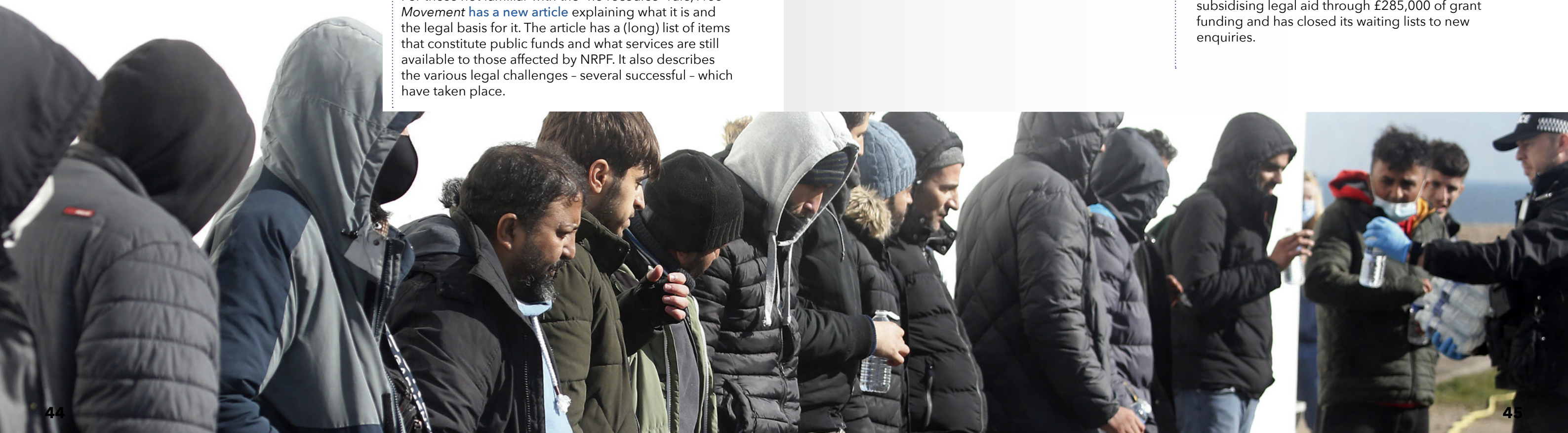
The Public Law Project has taken the first step in bringing legal proceedings against the Lord Chancellor, arguing that he is in breach of his constitutional duty to make legal aid available for immigration and asylum issues.

Explore [the report written with Haringey Migrant Support Centre: An Ocean of Unmet Need](#).

PLP claims that access to legal aid for immigration and asylum is now so poor that many people are being denied access to justice.

The research shows that:

- The South West region has immigration and asylum legal aid capacity for under 300 people per year – fewer than the number of people the Bibby Stockholm barge in Dorset is set to accommodate.
- In the South West, where six providers had recently either stopped trading or stopped providing legal aid, 4,827 asylum seekers had been dispersed to accommodation as of June 2023, including unaccompanied children.
- Across England and Wales, charities supporting refugees and asylum seekers make on average 16 attempts before securing a legal aid lawyer.
- In London, which has the highest number of providers, a refugee charity was able to successfully refer clients in only 4.1 per cent of 864 attempts.
- Two of the largest legal aid providers in London do immigration and asylum work at a loss.
- In the North West, the largest provider is subsidising legal aid through £285,000 of grant funding and has closed its waiting lists to new enquiries.



Evaluating the Support for Migrant Victims (SMV) pilot

The government allocated £1.5 million towards a 'Support for Migrant Victims' pilot scheme, launched in April 2021, to help migrant victims of domestic abuse with no recourse to public funds.

It has been delivered through six partners: Southall Black Sisters, Ashiana Sheffield, Bawso, Foyle Women's Aid, Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid, and Shakti Women's Aid. The services provided included accommodation services, legal support (partially funded by the pilot), subsistence payments, counselling and support groups. Unfortunately, there is no indication that the pilot will lead to greater, longer-term support.

The **evaluation** concludes that in many ways the pilot met its aims. Accommodation and/or subsistence were provided to all the survivors that received support. This helped to bridge the gap while survivors gained access to other entitlements. The support removes the barrier that could have prevented them from escaping an abusive relationship, and the data suggest that a very small minority return to the perpetrator.

The pilot also went beyond these aims in some respects. Most notably, it provided survivors with social and emotional support and helped survivors to understand their legal entitlements and helped connect them to legal support. However, there were clear limitations. First, the pilot provision itself did not always meet the need for "safe accommodation". Refugees could almost never be covered within the accommodation budget, meaning that some survivors were housed in a patchwork of other provision which might be unclean, unsafe or unreliable.

Second, the subsistence payments provided to survivors did not always cover their basic needs. As well as food, survivors can need clothing, toiletries, and transport to appointments or to stay in touch with their communities and support networks. Delivery partners were reliant on in-kind donations from charities to help survivors make ends meet.

Third, there is an unresolved question on the outcomes of survivors who do not have a quick pathway to funding. Whilst the pilot gave delivery partners some flexibility to extend support if needed from January 2022, it was often unclear what the long-term path is for survivors, and this caused additional anxiety for them.

There were other challenges. The services provided often depend on local partnerships, so delivery partners are often constrained by what is available, particularly in relation to accommodation and pro-bono legal support. The administration of the pilot also placed both time and financial burdens on delivery partners, e.g., delays in reimbursement of costs, which may be a barrier to smaller organisations providing support.



Good news corner

The Refugee Employability Programme

The Refugee Employability Programme (REP) is for refugees in England who arrive via safe and legal routes. It focuses on supporting refugees to become self-sufficient and integrate well into society. The service is expected to start in 2023 and will be delivered separately in each Strategic Migration Partnership area.

Ukraine: Refugee children almost fluent in Welsh

The BBC has a story from Anglesey about Ukrainian children who have successfully learned Welsh.

"I love this school. In Ukraine, we have so much homework and here, 'dipyn bach, dipyn bach' (a little). I want schools like this in Ukraine."

Granted bail from detention after 27 months

BID (Bail for Immigration Detainees) provide free legal advice to people held in detention. They reported on a successful case where a client was granted bail after no less than 27 months in detention. The Home Office acknowledged it was an exceptionally long time in detention, yet there was no timetable for the client's EUSS application to be considered, let alone resolved. The judge said his detention was "totally inexcusable." He can now reunite with his daughter.

Barrister Simon Cox commented:

"27 months in immigration detention. 27 months barred from contributing, caring for family, working. 27 months of public funds paying to keep him locked up. 27 months and Braverman's Home Office doesn't know when it will decide his application to remain."

Leicester unveils an artwork celebrating 50 years of Ugandan Asians migrating to the city

The artwork was designed by Midlands-based artist Anuradha Patel and represents the two communities impacted by the expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972 under the instruction of dictator Idi Amin. The council funded Structural Gateway was commissioned as a way of commemorating the thousands of Asians who were forced to flee their homes - with many relocating to Leicester - reports the *Leicester Mercury*.

Ambitious Scots programme "must now be scaled up"

More than 1,200 people in Scotland received vital support in the first year of an ambitious programme to end destitution caused by UK immigration policy, a new report written by Heriot-Watt University reveals. It has been released against a backdrop of rising asylum seeker evictions and fears of the return of "lock-change" eviction tactics.

Fair Way Scotland said 1,205 people excluded from state support accessed its services in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. This included 730 who received casework support in an effort to regularise their immigration status and protect them from being made homeless or forced on to the streets.

Six people were accommodated by the partnership in Glasgow with linked £50 weekly cash payments because they were excluded from all forms of public support. Sixty people in Glasgow, 291 in Edinburgh and 21 in Aberdeen accessed support and advice.

But efforts to house others - including European nationals without settled status after Brexit - will require additional independent funding available to finance accommodation, amid intense pressures on housing supply amplified by global events.

The report calls on the UK government to overhaul their hostile immigration policies and commit to ending destitution by design. It also urges the Scottish Government to show clearer political leadership by setting out concrete plans to fully mitigate the harm these policies create.

Children send paintings to replace those stripped out on ministerial orders

Children in Birmingham have been drawing pictures to send to detention centres to replace the murals to welcome children, that Robert Jenrick ordered to be painted over.



More news shorts

No. 10 crackdown on racism as minister warns officials n-word slurs won't be tolerated

A Tory cabinet minister has issued a warning to all Whitehall departments that racism will not be tolerated after *The Independent* revealed the use of the n-word in a slew of government documents, including immigration tribunal decisions and the government's websites - sparking outrage from MPs and campaigners.

Europe's migrant challenge suddenly gets much bigger

UnHerd explains how the arrival of more than 10,000 migrants from Africa in just one week, on the small Italian island of Lampedusa, poses a huge challenge to the Italian government's tough stance on migration and to the attitudes of other European countries.

Home Office inaction on the crisis in Sudan

West London Welcome, a community centre run by and for migrants, says that "It's shocking how little support Sudanese people fleeing war are receiving here. At our centre we're supporting three families who quickly realised this government weren't going to give them any guidance, left them destitute. We found them lawyers and helped them claim asylum." *Free Movement* looks at the position of those evacuated from Sudan and how uncertain their position is, concluding that "very little thought has been given to the practicalities needed for those individuals to re-start their lives here."

Parliamentary inquiry into effects of immigration policy on poverty

The All Party Parliamentary Groups on Migration and on Poverty are carrying out a joint inquiry into the effects of UK immigration, asylum and refugee policy on poverty. There is a questionnaire for professionals [here](#) and for people with lived experience of the issues [here](#).

A glitch or a feature? Systemic problems with digital proof of immigration status

Free Movement describes some problems with the digital proof of immigration status that many migrants entitled to be in the UK have to use. When it goes wrong, it momentarily strips the status holder of their legal rights. And, depending on the type of glitch, the fix to it may be months away.

New guide to refugee family reunion

Free Movement has a [guide](#) to the (free) application process for refugees and their advisers.

Who do we think we are?

In a [podcast](#), Catherine Craven, Nando Sigona, Michaela Benson and Colin Yeo discuss the government's New Plan for Immigration, and the alternatives.



Daily Telegraph advises readers how to break immigration rules (in France)

Do you want to live in France, despite restrictive post-Brexit immigration rules? The *Daily Telegraph* shows the ways around them.

Why most asylum seekers are young men

Ally Fogg [explains on X](#) why the overwhelming majority of refugees, asylum seekers & irregular migrants are young men, and why being a young man does not mean someone is not a genuine refugee or genuinely in need.

"What did Saint Augustine do after helping to spread Christianity to Britain?"

Brian Klaas passed his "Life in the UK" test and will soon become a dual citizen of the US and UK. He describes [what it was like to take the test](#) and how much he spent reaching the final stages of the immigration process. The answer to the question above, which he got right, is "Become the first Archbishop of Canterbury." Other questions he was asked included "In Scotland, what's the name of courts that deal with minor criminal offenses?" and, "Name the day on which Jesus died."





Do you have any comments on this newsletter?

send them to policyandpractice@cih.org

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