

Migration news roundup week commencing 19 October 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.

Content warning: This week's news roundup contains themes around death and violence that some readers may find distressing.

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UK borders and migration policy

[Eritrea has been threatened with a visa ban by the Home Secretary](#) unless the country improves cooperation on accepting the return of people who arrived by small boat or have criminal convictions. Although Eritreans were the top nationality group among small boat arrivals in the most recent data, accounting for 18% of arrivals, Madeleine Sumption of the Migration Observatory said the impact of such ban would be limited. She noted that 84% of Eritrean asylum applicants are granted protection, and some of those initially refused are subsequently successful on appeal. (Source: BBC)

This article looks at the increase in small boat crossings from Normandy and their impact on Hampshire, where they typically arrive, including the cost of policing recent anti-migrant protests. (Source: BBC)

Concerns have been raised about the Home Office's use of AI tools in asylum decision-making. (Source: Open Rights Group)

Two new amendments to the Immigration and Asylum Bill have been announced. The first would require courts to consider the length and frequency of a parent's contact with their child when assessing 'family life' claims under Article 8. The second would allow decision-makers to consider the timing of an asylum claim, with claims made at the 'last minute' potentially affecting an applicant's credibility. (Source: Home Office)

Citizenship applications reached a record 315,000 in the year ending June 2026, more than double the figure for the year ending June 2017. Growth since 2022 has been driven mainly by applications from non-EU nationals, although EU applications have risen fastest over the past year. Concerns about tighter government policies may have prompted more people to naturalise. (Source: Migration Observatory)

This briefing provides an overview of the newly 're-opened' UK Resettlement Scheme, and the three new sponsorship routes: community, study and work. (Source: UK Parliament)

Specific migrant groups

On refugees, a Syrian doctor has been informed by the Home Office that his refugee status has been revoked on the grounds that it is now safe for him to return to his home country. Meanwhile, UNHCR reports that 1.8 million refugees and 2 million internally displaced people have returned to their homes in Syria since the fall of the Assad regime. However, the country's infrastructure remains damaged and 70% of the population requires humanitarian assistance. (Sources: the Guardian, United Nations)

On asylum, this blog argues that restricting or banning people seeking asylum from working is an infringement of their human rights. (Source: legalblogs)

As asylum hotels continue to close, attention is turning to dispersal housing, particularly the increased use of HMOs (houses of multiple occupation):

- In Fenland, Cambridgeshire, plans to accommodate 26 asylum seeking mothers and their babies have prompted anti-migrant protests. However, Home Office data show that only three people seeking asylum were receiving support in the district, none of whom were receiving accommodation support. (Source: Infomigrants)
- An online film featuring an HMO in Leicester was removed from YouTube on the grounds of harassment after far-right propagandists gained access to the property by posing as Serco contractors. (the Guardian)

- In Salford, the local council has been tackling misinformation that led to family homes being targeted with graffiti, despite the properties neither being HMOs nor housing people seeking asylum. (Source: Manchester Evening News)
- Hyndburn, Lancashire, has one of the highest numbers of dispersed people seeking asylum in the country, many of whom are housed in HMOs managed by Serco. This documentary investigates the impact on local housing, the community and people seeking asylum who have been dispersed there by the Home Office. (Source: SkyNews)

On economic migration, the number of work visas issued last year fell to levels similar to those seen before Brexit, with 157,000 visas granted to the end of June 2026, compared with 335,000 in 2023. This follows a series of policy changes, including higher salary and skills thresholds, restrictions on care workers bringing dependants, and the closure of the Health and Care Worker visa. (Source: Migration Observatory)

On ESOL, analysis of central and devolved funding has revealed an almost 40% decline in ESOL budgets over the past 15 years, despite rising demand. In West Yorkshire, many learners are waiting up to two years to access provision, with waiting lists of up to 400 people for some courses. (Sources: hyphen)

On international students:

- A parliamentary committee has been told that the 'visa brake' policy, which prevents students from four countries

from coming to the UK, is harming the UK's global academic reputation. (Source: Research Professional)

- This story celebrates the early opening of a new medical school in the East of England, which has welcomed its first cohort of international students. The region has a below-average number of doctors. (Source: BBC)

On Modern Slavery:

- The government has published a summary of measures within the Immigration and Asylum Bill relating to modern slavery, aimed at reducing the 'improper use' of the National Referral Mechanism while protecting victims. Separate analysis highlights that only a very small number of referrals are disqualified on 'bad faith' grounds. (Sources: Home Office, Free Movement)
- The Home Office has reported an 80% reduction in the number of modern slavery cases awaiting a final decision, from 31,101 in 2023 to 6,277 at the end of September 2026. (Source: Home Office)
- A new report analyses the scale of child trafficking in UK. Of the 7,045 children referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in 2025, more than a third (38%) were foreign nationals who faced 'substantially higher rates of refusal' than UK children. (Source: ECPAT UK)

Cohesion and integration

A motion to withdraw Bradford from the Local Authority of Sanctuary status has been defeated. Proposed by Reform councillors, it was debated at the last Full Council meeting and failed to pass, with 37 votes in favour and 38 against. (Source: The Telegraph and Argus)

The head of MI5 has said that right-wing extremists are increasingly likely to consider violent attacks. As part of its annual threat update, the agency chief warned that extreme 'anti-immigration grievance' is tipping over into plans to target community groups, political figures or immigration centres. (Source: The Guardian)

In Northern Ireland, the BBC has published an article on the 'education limbo' faced by teenagers seeking asylum. The article features interviews with young people seeking asylum who reflect on challenges of accessing higher education and training. One interviewee said she had more opportunities to study in war-torn Gaza than in her current situation. (Source: BBC news)

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust is promoting its partnership with Action Asylum, which is delivering a three-year project to support people seeking asylum to build confidence and practical skills in conservation through volunteering and engagement with nature. (Source: Yorkshire Wildlife Trust)

International news

At least 139 people died after an overcrowded boat carrying 300 migrants capsized while travelling towards Yemen. (Source: AP)

news)

The Trump administration has announced that refugees will have 10 days rather than 30 to challenge decisions terminating their refugee status. (Source: AP news)

South Africa has withdrawn a directive intended to facilitate asylum applications, following violent anti-migrant protests in Johannesburg and Durban. (Source: Reuters)

The EU has launched a partnership with Frontex, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), and IOM to help Ukraine align its border management and asylum system with EU and Schengen standards. (Source: eeas.europa.eu)

Stories that inspired us this week

'Desi Pubs' were featured on The One Show this week. Created in the 1960s in the West Midlands in response to former racial discrimination, they are now popping up across the country, bringing together the British pub and South Asian food in spaces where everyone is welcome. (Source: BBC – watch from 15' 55" for 5 mins)

Fahd arrived in Sheffield from Syria and had a natural talent for kickboxing. He is now proud to represent England in the world championships in Madrid. (Source: ITV)

A group of people with refugee backgrounds are taking part in a leadership programme in Scotland. The initiative aims to strengthen their skills and help them build connections and

communities. (Source: Scottish Refugee Council)

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