

THE HOME OFFICE 'NEW PLAN FOR IMMIGRATION'

This paper presents key features of the '[New Plan for Immigration](#)', a lengthy Home Office policy consultation paper published on 24 March 2021, and highlights potential issues and implications for those working in this field in the West Midlands.

Summary

1. The plan has 3 objectives: fairness and efficacy of the system; deter illegal entry; and, remove people with no right to be here. A repeated theme is 'fair but firm' and key ideas are that the asylum system should be based on need rather than the ability to pay smugglers and should not reward people who enter the UK 'illegally'.

2. Key proposals cover these key aspects of the immigration system:

- Incentives and deterrence in relation to reaching the UK, and removals action.
- Process for determining asylum claims.
- Asylum support arrangements.
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- Identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery.
- Refugee resettlement and integration support.
- Correcting 'anomalies' to British Nationality law [citizenship applications].

3. Specific policies proposed that would bring about significant change include:

- More generous arrangements for refugees: enhanced integration support focused on progress to employment.
- Numbers of refugees resettled directly from overseas could be related to local capacity. Refugees may be prioritised for resettlement in different ways. There will be stronger links between community sponsorship and local government.
- People will be designated as 'inadmissible' to the asylum system if they arrive 'illegally', passing through a 'safe country' en route to the UK.
- There will be a legal definition of 'persecution' and higher standard for testing for a 'well-founded fear of persecution' in asylum decision-making. A previous opportunity to make an asylum claim in another country will impact on the credibility of a claimant.
- Reception centres will replace hotels as asylum accommodation for people who are not admissible to the asylum system. The number / capacity of such centres and the proportion of asylum claimants to be accommodated in this way is unknown but could have a significant impact on existing dispersal areas.
- Those who enter the UK illegally but cannot be returned can be given a temporary status with restricted entitlements and no right to settle.
- Local authorities will be consulted on ending support to refused asylum seekers.
- Changes to age assessment of unaccompanied children include creating a national board that can undertake age assessments, use of newer technology for determining age, and a reduction from 25 to 18 years in the apparent age of a young person for them to be treated as a child.
- The definition of family members for the purpose of family reunion for unaccompanied children will be reconsidered.
- People face greater sentences for 'illegally' entering the UK.

- There will be more stringent appeal rights to prevent ‘late claims’ when people are facing deportation, either on asylum or modern slavery grounds. Refugees with a one-year prison sentence may have their refugee status revoked.
- Changes to modern slavery decision-making will centre on increased efforts to distinguish between ‘genuine’ and ‘vexatious’ accounts.
- Flexibility in naturalisation decisions will enable people from the Windrush generation to be granted citizenship despite temporary absence from the UK.

4. Common concerns raised by commentators include whether the UK is adhering to the Refugee Convention [e.g. in relation to making a claim ‘inadmissible’ if someone travels through a safe third country, and a higher standard in relation to defining persecution] and the differentiation between resettled refugees and people who are granted a form of protection through the asylum system. Other issues to consider are the risks of assessing a child’s age using potentially unreliable, intrusive methods and by immigration officers rather than trained social workers, and the impact of changing arrangements in local communities through the introduction of new reception centres for asylum seekers with ‘inadmissible’ claims and the potential cessation of support provided to refused asylum seekers.

Next steps

5. The consultation period lasts 6 weeks and closes on 6 May. There are 45 questions. Respondents are expected to register online; this is the only way to view the consultation questions and the information sheet in the Annex regarding family reunion for unaccompanied asylum seeking children. However, it is also possible to complete the consultation in another format such as email or by letter.

6. We encourage all affected organisations and individuals in the West Midlands to submit their own response to this consultation. The West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership will respond to the consultation, engaging with relevant stakeholders to feed into that response.

Sources

[Home Office](#), the Guardian [[overview](#) and [on returns agreements](#)], [BBC](#), [JCWI](#), [IPPR](#), [the Independent](#), [Freemovement](#), [Migration Watch](#), [Refugee Council](#) [plus commentary in [the Guardian](#)], [Refugee Action](#), [Labour Party](#).

This briefing was originally compiled by the Migration Yorkshire SMP in March 2021.