

Migration news roundup week commencing 19 January 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

This article considers what data tells us about the government's progress in relation to six migration pledges, including bringing down net migration and ending the use of asylum hotels. There's concern in some quarters that if predictions of zero or even negative net migration are correct, this could result in tax rises. Meanwhile, new polling shows that contrary to the facts, two-thirds of voters believe net migration is actually rising. (Sources: Migration Observatory, Eastern Eye, the Guardian)

A new Home Office Tiktok account aimed at preventing irregular migration to the UK has been criticised for sharing footage of deportations and enforcement raids, with concerns that such tactics could further inflame anti-migrant sentiment. (Source: the Guardian)

Government U-turned on its plan for mandatory digital ID to demonstrate the right to work. However, the intention is that by 2029 all right to work checks will be performed online. (Source: BBC)

Record levels of enforcement activity related to illegal working have been reported, with an 80% increase in raids and a similar rise in arrests since July 2024. (Source: Home Office)

Specific migrant groups

In relation to the asylum process:

- The UN refugee agency published a response to the UK government's asylum policy proposals announced in November expressing concerns, for example, about plans to grant renewable temporary leave for 30 months at a time. A different article also reports on the asylum announcement, highlighting that from this spring asylum seekers with the right to work will have their asylum support removed, as will those caught working illegally. Meanwhile, this article picks up on recently revealed details about the proposed new asylum and immigration appeal body. (Sources: UNHCR, Independent Free Movement)
- The government has defended a '£100,000 a bed per year' contract for a detention centre at Heathrow, saying that it must be 'secure, humane and dignified'. In contrast, the ongoing inquiry into Manston detention centre has heard that overcrowded conditions at the former RAF base led to an outbreak of diphtheria and scabies. (Sources: the Standard, the Guardian)
- Over 100 asylum seekers detained for removal to France staged peaceful protests over the government's 'one in one out' scheme. Some reported to journalists that officers used forceful methods in response. (Source: the Guardian)

The High Court found the Home Secretary took an unlawful approach to a modern slavery case in the way that the 'public order disqualification' power was applied. The Home Secretary has the power to prevent a victim from receiving support if they are considered a 'threat to public order'. (Source: Free Movement)

The government has introduced the Medical Training Prioritisation Bill that sets rules for prioritising places on the foundation programme and specialty training in medicine. The Bill considers international students studying at UK medical schools as UK graduates, regardless of their nationality or immigration status, offering them the same level of priority. (Source: British Medical Association)

Several changes are being made to the Windrush compensation scheme, including covering personal pension losses and older people being prioritised. (Source: Home Office)

Cohesion and integration

Polling about 'the state of social cohesion' at the end of 2025 found that nearly half of Britons surveyed consider the divide between migrants and those born in the UK as the biggest way that society is divided today. Nearly two thirds say that the UK feels divided, the highest number since

2022. (Source: More in Common)

This article looks at how citizens of Glasgow are responding to increased tension between local residents and refugees. It features interviews with organisations building on Glasgow's reputation as a welcoming city and explores challenges presented by pressure on limited housing. (Source: the Guardian)

Here's an analysis of government's proposals to raise English language requirements for most visa routes, and how the proposals risk tying language directly to immigration control, framing English as a new kind of border. (Source: The Conversation)

International news

As the number of refugees in the world passes 42?million, nearly doubling in the last decade, this context piece predicts a 'bleak 2026' due to upcoming asylum restrictions in numerous countries. (Source: Thomson Reuters Foundation)

With Venezuela in the headlines, here are the countries with the largest Venezuelan diasporas. Eight million citizens, a quarter of the population, are reported to have left the country in recent years. (Source: Al Jazeera)

In Europe, the Irish Refugee Council has condemned the Irish government's new International Protection Bill, which requires refugees to wait three years before reuniting with their families. Meanwhile, Portugal has said it is willing to pay €8.4?million into a Solidarity Fund instead of accepting 420 asylum seekers, under the EU's mechanism being rolled out to share responsibilities towards people seeking asylum. (Sources: The Irish Times, Info Migrants)

Stories that inspired us this week

'The Old Oak', a Ken Loach film about Syrian refugees moving to a County Durham mining community, is now available to watch free online. (Source: BBC iPlayer)

Najiba Hadaf and Nilab Mohammad, Afghan professionals now living in Barnsley, feature in this picture essay of Afghan women who found safety in the UK. (Source: the Guardian)

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