Refugees and asylum seekers
The UK's policy and commitment

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Global and national context

- **Global refugee crisis** – Unprecedented levels of displacement. UNHCR estimate 100 million people have been forced to flee their homes globally
- Growing need for refugee protection in the UK and across Europe/worldwide
- **65,008** applications for asylum in the UK last year (highest in 20 years) - 2022 could increase further (some estimates 90,000)
- Asylum claims in EU - Germany 148,000, France 100,000
- Current **bottleneck in the asylum system** since the pandemic. **100,000 applications outstanding**.

Global and national context

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- **3,762 applications in 2021 from Unaccompanied children**

- Up to 200,000 could come from Ukraine **(100,00 visas issues)** **Homes for Ukraine scheme and family visa routes.**

- **Resettlement – 18,000 Afghans evacuated (ARAP) 5,000 Afghans due to arrive under (ACRS)** plus smaller numbers from other nationalities under the **UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)**

- **Pressures on Local Authorities and housing**

Asylum (spontaneous arrivals)

- **103,000 claims awaiting initial decision**
  - 25,000 accommodated in contingency hotels due to housing shortages

- **No right to work, limited access to public funds, asylum support remains low** (£8 per week for those in hotels, £40 per week in dispersed accommodation in the community)
- Private sector responsible for housing and support (e.g. Serco)
- No specific *funding for LAs or mainstream services for integration support

Top 5 countries of asylum in the UK

- **Iran, Iraq, Eritrea, Albania, Syria**

Asylum - widening dispersal

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- People will be accommodated in more **rural areas/small towns** with limited local specialist infrastructure and diverse communities – leading to isolation, pressures on local services and lack of support
- Some payments to LAs to encourage new areas to open up

- **Move-on** 28 days following Home Office decision (grants of refugee status/asylum refusal) – local implications on services plus housing affordability (cost of living)
- **Refugee status decision rate is 82%**
- **Destitution** and risk of detention and deportation for those who are refused

New Immigration and Borders Act (Apr 22)

- **Key theme –** safe and legal routes
- **Accommodation centres –** Plans for more congregated living settings – hotels and barracks (Napier and new proposed site Linton on Ouse RAF base)
- **2 classifications of refugee (group 1 and group 2)** depending on how you arrive in the UK.
- **Group 2 have restricted rights**
  - Length of leave (30 months opposed to 5 years)
  - Limited rights to welfare benefits (NRPF)
  - Restrict rights to family reunion

- **Inadmissibility**
  - Asylum claims may be declared inadmissible and not substantively considered in the UK, if the claimant **was previously present in or had another connection to a safe third country**, where they claimed protection, or could reasonably be expected to have done so – e.g. France
  - While claims are being considered under these rules, people's asylum claim will not move forward in the UK.
  - If the Home Office decide your asylum claim is inadmissible, they can try and remove you to a safe third country

New Immigration and Borders Act

- **Offshore processing**
  - Rwandan deal. People found to be inadmissible will potentially be sent into the Rwandan asylum system and then live there if found to be refugees. Before that, they receive a notice of intent and have 2 weeks to send evidence to object.
- **Criminalisation**
  - The Act states that anyone arriving in the UK without valid clearance is potentially committing a criminal offence (4 year prison sentence)
  - Government states it will only apply to a small minority of those liable to deportation
- **How you come into the UK is a huge factor** in how your asylum claim will be considered
- **Erosion of refugee protection rights –** UNHCR refugee convention
- Increased anxiety and fear among people seeking asylum in the UK. Increase in people absconding.

Ukraine crisis response

- **Homes for Ukraine** –Ukrainians with no family ties to the UK can be sponsored by individuals who can offer them a room/home
- LAs - funding for wraparound support and responsible for housing/family relationship breakdowns or if property is unsuitable
- **Family visa route** –Ukraine Family Scheme allows applicants to join family members or extend their stay in the UK.
- No funding but LAs responsible for housing/family relationship breakdowns
- **Different geographical spread compared to asylum dispersal**

Resettlement schemes

- **Managed government programmes –** refugees arrive with status already granted
- **Afghan Relocations and Assistance Programme (ARAP)**
  - 18,000 people evacuated (mostly families who worked for the British military and UK government)
  - 12,000 living in holding hotels
- **Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)**
  - 5,000 per year (commitment up to 20,000)
  - Women and children and minority groups at risk of the Taliban
- **UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)**
  - Vulnerable cases identified by UNHCR
  - Original pledge of 5,000 but not met
  - Community Sponsorship
- **Syrian VPRS –** Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme

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The UK now has a 3 tier system of support and immigration status

Ukraine crisis, Resettlement (UKRS/ARAP/ACRS) and Asylum System

Growing support amongst general public – Huge responses to Ukrainian and Afghan crisis. A growing number of charities working to support refugees.

Also a rise in hate crime and negative attitudes.

Challenges / improvements

- The asylum system is now at risk of collapse – Constructive creative solutions are needed
- Asylum decisions need to be faster and H.O need to get through the backlog of claims
- Lift the ban – The UK faces labour shortages yet 100,000 people are not allowed to work
- Increased beurocracy with adding further layers of refugee status/protection
- Restricting family reunion rights for Group 2 refugees takes away a safe and legal route – forcing people (children) to take dangerous journeys
- Expensive projects such as Rwanda very unlikely to deter people coming to the UK
- Opening sponsorship opportunities for other nationalities

It is possible to create a more fair, equitable and compassionate asylum system

Any questions?

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