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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.

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Asylum Seekers and Refugees – including refugee resettlement

New support for Afghans in UK hotels to find settled housing

This Home Office article sets out the detail of the government's plans to provide additional support to find settled housing to Afghans who arrived in the UK under the two resettlement schemes, Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), as announced by Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Johnny Mercer on 28 March.

The government is providing £35 million in new cash for local authorities, which will go towards increasing the level of support available and overcoming key barriers in accessing the housing system and employment. This new, generous package of support comes in addition to the existing support available for people on the ACRS and ARAP schemes, including access to welfare and the right to work, as well as access to public services.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is expanding the Local Authority Housing Fund by £250 million. This innovative fund is helping councils to source homes to house Afghans currently in bridging accommodation.

Dedicated staff, including Home Office Liaison Officers, DWP work coaches, council staff and charities, will be regularly based in hotels to provide advice to Afghans, including providing information on how to rent in the private sector, helping people find jobs and signposting available English language instruction. Translated guidance will be provided and a helpline is also available for Afghans who arrived under ARAP and ACRS.

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

Asylum seekers to be accommodated on surplus military sites

This Home office [news story](#) sets out the government's plans and announcement around the use of surplus military sites at Scampton and Wethersfield to accommodate asylum seekers who enter the UK via small boats.

Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick said in his announcement to Parliament on 29 March:

"Delivering accommodation on surplus military sites will provide cheaper and more orderly, suitable accommodation for those arriving in small boats."

The 2 military sites in Lincolnshire and Essex will provide basic and functional accommodation for migrants who enter the UK by crossing the Channel, instead of using hotels.

To begin reforming the accommodation system, this article sets out that the government will:

- set up accommodation sites on surplus military sites in Wethersfield and Scampton for up to 3,700 asylum seekers across both sites, while preserving their heritage
- open a non-military site in Bexhill, East Sussex which will also be used for accommodation for up to 1,200 people
- explore the use of vessels to provide accommodation in line with the approach taken by the Netherlands and Scotland
- significantly increase dispersed accommodation across the country by providing a new local authority funding package with a generous additional per bed payment for asylum seekers, alongside continued funding for each new dispersal bed
- pilot an extra incentive payment for local authorities when properties for asylum seekers are made available faster
- introduce a temporary licensing exemption to houses of multiple occupancy regulations for asylum seekers which will help move people out of hotels more quickly

Asylum accommodation factsheets

The Home Office have published [factsheets](#) for proposed new accommodation sites for asylum seekers in Bexhill, MOD Wethersfield, RAF Scampton, and the Portland Port Vessel.

The factsheets set out details about the proposed new accommodation sites, including:

- why they have been chosen



- how many people will be accommodated on each site
- security measures

Refugee Action Report: Hostile Accommodation

This Refugee Action [report](#) finds that asylum accommodation is not a broken system, but one that is hostile by design. It compiles data from Refugee Action's Asylum Crisis services in three locations - Greater Manchester, London, and the West Midlands from mid-year 2021 to January 2023.

The findings in the report are set out as below:

- The set of policies surrounding asylum accommodation, decision-making and support have converged to produce a nation-wide system of racialised segregation and de-facto detention of people seeking asylum.
- The cost of de-facto detention has increased exponentially since 2019 leading to enormous profits being generated for the Government's private contractors.
- Plans to replace 'contingency accommodation' or detention of people in one room in hotel settings with camps will further entrench this system.

It sets out the following 3 recommendations to the UK government:

- Housing people seeking asylum in high quality and appropriate accommodation in communities is workable and just.
- Standards for asylum seeker housing should be brought into line with those of the rest of the population and adjusted for their specific needs.
- The Government should work with and fund local authorities and NGOs to run integrated housing, support, and legal advice in communities and address the crisis in social housing.

New national age assessments board introduced to "strengthen age assessments of small boat arrivals"

A new Home Office age assessments board has been introduced to bolster the process for checking the age of asylum seekers who arrive to the UK. The board consists of specialist social workers who will work to support local authority and Home Office teams to resolve age disputes by carrying out age assessments. The board will act as a centralised team, setting the national standard for age assessments, and providing expert advice and training to improve consistency as well as the quality of how age assessments are carried out.

Read the full Home Office news story, [here](#)

National Age Assessment Board: caseworker guidance

This [guidance](#) sets out the policy and procedures for the operation of the National Age Assessment Board (NAAB) and on the wider processes required by sections 50 and 51 of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 (2022 Act).

The NAAB is a decision-making function in the Home Office, which primarily consists of social workers and can conduct age assessments upon referral from a local authority, a Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland or the Home Office, on those subject to immigration control, who do not have sufficient evidence to demonstrate their age, and either:

- there is reasonable doubt about their claims to be children
- they claim to be adults but are suspected to be children
- they are accepted to be children, but are believed to be of a different age than claimed

This guidance covers the actions local authorities must take to comply with sections 50 and 51, it does not cover the manner in which age assessments must be conducted by them.



Briefing - 'Disbelieved and denied: Children seeking asylum wrongly treated as adults by the Home Office'

A new [briefing](#) from the Helen Bamber Foundation, Asylum Aid and Humans for Rights Network reveals that the Home Office is incorrectly treating many children seeking asylum as adults, based on a short visual assessment on arrival in the UK.

This briefing highlights the urgent need for the government to address the decision making that is taking place at the border, and to put in place safeguards so that children do not continue to be put at risk in adult detention and unsupervised accommodation.

Free Movement Article: No second check for asylum claims that are certified as clearly 'unfounded'

On 17 April, Minister Robert Jenrick [announced](#) that it will no longer be necessary for an asylum claim decision that is clearly certified as 'unfounded' by the Home Office, to be checked by a second caseworker, as was required by an undertaking that was introduced in 2002 by the then Labour government.

The Nationality and Borders Act that came into force last summer has already removed the ability to appeal decisions on claims certified as clearly unfounded. In his announcement, Minister Jenrick stated:

"The Home Office already operates a robust quality assurance framework for non-certified decisions which helps to maintain the quality of case-work decisions and expertise. The specific quality check undertaken for section 94 decisions is no longer necessary, therefore we are improving the assurance process and aligning it with checks adopted on other decisions. Claims certified under section 94 will be regularly reviewed which will ensure that the certification process continues to be applied with careful scrutiny."

Read this Free Movement article in full, [here](#)

Guidance: Child staying with or joining a non-parent relative (protection)

This [guidance](#) tells decision-makers how to consider applications for a child seeking to stay with or join a non-parent relative with protection status in the UK in serious and compelling circumstances, under Appendix Child staying with or joining a Non-Parent Relative (Protection) (CNP) of the Immigration Rules. It also provides guidance on how to consider any exceptional circumstances for applications which do not meet the validity and eligibility requirements of Appendix CNP.

A Collection of responses to reports by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

Official responses by the Home Office (including UK Visas and Immigration, Border Force and Immigration Enforcement) to reports by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration can be found [here](#).

They include:

- a response to a report on a re-inspection of family reunion applications; and
- a response to a report on an inspection of visit visa operations

New measures to stop the boats in Illegal Migration Bill

On 21 April, the government tabled a number of amendments to the Illegal Migration Bill, to help speed up the removal of people who arrive in the UK seeking asylum, and to enhance safeguards for unaccompanied children who cross the Channel in small boats. Amendments include a commitment to consult local authorities within three months of the bill becoming law to understand their capacity to support those arriving via the government resettlement schemes, and to publish a report on existing, and any proposed additional safe and legal routes within six months of the bill becoming law.



To read this Home Office article in full, click [here](#)

Migration

Explainer: Modern slavery clauses in Illegal Migration Bill – Modern Slavery & Human Rights Policy & Evidence Centre

On 7 March 2023, the UK Government introduced the Illegal Migration Bill with the stated purpose to “prevent and deter unlawful migration, and in particular migration by unsafe and illegal routes.” The Bill introduces provisions that would amend immigration, asylum, and modern slavery legislation.

This [Explainer](#) aims to answer common questions about the modern slavery provisions in the Bill. It is based on a rapid assessment of what is known from research, evidence and data about the rationale for the modern slavery provisions and their potential implications and a legal analysis of the human rights compatibility of the Bill’s modern slavery provisions, undertaken by Dr Marija Jovanovic and available on the PEC website. This Explainer was produced by the Modern Slavery PEC’s policy impact team, alongside the PEC’s lived experience engagement team.

This Explainer will be updated as the Bill progresses through Parliament and new evidence becomes available.

Human Trafficking Foundation's Survivor Hub

Survivor advocates and Human Trafficking Foundation have created an online [Survivor Hub](#), a place for survivors to find opportunities for work and paid research participation, to find resources on education, housing support, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), mental health support and includes directories of support providers and legal advisors across the country. Please share this widely in your networks.

If your organisation has resources or opportunities that you would like included please email jasmine@humantraffickingfoundation.org

Tackling Child Exploitation and Extra-Familial Harm – A New Set of Practice Principles

New Practice Principles to shape and inform the work of professionals responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm have been launched by the Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Support Programme.

The eight Practice Principles are grounded in research and informed by practical learning and expertise from multi-agency professionals and the lived experiences of children, young people, parents and carers. They, and the six supporting resources, provide a way for professionals and agencies to navigate the complexities of these types of harm and work together to protect and support children and young people.

Commissioned by the Department for Education, with support from the Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Department of Health and Social Care, the Principles have been developed by a consortium led by Research in Practice in partnership with The Children’s Society and the University of Bedfordshire’s Safer Young Lives Research Centre. The Practice Principles:

- offer a compass to help navigate a complex landscape, rather than a detailed map for every individual situation, as no one set of circumstances or local context is the same as another, and there is no single answer for how to respond to these types of harms.
- are high-level to support a coherent approach across local partnerships and to support multi-agency working.
- focus on behaviours and culture to help direct work with children, young people, and families, operational management and strategic leadership to align.
- complement existing and forthcoming guidance and are broad enough to sustain utility over time and to fit within diverse local working arrangements.

The Practice Principles are now available to download on the Tackling Child Exploitation [microsite](#).

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Domestic Abuse Commissioner's strategic plan - September 2022 to September 2025

The purpose of the [strategic plan](#) is to set out the commissioner's objectives, priorities and activities the commissioner proposes to undertake. The strategic plan has been developed in consultation with the Secretary of State for the Home Office and the advisory board to the commissioner, established under Section 12 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Resources for Hong Kong BN(O) visa holders

UKHK.org has released new resources for Hong Kong BN(O) visa holders. The [Welcome to the UK: Youth!](#) page contains 3 videos for Hong Kong teenagers which look at issues around making friends, differences in UK/HK schooling and ways to integrate well. Please share these videos with schools and youth groups in your region. On the webpage, there is also a downloadable resource which includes a PDF discussion plan for a group session with HK teenagers.

The [Wellbeing: Looking After Myself](#) page includes 3 wellbeing videos covering a range of issues, with the aim of equipping people to start talking about and getting help with their own health and wellbeing.

This resource is for groups and organisations that are in contact with HK BN(O) visa holders that require more information and help around the topic of mental wellbeing. The videos are designed to be watched in a group or in pairs so that the viewers can discuss the content together.

Both the Youth and Wellbeing videos are in Cantonese with English subtitles, making it much easier for Hong Kongers to digest the information and engage with the given topics.

New settlement route for Hong Kong veterans

Hundreds of Hong Kongers who served in the British armed forces will be able to apply to settle in the UK, in recognition of their military service in the 20th century.

The government's new Hong Kong Veterans Settlement route will be open to all servicemen and women who served in the British military prior to 1 July 1997 and their family members, including a partner or spouse and dependant children.

This will put veterans from Hong Kong on an equal footing with other members of the British armed forces who were also stationed in the territory. All those eligible will be able to apply for indefinite leave to enter, allowing them to live and work in the UK without restriction and putting them on a path to full British citizenship.

Applications for settlement are expected to open this autumn. More information can be found [here](#).

Automatic acquisition of British citizenship: caseworker guidance

This immigration staff [guidance](#) on whether an individual has an automatic claim to British citizenship has been amended to reflect the fact that the policy for the acquisition of citizenship by individuals born in the UK between 1 January 1983 and 1 October 2000 inclusive to an EEA national parent has been suspended whilst the Home Office assesses recently identified legal issues. The amended guidance also confirms that if someone has already been recognised as a British citizen, for example, through the issue of a British citizen passport, they will continue to be treated as such.

All families matter: An inquiry into family migration - Justice and Home Affairs Committee

Published on 28 February 2023, this [report](#) explores the impact of family migration policies on families and society, including the experience of separated families and the situation of the NHS. The committee finds that current family migration policies fail both families and society and advocates for new policies grounded in humanity and decency.

For more information, click [here](#)

Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify statistics UK, end of year summary 2022

This statistical bulletin provides 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 in 2022.

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The key results are:

- there were 16,938 potential victims of modern slavery referred to the Home Office in 2022, representing a 33% increase compared to the preceding year (12,706) and the highest annual number since the NRM began in 2009
- the large increase in referrals from government agency first responders has driven this increase which could be linked to the increase in detections at the border and, particularly, the large increase in small boats arrivals
- around three-quarters of referrals (77%; 13,004) were sent to the Single Competent Authority (SCA) for consideration and the rest (23%; 3,934) were sent to the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority (IECA)
- Albanian nationals overtook UK nationals as the most commonly referred nationality in 2022, with Eritrean nationals being the third most referred
- the competent authorities issued the highest number of reasonable and conclusive grounds decisions in 2022, with almost 17,000 reasonable grounds and just over 6,000 conclusive grounds decisions made; of these, 88% of reasonable grounds and 89% of conclusive grounds decisions were positive
- the Home Office received 4,580 reports of adult potential victims via the DtN process, the highest annual number since the DtN began.

The full summary can be found [here](#)

Quarter 4 2022 – October to December statistics are available [here](#)

Forced marriage resource pack

This [resource pack](#) was developed following a commitment in the Government's Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG), published in July 2021. The Strategy recognised that more could be done to provide frontline professionals, including local authorities, the police, schools, healthcare services and others, with additional resources on forced marriage.

The resource pack has been designed to highlight examples of best practice and to help ensure that effective support is available to victims of forced marriage.

This pack includes:

- case studies of people who have experienced forced marriage
- resources produced by both statutory and non-statutory organisations
- links to support organisations and helplines which can help people who may be at risk of forced marriage.

Voluntary return to your home country

There have been a number of updates to the voluntary return to your home country [collection](#). The 'Administrative removal: notification and implementation' – interim guidance has been added and the 'Arranging removal' guidance has been updated.

New stories have been added to the [collection](#) of personal real-life stories about how the Voluntary Returns Service (VRS) has supported people to return to their home country.

Materials designed to raise awareness of the Voluntary Returns Service for those who may require help to return home can be requested via the order form [here](#)

EU Settlement Scheme quarterly statistics, December 2022

This [report](#) provides detailed statistics on applications made and concluded to the EUSS from 28 August 2018 to 30 December 2022. Information on applications received from 1 July 2021 to 30 December 2022 by application type are included.

Applications to the scheme and their outcomes are presented by nationality, age, and geography (which includes constituent parts of the UK, region and local authority) as well as detailed information on repeat applicants.

Events and Training

EELGA SMP: 'Let's Employ Refugees'



After successful delivery of the 'Let's Employ Refugees' event last year, EELGA SMP now want to invite as many employers as possible in the region to take part in understanding the barriers refugees face when seeking employment.

Date: 16 May 2023

Time: 10:00 - 12:00

Location: Virtual – Microsoft Teams

Entry Fees: Free

Book on to this virtual event [here](#)

Save the date: Migrant Help Building Bridges Conference 2023, 11 July, London

Migrant Help would like to invite you to their third annual asylum sector conference, this time taking place in person at Friends House in London.

This year's conference will aim to encourage collaboration and communication within the sector. We will discuss ways in which we can work better together – to assist people seeking asylum in the best ways possible, to include their voices in decision making processes, and to ensure that charity workers get the support needed to continue doing what they care so much about.

The conference is free to attend.

If you are a small organisation and travel cost might be prohibitive to your attendance, please [email us](#) to discuss how we can help.

You can register your place [here](#).

More information on the agenda and speakers will follow soon. If you have any questions at this stage, feel free to [email us](#).

Date: 11 July 2023

Time: 10:30 – 16:00

Location: The Light Auditorium | Friends House | 173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

Funding

Call for funding bids: FAST-CARE Integration of Third Country Nationals (Ukraine)

This Call is for the retroactive financial support for the facilitation of the reception, welcoming and integration of people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

Through this Call the Managing Authority is seeking applications from Upper Tier Local Authorities or other types of delivery partnership arrangements based on retroactive Local Authority costs incurred in the reception, welcoming and integration of third country nationals, in England between 24 February 2022 to 31 August 2022

Full application deadline: 23:59 on 15 May 2023

Click [here](#) for more information



Suffolk County Council: Engaged Communities Group - Funding opportunities to support local communities via the Voluntary and Community Sector in Suffolk.

The Engaged Communities Group brings together Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations from across Suffolk who work with and represent their local communities and many of our seldom-heard groups in Suffolk.

For more information on the funding criteria, the types of projects the Engaged Communities Group would like to invite proposals for, and how to apply, click [here](#)

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