



# MIGRATION CAMPAIGN MESSAGING 2024

**GPEW ASYLUM & MIGRATION POLICY WORKING GROUP**

**[MIGRATION.GREENPARTY.ORG.UK](https://migration.greenparty.org.uk)**

## CONTENTS

Green Party Policy - Key Principles.....	4
Key Policies - Summary.....	5
General Updates and Talking Points.....	6
Chaos at the Home Office.....	6
Rising homelessness amongst refugees.....	6
The Rwanda Plan.....	6
Breaking up families #1 - Rises in minimum salary requirements.....	7
Breaking up families #2 - Ban on family members from care workers and master’s students.....	7
Breaking up families #3 - Ukraine family visa scheme abruptly closed.....	8
Citizenship - Shamima Begum.....	8
Windrush Update.....	8
Exploiting migrants for cash - increasing visa and immigration health surcharge (IHS) fees.....	9
People Seeking Asylum and Refugees.....	10
Myth 1: Does the UK take more asylum-seekers than its fair share? No, in fact the opposite.....	10
Myth 2: The asylum backlog is not caused by an unprecedented number of arrivals.....	10
Myth 3: Why don’t they stay in France.....	11
Myth 4: Small boat arrivals are encouraged by government policy not smuggling gangs.....	12
Myth 5: Small boats are not full of criminals.....	12
Myth 6: Bogus asylum seekers playing the system.....	13
Myth 5: Seeking asylum is not illegal; however, preventing it is.....	13
Myth 6: They are, for the most part, not economic migrants.....	14
People Seeking Asylum and Refugees.....	15

Housing.....	16
Myth 1: We are not too full.....	16
Myth 2: Migrants are not being given all the social housing.....	16
Myth 3: Migrants and citizens of colour are not given preferential treatment.....	17
Housing - Messaging.....	18
Work.....	20
Myth 1: Migrants are not stealing our jobs.....	20
Myth 2: Immigration does not have an impact on wages.....	20
Myth 3: It is not easy for employers to hire the labour they need.....	20
Myth 4: Migrants have a negative effect on employment rights.....	21
Work.....	22
Benefits, NRPF and the NHS.....	23
Myth 1: Migrants do not come to the UK to claim benefits.....	23
Myth 2: Migrants do not come to the UK just so they can use the NHS.....	24
Benefits, NRPF and the NHS - Messaging.....	25
Legislation Summary.....	26
Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill.....	26
Illegal Immigration Bill.....	26
Nationality and Borders Bill 2022.....	26
What you can do now.....	28
Encourage Migrants to Vote.....	28

## GREEN PARTY POLICY - KEY PRINCIPLES

How we treat people who have chosen the UK as their home is an important signal of our values and national character, which we believe values solidarity both at home and abroad. **We welcome** the economic and societal contributions that immigrants and refugees make to British society. We understand that **migration is natural and people have always and will always move**.

The Green Party seeks to establish a system of **managed migration that promotes social cohesion** and recognises that all migrants are treated as **potential citizens** and therefore supports and encourages them to put down roots in their new home.

We would immediately set out to **abolish the Hostile Environment policies** which have been found to be entirely ineffective and often unlawful, and which have caused immense suffering for those who have been caught up in it, including the Windrush generation.

**No one becomes a refugee lightly**. People leave their homes, friends and often their family because they are forced to do so through circumstances that make remaining at home intolerable.

**The Green Party acknowledges the right to claim asylum**, in any country, as set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which the UK helped write and was a proud signatory. We will establish a system of asylum and humanitarian protection which **treats the applicant fairly, humanely and without discrimination**.

**We will work with other countries to establish safe routes** by which those fleeing persecution, war, or climate disaster may arrive in the country of their choice to make their case without having to risk their lives.

The Green Party accepts we all have a **collective responsibility for the climate emergency** and that the UK has a duty to support people forced to move due to the changes in their home environment, whether internally or from abroad.

All Green Party migration policies can be found on our website <https://migration.greenparty.org.uk/policies/>

## KEY POLICIES - SUMMARY

The Green Party wants to see a world without borders, until this happens **we will implement a fair and humane system of managed immigration** where people can move if they wish to do so.

When the Greens are in government:

- **We will accept our responsibility for the climate emergency** and support the people forced to move because of it.
- **We will acknowledge the right to claim asylum**, in any country, as set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We will work towards a world in which no one has to flee their home.
- **We will dismantle the dysfunctional Home Office**, creating a separate Department of the Interior and a Department of Migration, so criminal enforcement no longer sits alongside immigration, and people are not put in prison because of their immigration status.
- **We will completely reform the application process** that adversely affects women, children, caregivers, and people of colour. We will resource it properly and decide all asylum applications quickly, putting a stop to high fees and ensure nobody has to wait for more than five years for settlement.
- **We will treat all migrants as potential citizens**, by permitting people seeking asylum to work and by giving all residents the right to vote because everyone deserves to have a say and to be heard.
- **We will help families to be together**, including grandparents and children, we will abolish the No Recourse to Public Funds condition, and the ten year route to settlement that adversely affects women, children, caregivers, and people of colour.



## GENERAL UPDATES AND TALKING POINTS

### Chaos at the Home Office

Too much politics and gross incompetence have left us with a Home Office incapable of performing basic immigration functions effectively. There are huge backlogs in processing all applications, not just asylum ones. Practitioners are reporting huge problems caused by poor decision making, the losing of documents, and other random chaotic correspondence. Multiple reports have found the department a toxic workplace and poorly managed<sup>1</sup>. The Green Party will abolish it altogether and create a new dedicated Department of Migration.

### Rising homelessness amongst refugees

In August 2023<sup>2</sup>, the Home Office reduced the notice period a successful asylum seeker is given to leave their asylum accommodation once they have been granted refugee status, from 28 days to just 7 days. After waiting months and sometimes years for a decision, applicants are given no notice and no time before they are evicted from their support accommodation.

Unsurprisingly, this led to a 203.8% increase<sup>3</sup> in households being made homeless in July-Sept 2023, with higher numbers expected in the last quarter. The Green Party proposes this transition period should be up to six months to allow people to get themselves on their feet.

### The Rwanda Plan

The government wants to relocate asylum seekers in the UK to Rwanda so their applications are processed there, and if successful they are granted asylum in Rwanda only (not the UK). The Supreme Court unanimously ruled that this Rwanda plan was unlawful in Nov 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/feb/29/child-asylum-seekers-in-uk-made-to-play-game-about-who-gets-foster-care-places>

<sup>2</sup> <https://freemovement.org.uk/home-office-change-in-practice-increases-risk-of-homelessness-for-recognised-refugees/>

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-july-to-september-2023/statutory-homelessness-in-england-july-to-september-2023#reasons-for-homelessness>

The government response has been the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill which is currently at House of Lords Committee stage, it tries to put in law that Rwanda is a safe country, despite the Supreme Court saying it is not, i.e. trying to legislate that 2+2=5.

The Green Party will completely scrap this plan by ensuring applications are dealt with promptly and humanely.

### **Breaking up families #1 - Rises in minimum salary requirements**

The current minimum salary for a British or settled person to bring their foreign spouse is £18,600, which is already more than what approximately 40% of the public earn.

On 4 April, this is set to rise to £29,000, and is set to climb further until eventually also reaching £38,700. The *current* threshold has already separated countless families and created single-parent households for approximately 15,000 children. Family visas only make up around 5% of all immigration, thus this will have little impact on overall numbers and will cause untold cruelty in the process.

The Green Party would abolish minimum income thresholds for family (and work) visas,

### **Breaking up families #2 - Ban on family members from care workers and master's students**

Starting 11 March, foreign Care Workers will no longer have the right to bring their spouses or children. This is not only a cruel policy, but it will harm the Care sector which is already facing a vacancy problem.

Since 1 January, international master's students are no longer allowed to bring their spouses or children. The UK already had the strictest rules regarding students and families (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the USA, our main competition for international student fees, all allow undergraduates to bring their spouses and children, while until 1 January only postgraduate students in the UK were given this right).

This has already affected intake which is down by a third.<sup>4</sup> Considering that higher education is one of the UK's most important soft power exports, and our universities need international student fees to operate under the current system, this will only contribute to the problems faced by the sector.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/feb/29/student-immigration-restrictions-will-damage-uk-economy-universities-say>



### **Breaking up families #3 - Ukraine family visa scheme abruptly closed**

A visa scheme allowing Ukrainians to join family members in the UK was abruptly closed to new applications on the 19th February 2024. Home Office Minister Tom Pursglove said the decision was taken to ensure schemes for Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion were "sustainable". The visa scheme enabled people in the UK to host Ukrainian refugees even if they do not have family ties here. More than 200,000 people have come to the UK under these schemes since the start of the conflict.

Enver Solomon, chief executive of the Refugee Council, said: "The lack of options for Ukrainian and other families separated by war and persecution is already a huge problem. It's concerning that one of the few safe routes created for families to reunite will be closing at such short notice.

### **Citizenship - Shamima Begum**

Shamina Begum was just a 15 year old child when she left her home in East London to join ISIS, there is no doubt she was groomed to do so, she was just a child. In 2019 she was stripped of her British Citizen with the reasoning that because her parents are of Bangladeshi heritage means she can apply for citizenship of that country – she has never been to Bangladesh - she is currently living in a refugee camp in Syria after suffering the loss of three children. The legal case for stripping citizenship was recently upheld and she is looking to appeal again.

This case raises the prospect of two types of British Citizen. If you are the child of migrants then you are not ever seen as truly British and this citizenship can be stripped at any time. Even Jacob Rees Mogg thinks this is wrong!<sup>5</sup>

The Green Party will commit to tackling statelessness and ensure that once citizenship is granted it cannot be removed.

### **Windrush Update**

In 2018, it emerged that the government had not properly recorded the details of people granted permission to stay in the UK. As a result many in the Windrush Generation (more than 500,000 UK residents who were born in a Commonwealth country and arrived before 1971)

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/shamima-begum-shouldnt-have-lost-her-british-citizenship/>

had lost homes, jobs and access to welfare benefits and NHS services after being wrongly classed as illegal citizens under strict Home Office immigration policy - many were detained and deported.

After five years it was clear the government was failing to compensate the victims properly despite setting up a compensation scheme. The Green Party agrees the compensation scheme should be run independently and insists that the Windrush Lessons Learned Review recommendations are implemented.

### **Exploiting migrants for cash - increasing visa and immigration health surcharge (IHS) fees**

The government's recent decision to implement steep increases in visa fees and the Immigration Health Surcharge serves only to make the lives of migrants more difficult, there is no evidence that

For example, a spouse joining their British partner in the UK on the standard 10-year route is already having to pay £11,788 in visa fees and the immigration health surcharge just to get settled status. This is on top of any tax and national insurance contributions they make. From the 16th January, this figure rose to £16,379, a 40% increase<sup>6</sup>.

Further, the cost of processing this application comes to only £1,843, giving the Home Office a massive profit of 888% from some of the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.

The Green Party will abolish these exploitative fees, and further believes that the NHS needs to be funded properly and sustainably, not through migrant fees.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://migration.greenparty.org.uk/a-regressive-and-punitive-policy/>

## PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM AND REFUGEES

### Myth 1: Does the UK take more asylum-seekers than its fair share? No, in fact the opposite.

In terms of the number of asylum applications per head of population, the UK is ranked 20th in Europe. Even in terms of raw numbers of applications, the UK only ranks fifth<sup>7</sup>, behind Germany, France, Spain, and Austria. Taken against the EU27, where there were 22 applications per 100,000 people in 2022, the UK only saw 13 applications per 100,000 people.<sup>8</sup>

The UK only hosts 0.7% of *all* global refugees, and rich countries in general only host 24% of all refugees. The vast majority are in poor or middle-income countries, and 69% of all refugees remain in neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Uganda, and Pakistan.<sup>9</sup>

Neither are we too full to fulfil our international and moral obligations - only 0.5% of the UK population are asylum-seekers or refugees; compare this to Lebanon (22%), Aruba (16%), or even other European countries such as Germany (3%).

### Myth 2: The asylum backlog is not caused by an unprecedented number of arrivals.

Despite lower numbers than other European countries, the UK currently has the second-largest backlog due to the government's mismanagement of the system<sup>10</sup>.

- Of the 14,500 applications that received an initial decision in 2021, only 4% received that decision within six months of the filing of said application, and only 19% received it within 12 months. More than 50% had been waiting over 18 months.
- Despite asylum numbers remaining relatively stable, there are currently fewer decisions per year than there were a decade ago - in 2015, the average annual decision per caseworker was 101; in 2021, it was down to 24.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00189/default/table?lang=en>

<sup>8</sup> <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn01403/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.concern.org.uk/news/these-12-countries-hosted-most-refugees-2023>

<sup>10</sup> <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/the-uks-asylum-backlog/>

Further, the current situation is not even the peak of asylum entries in the UK, which was over 20 years ago, in 2002. While there were more applications in 2022 than there had been since 2002, the number of applications was still only 81,130 - the equivalent of 0.1% of the British population. These are not huge numbers, despite government and media rhetoric.

The backlog is a lose-lose: it is not good for asylum-seekers involved, as they are not allowed to work while their applications are pending. Nor is it good for communities who are hosting them, as austerity has depleted funding available. Meanwhile, successive governments - starting under New Labour and made worse under the Coalition and Conservatives - have stripped asylum-seekers of their rights and dignity.

### **Myth 3: Why don't they stay in France**

Firstly, there is no such thing as 'first safe country' in any international law which the UK is a signatory to, despite the regular usage by politicians and the media. Conveniently, if there was it would mean that the UK - as an island on the fringes of Europe - would never be required to host refugees. Indeed, the only 'first safe country' which exists in any international agreement that UK was ever a part of was the Dublin Regulation, which often forces peripheral - and poorer - EU countries such as Italy and Greece to manage the vast majority of asylum-seekers who reach Europe.

Further, countries can be safe or dangerous depending on who you are. Jamaica is a popular holiday destination, for example, but it has one of the highest murder rates in the world. France is also safe for tourists but dangerous for those who live in the 'Jungle' at Calais, where their tent houses are constantly torn down - with the aid of British money.

Of the 24% of global refugees who leave their region, they are either resettled by UNHCR or national governments or head independently to a country where they have ties. Usually these ties come in the form of family, a diaspora, a common language, or specific ties such as Afghans who helped the British military and were then left behind when the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in 2021.

*If you were fleeing a war, where would you go? How safe would you feel in a country if you knew nobody and had nowhere to sleep.*

#### **Myth 4: Small boat arrivals are encouraged by government policy not smuggling gangs**

Smuggling would not exist if hard, militarised borders did not exist. They appear when existing routes are closed - compared to current rates, people did not die in the Arizona border before the USA militarised its border with Mexico; people did not drown in the Mediterranean until the EU forced Spain and Italy to shut down long-standing routes with North Africa; and people were not taking small boats across the English Channel until routes - and lorries - were closed and monitored.

One need only look at the nationalities of those who arrive on small boats in 2023 - more than half come from only five countries, Afghanistan, Iran, Eritrea, Syria, and Sudan. Refugee Council has stated<sup>11</sup> that they would expect approximately 74% of these arrivals to be considered refugees, yet the UK government has closed the routes available to them and instead forced them onto these boats.

We should also remember that, despite government rhetoric, the numbers are relatively small and certainly do not make up any kind of invasion - in 2022, the year with the most arrivals, there were only 45,776, which is half the capacity of Wembley Stadium.

#### **Myth 5: Small boats are not full of criminals**

Studies across the world have been unable to show any relationship between crime rates and levels of migration<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, it is the opposite, crime rates have been reported as lower amongst foreign-born populations compared to native-born, in every country that studies are conducted in.

There are several likely factors for this, the most prominent being that immigrants will be more wary of a punishment than citizens, as they risk deportation. Further, it is important to remember that often irregular border crossings are themselves included in crime statistics in order to inflate the concept of urgency and inflate immigration with crime.

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<sup>11</sup>

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/almost-three-quarters-of-those-crossing-the-channel-would-be-allowed-to-stay-in-the-uk-as-refugees/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/immigration-and-crime-evidence-for-the-uk-and-other-countries/>

## Myth 6: Bogus asylum seekers playing the system

Applicants for asylum and other visas are not 'playing the system' or 'abusing the system', and nor are the lawyers that support them. The immigration rules are complicated and difficult to navigate, and if a rule seems to fit a particular person's situation then they should not be abused for making an application based on those rules.

*Let us remember that a bogus asylum-seeker is not equivalent to a criminal; and that an unsuccessful asylum application is not equivalent to a bogus one - Kofi Annan*

## Myth 5: Seeking asylum is *not* illegal; however, preventing it is.

Under the Refugee Convention, which the UK helped write and is a signatory to, seeking asylum is legal. As such, despite government crackdowns on routes to the UK in order to prevent people from seeking asylum, *it is not illegal to arrive without permission if you are arriving to seek asylum.*

What *is* illegal is trying to stop people from claiming this right, which the UK (and all industrialised countries) does. While this can look like a Coast Guard ship pushing a dinghy back into open water, as has been seen in Greece, the much more common prevention tactics are carrier fees and visas. Carrier fees are heavy fines imposed on transport companies who do not ensure all passengers have the right to arrive in their destination country, while visa impositions mean that it is much more difficult from certain countries to travel - there is a reason Australians can travel freely to the UK while Rwandans cannot, despite the fact that Australians are thought to be the single-largest group of visa overstayers in the UK.

The UK pioneered both carrier fees and the usage of visas to prevent asylum-seekers from arriving, which is not a legacy we are proud of. Carrier fees were first imposed in the early 20th century, against Jews escaping Czarist Pogroms. Imposing visas on countries with conflicts were first imposed against Sri Lanka - a former British colony whose problems can be partially traced back to the Empire, and a current Commonwealth member - in the 1980s.

**Myth 6: They are, for the most part, *not* economic migrants. And even if they are, this is - once again - due to a failure in government policy.**

To repeat, nearly 75% of those who arrive via small boats will eventually obtain refugee status - this *despite* the hostile environment at the Home Office. The top five nationalities who arrived in 2023 were Afghanistan, Iran, Eritrea, Syria, and Sudan. These statistics alone should be enough to show a strong base to counter the common argument that those arriving on the shores of Kent are 'mere economic migrants'. They are arriving because there are no safe routes for them to do so, and most likely they have family or other ties to the UK. Economic migrants who do not have ties, meanwhile, will look to countries where they might have an easier time reaching or receiving a visa for.

Individuals from Ukraine and Hong Kong - two visa routes which helped make up large numbers of arrivals in 2022 - are arriving how a visa scheme is meant to work: at the airport, visa in hand. While we do not encourage visa schemes for those seeking safety, we use these two examples to illustrate why an Afghan might arrive on a boat while someone from Ukraine will not.

It is also important to remember that, as with all conversations around immigration, the government and media create the narrative: while the vast majority of those who arrive via unpermitted routes are asylum-seekers, there will be other migrants as well. If there were other routes for them to arrive, they would choose those. People denied family reunification will still try to be together, for example. Further, labour immigration happens because a destination country has labour shortages. This is plain and simple - the easiest way to prevent economic migration is to destroy the economy, which nobody wants. When government work visa policy does not match with labour market needs, there will be irregular migration. The trend (albeit small numbers) of immigrants pretending to be asylum-seekers has risen at the same time as the closure of labour routes after the 1970s.

## PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM AND REFUGEES

### Do

- Talk about people seeking asylum (and immigrants in general) as human beings who make rational choices - if they are coming to the UK via small boat, they will almost certainly have ties here, brothers, sisters, parents, and there are no safe routes.
- Explain that the vast majority of those who arrive via small boat are people who are eventually recognised as refugees, the largest majority came from Afghanistan in 2023, fleeing the Taliban with no other options.
- Emphasis that the backlog is entirely government created; it is not the result of increased arrivals but instead of the government's inability to manage the system.

### Don't

- Use the phrase 'they are asylum-seekers, not economic migrants (or simply migrants)', while this is meant well, in order to emphasise the need for protection as well as the legality of their arrival, this phrasing creates a good/bad binary which inevitably labels people seeking asylum as 'good' and 'migrants' as bad.
- Talk about legal and non-legal routes, this is irrelevant and confuses the debate
- Talk about refugees as if they are a burden, they are people we are in the privileged position of being able to help.
- Do not connect refugees and poverty, which is common. Of course people have smartphones, it's 2024! Refugee status is not synonymous with poverty, it is synonymous with having been in a dangerous situation.

### Why

- The UK is a proud co-author and signatory of the original Refugee Convention, and much of what the current government proposes goes against the international law which was agreed to - for good reason - by Britain. The Green Party respects international law.
- We need to move away from labels and talk about people



## HOUSING

### Myth 1: We are not too full

The British Isles are not full, or even more densely-populated than we were a century ago. London, for example, has the same population density as it did in 1939. Further, we have better mechanisms to handle population density now than we did back then, we just need to be politically willing to use them.

While there are infrastructure needs that need to be met with any population increase, this is the responsibility of the government and not something to be blamed for anybody who has moved to somewhere with a better labour market than where they are from.

### Myth 2: Migrants are not being given all the social housing

More than 90% of social housing goes to British citizens<sup>13</sup> then 4% EU Nationals and 6% others.

Aside from exemptions such as domestic violence and where children are at risk, migrants are generally not eligible for social housing until they get settled status or have refugee status. If they have refugee status there is no rule that means they jump a queue.

The Green Party are clear that the real problem is that there are about 1.5 million fewer social homes today than there were in 1980, In 2021/22, just 7,528 new social homes were delivered, there were 1.1million people on the waiting list<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-2022-to-march-2023/social-housing-lettings-in-england-tenants-april-2022-to-march-2023>

<sup>14</sup> [https://england.shelter.org.uk/support\\_us/campaigns/story\\_of\\_social\\_housing](https://england.shelter.org.uk/support_us/campaigns/story_of_social_housing)

### Myth 3: Migrants and citizens of colour are not given preferential treatment

While private housing should be accessed equally by all members of society, this government has turned English landlords into immigration authorities, imposing large fines, along with the threat of imprisonment, if they rent to someone without an immigration status.

This 'Right to Rent' scheme required by the government in England (though not in the other three nations, who have successfully fought against its implementation) have been found<sup>15</sup> to be illegal by the courts due to discrimination against British citizens of colour, who are wrongly thought to be immigrants by landlords and leasing agencies.

Like migrants, citizens of colour are also more likely to end up homeless, as they currently make up 33% of all homeless people in the UK despite only making up 18% of the population. Thus, only 31% of the homeless population are white British people, despite making up around 71% of the overall population. Discrimination in housing and other areas of society have a large and clear impact on life outcomes for marginalised populations.

Immigrants are less likely to make as much demand as citizens - on average, migrants from wealthy countries flat-share for their first five years in the UK, while migrants from poorer countries flat-share for their first ten years in the UK. While the economy is forcing citizens to flat-share longer than older generations, it is still not as long as migrants. Further, migrants are more likely to live in poor housing, leaving the nicer properties to British people while simultaneously putting migrants in unhealthy or potentially even dangerous situations.

Additionally, the number of migrants is inflated by international students, who always make up the largest percentage of visas issued each year. They are 60% more likely to live in student housing than are British students and thus are not competing with citizens in the housing market. Further, most international students leave after their studies, which means they *never* enter the wider housing market.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://eachother.org.uk/high-court-rules-that-right-to-rent-scheme-violates-human-rights/> (this was since overturned)

## HOUSING - MESSAGING

### Do

- Ensure everyone understands the lack of both social housing and more general problems within the housing sector are the result of intentional government policies, such as the right to buy and not building enough new homes - and not migrants.
- Point out that there are about 1.5 million fewer social homes today than there were in 1980, In 2021/22, just 7,528 new social homes were delivered, there were 1.1million people on the waiting list<sup>16</sup>
- Mention that Brexit has contributed to the cost of construction materials including cement, timber and steel increasing by 60% and at the same time, the cost of labour in the UK going up by 30% (UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy data)<sup>17</sup>.
- Focus on the political decisions around housing - the lack of regulation of predatory landlords, the poor housing conditions, the lack of building, etc.

### Don't

- Fall into the trap of 'immigrants shouldn't be able to access social housing' the very small amount that do will be families with young children who are in the most severe need.

### Why

- UKIP won over 12% of the total vote share in 2015, after running a campaign which saw immigration's impact on public services discussed more than any other topic, according to a recent content analysis. David Cameron then promised to ensure that EEA citizens who needed housing assistance would be barred from getting it, further associating public service pressures with migration.

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<sup>16</sup> [https://england.shelter.org.uk/support\\_us/campaigns/story\\_of\\_social\\_housing](https://england.shelter.org.uk/support_us/campaigns/story_of_social_housing)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/jan/24/brexit-uk-construction-costs-eu>

- In January 2024, Sunak announced reforms to prioritise British citizens for social housing, again implying that migrants are to blame for the lack of social housing.
- Current housing policy leads to discrimination against migrants *and* British people of colour, and has led to several court cases due to the discrimination
- The Green Party needs to combat these narratives, putting the blame for poor public provisions on the politicians that are to blame for it.

## WORK

### Myth 1: Migrants are not stealing our jobs.

The British economy - like all industrialised economies - needs immigration. Training is important, but only a destabilised economy will reduce the need for migration

Labour immigration occurs because of labour shortages, plain and simple. The only guaranteed mechanism to prevent labour immigration is to crash the economy - globally, the 2008 economic crash and COVID pandemic saw the lowest immigration patterns. Further, governments know that immigration is required to fill economic gaps - this is why people on family visas are permitted to work, because they are an important component of plugging labour gaps. Unemployment would be *higher, not lower*, if not for immigration.

### Myth 2: Immigration does not have an impact on wages

Immigration has very little impact on wages, whether positive or negative. While immigration boosts the overall economy, the impact on any given individual's share of the economic pie is negligible. Some studies have found that high-skilled immigration has a positive impact on higher wages, while low-skilled immigration can have a negative impact on the bottom 10% of wages (which are roles usually filled by other immigrants, not citizens), but these impacts are small and not guaranteed.

### Myth 3: It is not easy for employers to hire the labour they need

British businesses are punished for sponsoring workers. Small businesses must pay the government £364 per year of sponsorship, while large businesses must pay £1,000 per year. Although this fee goes towards funding training programmes for British citizens, a healthy economy will always be expected to require immigration.

The two periods which saw the lowest immigration in the last 20 years were due to the pandemic and the economic crash. Businesses hire foreign workers because they have not been able to find the necessary labour in the UK.

Further, sponsored migrants are required to be paid a certain amount in order to qualify for a visa, which at times can be more than what a business can afford. This minimum salary is set to increase *significantly* on 4 April 2024, from £26,200 to £38,700. This new salary threshold is above what nearly 80% of the workforce earns, and will do untold damage to UK businesses. Brexit has already harmed British business, for numerous reasons including the loss of free movement. These new rules will only further harm sectors already struggling in a downturning economy.

Related are the need for sponsoring businesses to hold Sponsor Licences in order to sponsor work permits. According to a 2020 study by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Migration, around 50% of businesses which need workers are unable to afford the sponsor licence and visa fees. Of those businesses which do hold a sponsor licence (less than two percent of all UK businesses), the study found that a whopping 80% of them are negatively impacted by the high costs of the ISC and visa fees. Only the largest companies are able to easily absorb these costs, which of course exacerbates an already unequal society.

#### **Myth 4: Migrants have a negative effect on employment rights**

We have been unable to find any evidence of migrants affecting employment rights. There should be no difference between the contracts offered to migrant and native-born workers. Migrant workers are more likely to be in non-permanent jobs, zero-hour contracts or shift work and are often overqualified for their jobs<sup>18</sup>.

Despite the risks, migrant workers have been campaigning for better work conditions particularly in the delivery worker sector with groups like Delivery Job UK and the IWGB union. The Green Party have been supporting workers in their fight by encouraging riders to join their union in Hackney and beyond.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migrants-in-the-uk-labour-market-an-overview/>

## WORK

### Do

- Focus on the harm done to British business when they do not have easier-access to necessary labour
- Labour migration happens because there are labour shortages in a destination country, plain and simple. There is no “stealing of jobs”, they are coming precisely because businesses cannot find the workers here.
- Numerous studies across the world have been done on the impact of migration on wages - there is negligible impact. At best, if we squint, we see a slight rise in wages for higher-skilled workers and a slight decrease in wages for the bottom 10% of earners, who themselves are most likely migrants.

### Don't

- While immigrants do plug crucial gaps and it is true that there are many jobs that are more likely to be filled with immigrants (agriculture, for example), the common idea that “immigrants do the jobs you don't want” is demeaning; instead, focus on the labour shortages in these sectors and their necessity in society - as the pandemic showed, for example, delivery drivers are appreciated and often migrants. Skills shortage, not “they do demeaning work”

### Why

- The UK economy - and all rich economies - require immigration. Illegal immigration occurs in large part because government policy and economic needs do not align. The vacancies need to be filled and it is economic folly to deny their legal filling.

## BENEFITS, NRPF AND THE NHS

### Myth 1: Migrants do *not* come to the UK to claim benefits

The No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition is a legal restriction on individuals 'subject to immigration control', as defined in section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. It restricts people from accessing most mainstream benefits and housing assistance if they hold temporary immigration statuses or lack a valid status.

The NRPF condition can also indirectly affect family members and dependents of individuals subject to immigration control; for example, British children whose parents have NRPF and who cannot claim benefits in their own right. While this condition can be challenged, particularly where children are at risk, successful challenges add up to around 2.5k per year out of an estimated 2.6m migrants with NRPF<sup>19</sup>.

Because of this the majority of migrants are unable to claim benefits, despite working, paying tax and national insurance. It also excludes parents from most government support with the costs of childcare, including 30 hours' childcare for working parents of 3- and 4-year-olds.

No correlation between a welfare system and immigration has been successfully demonstrated - no study across the world has found a strong welfare state to be the main draw for migrants. If strong welfare was an incentive, the USA would not be the largest migrant magnet.

**Asylum Support** - people awaiting a decision on their asylum claim can receive support, the basic level for this £49.18 per week<sup>20</sup> (£7 per day) or £8.86 per week if they are housed in accommodation that provide meals, such as the Bibby Stockholm barge.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/deprivation-and-the-no-recourse-to-public-funds-nrpf-condition/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get>



## Myth 2: Migrants do not come to the UK just so they can use the NHS

Since 2015, visa-holders have been required to pay the IHS fee (increased on 6th February 2024 to £1,035 a year for most adults and £776 for children, Students, and those on the Youth Mobility visa<sup>21</sup>) to access the NHS.

Since the law changed in 2015 many people are no longer deemed 'ordinarily resident' in the UK and are charged for all NHS care at 150% of cost price except for emergency care<sup>22</sup>. Since 2017 the law has been tightened further, putting pressure on Trusts to collect money from those deemed as 'non-resident'. Hard evidence of health tourism has been non-existence with even Government estimates of the 'problem' low<sup>23</sup>.

Further, studies have found that newly arrived migrants tend to use the NHS less than the UK population in general and that this pattern was at least partly explained by better health and younger age.<sup>24</sup>

The Green Party says that migrants should not be used as cash machines, especially when they already pay tax, NI, and contribute to the overall economy through their spending power

Indeed, rather than causing problems for the NHS, immigration has been crucial for the healthcare system since its founding in 1948, when citizens of the empire were asked to come help set up the NHS. Many of those caught up in the Windrush scandal were the children of nurses who came from the Caribbean to take care of sick people in Britain. Today, approximately 18.7% of all NHS staff are migrants, including 35% of doctors and 27.2% of nurses<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7274/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/visiting-or-moving-to-england/how-to-access-nhs-services-in-england-if-you-are-visiting-from-abroad/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://keepournhspublic.com/health-tourism-fact-vs-fiction/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1355819620911392>

<sup>25</sup> <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7783/CBP-7783.pdf>

## BENEFITS, NRPF AND THE NHS - MESSAGING

### Do

- Say that migrants already are not generally eligible to claim benefits despite working and paying taxes.
- Say that migrants are charged to use the NHS despite working and paying national insurance, or having private insurance

### Don't

- Say that depriving migrants of benefits is a good thing, if people are in need they should be helped, the NRPF condition affects the most vulnerable in society to the extent that even Boris Johnson thought it sounded bad<sup>26</sup>.
- Say that migrants are paying for their treatment in the NHS with the immigration health surcharge, there is some confusion about whether the money paid actually goes to the NHS directly<sup>27</sup>.

### Why

- People should not be deprived of health care because of their immigration status, this is inhumane.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://twitter.com/stephenc Timms/status/1265749700281618432>

<sup>27</sup> <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7274/>

## LEGISLATION SUMMARY

### Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill

#### Key points

- Legislation passed on 25/04/2024
- Attempts to put in law that Rwanda is a safe country, despite the Supreme Court saying it is not, trying to legislate that 2+2=5
- Asylum Aid had immediate success with litigation<sup>28</sup> and in May the Home Office has confirmed that the individual's reasons that Rwanda isn't safe for them need to be considered in relation to any decision on whether their claim is inadmissible as well as in relation to any human rights decision and has accepted that its guidance needs to be amended to reflect this.
- On 01/05/2024 one failed asylum seeker was voluntarily sent to Rwanda with £3,000<sup>29</sup>
- Many migrants have been told they are eligible for deportation to Rwanda and have been detained waiting to go.
- After calling the election the government confirmed no flights until after, and as Labour have promised to scrap the scheme, it seems the plan is now dead, a waste of millions of pounds (240m?)<sup>30</sup>
- There are calls now for those detained to be released<sup>31</sup>
- The impact on migrants has been terrible though, many absconded from asylum accommodation through fear of being sent to Rwanda, they will now be unable to access further asylum support and will no doubt end up on the streets.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.asylumaid.org.uk/node/157>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-68932830>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-67656220>

<sup>31</sup> <https://thelead.uk/rwanda-isnt-happening-release-detainees>

## Illegal Immigration Bill

### Key points

- Allows the automatic dismissal of any asylum claims by people who arrive by irregular methods and not directly from their country of origin, and the removal of them from the UK with no right of appeal,
- Restricts courts, including the ECHR, from stopping removals,
- Allows for indefinite detention
- Removes safeguards for children.

UNHCR has said that this Bill 'would amount to an asylum ban' as it would extinguish 'the right to seek refugee protection in the United Kingdom for those who arrive irregularly, no matter how compelling their claim may be'<sup>32</sup>. In response the UK Government has called for reform of the ECHR, with some government ministers threatening to leave the ECHR treaty altogether.

## Nationality and Borders Bill 2022

Most of this act, including the differentiated status of asylum seekers based on how they arrived, so called Group 1 and Group 2 (temporary status) was abandoned in June 2023<sup>33</sup>.

It is however still being used to make it easier to prosecute migrants such Ibrahim Bah<sup>34</sup> who are forced to steer boats across the channel, or volunteered to do so in exchange for free passage. It makes the act of merely arriving in the UK, even to claim asylum, an offence if without valid leave<sup>35</sup> and the maximum sentence for helping others to do so extended to life imprisonment.

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/uk-asylum-and-policy>

<sup>33</sup> <https://freemovement.org.uk/last-traces-of-nationality-and-borders-act-2022-erased-with-abandonment-of-differentiated-status-for-refugees/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/feb/23/man-who-steered-small-channel-boat-sentenced-to-detention-after-four-died>

<sup>35</sup> <https://freemovement.org.uk/briefing-how-the-nationality-and-borders-act-has-criminalised-those-seeking-safety-in-the-uk/>

## WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

### Encourage Migrants to Vote

**Commonwealth citizens** are entitled to vote in **Parliamentary, Local Government** and **Mayor** elections. This is a population that is often ignored by politicians and political parties, but they are a large demographic - and set to become larger, with new post-Brexit immigration trends showing that Commonwealth immigration is trending upwards.

A person is a qualifying Commonwealth citizen if they do not require leave to enter or remain in the UK, or they do require leave to enter or remain in the UK but have been granted such leave, or are treated as having been granted such leave. Any type of leave to enter or remain is acceptable, whether indefinite, time limited or conditional.

List of Commonwealth countries: *Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kingdom of Eswatini, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, The Bahamas, The Gambia, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Zambia, Zimbabwe.*

**Resident EU Citizens** are entitled to vote in **Local Government** and **Mayor**.

Note that this will change to something very complicated after the May elections in 2024.

In Wales, **anyone legally resident** is entitled to vote in **Local Government** and **Mayor** elections.

Source: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8985/>