

The UK's migration proposals

I reproduce below a letter sent by the Home Secretary to all MPs and peers, as I thought it best you read the government's statement and respond to their proposals:

New Plan for Immigration

We have today published the New Plan for Immigration – our landmark programme to deliver the first comprehensive overhaul of the asylum system in decades.

UK asylum claims increased by 21% to almost 36,000 in 2019 – the highest number since the 2015/16 European 'migration crisis'. Small boat arrivals to the UK reached record levels with 8,500 illegal arrivals last year.

At the same time, our ability to remove individuals with no right to remain in the UK is being undermined by repeated legal claims designed to impede removal action, often strung out over a period of many years. The vast majority of last-minute claims designed to prevent removal are subsequently found by the courts to have no merit. Shockingly, there are around 45,000 failed asylum seekers who have not left the UK and over 10,000 Foreign National Offenders – and yet there were just 7,000 enforced returns in 2019.

All of this impacts our ability to help those in genuine need by taking up scarce resources and wasting valuable judicial capacity.

We have already reformed our legal immigration system by ending free movement and introducing a new points-based immigration system. This plan is the next step in taking back control of our borders by tackling illegal immigration.

Our New Plan for Immigration has three main objectives:

1. To increase the fairness and efficiency of our system so that we can better protect and support those in genuine need of asylum;
2. To deter and prevent illegal entry into the UK, thereby breaking the business model of the criminal trafficking networks and protecting the lives of those that they endanger; and
3. To remove more easily from the UK those with no right to be here.

At the heart of this plan is the principle of fairness. Access to the UK's asylum system should be based on need, not on the ability to pay people smugglers.

For the first time, how someone enters the UK will impact on how their claim progresses and on their status in the UK if that claim is successful. As we clamp down on illegal immigration and abuse of the system, we will also streamline the asylum framework to prevent repeat claims which frustrate removal, including of dangerous Foreign National Offenders.

We will increase prison sentences for those illegally entering the UK, introduce life sentences for facilitation of illegal entry, give Border Force

additional powers, strengthen age assessments and introduce a more robust statutory definition of “well-founded fear of persecution” for asylum purposes.

At the same time, we will enhance our reputation as Global Britain, strengthening our safe and legal routes for refugees and fixing historic anomalies in British Nationality law.

The proposals are fully compliant with our international obligations, including the European Convention on Human Rights, the Refugee Convention and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

These reforms are explained in more detail in the policy statement, which we have published today. To inform the proposals set out and ensure we can deliver effective change across the system, we have also launched a public consultation and a wide-reaching engagement process. We will use this opportunity to listen to a wide range of views from stakeholders and sectors as well as members of the public, followed by legislation at the earliest opportunity.

You can find the policy statement and consultation portal at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-plan-for-immigration>.

I look forward to hearing your views on our New Plan for Immigration, and hope that you will strongly encourage your constituents to take part in the public consultation so that the voice of the public is heard.