



# Housing Rights

Your quarterly newsletter from the Housing Rights website

Autumn 2024

**F**or our Autumn 2024 newsletter we are announcing more changes to the housing rights website. Soon we will cover the whole of the UK for the first time, by including Northern Ireland. Many thanks to Innisfree Housing Association for supporting the work involved. Do watch out for the change!

This issue of the newsletter starts by asking the big questions the new government faces about the immigration system – what has been announced so far, and how far do the changes go? We summarise some of the key measures and pick out what the home secretary still has in her in-tray.

Three feature articles in this edition cover refugee family reunion, barriers to safe housing for migrant women, and the hidden humanitarian crisis in Scotland.

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

Regular items include news on the EU Settlement Scheme, an update on issues about NRPF and more on the government's moves towards a digitalised immigration system.

And we wrap up with the usual miscellany of other news items.

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

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

*The Housing Rights team*

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## The big questions facing Labour - what we know so far

**G**ood news from the government included halting the Rwanda scheme, ending the contract on the Bibby Stockholm and scrapping the previous government's plans to change housing allocation rules. But did the bad news outweigh the good? The government has also pledged to bring down net migration, reduce reliance on overseas workers, look at offshore processing of asylum claims and accelerate the removal of people without legal status in the UK.

Here are some of the key questions about government plans and what we know so far.

### Will Labour end the asylum accommodation racket?

Labour has already announced that it will stop using the Bibby Stockholm barge, says it wants to move people out of hotels and has hinted that it wants to end the use of mass accommodation sites such as Wethersfield (see [page 18](#) for more detail).

Will it shift to a new model of providing asylum accommodation? *The Financial Times* said in October that ministers are "shocked" by the profits being made by big suppliers and "are keen to apply break clauses in contracts for asylum accommodation with outsourcers including Serco and Mears in an effort to renegotiate terms or end the deals." The break clauses would enable the contracts to be ended in 2026.

There have been other encouraging signs that the government recognises the severity of the problems. The chief inspector of borders and immigration carried out inspections this year and produced a detailed report on 'contingency' accommodation (hotels and large sites). The report was published on 24 October and the government issued its response at the same time, accepting in full or in part all of the inspector's recommendations, for example on contractors' compliance with the conditions in the contracts.

A wide range of organisations, including CIH, wrote to the new home secretary on 1 August calling for a completely new approach to asylum accommodation, one "that puts people before profit". It said that the government could use the break clause in the contracts to usher in a radical change - handing power back to local areas to house people seeking asylum, rather than the current top-down system.

The letter argued that properly funded councils and housing associations can work with charities and community groups to deliver better integrated wraparound services in a way that benefits their area; not how it currently works, where they often have to pick up the pieces of a system in which they have little power. "They have skin in the game, but no say in the rules," the letter said.

The Home Office response to the letter was non-committal, but representatives of three of the bodies who signed it met Angela Eagle, minister of state for border security and asylum, to discuss the proposals. As a result, [this briefing paper was produced](#), which - it is hoped - will be the basis of further meetings.

On 16 October, CIH published its *UK Housing Review Autumn Briefing Paper*, which includes an article by Kate Wareing of Soha Housing, setting out a new approach to providing asylum accommodation in properties that could be acquired by local authorities. She argues that such a scheme could pay for itself in less than a year. The article is available [here](#) and the full report with costing details is [also available](#) from Soha.

Also in October, IPPR launched a new report, *Transforming Asylum Accommodation*. It examines the problems with the current system and calls for it to be replaced by one devolved to regional level. It looks in detail at further options, including recommending a trial of the Kate Wareing proposals above.

RAMFEL, the Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex and London, is asking for signatures on [its petition](#), calling on the government to cease using hotels to house those seeking asylum.

Finally, in the Budget on 30 October, the chancellor announced savings of £4 billion over two years in the costs of asylum accommodation, by ending the use of hotels and reducing the claims backlog. The government is reinvesting just over £800 million of this in improvements to the system, including to the appeals system, but also including spending more on returns.

### Will we tackle refugee homelessness?

Faced with [appalling levels of homelessness among refugees](#) leaving asylum accommodation, is the government going to extend the current move-on period?

Charities have slammed government policy that gives [people who are granted asylum only 28 days to leave Home Office accommodation](#) - whether it's a B&B, hotel, or military base. The new government has been warned that this "sets refugees up to fail from the start". Calls for the move-on period to be increased to 56 days, in line with homelessness legislation, have come from [Homeless Link](#), the [Refugee Council](#) and the grassroots campaign, [Young Roots](#).

Councils [have also called for an extension to the move-on period](#). A snapshot survey by the LGA found that 89 per cent of council respondents said that the short move-on period contributes to a rise in homelessness in their areas, and around three-fifths said it led to increased rough sleeping.

In June, CIH joined NACCOM and Homeless Link in writing to all political parties about refugee homelessness (see the [summer newsletter](#)). NACCOM and Homeless Link have since [published](#) a briefing which has been sent to the minister, Angela Eagle. They are asking to work with her to change the system, so it is no longer a direct cause of homelessness.

Baroness (Ruth) Lister, working with the Refugee Council, has put down [a Private Members' Bill](#) which would increase the moving on period to 56 days. It is due to get its second reading in the House of Lords on 13 December.

A promising early move by the deputy prime minister was the announcement that the previous government's plan to make it harder for non-UK nationals to apply for social housing would be dropped. The plans had been widely condemned, [including by CIH](#) (see our [summer newsletter](#)) as potentially worsening refugee homelessness.





## Will asylum claims be processed “offshore”?

Among her first acts, new home secretary Yvette Cooper scrapped the Rwanda scheme and diverted £75 million from it towards a new UK border security command to disrupt the “vile trade” of bringing migrants across the Channel. Cooper said she wanted to introduce a “better controlled” immigration system in order to tackle “the chaos that has blighted the system for far too long”.

Kier Starmer then travelled to Italy to meet prime minister Giorgia Meloni, whose hardline immigration policies have cut numbers crossing the Mediterranean. Italy has an agreement with Albania to process asylum claims and with Tunisia and Libya to prevent boat crossings. Critics say that Italy’s measures seem to offer little, given the rather different kind of agreement the UK would need with the French government. “What can the UK learn from Italian migration management?” [asked Colin Yeo](#); the short answer is “nothing”.

Furthermore, Italy’s courts recently [dealt a blow](#) to the Albania scheme, ordering several asylum seekers who had been sent there to be sent to Italy instead.

The International Rescue Committee, headed by former Labour foreign secretary David Miliband, said that [copying Italy’s migration policies won’t stop Channel deaths](#). It urged Labour instead to make “effective and compassionate” decisions about asylum policy.

Zoe Gardner [brilliantly explains](#) the practical obstacles that face any plan to process asylum claims abroad, and why it is likely to be more complicated, more expensive and unlikely to deter people from crossing the English Channel. She suggests a much smaller and quicker arrangement to vet people initially in France and then transfer them to the UK by regular transport. [Just Security looks at the Swiss model of asylum processing](#), arguing that other countries could learn from it.

*Byline Times* said that Border Force whistleblowers say the plan to “smash the small boat gangs” is [doomed to fail](#). It argued that Labour should [“think outside the box”](#) and open a cross-Channel safe route for asylum seekers.

The Refugee Council’s Enver Solomon [also criticised the policy](#), saying that an ethical foreign policy should be “the guiding star” in tackling the refugee crisis.

*The World Politics Review* [said](#): “... the ‘Italy model’ for managing migration is no real solution at all. Instead, if the EU, the UK and other European countries really want to ‘control’ migration, they should try to engage with countries of origin and transit in a more sustainable way. Understanding the nature of these flows of people and expanding bilateral dialogue beyond the narrow security lens - by broadening visa programs, upgrading asylum processing and opening new humanitarian corridors, for instance - is crucial.”

## Can the government deal with the asylum claims backlog?

With the Rwanda plan scrapped, the government has pledged to start tackling the backlog of asylum claims that accumulated under the last administration. Much of this was due to the passage of the Illegal Migration Act, which effectively warehouses people within the UK with no access to asylum and unable to be [removed](#). *The Observer* has [reported](#) on the ‘inhumane’ treatment of migrants who were rounded up under UK’s failed Rwanda plan. Testimonies from Home Office staff revealed that force was used against distressed detainees.

The claims backlog has caused enormous hardship.

**According to [openDemocracy](#), more than 31,000 people who arrived in small boats after July 2023 are “in limbo”.**

*The Face Magazine* met four young men trying to build their lives amid uncertainty about their claims. One asylum seeker has been waiting [for 16 years](#), since the last Labour government. [Nineteen cases](#) are over a decade old.

*The Financial Times* asks [whether Labour can fix the UK asylum system](#), warning that their plans “could risk pushing higher numbers into homelessness”. It has a series of charts showing the problems which Labour faces, with “legacy” asylum claims now largely dealt with but with a different backlog of over 80,000 claims frozen under recent Conservative legislation. In September, the government [passed regulations](#) enabling it to process these cases. The implications for local authorities and others are [analysed by the NRP Network](#).

There is also a record backlog of outstanding appeals (because many of the backlog claims were refused). [New figures](#) show the appeals backlog had risen to 33,227 cases at the end of June 2024, under the last government. In the period April to June 2024, the immigration tribunal received 9,318 asylum appeals and disposed of 3,598 cases. In October, the government [was reported to have recruited 200 extra staff](#) to deal with the part of the backlog formed of modern slavery cases.

The Migration Observatory [set out the data](#) behind some of Labour’s key pledges on the asylum claims backlog and other issues.

## Will there be a new government crackdown? - with more detentions and more deporting?

The government also committed to re-opening migrant detention centres and significantly increasing the numbers deported from the UK. [The plan faced extensive criticism from campaigners and from experts on migration](#).

Zoe Gardner branded the announcement “a betrayal of everyone who voted for change”. She later [added](#): “Detention and deportation are brutal and useless for anything but enriching private companies that enact it.” A Home Office official [described Labour’s plan for returns](#) as “fanciful thinking” as legal challenges make it an “absolute nightmare”.

The campaign to “Keep Campsfield Closed” [was alarmed](#) at the plan to reopen detention centres, one of which is Campsfield House in Cambridgeshire, and held demonstrations against it. “Labour’s plan to reopen such centres will be disastrous”, argues Gee Manoharan of the Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees, [writing in the Guardian](#). He adds:

*“As someone who has survived the nightmare of immigration detention, I know first-hand the toll that it takes on the human soul. The government’s response? To expand this inhumane system by planning to reopen the Haslar and Campsfield House centres in Hampshire and Oxfordshire respectively, ignoring the mountain of evidence that detention inflicts profound harm. This isn’t just a misstep, it’s a blatant betrayal of human dignity.”*

In contrast, the Daily Telegraph [argued](#) that Cooper’s migrant “crackdown” will “barely make a dent”. This is because the benchmark for removals is the lowest annual total in almost two decades. And [openDemocracy warned campaigners](#) not to expect Labour to take progressive steps on migrant detention, given that it takes lessons from the US which imprisons migrants on a large scale.

## Can Labour make more radical changes to migration policy?

Several organisations called on the government to step back from these immediate issues and take a fresh look at immigration and asylum policy as a whole.

The Refugee Council’s Enver Solomon [urged the government](#) to end the hostile rhetoric about asylum seekers and refugees, or risk failing to fix a broken system.

Barrister Colin Yeo has an [alternative plan for Labour](#). They should “change the conversation” on immigration issues, he argues.

*The Conversation* [praised the government](#) for changing its language - moving away from talk of “illegal” migration to calling it “irregular migration”. It sees this as “the beginnings of a more humane conversation”, with Starmer calling for a new, “quick and humane” asylum system. He also promised European leaders that he will “reset” the UK approach to migration in a way that respects international law.

However, several commentators see Home Office culture as a key obstacle which the new government must overcome. Colin Yeo makes the case for a [fundamental change](#). Migrants Rights sees the immigration system as [“racist by design”](#), needing complete overhaul. [Together with Refugees](#) demands a “fair new plan for refugees” (and has a template email which organisations can use for outreach [here](#)).

Yvette Cooper appeared to recognise the need for cultural change in October when she announced the re-establishment of the unit set up to tackle this issue in the aftermath of the Windrush scandal. [Speaking to the Guardian](#), she said the reopened unit would report to the Home Office’s ethics adviser and would be “dedicated to driving forward the action needed to ensure that what happened to the Windrush generation can never happen again to any part of our society”.





## Refugee family reunion - what housing options are available?

*Housing rights contributor Sue Lukes, with thanks to Liz Davies KC of Garden Court Chambers, clarifies issues about family reunion and housing rights.*

The joy of reuniting with family can sometimes be spoiled by the difficulties in sorting out housing when they arrive. This article is about how to avoid that where possible.

What happens when refugees finally manage to get their family members here? Family reunions are often messy. This article does not deal with any of the immigration issues involved, or how to apply for or get a family reunion. It's worth noting that:

- Sometimes family reunions happen through "official" channels and sometimes through less official ones
- Sometimes they are planned for months, but even when they are people may need to travel with very little notice
- Sometimes people may simply turn up
- Unlike other refugee resettlement schemes, local authorities are not routinely told when official family reunions will arrive, and obviously do not know about unofficial ones until they do.

And once the rest of the family arrive, usually there is a new housing problem, because the refugee here is often in a single room, a hostel, hosted or staying with friends.

This article covers the practicalities of dealing with that situation.

**Important:** This article only deals with **refugee family reunions** i.e. those where:

- The refugee is in the UK and recognised as a refugee and still has refugee status
- The family was started before the refugee had to flee
- Close family members are involved.

Other family reunions may be even more complicated and what happens in relation to housing will probably depend on the facts of the case.

### Immigration status, family reunions and eligibility

To get help from the local council as homeless or to be allocated council housing or be nominated by the council for housing (e.g. by a housing association) an applicant must be **eligible**. Eligibility is defined by regulations; you can find an explanation of the regulations for England and Wales with links to the up-to-date regulations on the housing rights website [here](#) and the Scottish regulations can be found [here](#).

Refugees are eligible (many people with limited leave to remain are not) and may be asked to provide some proof of their status such as a letter of grant of status, a BRP, a Home Office travel document, or an eVisa. Refugee family members are also eligible if they fall within one of the classes in the regulations and, if they do not, or are told that they do not, they should seek advice.



## Housing and refugee family reunions

Since refugees and their families are eligible, they can get specific help from local housing authorities if they are in unsuitable housing, homeless or threatened with homelessness. Housing authorities also have to ensure that advice is available to anyone in their area, eligible or not.

Refugees can go on to the local council housing register (which is usually run jointly with housing associations in the area, to which the council can nominate people in housing need). Housing on the register is allocated on the basis of need, with people in overcrowded, insecure or unsuitable accommodation getting preference. However, most councils will not take account of family members for housing register applications until they arrive, and this is difficult to challenge (because, of course, they may not arrive or not arrive for some time).

Refugees can also apply as **homeless** to the local council if they are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. Councils then have specific duties to assess their case, prevent homelessness if possible, and 'relieve' homelessness for everyone who is homeless. They have a duty to provide interim accommodation for applicants if the council has reason to believe that an applicant may be in 'priority need'. So, the council has to put a roof over the head of an applicant in priority need if/once they are homeless, at least for a time.

An applicant is in **priority need** if they or a member of their household is pregnant or vulnerable or they have a child as part of their household or they are homeless because of domestic abuse. A person may be vulnerable because of:

- Old age
- Mental health
- Disability
- Having served a custodial sentence (as specified by regulation)
- Some other special reason (and this could include, for example, the trauma suffered by refugees before and during flight and/or trauma experienced as a result of imprisonment abroad or immigration detention).

But vulnerability is a complex and contested legal area, and if the priority need depends only on that it is wise to get advice. Young people aged 16-17, and those aged 18-21 (or up to 25 if they are in full time education), who were in the care of the council, also have a priority need.

A refugee is **homeless** if they:

- Have nowhere where they have a legal entitlement to live, or
- If they have somewhere but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy it, or
- If there is nowhere the family can live together.

How does this fit with refugee family reunion? Until the family arrive it is difficult to make an application as homeless or even threatened with homelessness (but see below for suggestions about getting councils to make sensible policies on this) because the refugee has somewhere to live that it is reasonable for them to continue to occupy.

So, in many cases the application for homelessness help is made once the family arrive.

- When the family arrive, the refugee may lose their current accommodation if, for example, they are **staying with friends or being hosted**. They would then have nowhere they had a legal entitlement to occupy. The council may demand proof that the accommodation is no longer available, for example a letter from the host ending the arrangement.
- **Hostel** accommodation can be trickier, as generally the refugee will have some form of licence or tenancy for their room. If the family come and stay there, it is likely that the licence or tenancy terms will be breached, but the council may demand that the arrangement be formally terminated before they will take an application. However, there will be situations where it is clearly **unreasonable to continue to occupy** the hostel room, e.g. when it is a men-only hostel and the family includes women and children or the room might be overcrowded (see below). The council may need reminding or even persuading of this, and the hostel provider may be able to help with that.
- If the refugee has a tenancy of a room or flat then they are entitled to have people stay with them there temporarily, even if they are overcrowded. The landlord may decide they don't want that and move to evict but will have to do that legally through the courts. The refugee and family can apply to the council as homeless because it is **unreasonable to continue to occupy** if it is very overcrowded or otherwise unsuitable (e.g. because a family member cannot access the tenancy because of disability). This may need advice, advocacy and support as the council may argue that instead it would be better to apply for an allocation via the housing register which should take account of the extra housing need.
- In either of these situations (a hostel or a tenancy that it will be very difficult to live in) the arriving family members could instead **apply directly as homeless** to the local council as soon as they arrive or go and stay with a friend briefly and then do that.



- If the refugee has a tenancy, it is important to know that the husband, wife or civil partner of a tenant gets a **legal right to live in their tenancy** as soon as they move in there, so if they spend one night in the refugee's tenancy they are possibly no longer "homeless". If the husband, wife or civil partner wants to be treated as homeless in her own right, they may want to apply to the council on arrival or stay with a friend temporarily before they make their application.
- The council has a duty to provide accommodation to an applicant who is eligible, homeless and in priority need, and that accommodation is for the applicant and anyone who is living or could reasonably be expected to live with them, so if the family apply as homeless on arrival, **the accommodation must be for all the family including the refugee.**
- The duty of the council is to house the eligible applicant and all those who are living with them or could reasonably be expected to live with them. So, it does not matter if some or all of the other family members are not **eligible, the accommodation provided must be for all of them.** For example, if a refugee is staying with friends or a host and then the family arrive so the refugee loses their accommodation, if the refugee himself/herself is in priority need then the council must house them plus the family members. But if the refugee depends for priority need on someone who is not eligible, we strongly recommend getting advice.

### Can we make things easier?

Because councils generally refuse to deal with refugee family reunions until people arrive in the UK, it creates emergencies and difficult situations for everyone involved. Providing emergency accommodation at short notice can be very expensive for councils, especially when they will also need to provide interpreting, transport and maybe other help as well.

If there are a lot of refugee family reunions in your area, you could try to negotiate better arrangements with the council for everyone. The council is under no obligation to do this, but it could save them money and will certainly save them a lot of stress.

Councils that have City of Sanctuary status, refugee/migrant integration strategies and/or migrant champions could be encouraged to include family reunion policies, as part of that work. A good policy for refugee family reunions would include:

- All refugees in the area are encouraged to tell the council if they are applying for or trying to organise family reunions, who could be coming and whether they have any particular needs, and how the application is progressing.
- Local voluntary and community organisations can help with this, both spreading the word and even acting as a communication channel between the refugee and the council (especially for unofficial family reunions where refugees may be reluctant to engage directly).
- Once a refugee family reunion application has been accepted and a visa issued the council starts planning with the refugee insofar as is possible.
- Where appropriate, social services can be included in the planning especially where there are relevant care needs.
- This should include taking a homeless application if the family has tickets to travel within the next 56 days.
- The refugee could be assisted to apply to the housing register (for a new social housing tenancy or a transfer if an existing tenant) and the size of the property that the refugee will be entitled to under the allocation scheme will then be re-assessed to take account of the family members once there is a definite date for the family to arrive, such as a ticket obtained, or possibly the visa granted.

The council can then prepare appropriately for the arrival, ensuring that accommodation, interpretation and other support is available on the day.



## Unsafe, insecure: Barriers to safe housing for Black and minoritised migrant women

Katy Swaine Williams, a consultant at Hibiscus Initiatives, writes about a new [report](#) by Hibiscus, published on 23 October.

The new report highlights the profound housing challenges faced by Black and minoritised migrant women in the UK. The research reveals a correlation between inadequate access to safe, secure housing and an increased likelihood of experiencing mental health struggles.

Hibiscus is a national charity which has been delivering services for over thirty years to Black and minoritised migrant women (in other words women without British citizenship) in contact with the criminal justice and/or immigration systems. The charity works through a wraparound, trauma-informed, women-centred and rights-based support model, centring anti-racist practice, including through group activities at our specialist women's centre in North London.

Many of our service users have multiple and complex needs due to past trauma including human trafficking, domestic servitude, domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG). Often the recovery of these women is hindered, and can also be re-traumatised by contact with the immigration and criminal justice systems and associated problems including homelessness, poverty and debt, exposure to further harm, communication and cultural barriers, racism and discriminatory treatment.

Over half of the women Hibiscus supported in the last year reported housing insecurity, with those affected nearly twice as likely to suffer from mental health issues. Many of the women live in unsafe or unsuitable accommodation. "Mona" (not her real name) said:

*"Not having somewhere safe [to live] is slowing my recovery - if you're constantly experiencing new trauma how can you deal with it as new ones keep coming up?"*

Drawing on focus groups with Hibiscus' frontline practitioners and service users, and data from the charity's casework, this new [evidence report](#) identifies five barriers to safe housing for the women Hibiscus supports, while an accompanying [policy briefing](#) makes recommendations for reform. This includes ending the "hostile environment" policy and associated barriers which restrict migrant women's rights and cause harm to them and their children.

Hibiscus is also calling for an end to reliance on poor-quality, shared accommodation for migrants, which causes harm to health and re-traumatisation, and investment in decent, self-contained, family-friendly social housing in communities that is accessible to migrant women. It was of paramount importance to the women taking part in the research that their accommodation should be clean and in good repair, not damp, and not overcrowded. It was also important for it to be within reasonable reach of essential services including children's schools, and in a location where the women were - and felt they were - safe.

We have also called for the adoption of a gender-informed, trauma-responsive and intersectional approach to migrant women's accommodation provision and the housing application process. Women-only accommodation is key. Our research findings echo the [Strategy for Ending Women's Homelessness in London](#), which made clear that tackling women's homelessness requires increased availability of safe, suitable and specialist single-sex accommodation and wraparound, multi-agency, trauma-informed support, as well as second-stage and move-on accommodation and support. Critically, this must also be available to women with No Recourse to Public Funds and complex immigration status.

It was important to the women we spoke to that staff onsite at their accommodation, such as security staff, should be trained to take a gender-informed, trauma-informed, intersectional approach to their work. Hibiscus recommends that training and guidance for staff should be co-designed and co-delivered with women with lived experience and specialist organisations, to ensure accommodation provision respects the rights and meets the needs of migrant women and their children.

Hibiscus would like to hear from any landlords who are interested in helping to identify practice-based solutions to increase successful referrals of Black, minoritised and migrant women and their children into safe and suitable accommodation.

To find out more and share your insights, contact us: [info@hibiscus.org.uk](mailto:info@hibiscus.org.uk).



## The hidden humanitarian crisis in Scotland: How UK immigration policy is creating destitution by design

Professor Beth Watts-Cobbe of Heriot-Watt University and co-author of [a recent report](#), writes about tackling destitution in Scotland.

In communities across Scotland, a hidden crisis is unfolding. Thousands of individuals, many of whom have lived here for years, even decades, are facing extreme deprivation, destitution and homelessness. This is not the result of an economic downturn or natural disasters, but a direct consequence of UK immigration policy – specifically “hostile environment” policies that exclude people in a wide range of circumstances from accessing statutory support including benefits and housing assistance. As our recent research reveals, this policy is creating destitution by design.

Radical and urgent reforms are needed that prioritise people’s ability to access the essentials and live a dignified life. The new UK government must commit to ending the unnecessary hardship that is being caused by current immigration policy and urgently change course.

For the last two years, we have been working with a [partnership](#) of migration and homelessness charities seeking to help migrants facing destitution in Scotland. This partnership – provides casework support, legal advice, accommodation, and modest financial help to migrants facing destitution. The people they work with have no recourse to public funds (NRPF) or restricted eligibility for mainstream social and housing supports.

The integrated support provided by Fair Way Scotland partners is transformative, even lifesaving, for those who can benefit from it. However, demand far outstrips availability. Scaling up the partnership is now critical given the growing demand for help, but mitigation programmes like this shouldn’t be necessary.

Demand for Fair Way Scotland case work support increased by 65 per cent last year, reflecting wider evidence that migrant destitution has skyrocketed. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s *Destitution in the UK* report, destitution among migrants increased by 136 per cent between 2019 and 2022, more than double the 61 per cent increase in general destitution over the same time-period.

Our own survey of those getting support from Fair Way Scotland found that almost all (97 per cent) are destitute, surviving on an average of just £40 per week. A third reported they had no income at all in the last month. A shocking 93 per cent are experiencing homelessness, with one in eight sleeping rough. Two-thirds report going without meals, clothes, and basic toiletries. While many relied on charities for support with such essentials, this kind of help was not always available and was often experienced as degrading.

Two-thirds of those we spoke to are not allowed to work, blocking their ability to support themselves out of these dire circumstances and stifling their ability to contribute to the society they desperately want to make their home. These counterproductive hostile environment policies affect thousands of people across Scotland, crushing their potential. The level of need is shocking, but the issue is entirely preventable with concerted action.



These aren't just statistics; they represent real people – our neighbours, members of our communities – who have been systematically stripped of their ability to live a minimally flourishing life by a policy that seems designed to create suffering:

- Sofija, a European national who has lived in Scotland for nine years, faced extreme vulnerability sleeping rough before she was finally able to secure settled status thanks to a Fair Way Scotland case worker.
- Jamal came to the UK 17 years ago to seek asylum from persecution but is still locked out of work and welfare supports.
- Kunal arrived in the UK more than a decade ago as a 26-year-old to pursue his education and escape homophobic persecution in his home country. Unable to afford student accommodation, Kunal stayed in an overcrowded two-room flat with 12 other people, making it difficult to focus on his studies. He was robbed, his college closed and his visa application was refused, and so he became homeless, sleeping rough and in shelters where he faced threats and exploitation. He walked the streets in minus temperatures, hungry, in fear for his safety and terrified of losing his vital documents. A turning point came when the Scottish Refugee Council assisted him in submitting a fresh application and he is currently in temporary accommodation. Kunal remains anxious about his uncertain future, caught between the fear of danger at home and his continued insecurity in the UK.

The levels of need, deprivation, disadvantage and trauma experienced by people with NRPF amounts to a humanitarian crisis among a group often hidden from public view, but whom politicians and policy makers know are here and have the power to help.

The UK government must simplify routes to settlement, process all claims fairly and quickly and require, empower and adequately resource local, regional and devolved governments to provide an immediate basic safety net for all.

While such action is being taken at a UK level, Scottish Government, independent funders, housing associations and local authorities must work together – using all the tools at their disposal – to mitigate the harms and costs imposed on those effected. Until they do, public services including NHS emergency care and charities will continue to bear the entirely preventable and costly brunt of national immigration policy. It's time to stop passing the buck.

Originally published in Scotland by *The Herald* on 23 September 2024. A JRF briefing on the report is available [here](#).



## Summer disturbances and responses to them

Demonstrations and violent protests in August led to calls for parliament to be recalled to address the far-right attacks spreading across the country.

Over 240 organisations, including CIH, came together to denounce the spread of racism, Islamophobia and anti-migrant hate, and called for both urgent action and a long-term shift away from the hostility of the past. You can read the statement [here](#) as well as the media coverage it received - including in the [Daily Telegraph](#) and [Independent](#). Leila Zadeh, CEO of Rainbow Migration and spokesperson for Together With Refugees, was also interviewed about it on [LBC News](#).

The Migrant Champions Network, which links local councillors who take a positive role in migration issues, [made a statement](#) about the disturbances and issued a [Messaging Guide for Councillors](#). [The Local Government Chronicle reported from Rotherham MBC](#), where Chris Read, the council leader, and Sharon Kemp, chief executive, made sure that public services were on site to deal with the effects of the violence directed at hotels accommodating asylum seekers.

Other responses included these:

- [Jonathan Portes](#) in [The Independent](#), urged the government to ditch clever, but undeliverable and damaging soundbites like "stop the boats", treat asylum seekers as human beings and be honest about legal migration.
- Zoe Gardner [on X](#), said that ten days on since racists attacked asylum seekers and mosques, "Labour announce they're ramping up the failed narrative that we can just get rid of the people we don't want here".
- Jacqui Mckenzie [on X](#), criticised the government for "not having ideas and plans for dealing with the inevitable global movement of people, detaining vulnerable people, raiding businesses where these days you'll mostly find hardworking people eking out a subsistence wage, most with the right to be in the UK".
- Sunder Katwala of British Future also [argued in the Big Issue](#) that "there's a much better way to talk about immigration".

- Daniel Trilling in the [London Review of Books](#) [argued for](#) "a wholesale rejection of the racist lies on which the violence thrives".
- Tim Newburn, who led an inquiry into the 2011 riots and has been a CIH author, called for a [proper inquiry](#) into recent events that finds the real causes. "Was it racism, poverty, drink?" he asks, "we need to know".

What do asylum seekers and refugees make of the eruption of far-right violence in the UK? A [Guardian](#) panel [talked about the riots](#), their fear, the racial harassment they are experiencing and their hope that inclusive values will prevail

Usman Sharifi came to the UK as an Afghan refugee. The far-right riots reminded him of the hatred he fled, [as he told Hyphen](#):

*"Living through this increase in hatred feels like cruel déjà vu. In Afghanistan, I witnessed first-hand how such hate strips away our humanity. I left Kabul to escape the brutal intolerance of extremists, hoping for peace and acceptance in the UK. They use religious extremism as their cause, while here rioters attack under the guise of nationalism. Despite their different masks, both have fostered a climate of fear and violence where marginalised people suffer."*

[The Hackney Citizen](#) [talked to migrant residents](#) of the borough who took part in Summer anti-racism protests. Augusta, a refugee from Nigeria, said:

*"I was humbled by the absence of disorder and the solidarity shown by the community, which was instrumental in helping me regain a sense of safety and inner peace after the heightened anxiety levels generated by the threats, particularly for people of colour and those of Muslim heritage."*



An anti-racism protest in central Hackney. Photograph: Maya Sall / LDRS.

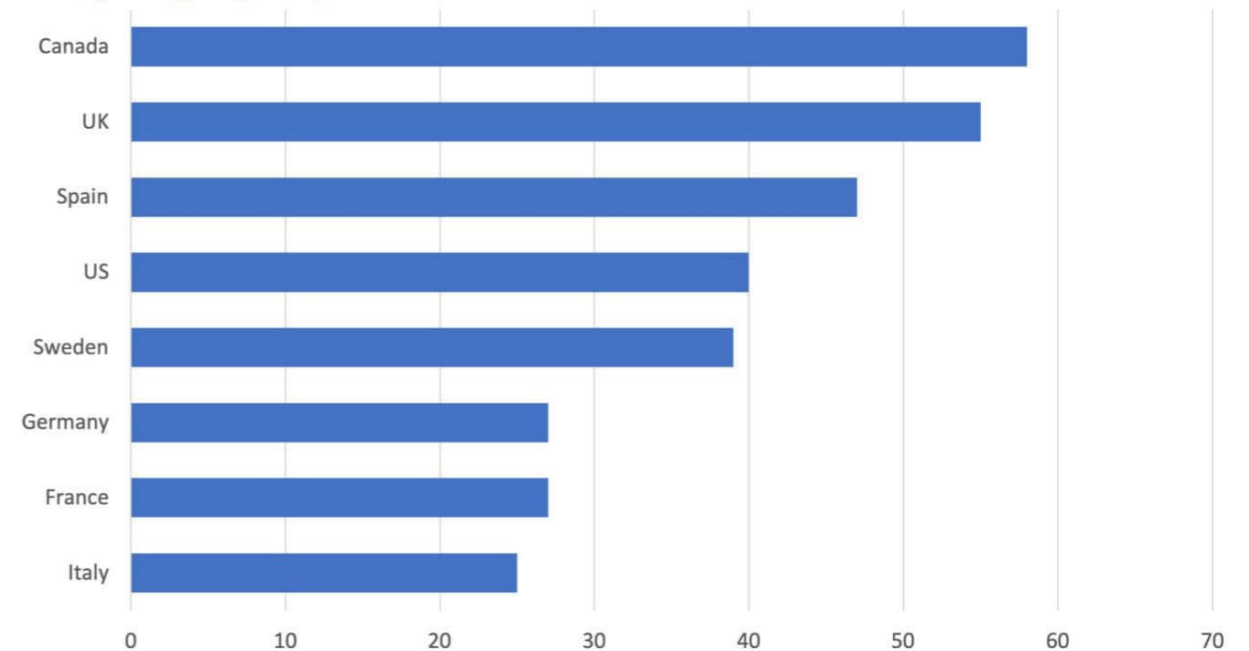
## New resources published in response to the violence

- The Public Interest Law Centre produced an excellent [guide for non-lawyers](#) supporting residents of asylum accommodation who need to be moved in light of actual or threatened racist attacks.
- CIH published an updated article by John Perry about migrants and housing, [dispelling some myths](#).
- [The Big Issue](#) [offered suggestions](#) to help asylum seekers and refugees affected by the violence.
- Hope not Hate offered [resources](#) to help respond to the far-right threat.

[Radix Big Tent](#) showed that, in spite of the riots, British people are [near the top of the chart](#) for feeling positive about migrants (see chart).

Now we would like to know your opinion about the people from other countries who come to live in [your country] –immigrants. How would you evaluate the impact of these people on the development of [your country]?

% responding Very Good/Good



Source: World Values Survey

Finally, several articles pointed out that public opinion about immigration is at odds with reality, such as [this one](#) from the [Financial Times](#). [The Big Issue](#) had "22 facts that prove migration benefits all of us".



## Refugee homelessness intensifies

Homelessness among those leaving asylum accommodation after receiving decisions on their claims **rocketed in the past year**. In 2023/24, 3,420 households required a relief duty under homelessness legislation after leaving Home Office accommodation, an increase of 148 per cent on 2022/23. In addition, 590 households required a prevention duty, an increase of 97 per cent on the previous year. Single people leaving asylum accommodation and needing homelessness assistance form 3.9 per cent of all single homeless households.

A new series of short films exploring why people become homeless has been made in collaboration with the *Big Issue* by **Cardboard Citizens**, a charity that uses drama to transform the lives of those with lived experience of homelessness, in association with **Black Apron Entertainment**. Each film is written and performed by people who have experienced homelessness. The first film shows how migrants' right to housing is dependent on immigration status - "that's the definition of racism", it argues.

### An Uncertain Future: A journey through the move-on period

In October, the UN Refugee Agency published a new report on the move-on period, **An Uncertain Future**.

The report reveals that for many refugees the move-on period is a time of great uncertainty and anxiety. Delays in receiving key documents from the Home Office and accommodation providers and errors with Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) leave individuals confused about how to move forward. Accessing private rental accommodation is next to impossible and means that newly recognised refugees are reliant on local authorities to provide housing at a time when there are acute shortages of accommodation. The five-week wait to receive universal credit means that asylum support ends before most asylum-seekers have been able to access critical funds to support themselves.

UNHCR makes a number of recommendations for change. They are talking to the Home Office about the findings.



## Latest on refugees fleeing world crises

### Children from Gaza

Despite the appalling injuries suffered by Gazan children, the government refuses to make special arrangements for them to be treated in the UK. In **a letter to Baroness Helic**, a foreign office minister says that they should get treatment in the region or apply for a visitor visa to travel to the UK. Visitor visas can be refused without giving a reason and there is no right to appeal the decision. The government is being lobbied to change its mind.

### Evacuees from Lebanon

Evacuation flights from Lebanon have landed in the UK, and the government has said that it is committed to ensuring that British nationals (and presumably their families, although with the Sudan evacuation that had to be pushed for) are able to leave.

Regulations already in force (S.I. 2023/1142, which came into operation on 27 October 2023) cover eligibility for housing and homelessness services for "a person who was residing in Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights or **Lebanon** immediately before 7 October 2023 and who left Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights or **Lebanon** in connection with the Hamas terrorist attack in Israel on 7 October 2023 or the violence which rapidly escalated in the region following the attack."

UK nationals and others not subject to immigration control who are covered by this definition do not have to pass the habitual residence test (HRT) to be eligible. Those subject to immigration control who have leave given within the rules and with no NRP conditions or undertaking covering them are also exempted from the HRT.

This may leave some with potential problems:

- People given leave outside the rules (which may cover those evacuated as family members for example, if, like the Sudanese evacuees, they are given limited leave with RPF). If the Sudanese experience is repeated, they may get an amendment to the eligibility regulations eventually.
- People who were not living in the region immediately before 7 October 2023.
- As usual, people approaching local authorities which are not familiar with or using the regulations.

As always, on the housing rights website there is **an up-to-date copy of the eligibility regulations** with any subsequent amendments.

### What can we learn about solutions to refugee accommodation from the Ukraine response?

**Finding a Safe Home** looks at experience with the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the lessons to be learned. The Red Cross calls on the government to build on what has been achieved through the Ukraine schemes, to improve the UK's support system for displaced Ukrainians and other refugees, no matter where they are from. The report recommends:

- Strengthening Homes for Ukraine so it protects the safety and sustainability of sponsorship
- Helping displaced people access the private rented sector and increase affordable housing stock
- Publishing a national integration strategy that promotes more equal support for all displaced people
- Applying lessons learnt from the Homes for Ukraine scheme and explore ways to offer faster, more effective safe routes to others seeking sanctuary.

The Red Cross argues that, by addressing these recommendations, the UK can create a more effective and compassionate framework for supporting displaced individuals.



## Ukrainian migration to the UK - an overview

The Migration Observatory [has a new briefing](#) on Ukrainian migration to the UK since early 2022, summarising the evidence on what happened. Of the six million Ukrainian refugees recorded in European countries as of June 2024, around four per cent had come to the UK. Britain was fourth in terms of the number of arrivals after Germany, Poland, and Czechia (note that around five million refugees, not included in these figures, were also accepted by Russia). *The Kyiv Independent* says that as many as 700,000 more Ukrainians are expected to leave the country by 2025.

Latest figures show that the number of Ukrainians who have entered the UK via the three main visa schemes is now over 200,000. Up to October 1, [around 190,000 visas](#) had been issued under the Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme; 156,000 people had actually arrived here. In addition, some 58,000 people had arrived by the Ukraine Family Scheme.

Data on homelessness among those housed under the HFU or family schemes are provided [here](#). As of 31 August 2024, 10,660 households had been dealt with as homeless, two-thirds of them (just over 7,000) because hosting arrangements under the HFU broke down or ended (the figures are likely to be underestimates, as many councils are not submitting data).

The House of Commons Library has published [an excellent review](#) of the visa scheme for Ukrainians and of the hosting arrangements.

The housing rights web page on advising Ukrainians has been moved and is now [here](#).

## Good and bad news for Afghan refugees and asylum seekers

The Refugee Council says that it is [excited to share](#) news that the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) now allows family reunification for those separated during the Kabul evacuation in 2021. This means some Afghans can refer their closest family members for relocation to the UK.

Hundreds of Afghan soldiers are also to be allowed to relocate to UK after a government U-turn, [reported the BBC](#). The government says it is allowing some 'eligible' Afghan special forces soldiers who fought alongside the British military to resettle in the UK, after they were previously rejected.

At the same time, *Free Movement* [commented](#) on the rising numbers of refusals of asylum claims by Afghan nationals, which seems to indicate a change of policy on the part of the Home Office, although the evidence so far is only anecdotal.

Afghans form the biggest proportion of nationals arriving in the UK via the government's resettlement schemes. In the year ending June 2024, 8,198 people were resettled, 94 per cent of them from Afghanistan. More than twice as many people were resettled in the last year as in the previous one.



## Asylum and refugee resettlement in the UK

A new [briefing](#) from the Migration Observatory summarises the evidence about the impact of asylum on the UK population. It shows that, in 2022, an estimated 0.6 per cent of the UK population consisted of people who came to the country seeking asylum. The majority of these people were long-term residents who had been in the UK for more than a decade. Asylum seekers accounted for seven per cent of immigration to the UK in 2023, compared with four per cent who arrived on bespoke humanitarian schemes for Hongkongers, Afghans and Ukrainians.

In 2023, the UK ranked fifth in the absolute number of asylum claims received when compared to EU+ countries. But when adjusted for population size, it falls to 20th place.





## Hotels, military bases and barges - costs out of control

### Call for “mass containment sites” for people seeking asylum to be abandoned

“Quasi-detention” sites such as former military barracks and the Bibby Stockholm barge are harmful to health and must be replaced with safe and stable accommodation, says [an opinion piece](#) in the *British Medical Journal*.

Mass containment sites are particularly damaging for people with trauma and poor health, the authors argue. They call on the government to urgently replace these sites with “safe and dignified community-based accommodation”, with access to appropriate and timely healthcare.

The government’s [announcement](#) that the current contract for the Bibby Stockholm (which expires in January 2025) will not be renewed is a step in this direction. One asylum seeker [told ITV News](#) that he felt “totally imprisoned” on the barge. *The Independent* [reported](#) from inside the Bibby Stockholm as work began to rehome asylum seekers after the closure announcement.

### Dangers to life in asylum accommodation and detention centres

The number of asylum seekers who died in Home Office care doubled in a year, [reported the Guardian](#). In the period January-June 2024, 28 people died, including two babies. Figures obtained by the NGO *The Civil Fleet* show that for the same period in 2023, there were 13 deaths.

*Byline Times* says that the “extreme distress and harm” suffered by detainees at UK immigration detention centres [has been laid bare](#), with official figures showing that self-harm rates have soared there by 67 per cent. From June 2023 to May 2024 there were 513 instances of self-harm at UK immigration detention centres, up from 308 the previous year.

Women for Refugee Women launched a new report, [Coercion and Control](#), on the treatment of women in hotel accommodation. The research shows that women who have fled gender-based violence are subjected to coercion and control in hotels, akin to patterns they have experienced in previous abusive relationships and situations.

[According to openDemocracy](#), scabies, sexual harassment and racism are rife inside the asylum hotels.

In the year to March 2024, there was a 51 per cent increase in the number of people held in immigration detention since the previous year - from 1,183 to 1,783 - meaning self-harm rates are rising faster than that of the detention estate population.

### High Court judgment on use of hotels to accommodate asylum-seeking children

The *East of England SMP newsletter* summarises the latest position on use of hotels to accommodate asylum-seeking children.

In July 2023, in [a case brought by ECPAT UK](#), the High Court found that the use of hotels for unaccompanied children was unlawful. In a subsequent judgment, the High Court found the *Home Secretary’s* decision-making in relation to the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) irrational because it failed to accept and take account of its responsibility in Kent County Council’s unlawful failure to discharge its duties to take all unaccompanied children into care.

In June 2024, the High Court issued its final ruling in the case on the use of hotels to accommodate unaccompanied children. The [judgment](#) once again emphasises that Kent County Council cannot derogate from its duties under the Children Act 1989 and that both the Home Office and Kent County Council should take all steps to ensure that the unlawful situation never arises again. ECPAT UK have issued a [press release](#) explaining this.

Lone children seeking asylum in the UK, placed in Home Office hotels, are at increased risk of exploitation according to a report by UCL researchers and ECPAT UK. [Behind Closed Doors](#) is a legal and empirical analysis of human trafficking risks in hotels compared to other accommodation for unaccompanied children and young people seeking asylum in the UK.

### Exorbitant cost of asylum accommodation

Writer Ed Hayward [points to the soaring costs of housing asylum seekers](#) in ten years, from £500 million to nearly £4 billion:

A think tank blames “woeful budgeting” at the Home Office for repeated overspending on asylum support. Over the last three years, the department’s initial estimated budgets for asylum, border, visa and passport operations amounted to £320 million. But the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#) said it had ended up spending £7.9 billion over the period, £7.6 billion more than forecast.



*“For years, asylum seekers cost the UK around £450 million to £600 million a year. And then the Tories deliberately stopped processing most asylum applications. What happened next? The backlog of people waiting for a ruling increased. A lot. And costs soared to the moon.”*

A former top civil servant warned that lack of oversight in accommodation spending echoes corrupt contracts awarded during the pandemic. Sir Mark Lowcock [told the Guardian](#) that “Some people are making a killing from that massive increase to £4 billion a year... That should all be subject to an urgent independent forensic audit. I think the results would not be pretty.”

A [joint investigation](#) by Liberty Investigates and *Prospect* magazine found that “the asylum king”, Graham King of Clearsprings, one of the Home Office contractors, “made millions from Britain’s broken immigration system”. And in [a separate investigation by Metro](#), King was alleged to have “passed £16 million to what appears to be an offshore company with links to its billionaire founder”. Clearsprings made [£62,500,000 in profits after tax](#) for the year ending January 2023, doubling its earnings of £28,000,000 from the previous year.

[According to Unherd](#), hotel entrepreneur Alex Langsam is another “asylum king”, worth at least £300 million, partly via asylum accommodation provided through his hotel chains.

[Another investigation](#), this time by *openDemocracy*, found that the Home Office holds no centralised data on the performances of its three main accommodation providers - Serco, Mears and Clearsprings Ready Homes - who use large numbers of subcontractors, unmonitored by the Home Office.

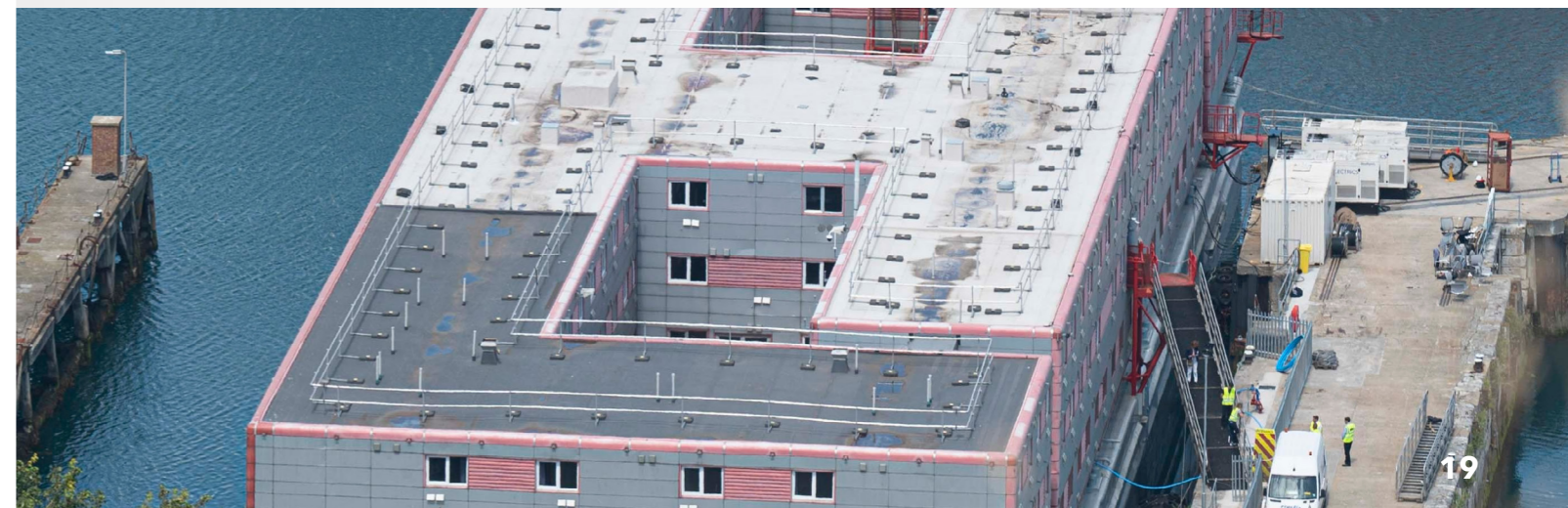
And the [Institute for Government](#) says that the government should stop using “fake numbers” in planning for asylum accommodation costs, which regularly and vastly exceed their budget allocations.

### Access to advice on asylum support

ASAP (the Asylum Support Appeals Project) has carried out research into access to advice on asylum support, and asylum support appeals. The research:

- Identifies the factors helping and preventing people from accessing advice
- Outlines the impact on people in the asylum support system and the organisations supporting them
- Includes a regional mapping of services across the UK
- Makes recommendations that will improve access to advice.

The report describes the myriad of challenges that people have to navigate and the pressures that organisations delivering this advice are under. Here is an [executive summary](#) and the full report is available [here](#).





## Latest news on the EU Settlement Scheme

### Pre-settled status - update on recent changes

In August, the NRPF Network published an [overview of recent updates](#) which have affected the rights of pre-settled status holders in UK. These include the automatic five-year extension of pre-settled status, changes to how immigration status is viewed by employers and landlords, the widening eligibility for universal credit for some people with pre-settled status who do not have a qualifying right to reside, and ongoing litigation as to whether people with pre-settled status may be eligible for homelessness assistance.

[Free Movement explains](#) how certain people are vulnerable to curtailment of their pre-settled status after no longer meeting the rules.

[Settled](#) has a [guide](#) for people with pre-settled status who want to move to settled status, which explains recent changes. See also the [summer issue](#) of the newsletter for detailed coverage of recent court cases.



Photo: An adviser at Settled.

## "No recourse" and migrant destitution

Homeless Link and NACCOM have published a new policy briefing, *Vital solutions to ending migrant homelessness*, exploring the key drivers of, and potential solutions to, homelessness amongst migrants.

The [briefing](#) is supported by over 70 organisations working in the fields of homelessness, housing, and migrants' rights, from local grassroots charities to leading national organisations including CIH, Criss, Shelter, the Refugee Council and Refugee Action. The briefing has been sent to the minister for border security and asylum, with a request to work with the Home Office to reform the system so it is no longer a direct cause of homelessness.

A shorter executive summary and MP engagement pack are available [here](#).

### Rising migrant destitution in the UK needs an urgent policy response

Lucy Leon [writes about](#) a COMPAS study that found that the provision of local authority support to prevent migrant destitution is inconsistent and frequently inadequate, with no clear guidance on minimum standard subsistence rates, and operates without any dedicated funding from central government.

Research found significant gaps in services provided by local authorities, for example:

- Destitute people assessed as not meeting the high social care threshold and being refused support
- People unaware that they can access social care support
- People too worried about the potential ramifications on their immigration status to present at social care
- People finding that the process to get the support they are entitled to is humiliating, distressing and intrusive.

The research also highlights the difficulties faced by those trying to get NRPF restrictions lifted.



### Three things the government can do to help councils deliver support to residents with NRPF

The NRPF Network is [calling](#) for the new government to take three steps:

- Provide grant funding for councils to invest in accommodation and financial support for families and adults with care needs who have NRPF.
- Ensure that the Home Office implements proportionate policy and operational solutions so that the provision of direct support becomes, in most cases, a short-term rather than long-term intervention.
- Ensure that impacts of immigration policies are adequately addressed in order to achieve cross-government policy ambitions such as ending homelessness, tackling child poverty and tackling violence against women and girls.

The network wants more help from the government for local authorities facing growing numbers of NRPF cases.

### New guidance from the NRPF Network

The NRPF Network has launched newly updated [practice guidance for local authorities supporting families with no recourse to public funds](#) and brand new [practice guidance on the service models that local authorities use to deliver the key elements of NRPF support](#). The latter gives a strategic view of service delivery for people with NRPF, based on the findings from a local authority survey and interviews.

The [rights and entitlements section of the network's website](#) has also been updated with new content on [employment](#). It covers rights and entitlements for workers, and information on specific routes like the Health and Care Worker visa.

The NRPF Network also considers how the Home Office's ramping up of asylum decision-making will lead to an increase in homelessness for people refused asylum, and sets out [what councils can do](#) to mitigate the risks of a rise in street homelessness and potential increase in demand for adult social care services.

### Combatting Destitution Project

Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre has a service offering subsistence help and other support to those suffering NRPF. You can check out the service [here](#).



## Dangers of the new "eVisas"

The Refugee Council's [new report](#), *Rescue, Recovery and Reform: Towards an effective asylum system*, says that the new eVisas could worsen refugee homelessness:

*"Given refugees only have 28 days between the decision on their asylum claim and their entitlement to Home Office accommodation and financial support ending, any delay caused by problems accessing an eVisa could have severe consequences. At the time of writing, there is no publicly available information about any plans the Home Office has in place to mitigate these risks."*

[Open Rights Group](#) also say that the digital documentation system is prone to data errors, system crashes and other glitches, and "could create a digital Windrush scandal".

Migrants Organise is part of a stakeholder engagement group with the Home Office on this issue. It is particularly concerned about the DWP, local authorities, NHS and other public authorities making a lot of mistakes and causing distress to people after eVisas come in on 31 December.

Migrants Organise and the3million, a non-partisan grassroots organisation of EU citizens in the UK, have therefore prepared a letter to be directed to all public authorities to remind them of their various duties to check people's status properly (particularly if there are issues with the system) and not to deny individual access to services they are entitled to. They plan to send the letter out en masse to local authorities and other bodies.

The letter can be [downloaded](#) from the3million website and is also available as a [Google document](#).

### Lost or stolen biometric residence permits will no longer be replaced

[Free Movement](#) says that the latest "what could possibly go wrong?" in the roll out of eVisas is that the Home Office appears to have announced without notice that they **will no longer be replacing lost or stolen biometric residence permits**. If someone has lost their BRP or if it has been stolen, the [Home Office](#) says they can use their travel document and visa application number to create their eVisa account. "Fingers crossed anyone in this position has both of those things to hand, I suppose."

All biometric residence permit holders **can now apply** for an eVisa.

### Grave concerns regarding digital-only immigration status

The Immigration Law Practitioners' Association wrote to the Home Secretary in August, on behalf of a range of organisations, expressing "grave concerns regarding digital-only immigration status". A lengthy reply from junior minister Seema Malhotra set out the steps the Home Office is taking to ensure the changes work and invited further engagement on the issue.

The correspondence can be seen [here](#). A "deep dive" [event for stakeholders](#) was held on 11 October.

## Other migration news

### More on the Windrush scandal

A suppressed government report into the causes of the Windrush scandal has [highlighted that historic immigration laws were designed to reduce the proportion](#) of Black and Asian people living in the UK. Between 1950-1981, "every single piece of immigration or citizenship legislation was designed at least in part to reduce the number of people with black or brown skin who were permitted to live and work in the UK", the report said.

Immigration lawyer Jacqui McKenzie [told Channel 4 News](#) that "Successive governments feel a sense of shame...and don't want to engage with Windrush".

The parliamentary and health service ombudsman has conducted [a review of the Windrush compensation scheme](#). It found that people were wrongly denied compensation, were told they weren't eligible for compensation when they were, evidence provided was not always looked at, and that rules were applied even when these led to unfair outcomes. These are aggravating features of the scheme - claimants have to wait years for reviews to conclude, which could be avoided with more efficient casework.

### More reports on the need for legal aid in immigration

Most of us are being confronted daily with the impacts of people not having access to immigration legal advice as a result of chronic under-investment in the legal aid system. A growing group of organisations, community groups and legal aid providers have been working together to try and create greater awareness of the crisis in legal aid and organise collective actions to bring about change.

JCWI and Migrants Organise have co-drafted [a briefing on the need for legal aid in immigration](#), a public document that can be shared with MPs/less familiar audiences laying out the problems, what needs to change and how to change it. If you would like hard copies of this resource to distribute within your local community - particularly at places like asylum hotels - please email [info@migrantchampionsnetwork.org](mailto:info@migrantchampionsnetwork.org).

A new report by the Public Law Project (PLP), [Remote immigration and asylum advice: what we know and what we need to know](#), argues that the government has been rolling out remote advice - as opposed to face-to-face advice - without sufficient research or any best practice guidelines. It says that "unsustainable fees" and remote advice from "burnt out lawyer" are no solution for legal aid deserts.

### The Guardian exposes deep rooted racism in the immigration system

The [Guardian](#) published an article condemning the Home Office for its controversial 10-year immigration route, which has been criticized for being long, expensive, and racially biased. Many are forced onto this route due to low income, with people required to renew their visas every 30 months, at a cost of £3,850 each time.

Nick Beales, RAMFEL's head of campaigning, emphasized that the 10-year route is a legacy of the hostile environment: "The racist intent is clear, with African and South Asian nationals far more likely to be placed on this arduous and often brutal route".

### Problems for migrant workers intensify

- The Bureau of Investigative Journalism reports on workers being promised UK jobs but then their recruiter had their licence revoked: ['We sacrificed everything we had': seasonal workers left without jobs after Home Office decision](#).
- [PoliticsHome](#) reports that the [care sector is in a "precarious" state as figures show overseas worker visas plummeting](#).
- "They promised dignity and respect, but all I got was abuse": [The Voice](#) tells the story of Caribbean care workers in the UK face who racial abuse, sexual harassment, and wage theft, but are trapped into silence due to visa dependency on exploitative employers.
- Following the government's announcement that it is ramping up raids and removals, [a new report from the Migrants Rights Network](#) shows that immigration raids are a racist intimidation tactic. The report dissects the secretive and opaque nature of raids, and their disproportionate impact on racialised communities.





Brief news items

- **Appealing asylum decisions to the wrong tribunal.** The asylum support tribunal (AST) is still receiving a significant number of appeals which are being sent to them instead of to the asylum tribunal. Right to Remain have put out [this call for action](#) - please help to spread the word.
- **Asylum claimants need to update the Home Office with their addresses.** ASAP says that asylum seekers or their representatives should contact [asylumcentralcommunicationshub@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:asylumcentralcommunicationshub@homeoffice.gov.uk) to update their address details. They strongly encourage all asylum seekers to do this, irrespective of whether they have moved, to ensure their claim is not unduly delayed. Please email [segsecretariat@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:segsecretariat@homeoffice.gov.uk) if you have any questions.
- **List of mental health organisations and services.** Here is a [useful list](#) from Community Trauma Conference UK of mental health organisations and services accessible to migrants.
- **New briefing on immigration rules.** The House of Commons published a [new briefing on the rules](#) in July.
- **Scottish Government ends free bus travel for asylum seekers.** Free bus travel boosted mental health and integration for asylum seekers, refugee organisations said. But the Scottish government has ended a £2 million pilot, [reports The Big Issue](#).

Good news corner

A great British welcome for refugees

A project by the UN High Commission for Refugees shares the stories of how communities across the UK are welcoming refugees and asylum seekers, helping them to rebuild their lives in a new home through integration and friendship. The photo series from the project can be found [here](#).



Organisers and members of Refugees Rock at the Climbing Hangar in Liverpool during a monthly session. © UNHCR/Andrew Testa

Lancashire Council is set to buy a group of properties to house refugees

[Lancs Live reports](#) that Chorley Council is set to buy a group of properties to house refugees from Afghanistan and anyone who finds themselves homeless in the borough. The authority has been awarded a £654,000 government grant which it will use, in part, to purchase a trio of two or three-bedroomed dwellings for Afghans who have settled in Chorley.

The remainder of the cash will pay for the acquisition and conversion of a commercial block which will be turned into three homes to act as temporary accommodation. The money is coming from the latest £450 million round of the Local Authority Housing Fund, which is targeted at helping both Afghan refugees and homelessness.

Northumberland County Council buys homes to house refugees

[The BBC reported](#) on another council using the Local Authority Housing Fund This time, Northumberland County Council is spending £1.2 million to buy and refurbish seven properties, to be used to house Ukrainians and Afghans. Council leader Glen Sanderson said buying the homes was "absolutely the right thing to do".

Afghan women arrive in Edinburgh to finish medical degrees denied under Taliban

A group of trainee female doctors from Afghanistan [have travelled to Edinburgh](#) to complete their medical degrees after the Taliban forced them to quit studying. The 19 women arrived in the UK after a three-year campaign by the parents of Linda Norgrove, the kidnapped Scottish charity worker who was killed during a botched rescue attempt by US special forces in 2010.

UK settles legal aid fee dispute with immigration lawyers

[The Financial Times reports](#) that the government has settled a case with Duncan Lewis Solicitors about uprating legal aid fees for immigration lawyers. The government has promised to review fees - unchanged since 1996 - by November. The agreement is seen as "a sign of Sir Keir Starmer's ambition to ease problems in the asylum system".

Arhag residents' roadshow

Housing Association Arhag have held their residents' roadshow, three days of visiting estates and gathering feedback from residents. Arhag believes this is an excellent way to engage residents, including many from migrant backgrounds. You can read their blog [here](#).



Arhag's roadshow in July.

Wales honours migrants who promote the Welsh language

Joseff Gnagbo, an asylum seeker from the Ivory Coast and chairman of the Welsh language group Cymdeithas yr Iaith, and Theresa Mgadzah Jones, who emigrated from Zimbabwe to Cardiff as a 12-year-old, [were both honoured](#) at the Wales National Eisteddfod in August for their work in promoting the Welsh language.

What does Durham City of Sanctuary do?

Read this [brilliant interview with Amya Nemesh](#), coordinator of Durham City of Sanctuary, about her experience of fleeing Ukraine and finding community here in the UK.

Cat that comforts trafficked women in London safe house is feline of the year

Marley, whose "incredible gift of empathy" is said to help exploited women, [beat thousands of cats to win the prize](#).





## Forthcoming events

### Migrants and Mental Health Disability All-Day Conference, 15 November

**M**igrants Organise and Doughty Street Chambers are organising a conference at Doughty Street Chambers titled "Migrants and Mental Health Disability All-Day Conference: Best practices for immigration and court of protection professionals".

They aim to encourage collaboration, networking and knowledge-sharing between professionals working in the UK's migrant and disability rights fields. They are inviting immigration, mental health / court of protection professionals, as well as clinicians and social workers.

For further information and to book a ticket, click on [this link](#).

### NRPF: From Political Context to Personal Impact - training session on November 7th

Project 17 are delighted to announce a new training series in collaboration with [United Impact](#).

United Impact are a group of around sixty people with personal experience of no recourse to public funds. Their aim is to raise awareness of the extremely difficult conditions that families with NRPF are forced to endure. The group meets weekly to work in solidarity on their aims and projects, and also for mutual community support.

We invite you to join us for the online launch of our first session on 7 November, between 10.30-12.30am.

The session will explore:

- What is NRPF?
- The political and historical underpinnings of NRPF
- Identifying different immigration statuses
- Entitlements and restrictions
- Issues and barriers
- Experiences of the Hostile Environment

You can read more about the session and purchase tickets [here](#).







# Do you have any comments on this newsletter?

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

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