Migration news roundup week commencing 02 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.

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

UK borders and migration policy

As the quarterly Immigration Statistics covering 2025 were published, news headlines focused on rises in small boat arrivals but a fall in asylum hotel use. Key data points include:

- Study continues to be the top reason for coming to live in the UK, followed by work.

- A 13% increase in small boat arrivals to 41,000 people. Top nationalities are Eritrean, Afghan, Iranian, Sudanese and Somali. 95% of arrivals on small boats claim asylum, making up 40% of all asylum claimants.

- A 4% fall in asylum claimants in 2025 to 101,000 people (5th in comparison to EU+ countries and 15th per head of the population)

- A large fall in the number of people waiting for an initial decision (nearly halved to 64,000)

- Much higher initial decision-making rates (56% higher than in 2024). Two thirds of people receive an initial decision within 6 months (latest data for Q2 2025)

- The grant rate falling further (from 47% to 42%, although for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children it's higher at 62%) There've been significant drops for some nationalities (Syrians fell from 98% in 2024 to 9% in 2025, and Afghans from 51% to 34% for example).

- There's currently no Home Office data on people awaiting a decision on their appeal (due to 'work on the transition to a new caseworking system'). Data from the courts suggest appeal cases are double the level from the previous year at almost 70,000 (for the year ending September 2025) due to more initial decisions and a higher refusal rate.

- A 5% fall in people on asylum support (107,000)

- A 19% drop in the number of people housed in hotels (to 31,000).

Our Yorkshire and Humber migration data dashboards have been updated with the latest local data including newcomers, EU nationals and Ukraine. (Sources: Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Migration Observatory, Migration Yorkshire)

Following government policy and consultation on 'earned settlement' proposals, two reports look at different aspects of settlement:

- This data briefing on settlement shows that most non-EU migrants who arrived on visas between 2005 and 2019 were not subsequently granted indefinite leave to remain, although this varies by visa route: most family visa holders acquire settlement in contrast to those on work and study visas. (Source: Migration Observatory)

- Research with parents currently on the 10 year route to settlement found most of those surveyed would stop claiming public funds to avoid a 20 year wait under government 'earned settlement' plans, despite the impacts

on their children. (Source: RAMFEL)

Specific migrant groups

Plans to reduce refugee status to 2.5 years (from the current five) and as a temporary, renewable status, will be implemented immediately, from Monday 2 March. Refugee status will not be renewed if an individual's country of origin is judged to be safe. Unaccompanied children are exempt from this change. It's not immediately clear to whom the new rule will apply: people who apply for asylum from 2 March, or decisions to grant asylum made from 2 March. (Sources: BBC, the Guardian)

A charity is challenging the Home Office for halting the refugee family reunion route. It's been granted permission to bring a judicial review against the suspension. (Source: Safe Passage International)

Two contrasting stories about Ukraine:

- Government says that it's listened to Ukrainians in the UK about the stress caused by having only a short time to renew visas under the Ukraine Permission Scheme. Ukrainians can now renew visas up to 90 days before their permission to stay expires, rather than the current 28 days. (Source: Home Office)

- Official data shows in the past six months Ukrainians are rarely granted permission to stay on a permanent basis through the asylum system, being told they could relocate to parts of Ukraine deemed to be ‘safe’. The story reports a family were told their daughter, who suffers from panic attacks, should wear noise-cancelling headphones. (Source: Sky)

On modern slavery:

- National Referral Mechanism referrals reached a record high of over 23,400 last year, with the top nationalities being UK, Eritrean, Vietnamese, Albanian, Somali (which saw a steep rise) and Sudanese. This analysis notes significant progress in reducing the backlog of cases (from 17,200 at the end of 2024 to 5,800 a year later) but questions the quality of decision-making. (Sources: Home Office, Free Movement)

- Local authorities can access a new training framework to support their role as first responders. (Source: Anti-Slavery International)

- Alongside updated child to adult transition guidance (from paragraph 9.47) there are new resources for professionals and for young people. (Source: Home Office)

New findings from migration data include:

- An analysis of EU ethnic minority populations in the UK, based on census data, finds they are less likely to be in employment and to have a university degree, and that Asian EU nationals more likely to report poor proficiency in English than any other EU group. (Source: Migration Observatory)

- Migration has little impact on employment and pay for UK workers, according to this data briefing on the evidence about migrant workers and the labour market. (Source: Migration Observatory)

Cohesion and integration

Two local announcements were made to reduce integration initiatives. The mayor of Lincolnshire confirmed plans to stop ESOL classes across Greater Lincolnshire by August 2027 (with exceptions for people from Hong Kong and Ukraine), reallocating the funding to literacy support. All 63 libraries in Lancashire will cease to be part of Libraries of Sanctuary, after a decision by

the Reform-run council, who said it was due to the ‘implied cost … focusing on refugees at the expense of wider service users.’ (Sources: BBC, Arts Professional)

Two items focus on the importance of words and language:

- A visual analysis of 100 years of speeches demonstrates how right-wing rhetoric has sharply risen in parliament and compares how vocabulary used by MPs around immigration has changed. (Source: the Guardian)

- Following comments from Jim Ratcliffe about the UK being ‘colonised’ by migrants, this article recounts how themes of invasion have been used to frame debates around immigration in Britain with harmful consequences. (Source: The Conversation)

International news

The UN confirmed over 600 people died crossing the Mediterranean in 2026 already. It keeps records of people who have died or gone missing on migration routes around the world, at almost 7,700 people or 21 per day in 2025. (Source: International Organization for Migration)

The US administration is proposing to pause issuing work permits to asylum seekers until processing times for asylum

applications fall below six months, to stop meritless applications being made as a way to work in the country. (Source: Times of India)

Stories that inspired us this week

At a ceremony at St James's Palace, Hull College has been awarded the Queen Elizabeth Prize for Higher and Further Education for success in supporting refugees and asylum seekers to learn English through their Silent Voices, Vivid Stories project. (Source: BBC)

We've got two sporting stories to share:

- Arvid Lindblad, set to become Britain's youngest ever Formula 1 driver, is proud of his mixed heritage. Born to a Swedish father and a mother of Indian descent, he says growing up between these cultures shaped his identity and helped him become the person he is today. (Source: BBC)

- Boxer Bilal Fawaz, now the British and Commonwealth super-welterweight champion, has quite a history. Born in Nigeria to parents from Benin and Lebanon, his story includes abuse, trafficking, statelessness, homelessness, detention, and a long wait to be granted leave to remain. (Source: The Sun)

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