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Immigration and Asylum

UK Parliament Debates

UK Citizenship Test

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-22/debates/A3994B11-A37B-4F75-BE1A-4083FD564653/UKCitizenshipTest>

Draft Immigration (Age Assessments) Regulations 2023

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-20/debates/08404159-b45c-4fad-9277-0fab7640ed07/DraftImmigration\(AgeAssessments\)Regulations2023](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-20/debates/08404159-b45c-4fad-9277-0fab7640ed07/DraftImmigration(AgeAssessments)Regulations2023)

UK Parliament, House of Commons Oral Answers

Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy

Rupa Huq (Labour) [900157] What steps [the Minister] is taking to support Afghan citizens who are eligible for the Afghan relocations and assistance policy.

Reply from the Minister for Armed Forces (James Heapey): Some 13,000 eligible persons and their families are now in the UK under the ARAP scheme. We are determined to deliver on our commitments, with many hundreds more arrivals in the UK planned before the end of the year.

Rupa Huq: In the light of Pakistan's brutal crackdown on undocumented and temporary visa-bearing Afghan refugees and its forcible deportation of those people back to Afghanistan, can the Minister confirm the security of those eligible for the Afghan citizens resettlement and ARAP schemes in Pakistan, including many whose claims have been unprocessed for two years? Can he expedite those claims to stop people being thrown back into the clutches of the Taliban?

Reply from Hames Heapey: May I gently encourage Members on both sides of the House to change their tone when describing the Government of Pakistan in relation to these matters? We would not have brought out thousands of people had it not been for the support of the Government of Pakistan, and we continue to enjoy their support and co-operation in our efforts to bring out many thousands more. As the hon. Lady well knows, because it has been well covered in the media, the Government of Pakistan have sought to accelerate the deportation of those whom they consider to be there illegally, but our excellent team in the high commission in Islamabad are working day and night with the Government of Pakistan to ensure that that does not happen to those who are in Pakistan under ARAP and ACRS. We are moving at our best pace to bring people back, with the full co-operation of the Government of Pakistan.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-20/debates/10C88126-B89B-4E81-9D2C-E40FA54F9810/AfghanRelocationsAndAssistancePolicy>

Information about the Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers: Rwanda Refugee Policy

Asylum: Rwanda

Diana Johnson (Labour) [2109] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost to the public purse was of responding to legal challenges to the UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership as of 15 November 2023.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: The information requested on legal costs has been released through the Home Affairs Select Committee. Please find the information requested at this link:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/40398/documents/197156/default/>
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-15/2109>

Asylum: Rwanda

Diana Johnson (Labour) [2110] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government is contractually obligated to pay any further monies to the Rwandan Government as part of the Migration and Economic Development Partnership as of 15 November 2023.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: The details of the funding agreement are confidential in order to maintain commercial sensitivity and preserve a safe space to negotiate bilateral agreements.

In terms of payments to Rwanda, as previously published we have provided Rwanda with an initial investment of £120 million into its economic and growth as part of the Economic Transformation and Integration Fund (ETIF). Investment has been focused in areas such as education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, and job creation.

In advance of flights taking place, a separate £20 million was also paid last year to support initial set up costs for the relocation of individuals. We will not enter into speculation as to what the final costs of the partnership may be nor provide a running commentary.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-15/2110>

Asylum: Rwanda

Alison Thewliss (SNP) [2160] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost to the public purse was of establishing the UK and Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: The UK has provided Rwanda with an initial investment of £120m into its economic development and growth as part of the Economic Transformation and Integration Fund (ETIF). Investment has been focused in areas such as education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, and job creation. A separate advance payment of £20m was also paid last year to support initial set up costs for the relocation of individuals.

Funding will also be provided to support the delivery of asylum operations, accommodation, and integration in Rwanda. Costs and payments will depend on the number of individuals relocated, the timing of when this happens, and the outcomes of individual cases. Actual spend will be reported as part of the annual Home Office Reports and Accounts in the usual way. We will not enter into speculation as to what the final costs of the partnership may be nor provide a running commentary.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-15/2160>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers: Channel Migrants

Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Neil O'Brien (Conservative) [2433] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many irregular migrants have (a) arrived in small boats and (b) been deported since 2018.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: The Home Office publishes statistics on small boat arrivals to the UK in the '[Irregular migration to the UK statistics](#)' release. Data on small boat arrivals by year is published in table Irr_D01 of the '[Irregular migration to the UK detailed datasets](#)' with the latest data up to the end of June 2023.

The Home Office also publishes statistics on the number of returns from the UK in table Ret_D01 of the '[Returns detailed datasets](#)', as part of the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. However, this data includes all returns, not just returns of small boat arrivals.

Official statistics published by the Home Office are kept under review in line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#), taking into account a number of factors including user needs, as well as quality and availability of data.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-17/2433>

Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Julian Lewis (Conservative) [2243] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what advice his Department provides to rescue services that pick up migrants in small boats in the English Channel in (a) international and (b) UK territorial waters on where they can land those rescued; and what (i) domestic and (ii) international legal advice he has received on whether they can be landed on the territory of the last safe country from which they embarked.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: Rescues of people making dangerous, illegal and unnecessary crossings of the Channel in small boats are directed and coordinated by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and are subject to the UK's obligations under the SAR and SOLAS Conventions and UNCLOS. The policy on where, when and how those people are rescued therefore lies with MCA and not the Home Office.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-16/2243>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers: Other Immigration and Asylum

Immigration

Neil O'Brien (Conservative) [2428] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people (a) were given and (b) had Indefinite Leave to Remain in each year since 1993.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: The Home Office publishes data on Indefinite Leave to Remain (Settlement) grants in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data covering the period 2011 onwards are published in table se_06 of the [Settlement summary tables](#). Earlier data are available in table se_06 at [Settlement data tables](#)

The Home Office does not produce information on the UK population. These are the responsibility of the UK Office for National Statistics.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-17/2428>

Refugees: Palestinians

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [852] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a Homes for Palestinians scheme similar to Homes for Ukraine.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: Since 2015, over half a million people were offered safe and legal routes into the UK. This includes over 28,600 individuals resettled to the UK under our global resettlement schemes. We continue to provide the most vulnerable refugees in need of protection a route to safety directly from regions of conflict and instability through these schemes, which include the UK Resettlement Scheme, Community Sponsorship and the Mandate Resettlement scheme. This represents one of the most generous resettlement offers in the UK's history.

However, the U.K. only has finite capacity. We cannot provide a safe and legal route for every conflict in the world. There are no plans to introduce bespoke arrangements for people arriving from the region, and we are not considering establishing a separate route for Palestinians to come to the UK.

Immediate family members of British citizens, and those settled in the UK, who wish to come and live in the UK and do not have a current UK visa, can apply under one of the existing family visa routes.

The UK's efforts are focussed on ensuring aid reaches those who need in most. The Prime Minister announced on Monday 23 October that the UK will provide a further £20 million of humanitarian aid for civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

(OPTs). This latest funding is in addition to the £10 million of aid announced by the Prime Minister last week.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-08/852>

Information about the UK Resettlement Scheme, Community sponsorship Scheme, and Mandate Scheme, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/611cd056d3bf7f63b45df0ed/Resettlement_Policy_Guidance_2021.pdf

The announcements referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-announces-10m-humanitarian-aid-for-civilians-in-occupied-palestinian-territories>

and

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-23/debates/018D96AB-5D91-48D7-9809-19A03E54125A/IsraelAndGaza#contribution-61483896-20C4-4BA0-AC5E-163033573EB4>

Refugees: Homelessness

Tahir Ali (Labour) [2005] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to reduce homelessness among refugees.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: The UK Government's 'Ending Rough Sleeping for Good' Strategy was revised and published in September 2022. Under this strategy the Home Office is committed to preventing rough sleeping wherever possible and where it cannot be prevented, ensuring it is a rare, brief and non-recurring experience.

We are working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on ensuring individuals can move on from asylum support as smoothly as possible. With DLUHC, we are working to ensure the right asylum decision data is being shared with local authorities to enable effective planning and to lessen the impact on existing homelessness and rough sleeping pressures. Our accommodation providers are also directly working with local authorities to notify them when an individual is due to have their asylum support ended.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-14/2005>

The Strategy referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102408/20220903_Ending_rough_sleeping_for_good.pdf

Asylum: Detainees

Diana Johnson (Labour) [2537] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers who arrived in the UK since 20 July 2023 are held in detention centres.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: The Home Office publishes data on detention in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on asylum seekers in detention is published in table Det_01 of the '[detention summary tables](#)'. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate to September 2022. More recent data on asylum seekers in detention is not available due to the on-going transition to a new case working system. We will seek to include this information in future editions of the publication when available.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-20/2537>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Oral Answers

Illegal Immigration

[The Home Secretary's statement to the House of Commons](#) was read in the House of Lords.

Lord Coaker (Labour): My Lords, does not the Rwanda judgment made by the Supreme Court make damning reading ...

The Government say that they will introduce a new treaty to deal with all of this, but why only now? Why has so much time been wasted, when these problems were known about? Can the Minister explain how the Rwanda policy, if implemented, can actually work? Since the Act came into force—since the 20 July date that the noble Lord, Lord Carlile, brought forward in an amendment in Committee—approximately 13,000 people have arrived illegally. According to the Act, they are deemed illegal and therefore need to be sent abroad. How are they to be sent to Rwanda? Are they all expected to go to Rwanda, or are the reports we read in today's media accurate that the Government are considering giving thousands of people deemed to be here illegally, in light of the Supreme Court judgment and since the passage of the Act, access to the asylum system? Is not the truth of the matter that thousands upon thousands of people deemed illegal are being held here indefinitely, with families often traumatised, and women and children in limbo? What sort of policy is that? ...

What of the plan in the new legislation to simply declare Rwanda a safe country in its upgrade to change it from an agreement to a treaty? ... What do the Government say to Lord Sumption's criticism that you cannot "change the facts, by law" by proposing legislation that would, as I say, declare Rwanda safe? ...

Would it not have been a much better thing—rather than the wasting of time that we have seen from the Government, with over £140 million spent without a single person sent to Rwanda—to have had a proper plan to tackle the criminal gangs? ... Would it not also have been a good idea to improve our agreement with France, to speed up asylum decisions, to establish safe and legal routes and to tackle the problem at source? ...

Lord German (Liberal Democrat): ... Are the Government intending to implement legislation that simply allows them to make an opposing declaration to that of the Supreme Court on the safety of Rwanda for refugees? To what extent is that respecting the Supreme Court's decision? Do the Government agree with the Supreme Court that, in order to see their Rwanda policy in operation, they would need to disregard the ECHR and the United Nations system of international treaties, including the refugee convention, the United Nations convention against torture, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and also change not just the Human Rights Act but also domestic asylum legislation from 1993 and 2002?

Further, the Supreme Court judgment states about the Rwanda system that "necessary changes may not be straightforward, as they require an appreciation that the current approach is inadequate, a change of attitudes, and effective training and monitoring".

Therefore, in the past 12 months, have the UK Government provided any effective training to Rwandan officials?

Thirdly, this Statement says that arrivals are down, decisions are up, returns are up—we are getting on with the job. Believe that if you wish. Small boat arrivals are down on last year, but if you remove Albanians—clearly, we must accept the policy that returns those who are not genuine asylum seekers to their safe home country—total numbers are up from 2022. Going by the recent annual grant rates, 75% of those who crossed this year would be granted asylum. Of course, because clauses of the Illegal Migration Act have not yet been brought into force, the Government will have to hear this backlog of cases. The current backlog of cases is 122,585, taking legacy and flow numbers together. In addition, government figures show that small boat arrivals represent only 37% of people claiming

asylum, up to June 2023.

What actions are being taken to ensure that those from high grant rate countries have a safe way to travel to the United Kingdom to claim asylum: for example, an Iranian female political protester, a Russian anti-war activist, a young man at risk of forced conscription from Eritrea, and so on? ...

Reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Sharpe of Epsom): My Lords, it goes without saying that Wednesday's outcome was not what the Government wanted to see, but we have spent the last few months planning for all eventualities and we remain completely committed to stopping the boats.

The core part of our policy—to relocate those who entered illegally and have no right to be here to another country—remains lawful. We have also made progress on other fronts of our plan to tackle the small boats—which I will come back to in a minute—but crossings are down, the backlog is being cut, and it is interesting to note that countries across Europe have seen what we are doing and are interested in following suit.

The Supreme Court recognised that changes may be delivered in future which would address the issues it raised. The Prime Minister has spoken to President Kagame of Rwanda and both countries reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to deliver on our landmark partnership. We will work with Rwanda to address the Supreme Court's concerns by setting out strong assurances in a new treaty binding in international law. However, we are also going a step further. As has been noted, the Prime Minister has announced that we will take the extraordinary step of introducing emergency legislation to enable Parliament to confirm that, with our new treaty, Rwanda is safe. ...

When people know that if they come here illegally, they will not get to stay, they will stop coming altogether and we will stop the boats. Illegal immigration destroys lives and costs British taxpayers billions of pounds a year. We need to end it, so we will do whatever it takes.

However, as the new Home Secretary has pointed out, the Rwanda plan has only ever been one tool in our toolbox, and we have other schemes to drive down these numbers. We are tackling illegal immigration at every stage of the journey of a would-be illegal migrant, and our plan is working. Last year, the Prime Minister signed the largest ever small boats deal with France—I believe that 22,000 crossing attempts have been prevented because of the close co-ordination between British and French officials, and that is in 2023 alone.

Cutting-edge surveillance technology is in play, and we have beefed up security infrastructure, such as more CCTV at key border crossing points along the channel. We have ensured that there are more French officials and officers patrolling French beaches, and, as I said, they are working closely with their UK counterparts. So that is less money that British taxpayers have to spend on hotels, less profit for the criminal gangs and fewer people to process—fewer people also, I should add, putting their lives at risk. That sends a clear message to those who want to cross that we will stop them.

The noble Lord referred to the fact that we now have a returns agreement with Albania, and seemed rather dismissive of it, but the fact is that so far during 2023 we have returned more than 4,600 people in just 10 months. He should be applauding that. We are targeting the movement of goods, such as dinghies and engines, that are used to facilitate the crossings in order to undermine a key component of the smugglers' business model. Apart from Albania, we have expedited returns arrangements with countries including France, Turkey and Italy. We have increased the number of illegal-working raids by almost 70%. We have cut the asylum legacy backlog by more than 59,000 cases. We have freed up

hundreds of hotel beds with the use of alternative sites. We have announced the closure of the first 50 asylum hotels and we have passed the Illegal Migration Act 2023, which is the most ambitious immigration legislation in decades. It makes it clear that the only route to asylum in the UK is via one of the safe and legal routes that are in place.

Noble Lords asked about treaties and why this was not considered at the start. The fact is that a memorandum of understanding is a common mechanism for establishing an arrangement or partnership between countries. The Supreme Court was clear that Rwanda entered into the partnership and signed the MoU in good faith, and both countries remain committed to the partnership. We always knew that the partnership would face challenges, but we have been clear that we will do whatever it takes to deliver it.

On the Supreme Court's decision and conclusion, the Prime Minister has said that we respect the Supreme Court's decision. The rule of law is fundamental to our democracy, but it is also of fundamental importance that we stop the boats. ...

It is clear that this was a judgment from our domestic courts, not the ECHR. We always said that our plan will deliver the changes necessary to take away the incentive for people to risk their lives through illegal crossings, while complying with our international obligations. But, as the Prime Minister said, if people continue to put obstacles in the way of this policy, we will remove those barriers. ...

To read this very long question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-11-20/debates/559071C5-A346-4991-A545-095AE2E10FE0/IllegalImmigration>

The Supreme Court Judgement about the Rwanda Refugee Policy, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2023/745.html>

Rwanda: Asylum Arrangements Treaty

Lord Goldsmith (Labour): To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have for ratification of the proposed asylum arrangements treaty with the government of Rwanda, as announced by the Prime Minister on 15 November; and whether they intend the treaty to be subject to scrutiny by Parliament for 21 days under the provisions of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

Reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Sharpe of Epsom): My Lords, the Government will lay a treaty before both Houses of Parliament in due course. This will enable Parliament to consider Rwanda as safe, in conjunction with new legislation announced by the Prime Minister. We will follow standard procedure as per the CRaG Act [Constitutional Reform and Governance Act].

Lord Goldsmith: I am grateful for ... the confirmation that this time, the treaty will be put through the CRaG process. That will mean that Parliament will be able to scrutinise the agreement and consider the relevant policy considerations, and indeed the financial implications, unlike the memorandum of understanding, which the International Agreements Committee of this House previously said was deeply concerning because that scrutiny was not available. Can the Minister also tell us when the CRaG notice will be given so that that process can start, and when the relevant Minister will come to the committee to give evidence?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: I am afraid I do not have that detail because the Bill has yet to be presented to Parliament. However, as I understand it, the timeframe is 21 days after laying, when both Houses are sitting, for the treaty process to take effect.

Viscount Hailsham (Conservative): My Lords, does my noble friend agree that, for the

purposes of assessing the safety of a country, a theoretical commitment to treaty obligations is not sufficient? What counts is the performance of those obligations, which requires a period of assessment.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: ... I am unable to predict what is likely to be in the legislation that is yet to be presented to Parliament.

Lord Lansley (Conservative): My Lords, will my noble friend confirm that, if a committee of this House—the International Agreements Committee or indeed the relevant committee in the other place—under CRaG, were to make a report for debate, the Government would not proceed to ratification of the treaty unless and until that debate had taken place?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Again, the noble Lord is asking me to speculate on something that has not yet happened, and I am afraid I do not see the point of that.

Lord German (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, are the Government intent on making any payment to the Government of Rwanda for converting their MoU into a treaty, and have the Government provided any support to the Rwandan Government in the last 12 months for the training of their officials in the immigration department?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: ... in answer to the second part of the noble Lord's question, the answer is yes. As regards the costs, I have no knowledge of that.

Lord Blunkett (Labour): My Lords, this proposal is both an expensive distraction and a delusion. Is it not true that even the far-right Prime Minister of Italy has proposals that would mean processing offshore but with Italian immigration officers, and those adjudged to be legitimate asylum seekers would then be returned to Italy? If we cannot manage something the far right in Italy can, what sort of people are we?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: I am not sure I would characterise the Prime Minister of Italy as far right, to be perfectly honest. ... This is a personal opinion, my Lords. Having said that, of course, I am also not going to speculate about what other countries may be doing. I notice that a number of other countries are exploring possibilities very similar to those we are looking at.

Lord Trefgarne (Conservative): My Lords, have not the Falkland Islands been considered as an alternative to Rwanda, and what progress has been made with that proposal?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My Lords, I read that story in the papers, and I have no idea.

Lord Clarke of Nottingham (Conservative): My Lords, did not the Supreme Court make a finding of fact that Rwanda had broken similar agreements in the past with the Government of Israel and that the state of the Government in Rwanda did not give rise to any confidence that they would comply with the agreement we have made? How does a treaty affect that at all? Are the Government capable of taking any steps that make the Government of Rwanda look more capable, and are the Government searching for another safe country that can be trusted, which seems to me the only way in which this policy can possibly be continued with any hope of success?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My Lords, that gives me an opportunity to reflect again on what the court said: "changes and capacity-building needed to eliminate the risk"—of refoulement—"may be delivered in future, but they were not shown to be in place when the lawfulness of the policy had to be considered in these proceedings".

The fact was that those proceedings considered one day —14 June 2022. Much has changed since then, so I think we should wait to see what the legislation says. ...

To read this very long question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-11-21/debates/4561DD1D-DDCD-4664-B81A-935EE0E2A485/RwandaAsylumArrangementsTreaty>

The Supreme Court judgement referred to above can be read at <https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2023-0093-etc-judgment.pdf>

The Prime Minister's announcement referred to above can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-remarks-on-supreme-court-judgement-15-november-2023>

The Memorandum of Understanding referred to above can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/memorandum-of-understanding-mou-between-the-uk-and-rwanda/memorandum-of-understanding-between-the-government-of-the-united-kingdom-of-great-britain-and-northern-ireland-and-the-government-of-the-republic-of-r>

Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Safe Routes

Lord Dubs (Labour): To ask His Majesty's Government what safe routes to the United Kingdom are available to child refugees and asylum seekers.

Reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Sharpe of Epsom): My Lords, there are no provisions in our Immigration Rules to enable someone to travel to the UK to seek asylum or temporary refuge. The UK welcomes vulnerable refugees, including children, directly from regions of conflict and instability through our global resettlement routes, the UK resettlement scheme, community sponsorship and the mandate resettlement scheme. We also have bespoke routes responding to crises in Ukraine and Afghanistan and the Hong Kong BNO visa route.

Lord Dubs: ... is it not the truth that virtually every safe and legal route to child refugees has been closed by the Government? Perhaps the Minister will not recall, but some years ago I was given assurances both privately by Ministers and in the House that the Government would not close down safe and legal routes. Why are they not willing to do that?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My Lords, I do not think it fair to say that there are no safe and legal routes. Since 2015, we have offered a safe and legal route for over half a million people. This includes over 28,600 refugees, including 13,800 children, via the refugee resettlement schemes with the UNHCR. We are the fifth largest recipient of UNHCR-referred refugees and, in Europe, we are second only to Sweden.

Baroness Meacher (Crossbench): My Lords, can the Minister explain exactly what accessible facilities are available in a country such as Afghanistan for someone facing persecution to seek asylum in this country?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My Lords, the noble Baroness will be aware that the situation on the ground in Afghanistan is very complicated—I would imagine my noble friend who answered the previous Question would be able to shed more light on exactly how complicated. However, as the noble Baroness will also be aware, we have resettled a vast number—well, not vast, but a large number—of people from Afghanistan. By the end of June 2023, approximately 9,800 people had been granted settled status under the ACRS, including over 4,600 children, and we provide local authorities with substantial funding. Since ARAP opened in April 2021, we have relocated over 12,200 people to the UK, including over 6,100 children. We know there is more to do, particularly with those currently still stuck in Pakistan, but we are working at pace on that.

The Lord Bishop of St Albans: My Lords, in May 2021, recognising the need to speed up the applications for child asylum seekers, the Government set up two dedicated caseworking hubs to try to process these claims more quickly. What assessment, two and half years on, has been made of the success of these dedicated hubs, and what more could be done to speed up the claims of young people as they seek asylum?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My Lords, as I understand it, those hubs have

worked very well. There were 5,186 asylum applications from unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the year ending June 2023—a similar number to the year ending June 2022. There were 6,229 initial decisions relating to UASCs in the year ending June 2023, some 78% of which were grants of refugee status or humanitarian protection. The statistics bear out the fact that they are working well.

Lord Scriven (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, evidence shows that refugees will choose official routes over smugglers, where they represent a realistic alternative. Therefore, to smash the smugglers' deadly trade, will the Government look at piloting a refugee visa, as outlined in a report by Safe Passage?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My Lords, no, I am afraid the Government are going to be consistent in this particular regard. As I said earlier in my initial Answer, there is no provision within our Immigration Rules for somebody to be allowed to travel to the UK to seek asylum or temporary refuge, so I do not think that visa is on the table.

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Labour Co-op): My Lords, since the passing of the Illegal Migration Act, how many children have come over on small boats, how many are now subject to removal provisions and how many made those crossings unaccompanied?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: I am afraid I do not have those statistics. I will write to the noble Lord.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench): My Lords, I have seen figures that suggest that those who come in small boats to seek asylum constitute less than 5% of net annual immigration. Can the Minister explain why the Government are obsessed with trying to exclude those fleeing persecution and seeking refugee status in this country, while ignoring the Christian teaching of welcoming refugees?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The answer is twofold. First, we have welcomed over half a million people, so that is very much a vindication of the Christian principle. Secondly, we are not obsessed with the asylum seekers themselves; we are obsessed with putting criminal gangs out of business, and I make no apology at all for that.

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Labour): My Lords, the Minister, in a rather throwaway remark, acknowledged there are still children from Afghanistan who are stuck in Pakistan. Can he give us any estimate of just how many children, who should have been able to come to the UK because they are entitled to on the routes set up, are stuck there?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: I apologise if it sounded like a throwaway answer, but I do not think it was. I am afraid I cannot give you that information ...

Lord Tregarne (Conservative): ... Is it the case that the Falkland Islands are being considered as an alternative to Rwanda?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: ... I have read the newspaper reports. I have no particular knowledge of whether the Falkland Islands are being considered or not; I will endeavour to find out.

Baroness Hussein-Ece (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, can the Minister confirm whether the reports are true that there are at least 100 unaccompanied child refugees in hotels at present, despite this being declared unlawful by the courts?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My Lords, I do not think that it was declared unlawful by the courts. The fact is that there were some issues with regards to a particular county, and, as far as I understand it, the courts basically reaffirmed that there is a statutory duty on local authorities to look after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. In terms of the support that is available to those councils, we have made a considerable amount of money available, and we are working very closely with the councils that are involved in order to make that happen.

To read this very long question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-11-22/debates/6D8E35ED-3E88-47D9-A918-494652DA8B1E/RefugeesAndAsylumSeekersSafeRoutes>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answer: Afghanistan

Refugees: Afghanistan

Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws (Labour) [HL113] To ask His Majesty's Government how are decisions made on, and what is the process for, resettling more Afghans from Pakistan who are facing expulsion in addition to the 3,000 already accepted under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme; and what steps they are taking in that regard, including on prioritising the 20 female Afghan judges who are in Pakistan.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Resettlement of eligible Afghans remains a top priority for this government. As of June 2023, around 24,600 vulnerable people affected by the events in Afghanistan have been brought to safety. This includes British Nationals and their families, Afghans who loyally served the UK and others identified as particularly at-risk, such as campaigners for women's rights, human rights defenders, Chevening scholars, journalists, judges and members of the LGBT+ community.

We are aware of the recent Government of Pakistan announcements regarding Afghans in Pakistan and appreciate the impact of this on those awaiting resettlement. HMG has engaged intensively with the Government of Pakistan to secure assurances that none of those eligible under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will be subject to deportation.

Visas continue to be issued to individuals eligible for the ACRS and ARAP schemes and flights are continuing to bring eligible Afghans to the UK.

The ACRS is not open to applications. Instead, eligible individuals are prioritised and referred for resettlement to the UK through the existing pathways under this scheme. Our Afghan schemes have been designed to be fair and equitable in identifying those in need of resettlement or relocation to the UK.

We recognise there are many vulnerable individuals who remain in Afghanistan and the region. Whilst the government maintains a generous resettlement offer, we must recognise that the capacity of the UK to resettle people is not unlimited and difficult decisions have to be made on who will be prioritised for resettlement.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-08/hl113>

Information about the Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>

Information about the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answers: Other Immigration and Asylum

Refugee Convention

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [2360] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to ensure that the UK meets its obligations to refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: All asylum claims admitted to the UK are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our legal obligations. Each individual assessment is made against the background of relevant case law and the latest available country of origin information.

Our assessment of the situation of a given group in a given country is set out in the relevant country policy and information note, which is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/country-policy-and-information-notes)

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-16/2360>

The Refugee Convention, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.unhcr.org/media/convention-and-protocol-relating-status-refugees>

Asylum

Lord German (Liberal Democrat) [HL109] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by the Prime Minister on 13 December 2022 when he stated that "we expect to abolish the backlog of initial asylum decisions by the end of next year" (HC Deb col 887), what progress they have made in reaching that target.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: We remain on track to clear the legacy backlog by the end of 2023. The asylum backlog of legacy cases fell by over 35,000 cases between the end of November 2022 and the end of August 2023 when, according to provisional data, it stood at 55,477 outstanding claims.

23,702 asylum claims were decided in the year ending June 2023, an increase of 61% on the previous year, in part due to an increase in the number of asylum decision-makers employed by the Home Office.

We met our commitment to increase the number of asylum decision-makers to 2,500, and at the end of August 2023, provisional data shows there were 2,510 in post.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-08/hl109>

The Prime Minister's remarks referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-12-13/debates/DB61C374-16B5-411C-9A29-CC3DCA119EB3/IllegalImmigration#contribution-0956F9E3-33B1-435A-B085-6B124DAD75AD>

Asylum: Children

Lord Scriven (Liberal Democrat) [HL192] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Murray of Blidworth on 26 September (HL10118), whether the live operational databases referred to in that answer have a field for inputting the child's age; and if so, when the age is initially entered, how the age is initially determined, and how, when, and by whom, it is quality assured.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The majority of those arriving in the UK illegally do not have valid documentary evidence of their age and some may misrepresent their age whether intentionally or not. There are clear safeguarding issues which arise if a child is inadvertently treated as an adult, and equally if an adult is wrongly accepted as a child and placed in accommodation with younger children to whom they could present a risk.

Where a new arrival does not have genuine documentary evidence of their age and their claimed age is doubted, an initial age decision is conducted as a first step to prevent individuals who are clearly an adult or child from being subjected unnecessarily to a more substantive age assessment and ensure that new arrivals are routed into the correct accommodation and processes for assessing their immigration claim. Most of these initial decisions on age are conducted at the Western Jet Foil, Dover on those who arrive via small boat, although the policy applies nationally and across modes to help establish age where new arrivals are first encountered.

The '[Assessing Age](#)' guidance details the Home Office's age assessment policy for immigration purposes. Where doubt remains and an individual cannot be assessed to be significantly over 18, they will be treated as a child for immigration purposes and referred to a local authority for further consideration on their age, usually in the form of a 'Merton compliant' age assessment. This typically involves two qualified social workers undertaking a series of interviews with the young person and considering any other information relevant to their age.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-09/hl192>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-12/hl10118>

Information about Merton compliant age assessments, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1140168/Assessing_age_March_2023.pdf

Asylum: Deportation

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [2302] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average length of time taken is for people whose asylum appeal has been rejected to (a) voluntarily leave and (b) be removed from the UK.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: The Home Office publishes data on returns and asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'.

Data on asylum appeals lodged and determined (including those dismissed) by year are published in tables Asy_D06 and Asy_D07 of the '[Asylum appeals lodged and determined detailed datasets](#)'. The data are not broken down by how many people remain in a constituency followed a dismissed asylum appeal.

Data on asylum-related returns by year and return type are published in table Ret_05 of the '[Returns summary tables](#)'. The data are not broken down by the constituency the individual lived in prior to their return or whether the return followed a dismissed asylum appeal.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-16/2302>

UK Parliament Early Day Motions

Stuart C McDonald (SNP) [98] **Cost of applying for indefinite leave under the bereaved partner concession** – That this House supports the Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex and London's call for a fee waiver to be introduced for grieving widows applying for indefinite leave to remain under the bereaved partner concession; notes that the death of a loved one brings multiple emotional, practical and financial costs; acknowledges that people whose leave to remain in the UK is tied to a partner who dies are in a particularly vulnerable situation; regrets that the spouses of deceased partners are now required to pay £2,885 for the concession despite the application costing just £491 for the government to process; further notes that people who cannot afford this fee may be forced to leave the UK or face detention and removal after the death of their partner; notes that the lack of a fee waiver for the concession discriminates against women who constitute almost 70 per cent of those on family visas; believes it is irrational for the government to introduce a concession in recognition of these applicants' vulnerability but first insist on payment of a fee that people cannot afford; and calls for a fee waiver to be introduced.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61569>

Daisy Cooper (Liberal Democrat) [100] **Sporting ambitions of children on dependent visas** – That this House notes that some people who are legally residing in the United Kingdom have children attached to their dependent visas who are extremely talented at sports; expresses extreme disappointment at the refusal of the Home Office to establish a route for these talented children on dependent visas to enter a professional sporting environment to further their career; regrets that children who have entered the UK dependants are precluded from pursuing a professional sporting career; and calls on the Government to engage with the Professional Footballers Association, football clubs and other sporting bodies that want to nurture the sporting talent of these young people.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61571>

Press Release

People smugglers ordered to pay over £280,000 from criminal profits in the Essex lorry deaths case

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/people-smugglers-ordered-pay-over-ps280000-criminal-profits-essex-lorry-deaths-case>

New Publications

A Home Office Guide to Living in Initial Accommodation

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65576e09544aea0019fb2f40/HO_Guide_to_Living_in_IA_Draft_June_2023_FINAL.pdf

Understanding international migration statistics

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/methodologies/understandinginternationalmigrationstatistics>

Estimating UK international migration: 2012 to 2021

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/estimatingukinternationalmigration2012to2021/2023-11-23>

Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending June 2023

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/longterminternationalmigrationprovisional/yearendingjune2023>

Reason for international migration, international students update: November 2023

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/reasonforinternationalmigrationinternationalstudentsupdate/november2023>

EU Settlement Scheme Quarterly Statistics: September 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eu-settlement-scheme-quarterly-statistics-september-2023/eu-settlement-scheme-quarterly-statistics-september-2023>

Analysis of Ukrainian nationals entering employment in the UK

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/655e2d8da7a134000d5857be/Counts_of_Ukrainian_Nationals_in_Employment_-_March_2022_to_September_2023.ods

Updated: Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Visa data by age and sex of applicant

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1158985/Ukraine_Sponsorship_scheme_visas_-_by_age_and_sex_to_31_March_2023.ods

Updated: Migrants detected crossing the English Channel in small boats – last 7 days

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migrants-detected-crossing-the-english-channel-in-small-boats/migrants-detected-crossing-the-english-channel-in-small-boats-last-7-days>

Updated: Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Visa data by country, upper and lower tier local authority

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-visa-data-by-country-upper-and-lower-tier-local-authority>

News: Rwanda Refugee Policy

Rishi Sunak faces cabinet split over Rwanda deportation Plan B

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/rishi-sunak-rwanda-asylum-b2450256.html>

Rwanda not the 'be all and end all' of plan to stop the boats, James Cleverly says

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/james-cleverly-rwanda-not-be-all-b2453299.html>

James Cleverly: Rwanda plan is not the be all and end all

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/james-cleverly-interview-home-secretary-migrants-rwanda-fb05pxv9b>

No split between Cleverly and Sunak on Rwanda, says minister

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/rwanda-laura-trott-home-secretary-robert-jenrick-treasury-b2453631.html>

Douglas Ross defends UK Government's Rwanda plan

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/23933580.douglas-ross-defends-uk-governments-rwanda-plan/>

Falklands was suggested as Rwanda back-up for migrants by Home Office

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/home-office-offered-up-falklands-as-back-up-for-rwanda-policy-z8stsjc83>

News: Channel Migrants

Two migrants die crossing Channel in small boat

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67504799>

News: Other Immigration and Asylum

Net migration to UK hits record high

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/11/23/uk-net-migration-hits-record-high-ons/>

Net migration to UK hit record 745,000 in 2022, revised figures show

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/23/net-migration-to-uk-hit-record-745000-in-2022-revised-figures-show>

Sunak plans new immigration crackdown on foreign worker families as migration figures set to hit record high

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/rishi-sunak-immigration-rwanda-tories-b2451615.html>

Suella Braverman hits out after record migration figures

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-67511343>

Robert Jenrick pressures No 10 with own plan to cut migration

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-67515674>

Send asylum seekers to Orkney Islands not Rwanda, says Lee Anderson

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/11/22/send-asylum-seekers-orkney-islands-rwanda-lee-anderson/>

Send asylum seekers to remote Scottish islands if Rwanda deal fails, says Tory deputy chair Lee Anderson

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/lee-anderson-tory-rwanda-asylum-rishi-sunak-b2451600.html>

Lee Anderson: 'Send Asylum seekers to Orkney' comments condemned

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/23942310.lee-anderson-send-asylum-seekers-orkney-comments-condemned/>

Questions politicians can't seem to answer on immigration

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-67530919>

Curbs on migrant workers would be 'dangerous' for social care, warns government adviser

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/nov/25/curbs-on-migrant-workers-would-be-dangerous-for-social-care-warns-government-adviser>

'We're going to see people dying on the streets': homeless refugee crisis grips Liverpool

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/21/were-going-to-see-people-dying-on-the-streets-homeless-refugee-crisis-grips-liverpool>

Student with rare disease to stay in UK after immigration battle

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-67451358>

TOP

Community Relations

Scottish Parliament Motion

John Mason (SNP) [S6M-11320] International Day for Tolerance – That the Parliament notes that 16 November 2023 was International Day for Tolerance; considers that tolerance, as articulated in UNESCO's 1995 Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, is a fundamental element in cultivating a harmonious and inclusive global society and embodies respect and acceptance for the diverse array of cultures, traditions, belief systems and ways of life across the world; further considers that tolerance goes beyond a mere acknowledgment of differences, requiring a genuine appreciation for the richness that diversity contributes to the global community, and is an active and conscious effort, which necessitates a proactive stance in understanding, engaging with, and coexisting with differences; believes that the central idea of tolerance is the recognition of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms for every individual, regardless of their background or identity, and that this becomes a commitment to upholding these rights, emphasising equality and dignity for all; further believes that, given the natural diversity among people, the declaration underscores that tolerance is vital for the survival of mixed communities globally, in a world marked by cultural, ethnic, or religious heterogeneity; considers that tolerance emerges as a key factor in maintaining peace and stability; welcomes that this day encourages individuals, communities and nations to reflect on, and promote, tolerance through activities fostering mutual understanding, respect and appreciation for diversity, and hopes that days like this help in building a just, peaceful,

Equality

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

HIV Infection: Ethnic Groups

Florence Eshalomi (Labour) [2037] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to create tailored HIV awareness campaigns for the black community.

Reply from Andrea Leadsom: HIV Prevention England (HPE) is the national HIV prevention programme for England and is funded with £3.5 million over three years by the Department of Health and Social Care, as part of the Government's HIV Action Plan.

The programme aims to support communities who are disproportionately affected by HIV, in particular gay people, bisexual people and men who have sex with men and Black African heterosexual men and women. The Department has appointed Terrence Higgins Trust, a national charity who provide services related to sexual health and HIV, to deliver the programme from 2021-2024. HPE delivers a nationally co-ordinated programme of HIV prevention work, including public campaigns such as National HIV Testing Week, that is designed to complement locally commissioned prevention activities in areas of high HIV prevalence. HPE also aims to improve knowledge and understanding of HIV transmission and reduce stigma within affected communities.

HPE work with a wide range of models and their network of influencers and develops its strategies based on comprehensive data, audience insight and knowledge from local partners within England, which ensure a wide range of patient voices and experiences are represented, including those within the black community. Campaigns are promoted using a multi-channel approach including specialist channels relevant to the audiences and targeting via digital platforms and social media.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-14/2037>

HIV Infection: Ethnic Groups

Florence Eshalomi (Labour) [2040] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the availability of (a) education, (b) employment and (c) housing for the black community on rates of HIV transmission within that community.

Reply from Andrea Leadsom: No assessment has been made of the potential impact of the availability of education, employment and housing for the black community on rates of HIV transmission within that community.

Statutory guidance on relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education is the responsibility of the Department for Education. This ensures that pupils understand transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and that they understand how and where to access confidential sexual and reproductive health advice and treatment, amongst other key issues.

The HIV Action Plan is the cornerstone of our approach in England to drive forward progress and achieve our goal to end new HIV transmissions within England by

2030. A key principle of our approach is to ensure that all populations benefit equally from improvements made in HIV outcomes.

As part of the Plan, the Department has committed £3.5 million to fund a national HIV prevention programme for England, HIV Prevention England (HPE). The programme aims to support communities who are disproportionately affected by HIV, with a particular focus on Black African communities, delivering a nationally co-ordinated programme of HIV prevention work that is designed to complement locally commissioned prevention activities in areas with high HIV prevalence.

NHSE England is also investing £33 million to fund and roll out the blood-borne virus emergency department (BBV ED) opt-out testing programme covering the 21 local authorities with the highest HIV prevalence. Findings published by UKHSA show that the programme has been particularly successful in engaging harder to reach groups, such as older people, women, people from non-white British backgrounds, and people living in the most deprived areas.

Local authorities are responsible for commissioning comprehensive, open access sexual health services to meet local demand and individual local authorities decide on spending priorities based on an assessment of local need for sexual health services, including HIV prevention and testing. We are providing more than £3.5 billion this financial year to local authorities through the Public Health Grant to fund public health services, including sexual health services, increasing to £3.575 billion in 2024/25.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-14/2040>

The HIV Action Plan, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/towards-zero-the-hiv-action-plan-for-england-2022-to-2025>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Young Offender Institutions: Ethnic Groups

Janet Daby (Labour) [2642] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many ethnic minority staff were employed in the youth secure estate in each reporting year since 2010.

Janet Daby (Labour) [2645] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many ethnic minority personnel were employed in senior leadership roles in the youth secure estate in each reporting year since 2010.

Reply from Edward Argar: The headcount of staff who declared that they were from an ethnic minority background and who work in prisons currently part of the Youth Custody Service is given in the table below.

Table 1 - Headcount of staff in Youth Custody Service prisons, declared from an ethnic minority background, as at 31 March since 2010, and latest position as at 30 September 2023.

As at	Ethnic Minority	White	Unknown	Total
31/3/10	166	1,224	105	1,495
31/3/11	163	1,257	123	1,543
31/3/12	162	1,225	110	1,497
31/3/13	159	1,159	142	1,460
31/3/14	145	1,043	122	1,310
31/3/15	131	985	149	1,265
31/3/16	135	913	230	1,278
31/3/17	145	942	309	1,396
31/3/18	134	844	538	1,516
31/3/19	191	1,080	566	1,837

31/3/20	207	1,122	253	1,582
31/3/21	211	1,115	263	1,589
31/3/22	228	1,128	277	1,633
31/3/23	251	1,095	304	1,650
30/9/23	276	1,158	264	1,698

Notes

1. The Youth Custody Service (YCS), created in April 2017 to oversee day-to-day management of the under 18s young people's estate. Youth Custody Estate includes the following prisons: Cookham Wood, Feltham, Werrington, Wetherby and Medway Secure Training Centre (which closed in March 2020)
2. Ethnicity is a self-declared field and is optional to complete.
3. Unknown includes those who hadn't declared their ethnicity as well as those who responded 'Prefer Not To Say'.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-20/2642>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-20/2645>

Young Offender Institutions: Ethnic Groups

Janet Daby (Labour) [2646] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of when the proportion of ethnic minority people in senior leadership roles in the youth secure estate will be the same as the proportion in the wider working population.

Reply from Edward Argar: As of 30 June 2023, 19.2 per cent of all Youth Custody Service staff who declared their ethnicity were from an ethnic minority background, up from 11.9% in 2010. It is not possible to disaggregate this figure to show how many were in senior leadership roles.

More generally, the proportion of His Majesty's Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) senior leaders (from HMPPS Band 10 upwards) from an ethnic minority background has increased from 4.8 per cent in December 2019 to 9.5 per cent in 2022. HMPPS is continuing to work to the goal of ensuring that the representation of ethnic minority senior staff matches the working age population by 2030.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-20/2646>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Football: Ethnic Groups

Thangam Debbonaire (Labour) [1907] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the report entitled Black Representation in English Professional Football published by the Black Footballers Partnership in January 2023.

Thangam Debbonaire (Labour) [1908] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to increase black representation in the football profession.

Reply from Stuart Andrew: The Government supports calls for further action to be taken on a range of issues in the domestic game, including equality, diversity and inclusion. We welcome the industry's ongoing efforts to improve transparency and its commitment to provide equity and fair opportunities for all. Since the publication of the Fan-Led Review, the football leagues and the Football Association (FA) have introduced enhanced equality requirements for football clubs.

The Government acknowledges that there is still more progress to be made and will continue to work with the leagues, the FA, and other organisations to encourage reform where appropriate.

It is ultimately for football's national governing body, the FA, to decide on the specific aims and appropriate initiatives to increase diversity and inclusion in the sport.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-14/1907>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-14/1908>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://api.blackfootballerspartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/BFP-SzymanskiReport2023-1.pdf>

New Publication

Kicking the can down the road: The planning and provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in England 1960-2023

https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Oak-Project-Report_links.pdf

TOP

Racism, Religious Hatred, and Discrimination

Scottish Parliament Written Answers

Islamophobia

Paul O’Kane (Labour) [S6W-22748] To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S6W-06439 by Shona Robison on 10 March 2022, what the current status is of its work on adopting a formal definition of Islamophobia; whether it will commit to adopting the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia, and, if so, within what timeframe.

Reply from Siobhian Brown: Nobody in our society should ever be subjected to Islamophobia, and we recognise we need to do more to tackle it in Scotland.

We previously consulted with communities affected by Islamophobia on whether adoption of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) or some other definition of Islamophobia would be helpful. Although communities were broadly supportive of a definition, there was no consensus on the APPG definition.

Our Hate Crime Strategy sets out our strategic priorities for tackling hate crime in Scotland, including Islamophobia. It was informed by communities with lived experience of hate crime, including Muslim communities.

Our Hate Crime Strategy Delivery Plan, published this week, commits to a range of meaningful, ongoing and participatory engagement. We will continue to engage with Muslim communities in Scotland to understand the issues of importance to them as we move into strategy delivery.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-22748>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-06439>

Information about the APPG definition of islamophobia, referred to above, can be read at

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf>

The Hate Crime Strategy referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/hate-crime-strategy-scotland/>

The Hate Crime Strategy Delivery Plan referred to above can be read at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/hate-crime-strategy-delivery-plan/>

Islamophobia

Foyso Choudhury (Labour) [S6W-22685] To ask the Scottish Government, in light of Islamophobia Awareness Month 2023, what action it is taking to support Police Scotland in recognising and tackling Islamophobic abuse (a) in person and (b) online.

Reply from Siobhian Brown: Islamophobia Awareness Month (IAM) shines a light on the continuing presence of Islamophobia in our society, and the impact that anti-Muslim hatred can have.

The Scottish Government is taking action to implement our new Hate Crime Strategy for tackling all forms of hate crime, including Islamophobic hate crime. The strategy was developed in partnership with a range of organisations who have expertise in tackling hatred and prejudice, including Police Scotland who are members of our Hate Crime Strategic Partnership Group.

Our Hate Crime Strategy Delivery Plan, published 20 November, outlines our priorities for tackling hate crime until 2026. The delivery plan sets out our action in relation to the strategy's commitments, including support for victims and reporting, improving data and evidence on hate crime and developing effective approaches to prevention. It will also support implementation of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021.

Whilst regulation of internet services is reserved to the UK Government, we will consider the impacts of online hate crime, recognising the need to continuously improve and adapt to align with changes online. We want to ensure people – including children and young people – know how to keep safe online, including on social media.

We will continue to engage with the UK Government as they implement the Online Safety Act.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-22685>

The Hate Crime Strategy referred to above can be read at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/hate-crime-strategy-scotland/>

The Hate Crime Strategy Delivery Plan referred to above can be read at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/hate-crime-strategy-delivery-plan/>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

Hate Crime

Dan Jarvis (Labour) [1885] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he plans to publish a Hate Crime Action Plan.

Reply from Laura Farris: We will not be publishing a new Hate Crime Strategy because the Government is focussed on improving the police response to all crime. This approach represents the best use of public money, and the Government remains committed to continuing to protect all communities from crime. We expect the police to investigate these abhorrent offences and make sure the cowards who commit them feel the full force of the law.

Our absolute priority is to get more police onto our streets, cut crime, protect the public and bring more criminals to justice. We are supporting police by providing them with the resources they need. This has included the recruitment of 20,000 additional police officers by March 2023.

Internet: Antisemitism and Radicalism

Dan Jarvis (Labour) [1572] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment he has made of the potential feasibility of setting up a dedicated unit to focus on disrupting (a) Bitmasks and (b) other online platforms that have the potential to spread (i) antisemitism and (ii) radicalisation.

Reply from Tom Tugendhat: The Online Safety Act recently received Royal Assent. Under the Online Safety Act tech companies will be accountable to an independent regulator, Ofcom, to keep their users safe. Platforms will be required to take action to prevent the proliferation of illegal content online, including terrorist content, and ensure their services are not used for offending. This means that companies will need to mitigate the risk that their services are used for illegal activity or to share illegal content. Ofcom will have a tough suite of enforcement powers to use against companies who fail to fulfil their duties.

The Home Office builds relationships with a range of online platforms to tackle online harms including to reduce the availability and accessibility of radicalising content online. It would not be appropriate to comment on the specific status of our relationships with individual companies at this time.

The Metropolitan Police's Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CTIRU) identifies, assesses and refers online content that is in breach of UK terrorism legislation to tech companies for removal, in accordance with platforms' terms and conditions.

The Government stays abreast of developments in technology and the way in which technology is exploited for harm, in order to adapt Government's approach to tackling online harms, where appropriate.

This Government is clear that all forms of hate crime, including antisemitism, are completely unacceptable and we are committed to tackling these abhorrent offences. The Government is clear that online offending is as serious as offline offending, which is why we fund the National Online Hate Crime Hub, a central capability designed to support individual local police forces in dealing with online hate crime.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-13/1572>

UK Parliament Petition

Definition of Islamophobia

Afzal Khan (Labour): I rise to present a petition about the need for the Government to formally define Islamophobia to tackle hatred against Muslims. The all-party group on British Muslims developed a definition of Islamophobia that is supported by countless academics, community organisations, political parties, mayors, councils, trade unions and others. Last month alone there was a 600% rise in Islamophobia.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of the United Kingdom, declares that a formal, Government-backed definition of Islamophobia is needed; further declares that the definition by the APPG on British Muslims is more appropriate, which defines Islamophobia as "rooted in racism and a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness"; notes that this definition recognises that Muslims are subject to a system of discrimination, control and socio-economic exclusion, alongside hate crime, harassment and abuse; further notes that adopting this definition is an important first step towards tackling hatred against Muslims in Britain.

The petitioners therefore urge the House of Commons to formally adopt the APPG's

definition of Islamophobia and take further steps to tackle Islamophobia in the UK. And the petitioners remain, etc. [P002871]

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-22/debates/2DE48EFB-5C5B-48C8-A7FB-09FF097DDDA8/DefinitionOfIslamophobia>

Information about the APPG definition of islamophobia, referred to above, can be read at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf>

Press Release

STUC Anti-Racism Rally, Glasgow, November 25th 2023 – First Minister’s Speech

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/stuc-anti-racism-rally-glasgow-november-25th-2023-first-ministers-speech/>

New Publications

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021: information note

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/hate-crime-public-order-scotland-act-2021-information-note/>

Hate crime strategy: delivery plan

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/hate-crime-strategy-delivery-plan/>

News

Jeremy Hunt pledges £7m to tackle antisemitism

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67494802>

Chancellor pledges up to £7m to tackle antisemitism in schools and universities

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/holocaust-educational-trust-chancellor-jeremy-hunt-community-security-trust-islamophobia-b2451765.html>

Bob Stewart MP to stand down after racial abuse conviction

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-67467950>

MP Bob Stewart found guilty of racist abuse will not stand at next election

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/11/19/mp-guilty-of-racist-abuse-will-not-stand-at-next-election/>

MP Bob Stewart to stand down after racial abuse conviction

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/19/tory-mp-bob-stewart-to-stand-down-after-racial-abuse-conviction>

Council of Europe anti-racism Commission to prepare report on the United Kingdom

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/-/council-of-europe-anti-racism-commission-to-prepare-report-on-the-united-kingdom>

Tell MAMA recorded 895 anti-Muslim cases in six weeks

<https://tellmamauk.org/tell-mama-recorded-895-anti-muslim-cases-in-six-weeks/>

Antisemitic Incidents – 22 November Update

<https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2023/11/22/antisemitic-incidents-22-november-update>

With antisemitism rising as the Israel-Hamas war rages, Europe's Jews worry

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/israel-ap-jews-europe-hamas-b2453572.html>

BBC staff 'blocked from march against antisemitism'

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/bbc-staff-blocked-from-march-against-antisemitism-68jwmij9d>

We must fight antisemitism on UK campuses

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2023/nov/20/we-must-fight-antisemitism-on-uk-campuses>

Elon Musk's X sues Media Matters over antisemitism analysis

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-67482231>

Tackling racial disparities on Wikipedia

<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/blog/tackling-racial-disparities-on-wikipedia>

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Other Scottish Parliament and Government

Debate

Calderwood Lodge Primary School (60th Anniversary)

<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=15562&i=132799#ScotParlOR>

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Other UK Parliament and Government

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answer

Meat: Ritual Slaughter

Christopher Chope (Conservative) [2460] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring halal meat to be labelled with a declaration as to whether it comes from animals that are stunned before slaughter.

Reply from Mark Spencer: In 2021, Defra ran a call for evidence to gather data on the potential impacts of different types of labelling reform for animal welfare, including considerations around method of slaughter. We received over 1,600 responses and a [summary](#) of these responses is available on GOV.UK. Based on the information gathered, we will continue to work with stakeholders to explore how we can harness the market to improve food information for consumers.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-20/2460>

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Cost of Living

Scottish Government Website

Help during the cost of living crisis

Most households are concerned about the cost of living, with worries about issues such as rent and mortgages, food and utility bills, energy costs, and debt.

In response, the Scottish Government has launched a new website that provides information to help people access support with

- Energy and Bills
- Benefits and Income
- Children and Families
- Debt and Money
- Health and Wellbeing

Your local council might be able to help if you need urgent help with money, food or fuel – contact the council for information.

<https://costofliving.campaign.gov.scot/>

Publication

Rising cost of living in the UK

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9900/CBP-9900.pdf>

News

UK households to be £1,900 poorer by end of this parliament, say economists

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/23/autumn-statement-tax-cuts-favour-richest-20-thinktank-analysis-finds>

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Other New Publication

'Blasphemy' in Schools Self-Censorship and Security Fears Amongst British Teachers

<https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/%E2%80%98Blasphemy-in-Schools.pdf>

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Other News

Some teachers 'self-censoring' to avoid causing religious offence, poll finds

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/batley-grammar-school-muhammad-policy-exchange-yougov-suella-braverman-b2450158.html>

Teachers are terrified of causing religious offence – but there’s a price to pay for censoring lessons

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/columnists/2023/11/20/teachers-curriculum-censorship-islam-religious-education/>

How youth workers can create space for difficult conversations with young people

<https://www.actiononprejudice.info/news/how-youth-workers-can-create-space-for-difficult-conversations-with-young-people/>

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Bills in Progress ** new or updated this week

Scottish Parliament

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/police-ethics-conduct-and-scrutiny-scotland-bill>

UK Parliament

The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 [Draft]

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2023/9780348253191/contents>

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-protection-of-premises-draft-bill-overarching-documents>

**** Workforce Information (Ethnicity) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3522>

Bill as introduced

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/53095/documents/4041>

First Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-11-23/debates/074783D0-6104-4D44-9EFC-833DD199F6E1/WorkforceInformation\(Ethnicity\)Bill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-11-23/debates/074783D0-6104-4D44-9EFC-833DD199F6E1/WorkforceInformation(Ethnicity)Bill(HL))

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Consultations ** new or updated this week

Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Bill (closing date 8 December 2023)

<https://yourviews.parliament.scot/justice/police-ethics-conduct-and-scrutiny-bill/>

Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill (closing date 20 December 2023)

https://yourviews.parliament.scot/health/abortion-services-saz-bill/consult_view/

Democracy Matters (closing date 28 February 2024)

<https://consult.gov.scot/local-government-and-communities/democracy-matters/>

Your Police 2023-2024 (closing date 31 March 2023)

<https://consult.scotland.police.uk/strategy-insight-and-innovation/your-police-2023-2024/>

ITV/Tell MAMA survey on mosque safety in the UK (closing date not stated)

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/V7V5B6L>

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Job Opportunities

[Click here](#) to find out about job opportunities.

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Funding Opportunities

** new or updated this week

Democracy Matters Community Engagement Fund 2023/24

Closing date: 26 January 2024

Scottish Government funding of up to £300 (possibility of higher funding to assist with accessibility) to support organisations and groups to host conversations and gather the views of people across Scotland on how we can create a system of inclusive local democracy. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/4ds8r9h2>

Cost-of-Living Support Scotland

Application deadline not stated

National Lottery funding from £10,001 to £75,000 for projects to help support individuals, families and communities currently experiencing hardship as a result of the cost-of-living increases. The programme aims to fund activity that reduces the impact of, or prevents financial insecurity so that people have more resilience and are more able to identify ways to deal with the impact of increased cost of living in their lives, are able to shape activity in their community to address the increased cost-of-living, and have more access to support and services that will help them to deal with the increased cost of living. For information and to apply see

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/cost-of-living-support-fund>

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Events, Conferences, and Training

** new or updated this week

**** this week!**

The Basics: A Human Rights and Equalities First Approach

27 and 28 November 2023 (online, 2.00–4.00)

THRE 2-day course for people who are just starting out and want to learn the fundamentals or who know a bit about human rights and equalities and want to know more or are just curious about what a human rights and equalities first approach might be. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/bdhtkyd9>

**** this week!**

Marking 85 years the start of the Kindertransport

1 December 2023 (online, 10.00–11.30)

Holocaust Educational Trust event for primary schools to mark 85 years since the arrival of the first Kindertransport in the UK. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/6e854fnx>

Exploring the Holocaust: UK-wide Residential Course

Application deadline 11 December 2023

9-13 February 2024 (Leicester)

Holocaust Educational Trust course for teachers and trainees to advance knowledge and inform classroom practice about the context of the Holocaust, Wartime persecution and murder, and Reactions to the Holocaust. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/46u8fdx7>

Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre School's Holocaust Memorial Day Event 2024

23 January 2024 (Glasgow, 10.00–1.30)

Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre event for secondary school pupils, providing an opportunity to hear people whose parents were survivors of the Holocaust, and who made a life in Scotland. For information see <https://sjhc.org.uk/news/hmd2024/>

Rights and Entitlements of EEA Nationals

14 February 2024 (online, 10.00–12.30)

PAIH course to find out about fundamental issues of housing, homelessness and welfare entitlements of EEA nationals and look at how service users might prepare themselves for an economy in recession and cost of living spiralling. For information see <https://www.paih.org/what-we-do/migrants-rights-courses>

Rights of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

15 February 2024 (online, 10.00–12.30)

PAIH course explore how the asylum system works from the perspective of a claimant and the process involved in making a claim for asylum. The course also explores the journeys and barriers faced by both refugees and asylum seekers reaching and building a new life in Scotland and their respective entitlement to services. For information see <https://www.paih.org/what-we-do/migrants-rights-courses>

No Recourse To Public Funds

21 February 2024 (online, 10.00–12.30)

PAIH course to help frontline workers identify a tenant's current status, clarify what this means in terms of access to public funds and plan effective support where difficulties arise. For information see <https://www.paih.org/what-we-do/migrants-rights-courses>

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Useful Links

Scottish Parliament <http://www.parliament.scot/>

Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/>

UK Parliament <http://www.parliament.uk/>

GovUK (links to UK Government Departments) <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations>

One Scotland <http://onescotland.org/>

Scottish Refugee Council <http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk>

New Scots <https://newscots.scot/>

Refugee Survival Trust <https://www.rst.org.uk/>

Freedom from Torture <https://www.freedomfromtorture.org/>

Interfaith Scotland <https://interfaithscotland.org/>

Equality and Human Rights Commission <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en>

Equality Advisory Support Service <http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/>

Scottish Human Rights Commission <http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/>

ACAS <http://www.acas.org.uk/>

SCVO <https://scvo.org.uk/>

Volunteer Scotland <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/>

Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) <https://www.oscr.org.uk/>

Scottish Fundraising Standards Panel <https://www.goodfundraising.scot/>

Disclosure Scotland <https://www.mygov.scot/disclosure-types>

Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services

<https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/disclosure-services/>

BBC News <https://www.bbc.com/news>

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SCoJeC
Scottish Council of
Jewish Communities

Representing, connecting, and supporting Jewish people in Scotland



The **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)** is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. It advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, and also works in partnership with other organisations to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality. (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438) <https://www.scojec.org/>



BEMIS is the Scottish national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body, supporting, empowering, and building the capacity of minority third sector community organisations. As a strategic partner with Government, it is proactive in influencing the development of race equality policy in Scotland, and helps develop and progress multicultural Scotland, active citizenship, democracy, and Human Rights Education at the Scottish, UK, and European levels. (Scottish Charity, no. SC027692) <http://www.bemis.org.uk/>



The **Scottish Government** is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for all those who live in Scotland. **One Scotland** is the Scottish Government campaign designed to tackle racism. It aims to raise awareness of racist attitudes, highlight its negative impact and recognise the valuable contributions that other cultures have made to our society – and make Scotland no place for racism. <http://www.gov.scot/>

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