

Asylum Reforms



Together with Migrant Children

An explainer and statement

November 2025

Introduction

This briefing provides information and our position on proposed major changes to the asylum system in the UK. The changes are set out in the government white paper '[Restoring Order and Control: A statement on the government's asylum and returns policy](#)' (November 2025). These are major proposed changes to the asylum system in the UK.

There is still much that we don't know about the proposals. This includes the timeframe, what most arrangements might look like, and the detail around how the changes will be executed.

This briefing is not intended to be a technical nor exhaustive document, and we will signpost to other resources throughout for those who want to know more. A good starting point for a more technical analysis is the explained produced by the [Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit](#).

Our overall view

These reforms and policy changes focus on and target those seeking protection and impact on their fundamental rights. In the context of children and families, some of the proposed measures introduce significant risk to children, both to their wellbeing and rights. The reforms if enacted would mean more children unable to settle for longer and a tightening of access to the welfare safety net.

Nothing currently in the proposed reforms suggests children will be exempt from measures such as the increase in settlement route and 2.5 year limited leave. Though the proposals do explicitly state they will given further consideration to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), families and other vulnerable groups.

The United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognises the special status and vulnerability of children fleeing persecution or those that have

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suffered abuse and neglect and their need for care and support that prioritises their wellbeing. The convention also supports the principle that all children should be able to grow up in circumstances that promotes their development, a cornerstone also of our domestic children's legislation. These foundational ideas of childhood and a child's right to safety and belonging cannot be achieved in a system that defines and divides children by their immigration status. The proposals risk creating a two-tier childhood based on immigration status.

More broadly, these proposals and the language used around them continue to fuel a divisive narrative around those seeking protection, making meaningful social integration into our society and our communities increasingly difficult.

A summary of proposed reforms

Change to a more temporary status for refugees and a longer route to settlement.

The government plan to increase the route to settlement (how long before someone can settle) to **20 years** from 5 years. This would be granted for 2.5 years at a time. The focus would be on re-assessing at each point whether someone still needs protection.

A route would be introduced for work and study which would shorten the time to settle based on 'earning it'. We don't know what this looks like yet, but it is likely linked to wider proposals about 'earned settlement'.

Changes to family reunion

The proposals indicate that those on protection routes will not automatically qualify for family reunion, tying family reunion eligibility to the new work and study route.

The proposals also restrict who counts as family to parents and children.

Reduced access to public funds

The proposals discuss prioritising public funds for those 'contributing' to the UK economy. They suggest that this could include additional criteria to be met to access

public funds, and on-going criteria to maintain access to them. There is no detail around how this will be implemented.

Changes to appeals, removals and human rights protections

The proposals aim to create a new body to hear asylum appeals, heard by ‘trained adjudicators’. They will prioritise or accelerate cases they consider to be low merit or abusive and aim for a single appeal. This will include reform to limit and restrict further submissions.

Specifically, if someone does not leave the UK following an unsuccessful appeal, the reforms mention excluding accrued rights under private or family life routes after that date and state that except in the most exceptional cases, the focus will be on removal.

Further changes are proposed to how claims under Article 8 (private/family life) and Article 3 (inhumane and degrading treatment) are dealt with, alongside changes to modern slavery legislation. These changes would make human rights claims more restrictive.

Specifically in relation to families, the proposals suggest a focus on the removal of families following an unsuccessful claim through both voluntary and enforced returns. This is currently not prioritised in current policy.

This area is covered in much more technical detail in the [GMAIU explainer](#) to the proposed reforms.

Asylum support changes

Current asylum support law places a duty on the state to provide support to asylum seekers who are destitute. A key change proposed is to make this a power - from ‘they must’ to ‘they can’.

Where people have ‘assets’, the proposed changes would give the Home Office the ability to make people

contribute towards the support that they are receiving. How this would work in practice has not been defined.

The proposals also state they will remove asylum support for those who have a right to work and make it easier to withdraw support from people who break the law, fail to follow support conditions, fail to follow removal directions, or work illegally.

There is a specific proposal to remove support from families. Currently, support cannot be removed from families unless they have been issued with removal directions, or until a child turns 18. The proposal states a consultation will be held on the ability to remove support from families who don't have an obstacle to return.

New safe routes

These routes will likely interact with the 'earned settlement' proposals.

These largely turn on a new community sponsorship model, like schemes such as 'Homes for Ukraine'. This would be a capped route. People would need to be registered with organisations such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). No further detail has been provided on who would qualify for these routes.

Routes are also proposed for displaced students and skilled refugees, which will again be capped.