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Immigration and Asylum

UK Parliament Debates

Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill: Third Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-03-12/debates/57E7A04B-226F-4799-9EA9-83511EBCD1D7/SafetyOfRwanda\(AsylumAndImmigration\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-03-12/debates/57E7A04B-226F-4799-9EA9-83511EBCD1D7/SafetyOfRwanda(AsylumAndImmigration)Bill)

Asylum and Migration

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-14/debates/7639F937-FDAB-4A70-8787-00F880CA09CE/AsylumAndMigration>

UK Parliament, Ministerial Statement

Immigration Rules Changes

The Minister for Legal Migration and the Border (Tom Pursglove) [HCWS338] My right hon Friend the Home Secretary is today laying before the House a statement of changes in immigration rules. As announced by the Prime Minister and Home Secretary on 4 December 2023, changes are being made to curb immigration abuse and reduce net migration. The changes will mean around 300,000 people who came to the UK last year would now not be able to come. Migration is far too high, which is why we are introducing a package of measures which will deliver the biggest ever cut to migration over the course of this year.

These changes, including the increase to the minimum income requirement (MIR) for those applying in the partner route, are supportive of the wider ambition for the UK to be a high wage, high productivity, high skill economy.

Changes to the skilled worker route

Our changes will ensure businesses invest in the resident workforce rather than over-relying on migration, while bringing salaries in line with the average full-time salary for eligible jobs.

Today the Government are laying the following measures as part of the net migration package announced on 4 December:

Sponsoring employers must pay skilled workers at least a general salary threshold or the going rate for the individual occupation, whichever is higher. The general salary threshold is being raised from £26,200 (based on 25th percentile UK earnings in eligible occupations) to £38,700 (based on median UK earnings in eligible occupations). Going rates are also being raised from the 25th percentile to the median. The new thresholds and going rates are based on the latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) pay data. Workers sponsored for health and care visas, or in occupations where going rates are set using national pay scales, are exempt from the new median salary requirements. Instead, a general threshold based on the 25th percentile continues to apply, and is being updated from £26,200 to £29,000, based on the latest ONS pay data.

The shortage occupation list is being removed and replaced by a new immigration salary list (ISL). The contents of the new list have been informed by a review carried out by the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC). The MAC will carry out a full review of the list later in 2024. As with the previous list, included occupations have a 20% discount to the general salary threshold (to £30,960 or £23,200, depending on whether they would otherwise be subject to the £38,700 or £29,000 threshold), but the previous 20% discount to the going rate requirement is being removed.

These measures are on top of changes we have already implemented in March, when we removed the right of care workers and senior carers to bring dependants, and introduced a requirement that care providers in England can only sponsor migrant workers if they are undertaking activities regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Changes to the minimum income requirement under the partner routes

We have also taken the first step to bring the financial requirement that must be met to sponsor a partner and child(ren) under the family rules into line with the new minimum general salary threshold for skilled workers of £38,700, with an initial increase to £29,000. This will no longer include an additional income requirement for children.

This increase ensures that families will make a net positive impact on the economy, as well as contributing to the Government target to lower net migration.

We have also brought the MIR for the HM armed forces partner route—which includes the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the Army, including the Brigade of Gurkhas and the Royal Air Force—into line with the HM armed forces salary minimum threshold, which is currently £23,496. This will similarly no longer include an additional income requirement for children. Tethering the MIR for HM armed forces to their salary threshold takes into account the

unique nature of their service, the armed forces covenant, and the critical need to recruit and retain HM armed forces personnel in order to maintain national security.

Other aspects of the MIR under both routes will remain unchanged, such as the various ways in which it can be met and the consideration of exceptional circumstances where it may not be met in certain cases. The rules also make transitional provisions for those already granted under the family or armed forces rules.

Changes relating to the EU settlement scheme (EUSS)

We are amending the relationship requirements under “Appendix Victim of Domestic Abuse” (VDA) to include all partners with pre-settled status under the EUSS.

The EUSS in “Appendix EU” enables EU, other European economic area (EEA) and Swiss citizens living in the UK by the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, and relevant family members, to obtain immigration status. “Appendix VDA” provides access to immediate settlement for victims of domestic abuse who meet its relationship requirements. They currently include, together with their dependent children, any partner sponsored under “Appendix FM” by an EEA or Swiss citizen with settled status or (based on their residence in the UK before the end of the transition period) pre-settled status under the EUSS.

The changes expand the scope of those immediate settlement provisions to include a spouse, civil partner, or durable partner with pre-settled status under the EUSS (meaning that the relationship was formed before the end of the transition period), and their dependent children. We will also include them within the scope of the migrant victims of domestic abuse concession (outside the immigration rules) so that they can obtain leave outside the rules with access to public funds pending the outcome of an application in the UK under “Appendix VDA”. This will ensure that partners of EEA and Swiss citizens with EUSS status are treated equally under these domestic abuse provisions, regardless of whether the relationship was formed before or after the end of the transition period.

A person granted immediate settlement under “Appendix VDA” will still be able to apply for settled status under the EUSS at the point at which they would otherwise have been eligible for it, based on their continuous residence in the UK. However, in line with article 18(1)(h) of the withdrawal agreement, the changes also require a person resident in the UK before the end of the transition period—where they seek to obtain settled status under the EUSS in place of indefinite leave to enter or remain granted to them under another route—to have held their existing indefinite leave at the end of the transition period.

Immigration salary list and asylum

We are replacing the shortage occupation list with a new immigration salary list. Eligible asylum seekers granted permission to work in the UK can currently only work in roles on the shortage occupation list. Given the shortage occupation list’s replacement with the immigration salary list, asylum seekers who are eligible and granted permission to work in the UK from 4 April will only be able to work in roles on the immigration salary list.

Changes to “Appendix AR: Administrative Review EU”

“Appendix AR: Administrative Review EU” has been redrafted and simplified in line with “Appendix AR: Administrative Review”. It has also been amended to remove the scope to apply out-of-time for administrative review of a relevant EUSS decision taken before 5 October 2023. Individuals will have had more than five months to apply out-of-time for administrative review, and they will continue to be able to apply to the first-tier tribunal to appeal out-of-time and the tribunal will consider that application on its merits. The scope to apply for administrative review of a relevant EUSS decision taken from 5 October 2023 was removed by HC 1780.

There are a number of other changes to the immigration rules, mainly of a minor or technical nature. The changes to the immigration rules are being laid on 14 March 2024 and will come into effect on 4 April 2024.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-14/debates/24031435000016/ImmigrationRulesChanges>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Oral Answers

Illegal Migration

Tom Hunt (Conservative) [901934] What diplomatic steps [the Minister's] Department is taking to help tackle illegal migration.

Reply from the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Anne-Marie Trevelyan): We are engaging with international partners on a “whole of route” approach to addressing irregular migration. This includes: a multi-year operational plan with France to stop small boats; developing partnerships to tackle organised immigration crime; improving returns processes; and working with partner countries through a number of international fora to address the root causes.

Tom Hunt: Small boat crossings continue to be a massive concern for my constituents, many of whom point out to me that there is some logic to the argument that if those who illegally enter our country from France, a safe European country, were returned on the same day, the problem would probably be dealt with overnight. Has my right hon. Friend discussed this with her French counterpart, and is her counterpart open to this undeniable logic? If so, why does France not accept them back on the same day?

Reply from Anne-Marie Trevelyan: My hon. Friend raises a point that is raised in many of our postbags. The reality is that individuals in need of international protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach; that will always be the fastest route to safety. We, of course, continue to work collaboratively with our European partners, including France, to address our shared migration challenges. I can update the House that our partnership with France has helped to bring down small boat arrivals, and together we stopped more than 26,000 crossings last years.

Jim Shannon (DUP): I thank the Minister for her response. We in Northern Ireland have a border with the Republic of Ireland. What discussions has she had with her counterparts in the devolved nations, and particularly in the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, about tackling illegal migration? I am ever mindful that we have a land border that needs to be patrolled and policed.

Reply from Anne-Marie Trevelyan: As I said, we continue to engage across a number of international fora to strengthen our collaboration, and to make sure that we have secure and ambitious partnerships to tackle irregular migration. I will ensure that my colleague updates the hon. Gentleman on the meetings they have been having with the PSNI.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-12/debates/2387F343-4840-4293-843E-69577C73A42D/IllegalMigration>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers: Ukraine

Asylum: Ukraine

Taiwo Owatemi (Labour) [17704] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what his planned timetable is for establishing a process by which Ukrainians who did not receive a 1A stamp on arrival to the UK are able to apply for a biometric residence permit and extend their leave to remain.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: We are aware of occasions where Ukrainians did not have their passport endorsed by an immigration official on arrival to the UK. Measures have been taken to prevent this from occurring in the future, and steps are being taken to progress those applications affected.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-07/17704>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Visas: Ukraine

Deidre Brock (SNP) [17110] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason people on Ukraine visa schemes did not have visas automatically extended.

Deidre Brock (SNP) [17111] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department has had discussions with the Ukrainian community on changes to Ukraine visa schemes.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: Although given consideration, it is not feasible to extend Ukraine scheme visas automatically. Automatic extension would require Ukrainians to confirm their residence in the UK and their willingness to have a visa extended, and so the possible customer benefits, and savings in process time, would be limited. Without requiring a registration process there would be a risk of not being able to contact all the eligible individuals which could lead to some Ukrainians being left without legal status.

The Home Office and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have had numerous discussions with the Ukrainian community, and there is currently an extensive programme of stakeholder engagement in place.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-05/17110>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-05/17111>

Visas: Ukraine

Claire Hanna (SDLP) [16531] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of extending visas for people resident in the UK on Ukrainian sponsorship schemes (a) indefinitely and (b) beyond 18 months.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: To provide certainty about the future of the Ukraine visa schemes, on 18 February we announced that existing Ukraine scheme visa holders will be able to apply for permission to remain in the UK for an additional 18 months under a new Ukraine Permission Extension scheme set to open in early 2025 (before the first UKR scheme visas start to expire in March 2025).

We keep our Ukraine schemes under consistent review in line with the ongoing war, engaging closely with other Government departments, the Ukrainian government and our counterparts globally, including governments within Europe who are hosting Ukrainians under the EU's Temporary Protection Directive (or similar).

The Ukrainian government have been clear about their strong desire for the future repatriation of its citizens to help rebuild Ukraine when it is safe to do so. It is important that our approach respects these wishes and therefore our offer of sanctuary remains temporary in nature and does not lead to settlement in the UK.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-01/16531>

Information about the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-permission-extension-scheme-information/ukraine-permission-extension-scheme-information>

Information about the EU Temporary Protection Directive, referred to above, can be read at

https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en

Overseas Students: Ukraine

Wendy Chamberlain (Liberal Democrat) [16899] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether residents under the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme will be considered Home Students for the purposes of university and college fees and student finance.

Reply from Robert Halfon: I am pleased to confirm that the department will be making changes to the student finance regulations following the recent announcement on the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme. These will ensure that, from the 2024/25 academic year, students who are granted leave under this scheme will be able to access Higher Education (HE) student support, home fee status, Advanced Learner Loans and Further Education 19+ funding on the same basis as persons with leave under one of the existing Ukraine schemes. Persons granted leave under this Scheme will continue to be eligible for student support and home fee status for as long as they continue to be granted further leave to remain in the UK.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-04/16899>

Information about the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-permission-extension-scheme-information/ukraine-permission-extension-scheme-information>

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

Visas: Care Workers

Dan Carden (Labour) [17951] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the report by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism entitled Visa system forces care workers to stay silent on rape and abuse, published on 11 March 2024.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: The Government strongly condemns any allegations of such abuse.

Anyone who has witnessed or been the victim of criminal activity should, in the first instance, contact the police.

The UK's sponsorship system has a built-in compliance framework, which has strong safeguards to prevent sponsors from engaging in illegal employment practices.

Sponsors are required to comply with UK laws, including wider employment law (such as working hours and meeting minimum salary requirements). UKVI have powers to revoke a licence where any of the key personnel named on it are convicted of certain serious offences. UKVI regularly visits premises to check sponsor compliance with the duties and requirements set out in the sponsor guidance, and this is frequently done alongside the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, whose specific remit is to protect vulnerable and exploited workers.

Employers in the health and care sector are also expected to adhere to the Department's Health and Social Care's Code of Practice for international recruitment. This sets out clear routes of escalation for anyone with concerns about exploitative recruitment or employment practices. It can be accessed here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-international-recruitment-of-health-and-social-care-personnel/code-of-practice-for-the-international-recruitment-of-health-and-social-care-personnel-in-england

Anyone who has witnessed or has been the victim of immigration abuse is strongly encouraged to report an immigration or border crime here:

www.gov.uk/report-immigration-crime

Or, to the Gangmasters & Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) here:

www.gla.gov.uk/report-issues/

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-11/17951>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2024-03-11/visa-system-forces-care-workers-to-stay-silent-on-rape-and-abuse/>

Armed Conflict: Visas

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [16823] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the potential merits of enabling (a) Palestinian civilians in Gaza and (b) other people living in war zones to apply for a visa without visiting a visa application centre.

Reply from Andrew Mitchell: The Foreign Secretary meets regularly with the Home Secretary to discuss relevant policy matters between the two departments. Visa applications can be started online at any time. Applicants are required to enrol their biometrics in a Visa Application Centre (VAC) as part of the visa application process to support identity assurance and suitability checks on foreign nationals who are subject to immigration control. Foreign national dependents of British citizens who are travelling from Gaza to Egypt and require visas to come to the UK can apply online and then visit the Visa Application Centre in Cairo or Alexandria to provide their biometric information. Further advice on travelling to Egypt from Gaza is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>. The FCDO Consular Contact Centre can be contacted on 020 7008 5000.

There are no plans to authorise entry clearance without biometrics for visa applications from Palestinian civilians in Gaza and or other people living in war zones. Palestinians in Gaza who want to apply for a UK visa but are not a dependent of a British National are not currently eligible for FCDO assistance.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-04/16823>

Visas: Gaza

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [16815] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason he has not established a family reunification visa scheme for people in Gaza.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: The Government recognises that some people impacted by the conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories may wish to join family in the UK.

The Government currently has no plans to introduce bespoke arrangements for people arriving from the region who do not hold permission to come to the UK. Palestinians who wish to join family members in the UK must do so via the existing range of routes available.

The Government allows individuals with protection status in the UK to sponsor their partner or children to join them in the UK through our refugee family reunion policy, provided they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country of origin to seek protection.

There are additional safe and legal routes for people to come to the UK should they wish to join family members here, work or study. They would need to meet the requirements of the relevant Immigration Rule under which they were applying to qualify for a visa.

The Home Office has not considered establishing a separate resettlement route for Palestinians to come to the UK. Since 2015, over half a million people have been offered safe and legal routes into the UK.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-04/16815>

Asylum: Churches

Alison Thewliss (SNP) [17427] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department,

with reference to the article by the former Secretary of State for the Home Department, the Rt hon. Member for Fareham, entitled Too many churches are facilitating bogus asylum claims. This must stop, published by the Telegraph on 3 February 2024, whether his Department holds evidence of churches facilitating high levels of false asylum claims.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: Every asylum case is determined on its individual merits and on a case by case basis. The Home Secretary and the Church are working together to better scrutinise asylum claims based on religious persecution and ensure those in genuine need are supported, and that there are no loopholes to claiming asylum in this country.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-06/17427>

The article referred to above can be read at

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/02/03/too-many-churches-are-facilitating-bogus-asylum-claims/>

Asylum: Christianity

Stephen Timms (Labour) [17030] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate he has made of the number of asylum claims based on false conversions to Christianity between 6 September 2022 and 13 November 2023.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: This information is not recorded in a reportable format.

Information regarding initial decisions on asylum claims, by outcome, is contained within the ASY_D02 tab of the Asylum applications, decisions and resettlement dataset: [Immigration system statistics data tables](#).

This does not include information regarding whether the asylum claimant changed their religion.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-05/17030>

Asylum: Children

Peter Gibson (Conservative) [17195] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment his Department has made of the needs of an unaccompanied minor placed in the care of a local authority; and what assessment his Department has made of the ability of local authorities to meet those needs.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: Local authorities have a statutory duty under S20 of the Children Act 1989 to look after children in need in their area. This includes unaccompanied asylum seeking (UAS) children who either arrive in a local authority area or are transferred there under the mandated National Transfer Scheme. The National Transfer Scheme provides a mechanism for the statutory responsibility for an UAS child to be transferred from an entry local authority to another local authority in the UK for ongoing care and support.

The decision for any UAS child to be referred to the NTS for transfer lies with the local authorities as the child's corporate parent. The NTS Protocol sets out the criteria for referring a child to the NTS which can be found here: [Unaccompanied asylum seeking children: national transfer scheme](#).

When a child is being looked after by a local authority, that local authority is under a duty to safeguard and promote the child's welfare under the Children Act 1989.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-05/17195>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Asylum: Housing

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour) [16977] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to address the findings of the report entitled A re-inspection of the use of hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, published by his Department in February 2024.

Asylum: Children

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour) [16978] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the report entitled A re-inspection of the use of hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, published by his Department in February 2024, what steps he is taking to ensure the (a) safety and (b) welfare of unaccompanied child asylum seekers in the UK.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: Since the two ICIBI inspections in 2022 and 2023, the Home Office has taken positive steps with our partners which has resulted in the closure of all 7 hotels for UAS children. The Home Office has provided details of its formal response to the recommendations and had already progressed activity linked to those recommendations prior to the hotels closing.

On both occasions of inspection, the ICIBI found that the children accommodated at the interim hotels reported they felt 'happy and safe' and spoke well of the staff caring for them.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-04/16977>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-04/16978>

The reports referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e07349f1cab36b60fc47ba/A_re-inspection_of_the_use_of_hotels_for_housing_unaccompanied_asylum-seeking_children_September_to_October_2023.pdf

and

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/634fa461d3bf7f618aaa30b9/An_inspection_of_the_use_of_hotels_for_housing_unaccompanied_asylum-seeking_children_UASC_March_to_May_2022.pdf

Immigration: Housing

Peter Gibson (Conservative) [16931] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to provide homes to people granted leave to remain once their funded accommodation ends; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of extending the period of time before which such accommodation needs to be vacated on the supply of social housing.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: We work closely with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) 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 directly working with local authorities to notify them when an individual is due to have their asylum support ended.

We are working with our partners, including local authorities, to provide timely notification of key events that impact them. We are working with our SMP to facilitate regional sessions with councils and to share data.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-04/16931>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answer: Rwanda Refugee Policy

Asylum: Rwanda

Lord Dodds of Duncairn (DUP) [HL2890] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the application of all the provisions of the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill to Northern Ireland in light of the judgment of the High Court

of Justice in Northern Ireland that the conditional immunity provisions in the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 are incompatible with Article 2 of the Windsor Framework.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Government has consistently applied immigration policy across the United Kingdom as a whole. That remains our absolute intention with the Rwanda Bill, which provides for it to apply UK-wide. We have considered the judgment and have lodged an appeal.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-29/hl2890>

The judgement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.judiciaryni.uk/files/judiciaryni/2024-03/Dillon%2C%20McEvoy%2C%20McManus%2C%20Hughes%2C%20Jordan%2C%20Gilvary%2C%20and%20Fitzsimmons%20Application.pdf>

The Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/41/enacted>

The Windsor Framework, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63fccf07e90e0740d3cd6ed6/The_Windsor_Framework_a_new_way_forward.pdf

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

Asylum: Rwanda

Lord Scriven (Liberal Democrat) [HL2962] To ask His Majesty's Government how many Rwandan nationals have been granted (1) refugee status, or (2) other leave to remain, in the UK since April 2022; and what are the principal reasons for granting.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)' on gov.uk. Data on initial decisions by nationality are published in table Asy_D02 of the '[Asylum applications, decisions and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. From April 2022 until December 2023, 9 main applicant Rwandan nationals were granted refugee permission and 1 main applicant was granted other leave.

All asylum and human rights claims lodged from within the UK and admitted to the UK asylum system, including those seeking asylum from Rwanda, are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations, and against the background of relevant case law, policy guidance and the latest available country of origin information.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-01/hl2962>

Asylum: Children

Lord Scriven (Liberal Democrat) [HL2855] To ask His Majesty's Government how many unaccompanied children seeking asylum who were housed in Home Office hotels are still missing; and what is the breakdown of (1) ages, and (2) length of time missing, for those children.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: We take any child going missing extremely seriously. When any child goes missing, a multi-agency missing persons protocol is mobilised. Many of those who have gone missing are subsequently traced and located.

As of 5 March, 118 children are still missing. The majority were aged 16 and 17 when they went missing. Only about 18 are still under the age of 18. It is important to note that this data is from a live operational database and has not been quality

assured to the same standard as published data.

The most recent published data can be found at <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-28/hl2855>.

Undocumented Migrants

Lord Scriven (Liberal Democrat) [HL2853] To ask His Majesty's Government how many individuals have arrived into the UK via irregular routes since 7 March 2023; and of those individuals, how many have a case for refugee status started by the Home Office.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Home Office publishes statistics on irregular arrivals to the UK in the 'Irregular migration to the UK statistics' release on gov.uk. Data on irregular arrivals from 2018 to 2023 is published in table Irr_D01 of the '[Irregular migration to the UK detailed datasets](#)'. Data on asylum applications from small boat arrivals and the initial decisions for these applications is published in tables Irr_D02 and Irr_D03 of the '[Irregular migration to the UK detailed datasets](#)', with the latest data up to the end of May 2023.

The Home Office does not publish data on asylum applications for other irregular arrivals.

As shown on table Irr_D03, there were no applications of asylum granted to small boat arrivals who arrived in April and May 2023.

[Irregular migration to the UK detailed datasets](#)

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-28/hl2853>

Asylum: MOD Wethersfield

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Labour) [HL2845] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Sharpe of Epsom on 14 February (HL2168), whether they will now answer the question put; namely, what assessment they have made of the findings of the report Ghettoised and traumatised: the experiences of men held in quasi-detention in Wethersfield, published by the Helen Bamber Foundation and Humans for Rights Network on 15 December 2023, and their implications for housing asylum seekers at MDP Wethersfield.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Home Office dispute the findings of the report. Many of the points raised in the report are factually incorrect and the report has not been written following an 'inspection' or visit of the site to gain first-hand experience/evidence/knowledge.

The site at Wethersfield provides safe and secure non detained accommodation for asylum seekers who are free to come and go.

The welfare of asylum seekers is our utmost priority. The Home Office ensures that accommodation provided is adequate and meets the regulatory standards. The Home Office assesses an individual's suitability to reside at the sites and only accommodates single adult males who are considered suitable to reside there. Guidance on the suitability criteria used can be found here: [Allocation of accommodation](#).

An allocation policy and suitability criteria will ensure that no one is housed in accommodation that does not suit them or their needs. If, during their stay, it emerges that an asylum seeker is no longer suitable for the site, they will be moved to different accommodation. The service provider who is running the site on behalf of the Home Office is responsible for the safeguarding of migrants. Our service providers are experienced in managing asylum seeker accommodation in an orderly and secure manner.

The Home Office operates a Safeguarding Hub to support vulnerable individuals. Both the Home Office and its accommodation providers have robust processes in place to ensure that where someone is at risk, they are referred to the appropriate statutory agencies of the police, NHS, and social services, to promote appropriate

safeguarding interventions.

As well as making safeguarding referrals to the appropriate statutory agencies, other actions include attendance at adult protection meetings with the police, and the Home Office liaise with external and internal partners to share information. The statutory agencies retain responsibility for all decisions on intervention activity. All asylum seekers in the UK may contact Migrant Help 24 hours a day, 365 days a year if they need help, advice, or guidance; that includes raising issues relating to safeguarding.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-28/hl2845>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-02/hl2168>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.helenbamber.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/HBF%20HRNF%20Ghettoised%20and%20traumatised%20report%20on%20Wethersfield%20December23.pdf>

Offenders: Foreign Nationals

Lord Jackson of Peterborough (Conservative) [HL2798] To ask His Majesty's Government how many foreign national offenders they have removed from the United Kingdom at the conclusion of their custodial sentences in each of the past ten years.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Our priority will always be to keep the British public safe. That is why foreign nationals who abuse our hospitality by committing crimes should be in no doubt of our determination to deport them.

The table below provides information on the returns of foreign national offenders (FNOs) and those returned under Early Removal Scheme (ERS).

| Date of return | Total FNO Returns | FNOs returned under ERS |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 2014 | 5,395 | 1,717 |
| 2015 | 6,024 | 2,034 |
| 2016 | 6,437 | 2,161 |
| 2017 | 6,292 | 2,106 |
| 2018 | 5,518 | 2,118 |
| 2019 | 5,128 | 2,101 |
| 2020 | 2,944 | 1,364 |
| 2021 | 2,706 | 1,196 |
| 2022 | 3,097 | 601 |
| Jan 2023 - Sep 2023 | 2,801 | – |
| TOTAL | 46,342 | 15,398 |

Footnote:

1: The total returns dataset is from 01 January 2014 to 01 September 2023, in line with published data.

2: Available published statistics for ERS are only available up to and including June 2022.

The Nationality and Borders Act introduced in April 2022 made it easier and quicker to remove FNOs and those with no right to be in the UK. The Act extended the period an FNO can be removed from prison under the ERS from a maximum of 9 months to 12 months before their custodial sentence would otherwise have ended. New changes, which came into force in January 2024, extended the removal period even further. Removal of FNOs can now take place up to 18 months before the end of the custodial element of their sentence, providing they have served the requisite period before removal can take place.

The ERS remains the most effective mechanism for removing eligible FNOs as quickly as possible, freeing up prison beds and saving money.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-27/hl2798>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Home Affairs Committee

Evidence session: Asylum decision-making and conversion to Christianity

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14460/html/>

UK Parliament Petitions

Family visa minimum income thresholds

The petition of residents of the constituency of Manchester Gorton, Declares that multinational families are facing separation due to the Government decision to increase the income threshold for family reunification from £18,600 to £38,700; notes that there were 82,395 family-related visas granted in the year ending September 2023, with the most common origin countries being Pakistan, India and the USA; further declares that workers of Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage have the lowest median hourly pay of any ethnic group which may lead this policy to be overwhelmingly discriminatory against British Asians; and further declares that the European Convention of Human Rights grants everyone the right to family life which this policy could threaten.

The petitioners therefore request the House of Commons to urge the Government to not implement the increase in the minimum threshold for family visas to £38,700.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[\[Presented by Afzal Khan, Official Report, 27 February 2024; Vol. 746, c. 300.\]](#)

[P002916]

Observations from The Minister for Legal Migration and the Border (Tom Pursglove): The minimum income requirement (MIR) was introduced in July 2012 to ensure family migrants could be supported at a reasonable level, so they do not unreasonably become a burden on the British taxpayer, and to help ensure they can participate sufficiently in everyday life to facilitate their integration into British society. It has not been increased in line with inflation or real wages since its introduction, or been adjusted in light of rising numbers of migrants using the route. The Government will bring this threshold into line with the new minimum general salary threshold for skilled workers, which is currently £38,700. This will ensure people only bring dependants to the UK they can support financially and will apply to all British and settled sponsors under the five-year partner route.

From 11 April 2024, the minimum income requirement (MIR) for family visas will increase to £29,000, that is the 25th percentile of earnings for jobs which are eligible for skilled worker visas. This will increase incrementally, moving to the 40th percentile (currently £34,500), and finally to the 50th percentile (currently £38,700, and the level at which the general skilled worker threshold is set) by early 2025.

Tethering the MIR to the general salary threshold for skilled workers ensures that migration policy is supportive of the wider ambition for the UK to be a high-wage, high-productivity, high-skill economy. The increase to the MIR will ensure that families will make a net positive impact on the economy, as well as contributing to the Government target to lower net migration.

Those unable to meet the increased MIR will still be granted permission where to deny entry, or permission for further stay, would breach their and/or their family's article 8 rights (the right to family life) under the European convention on human rights.

The Government will publish an equality impact assessment for this policy in due course.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-11/debates/24031124000018/FamilyVisaMinimumIncomeThresholds>

Immigration health surcharge

Martyn Day (SNP) [P002925] I rise to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Linlithgow and East Falkirk in relation to the immigration health surcharge. I would like to put on the record my declaration of interest, as my partner pays the immigration health surcharge. She was not, however, one of the signatories to the petition.

There is no doubt in my mind that migrant workers are a vital part of our communities and our workforce. They contribute greatly through taxes and national insurance, and many would agree with the point that they are effectively paying twice for their healthcare. They have faced a 400% increase in the rate of the immigration health surcharge over the last five years.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of the constituency of Linlithgow and East Falkirk,

Declares that in this time of crisis in the cost of living, the spiralling cost of the immigration health surcharge paid by migrants is alarming; further that the immigration health surcharge now stands at £1035 per annum, representing a 400% increase compared with five years ago; further that when combined with the increases in visa and immigration fees, many migrant families are facing poverty, debt and destitution as they try to bear these costs; and notes that migrant workers are a vital part of our communities and our workforce, including in the UK's health and social care sectors.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to review the immigration health surcharge, taking account of the fact that migrants already pay into and contribute significantly to health and care services across the UK.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-13/debates/93851F73-B3A1-4AE0-A52B-673E5256AC5E/ImmigrationHealthSurcharge>

Press Release

New laws to cut migration and tackle care worker visa abuse

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-laws-to-cut-migration-and-tackle-care-worker-visa-abuse>

New Publications

Correspondence from the Home Secretary to the MAC regarding the rapid review of the Immigration Salary List and the review of the Shortage Occupation List

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-secretarys-response-to-mac-reviews/correspondenc-from-the-home-secretary-to-the-mac-regarding-the-rapid-review-of-the-immigration-salary-list-and-the-review-of-the-shortage-occupation-l>

The rapid review referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65d5c4252197b2001d7fa725/Rapid_review_of_the_Immigration_Salary_List_2024.pdf

House of Commons Library Briefing: Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill: progress of the Bill

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9944/CBP-9944.pdf>

House of Commons Library Briefing: Changes to legal migration rules for family and work visas in 2024

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9920/>

Guidance: Failure to travel to Bibby Stockholm vessel

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/failure-to-travel-to-bibby-stockholm-vessel-caseworker-guidance/failure-to-travel-to-bibby-stockholm-vessel-accessible>

Updated Guidance: Afghan citizens resettlement scheme

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

Ukraine homelessness management information: 24 February 2022 to 29 February 2024

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f308b09d99de001103deed/Ukraine_Homelessness_Pressures_Publication_February_2024.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>

Food experiences of people seeking asylum in London: areas for local action

<https://www.sustainweb.org/reports/mar24-food-experiences-of-people-seeking-asylum-in-london/>

News: Rwanda Refugee Policy

Rwanda Bill ‘to be pushed through with no amendments’

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/03/15/sunak-rwanda-bill-passed-in-two-days-say-ministers/>

UK to pay failed asylum seekers to move to Rwanda under new scheme

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-68550404>

Home Office condemns ‘cruel’ Rwanda phone scam targeting asylum seekers

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/mar/16/home-office-condemns-cruel-rwanda-phone-scam-targeting-asylum-seekers>

Government offering failed asylum-seekers thousands of pounds to move to Rwanda, under new plans

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/rwanda-asylum-voluntary-sunak-immigration-latest-b2511636.html>

Rishi Sunak accused of 'betrayal' over £3,000 Rwanda plans

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/13/rishi-sunak-accused-of-betrayal-over-3000-rwanda-plans/>

Migrants get phone calls about £3,000 Rwanda offer

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/home-office-begins-offering-migrants-3000-to-relocate-to-rwanda-59sbq9j86>

Human rights not much use if you're dead, MP warns peers set against Rwanda plan

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/conservative-human-rights-rwanda-echr-immigration-b2510909.html>

Minister declines to guarantee flights to Rwanda will take off before election

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/mark-harper-government-rishi-sunak-prime-minister-immigration-b2513971.html>

Legal challenges 'likely to delay Rwanda flights until end of May'

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/14/rwanda-flights-unlikely-to-take-off-until-end-of-may/>

News: Channel Migrants

Ibrahima Bah was sentenced to nine years for steering a 'death trap' dinghy across the Channel. Was he really to blame?

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/mar/12/ibrahima-bah-teenage-asylum-seeker-manslaughter>

News: Other Immigration and Asylum

Ex-home secretary says Government's asylum accommodation 'obviously not working'

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-office-priti-patel-dame-government-mps-b2512813.html>

Call for refugees in UK to have twice as long to find homes after hotel evictions

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/mar/14/call-refugees-uk-twice-long-find-homes-hotel-evictions>

Home Office food provision leaving some asylum seekers malnourished – report

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/mar/12/home-office-food-provision-leaving-some-asylum-seekers-malnourished-report>

Baptisms 'a ticket to something' for some asylum seekers - vicar

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68543879>

Asylum seekers seeking baptism 'melted away' under rigorous process – ex-priest

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/church-of-england-home-affairs-select-committee-christianity-darlington-b2511264.html>

Asylum seeker conversions: lawyers 'told priest to make up evidence'

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/asylum-seeker-conversions-lawyers-told-priest-to-make-up-evidence-tph9m6g9g>

What's it like to be a refugee in the UK without internet access? Mostly impossible – and often unbearable

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/mar/13/refugee-uk-internet-access-nigeria-england-digital-divide>

Care firm has overseas worker licence revoked by Home Office

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c2803m0kl4no>

MND patient: 'Without my carers I would not be here'

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c720jz4yzq5o>

Gaza family win visa legal battle with Home Office

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68528060>

Palestinian citizen of Israel granted UK asylum in case said to be unprecedented

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/mar/12/palestinian-citizen-of-israel-granted-asylum-in-uk-in-case-said-to-be-unprecedented>

TOP

Equality

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answer

Travellers: Sentencing

Kevin Brennan (Labour) [17530] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the recommendations in the report by the Traveller Movement entitled Fair Sentencing for Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller People, published in December 2023.

Reply from Mike Freer: HMPPS [HM Prison and Probation Service] has been working closely with The Traveller Movement since the publication of 'Pre-Sentencing Report Toolkit Fair Sentencing for Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller People'. We are working through the report together to see how the some of the findings can better support our work.

As part of the HMPPS Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Strategy, an Aide Memoir: 'Preparing pre-sentence reports for ethnic minority people' was published in December 2023, giving specific guidance and information regarding GRT community members. We will add to this as appropriate through the above-mentioned collaboration. We will also carefully consider the findings of the report regarding future policy reviews and updates.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-07/17530>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://wp-main.travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Pre-Sentencing-Report-Toolkit.pdf>

The Aide Memoir referred to above is only available on the private HMPPS website

Press Releases

Diversity and Inclusion of the Scottish Government Workforce

<https://www.gov.scot/news/diversity-and-inclusion-of-the-scottish-government-workforce-3/>

New action to tackle ethnic and other biases in medical devices

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-action-to-tackle-ethnic-and-other-biases-in-medical-devices>

New Publications

Equity in Medical Devices: Independent Review

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e89e9e62ff48001a87b2d8/equity-in-medical-devices-independent-review-report-web-accessible.pdf>

Government response to the report of the equity in medical devices: independent review

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-report-of-the-equity-in-medical-devices-independent-review/government-response-to-the-report-of-the-equity-in-medical-devices-independent-review>

News

Humza Yousaf: Tories ‘of colour’ pull up the ladder once they succeed

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/humza-yousaf-tory-mps-of-colour-pulling-ladder-up-behind-them-drtdfsvpc>

Concern for civil and political rights in Scotland

<https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/news/concern-for-civil-and-political-rights-in-scotland/>

Britain is not without its problems. But Vaughan Gething proves how diverse it really is

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/mar/16/britain-is-not-without-its-problems-but-vaughan-gething-proves-how-diverse-it-really-is>

UK report reveals bias within medical tools and devices

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/mar/11/medical-tools-devices-healthcare-bias-uk>

BME workers experiences of home working – why we need to make flexible working the default

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/bme-workers-experiences-home-working-why-we-need-make-flexible-working-default>

The woman teaching Afro-Scots to reclaim their natural hair

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cg3wd485rwxo>

TOP

Racism, Religious Hatred, and Discrimination

UK Parliament, House of Commons Oral Answers

Prime Minister’s Questions

Keir Starmer (Labour): ... Is the Prime Minister proud to be bankrolled by someone using racist and misogynous language when he said that the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) “makes you want to hate all black women”?

Reply from the Prime Minister: The alleged comments were wrong, they were racist ... He has rightly apologised for them and that remorse should be accepted. There is no place for racism in Britain, and the Government that I lead is living proof of that.

Keir Starmer: Mr Speaker, the man bankrolling the Prime Minister also said that the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington should be shot. How low would he have to sink, what racist, woman-hating threat of violence would he have to make, before the Prime Minister plucked up the courage to hand back the £10 million that he has taken from him?

Reply from the Prime Minister: As I said, the gentleman apologised genuinely for his comments, and that remorse should be accepted. The right hon. and learned Gentleman talks about language. He might want to reflect on the double standards of his deputy Leader calling her opponent “scum”, the shadow Foreign Secretary comparing Conservatives to Nazis, and the man whom he wanted to make Chancellor talking about “lynching” a female Minister. His silence on that speaks volumes.

Reply from the Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, I am absolutely not going to take any lectures from somebody who chose to represent the antisemitic terrorist group, Hizb ut-Tahrir, who chose to serve a Leader of the Opposition who let antisemitism run rife in this Labour party. Those are his actions, those are his values, and that is how he should be judged.

Keir Starmer: The problem is that the Prime Minister is describing a Labour party that no longer exists; I am describing a man who is bankrolling the Conservatives’ upcoming general election. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-13/debates/0F85365D-BD56-4647-B8B5-EC356A1BD132/Engagements#contribution-14D02CF1-9D60-404B-93EC-3C951E915099>

Prime Minister’s Questions

Stephen Flynn (SNP): ... The Conservative party has accepted a £10 million donation from an individual who has said that one of our parliamentary colleagues in this Chamber “should be shot.” Why is the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom putting money before morals?

Reply from the Prime Minister: As I have said, the comments were wrong, the gentleman in question has apologised for them and that remorse should be accepted.

Stephen Flynn: This is complete rubbish. The gentleman in question apologised for “being rude”. He was not rude; he was racist, odious and downright bloody dangerous. On Monday, No. 10 said that we have “seen an unacceptable rise in extremist activity, which is seeking to divide our society and hijack our democratic institutions.” Is not the extremism that we should all be worried about the views of those Tory donors we have read about this week?

Reply from the Prime Minister: No, there has actually been a rise in extremist activity that is seeking to hijack our democratic institutions. It is important that we have the tools to tackle this threat. That is what the extremism strategy will do. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-13/debates/0F85365D-BD56-4647-B8B5-EC356A1BD132/Engagements#contribution-ACEA7097-1091-4290-A398-87F698BF8027>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

Islamophobia

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) [17688] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2024 to Question 10238 on Islamophobia, whether he has taken steps to develop a definition of anti-Muslim hatred.

Reply from Lee Rowley: I refer the Hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN 10238 on 23 January 2024.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-07/17688>

Anti-Muslim hatred is abhorrent and has no place in our society. No one should ever be a victim of hatred because of their religion or belief and the Government continues to work with police and community partners to monitor and combat it. We have funded Tell MAMA, a service that supports victims of anti-Muslim hatred, with over £6 million since their inception in 2012.

In light of the rise in anti-Muslim hate incidents being reported, the Government has increased Tell MAMA's funding to £1 million this year. This funding will provide additional resource to the service they are providing to support victims of anti-Muslim hatred.

The department has given careful consideration to the use of language and definitions. The definition of Islamophobia as proposed by the APPG is not in line with the Equality Act 2010, which defines race in terms of colour, nationality and national or ethnic origins. The term anti-Muslim hatred is a more precise term which better reflects UK hate crime legislation.

The department is seeking the views and perspectives of domestic and international leaders and experts in this field to explore how religious hatred is experienced by British communities

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-17/10238/>

Department for Education: Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) [16850] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the document entitled Draft terms of reference for the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group, what updates her Department has provided on relevant developments in its area of work to that group since 2019.

Reply from Damian Hinds: The Government condemns and strives to tackle all forms of discrimination, prejudice, and harassment, and the department is committed to working with other government departments to achieve this. Ministers and officials have regular discussions with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities over a range of issues. More broadly, I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 2 March 2024, Official Report, PQ 16019 on tackling anti-Muslim hatred.

Every school and further education provider should actively promote the shared values, including mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs. The department has published advice on promoting these values and made resources available on challenging anti-Muslim hate on the Educate Against Hate website, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.educateagainsthate.com/>

The department has also published the 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' guidance, which directs schools to organisations who can provide support with tackling bullying related to race, religion and nationality. This guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

The department is providing over £3 million of funding, between 10 August 2021 and 31 March 2024, to five anti-bullying organisations, which includes projects to

tackle hate-related bullying on the basis of race and faith.

Ministers and departmental officials continue to work closely with Muslim groups, such as Tell MAMA, as the leading national organisation monitoring and supporting victims of anti-Muslim hatred. The department is committed to understanding this issue and to actively assess incidents affecting the Muslim community. The department welcomes guidance produced by Universities UK, which focuses on tackling anti-Muslim hatred. Further information on tackling anti-Muslim hatred can be found here:

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/tackling-islamophobia-and-anti-muslim>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-04/16850>

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) [16852] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the document entitled Draft terms of reference for the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group, what updates his Department has provided on relevant developments in its area of work to that group since 2019.

Tom Tugendhat: Ministers and officials have regular discussions with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities over a range of issues. More broadly, I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 1 March 2024, Official Report, PQ 16019 on tackling anti-Muslim hatred.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-04/16852>

The draft terms of reference referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/724354/AMHWG_Draft_TOR.pdf

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-27/16019>

Antisemitism

Tulip Siddiq (Labour) [16932] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to tackle anti-Semitism.

Reply from Lee Rowley: Anti-Semitism is abhorrent and has no place in our society. No one should ever be a victim of hatred because of their religion or belief and the Government continues to work with police and community partners to monitor and combat it.

That is why on 28 February 2024, the Prime Minister announced that the Community Security Trust will receive further funding of £54 million for 2025-2028, as part of the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant. This is in addition to the commitment made as part of the Autumn Statement for £18 million in 2024/25.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-04/16932>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-funding-will-protect-jewish-communities-from-harm>

Information about the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant can be read at

<https://cst.org.uk/security/government-grant>

The Autumn Statement can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2023/autumn-statement-2023-html>

Cricket: Discrimination

Navendu Mishra (Labour) [17210] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and

Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the England and Wales Cricket Board on (a) racism and (b) discrimination in cricket.

Reply from Stuart Andrew: The Government is clear that racism has no place in cricket, sport, or society at large. I regularly meet with the England and Wales Cricket Board to discuss a range of issues, including equality, diversity and inclusion.

It is ultimately for all individual sports' national governing bodies, to decide on the specific aims, appropriate initiatives and funding to tackle discrimination in their organisations.

The ECB has provided a full response to the 2023 Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket report, and has publicly committed to taking on board the majority of the recommendations to create lasting change across the sport. We welcome the ECB's commitment to tackle these serious issues and secure a sustainable future for the sport. Government will be monitoring closely to ensure that progress is made.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-05/17210>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://theicec.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/HOLDING-UP-A-MIRROR-TO-CRICKET-REPORT-ICEC-2023.pdf>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answer

Universities: Antisemitism

The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL3156] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support Jewish university students following recent increases in incidents of antisemitism on campuses.

Reply from Baroness Barran: Antisemitism, intimidation, and threats of violence must never be tolerated on university campuses. The Community Security Trust 2023 annual report highlights the unprecedented increase in antisemitic incidents in higher education (HE) and this unacceptable rise is deeply concerning. All antisemitism is abhorrent and universities should have robust systems to deal with incidents of support for unlawful antisemitic abuse and harassment. We will not tolerate unlawful harassment or the glorification of terrorism.

Since the 7 October attacks, we have actively intervened to ensure that universities act swiftly and appropriately to deal with incidents of antisemitism.

The Secretary of State for Education and the Minister for Skills wrote to all universities on 11 October 2023, urging them to respond swiftly to hate-related incidents, and actively reassure Jewish students that they can study without fear of harassment or intimidation. The Minister wrote again to Vice Chancellors on 16 November 2023, emphasising that they must use disciplinary measures wherever appropriate, highlighting the importance of police engagement, and reiterating that student visas could be suspended where a foreign national is found to have committed or incited acts of racial hatred. This was one of the key actions set out in the five point plan for tackling antisemitism in HE, which was published on 5 November 2023. The plan also involves:

- Calling for visas to be withdrawn from international students who incite racial hatred. Visas are a privilege, not a right, and we will not hesitate to remove them from people who abuse them.
- Logging specific cases and sharing them with the Office for Students for their consideration.
- Continuing to make it clear in all discussions that acts that may be criminal

should be referred to the police.

- Establishing a Tackling Antisemitism Quality Seal which will be an award available to universities who can demonstrate the highest standards in tackling antisemitism.

On 22 November 2023, the department announced in the Autumn Statement an additional £7 million over three years to tackle antisemitism in education. The Quality Seal will be the cornerstone of this package for universities, providing a framework of measures that will make clear what good practice is in tackling antisemitism in HE, and making sure that our universities are a safe and welcoming space for Jewish students and staff.

The department will not hesitate to take further action across education to stamp out antisemitism and harassment of Jewish pupils, students and staff.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-08/hl3156>

The CST report referred to above can be read at

https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic_Incidents_Report_2023.pdf

The 11 October letter referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/GillianKeegan/status/1712461243267829960>

The 16 November letter referred to above is not available online.

The five-point plan referred to above can be read at

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/05/how-were-protecting-jewish-students-on-university-campuses/>

The Autumn Statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2023/autumn-statement-2023-html>

Press Releases

Tackling hate crime

<https://www.gov.scot/news/tackling-hate-crime-1/>

Government commits more funding to protect UK Muslims

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-commits-more-funding-to-protect-uk-muslims>

Former barrister sentenced for grossly offensive antisemitic blog posts

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/wessex/news/former-barrister-sentenced-grossly-offensive-antisemitic-blog-posts>

UN Human Rights Council 55: UK Statement on Countering Religious Hatred

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/un-human-rights-council-55-uk-statement-on-countering-religious-hatred>

More determined efforts needed to combat anti-Muslim prejudice amidst surge in hatred, OSCE says

<https://www.osce.org/chairpersonship/564821>

News

Hate crime law: Force for good or recipe for disaster?

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-68570614>

Hate crime laws Scotland: Warning people could be wrongly charged amid claims Police Scotland 'unprepared' for new law

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/hate-crime-laws-scotland-warning-people-could-be-wrongly-charged-amid-claims-police-scotland-unprepared-for-new-law-4554538>

Hate Crime Act Scotland: Concerns raised as controversial new laws due to come into force

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/hate-crime-act-scotland-concerns-raised-as-controversial-new-laws-due-to-come-into-force-4551185>

Hate Crime and Public Order Act is an attack on free speech that's wide open to abuse

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/hate-crime-and-public-order-act-is-an-attack-on-free-speech-thats-wide-open-to-abuse-euan-mccolm-4552351>

Hate crime law will lead to 'great deal of police time being wasted'

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24183726.hate-crime-law-will-lead-great-deal-police-time-wasted/>

Hate crime laws: MSPs pile pressure on Police Scotland to stop recording non-criminal hate incidents

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/hate-crime-laws-msps-pile-pressure-on-police-scotland-to-stop-recording-non-criminal-hate-incidents-4557769>

Police Scotland will log 'hate incidents' even if no crime is committed

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/police-scotland-will-log-hate-incidents-even-if-no-crime-is-committed-6mw6hs9hn>

SNP's farcical hate crime bill is an insult to nation's intelligence

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/snps-farcical-hate-crime-bill-is-an-insult-to-nations-intelligence-svnbzrcnw>

Tory donor's alleged comments about Diane Abbott were racist, says Downing Street

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-68548389>

Frank Hester: Tory donor accused of racist Diane Abbott remarks

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-68539981>

Tories do not have a problem with race, says cabinet minister

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-68590969>

If calling for Diane Abbott 'to be shot' isn't racism, then what is?

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/racism-tory-donor-frank-hester-diane-abbott-b2512165.html>

Tory donor suggests 'no room for the Indians' in latest remarks revealed in racism row

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/conservative-racism-row-frank-hester-comments-b2511786.html>

Wales' first Black leader is a testament to Britain's political diversity, but racism persists

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/rishi-sunak-ap-britain-black-humza-yousaf-b2514006.html>

Ex-Tory councillor discriminated against by local party, report finds

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-68563876>

£117m to protect UK mosques and Muslim schools from hate attacks

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68529601>

Government commits extra funding to protect UK Muslims

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/government-hamas-muslims-james-cleverly-islamic-b2510379.html>

I'm chair of the government's Islamophobia taskforce – we haven't met in years

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/anti-muslim-hatred-group-gove-extremism-islamophobia-b2512655.html>

Labour will order police to record anti-Semitic and Islamophobic non-hate crime incidents

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/03/12/labour-police-anti-semitic-islamophobic-non-hate-crime/>

Casual racism still going unchallenged in boardrooms

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/casual-racism-still-going-unchallenged-in-boardrooms-lp3cq28nb>

'Neo-Nazi' upset he did not kill solicitor - court

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-68543812>

'Neo-Nazi planned to take solicitor hostage at immigration law firm'

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/neo-nazi-planned-to-take-solicitor-hostage-at-immigration-law-firm-935lw8pz8>

Doctor who said London would be better 'jew free' to be investigated by Health Secretary

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/09/doctor-claim-london-better-jew-free-investigation/>

Shocking 'racial abuse' captured on camera as Black teenager beaten up

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/carlisle-racial-hate-crime-student-arrest-b2513903.html>

Community council chair exposed as notorious fascist podcaster 'Mean Peen'

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/community-council-chair-exposed-notorious-32342894>

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Other Scottish Parliament and Government

Scottish Parliament Motion

Pam Gosal (Conservative) [S6M-12448] Ramadan Mubarak 2024 – That the Parliament notes the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which will begin on 11 March 2024 and will last for 30 days; understands that the ninth month of the Islamic calendar is a month of fasting from sunrise until sunset, spent in prayer and good deeds; appreciates the charitable giving during this month to those who are less fortunate and in need, and wishes all those celebrating in Scotland, the rest of the UK and around the world a Ramadan Mubarak.

New Publication

Public participation in the Scottish Parliament: Understanding the core principles of deliberative democracy and a creating a framework for measuring impact

<https://bprcdn.parliament.scot/published/2024/3/15/80da7f6b-77b0-46e1-ab67-0569c7b8df6e/SB%2024-13.pdf>

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Other UK Parliament and Government

Ministerial Statement

Extremism Definition and Community Engagement

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Michael Gove)

[HCWS342] The terrorist attack in Israel on 7 October, its aftermath and the domestic implications have all sharpened our focus on the pressing need to enhance counter-extremism and community cohesion in the UK.

The ways in which extremist agendas are pursued have evolved since extremism was first defined by Government in 2011. The Government's approach must evolve too. There is cause for serious concern about the growing influence of organisations such as the British National Socialist Movement and Patriotic Alternative who promote neo-Nazi ideology and argue for forced repatriation, a white ethno-state and the singling out of minority groups for intimidation. The targeting of both Muslim and Jewish communities and individuals by these groups is a profound concern, requiring concerted action.

Organisations such as the Muslim Association of Britain, the British affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood, and other groups such as Cage and MEND give rise to concern for their Islamist orientation and views. These groups are divisive forces within Muslim communities and cause real harm to them.

Without prejudicing any formal process, these are the kind of organisations that we may assess to consider if they meet our definition of extremism and, if they do, we will take action as appropriate against them.

Islam is a great faith that is practised worldwide; a religion of peace that provides spiritual nourishment to millions, inspires countless acts of charity and celebrates the virtues of generosity, compassion and kindness. Islamism, however, is a political ideology that seeks to divide, calls for the establishment of a totalitarian state governed by sharia law and seeks to overthrow liberal democratic principles. We must be very conscious of conflating the experiences and motivations of the majority of British Muslims, who want to practice their faith peacefully and in line with British values, and Islamists, who seek to abuse religious values and traditions or subvert our society. Many Muslim scholars have made the distinction: Islam is not Islamism.

To tackle extremism head-on, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has worked with the Home Office, as well as other Government Departments and external agencies and practitioners, to update the 2011 definition of extremism based on a careful consideration of extremist threats to our liberal democracy, rights and freedoms. With this new definition, we will be assessing whether these, and other organisations, meet our definition and we will take action as appropriate.

However, this is not a new law, it does not create new criminal offences, and through this definition we have taken care to protect our democratic right of freedom of expression and

belief, and not to curtail the civil liberties and rights of people in the UK.

It is important for Government to be clear and transparent over what extremism is and how it is recognised, so in due course we will also be publishing a framework to support frontline practitioners. This framework will be publicly available and kept up to date with the landscape of extremism.

Community engagement is a fundamental part of the work of many UK Government ministerial Departments. We are proud to engage with groups and individuals from across the country—from charities and community organisations to local people. Our external engagement can strengthen our democracy, our policymaking and our society.

We also know, however, through the independent review of Prevent, that if best practice is not followed, the UK Government's engagement with communities and external groups can inadvertently provide a platform, funding or legitimacy for individuals, organisations or groups that oppose our shared values. This allows extremists, of all ideologies, to exert greater influence and be legitimised and publicly emboldened.

To ensure that we maximise the benefits of engagement and minimise the risks, we are publishing a new set of community engagement principles that central Government Departments will be expected to consider when undertaking external engagement or providing funding.

To support this work to tackle the threat of domestic extremism, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is setting up a new counter-extremism centre of excellence as a world-leading authority on best practice, data and research. The centre of excellence will provide leadership for Departments' operationalisation and implementation of the new extremism definition, cross-Government standards and an extremism-related due diligence process. In time, it will also become home to new counter-extremism assessment and analytical functions and capabilities. The centre will work with the Commission for Countering Extremism to upskill officials and institutionalise counter-extremism literacy, plugging the gaps in HMG's existing counter-extremism capability.

To protect our democratic values and improve social cohesion, it is important both to reinforce what we all have in common and to be clear in identifying the dangers posed by extremism. That is why we are proud to have provided additional funding for the Community Security Trust and Tell MAMA. Furthermore, we are establishing a new cohesion fund to provide additional support for grassroots organisations working to tackle these issues.

We recognise that tackling extremism and supporting community cohesion requires a holistic approach. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has been working with local authorities, civil society and faith groups—particularly in those areas where social cohesion is most under strain—to reduce tensions and explore the most constructive support that we can offer.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-14/debates/24031435000017/ExtremismDefinitionAndCommunityEngagement>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Extremism Definition and Community Engagement

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Michael Gove):

... The United Kingdom is a success story: a multi-national, multi-ethnic and multi-faith democracy, stronger because of our diversity. However, our democracy and values of inclusivity and tolerance are under challenge from extremist groups that are radicalising our young people and driving greater polarisation within and between communities to further their own ends. ...

As our new definition makes clear, extremism can lead to the radicalisation of individuals, deny people their full rights and opportunities, suppress freedom of expression, incite

hatred, weaken social cohesion and, ultimately, lead to acts of terrorism. Most extremist materials and activities are not illegal and do not meet the terrorism or the national security threshold. For example, Islamist and neo-Nazi groups in Britain are operating lawfully, but they advocate and work towards the replacement of democracy with an Islamist or Nazi society. ...

From our engagement we hear widespread unease about the safety and security of community organisations, political candidates and elected officials. Councillors have been threatened with violence; council meetings have been disrupted; council officers and elected members talk of walking a tightrope, terrified of inadvertently saying the wrong thing or offending one side or the other. Many choose to remain silent and to take no action, such is the chilling element of these extremist groups on our democracy.

It is gravely concerning that the conflict in the middle east is driving further polarisation. We have seen a terrible increase in antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate crime, as well as a very significant increase in radicalisation. Troublingly, there is also evidence that some Islamists and extreme right-wing groups and others who seek to tear our society apart are working together to maximise the reach of their message and cause. That is why the work of civil society organisations such as the Community Security Trust and Tell MAMA, as well as Muslims Against Anti-Semitism, the educational charity Solutions Not Sides and the Forum for Discussion of Israel and Palestine is so important. We have provided additional funding for the CST and Tell MAMA to counter antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred, and we will do more. We will shortly establish a new fund to provide additional, direct and tangible support for grassroots organisations, building bridges and fighting division. I commend those who are doing so much to counter prejudice.

Working in civil society, it is critical that we do not unwittingly, or through ignorance, fund or otherwise support organisations or individuals who are themselves extremist. In the past, it has unfortunately been the case that extremist groups and actors have sought to present themselves as moderate voices representative of majority or mainstream opinion. The Government have had a definition of extremism since 2011. It has helped inform our Prevent counter-terrorism work and was designed to assist the Government in engagement. But in a considerable number of cases organisations and individuals with views that are clearly extreme have nevertheless benefited from state engagement, endorsement and support, and furthermore have exploited that association to further their extremist agendas.

Among the most significant was Shakeel Begg, who was labelled an Islamist extremist by a judge. Mr Begg, an NHS chaplain and regular speaker at state schools, ran Lewisham Islamic Centre and was on both the Metropolitan police's independent advisory group in Lewisham and Lewisham's standing advisory committee on religious education. In 2016, Mr Begg sued the BBC when it described him, accurately, as an extremist. The judge in the case, Mr Justice Haddon-Cave, conducted his own scrupulous research, identifying many occasions when Mr Begg had advocated extreme positions, including promoting and encouraging religious violence, and by telling a Muslim audience that violence in support of Islam would constitute a man's greatest deed. ...

We have since seen how figures of potential extremism concern have been able to work with the Crown Prosecution Service and the Metropolitan police, co-opt charities and benefit from public funding. We know from William Shawcross's excellent independent review of Prevent, that such engagement has inadvertently provided a platform, funding or legitimacy for groups or individuals who oppose our shared values. This apparent legitimising of their views can lead extremists of all ideologies to be emboldened and to exert greater influence. That is why today my Department is publishing an updated, more precise and rigorous definition of extremism, alongside a set of cross-Government engagement principles for use when engaging with external groups. There is also detailed guidance on what the definition does and does not capture. We are also setting up a new counter-extremism centre of excellence in my Department, as a world-leading authority on

best practice, data and research. ...

Freedom of expression, freedom of religion and belief, the rule of law, democracy and equal rights—these are the cornerstones of our civilised society that Government and Parliament, on both sides of the House, strive always to uphold. To be clear, our definition will not affect gender-critical campaigners, those with conservative religious beliefs, trans activists, environmental protest groups, or those exercising their proper right to free speech. ...

The proposed definition will hold that extremism is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance that aims to: negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights; or intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve those results. While the Government in no way intend to restrict freedom of expression, religion or belief, we cannot be in a position where, unwittingly or not, we sponsor, subsidise or support in any way organisations and individuals opposed to the freedoms that we hold dear.

Across the House, I am sure that we agree that organisations such as the British National Socialist Movement and Patriotic Alternative, who promote neo-Nazi ideology, argue for forced repatriation, a white ethno-state and the targeting of minority groups for intimidation, are precisely the type of groups about which we should be concerned and whose activities we will assess against the new definition. The activities of the extreme right wing are a growing worry. The targeting of both Muslim and Jewish communities and individuals by these groups is a profound concern requiring concerted action.

As with our definition of extremism, it is important that we be precise in our use of language when discussing Islamism. Islamism should never be confused with Islam. Islam is a great faith, a religion of peace that provides spiritual nourishment for millions, inspires countless acts of charity, and celebrates the virtues of generosity, compassion and kindness. Islamism is a totalitarian ideology that seeks to divide, calls for the establishment of an Islamic state governed by sharia law, and seeks the overthrow of liberal democratic principles. It has its roots in the thinking of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, Abul A'la al-Maududi, and the Muslim Brotherhood ideologue Sayyid Qutb. The Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood is, of course, Hamas. Organisations such as the Muslim Association of Britain, which is the British affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood, and other groups such as CAGE and Mend, give rise to concern because of their Islamist orientation and views. ...

As the Prime Minister has said, the time has come for us all to stand together to combat the forces of division and beat this poison. The liberties that we hold dear, and indeed the democratic principles that we are all sent here to uphold, require us to counter and challenge the extremists who seek to intimidate, to coerce and to divide. ...

Angela Rayner (Labour): ... Hateful extremism threatens the safety of our communities and the unity of our country. Everyone, across the House, can agree that it is a serious problem which demands a serious response, so let me say from the outset that when it comes to our national security, when it comes to the threat of radicalisation and when it comes to the toxic scourge of Islamophobia, neo-Nazism, antisemitism or any other corrosive hatred, the whole House can and should work together. The way the Government do this work matters, and the language that we all use is important. I welcome the Secretary of State's opening comment that it is our diversity, and our values, that make our country stronger. ...

We all have a responsibility to work to extinguish the flames of division, and never to fan them. While it may be part of the nature of our politics for passion sometimes to take centre stage, and while we may challenge and probe these plans today, if the Secretary of State wants to engage going forward, he has my word that we can do so in good faith. ...

Given this new definition, the public will rightly be alarmed by the idea that Ministers could have already met extremist groups. Can the Secretary of State shed some light on that?

Renewed vigilance and diligence are welcome, particularly in the current climate, but if his own Department now needs to cut ties with extremist groups, that begs the question of why it was working with them in the first place. He said in his statement that the new definition “will not affect gender-critical campaigners, those with conservative religious beliefs, trans activists, environmental protest groups, or those exercising their proper right to free speech.”

Can he explain which groups it will affect, and where the Government have chosen to draw the line?

This is not the first time that the Government have identified this risk or promised to act. As the Secretary of State mentioned, back at the beginning of 2011 the Conservative Home Secretary told the House: “ If organisations do not support the values of democracy, human rights, equality before the law, participation in society...we will not work with them and we will not fund them.”—[\[Official Report, 7 June 2011; Vol. 529, c. 53.\]](#)

That prompts another question: why has it taken the Government 13 years to address this? ...

We know there has been a huge surge in online extremism. Can the Secretary of State give assurances on how that will be dealt with? What action is he taking to work across Government to assess and confront online hate? We know that extremism does not exist in a vacuum, and we need political leadership on this ... The Secretary of State says that the Department has been working with faith groups, civil society and local councils, and I agree that they all have a crucial role to play in tackling extremism, but what form has that consultation taken, and will he publish its findings? ...

We have seen an appalling surge in antisemitism and Islamophobia in recent months, and the previous strategy is now four years out of date. When will the Secretary of State have an updated hate crime action plan? Have Ministers abandoned plans to introduce a new hate crime strategy? Why are the anti-Muslim hatred working group and the antisemitism working group no longer meeting?

We need much stronger action to tackle the corrosive forms of hatred that devastate lives and corrode communities, but today’s statement does not go far enough. Regardless of how workable and effective the new definition and the centre for excellence may be, this announcement will not be enough.

Let me end by echoing the words of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, who have warned that, against the backdrop of growing divisions, it is for political leaders to provide “a conciliatory tone” and to “pursue policies that bring us together, not risk driving us apart.” ...

Reply from Michael Gove: ... I agree with the shadow Secretary of State that ... Passion, vigour and determination are all part of the meat of our politics, and nothing that we have said today should take away from our desire to see free speech exercised as energetically as possible. ...

The shadow Secretary of State asked how the centre of excellence will be staffed and funded. Impartial civil servants with training in this area will be supplemented in their work by studies by academics and academic bodies, and we will work with the existing expertise in the homeland security analysis and intelligence unit within the Home Office in order to ensure that all our work is rigorous. We will make sure that if a decision is made to list an organisation as extremist, we will show our working and the evidence that leads us to that conclusion, and the judgment that we have made will be there for everyone to see.

The shadow Secretary of State asked why the Government or arms of the state have unwittingly engaged with extremist organisations in the past. Although the previous definition of extremism was well intentioned and drawn up with care, it was perhaps insufficiently precise and insufficiently policed, so we thought it was appropriate to update it. ...

Peter Bottomley (Conservative): ... It is interesting to consider whether it would have

been right 90 years ago to identify as a threat Oswald Mosley's approach, as well as the people who marched through the streets to intimidate others. More recently, when Kathleen Stock was at the University of Sussex, the students' union and many others called her a dangerous extremist for writing a rather good book and having views that are now mainstream.

Filling the gap between what is not necessarily criminal but should be identified as wrong is important, and I hope the whole House can give support to today's proposals.

Reply from Michael Gove: ... There should, rightly, be a high bar on the use of criminal sanctions. We should always seek to encourage free speech, but he is quite right to draw attention to the freedom-restricting harassment that some people have engaged in. ...

Alison Thewliss (SNP): ... Friday is International Day to Combat Islamophobia, but Muslims are afraid to speak out, lest they be targeted for their beliefs or, indeed, labelled as extremists. The Government's independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, Jonathan Hall, has said that their proposal "could undermine the UK's reputation because it would not be seen as democratic."

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have said in a joint statement that the new definition "risks disproportionately targeting Muslim communities, who are already experiencing rising levels of hate and abuse", and "may vilify the wrong people".

Zara Mohammed of the Muslim Council of Britain is concerned that the Government's proposals are undemocratic, divisive and potentially illegal. The organisation is also concerned about the lack of engagement with some of the groups that the Secretary of State has talked about today. Were any of the Muslim groups that he specifically mentioned contacted, so that they knew that they would be mentioned in today's statement?

There has been a desperately worrying increase in Islamophobia and antisemitism since 7 October, and it should concern us all that it is happening. We stand against extremism and the targeting of groups in our society, but extremism is on the rise, driven in no small part by the culture wars stoked by the Conservatives, their hangers-on and those who would call peace demonstrations hate marches. ...

Reply from Michael Gove: ... we should not conflate the specific challenge from certain Islamist groups with the broader Muslim community. We need to be precise in order to draw that distinction, so that we are able to support organisations on the ground that seek to bring people together and to counter anti-Muslim hate and antisemitism. ...

Julian Lewis (Conservative): Surely the essential point here is that the Government are proposing not to ban any organisation, however extreme, from operating legally and within the law, but to identify organisations that should be barred from receiving funding or other support from the Government. ... does the Secretary of State agree that in any democratic society people have a right to decide with which bodies they will or will not associate? ...

Reply from Michael Gove: ... We are not seeking to ban or restrict the operation of organisations in a free society; we are simply making it clear that it would be wrong for the Government to use taxpayers' money or public endorsement in engagement with such organisations. ...

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

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-03-14/debates/4E9FCBC1-F151-470C-840B-1CC58EBF73F4/ExtremismDefinitionAndCommunityEngagement>

The Shawcross Review, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63e26968d3bf7f17385a3421/Independent_Review_of_Prevent.pdf

The joint statement from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/news-and-statements/joint-statement-archbishops-warns-government-over-new-extremism-definition>

The Muslim Council of Britain statement referred to above can be read at <https://mcb.org.uk/muslim-council-of-britain-slams-governments-flawed-extremism-strategy/>

Press Releases

Government strengthens approach to counter extremism

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-strengthens-approach-to-counter-extremism>

Prime Minister's Ramadan Message [video]

<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1767172496623640724>

New Publication

Guidance: New definition of extremism (2024)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-definition-of-extremism-2024/new-definition-of-extremism-2024>

News

New extremism definition unveiled by government

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-68556914>

Michael Gove names groups as he unveils extremism definition

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-68564577>

Archbishops of Canterbury and York criticise Gove's extremist definition plans

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68550673>

Extremism definition: UK Government's definition a 'smash and grab' on human rights, Amnesty International claims

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/extremism-definition-uk-governments-definition-a-smash-and-grab-on-human-rights-amnesty-international-claims-4555280>

New definition of extremism sets 'dangerous precedent', named groups say

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/michael-gove-mps-parliament-government-cage-b2512800.html>

Banned 'extremist' groups will still be able to influence policy

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/banned-extremist-groups-influence-policy-michael-gove-nfq0mhhp7>

'Smacks of desperation': British Muslim organisations react to Gove's extremism definition

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/michael-gove-extremism-definition-british-muslims-b2512516.html>

Extremism stalked my childhood. Britain is still not at ease with itself

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/our-divided-society-is-sick-challenging-extremism-is-our-only-hope-sqhg90sf>

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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

Tackling the cost of living – Scottish Government Policy

<https://spice-spotlight.scot/2024/03/11/tackling-the-cost-of-living-scottish-government-policy/>

News

Poverty crisis is destroying the lives of Scotland's kids

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24189992.poverty-crisis-destroying-lives-scotlands-kids/>

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Other News

Vaughan Gething to become Wales' first black leader

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-politics-68500807>

New short film commission opportunity for South Asian artists in Scotland

<https://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/latest/new-short-film-commission-opportunity-for-south-asian-artists>

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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

Asylum Application (Entry to the United Kingdom) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3530>

Asylum Seekers (Permission to Work) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3627>

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

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

Family Visas (Minimum Income) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3684>

Housing Standards (Refugees and Asylum Seekers) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3618/stages>

Illegal Immigration (Offences) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3649>

Immigration and Nationality Fees (Exemption for NHS Clinical Staff) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3660>

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

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3540>

Third Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-03-12/debates/57E7A04B-226F-4799-9EA9-83511EBCD1D7/SafetyOfRwanda\(AsylumAndImmigration\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-03-12/debates/57E7A04B-226F-4799-9EA9-83511EBCD1D7/SafetyOfRwanda(AsylumAndImmigration)Bill)

Bill as returned to the House of Commons

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/53802/documents/4312>

Amendment Papers

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0182/amend/rwanda_day_ccla_0318.pdf

and

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0182/amend/rwanda_rm_ccla_0315.pdf

House of Commons Library Briefing: progress of the Bill

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9944/CBP-9944.pdf>

Scottish Law Officers (Devolution) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3665>

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>

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Consultations

** new or updated this week

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

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

Ending conversion practices in Scotland (closing date 2 April 2024)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-conversion-practices-scotland-scottish-government-consultation/>

Disclosure Scotland fees: discounting, waivers and accredited bodies

(closing date 28 May 2024)

<https://consult.gov.scot/disclosure-scotland/fees-discounting-waivers-and-accredited-bodies/>

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

Ethnic Minority Development Fund

Closing date: 15 April 2024

National Lottery Community Fund grants from £500 to £15,000 for projects run by ethnic minority-led third-sector organisations in Scotland that bring ethnic minority people together and build strong relationships across communities, help more ethnic minority people to be the best they can be, by supporting them as soon as possible, or improve places and spaces that matter to ethnic minority communities. For information see

<https://cemvoscotland.org.uk/emdf/>

Faithful Welcome

Application deadline not stated

Faith in Community Scotland, and Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees funding of up to £500 to support Scotland's faith communities to welcome refugees and asylum seekers and enable them to be an integral part of community life, wherever they are coming from and whatever the reason. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/bdd5kr6n>

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!**

Governance - A Human Rights and Equalities First Approach

20 March 2024 (online, 10.00–12.30)

THRE introduction to what a human rights and equalities approach means for third sector boards and committees. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/3npb6d7f>

PANEL Workshop: A Human Rights and Equalities First Approach in Practice

25 March 2024 (online, 1.00–4.00)

THRE course about to find out about the PANEL principles, and how they can help you apply a human rights and equalities first approach. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/2srdmx62>

**** Transformative Responses to Hatred Based on Religion or Belief**

27 March 2024 (online, 6.00–7.30)

Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief talk by Dr Nazila Ghanea, United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. Dr Ghanea, Professor of International Human Rights Law at the University of Oxford, has contributed actively to networks interested in freedom of religion or belief and its interrelationship with other human rights and has advised states and other stakeholders. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/bde59xc6>

Rights of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

13 May 2024 (Glasgow, 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>

Rights and Entitlements of EEA Nationals

15 May 2024 (Glasgow, 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>

No Recourse To Public Funds

22 May 2024 (Glasgow (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
Empowering Scotland's Ethnic and
Cultural Minority Communities

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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