Migration news roundup week commencing 16 March 2026

This Migration News Roundup presents a selection of news, policy, research and statistics from the previous week on migration-related topics. The contents of each story do not necessarily reflect the views of Migration Yorkshire.

- Specific migrant groups
- Cohesion and integration
- UK borders and migration policy
- International news
- Stories that inspired us this week

Specific migrant groups

On the asylum system:

- Building on earlier changes, government has opened a consultation about the return of families who have been refused asylum with a closing date of 28 May. The consultation document looks at withdrawing support from families who have no barrier to leaving the UK, and the process for enforcing return that might include physical force. (Source: UK Parliament)

- Families who have been refused asylum have described their distress after being given a week to decide whether or not to participate in a Home Office pilot scheme that pays up to £40,000 to agree to voluntary return.

(Source: the Guardian)

- Ministry of Justice statistics reveal a backlog of 80,000 asylum appeal cases, up from 9,000 in 2023. Relatedly, a UNHCR audit of Home Office asylum interviews identified ways to improve the quality of initial decision making . (Sources: Free Movement, UNHCR)

- Following recent asylum policy announcements, this article examines the Home Secretary's claim that her proposed changes are grounded in 'Labour values'. (Source: The Conversation)

- This piece argues that a stricter asylum system won’t have the intended deterrent effect and that comparing the UK with Denmark is problematic. (Source: Free Movement)

In case you missed it, research on public attitudes to refugee sponsorship reveals that outside of the Homes of Ukraine scheme, people had little knowledge of the Community Sponsorship or Communities for Afghans schemes. It also found that while attitudes to sponsorship were generally positive, media narratives had shaped views around pressure on local services. (Source: Birmingham University)

The Home Office rejected a request from the Foreign Secretary to make exceptions to the new, tougher immigration rules for students who have a Chevening Scholarship, particularly women from volatile countries affected by the recent student visa ban. Relatedly, more than 200 Sudanese students awaiting the start of their courses are uncertain whether they will be permitted to begin their studies. (Source: the Guardian)

On children and young people:

- Leading charities are urging the next Scottish Parliament to recognise unaccompanied children primarily as ‘looked after children’ rather than through the lens of immigration control. (Source: Morning Star)

- A recent UNICEF briefing highlights the rising number of children on the move globally and calls for stronger protection systems. (Source: UNICEF)

Cohesion and integration

The government published 'Protecting What Matters', a policy paper on social cohesion. The paper provides an action plan intended to strengthen communities and improve integration, both regarding migration and more broadly across British society. Proposals include new funding and legal

provisions around antisemitism and anti-Muslim prejudice, as well as reiterating the aim to close asylum hotels and reduce irregular migration, with the promise of a cross-government integration strategy. The action plan has been welcomed by organisations such as Belong and British Future, while receiving criticism from others. (Sources: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Belong, British Future, The Critic)

15 frontline refugee organisations have written to the Home Secretary opposing the Immigration Rules changes, warning they risk increasing instability, anti-migrant rhetoric and undermining social cohesion. (Source: Scottish Refugee Council)

UK borders and migration policy

Data shows the UK had the highest number of asylum applications from Iranians last year compared to other European countries. ‘Iranian’ was also the most common nationality for UK asylum applications over the past 10 years. However, the potential impact of the current Iran conflict in terms of forced displacement and UK asylum applications is unclear. (Source: Migration Observatory)

Following a visit to Leeds, India’s High Commissioner outlined his desire for Indian and UK skilled workers to be able to work in each other’s countries, as well as increased trade ties with Yorkshire. The article also mentions the potential economic impact of the proposed international student levy on Leeds and

Sheffield. (Source: Yorkshire Post)

Sheep shearers from Australia and New Zealand will be permitted to work in the UK for up to three months as usual this year, following a government U-turn; it previously wanted to end the policy to help lower temporary work migration. (Source: Visa HQ)

MPs met with migrant rights organisations in Westminster to discuss plans to restrict settlement rights. The event was co-sponsored by Sheffield MP Olivia Blake, who described the changes as ‘against British values of fairness’. (Source: Work Rights Centre)

International news

With the ongoing conflict in the Middle East:

- UNHCR reports that more than 330,000 people have been forced to flee their homes in the Middle East, as well as along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, prompting them to call for urgent safe passage for civilians. (Source: UNHCR)

- Al Jazeera has created a series of infographics illustrating countries of origin of the 35 million foreign workers in the Gulf countries. (Source: Al Jazeera)

- Five Iranian women footballers who refused to sing their national anthem at the Asian Cup have been granted humanitarian visas in Australia amid fears for their safety if they return to Iran. (Source: BBC)

Stories that inspired us this week

A Hull-based language service has provided free translation of a welcome pack to support a housing project for refugees, helping families to settle and integrate into their new community. (Source: The Hull Story)

A public art campaign for International Women's Day showcases portraits of 15 migrant women across digital screens throughout Glasgow. The 'Mother Glasgow' project celebrates the impact these women have had in shaping modern Glasgow. (Source: Sixteen-nine)

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