

Migration news roundup week commencing 23 March 2026

Image

View of Houses of Parliament from bridge over river Thames

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.

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UK borders and migration policy

On the proposed earned settlement changes, the government is considering large scale exemptions in the wake of strong criticism from Labour MPs including Angela Rayner, who described the proposals as ‘un-British’. Exemptions could include public sector workers and those close to attaining settlement under the current system. Meanwhile, the Home Affairs Committee has published a report on the proposals, warning that uncertainty about the changes and when they will be implemented is already causing ‘distress’. Other concerns include the effect of the minimum income threshold; implications for the social care sector; increased exploitation risks; and consequences for young people who could spend much of their childhood without settled status. (Sources: the Guardian, UK Parliament)

On the ‘one in one out’ scheme, an Eritrean man has made a successful legal challenge to the government’s decision to remove him to France, on the grounds that his mental health needs were unlikely to be met in France. Meanwhile, four other individuals have returned from France in the last two weeks. (Source: the Guardian)

How well is the government doing on its migration pledges? This analysis highlights a fall in net migration and overseas workers (mainly as a result of measures by the previous government), a rise in removals, but also a rise in small boat arrivals. Meanwhile, on asylum hotels, the analysis shows that despite a substantial fall in the initial decision backlog, hotel use has remained relatively unchanged due to a growth in the appeals backlog. (Source: Migration Observatory)

Specific migrant groups

On Channel crossings, the National Crime Agency (NCA) has warned that the Iran conflict could lead to an increase in small boat arrivals. (Source: BBC)

The government has released new guidance for asylum caseworkers following confirmation that from 9 March 2026 the notice period for leaving asylum accommodation following a positive decision will be 42 days. (Sources: UK Visas and Immigration, Homeless Link)

A legal opinion has concluded that aspects of the Home Office's use of artificial intelligence (AI) in asylum decision making is 'likely to be unlawful'. Meanwhile, the Upper Tribunal has found that a decision to impose NRPF conditions on several refugees and people seeking asylum, relocated from the Chagos Islands, was also unlawful. (Sources: Open Rights Group, Administrative Court Blog)

The National Audit Office has described government Afghan resettlement schemes since 2010 as lacking clear governance, leading to increased costs and worsened outcomes for people who have been resettled. (Source: NAO)

The Independent Monitoring Authority (IMA) has found that the Home Office unnecessarily delayed decisions on some EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) applications , causing loss of jobs and refusals of mortgage applications or tenancies. In other news, the High Court has determined the Home Office acted lawfully when closing the Surinder Singh route in August 2023. The route allowed family members of British nationals to return to the UK from the EU following Brexit. (Sources: IMA, Free Movement)

A leading children's rights organisation has warned government plans to activate parts of the Immigration Act 2016 would leave many unaccompanied care leavers with no secure immigration status and without essential support when they turn 18, increasing risk of homelessness, destitution and exploitation. (Source: ECPAT UK)

On international students, the Home Office has issued new guidance introducing a RedAmberGreen (RAG) banding system to tighten compliance requirements for UK universities before they issue Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies documents to international students . This may make universities more cautious when recruiting students from countries with higher visa refusal risks. Relatedly, the UK-EU youth mobility scheme currently under negotiation could be under threat as EU states demand cheaper university fees. (Sources: ICEF Monitor, The i Paper)

Cohesion and integration

Kent County Council's Reform leaders are seeking to declare an 'illegal migration emergency' in the county in relation to small boat arrivals and their alleged impact on public finances and the community. Opposition councillors have described the move as 'scaremongering'. (Source: BBC)

Rabbi David Mason, the executive director of the Jewish refugee charity HIAS+JCORE, has vowed to continue supporting refugees in the face of increasing antisemitic abuse and conspiracy theories from the far-right, stating: 'I'm determined, as a Jew and as someone who believes in a strong, cohesive Britain.' (Source: the Guardian)

This report which draws on a survey carried out among people with lived experience of migration finds that most are worried about the potential impacts of the earned settlement proposals. Faith leaders have also expressed concerns in an open letter, stating the plans could undermine cohesion and integration. Signatories from our region include the Right Rev Arun Arora, Bishop of Kirkstall, and Imam Qari Asim of Leeds Makkah mosque. (Sources: Migrant Rights Network, the Guardian)

International news

The Trump administration is aiming to restrict both 'illegal' and 'legal' migration by expanding its visa bond programme, adding 12 more countries to the list of those who must pay up to \$15,000 to enter the country. (Source: Al Jazeera)

Whilst much of Europe is facing anti-migrant policies and rhetoric Spain's seventh regularisation of undocumented migrants in 40 years has been launched. This process, which is a citizen-led initiative signed by over 700,000 people, 900 NGOs and the Catholic church, could enable up to one million people to obtain legal status. (Source: eurasia review)

Stories that inspired us this week

Susan Aldworth, an Edinburgh artist, has produced a contemporary art show depicting her grandmother's journey from Northern Italy to Scotland, in the hopes of promoting an understanding of the complex stories of present-day migrants in the UK. (Source: The National)

'Bibby Boys', a free exhibition in Brixton, London, portrays how a group of local residents defied negative narratives by welcoming the men from the Bibby Stockholm with kindness. Their support helped the men build friendships, join community activities, and regain a sense of dignity. (Source: the Guardian)

Contact us about research

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