Migration news roundup week commencing 16 February 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

In the week of the deadline for the government's 'earned settlement' consultation:

- A cross-party group of MPs raised objections to applying any settlement changes to people already in the UK . (Source: Business Standard)

- This article argues the proposals to lengthen the standard waiting time for settlement would have no impact on the number of new arrivals, but a detrimental effect on the integration of migrants living in the UK. (Source: Free Movement)

- A thinktank blogpost estimates about 1.35 million people could be affected, including over 300,000 children and 140,000 refugees who have come through the asylum process. (Source: IPPR)

- The general secretary of Unison criticised the government proposals as a ‘full-frontal attack’ on migrant care workers that could lock them into exploitation for an extra decade. (Source: the Guardian)

- A survey of people likely to be affected by the changes found three in five were concerned about separation from family, and two out of three felt less welcome in the UK since the announcement. (Source: the Guardian)

- Here in our region, over 200 Calderdale residents signed a petition opposing the proposals. (Source: Halifax Courier)

In an alternative way to measure Channel crossings, it’s been reported that this Labour government has presided over the highest number of arrivals using small boats to date, with just under 66,000 arrivals since the general election in July 2024. (Source: The Standard)

The UN has expressed concerns over potential human rights breaches in relation to people being removed to France under the ‘one in, one out’ policy and called for the scheme to end. 16 people have launched a legal challenge on modern slavery grounds, in the hope of avoiding removal. (Sources: the Guardian, Independent)

Also on removals, the Home Office announced more than 58,500 voluntary or forced removals have taken place since government took office in July 2024 and released footage of a removals flight. Relatedly, the Democratic Republic of Congo is now cooperating on returns after being subjected to visa penalties, following the path taken by Angola and Namibia. (Sources: Home Office, The Standard)

Specific migrant groups

On the asylum system and refugees:

- Government data shows a five-fold increase in refugee homelessness since 2021/22 with almost 20,000 recorded cases in 2024/25. Charities attribute this to the 28-day move on period from asylum accommodation and faster decision-making in the asylum system. (Source: BBC)

- On asylum support, Cameron Barracks in Inverness remains empty due to the planning requirements under Scottish law that aren't yet confirmed. Meanwhile local demonstrations continue both for and against the plan, and a group of church leaders and politicians have signed an open letter welcoming refugees to their community. (Sources: BBC, The Inverness Courier)

- A report explores the impact of 'safe country' concepts and 'country of origin' information on women seeking asylum in the UK on gender-based grounds and calls for knowledge produced by women with lived experience to be recognised and valued. (Source: Asylos)

Lord Dubs has condemned the Home Secretary's approach to children seeking asylum abroad who are trying to reunite with their families in the UK. (Source: the Guardian)

The Hong Kong BN(O) visa route is expanding to allow those who were children at the time of Hong Kong's 1997 handover to China, who do not themselves have BN(O) status, to apply for the visa independently of their eligible parents. An estimated additional 26,000 people could arrive in the UK as the result. (Source: Home Office)

Cohesion and integration

The co-owner of Manchester United sparked criticism by describing the UK as being 'colonised by immigrants' despite being a migrant himself, living in Monaco. In response, Manchester United issued a statement emphasising it's 'an inclusive and welcoming club'. (Sources: Mirror, Manchester United)

The Welsh Refugee Council says scrapping Wales' Nation of Sanctuary policy would have ‘disastrous consequences’ , following announcements by the Welsh Conservative and Reform UK parties ahead of the May Senedd election that they would both end the scheme, if elected. (Source: BBC)

A literature review on ethnicity, poverty and in-work inequalities in the UK focuses on Bangladeshi, Black African and Pakistani populations. It also highlights specific findings for specific migrant groups around financial pressure, labour market outcomes, and exploitation. (Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

The latest tracker on British Social Attitudes finds increasing negative views on immigration when asked about impact on culture and the economy, and further polarisation along party lines. Relatedly, an international poll reveals the UK has the highest level of public concern about immigration out of 107 countries surveyed, with 21% of Britons naming it the country’s top issue, considerably more than any other nation surveyed.

(Sources: NatCen, Gallup)

International news

The European Parliament has backed legislation to create offshore centres for migrants and asylum seekers, enabling deportations to ‘safe’ third countries where individuals may have no prior links. The new rules are expected to come into force from June. (Sources: the Guardian, Al Jazeera)

In Ireland almost 400 arrivals in January were left without accommodation, highlighting a persistent asylum housing crisis, despite falling applications and increased voluntary returns. (Source: InfoMigrants)

Stories that inspired us this week

Singer Rita Ora’s sister Elena Ora reflects on Bad Bunny’s 2026 Super Bowl performance delivered in Spanish with vivid Puerto Rican cultural imagery. She recalls her upbringing in London after arriving as a refugee from Kosovo, with cultural influences like the Notting Hill Carnival. (Source: The Standard)

Read this story of an unaccompanied young refugee who left Afghanistan aged 13. Zainullah first learned to play cricket with a tennis ball wrapped in electrical tape - he’s now part of Scotland’s

national cricket squad for the T20 World Cup in India. (Source: BBC)

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