

[Asylum Seekers and Refugees](#)

[Migration](#)

[Events](#)

[Funding](#)

[Jobs](#)

The Newsflash is a bi-monthly round up of publications, information, events, funding and jobs relating to asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers for anyone who wants to keep up to date with the latest developments.

The newsflash is produced by the East of England Local Government Association - Strategic Migration Partnership.

CONTENT

ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES – INCLUDING REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

- [An inspection of the use of hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum seeking children \(UASC\) March - May 2022 – ICIBI Independent Report and Home Office Response](#)
- [ECPAT UK response: report of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration](#)
- [Information booklet for asylum applications](#)
- [Providing free school meals to families with no recourse to public funds \(NRPF\)](#)
- [Policy Update: Homes for Ukraine education and childcare grant conditions of funding](#)
- [Updated Guidance: Additional family members under Pathway 3 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme \(ACRS\)](#)
- [New statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 719 and Explanatory Memorandum \(18 October 2022\)](#)
- [UK-France joint statement: enhancing co-operation against illegal migration](#)
- [Conditions at Manston asylum processing centre](#)
- [Home Secretary visits migrant processing facilities in Kent](#)
- [Irregular migration to the UK, year ending September 2022](#)
- [Asylum backlog](#)

MIGRATION

- [Welcome: a guide for Hong Kong British National \(Overseas\) visa holders in the UK](#)
- [Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration report on the BN\(O\) visa route](#)
- [A new independent complaint investigation service for the Home Office](#)
- [Nationality and Borders Bill: Chagossian nationality factsheet](#)
- [Open consultation - Possible changes to the First-tier Tribunal \(Immigration and Asylum Chamber\) Rules and the Upper Tribunal Rules arising from Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#)
- [Voluntary Returns Service \(VRS\) stories of return](#)
- [Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify statistics UK, Quarter 3 2022 – July to September](#)
- [Housing Rights Newsletter, October 2022](#)
- [New research – child victims of trafficking share their experiences and call for change](#)

[Back to the top](#)

EVENTS AND TRAINING

- [EUSS And Family Breakdowns, What Does That Mean For Settlement Webinar](#)

FUNDING

- [People's Health Trust: Health Lottery East](#)

JOBS

- [SRS are recruiting for an Employment and Training Coordinator](#)
- [Strategic Migration Partnership: AMIF Project Training and Compliance Manager](#)

Asylum Seekers and Refugees – including refugee resettlement

[An inspection of the use of hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum seeking children \(UASC\) March - May 2022 – ICIBI Independent Report and Home Office Response](#)

This inspection examined the use of hotels to accommodate UASC, with particular reference to the Home Office's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are in the UK. The inspection took place between March and May 2022 and included site visits to all four hotels on the south coast in use by the Home Office at that time.

On 19 October, 2022 the Home Office released a [response to the ICIBI independent report](#), where they partially accepted the majority of the recommendations made.

ECPAT UK response: report of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

In response to the ICIBI's latest inspection [report](#), which examines the use of hotels to accommodate UASC, ECPAT UK make the following recommendations:

- The UK Government must prioritise cross-departmental collaboration particularly between the Home Office, the Department for Education and the Department for Levelling up, Housing & Communities to ensure the lawful care and protection of unaccompanied children
- The Home Secretary must immediately cease to unlawfully accommodate unaccompanied children and fulfil the statutory duties under Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009.
- The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities must ensure local authority children's services have sufficient resource and capacity to fulfil their legal obligations to care for children in need in their area.
- The Secretary of State for Education must ensure that all cases of unaccompanied children going missing are considered at high risk of exploitation and that serious incident notifications are made to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.

Read ECPAT UK's full response [here](#)

Information booklet for asylum applications

[This](#) booklet contains important information about claiming asylum in the UK. It explains the process for making an initial asylum application in the UK, including information on the process after you have made your asylum application. Recent updates to this booklet include new links to legal aid provision and an update to the wording of 'What if I don't have evidence to prove my age?'.

Providing free school meals to families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

The DfE have permanently extended free school meal eligibility to children in all households with NRPF, subject to maximum income thresholds. Schools and local authorities are not able to use the eligibility checking system (ECS) to confirm eligibility for these families as the family will not be in receipt of Universal Credit or legacy benefits. [This](#) most recent update explains who these groups are and how schools can verify their eligibility and award free school meals.

These groups include, but may not be limited to children of:

- Zambrano carers
- Families who have no recourse to public funds with a right to remain in the UK on grounds of private and family life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights

[Back to the top](#)

- Families receiving support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 who are also subject to a no recourse to public funds restriction
- A subset of failed asylum seekers supported under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Chen carers
- families holding a BN(O) passport
- spousal visa holders
- work visa holders
- student visa holders
- those with no immigration status

Applicants will need to evidence which group they belong to. The above list is not exhaustive, and other groups may still be considered. Further guidance on providing evidence can be found on the linked webpage.

In all cases, the family should complete and sign the [self-declaration form](#) confirming both their immigration category and that they are not above the maximum income threshold required for their area.

[Policy Update: Homes for Ukraine education and childcare grant conditions of funding](#)

The existing guidance relates to funding to provide education and childcare services for children who have entered England via the Homes for Ukraine scheme 2022 to 2023. It explains the conditions for spending the grant and how allocations were decided. Grants will be allocated under section 14 of the Education Act 2002 with the condition that local authorities in England can spend the funding on provision of services for children who have entered via the Homes for Ukraine visa route.

The department will make regular payments to local authorities based on quarterly data collections. Allocations will include arrivals from the previous quarter once the data has been validated. The first data collection from local authorities was in June 2022. The second data collection from local authorities was in September 2022.

Updates to this policy were made on 25 October in relation to the ['Allocation and payment arrangements'](#) within the conditions of grant, and also the [allocations and payments spreadsheet](#).

[Updated Guidance: Additional family members under Pathway 3 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme \(ACRS\)](#)

Under Pathway 3 of the ACRS Scheme, the government offered up to 1,500 resettlement places to eligible individuals from three specified groups, who are located in Afghanistan or the region. This figure includes any eligible immediate and additional family members. The three specified groups are: British Council contractors, GardaWorld contractors and Chevening alumni.

This updated guidance explains the eligibility criteria for additional family members (AFM) seeking to resettle in the UK alongside a Principal who is eligible for Pathway 3 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) in the first year. The guidance in this document applies to Pathway 3 in the first year of the Scheme only.

Any request for consideration of AFM must be accompanied by supporting documentation to verify the relationship between them and the Principal. The most recent update includes changes to the acceptable documentary evidence for this process.

[New statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 719 and Explanatory Memorandum \(18 October 2022\)](#)

The changes to note in this document relate primarily to the following:

- a new Appendix for Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)
- an Appendix for Temporary Permission to Stay for Victims of Human Trafficking or Slavery

- inclusion of the poultry sector in the Seasonal Worker route
- update to provisions regarding travel bans
- extension of the Ukraine Scheme
- abolition of the police registration scheme.

It also notes a series of minor changes to other policy areas.

UK-France joint statement

[This](#) Home Office policy paper sets out the series of steps that will be taken as part of the UK and France's co-operation to tackle all forms of irregular migration, including small boat crossings.

In 2021, this co-operation prevented over 23,000 small boat crossings, and over 30,000 so far this year. Both countries will implement new joint strategic objectives and a joint operational plan to drive forward the next phase of the co-operation. The joint strategic objectives set out 3 overarching 'border' objectives: smart border, resilient border and deterrent border. The activity will begin with immediate effect.

The UK has committed to a financial investment of up to €72.2 million in 2022 to 2023 to support delivery of this work.

Conditions at Manston asylum processing centre

This HM Inspectorate of Prisons news [article](#) covers the findings from their 1 November 2022 published [report](#) on the inspection they carried out of the Manston holding facility in Kent, that took place in July 2022. Manston is a non-residential facility designed to hold detainees for a maximum of 24 hours while their initial immigration paperwork is processed. The report recognises the suitability of the accommodation at Manston for short-term detention at the time of inspection, and the efforts of staff to create a calm and even welcoming atmosphere. The report also highlights failings in processes that undermine the resilience of the centre for dealing with increasing volumes of detainees. Priority concerns included the detention of detainees for more than 24 hours in non-residential accommodation and the prolonged detention of children.

Home Secretary visits migrant processing facilities in Kent

The Home Secretary visited the Western Jet Foil and Manston sites in Kent on 3 November. Over 1,000 people were moved off site in the five days leading up to her visit. The Home Secretary confirmed steps would be taken to immediately improve the situation on the ground. These include bolstering the 24/7 medical facilities already on site, extra bedding and improved catering facilities, as well as providing more activities to support welfare.

The Home Secretary and operational colleagues also agreed that work to safeguard individuals and provide alternative accommodation and support as quickly as possible remains their priority, whilst ensuring that people are treated with dignity, care and compassion throughout the process.

Read the article in full, [here](#)

Irregular migration to the UK, year ending September 2022

[This](#) Home Office report provides an overview of irregular migrants who come to the UK, including those arriving on a small boat across the English Channel (a 'small boat arrival'). The statistics presented relate to the number of people recorded being detected on, or shortly after, arrival to the UK on various routes. They do not provide an indication of the total number of people currently in the UK who have entered the UK via irregular routes.

For specific data on irregular boat arrivals to the UK, click [here](#)

[Asylum backlog](#)

The asylum backlog refers to the number of people seeking asylum in the UK who are awaiting a decision on their case. As of June 2022, there were 127,026 cases in the backlog, including those awaiting an initial decision and 'pending further review' ([view the most recent datasets for asylum decisions](#))

At the end of June 2022, the top six countries of nationality in the asylum backlog were: Albania (15,671), Iran (15,214), Iraq (14,005), Afghanistan (7,124), Eritrea (6,878) and Syria (5,841). Together these comprised just over half of the cases awaiting a decision. Applicants mentioned in this specific report that long periods of uncertainty during this period have an impact on both their mental and physical wellbeing.

Reasons for the backlog have been linked to case complexity, appeals and number of [legislative changes](#). Further explanation for changes/patterns in visa numbers can also be found [here](#).

Migration

Welcome: a guide for Hong Kong British National (Overseas) visa holders in the UK

The most recent version of this [welcome guide](#) includes updated information on the Hong Kong BN(O) Welcome Programme, including information on how to access support elements such as Welcome Hubs, VCSE projects, English language, and hate crime reporting. Also included is a new letter from DLUHC on Certificates of No Criminal Conviction.

Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) Welcome Programme – information for local authorities

The most up to date version of [this](#) guidance includes new information for local authorities about welcoming Hong Kong British Nationals. This resource aims to provide answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) and information for local authorities and others who are working with British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) status holders, arriving from Hong Kong via the UK government's BN(O) route.

[Hong Kong BN\(O\) Welcome Programme: VCSE Grant recipients Year 2 \(2022/2023\)](#)

A total of 42 national and regional projects have received funding for a range of support for Hong Kong BN(O)s to help them settle into life in the UK, including access to mental health services, help for people to find jobs and start their own businesses, and to meet people in their local communities, as well as a hate crime reporting service for BN(O)s and those of east and southeast Asian descent.

The most recent update to this guidance includes a list of successful grant recipients across the voluntary, community, and social enterprise year 2 grant schemes including information regarding the services available and links to the Strategic Migration Partnership Welcome Hubs.

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration report on the BN(O) visa route

On November 8th the ICIBI released its [report](#) on the Hong Kong BN(O) visa route, based on observations made between April – June 2022. The inspection focused on how the route has been working since its launch, including the ability to rapidly scale up operations and learnings taken from, and into, other immigration routes. There were 3 main recommendations made:

- Develop a clear plan with timescales to resolve the 600+ adult dependent relative applications currently on hold
- Within 3 months, publish quarterly data on performance against the service standard for processing applications. Provide an indication of the expected processing time for Hong Kong BN(O) applications on the GOV.UK page
- Record and share lessons learned from the introduction of the Hong Kong BN(O) visa route.

The Home Office published their [response](#) to this report, accepting all 3 recommendations in full and have begun work to deliver against these recommendations. They aim to process the 600+ applications that are currently on hold by the end of the year. They have also begun work against the request to publish quarterly performance data, which will be included in the regular quarterly Home Office transparency publication that covers visa service standard performance. The timeline to deliver this remains unconfirmed based on dependence on other data sets.

A new independent complaint investigation service for the Home Office

The Independent Examiner of Complaints (IEC) is a new independent complaint investigation service for people who are unhappy with the Home Office's final response to a complaint. The IEC is not a civil servant or Home Office employee. They are an independent post holder, appointed under contract. This allows them to make fully independent decisions based on the merits of each complaint on a case-by-case basis.

The Office for the Independent Examiner of Complaints (OIEC) reviews complaints about the Home Office for people who are unhappy with how their complaint has been handled. They will look at whether the Home Office has worked in-line with its own procedures and guidance.

This post is held by Moi Ali, who has a background in independent complaints review. Previously she served as chair of the Independent Complaints Review Panel at Postwatch, Scotland's first Judicial Complaints Reviewer a review body member in the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office.

Further information about using the new complaint review service, including guidance on when to contact them, what kind of complaints are eligible for IEC review and links to submission forms are available [here](#)

Nationality and Borders Bill: Chagossian nationality factsheet

There have been updates to the Chagossians nationality factsheet. The application process for the new British nationality route for people of Chagossian descent will open on 23 November 2022 at 9am UK time (1pm Mauritius and Seychelles time).

Below are the eligibility requirements for people who wish to use this application process to become a British citizen and a British Overseas Territories citizen (BOTC) through this route:

- a direct descendant of someone who was born on the islands that now form the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), and
- not already a British citizen or a BOTC

Adults will have 5 years from the commencement of the measure to make an application. Those who are children when the route is launched or who are born within the 5-year application period after commencement, will have until they are 23 years old to claim this entitlement to British nationality. More specific information about how to apply can be found here [Apply for British citizenship as a person of Chagossian descent - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Open consultation - Possible changes to the First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Rules and the Upper Tribunal Rules arising from Nationality and Borders Act 2022

The Tribunal Procedure Committee (the "TPC") are the body that make rules that govern practice and procedure in the First-tier Tribunal and in the Upper Tribunal. Both are independent tribunals. The First-tier Tribunal is the first instance tribunal for most jurisdictions, while the Upper Tribunal is primarily responsible for appeals. Further information on Tribunals can be found on the [HMCTS website](#).

The TPC are interested in hearing views as to potential changes to the Immigration and Asylum Chamber Rules and the Upper Tribunal Rules arising from the [Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#) (NBA) and the [New Plan for Immigration \(NPI\) programme](#).

The [consultation document](#) released in October provides an introduction to the reasons behind the consultation, 24 questions they are asking participants to consider and some background as to why these questions are being asked. The questionnaire itself can be found [here](#) and the deadline for submitting responses is 19 January 2023.

[Voluntary Returns Service \(VRS\) stories of return](#)

This collection of stories contains examples of how the Voluntary Returns Service has helped individuals to return home and also personal testimonials from people who have contacted and used the Voluntary and Returns Service (VRS). It includes 7 stories of people returning to: Iran, Brazil, India, Bangladesh, St. Lucia, Nigeria and India.

These case studies are based on interactions and information shared between the individuals and caseworkers.

The VRS service are looking to add case studies to this bank. If you know of a return story that you would like to share, get in touch at vrscommunication@homeoffice.gov.uk.

[Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify statistics UK, Quarter 3 2022 – July to September](#)

Published 3 November 2022, this Home Office data is accompanied by a summary and breakdown of the number of potential victims of modern slavery referred into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) or via the Duty to Notify (DtN) process from 1 July to 30 September 2022 (quarter 3).

Key Findings

- 4,586 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office in quarter 3 2022, representing a 10% increase compared to the preceding quarter (4,169) and a 38% increase from quarter 3 2021 (3,317)
- the number of referrals received this quarter is the highest since the NRM began in 2009.
- 79% (3,645) were male and 20% (937) were female
- 46% (2,088) of potential victims claimed exploitation in the UK only and 44% (2,032) claimed exploitation overseas only
- 50% (2,303) of referrals were for potential victims who claimed exploitation as adults and 43% (1,984) claimed exploitation as children

Housing Rights Newsletter, October 2022

This quarters [newsletter](#) from the housing rights website includes the following:

- Hotels are not homes! – the growing accommodation crisis
- Promoting positive stories about migrants and asylum seekers
- What can we expect from the new Home Secretary
- Asylum – latest news on accommodation and other issues
- More news and views on asylum issues
- The EU Settlement Scheme – problems continue
- Other migration news
- More short news items

New research – child victims of trafficking share their experiences and call for change

This ECPAT [report](#) summarises the full findings from a participatory research study based on the voices of young people who have experience of modern slavery. The research aimed to understand what positive outcomes for these young people would look like, and what the pathways towards these positive outcomes might be. Recommendations from the research call on the UK Government to ensure that child victims are always afforded their rights to protection and care. They call on the Home Office specifically to ensure the immigration and asylum

system does not re-traumatise children, with an emphasis on those procedures that have the potential to increase the risk of exploitation.

The research was in partnership with the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice at Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Bedfordshire's Institute of Applied Social Research.

Events and Training

EUSS And Family Breakdowns, What Does That Mean For Settlement Webinar

The EUSS was brought in to facilitate the route to settlement under the Immigration Rules for millions of EU nationals who were resident in the UK before 31 December 2020. In this free 1-hour webinar, Sandra Akinbolu & Tom Wilding of The 36 Group will look at what happens when partners separate, children turn 21 or are no longer dependent, and when extended family members begin leading independent lives.

Target audience: Legal practitioners and those working with them, with an assumed basic knowledge of the topic area.

Date and time: Thursday 19 January 2023 at 1pm.

If you are interested in attending this event, register [here](#)

Funding

People's Health Trust: Health Lottery East

Applications open on 4 January 2023 at 1pm in parts of the following areas:

Cambridgeshire: Fenland, Huntingdonshire

Essex: Braintree, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, Basildon, Epping Forest, Harlow, Tendring

Norfolk: Great Yarmouth, Norwich, Kings Lynn, North Norfolk and West Norfolk

Suffolk: Babergh, Ipswich

Applications will close on 1 February at 1pm.

Jobs

SRS are recruiting for an Employment and Training Coordinator

We are seeking a motivated, innovative and organised individual with a passion for helping vulnerable people into sustainable employment. You would be responsible for managing a small team of Employment Advice Workers, as well as managing a small caseload. The employment team is a vital part of the organisation and your role will be to equip and empower refugees and asylum seekers with the skills and training necessary to gain and maintain work in order to improve their quality of life

Hours: 35 hours per week

Salary: £26,355 - £28,500 per annum

Deadline: Wednesday 11th January @ 12 noon

Interview date: Wednesday 18th January

Please share with anyone who might be interested in this role. For more information and the application pack please go to our website at: [Current Vacancies – Suffolk Refugee Support](#)

Strategic Migration Partnership: AMIF Project Training and Compliance Manager

Come and join us at EELGA, working for a project that sits within the Strategic Migration Partnership, as the AMIF Project Training and Compliance Manager.

We would love to hear from you if:

- You have experience in monitoring, scrutiny or contract management
- You like working with people to develop relationships and improve performance
- You want to work in a small, well-motivated and supportive team
- You want to work in a job that really makes a difference to people's lives

Hours: 37

Salary: £33,820 - £37,261

Deadline: Monday 23 January 2023 @ 17:00

Interview date: Friday 27 January 2023

For information about the job, please follow this link to the job description and person specification: <https://www.eelga.gov.uk/app/uploads/2022/12/01-AMIF-Project-Training-and-Compliance-Manager.docx>

For an informal conversation about the role please contact:

[Gill Searl gill.searl@eelga.gov.uk](mailto:gill.searl@eelga.gov.uk) or [Louise Gooch louise.gooch@eelga.gov.uk](mailto:louise.gooch@eelga.gov.uk)

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