Migration news roundup week commencing 18 May 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.

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UK borders and migration policy

New immigration legislation was announced in this week's King's Speech, with a background briefing providing some detail (see pp.121-123). Meanwhile, this analysis confirms that the new Immigration and Asylum Bill will mainly implement policies already announced rather than introduce new measures. (Sources: Prime Minister's Office, Freemovement)

An investigation has uncovered the identity of a key people smuggler – an Iraqi Kurd whose network is thought to be linked to most recent small boat Channel crossings. Meanwhile, the media continues to focus on the milestone of 200,000 arrivals via this route, with some context provided here about nationalities,

demographics and grant rates. There's also a new parliamentary briefing on UK-France border cooperation. As a background to the debate around Channel crossings this detailed timeline documents events since 2018, when small boats started to become a widely used route. (Sources: BBC, House of Commons Library, The National)

A new campaign is encouraging people to use the Immigration Advice Authority's (IAA) free online system to check immigration advisers are authorised before using their services; research has found that many people are unaware that advisers are required to be regulated. (Source: IAA)

According to this briefing exploring the impact of migration on the demographics of the UK, without net migration UK nations would see population decline by 2049. In related analysis looking at stay rates for skilled worker visa holders, the authors conclude that lower earning migrants, such as health and care workers, women, and under 45s, are more likely to make the UK their long-term home than others. (Sources: Migration Observatory, Migration Advisory Committee)

This updated briefing provides an overview of the no recourse to public funds (NRPF) condition, which prevents people on certain visas from accessing welfare benefits and housing assistance. (Source: Freemovement)

Specific migrant groups

The Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has developed its own less expensive IT system matching Homes for Ukraine applicants with hosts. The previous system was initially delivered free by Palantir but has subsequently incurred costs of £10 million. (Source: BBC)

Following the government's confirmation of changes to the Afghan Resettlement Programme this briefing explains some of the main areas affected. (Source: Freemovement)

New research suggests that for young people who arrived in the UK alone to seek asylum, in order to thrive support services should focus not only on trauma. Meanwhile, the ECPAT Young Advisory Group has issued a response to the government's proposed reforms to the asylum and immigration system as outlined in the King's Speech. (Sources: Social Care Today, ECPAT UK)

News on modern slavery:

- Charities are calling for a 'coordinated, system-wide shift' in political will and investment, after a 41% increase in calls to the modern slavery helpline. (Source: the Guardian)
- A new report follows a recent summit of lived experience advisory panel members and includes key messages from the representatives on a range of topics. (Source: Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner)
- The latest Council of Europe report on the UK's response to trafficking identifies a number of areas where improvement is needed while also welcoming some recent measures.

(Source: Council of Europe)

News about international students includes:

- Study visa applications for January to March 2026 are 40% lower than this time last year falling from nearly 15,000 to almost 9,000, their lowest point in five years. (Source: The PIE News)
- Relatedly, a select committee of MPs warn how critical immigration policy is to the financial stability of universities. (Source: Electronic Immigration Network)
- Finally, this article describes how students when deciding where to study abroad look at visa policies of respective countries. It suggests that despite increasingly restrictive immigration policies the UK remains among the top four countries attracting students. (Source: ICEF Monitor)

Cohesion and integration

There are two new articles on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); one focusing on the Department of Education's new ESOL review and its importance in the wake of the Immigration White Paper and its raising of English language requirements; another article focuses on the new government social cohesion plan *Protecting What Matters* and its implications for future ESOL provision. In related news, an ESOL teacher describes creating zines with her students, particularly those who have experienced trauma. (Sources: Specialist Language Courses, FE Week)

A survey has found that that the majority of Britain has not heard the term 'Boriswave' and, whilst it is more known amongst Reform voters, a significant proportion of those aren't aware it refers to immigration. (Source: YouGov)

International news

The United States announced it would not support a United Nations forum declaration relating to international migration cooperation, stating that, 'Our goal is not to manage migration, but to foster remigration'. In that context, human rights organisations have written to Polish authorities with concerns over US deportation flights transferring Ukrainian nationals through Polish territory. Additionally, Equatorial Guinea was urged to halt plans to return US deportees to their countries of origin where they may face persecution. (Sources: US Department of State, Amnesty International, United Nations)

Stories that inspired us this week

The Patchwork Kitchen Project has been recognised at York University's Student Community and Volunteering Awards. The project is run by York City of Sanctuary with volunteer students, and it supports refugee and migrant women from Ukraine and Hong Kong through group cooking sessions that build English skills. (Source: University of York)

Community meals in Lancaster and Morecambe are bringing people together to share food and stories, helping build

connections between local residents and refugees while challenging division and celebrating kindness. (Source: MSN)

Yassin Mohamud, who arrived in the UK as a refugee from Somalia, has become Bristol's Lord Mayor. He's hoping to create a more inclusive community where others, including former refugees, can thrive. Meanwhile in Scotland, international student Q Manivannan has become an MSP (Member of the Scottish Parliament). This was possible due to changes to a 2025 Scottish Act that allows any resident with limited or indefinite leave to remain to become an MSP.
(Sources: BBC, Freemovement)

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