Briefing

boaztrust

MP Policy Briefing: The Immigration and Asylum Bill

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Introduction: The Immigration and Asylum Bill (IAB), which is currently making its way through parliament, contains some of the biggest changes to refugee protection since the UK signed the Refugee Convention in 1951 and represents a significant erosion of refugee rights. If legislated it will lead to greater financial and emotional hardship, impede people's ability to integrate into society, and push more people into poverty and destitution. This briefing provides an overview of the main elements of the bill that are of concern and its likely impact.

Context: The cost-of-living crisis is impacting millions of people in the UK[1]. Far right ideology is becoming more commonplace and threats against people seeking asylum, and the individuals and organisations supporting them, are growing by the day. While geopolitical events and chronic underfunding in public services are at the heart of domestic and international strain[2], people seeking asylum are now routinely scapegoated.

In 2025, just over 100,000 people applied for asylum in the UK[3] (of the 117.8 million people forcibly displaced worldwide[4]). A mere 0.08% of the globally displaced population sought asylum in the UK. Most people forcibly displaced from their homes are either internally displaced or seek sanctuary in a neighbouring country[5]. Of those who do seek asylum in Europe, the UK receives proportionally far fewer individuals than other EU nations, sitting below the wider European average[6].

What the bill proposes: The bill contains several key causes of concern regarding core protection, the possible use of lay - rather than trained - adjudicators, the repayment of £10,000 of asylum support costs and family reunion[7].

Core protection: The bill proposes to combine refugee status and humanitarian protection into a single core protection model. As of March this year, refugees are granted 30 months temporary leave (instead of 5 years) and under this core protection model, their status could be repeatedly reassessed over a 20-year route to settlement. Moving off core protection requires a person to obtain employment or commence study at an appropriate level and to pay a fee.

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[1] Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain, ONS, March 2026, https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/publicopinionsandsocialtrendsgreatbritain/march2026.
[2] Why does the UK underinvest in public service infrastructure – and how can the problem be fixed? Institute for Government, 2023, https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/event/uk-underinvest-public-service-infrastructure.
[3] Asylum Statistics, House of Commons Library, UK Parliament, 2026, https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn01403/.
[4] Figures at a glance, UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, 2026, https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/figures-glance.
[5] The truth about asylum, Refugee Council, https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/stay-informed/explainers/the-truth-about-asylum/.
[6] How many people claim asylum in the UK, Home Office, 2026, https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-march-2026/how-many-people-claim-asylum-in-the-uk.
[7] What's in the Immigration and Asylum Bill 2026?, Free Movement, 2026, https://freemovement.org.uk/whats-in-the-immigration-and-asylum-bill-2026/.

Inevitably, many people will find it challenging to move out of core protection and offering temporary status that is subject to repeated review will lead to greater levels of destitution owing to potential housing insecurity, insecure work, and debt from repeated legal and application fees. We know that successive governments have been unable to significantly clear the backlog of asylum claims and shortening leave to remain for people to 2.5 years, as well as an accelerated appeals process, will lead to greater risk of failure points and more destitution among people seeking asylum.

The use of lay adjudicators: The bill proposes to introduce a new Independent Immigration Appeals Authority. There is an existing lack of clarity surrounding the use of lay, rather than legally trained, adjudicators and scenarios where appeals may be heard without an oral hearing. The fundamental question of fairness arises. Immigration law is complex. Arguably lay adjudicators would lack the expertise needed to properly determine an individual's case and this would undoubtedly lead to more people becoming wrongly refused. Furthermore, the bill specifically intends to restrict appeals to a point of rule of law[8], rather than factual re-evaluation of an individual's case; thus, undermining access to justice.

Proposed repayment to the Home Office of £10,000[9]: The UNHCR suggests that the repayment of £10,000 for people with refugee status who have received asylum support would breach Article 29 of the Refugee Convention and undermine integration by delaying settlement and family reunion. Imposing a mandatory repayment will cause financial hardship for newly granted refugees and will deter some individuals seeking asylum from accessing asylum support, making more people vulnerable to homelessness.

Refugee family reunion: The bill seeks to constrain how Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to family and private life) is applied in immigration cases[10]. Under core protection, individuals will not be allowed to reunite with family members unless they transition to other routes. Being separated from loved ones for a protracted period undoubtedly impacts on people's wellbeing and will only encourage more people to take dangerous journeys to the UK.

"I want to ask the government about the rights of refugees because it is not fair. We need freedom and safety, and now we are being told that everything is changing and that we will have to wait many years for leave to remain."

(Anonymously shared by someone who attended the mass lobby of parliament with us earlier this year)

We call on parliamentarians to:

- **Oppose temporary refugee status,** which will create cycles of uncertainty for vulnerable people and harm integration;
- **Reject the refugee tax;** a policy that would create further financial hardship for newly granted refugees;
- **Ensure any new adjudication process is led and delivered by legally trained individuals.** Immigration law is complex and individuals' cases must be determined by people legally trained to understand immigration law;
- **Reopen refugee family reunion.** The closure of this route is dividing families and disproportionately penalises women and children.

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[8] The Immigration and Asylum Bill 2026: What we know so far, Right to Remain - legal updates, 2026, https://righttoremain.org.uk/the-immigration-and-asylum-bill-2026-what-we-know-so-far/.
[9] Asylum seekers will pay towards costs of accommodation, Gov UK, 2026, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asylum-seekers-will-pay-towards-costs-of-accommodation.
[10] Immigration and Asylum Bill - what's changing, The Law Society, 2026, https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/immigration/immigration-and-asylum-bill.