

*Control and compassion:  
A new plan for an  
effective and fair UK  
asylum system*

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**British  
Future...**

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# Executive Summary

The asylum system is failing. In 2022 a total of 45,756 people made the perilous journey across the Channel, up from 1,900 in 2019. At least 50 people have drowned or are missing, including 32 people who died when a boat capsized in November 2021. Criminal gangs are profiting from people's desperation. Those who arrive in the UK face lengthy delays in processing their asylum applications. At the end of September 2022 just 7% of asylum applicants were processed within a six-month period and 120,300 people were waiting for a decision on their initial application<sup>1</sup>. Unable to work while their decisions are processed, asylum seekers are left in unsuitable and expensive accommodation for months or sometimes years.

This is unfair to asylum-seekers and costly to the taxpayer, with the bill for emergency hotel accommodation currently amounting to £5.6 million per day<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, the Home Office is failing to remove people whose asylum claims are refused, with just 816 voluntary and enforced removals in 2021, compared with 10,489 ten years previously<sup>3</sup>.

Politicians must now prioritise reforms to build an asylum system that is controlled, well-managed and fair. The UK-Rwanda scheme is not the answer. It is wrong in principle, as it removes people without hearing their cases. It is also costly to the taxpayer and will not achieve its own aims in practice.

We believe, however, that there are constructive alternatives for asylum reform – measures that can secure broad consensus across parties, with civil society and among most of the public.

**We propose an orderly, workable and humane alternative reform agenda, comprised of the following elements:**

**1. Asylum policy should uphold Britain's values, traditions and international obligations to protect refugees.** This

means we reject proposals which violate the principles of a fair hearing for every case; or which break with the spirit and letter of our international commitments under the Refugee Convention.

**2. Put in place a streamlined process to make fairer and faster asylum decisions.** The Home Office should invest sufficient resources in a reformed asylum system, with a new strategy to triage initial applicants, simplify country guidance and meet targets to make most decisions in six months. A fast-track process to refugee status for the strongest cases should also be introduced, together with a streamlined appeals procedure.

**3. Hire a task force to tackle backlogs.** With an individual target of processing four asylum cases each week or 100 asylum claims in six months, 1,000 temporary Home Office posts would be needed to eliminate the asylum backlog in six months, at an approximate cost of £60 million. With emergency hotel

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accommodation costing the Home Office £5.6 million each day in October 2022, this move would pay for itself within a fortnight, eliminating the need for hotels by freeing up dispersal accommodation.

**4. Safer arrivals through a new humanitarian visa to come to the UK.** This should be made available to people who have family or other close links to this country and issued in a select number of UK consulates in countries of transit. Parliament should set an annual quota for people admitted through this route, which would run alongside the UK Resettlement Scheme and community sponsorship, as well as refugee family reunion visas.

**5. Adopt a policy of ‘comprehensive cooperation’ with our allies to tackle smuggling and irregular migration.** The Government should seek enhanced cooperation with countries of transit and safe countries of origin. It should seek new and more comprehensive UK-France and UK-Belgium agreements, covering security, police cooperation, returns and systems to share responsibility for people for who do not qualify for asylum. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office should also support refugees in countries of transit such as Lebanon and Turkey, enabling them to support themselves there rather than travel across Europe. The UK Government should build on the agreement it signed with Albania in 2021 to allow the return of people who are not authorised to remain in the UK. It should also seek further return agreements with safe countries of return such as Bangladesh, Georgia, India, Nepal and Nigeria. Safe countries of return should also be supported through the British overseas aid budget to enact programmes to reduce irregular migration flows.

**6. Ensure more and safer returns.** Government should significantly increase the number of voluntary returns, reintroducing independent advice for those refused asylum, along with faster removals for irregular entrants whose asylum claims are refused.

**7. Promote integration through ‘welcoming hubs’ that increase social contact between newcomers and receiving communities and help refugees to rebuild their lives and flourish.** There is a public appetite to play a part in welcoming refugees. Faith and civil society organisations should harness this and set up local welcoming projects for asylum-seekers and refugees. More volunteers could be involved in activities such as English language conversation clubs and sport, offering advice and mentoring. Welcoming hubs should offer such community contact activities to asylum-seekers, refugees and those on humanitarian visas, as part of a proactive approach to civic contact, integration and citizenship.

**8. Help more refugees into work.** English language classes should be accessible in all parts of the UK so that refugees have the skills they need for work. Employment support should be better tailored to meet refugees’ needs and practical partnerships with employers should be strengthened. This will help more refugees

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to find work and enable them to make their contribution to our economy.

**9. Sufficient and fairer funding** to enable Home Office targets to be met rather than forgotten, through investment in an effective asylum system, reducing backlogs and providing access to affordable English language classes in colleges. The dispersal of refugees across the UK should be based on a clear set of principles, with a fairer distribution of people and funding across regions and nations of the UK. Local authorities (and communities) should be consulted about new arrivals.

**10. Stronger democratic accountability and public voice in asylum.** An annual Immigration Review should be presented to Parliament, which should include a transparent review of asylum, refugee and resettlement policy. The public should be involved in this review, through a well-organised engagement exercise that reaches people whose voices are not usually heard in consultations. Past experiences show that where communities are consulted about asylum dispersal accommodation and can ask questions, this process often unlocks public consent. The views of local communities should also contribute to this annual review and to plans to house asylum-seekers in their neighbourhoods.

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# I. Introduction: We need an asylum system that is controlled, well-managed and fair

The UK asylum system needs fixing. It is not working for those seeking protection in the UK, who are forced to take dangerous boat journeys to get here and then often wait years in limbo for a decision. It is not working for the public and voters who see, in the scenes from the Channel and the Kent coast, a system that is chaotic and uncontrolled.

But it is not unfixable. In this paper we set out a series of proposals for reform of UK asylum policy that would, we believe, reduce dangerous boat crossings and improve the treatment of those who do seek asylum in the UK, in a way that could secure broad public and political support.

Building that support matters, because it is the key to securing policy change, particularly on an increasingly salient topic as a general election draws nearer. Among voters there are different frustrations, which can create a polarised political and media debate. Some would prioritise tougher controls, yet others would like to see a system operating with more compassion. And while the majority of people would like to see a system that blends the two, there are some irreconcilable divides between these groups at their extremes – for example with those who think Britain should play no part in refugee protection. The challenge, for those of us who do believe in protecting refugees, is to secure and deepen consent for the UK playing the fullest role possible.

Some 50,042 asylum applications were lodged in the UK in 2021, a 68% increase over the previous year<sup>5</sup>. Numbers have continued to grow in 2022, in part due to more small boat arrivals. This is far from their highest rate historically, but the issue is not so much one of numbers as of being able to cope with the arrivals that we have. This, the system is failing to do. It is badly designed, inefficient and unable to cope with additional pressures. It is in urgent need of reform.

The human costs are plain to see. Channel boat crossings are extremely dangerous: December saw at least four people die after a small boat ran into difficulties in the freezing waters. Only days before we had marked the anniversary of a tragedy in which 32 people drowned. Those who make it to the UK wait in overcrowded reception centres where people have fallen seriously ill with infectious diseases. Over a hundred thousand people are stuck in limbo, banned from working to support themselves,

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while they await the results of their asylum claim, sometimes for years. The financial cost of our failing system is significant too, as backlogs and slow decision-making leave taxpayers paying for expensive hotel accommodation.

There is a broader political cost too. The Ipsos/British Future Immigration Attitudes Tracker, which has studied public attitudes to immigration since 2015, finds that most of the public now feels positive about the impact of immigration on UK society. But boat crossings remain a cause of serious public concern: the number one reason for public dissatisfaction with the government's approach to immigration. The situation in the Channel and on the coast has become a hot-button topic for voters on the right. Uncontrolled boat crossings risk undermining public support for immigration and pushing the government to put in place more draconian policies.

Campaigners for asylum and refugee rights should also be invested in the need for constructive solutions to reduce boat crossings. Not only because such crossings are unsafe and leave people at the mercy of criminal gangs; but also because of the political pressure under which the Government finds itself. The Rwanda scheme illustrated that the Government, and the Home Secretary in particular, wants to be seen to be tackling boat crossings and will resort to radical measures as a result – measures which may not, as with the Rwanda scheme, respect the UK's responsibilities under the UN Refugee Convention.

Constructive proposals are needed to offer a better alternative to 'quick-fix' approaches, like the Rwanda scheme, that turn out to be unworkable in practice. We believe that significant asylum reform is possible and achievable – reforms which would substantially reduce dangerous boat crossings, get rid of the massive backlogs in the system, save money on hotel accommodation, treat people more humanely and reassure the public that the government has a grip.

This is not a single 'silver bullet' but a series of practical changes, with four key elements. First, it involves deeper cooperation with other governments, not just on policing but at all stages of the process – from conditions in transit countries to facilitating more safe returns of people whose asylum claims are unsuccessful. Second, a new humanitarian visa would undermine the business model of people smugglers. We propose opening this new humanitarian route with a capped number of visas, set initially at 40,000 people, the number of asylum claims received by the UK in a typical year. Government and Parliament would review this regularly. Establishing public confidence in a managed route would allow it to be increased, either in response to specific crises or broader advocacy for the UK to play a greater role<sup>6</sup>.

Third, other reforms would overhaul the existing asylum process at home. Upfront investment would employ new caseworkers to clear the backlog of 120,000 ongoing asylum cases in six months, saving millions on hotel accommodation, with reform of asylum decision-



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making so it is faster and fairer in future. And fourthly, a new welcoming programme would help integrate people whose claim is successful, through regional ‘welcoming hubs’ and by letting more people work, pay taxes and build a stake in our society.

Failure to reduce the number of small boat arrivals and address backlogs can only reduce public trust in the Government’s ability to manage the asylum system. The experience of the 1990s shows this. An inefficient system is unfair to asylum-seekers, costly to the taxpayer and risks stoking community tensions. Politicians must now prioritise an asylum system that is controlled, well managed and fair.

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## 2. What does the Government propose to do on asylum?

All European countries are signatories to the UN Refugee Convention. The UK, in common with many other European countries, faces practical challenges in how to respond to the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees. There are significant irregular migration flows to and across Europe, and Governments have struggled to reduce dangerous sea voyages, and to tackle people smuggling and trafficking. The majority of people fleeing from countries such as Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine are clearly refugees, but European countries have struggled to manage mixed migration flows, where people needing protection and those looking for better economic opportunities arrive together in significant numbers. Governments have found it difficult to return those who do not qualify for refugee protection.

Between 2004 and 2020, asylum has not been a high profile issue in the UK. But the highly visible increase in Channel crossings has increased the salience of asylum as an issue of public concern, in contrast to the reduction in the salience of EU migration immigration, particularly since 2016. The increase in the arrival of small boats making dangerous journeys across the Channel and the dangerous over-crowding of the Manston processing centre are nobody's idea of a well-managed asylum system.

Over the last year, there has been an increase in government policy-making on asylum – including the publication of a New Plan for Immigration in 2021, the announcement of a deal with Rwanda in April 2022, Nationality and Borders Act 2022 and a new UK-France agreement signed in November 2022.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has identified asylum policy – using the slogan “stop the boats” – as one of his five key priorities for this year, alongside inflation, economic growth and the NHS. The government has made several commitments:

- To make a new deal with France to tackle trafficking.
- To clear the asylum backlog by the end of 2023.
- To end the use of expensive asylum accommodation.
- To pass a new law to ‘stop the boats’ – including pledging to detain and remove everybody who enters the UK without legal permission.
- To pursue the Rwanda scheme to deport asylum seekers to Africa.

The Government's plans have been challenged on both principled and practical grounds in a highly polarised debate. This is an

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overview of how far these policies can meet the objectives that the government has set out for itself.

## I. A new deal with France

### **The Government's pledge**

The Prime Minister pledged to “stem the expansion of illegal crossings and make the small boats route unviable” through joint work between the British and French governments.

### **How?**

A new deal between the UK and France was agreed in November 2022. The three objectives are to (i) deploy technology and human resources to intercept attempts to cross the border (ii) joint intelligence work to challenge facilitation and organised crime networks, and (iii) top-line commitments that will look at how to prevent or deter crossings through work further upstream in countries of transit and origin.

### **Analysis**

Cooperation between the UK and French governments must almost certainly be part of any effective plan for a better managed and more orderly asylum system. There has been a fluctuating relationship between the governments, politically as well as operationally, and the Sunak administration has sought to prioritise practical cooperation.

The key challenge is how much of a sustained difference can be made by a deal which largely focuses on policing and security in the UK and France. Both governments report that they are intercepting a larger number of crossings, but also that a larger number of boats are getting through. Given that those prevented from crossing can try again, it is unlikely that UK-French cooperation on security can be sufficient to break up an increasingly entrenched international trafficking model. The governments would also need to negotiate a wider deal that addresses some difficult questions: which people would France agree to take back if they came to the UK – and who would be able to claim asylum in the UK?

## 2. Clear the backlog by the end of 2023

### **The Government's pledge**

‘We need to process claims in days or weeks, not months or years. We expect to abolish the backlog of initial asylum decisions by the end of next year,’ the Prime Minister has said.

### **How?**

The Government has said it will double the number of asylum case workers. Briefings to the media have also suggested reducing paperwork, enabling asylum claims to be processed in days or weeks, which would require a significant overhaul of the current

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processing model. The Government's pledge was later clarified, showing it to be somewhat less ambitious than it at first appeared: that it was a commitment to clear, by the end of 2023, the 92,000 claims made before June 2022 – rather than to deal with all 140,000 claims awaiting a decision at the time of the pledge. That would only keep the backlog steady, rather than clearing it in its entirety.

### **Analysis**

Effective action on the asylum backlog, through fast and fair decision-making, ought to be one approach that can command a broad coalition of support. The Government's initial focus has been on recruiting more asylum caseworkers so that more decisions can be taken. Its efforts are more likely to stabilise the backlog than to clear it, unless efforts to increase capacity are combined with significant reform and streamlining of the decision-making process. This report proposes one option for how to do that.

## **3. End the use of hotel accommodation.**

### **The Government's pledge**

To halve the £5.5m daily hotel bill for housing migrants, by accommodating people in alternative sites.

### **How?**

Hotels will no longer be used to house asylum-seekers, with 10,000 instead put up in disused holiday parks, former student halls and surplus military sites.

### **Analysis**

The Government has been keen to highlight the increasing cost of asylum accommodation. But the proposals to find alternative sites in which to house very large number of asylum-seekers are unlikely to come to fruition quickly, and will raise new questions about the suitability of the accommodation and the local legitimacy of these new sites. The cancellation of the Linton-on-Ouse facility, after a contract of £35 million had been given to Serco, was one example of how the pursuit of alternatives to hotel accommodation risks increasing the costs without contributing to any constructive solutions. The effective way to reduce this cost is to make asylum decisions more quickly.

## **4. New legislation to stop the boats**

### **The Government's pledge**

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said: "We will introduce new legislation to make unambiguously clear that if you enter the UK illegally, you should not be able to remain here," and you will be "Detained and returned to your home country or another safe country," as soon as possible.

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## How?

The Government has yet to set out what legislative changes and practical processes would enable those arriving by boat to be returned within days or weeks of arriving in the UK.

## Analysis

The key question for the Government is why, if a new asylum law this year *could* ‘stop the boats’, the new asylum law that the Government passed last year did not already achieve that. The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 has already put on the statute book measures to declare inadmissible for asylum in the UK those who cross the Channel, having been in a third country that the UK deems to be safe. Yet it has not been able to remove from the UK those who have been declared inadmissible.

In March 2022 the Government’s new plan for immigration acknowledged that “If an inadmissible person cannot be removed to another country, we will be obliged to process their claim.” Almost 20,000 people received notices of inadmissibility during 2022. But, once these were reviewed, the UK then admitted the individual into the UK asylum system in 99% of cases that did not involve people from Albania. The reason is that the UK Government has no legal alternatives if the UK has no realistic prospect of a removal or return. It is difficult to see how the new asylum legislation could change this. The main impact of the inadmissibility rule to date has been to add a six-month delay to asylum processing at the start, requiring more hotel accommodation to be used for longer.

Legislating a similar principle again on this will not address the practical and legal barriers to doing it in practice.

A key practical difficulty is that the proposal would require a ten-fold expansion of detention capacity. While the Government is making a commitment of £70 million to explore potential future options for increased capacity, there is no realistic prospect of an expansion on anything like the scale needed prior to the 2024 General Election.

A second key practical difficulty is that the Government has nowhere that it can send many of the people who cross the Channel and claim asylum. The UK has a returns deal with Albania, but it could not pursue one with countries such as Afghanistan, Iran or Syria, which are all in the top five countries of origin for people seeking asylum in the UK. The UK has no returns deal with France or other European countries. So it will not have anywhere to remove or send the majority of those crossing the Channel, excepting those from Albania.

Another hurdle is that the policy is unlikely to be lawful. Government policy is that detention is supposed to be used only ahead of an imminent deportation. To propose using detention for long or indefinite periods, for those where there is no prospect of return or removal, would require new legislation, and would be very likely to be found to be in breach of the European Convention

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on Human Rights and domestic human rights legislation. It is currently not government policy to leave the ECHR, which is a commitment within the Brexit deal and the Good Friday Agreement. While there is a political debate about whether the UK should remain in the ECHR, that is not going to be resolved before the General Election.

So the pledge to detain and remove all people who cross the Channel has no prospect of being honoured in the next two years. To achieve this over time would require returns or removal deals with countries of origin or European countries. Detention as a rule is very unlikely to become a viable option until and unless the numbers drop dramatically; and it is not a proposal that can bring about that reduction, given the lack of capacity to make this either a realistic policy or, therefore, a credible threat or deterrent.

The Government has proposed that those whose asylum claims are deemed valid should receive only temporary protection, for up to 30 months. This will create a new issue from 2025 of what to do with those given temporary protection, when that 30-month period expires. The next Government may have to make further decisions on thousands of cases that were decided in 2022 and 2023. There will be both an ethical and pragmatic case for permanent settlement, if returns to countries like Afghanistan, Iran and Syria remain unsafe and hence unfeasible.

## 5. Make the Rwanda plan work

### **The Government's pledge**

The Home Secretary said that she and her Rwandan counterpart had “confirmed our joint and steadfast resolve to deliver this partnership at scale as soon as possible.”

### **How?**

Officially known as the UK and Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership, the plan was agreed between the two governments in April 2022. Its aims are to disincentivise small boat crossings, break the business model of the smugglers and traffickers, as well as to boost Rwanda's economic development. People deemed ‘inadmissible’ to the UK, essentially those who have arrived on small boats, would be relocated to Rwanda, where their asylum applications would be processed in the Rwandan asylum system, and where they would be resettled if refugee status was granted. Even refugees with close relatives in the UK would be unable to return to the UK once their status was granted. The UK will pay the Rwandan Government £120 million over a five-year period to run the scheme, plus £20,000 - £30,000 for each migrant to cover their accommodation and living costs<sup>7</sup>.

The first flight was stopped by a legal challenge. The High Court found in favour of the Government in November 2022 but an appeal is pending. However, the potential legality of the policy would depend on a case-by-case assessment that Rwanda was safe

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for each individual. This would be a further barrier to the scheme operating at any scale. The Government does not plan to send any flights to Rwanda before the legal processes are exhausted.

### **Analysis**

As noted above, the UK Government would be subject to legal challenges if it deemed people inadmissible when there was no prospect of their safe return or transfer to a third country. The Rwanda policy was conceived of as a potential solution to this challenge. If deemed legal, this would become an option for the Government to deport some asylum seekers, dependent on the capacity in Rwanda. But this will not realistically affect 98-99% of cases, even if the Rwanda policy is operable.

The scheme is unlikely to work on its own terms as it lacks the scale to change people's behaviour and deter Channel crossings. The Government itself admits that the UK-Rwanda plan – if it ever starts deporting people – will only relocate a few hundred asylum-seekers each year, almost certainly less than 5% of those crossing the Channel. A one-in-twenty chance of being relocated is unlikely to deter people who are already willing to risk their lives in small boats. Nor would it generate sufficient awareness to change people's behaviour.

It is possible that a flight or two may go to Rwanda before the General Election; or that it will never operate, given that the Opposition has committed to scrapping the policy. There is no prospect of the scheme operating at a scale to make a significant difference to Channel crossings within the next two years.

Beyond the arguments in principle against this policy, any of these outcomes represent very poor value for money that could make a significant difference if invested in asylum reform. The £120 million earmarked for the UK-Rwanda plan could be better spent reducing the huge backlogs in the asylum system, increasing policing and other cooperation with France and Belgium, and ensuring that those who are not granted asylum are returned. Ministers and civil servants would better spend their time on measures to deliver a functioning asylum system. The scheme will distract ministers and officials from dealing with delays, backlogs and the collapse of returns, all of which mean that the asylum system isn't working for anyone.

The most recent British Future-Ipsos Immigration Attitudes Tracker finds that 61% of people are dissatisfied with the Government's handling of immigration<sup>8</sup>. Over-promising with the UK-Rwanda Plan, then failing to deliver on its commitments, risks further denting public confidence in the asylum and immigration system. Most of the public (52%), including 43% of Conservative supporters, do not think the Rwanda scheme is likely to succeed in reducing the number of people coming to the UK to seek asylum without permission. Only a quarter of the public (25%) and a minority of Conservative supporters too (38%) think the Rwanda scheme is likely to offer value for money. Most of the public (55%) thinks it is unlikely to offer value for money<sup>9</sup>. The Rwanda scheme

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will reheat and polarise the asylum and immigration debate in the UK. It appeals to only a vocal minority of the public because it fails to reflect what most people in Britain want: an asylum system that combines control and compassion, rather than having to choose between them.



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## 3. What are the alternatives to the Government's current approach to asylum?

We believe that it is incumbent on critics of the Government's proposed approach to asylum, including the Rwanda scheme, to put forward alternatives. Already, civil society has suggested proposals to reduce small boat arrivals, notably 'safe and legal routes' for those with links to this country to come to the UK. While this policy could play a part in reducing the numbers of small boat arrivals, by itself it is unlikely to address this issue fully or break the business model of smugglers. Policy responses to human smuggling need to be multifaceted and disrupt the work of smugglers and address push factors in countries of origin and countries of transit – so called 'upstream measures'.

Compared with countries such as Spain and Germany, the UK's upstream measures have been more limited: largely focusing on intelligence, extending visa regimes and preventing document fraud in high-risk countries. Spain, in contrast, has signed a number of bilateral agreements with migrants' countries of origin and transit. It has also delivered public information campaigns in these countries, as well as offering work visa opportunities to undermine smugglers' business models.

UK interventions also need to focus on countries of transit such as Serbia and France, to ensure that people have opportunities to claim asylum there and to work and support themselves, and to support policing and border control.

The UK also needs to make sure border control and asylum determination processes are adequately resourced, together with in-country enforcement and safe removal for those who are not granted asylum or leave to remain. There should also be opportunities for voluntary return. Providing safe and legal routes is not, in itself, enough to reduce smuggling; nor is a focus solely on security in countries of transit. Policy interventions on people smuggling and irregular migration need to be comprehensive, focusing on countries of origin, countries of transit and destination countries.

For safe routes to answer the practical challenge of helping to reduce the danger and frequency of irregular crossings, they also have to be designed in a way that would divert significant numbers of people. While calls for larger Global Refugee Resettlement schemes have merits – as a way for the UK to play its part in refugee protection – safe and legal routes are unlikely to prevent dangerous crossings and tackle people smuggling if they simply provide a new safe route to different groups of people.

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Proposals for ‘safe and legal routes’ also need to respond to political concerns that this proposal would act as a ‘pull factor’ for people who have few connections with the UK, increasing the overall refugee population. While evidence for ‘pull factors’ is weak and contested – and there is no evidence that, for example, the UK-Rwanda scheme is having a ‘deterrent’ effect – there is unlikely to be the necessary political or public support for this policy proposal of a new humanitarian route if the government was unable to predict the potential scale of initial take-up.

But we believe that asylum reform is possible and that an alternative approach can be found. An orderly, workable and humane alternative reform agenda would adhere to the following key principles:

1. It must uphold the UK’s historic commitment to refugee protection and our international obligations under the UN Refugee Convention.
2. It must make asylum safer – by reducing the number of dangerous journeys across the Channel and disrupting people-trafficking models as effectively as possible.
3. It should promote more effective, fair and timely decisions on asylum claims, to deliver better outcomes for people and not leave them in limbo.
4. It should help the UK to safely return more of those whose asylum claims fail.
5. It needs to promote the integration of refugees into our society, seeking better outcomes for those who come to the UK and the communities that they join.
6. It should provide value for money. Interventions that require public funding should achieve their stated aims and should not have adverse fiscal or economic impacts on other public services.
7. It needs to secure and strengthen democratic and public consent for refugee protection in the UK.

A series of constructive alternatives for asylum reform, which adhere to these principles, are set out in the following section. Our proposals would help to reduce dangerous small boat crossings and address backlogs and delays. We believe that this agenda for reform combines control and compassion, and will thus help to secure broad consensus across parties, among civil society and with most of the public.

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## 4. Ten proposals for reform

We believe that there are constructive alternatives for asylum reform. Our ten proposals, set out below, adhere to the above principles and can secure broad consensus across parties, among civil society and with a majority of the public.

### I. Asylum policy should uphold Britain's values, traditions and international obligations to protect refugees.

#### **The challenge**

Successive Governments have struggled to combine compassion and control in enacting refugee policy. Government policy has sometimes been struck out by the courts, because it has not taken into account our own human rights commitments and our international obligations under the UN Refugee Convention. A breakdown in relationships between the Government and organisations that work with refugees has contributed to heated and polarised debates on asylum that serve nobody's interests.

#### **Constructive solutions**

We believe that it is possible to combine control and compassion in refugee policy. Most people support such an approach. We propose a UK refugee policy that incorporates streamlined and faster asylum determination processes and takes action to tackle backlogs. The asylum system must be resourced, but by processing applications quickly we would save money.

We should divert people from the hands of criminals by offering a new humanitarian visa to come to the UK. At the same time, the UK should cooperate with our allies to tackle smuggling and reduce the drivers of irregular migration, as well as expediting the return of people whose asylum cases have been refused. Such a system is fair to those with a genuine claim to asylum, enabling their cases to be resolved quickly, but also strengthens our borders.

Interventions to address small boat arrivals must be enacted on land, not at sea, where our priority has to be the saving of lives.

A UK refugee policy that combines compassion and control also supports integration – a two-way relationship that breaks down barriers between 'them' and 'us'. So more action should be taken to help refugees into work. We propose to harness the power of civil society and volunteers by asking councils and mayors to coordinate local 'welcoming hubs', which would offer advice sessions and activities such as conversation clubs and volunteering programmes.

We reject proposals that violate the British values of a fair hearing for every asylum case and break with the spirit and letter of our international commitments under the UN Refugee Convention.

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## 2. Put in place a streamlined process to make fairer and faster asylum decisions

### **The challenge**

The asylum system is inefficient, costly and slow. At the end of 2021 just 7.4% of eligible cases were concluded within six months. People with strong cases for asylum can wait many years for a positive decision, hindering their integration. The new inadmissibility process (see Appendix 1), introduced in 2021, is further slowing down asylum decision-making by adding an extra layer of bureaucracy. The current design and delivery of the asylum system is not meeting the needs of asylum-seekers themselves, nor the Government's desire to manage asylum flows. An over-complex appeal system has also led to a small number of legal challenges that have frustrated the removal of asylum-seekers whose cases have been refused.

### **Constructive solutions**

We propose a triage system at the initial screening interview (see Appendix 1 for a description of the asylum determination process), as well as simplified asylum guidance, smarter interviews and better use of IT. We welcome the Prime Minister's admission that the asylum system needs "re-engineering"<sup>10</sup> and suggestions for asylum reform. The latter include looking at ways to make rapid, paper-based positive decisions on the most straightforward asylum cases from countries where more than 90% of cases are granted asylum (for example, Eritrea, Sudan and Syria) and all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. However, we believe that there is scope for further reform to decision-making to streamline the system, cut costs and to better support those with a genuine claim to asylum.

The screening interview should be made to work harder, and Home Office caseworkers should be upskilled and supported to make decisions at this interview. At this initial screening interview asylum-seekers should be divided into three groups.

1. Asylum-seekers with prima facie strong cases from countries with high recognition rates should go into a Fast-track to Refugee Status Stream, with people granted refugee status within a 28-day period and ideally while applicants remain in initial accommodation.
2. People whose asylum applications require further investigation should be invited for their substantive interviews as before, with a target of making decisions within a six-month target. As these cases may be more complex, the most experienced senior caseworkers should be processing these applications.
3. The Detained Fast Track process (currently suspended), the Non-Suspensive Appeals Process<sup>11</sup> and the new inadmissibility process should be merged and reformed into a new Rapid Assessment and Removal Stream. Those who have weak cases for asylum based on prima facie evidence and country of origin should have their cases resolved

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quickly – ideally within a 28-day period under the Rapid Assessment and Removal Stream – with the intention of removing people whose asylum cases are refused or rejected on safe third country grounds. This group should have access to independent legal advice and be given enough time to compile medical assessments and other evidence. Such an accelerated process must be rigorous and fair or it risks legal challenge, and must give people a streamlined, in-country right of appeal. Those deemed at risk of absconding should be detained.

As stated above, we would scrap the over-complex new inadmissibility process (see Appendix), which slows down decision-making without having a noticeable impact on removals or deterring people with weak cases from coming to the UK. From January 2021 until March 2022 the Home Office issued 12,277 notices of intent of inadmissibility. Some 75 people were eventually deemed inadmissible and 15 were removed.

We are concerned about Government proposals to re-introduce a ‘white list’ of countries from where asylum applications are automatically refused without any consideration of the merits of their case. Ministers have suggested that Albania would be included on such a list. Yet statistics on asylum decisions from the UK and other OECD countries shows that few countries outside the EU, USA or CANZUK bloc are totally safe for everyone. One wrong decision could cost a person’s life. Instead, we believe our proposed Rapid Assessment and Removal Stream provides protections such as independent legal advice and an in-country right of appeal, while expediting the removal of those who are not entitled to protection.

A number of other changes would also help to streamline the asylum process. Screening interviews should take place in initial accommodation, as this would lead to fewer interviews being missed.

Home Office country guidance should be simplified to make it easier for caseworkers to make judgments as to whether a person has a “*well-founded fear of persecution*” and is a refugee.

Home Office IT systems are outdated, with Excel spreadsheets still used to track asylum cases<sup>12</sup>. The Home Office should make better use of IT in the asylum determination process, developing a platform where asylum-seekers and their advisers can upload evidence, and where people can keep track of their cases and also receive online advice material.

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration’s recent report on asylum determination highlighted low morale and high staff turnover among asylum decision-makers, a shortage of technical specialist staff, and inadequate staff training<sup>13</sup>. The quality of initial decision-making needs to be improved, by training and supporting Home Office staff to make asylum decisions that do not risk appeal.

There is scope to streamline the appeals system. Asylum-seekers whose cases have been refused should have the right of appeal to a single-tier tribunal, as was the case between 2004 and 2010. This tribunal should be presided over by a judge and should hear asylum, modern slavery and human rights arguments in the same sitting. To ensure that the appeal process is efficient, all asylum-seekers should have legal representation at tribunal stage.

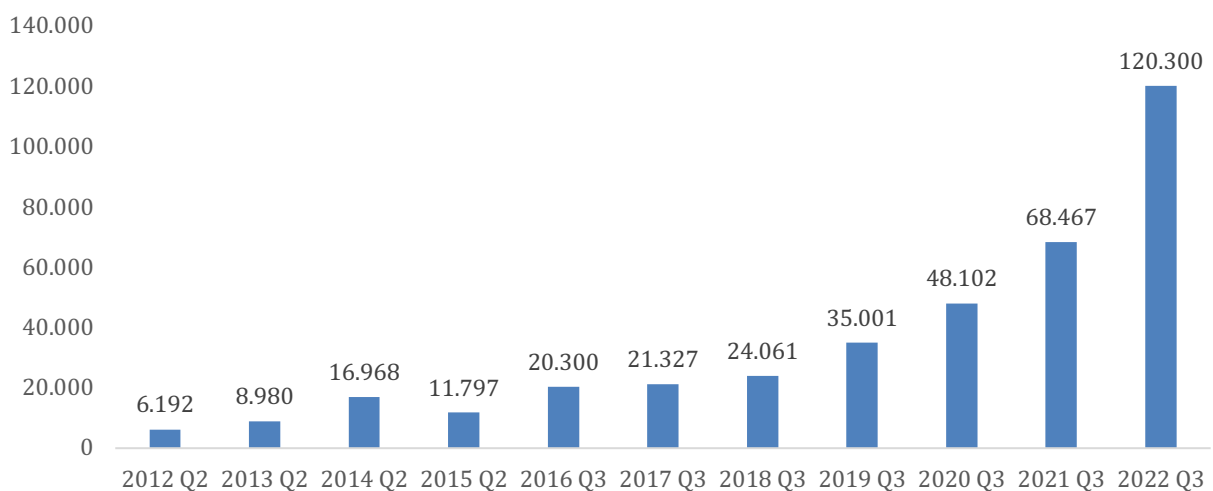
Section 4 accommodation should be abolished. Instead all asylum-seekers should be entitled to support under Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 until they are granted refugee status, other leave to remain in the UK, or until they are detained or removed. This change would prevent destitution and remove a layer of Home Office bureaucracy. It would also make it easier to track and remove asylum-seekers whose cases have been refused.

### 3. Hire a task force to tackle backlogs

#### The challenge

An overly complex and under-resourced determination process has led to asylum backlogs growing year-on-year. At the end of September 2022 some 120,300 asylum cases were waiting an initial decision (Figure 1). The same statistics showed that 60,290 asylum cases had been waiting for more than three years to be concluded. At the end of 2015, the Home Office’s own Migration Transparency data showed that nearly three-quarters (73.4%) of cases were processed within a six-month period, compared with 7.4% of cases today. Failure to process cases quickly means that backlogs will continue to grow. Many thousands of people have also been left in limbo. They have been refused asylum, but come from countries such as Afghanistan, Iran and Syria to which they cannot be removed.

Figure 1: Asylum Cases Awaiting an Initial Decision



Source: Home Office Migration Transparency data on Immigration and Protection, Q3 2022

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## Constructive solutions

In 2021-22 the Home Office employed 614 asylum caseworkers<sup>14</sup>. The number of annual asylum applications has increased: it rose 130% between Q2 2017 and Q2 2022, yet the Home Office did not take on more staff. An over-complex and under-resourced system is the root cause of today's huge backlogs. While we welcome the Government's commitment to double the numbers of asylum-caseworkers to 1,200, we fear that this move will not be enough to clear backlogs and reduce the need for expensive hotel accommodation.

We propose a taskforce to clear asylum backlogs, at a cost of about £60 million, of which £40 million would be spent hiring 1,000 extra Home Office caseworkers. The remaining £20 million would be made available to local authorities to provide advice and support to those granted refugee status or leave to remain in the UK. Given that emergency accommodation in hotels is currently costing the Government £5.6 million each day, the taskforce would pay for itself within a fortnight.

The taskforce would hire and train extra caseworkers to process the backlog. Currently, caseworkers are processing an average of 1.5 applications each week, although the Immigration Minister, Robert Jenrick, has requested that this is increased to four cases each week. We believe that with the streamlined processes described above this target could be met. An asylum caseworker should thus be able to process about 180-200 cases each year. Hiring 1,000 extra caseworkers at an estimated cost of £40 million<sup>15</sup> would enable a backlog of 100,000 to be processed within six months, or 500 people to process the backlog in a year<sup>16</sup>.

Backlog clearance would result in some people being granted refugee status, while others will be refused and be removed from the UK. Removal and voluntary returns programmes should be adequately resourced.

The proposed backlog taskforce must also consider housing for people granted refugee status or leave to remain in the UK. We propose that refugees who have been granted status through such a backlog clearance taskforce be housed across the UK, with all local authorities expected to take in refugees. Only one in five asylum cases includes dependents, which makes housing easier to find than for people admitted through Afghan and Syrian resettlement programmes, who tend to arrive as family groups. We propose £20 million be made to available to local authorities to help in this resettlement process, particularly in identifying move-on accommodation. Faith and civil society organisations should also be involved in welcoming activities, which we describe in detail later in this report.

Backlog clearance programmes have been undertaken before and on a larger scale. There is important learning from the 2007-2011 Asylum Legacy Programme<sup>17</sup>, which hired 1,000 people to process 403,000 unresolved asylum and immigration cases. Of this number, 161,000 people were granted leave to remain in the UK and 38,000



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people were identified and removed. Some 129,000 cases were deemed to be duplicate files or other errors. Another 74,500 cases were unresolved in 2011. The experiences of the Asylum Legacy Programme show how important it is to act before backlogs build up and to have IT systems to prevent errors or lost or duplicate files.

As already noted, a new backlog clearance taskforce would result in some people being refused asylum or other leave to remain in the UK. To maintain public confidence in the asylum system it is essential that those who have been refused are encouraged to return or are removed. But is also important to be realistic and not leave large numbers of people in limbo – where they have been refused but cannot be returned. The UK cannot and should not be returning people to Afghanistan or Iran at present. We propose that asylum-seekers who have been refused and who cannot be realistically returned be granted 2.5 years leave to remain. They should have a clean criminal record and show a commitment to learn English. Their case should be reviewed after this period with a view to either removal if conditions have changed, or extension and a route to settlement and citizenship if they cannot return.

## 4. Safer arrivals through a new humanitarian visa to come to the UK

### **The challenge**

Lives are being lost in the channel. People are paying smugglers, who may also be involved in other forms of organised crime, to help them make these dangerous journeys. The high visibility of small boat arrivals in south coast towns damages public trust in the asylum system.

### **Constructive solution**

We propose a new humanitarian visa allowing people with a prima facie case for asylum to travel to the UK and enter the asylum process. This would help to divert people from criminal gangs and help to reduce dangerous channel crossings. It would be a capped scheme, with the number of humanitarian visas set by Parliament, on an annual basis, along with the prioritisation criteria. Its success as a diversionary measure would also be reviewed by Parliament.

The visa would be issued at British consulates at locations away from the French and Belgian coasts – potentially in Paris, Brussels, Milan or Athens. There would, however, be information points in Calais and Dunkerque and transport back to a British consulate for those who wanted to apply. Those given a humanitarian visa would have the right to travel to the UK and would be given a set period – for example, 28 days – to make their asylum claim once they arrived. People would receive information on the UK asylum process and resettlement support and advice when they applied for humanitarian visas. They would also receive information about the UK's returns policy should their asylum claim fail. Acceptance of a humanitarian visa would include a commitment to return should an asylum claim fail.



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People would be eligible for a humanitarian visa if they have a strong prima facie claim for asylum, or another legitimate link to the UK. Such a link might include having immediate family in the UK, such as parents, children or siblings; or having previously undergone higher education in the UK, or other legal periods of residence.

It is likely that some people who may apply for humanitarian visas already have a legal route to enter the UK through refugee family reunion visas. These visas allow resettled refugees and people granted refugee status to bring spouses/partners and children to the UK. But asylum-seekers, as well as people now being granted temporary refugee protection or humanitarian protection, can no longer usually apply for family reunion (see Appendix 1). This restriction often forces people to turn to smugglers to reach family in the UK. We propose that British consulates issuing humanitarian visas are also able to issue refugee family reunion visas to those who qualify for them.

Our proposal is that humanitarian visas would be a capped scheme, with the annual number of visas set by Parliament, as part of a new 'safe routes' policy. A potential starting point could be 40,000 humanitarian visas a year – similar to the current number of UK asylum applications. Were a humanitarian visa scheme uncapped, it could reasonably be argued that this would have a stronger chance of ending the people smuggling business entirely. However, our view is that uncertainty about the potential scale of resulting applications to an uncapped scheme could likely to prove a decisive barrier to the adoption of that model.

We also propose to restrict the scheme mainly to 'countries of high concern', such as the 15 countries with the highest acceptance rate for UK asylum applications, or those with severe human rights violations as verified by the Government. It would also be possible to specify, for example, that a proportion of humanitarian visas would be awarded to women or vulnerable groups, as well as people from countries other than those of high concern.

Humanitarian visas would work alongside community sponsorship and the UK's smaller refugee resettlement programmes, such as the new UK Resettlement Plan. The UK would continue to honour its obligations under the Refugee Convention by considering asylum applications from spontaneous arrivals, but those seeking asylum would be encouraged to do so through the new humanitarian visa route.

An extra-territorial humanitarian visa regime is also a framework by which the Government could offer protection to other groups of refugees in situations of large-scale humanitarian crisis.

We believe that a well-designed humanitarian visa regime would have considerably more impact at breaking the business model of people smugglers than the UK-Rwanda plan, at much lower cost.

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## 5. Pursue a policy of ‘comprehensive cooperation’ with our allies to tackle smuggling and irregular migration.

### **The challenge**

Addressing forced migration flows and smuggling requires upstream interventions in countries of origin and transit. The UK cannot act alone but has often been unsuccessful in securing bilateral and multilateral agreements that make a difference on the ground. Political conditions in the UK and France have also limited the scope for more comprehensive cooperation.

An antagonistic approach to relations with our neighbours has not helped to reduce the number of boat crossings, nor to shift the blame for them. The public sees the UK government as primarily responsible for controlling our borders. A narrow focus on policing at the Channel is not proving successful at disrupting the business model of smugglers or discouraging people from making dangerous boat journeys.

### **Constructive solutions**

The new government has an opportunity to look afresh at how the UK works with other states to manage migration and tackle people smuggling and irregular migration. It should look beyond the current, narrow focus on policing at the Channel and take a more strategic and comprehensive approach to international cooperation. Bilateral deals should consider ‘push factors’ that lead people to leave their homes and attempt journeys to the UK; conditions in transit countries such as Turkey and Lebanon; enabling more returns of people whose asylum claim has been rejected; and they should seek, too, to make policing more effective at the ‘pinch point’ of the Channel.

We strongly believe that this would be a more effective approach: it is clear that the current approach is not working. In the table below we examine five options for cooperation.

| <b>Options for cooperation</b>   | <b>Is it achievable?</b>  | <b>Would it be effective at reducing boat crossings?</b>   | <b>Is it compatible with UK's international obligations?</b>           |
|--|---|--|--|
| 1. Status quo: limited security cooperation with France.   | Yes, with limitations. Expanding cooperation has been challenging.  | Not particularly. Boat crossings continue daily.   | Yes  |
| 2. Enhanced security cooperation with France in return for French authorities intercepting boats in French waters. | No. France is unlikely to accept a requirement to take back boats solely in return for more funding for policing, when the UK is trying to enhance policing anyway.                 | No. Firstly, France is unlikely to accept such a deal. In addition, increasing security in the Channel area does not address push factors and may just move smuggling operations to other locations.   | Yes  |
| 3. Multilateral approach with EU and other partners.   | In time, more multilateral cooperation may be achievable, though it has been fraught with political problems to date. Progress will be slow, more likely over a decade than a year. | Uncertain what direct impact multilateral approach would have on Channel crossings.  | Yes  |
| 4. 'Sovereignty first' withdrawal from international treaties.   | In theory yes, but with consequences for international cooperation and UK reputation.   | No. Does not offer a workable solution to smuggling and irregular migration. It is an approach that makes it difficult to sustain even current levels of cooperation.  | No – actively undermines international treaties.                       |
| 5. 'Comprehensive cooperation'   | Yes. A series of bilateral deals, addressing push factors, transit countries, policing and more safe returns, should be achievable.   | Yes. A UK offer to take a capped number of migrants through a new humanitarian visa would unlock greater French cooperation on policing, including returning boats – significantly reduced in numbers – that are intercepted in French territorial waters. | Yes. The UK would honour its commitments under the Refugee Convention. |

We believe that a policy of 'comprehensive cooperation' is the most likely of these options to be successful. This approach tries to make cooperation work, but without the constraints of multilateralism, focusing on bilateral deals with countries of origin and countries of transit. It will require the UK Government to prioritise improving cooperation with our European neighbours, seeking new UK-France and UK-Belgium agreements which make provisions for operational cooperation between police and border forces, joint investigations and intelligence sharing and the greater use of technology to arrest people smugglers and to detect small boats before they set sail.

Where safe to do so, France and Belgium should agree to intercept small boats on beaches and in their territorial waters and process their asylum claims in these countries. In return the UK should

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offer to receive migrants living in the coastal encampments who have a link to the UK, through the new humanitarian visa we have described above. The existence of this new, safe route to the UK, for those who qualify (see above) will significantly reduce the number of people making cross-Channel journeys – making effective policing more practicable. As previously described, the UK should seek French and Belgian cooperation on the issuing of these humanitarian visas.

The UK, France and Belgium should also cooperate in taking action to return those who do not qualify for the humanitarian visa or refugee protection. Further, as part of a policy of Comprehensive Cooperation, the UK Government should also prioritise bilateral irregular migration and readmission agreements with safe countries of return. It should support these countries to enact programmes to reduce irregular migration flows.

In 2021, the UK Government signed a bilateral readmission agreement with the Government of Albania<sup>18</sup>. In practice, however, most people who have been returned have been foreign national offenders and there is little incentive for the Albanian Government to cooperate. This agreement should be revived. The Government should also prioritise further readmission agreements with safe countries of origin where UK refugee recognition rates are low (see Appendix 2). In addition to Albania, the government could consider readmission deals with Bangladesh, Georgia, India and Nigeria as a priority. These agreements should commit signatory countries to taking back asylum-seekers who have been refused, other unauthorised migrants and foreign national offenders.

There should be criteria that determine whether a readmission deal should be pursued. In addition to a low refugee recognition rate in the UK, such criteria should include the absence of armed conflict in the areas of origin of returnees, observance of democracy and the rule of law, and the ability of British embassy staff to monitor the safety of returnees.

Readmission should also be incentivised through development aid that addresses some of the economic and social drivers of migration. The UK is currently funding a new hydroelectric dam, green job creation schemes and industrial parks in Albania. These will provide thousands of local jobs for young Albanians, helping to reduce push factors that lead to emigration. Similar approaches should be taken in other countries where readmission deals are signed. Countries that cooperate and take back unauthorised migrants should also be offered priority access to work visas in the UK. For example, in return for readmitting people who had been refused asylum in the UK, the Albanian government could be offered a quota of Seasonal Agricultural Worker visas.

In addition, a policy of comprehensive cooperation should also look at countries of first asylum and transit. Some refugees who arrive in the UK have lived in other countries before making the journey here. For example, Syrians may have spent time in Lebanon or Turkey before entering the EU. Afghans may have

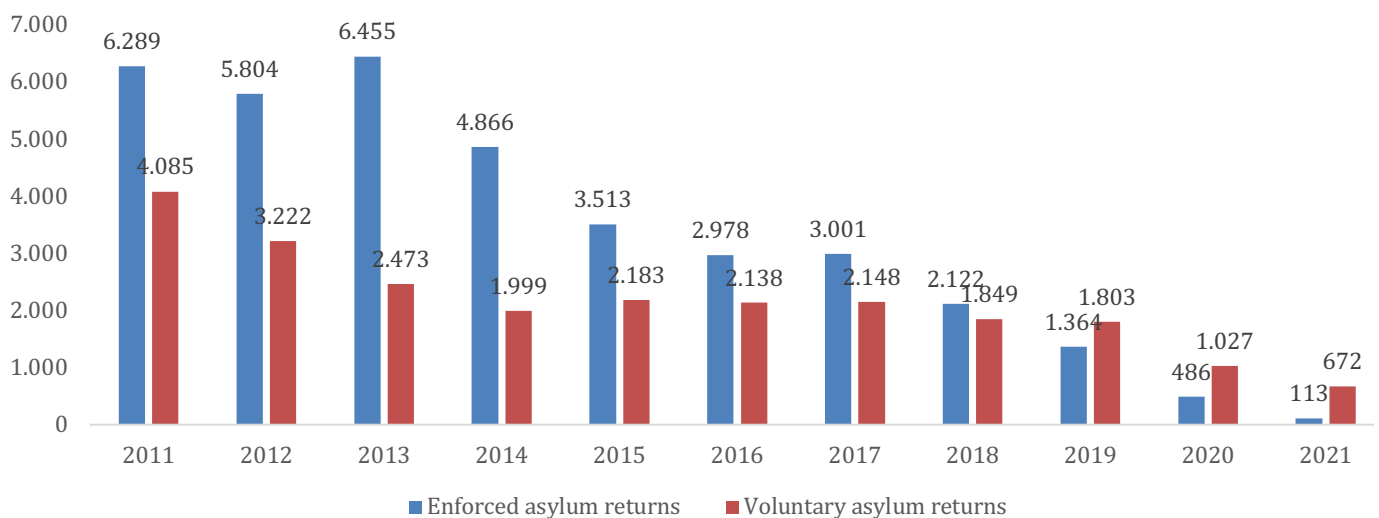
passed through Greece. It is often their inability to make a living in these countries that forces refugees to make the journey to western Europe<sup>19</sup>. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office should encourage local integration and support refugees in countries of transit, such as Lebanon and Turkey, with employment schemes through the UK aid budget. Business investment could also play a role here too, by increasing employment opportunities and thus reducing the need for onward migration.

## 6. Ensure more and safer returns

### The challenge

Many people who have been refused asylum do leave the UK, returning to their home countries or moving on elsewhere. Some of those who leave voluntarily receive help with their travel costs and a small resettlement grant through the Home Office’s voluntary returns programme. Asylum-seekers who have had protection in the UK refused are also subject to enforced removals. Changes to the way that voluntary return is organised, repeated legal challenges and difficulties securing the readmission of people to some countries have meant that returns are at an historically low level (Figure 2), leaving many thousands of people in limbo. This unsatisfactory situation dents public confidence in the asylum system. It is a further example of the gap between tough-sounding headlines and investment in systems to deliver outcomes.

Figure 2: Numbers of enforced and voluntary returns - asylum



Source: Home Office Immigration Statistics – Returns Q3 2022.

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## **Constructive solutions**

We acknowledge the many challenges that the Home Office faces in securing the return of people who are not authorised to remain in the UK. As previously proposed, we believe that the Government should prioritise bilateral readmission agreements with safe countries of return. We have also argued for leave to remain to be given to people whom the Home Office cannot realistically return. Alongside this, we need greater investment in immigration enforcement, including in voluntary returns programmes.

Voluntary return is less expensive to the exchequer and more dignified for the people involved than enforced return. People may return by themselves, but the UK also operates an assisted voluntary return programme, currently run by the Home Office, for asylum-seekers whose cases have been refused and for unauthorised migrants. Those who take part have their travel costs covered and receive help getting travel documents. Some people also get a small resettlement grant towards their living costs on return.

While significant numbers of people opted for voluntary return ten years ago (Figure 2), numbers have fallen off recently. The reason for this is clear: voluntary return is now run by the Home Office rather than by civil society. People considering voluntary return often have little trust in the Home Office.

Previously, voluntary return programmes were run by independent organisations. Refugee Action's Choices service delivered the UK's assisted voluntary return programme from 2011 until its closure at the end of November 2015. Return is a major decision and people need the opportunity to consider and discuss their options with someone they trust; they had this opportunity in the Choices service.

Evidence from past programmes shows voluntary return can be operated at scale<sup>20</sup>. The case for an effective voluntary returns programme should be able to command a broad political consensus, among those with different approaches and views. We would reverse the decision of the Government to take the voluntary returns programme in-house, and reintroduce a civil society-led programme where people can assess their options before committing to return.

## **7. Promote integration through 'welcoming hubs' that increase social contact between newcomers and receiving communities**

### **The challenge**

Many refugees successfully integrate into their new communities but some struggle, particularly in their first years in the UK, which can be a lonely experience. Learning English can prove difficult, particularly if refugees have little social contact with receiving communities. Social contact also helps to break down prejudice and

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misunderstandings between refugees and receiving communities. Despite its importance, England, Northern Ireland and Wales do not have refugee integration strategies and there is a postcode lottery of local provision.

### **Constructive solutions**

Government, combined authorities and councils need to provide local leadership, but there is also a public appetite to play a part in welcoming refugees. Nearly 400 community sponsorship groups have welcomed refugees through the Community Sponsorship Scheme and over 200,000 people registered their interest in being a sponsor for the Homes for Ukraine programme. Some 44% of people support the idea of local 'welcoming projects' involving members of the public and 24% of people say they would be very or somewhat likely to want to become involved in such projects themselves<sup>21</sup>. Scaled up, this is an army of more than 13 million welcomers.

Faith and civil society organisations should harness this goodwill by setting up local welcoming hubs for asylum-seekers and refugees. More volunteers could be involved in activities offering community contact to everyone on a humanitarian visa, as part of a proactive approach to civic contact, integration and citizenship. These hubs would work with local employers, colleges and schools and other services to support the integration of refugees. Activities that welcoming hubs might offer include:

- Befriending projects and social activities.
- Conversation clubs to help people practice their English.
- Access to IT, help in finding work and mentoring.
- Resettlement advice provided by trained volunteers.
- Sporting, environmental and cultural activities to welcome newcomers.
- Volunteering programmes for refugees themselves.
- Community sponsorship schemes.

Over time, the aspiration should be to develop meaningful community contact and support offers to those waiting for an asylum decision and to everybody granted protection in the UK, across all routes. The aim would be that all asylum-seekers, refugees and holders of humanitarian visas would eventually have access to a welcoming hub wherever they are settled in the UK.

These groups could also increase local support for community sponsorship, as well as finding housing and sponsorship for groups such as Afghans and Ukrainians. The local welcoming hubs should work with the 12 UK Strategic Migration Partnerships. Covering Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and the nine English regions, these organisations coordinate services for migrants and encourage cooperation across local authority boundaries. The Strategic Migration Partnerships have recently set up 12 'Welcome Hubs' for



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new arrivals from Hong Kong on the British National (Overseas) visa programme.

Inspired by the British public's response to Homes for Ukraine, the UK government should set ambitious goals for the development and scaling up of community sponsorship and welcoming efforts in the UK over the next five years. We would like to see the Government produce a Green Paper to develop a strategy for Welcoming – drawing on the lessons from Homes for Ukraine and new Afghan pilot schemes. We want to put the power of the community at the heart of refugee integration.

## 8. Help more refugees into work

### **The challenge**

Employment enables refugees to support themselves and to make a contribution to society. The workplace is also where refugees are most likely to meet and mix with people from their new communities. Yet the labour market outcomes of refugees are poor. In 2021, 61% of refugees were employed and 14% were unemployed – compared with 4.6% unemployed among the overall population. In the same year some 25% of people who had come to the UK to seek asylum were economically inactive<sup>22</sup>. Language barriers and a lack of familiarity with job search processes make it more difficult for refugees to move into work.

### **Constructive solutions**

The Home Office has made some important new efforts to recognise the role that work plays in integration. From mid-2023, it is funding a new Refugee Employability Programme where caseworkers will provide refugees with advice on ESOL, training, finding work and on broader integration. This is a welcome initiative, but the programme will exclude people who arrived in the UK before June 2022 and those granted temporary refugee protection or Humanitarian Protection, many of whom are likely to end up staying in the UK.

It is important that employment support meets all refugees' needs and that practical partnerships with employers are strengthened. We propose that every local Jobcentre Plus in dispersal areas should have a designated work coach for refugees, as was the practice in the 1990s.

The quality of employment support for refugees needs to improve in some cases. There have, however, been some successful employment support projects that have helped refugees to find and stay in work, most recently the European Social Fund-National Lottery Community Fund Building Better Opportunities initiative<sup>23</sup>. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which replaces EU funding and comes into operation in 2024-25, must continue to work with refugees and build on previous success.

Language fluency can be a barrier to getting a job. In England and in Northern Ireland adult asylum-seekers have to wait for



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six months before they become eligible for subsidised English language (ESOL) provision. This is not the case in Scotland and Wales, where asylum-seekers can enrol on an ESOL course on arrival, for free. As the majority of asylum-seekers are allowed to remain in this country, policy in England and Northern Ireland would appear to be a false economy, delaying people achieving the language fluency they need to get a job. We propose that fee policy is changed in England and Northern Ireland, bringing it in line with policy in Scotland and Wales to offer free ESOL courses for people seeking asylum. As previously described, civil society, faith organisations and local institutions such as schools and colleges could also organise volunteer-led conversation clubs for people to practice and gain confidence in speaking English. Language provision for refugees and asylum seekers should be one pillar of a comprehensive strategy towards achieving universal English fluency<sup>24</sup>.

Employers should be encouraged to reach out to refugees to fill vacancies. This process could be mediated by local employment support projects, through job fairs, through civil society organisations working with local Chambers of Commerce, and by councils and combined authorities through the process of delivering their employment support strategies.

This paper argues that the Government should aim to process asylum decisions within a six-month target period. Where this target has not been met, we believe that asylum-seekers should be allowed to work in the UK. Currently, most asylum-seekers are barred from working in the UK. They can only apply for permission to work if their asylum application has taken more than 12 months to process and the delay is the fault of the Home Office<sup>25</sup>.

For asylum-seekers waiting for a decision, attending a course or in the process of looking for work, there is a need for more volunteering opportunities. Volunteering boosts wellbeing, increases social contact, and enables people to practice their English and learn new skills. For some refugees, a volunteering role provides them with their first job references. We call on governments across the four nations of the UK to work with the ‘Shaping the Future with Volunteering’ group to organise and upscale a volunteering programme for refugees.

## 9. Sufficient and fairer funding for the asylum system

### **The challenge**

Over £1.3 billion is currently spent on the asylum system each year, with the main items of expenditure being Home Office staff and asylum accommodation and support. Large backlogs of unprocessed cases have meant that this expenditure has grown, diverting resources from immigration enforcement and refugee integration. Asylum accommodation is also unevenly dispersed across the UK, with some local authorities – mostly those in the

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North East, North West, West Midlands and Glasgow – receiving many hundreds of refugees and others none at all. The uneven dispersal of refugees has contributed to poor relationships between the Home Office and councils.

### **Constructive solutions**

Dispersal has long been part of the refugee protection system in the UK. Over the years, Polish, Hungarian, Vietnamese, Bosnian and Kosovan refugees have been dispersed across the UK, as were Syrian and Afghan refugees who have arrived more recently. Asylum-seekers have also been housed in different parts of the country since the mid-1990s. That many refugees remain in the area in which they are initially housed is evidence of successful dispersal. But we believe that the dispersal system needs to be based on a spirit of consent and some clear principles.

These principles include a front-loaded funding system that invests sufficient resources to process asylum cases quickly and fairly, and to support the integration of refugees by making sure they can work and speak English at the earliest opportunity. We have set out, in the sections above, plans to streamline the asylum system. It is also important to invest in the training of asylum caseworkers to enable them to process complex cases quickly but fairly. We believe that a better resourced asylum system represents better value for the taxpayer than the current system, where £5.6 million is being spent every day on emergency accommodation. As already discussed, investing £60 million in clearing the backlog of unprocessed asylum cases would pay for itself within a fortnight by reducing the cost of emergency hotel accommodation.

Some 165 local authorities were housing fewer than 20 asylum-seekers in March 2020<sup>26</sup>. We propose that responsibility for refugees is shared more evenly across the UK. We believe that such a move would help to address the concerns of some councils about housing pressures and the impact of asylum dispersal on the private rental market. However, local authorities, mayoral combined authorities and other public services should be consulted about dispersal and should have advance notice about Home Office plans to house asylum-seekers and refugees in their areas. There should be a local welcoming hub in every community to which asylum-seekers and refugees are dispersed.

## **10. Stronger democratic accountability and public voice in asylum**

### **The challenge**

Public confidence in the immigration system is low. Many people also feel that they have little voice in decisions about asylum and immigration policy. In some cases, extreme groups have exploited this situation to stir up hatred and disorder. This needs to be addressed. While ministers and officials are held to account for policy failures – in parliament, through National Audit Office and the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration –

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accountability mechanisms could be strengthened. One of the key lessons of the Windrush scandal, where both internal and external warning signs were missed and ignored, was that the Home Office needs to both shift its internal culture and have a more transparent and open relationship with stakeholders if processes of internal reform are to secure fragile public trust, including with those directly affected by decisions.

### **Constructive solutions**

There needs to be stronger democratic accountability and a greater public voice in asylum policy. A number of commentators, across political divides, have proposed annual or three-year immigration plans that are put to a parliamentary vote and annual parliamentary reviews<sup>27</sup>. We agree with these proposals and recommend that an annual Immigration Review should be presented to Parliament for approval by vote. This should include a transparent annual review of asylum, refugee and resettlement policy, including progress on reducing backlogs. As previously proposed, Parliament could vote on humanitarian visa and resettlement numbers and priorities every year, agreeing an annual quota for this route to come to the UK.

The public should be involved in this annual review, through a well-organised engagement exercise that reaches people whose voices are not usually heard in consultations. Past experiences show that where communities are consulted about asylum dispersal accommodation and can ask questions, this process often unlocks public consent. Businesses, local and mayoral combined authorities and civil society should also be involved in this annual review. There is a role for Strategic Migration Partnerships<sup>28</sup> in coordinating a local engagement exercise to contribute to the proposed Annual Immigration Review.

Local dialogue with communities also needs to be combined with more scrutiny of extreme groups operating both online and on the ground to stir up trouble. Both Twitter and Facebook are hosting accounts that go well beyond political protest to promote intimidation and calling for the spread of violent disorder. The major platforms need to be pressed to remove those accounts and to have sufficient capacity to monitor and remove cases of incitement.

The police should take action against those who are openly celebrating violence, such as that outside asylum accommodation in Knowsley, and encouraging it to spread into other areas. Action could include issuing local exclusion and online banning orders where relevant, and considering criminal charges where there is incitement to spread violence.

The Home Office should also work with Strategic Migration Partnerships and councils to set an annual number of asylum-seekers, refugees and people admitted through humanitarian visas and resettlement routes to be rehoused in their area. Refugees should not be rehoused without councils and local communities knowing about their dispersal.

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The lived experience of those who come to the UK should be understood to be an integral part of increasing public voice. Those given protection in the UK as refugees should be a valuable source of insight into what works and does not work in the asylum system. The proposal to create a Migrants Commissioner would be a practical way to give a proper focal point for the engagement of those with lived experience of the system. A Migrants Commissioner was a proposal that attracted cross-party support when made by Wendy Williams in the 2020 Windrush Lessons Learned Review<sup>29</sup> and the Government accepted the Williams recommendations in full. Yet the Government has since decided not to implement this commitment. We believe that the Government should review and reverse this decision. A Migrants Commissioner office is an opportunity to increase transparency and accountability on asylum reform, and to make sure that the Home Office maintains its commitment to “see the face behind the case” when making decisions.

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## 5. Public attitudes to asylum reform

Most people want an asylum system that is both controlled and compassionate. They also want refugees who come to the UK to make a contribution to society. This was one of the most important findings of the 2018 National Conversation on Immigration, the largest study of public attitudes on immigration and asylum ever undertaken in the UK<sup>30</sup>. While the National Conversation on Immigration was undertaken before people started crossing the Channel, public support for refugee protection, while not unequivocal, is a long-standing trend.

Research undertaken by Ipsos with British Future (the Ipsos Immigration Attitudes Tracker) finds that 75% of people agree *'People should be able to take refuge in other countries, including in Britain, to escape from war or persecution.'* Some 16% disagree<sup>31</sup>. There was majority support across age groups, political party tribes, leave-remain divides and even among those most sceptical about immigration. And this strong support for the principle of doing our bit to protect refugees is long-standing: the Global Advisor Survey found the same in 2019 (72%), 2020 (78%) and 2021 (73%)<sup>32</sup>.

More people agree that the UK should have an asylum system that is fair, even if that means allowing more asylum seekers to stay and live in the UK than we do now (46%) than prefer an asylum system that deters people from seeking asylum in the UK (32%). Preference for fairness over deterrence has grown over time, from a 5 percentage point lead in November 2020 (42% to 37%) to 14 percentage points in early 2022<sup>33</sup>.

The findings are reflected in the overall shift in the national mood on immigration since the 2016 referendum, with attitudes getting warmer across a range of measures. The latest Ipsos tracker finds that 46% of people feel immigration has a positive impact on Britain, compared to 29% who feel it is negative. Most of us would now prefer *not* to reduce immigration, with a significant gap emerging between those who choose 'don't reduce' (50%) and the 42% who still want to cut immigration numbers<sup>34</sup>.

That positivity is tempered, however, with concern about the small boats crossing the English Channel bringing migrants to Britain. Most people (55%) have sympathy for people making channel crossings by boat, compared to 39% who say they have little or no sympathy<sup>35</sup>. That basic sense of compassion has stayed steady since the question was first asked in the Ipsos Longitudinal Tracker in 2019. But these dangerous and chaotic boat arrivals are no-one's idea of a well-managed asylum and immigration system. The failure to address boat crossings is a key reason for public dissatisfaction with the Government's handling of immigration.

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Public dissatisfaction with the way that the government handles immigration is also nothing new. It has remained steady across each wave of the tracker survey, at 61% when Ipsos first asked the question in 2015 and remaining at 61% today<sup>36</sup>. And of those six in ten who say they are currently dissatisfied, more than half of them (55%) cite ‘not doing enough to stop channel crossings’ as a reason. Some 42% say ‘allowing too many people to claim asylum’.

The Ipsos Attitudes Tracker has also asked people their views on more specific policy proposals regarding immigration and asylum. Here the results are less conclusive, perhaps reflecting both a lack of public awareness and indeed the challenges of finding solutions to complex problems. Temporary protection regimes introduced in the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 only receive 32% of the public’s support, with 30% of adults opposing this change<sup>37</sup>. The latest tracker also found that nearly half of people (45%) would support efforts to reduce boat crossings by allowing asylum claims to be made from outside the UK, for example by applying for a new type of visa or making an asylum claim at British embassies, while 18% were opposed<sup>38</sup>. More people (63%) would support arrangements with specific countries to ensure a safe return of people whose asylum claim has been rejected<sup>39</sup>.

So the Government’s proposals to discriminate between refugees according to how they arrived in the UK generate rather less public support than an approach which would allow asylum claims to be made at UK embassies abroad – while the idea of agreeing safe returns for those whose claims have been rejected has two-thirds support.

The Ipsos tracker shows that the public want control **and** compassion. This is an important conclusion when the policy and media debates about asylum present a forced choice between control or compassion. Securing broad public consent for refugee protection will require a system that is orderly, fair and humane. The public don’t have all the answers as to how to achieve this – but most people are not convinced by the answers currently being offered by the Government.

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# Appendix I - About the asylum system

In the period 2010-2020 the numbers of asylum applications remained fairly stable, with an average of 26,666 asylum applications were lodged over this period.

Some 50,042 asylum applications were lodged in the UK in 2021, a 68% increase over the previous year<sup>40</sup>. With dependants this amounted to 58,532 people claiming asylum.

Some 72,027 asylum applications were lodged in the UK in the first nine months of 2022, of which 16% were from women. The top ten countries of origin for asylum-seekers in the first six months of 2022 were Albania (13,650 applications excluding dependents), Iran (9,652) Afghanistan (6,644), Iraq (6,333), Syria (4,143) Eritrea (3,225), Sudan (2,847) Bangladesh (2,505), India (2,181) and Pakistan (1,737). Further information about asylum-seekers' countries of origin is given in Appendix 2.

The first channel crossings occurred in late 2018, with 299 people arriving in that year. Some 28,526 people arrived in small boats in 2021, rising to 45,756 in 2022, according to government figures<sup>40</sup>. In the first six months of 2022 the top five nationalities of small boat arrivals were Albania (2,165), Afghanistan (2,066), Iran (1,723), Iraq (1,573) and Syria (1,041)<sup>42</sup>. In the same period 10.8% of these arrivals were female. Most but not all small boat arrivals later apply for asylum.

## Applying for asylum – the regular process

An application for asylum can currently be made on arrival in the UK, from a detention centre, at the Migrant Processing Centre in Manston, or by telephoning or visiting the Asylum Intake Unit in Croydon or Belfast. Asylum-seekers are then invited for a screening interview where biometric data is taken, alongside health and family information. Adult applicants are asked basic details about their route of travel and their reasons for claiming asylum.

On the basis of information gathered at the screening interview, the National Asylum Allocation Unit (NAAU) of the Home Office decides which route the application will follow. Until recently, most asylum-seekers went into the regular route and were invited for an 'asylum substantive interview,' where they explain the reasons for their asylum application. These take place in the Home Office's Croydon, Glasgow, Belfast, Liverpool, Leeds, Solihull and Cardiff offices. In many cases people can wait many months or even years to receive their substantive interview. The Home Office is now considering a paper-based process for the most straightforward asylum cases from countries where more than 90% of cases are granted asylum.



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Asylum-seekers are also assessed in the screening interview to see if they require support and accommodation. If they have nowhere to live, they will be placed in emergency accommodation, also known as Section 98 or initial accommodation. This is usually a hotel or hostel where people are provided with meals and toiletries. At the end of December 2021, 24,175 asylum-seekers were being housed in Section 98 accommodation<sup>43</sup>.

After a period of time in initial accommodation, asylum-seekers are then taken to ‘Section 95’ or dispersal accommodation, usually a shared flat or house in different parts of the country. This provision is delivered by three private providers: Serco, Mears Group and Clearsprings Ready Homes. The housing is furnished, and utility bills are paid. Asylum-seekers receive an allowance – currently £40.85 per week – to cover items such as food and clothing.

At the end of December 2021, 54,699 asylum-seekers were housed in Section 95 accommodation. The distribution of this accommodation is highly uneven across the UK. Some local authorities, often in the North East, North West and West Midlands, have large populations of asylum-seekers per head of population, while other local authorities house few or no asylum-seekers. For example, 99.1% of asylum-seekers who receive housing in Wales live in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea or Wrexham<sup>44</sup>

## Applying for asylum – other routes

Not all asylum-seekers go through the regular route:

- Unaccompanied children must be interviewed by trained Home Office staff, with decisions made by specialist caseworkers. In 2021 there were 10,814 applications from asylum-seekers under 18 years, 18.4% of total applications<sup>45</sup>, although the proportions of under 18s among all asylum-seekers has decreased a little in recent years.
- Applicants can be channelled into the Non-Suspensive Appeals process where applications are certified as clearly unfounded by the Home Office and where the applicant has no in-country right of appeal. Some 753 applicants were identified as eligible for the Non-Suspensive Appeals Process in 2021, mostly from Albania and India.
- There is also a Detained Fast Track process where people whose application was deemed unfounded can be detained and removed quickly from the UK. While this process remains in law it has not been used since 2015.
- Asylum applications can also be deemed ‘inadmissible’. New inadmissibility procedures have been in place since the UK left the EU in January 2021. The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 further codified inadmissibility. People who are now deemed inadmissible include: (i) Those who did not make an immediate application on arrival in the UK and cannot



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give a reason for the delay; (ii) People who have passed through a safe third country and could have claimed there; (iii) People who cannot show a good cause for illegal entry. Between January 2021 and June 2022 some 17,222 asylum cases had been identified as inadmissible, with 7,971 cases later entering the regular asylum determination system and 21 cases removed from the UK<sup>46</sup>. The new inadmissibility process is slowing down asylum decision-making as it adds an extra layer of bureaucracy. People who are deemed inadmissible may be granted temporary refugee protection lasting 2.5 years, rather than full refugee protection. But the inadmissibility process leaves thousands of people in limbo every year: neither given asylum or leave to remain in the UK, nor removed.

It is a criminal offence to use false documentation to enter the UK. In future it will be a criminal offence to arrive in the UK without valid entry clearance. Asylum legislation, however, recognises that people fleeing for their lives may be forced to enter in an irregular manner. Article 31 of the UN Refugee Convention – incorporated into UK law – protects those with refugee status from prosecution. Any Government proposal to refuse to consider applications from people who arrive in small boats risks contravening this protection in UK law and the UN Refugee Convention.

## Decision-making

On the basis of evidence presented at interview and in writing, the Home Office will make a decision on an asylum application. Of the 14,532 initial decisions made in 2021:

- 67% were grants of refugee status for people meeting the criteria of the UN Refugee Convention. This group receive a UN Refugee Travel Document.
- 4% were grants of Humanitarian Protection for people's whose lives are endangered, perhaps because they have fled a war zone, but who do not meet the criteria of the UN Refugee Convention
- 1% were discretionary, for example for an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child or other forms of leave in the UK.
- 28% of decisions were refusals.
- Additionally, 5,177 cases were withdrawn in 2021, or entered the non-suspensive appeals process<sup>47</sup>.

Decisions apply to principal applicants and dependents listed on the case. A grant of full refugee status or humanitarian protection allows people to work in the UK, receive benefits, apply for family reunion and receive most other forms of social support that UK citizens receive.

Before 2022 people who were granted refugee status and Humanitarian Protection were granted five years' leave to remain

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in the UK, after which they could apply for settlement (permanent residency) and a route to citizenship. People granted full refugee status are still granted five years leave to remain. But Humanitarian Protection is now only being granted for 2.5 years at a time. A person has to have received 10 years' Humanitarian Protection (4 x 2.5 years) before applying for settlement, as well as having restricted rights to family reunion and integration support during this period. The new Refugee Employability programme is only being offered to people who have arrived in the UK through resettlement programmes, refugee family reunion or those granted refugee permission to stay for five years. Some unauthorised entrants – i.e. those arriving on small boats – are now receiving 'temporary refugee permission' lasting 2.5 years at a time, with the same restrictions on family reunion, settlement and integration support.

Refugee recognition rates have recently increased in the UK, with 72% granted refugee status, humanitarian protection or leave to remain in 2021, compared with 46% in 2020 and 52% in 2019. This is likely due to an informal triaging, with stronger cases given quicker decisions and weaker cases left in the backlog.

## Asylum appeals

People whose initial application is refused may appeal against this decision. In the first instance, an appeal is heard by a First Tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber). An appeal must be lodged within 14 days of an asylum refusal, although there can be a delay of many months before it is heard.

Since 2010 there has been a two-tier tribunal service, which falls under the oversight of the Ministry of Justice. A further appeal on a point of law may be made to the Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum) with permission of the First Tier Tribunal or, if refused, of the Upper Tribunal. It is also possible to appeal against an Upper Tribunal decision – on a point of law – to the Court of Appeal or Supreme Court. Asylum-seekers can also make a 'fresh claim', providing they have new evidence after the asylum appeal process has been exhausted.

In 2021 some 4,081 appeals were lodged, of which 42% were upheld in that appellants were granted leave to remain in the UK. Further information on appeals is given in Appendix 2.

## Removal and voluntary departures

People who have been refused asylum or whose appeals have been exhausted are obliged to leave the UK or be removed. In 2021 there were 113 enforced returns, 672 voluntary returns and 31 removals of asylum-seekers who have been detained at the port of entry. The Home Office operates a voluntary departure programme, which covers travel costs and sometimes pays a small resettlement grant.

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Families with children can continue to receive Section 95 support until they leave the UK. In 2021 some 2,065 refused asylum-seekers received food and accommodation under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, usually because they were pregnant or could not be removed.

## Resettlement programmes

The UK also admits refugees to the UK through humanitarian resettlement schemes. In many of these schemes the UK Government works with agencies such as UNHCR to screen refugees, with status granted outside the UK. These schemes currently include the UK Resettlement Scheme, the UN Mandate Scheme and Community Sponsorship. The new UK Resettlement Scheme is the largest of these three schemes and brought 1,391 refugees to the UK in the first nine months of 2022, mostly Syrians (56% of resettled people), Sudanese (15%) and Iraqis (11%). In the last 18 months Afghan refugees have also been resettled in the UK through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy. The Homes for Ukraine scheme is a visa route for Ukrainians to come to the UK if they have a sponsor.

## Rules and guidance

Immigration Rules govern the day-to-day running of the asylum system. They are laid before Parliament by the Home Secretary, and parliamentarians only have the powers to accept or reject them. In reality there is little scrutiny of these statutory instruments. The Home Office also issues statutory guidance on asylum decision-making and support, which covers areas such as how to conduct interviews, and the criteria by which someone can be judged to face a “well-founded fear of persecution.” To help decision-making the Home Office has produced detailed country guidance setting out conditions in specific countries.

# Appendix II - Countries of origin and outcomes of asylum applications and appeals 2021

| Country     | Asylum applications 2021 | Decisions | Grant of refugee status at initial decision | Grant of HP at initial decision | Other leave to remain at initial decision | Refusal | Withdrawn cases | Appeals lodged to 1 <sup>st</sup> Tier Tribunal | % of appeals upheld at 1 <sup>st</sup> Tier Tribunal |
|-------------|--------------------------|-----------|---|---------------------------------|---|---------|-----------------|---|--|
| Iran        | 9,849                    | 2,763     | 89%   | <1%                             | <1%                                       | 10%     | 76              | 323   | 58%  |
| Iraq        | 6,163                    | 1,658     | 33%   | 10%                             | <1%                                       | 49%     | 94              | 782   | 44%  |
| Albania     | 4,853                    | 780       | 53%   | <1%                             | 3%  | 43%     | 616             | 170   | 52%  |
| Eritrea     | 4,675                    | 1,548     | 96%   | <1%                             | <1%                                       | 3%      | 10              | 32  | 66%  |
| Syria       | 3,389                    | 2,455     | 99%   | 0%                              | 0%  | <1%     | 26              | 10  | 65%  |
| Afghanistan | 2,727                    | 1,016     | 77%   | 3%                              | 2%  | 19%     | 207             | 400   | 29%  |
| Sudan       | 2,324                    | 935       | 94%   | <1%                             | 0%  | 5%      | 18              | 41  | 50%  |
| Vietnam     | 1,831                    | 766       | 69%   | <1%                             | 1%  | 30%     | 180             | 198   | 49%  |
| Pakistan    | 1,071                    | 860       | 52%   | <1%                             | 5%  | 43%     | 196             | 283   | 25%  |
| India       | 1,040                    | 293       | 1%  | 0%                              | 1%  | 98%     | 461             | 97  | 24%  |
| Bangladesh  | 987                      | 414       | 27%   | 0%                              | 4%  | 69%     | 64              | 279   | 26%  |
| Ethiopia    | 708                      | 169       | 45%   | 2%                              | <1%                                       | 54%     | 4               | 120   | 56%  |
| Nigeria     | 690                      | 377       | 37%   | 0%                              | 12%                                       | 51%     | 89              | 134   | 39%  |
| Somalia     | 670                      | 241       | 83%   | <1%                             | <1%                                       | 16%     | 7               | 42  | 63%  |
| El Salvador | 655                      | 413       | 12%   | 39%                             | <1%                                       | 49%     | 48              | 122   | 63%  |
| Kuwait      | 564                      | 68        | 82%   | 0%                              | <1%                                       | 16%     | 32              | 9   | 16%  |
| Turkey      | 541                      | 576       | 81%   | 0%                              | <1%                                       | 19%     | 28              | 91  | 55%  |
| Egypt       | 536                      | 182       | 51%   | 1%                              | <1%                                       | 47%     | 16              | 70  | 29%  |
| China       | 493                      | 152       | 21%   | 0%                              | 9%  | 70%     | 114             | 53  | 20%  |
| Georgia     | 469                      | 28        | 14%   | 0%                              | 4%  | 82%     | 43              | 19  | 38%  |
| Yemen       | 415                      | 305       | 40%   | 58%                             | 0%  | 2%      | 6               | 47  | 36%  |
| Libya       | 309                      | 387       | 19%   | 81%                             | 0%  | <1%     | 25              | 8   | 33%  |

Source: Home Office Immigration Statistics – Asylum and Resettlement Statistics Q2 2022 and Appeals Lodged and Determined Statistics Q2 2022.

Applications from other countries = 5,724. Applications from stateless people = 576.

HP = Humanitarian Protection.

Other leave = includes discretionary leave to remain or unaccompanied asylum-seeking child leave.

Decisions, grants and refusals excludes withdrawals.

Withdrawn cases include people who voluntary withdraw their cases and those in Non-Substantive Appeals.

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# Notes and references

1. Home Office Migration Transparency data on Immigration and Protection, Q3 2022 cites 101,426 people waiting for an initial decision and also provides statistics on cases processed within six months <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration>
2. Oral evidence to House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 26 October 2022. Figure excludes costs of hotels for Afghan refugees evacuated to the UK.
3. Home Office Immigration Statistics -Returns Q2 2022.
4. Clandestine entrants and people who arrive without the necessary authorisation.
5. Home Office Immigration Statistics - Asylum and Resettlement Statistics, Q2 2022
6. Humanitarian visas would work alongside community sponsorship and the UK's smaller refugee resettlement programmes, such as the new UK Resettlement Plan.
7. Gower, M. and Butchard, P. (2022) *The UK-Rwanda Economic Development Partnership*, London: House of Commons Library.
8. Wave 14 (19 July - 3 August 2022) of the Ipsos Immigration Attitudes Tracker which has surveyed 3,000 GB adults since 2015.
9. Ibid.
10. Prime Minister's statement on illegal migration: House of Commons, 13 December 2022.
11. Non-suspensive Appeals Cases are asylum applications that have been certified as clearly unfounded by the Home Office and where the applicant has no in-country rights of appeal. This process currently applies to less than 5% of cases, mostly from Albania and India.
12. Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) (2021), *An inspection of asylum casework (August 2020 – May 2021)*, London: ICIBI.
13. Ibid.
14. Institute for Government (2022) *Asylum backlog briefing*.
15. The calculation was based on the starting salary for an asylum caseworker as £24,991, with added NI, pension, management and office costs.
16. This assumes that a caseworker would be able to process 90-100 cases over six months, thus requiring 1,000 caseworkers to process a backlog of 100,000 people. With direct and indirect costs for 1,000 staff, a budget of £40 million would be needed to clear the backlog.
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  21. Representative survey of 3,004 GB adults carried out between 19 July and 3 August 2022 as part of the Ipsos Longitudinal Study.
  22. Labour Force Survey data 2021. See also Kone, Z., Ruiz, I. and Vargas-Silva, C. (2019) *Refugees and the UK Labour Market*, Oxford: University of Oxford Centre for Migration Policy and Society.
  23. <https://buildingbetteropportunities.org.uk/>
  24. Rutter, J. and Ballinger, S. (2018) *Speaking up: The case for universal fluency in English*, London: British Future.
  25. They can only apply for permission to work if their asylum application has taken more than 12 months to process and the delay is the fault of the Home Office. If this is granted, asylum-seekers can only take jobs on the UKVI shortage occupation list.
  26. Figure includes district councils. Home Office Immigration Statistics - Asylum and Protection - Asylum seekers in receipt of support by Local Authority Q1 2022.
  27. See National Conversation on Immigration recommendations and proposal in Tanner, W. (2019) *Beyond the net migration target How to restore confidence in our immigration system after decades of broken promises*, London: UKOnward.
  28. Strategic Migration Partnerships are council-led partnerships funded by, but independent of, the Home Office, whose role is to coordinate and support delivery of national programmes in asylum and refugee schemes as well as agreed regional and devolved migration priorities. There are 12 SMP partnerships across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.
  29. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/874022/6.5577\\_HO\\_Windrush\\_Lessons\\_Learned\\_Review\\_WEB\\_v2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874022/6.5577_HO_Windrush_Lessons_Learned_Review_WEB_v2.pdf)
  30. Rutter, J. and Carter, R. (2018) *The National Conversation on Immigration Final Report*, London: British Future and Hope not hate.
  31. Representative survey of 3,206 GB adults carried out between 28 January and 10 February 2022 as part of the Ipsos Longitudinal Study.
  32. [https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2021-06/G%40\\_World\\_Refugee\\_Day\\_Deck\\_2021.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2021-06/G%40_World_Refugee_Day_Deck_2021.pdf)
  33. Ipsos Immigration Attitudes Tracker, fieldwork 28 January- 10 February 2022, published March 2022.
  34. Ipsos Immigration Attitudes Tracker, fieldwork 19 July-3 August 2022, published September 2022.

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35. Ibid.
  36. Ibid.
  37. Ipsos Immigration Attitudes Tracker, fieldwork 28 January- 10 February 2022, published March 2022.
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  43. Home Office Immigration Statistics – Asylum and Resettlement Statistics Q2 2022.
  44. Home Office Immigration Statistics - Asylum and Protection - Asylum seekers in receipt of support by Local Authority Q1 2022.
  45. Home Office Immigration Statistics – Asylum and Resettlement Statistics Q2 2022.
  46. Ibid.
  47. Home Office Immigration Statistics – Outcomes of Initial Decisions and Asylum Resettlement Statistics Q2 2022.

# British Future...

*British Future is an independent, non-partisan thinktank and registered charity engaging people's hopes and fears about integration and migration, identity and race, so that we share a confident and welcoming Britain, inclusive and fair to all.*

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