

Newsletter – Spring

Happy spring greetings from RAMA! ...Even if it's hard to feel optimistic about anything right now given that the global picture has deteriorated so rapidly since the last newsletter. The volatile situation in West Asia is causing huge concern for all of us, but especially for our Iranian clients, for whom it's difficult to source accurate information. Whatever is said by the main protagonists, and however the violence plays out, one outcome is sure. The bloodshed and devastation **will** generate another wave of people forced to seek refuge far and wide. According to the [UNHCR](#), up to 3.2 million Iranians have already been temporarily displaced as the conflict continues. I wonder if this crosses the minds of far-right protestors who, oddly, seem very much to support the actions of the US in prosecuting this reckless war.



According to a recent [report](#) by Gallup, when asked about their main concern, 21% of British people named immigration. Interestingly, the UK has a similar percentage of its population born overseas (17%) to Norway (18%), the Netherlands (16%) and the USA (15%), but “adults in those countries are less likely to name immigration as the most important issue”. In the survey overall, there was no clear relationship between the proportion of foreign-born residents in a country and the level of public concern. It's clear that the negative narrative that has been allowed to prevail in the UK has had a damaging impact. As noted by the [head](#) of the refugee support NGO Care4Calais, “The public debate on migration is full of politically motivated rhetoric, and almost entirely devoid of facts. It's a dangerous situation that is undoubtedly inflaming hate and bolstering far-right actors.”

Thank you for continuing to support us in countering that narrative.

It has been a very busy few months, with significant changes to the immigration landscape. Here at RAMA we have continued to expand our remit with increased activity in the legal team (and new staff!) as well as further outreach work by the Wellbeing Team. The following pages should give a flavour of some of this work.

We're now registered with **Easyfundraising** – which means you can help us for FREE! Easyfundraising works with over 8,000 retailers nationwide, and through this partnership, these retailers donate to RAMA when you buy something from their websites... at absolutely NO extra cost to you!

All you need to do is register your interest by signing up with Easyfundraising, and then whenever you shop online, go first to Easyfundraising, then access your chosen retailer from there. An automatic link will be made so that when you make your purchases that retailer will donate a percentage of what you spend to RAMA. It's a win-win for all of us!

The process is very straightforward and, to repeat, completely FREE! From the smallest spend – (say a £15 picture frame which would give us about 30p), to a weekly grocery shop or a holiday booking (that will provide us with *much* more); anything you buy will provide us with something.

Even if you only make an occasional online purchase, these donations really mount up, so please sign up to support us. There are joining instructions and how-to video [here](#). There are also FAQs and further useful information elsewhere on the website.



Operational Lead's report

You will understand that our clients are affected by the current climate, with increased tensions and anxiety. What you may not expect is that the rhetoric also affects our funding: funders now require more evidence of how our work benefits the *wider* community – as though benefitting sanctuary seekers was not enough.

While it's a shame that we're obliged to do it, justifying our work is easy: we sit in the prevention space. The new NHS 10-year plan calls for increased prevention of health and mental health crises. Since we carefully manage client cases from initial registration onwards, our work prevents overburdened police, social workers, councils, the health & mental health sector and voluntary partners having to work with clients at crisis point.

Last year we saw 836 people with **no recourse to public funds** (NRPF). For the vast majority this was coupled with no right to work, no right to claim benefits, no free secondary healthcare and no legal aid. For those experiencing domestic abuse, there is also no access to a refuge or even the night shelter.

Nobody knows these clients exist. How could they? They pay no rent, no utilities, no tax; they are not registered to vote and claim no benefits. Local services are not qualified to offer support, and many have no funding for interpreters or translation. They cannot identify what immigration status people have and what rights accompany them. In every one of those 836 cases we assisted – helping people with destitution payments so they could stay with friends or family – before making immigration applications or lifts of the 'no recourse' condition. Clients were therefore able to escape abuse and potential exploitation. Without our input, the work of keeping Colchester as free as possible of modern slavery would be farcical.

Allow me to provide a few cases demonstrating the barriers these clients face.

One client (aged 83) is dying of motor neurone disease and cancer, seeking asylum and living in the Tendring facility with his wife (aged 80) who is unable to care for him. The hospital consultant called us and asked me not to tell her if he has no recourse to public funds as if so she would no longer be able to prescribe palliative care. As an asylum seeker he can access life-saving chemotherapy, but as soon as the care becomes palliative, he is no longer technically eligible, meaning he could die in agony.

Another referral was for a young, healthy woman dependent on her husband's work visa. She was pregnant on arrival, and while care for standard births is free, she had an emergency caesarean after complications so the hospital charged her £13,000. This terrified her, since the couple do not have the money to pay. Worse still, she now has a bad infection that the perinatal team fear will develop into sepsis if left untreated, but she is refusing to return for specialist help in case she is charged more. This same hospital has an overseas patient manager whose job it is to identify and charge people – with no leeway regarding their vulnerability or income – yet the cost of treating sepsis is far greater than any funds recouped from charges, and the cost for the family in terms of health and wellbeing is far more severe.

There are families newly granted refugee status placed in remote locations across Tendring and Colchester by London boroughs and even Chelmsford Council; often left there with no furniture, no crockery or cutlery and no white goods. Some have no English, and one recent arrival was a lone mother with seven children. Local services would not know about them and in any case have little capacity to support. Instead, it is RAMA that takes what action it can to remedy the situation. With local government and NHS restructuring well underway, further changes are inevitable. Our award-winning, forward-thinking SNEE-ICB (Suffolk & North East Essex Integrated Care Board) is losing its connection to Suffolk and joining two other Essex ICBs that are in debt. SNEE-ICB has been a great ally and respectful of the way we can reach communities they do not see. There are many good people within the system, but over 50% of staff will lose their jobs and currently there is no budget to manage the numbers needing redundancy.

In the same way that the Covid PPE scandal showed how there are always profits to be made from misery, many individuals profit from the way in which asylum seekers are treated. The constant negativity and 'othering' of marginalised groups is changing social attitudes. Recently we were told by NHS partners promoting EDI policies that staff participating in training had acknowledged that they would be professional when at work, but that these EDI principles did not align with their personal beliefs. Imagine: you attend a road traffic accident involving an asylum seeker, a black person and a blond, white person.... How do your personal beliefs not then affect your response? Instead of triaging for whose medical need is greater, other factors will be at play. EDI training is currently not fit for purpose; bombarding people with facts is not enough. To engage people and address the misinformation, we must have voices with lived experience so that true empathy is awakened.

You may not be aware that UK Immigration Enforcement has added 'compliance' to its title, to create ICE (just like in the US) – and that 3 sets of people (that we know of) have been approached by them in the last few months. One family included a mum and adult daughter both working for a well-known and respected local care agency. Totally without warning, the door to their flat was broken down and they were handcuffed – in front of a 7- and a 10-year-old – and their passports confiscated. They were told the company had lost its sponsorship license and were given a 60-day notice to leave the country (difficult when passport's been taken!). In fact, the company in question retains a full sponsorship licence, as any of us could check with a quick Google search. Luckily our MP told the family to come to us and with her help we have been able to get the passports returned and the 60 days' notice overturned. NO apology though, no understanding that the mother is now in fear of leaving the house and the younger children are worried to go to school in case mum is not there when they return.

Without RAMA's intervention, the already high number of clients facing serious mental health issues would be even greater. Some of our clients are sectioned, and we have known them to be subsequently discharged to homelessness and destitution without appropriate support. Now we work with the discharge teams to prevent this. Dismayingly, the current circumscribing of refugee rights will change the goalposts again and risks undoing much of the work we have done with partners in recent years. **MW**



Last month, we marked the fourth anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It was a sombre milestone, but an event in the Moot Hall organised by Colchester City Council was filled with a powerful sense of solidarity and warmth. Many of our clients attended, alongside Colchester Mayor Mike Lilley, Leader of the Council David King, and Yovone Cook, Community and Partnerships Officer at CCC. Their words of strength and hope resonated deeply. For the families we support, feeling this level of genuine care from local authorities makes a world of difference as they continue to build their lives here in the UK. Recent updates mean the Ukraine Scheme has been extended by a further 2 years (UPE2) and those wishing to extend their stays will now be able to apply up to 90 days before their current permission expires – three times the current 28 days.

However, great uncertainty remains about whether those Ukrainians living in the UK – for some, it has already been four years – will be able to stay in the country permanently, as the government has again set this as a temporary extension. This makes it difficult for families to plan for the long term, secure permanent housing, or feel fully at home.

While our casework often focuses on the 'essentials' of the H4U visa – giving practical assistance to resolve everyday issues – we also aim to support our Ukrainian clients as much as we can by offering activities and events that help them to find moments of joy and connection outside of their daily challenges. We are excited to share that RAMA has secured new funding from Essex Community Foundation (ECF). This funding is specifically dedicated to providing activities that allow us to focus on wellbeing and community spirit.

A Night at the Opera

The first of these activities has already seen an incredible response. We were thrilled that 50 of our clients signed up to see the **Ukrainian National Opera**, on tour from Dnipro, perform *Madame Butterfly* in March. There was huge enthusiasm in the group, and we were so pleased to facilitate an evening that celebrates Ukrainian professional talent on an international stage.

Dnipro Opera (Ukrainian National Opera) has a long history of top-quality productions. Дніпровський академічний театр опери та балету is close to the banks of the River Dnipro in the city of the same name. The theatre is home to opera performers, a ballet company, a choir and an orchestra. <https://www.opera-ballet.com.ua/>

Гастрольний тур до Великої Британії

The HOPE Programme: Bridging the Gap in Mental Health and Sanctuary

We are pleased to share a progress update on the **HOPE** Programme, a cornerstone initiative within RAMA's Mental Health and Wellbeing Department. Running as a pilot from October 2025 to March 2026, HOPE — Holistic Outreach and Psychological Empowerment — has been designed to address the systemic barriers that prevent refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants from accessing the mental health support they need and deserve. The programme is currently active across key locations throughout Essex, including Colchester, Tendring, Uttlesford (Stansted), Southend and Rochford, Chelmsford, Basildon, and Thurrock.

Our Holistic Delivery Model

To address the often unseen and unacknowledged psychological impact of trauma and displacement, the HOPE Programme employs a three-strand delivery model that integrates clinical expertise with community-centred care:

Indicator 1 — Individual Psychotherapy: Clients receive up to 12 dedicated sessions with qualified psychotherapists, providing a safe, linguistically accessible space in which to process trauma and begin recovery.

Indicator 2 — Group Therapeutic Sessions: A structured six-to-eight-week programme incorporating Tai Chi, yoga, mindfulness, and art therapy, complemented by psychoeducational workshops on topics including sleep hygiene and access to Essex Sexual Health Services.

Indicator 3 — Large Group Psychosocial Events: Community-building activities designed to foster resilience, including "The Tree of Life" workshops, forest school visits, and practical winter support in the form of clothing, warmth packs and essential vouchers.



Team Spotlight: Strengthening Our Clinical Leadership

We are delighted to welcome **Shireen Dossa** to the RAMA team in her role as Psychotherapist. Shireen brings considerable specialist experience to our Wellbeing Department, working with us on a part-time basis alongside her continued role at Herrick House, an NHS Secondary Mental Health Services provider. This dual professional position establishes a valuable bridge between RAMA's community-led model of care and the NHS secondary care system. Since joining, Shireen has made an immediate and meaningful contribution across three key areas:

Specialist Individual Clinical Care: Shireen provides intensive psychotherapy to clients presenting with complex post-traumatic stress and severe psychological distress.

Clinical Supervision: She offers structured supervision to our wellbeing staff, supporting team resilience and maintaining the highest clinical standards when managing high-risk cases.

Departmental Development: Shireen plays an active role in shaping the ongoing development of our wellbeing services, contributing to the refinement of our Holistic Model of Care.

We are enormously grateful for Shireen's expertise and commitment as we continue to dismantle barriers to mental health support and work towards building a community grounded in equity and sanctuary for all. **LA**

We were approached recently by **Community Dental Services** who were offering free dental checks and follow-up minor dental work for all our clients. It operates from a large mobile dental unit and, in this case, our friends at the Salvation Army in Colchester kindly offered the use of their car park for the three dates that we were given. Dental care is something that is in extreme demand by our clients and so we were very grateful for this offer. Often clients need immediate attention – looking after their teeth is difficult and not a priority on the journeys many of them make. It is always a struggle to find dental care: we work with one or two local providers who have been marvellous, but they cannot see to everyone's needs. This new service is invaluable to us. It is proving very popular, with the first check-up date on 30 March, and others to follow.

PM

Changes to Immigration Rules

As many of you will know, **UK immigration policy** over the past few years seems to have become no more than a series of reactive decisions made without any long-term planning or clear evidence explaining the motivation for these changes. This 'Hostile Environment' has undoubtedly failed to address public concern that we are living through an 'unprecedented invasion' (to use the awful term popularized by the previous Home Secretary). I'd wager that most people would be shocked to learn that, far from an invasion, net migration actually plummeted by 69% last year.

Some of us, myself included, had hoped that the new Labour government would approach these matters more sensitively. In hindsight, that hope admittedly appears naïve: the direction of travel was visible well before the Labour Party entered government. In the run-up to the election, Labour increasingly aligned itself on immigration with the Conservatives, emphasising the need for greater 'control', stronger enforcement, enhanced border security, faster returns, and an overall reduction in migration levels.

Despite these warning signs, it is fair to say that many of us at RAMA were still taken aback when, in May last year, the Home Secretary published the **Restoring Control over the Immigration System** white paper. Until that point, I had convinced myself that Labour's harsher rhetoric was largely performative, as a way of appearing 'tough on immigration' while more humane reforms were being developed behind the scenes. The publication of the white paper made it *somewhat* difficult to sustain that belief.

Nonetheless, we are not dwelling on the disappointment, and instead RAMA has been working tirelessly to challenge these changes and protect the interests of our vulnerable clients.

Here is a brief look at what we've achieved in the past few months...

Along with 139 other organisations, RAMA drafted a **formal submission** to the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee. We are proud to share that our submission was accepted and published as written evidence for the inquiry. (You can read [here](#)).

RAMA also responded to the government's **consultation on Earned Settlement** and ensured that our staff and volunteers had the necessary tools to understand the coming changes and answer the consultation themselves. In the whole of the UK, over 200,000 people raised their voices through this consultation. A massive thank you to those of you who took the time to contribute. We hope that this overwhelming wave of support cannot be ignored and that the government will hear our calls for a fairer reform.

Our immigration team also met **Colchester MP Pam Cox** to voice our concerns about the proposals directly. It was subsequently very rewarding to see her speak out in Parliament against some of the issues we had raised. She made the very good point that these changes risk undermining some of Labour's otherwise very positive policies on child poverty, workers' rights, gender equality, and homelessness.

RAMA will continue to challenge these changes by working closely with our partners across the sector, including as part of the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA)'s members group. Our priority will continue to be ensuring that our clients, especially those who are vulnerable, are protected and supported throughout these changes.

FE

The **pushback** on the proposed changes has come even from within the Home Secretary's own party. About 100 Labour MPs expressed their concerns in a private letter to Mahmood. Tony Vaughan MP (Folkestone and Hythe), said the changes would "breed insecurity and fractured communities". The refugee support sector as a whole has condemned the changes as hugely damaging. A group of NGOs, including ILPA, wrote a joint letter urging the removal of the policy introducing 30-month reviews for those awarded refugee status, saying "We believe [...] it will require political courage and the rejection of the performative cruelty that has characterised debate in the UK in recent years. We urge you to show that courage and demonstrate commitment to our communities and the dignity of those who come to the UK seeking safety."

EL



Local Foundation supporting with emergency accommodation

There is a high level of need for safe housing for all RAMA clients, but one group enjoys even fewer options: those with **no recourse to public funds** (NRPF). These clients are unable to access the Night Shelter, Council duty, YMCA, or even a refuge in cases where there has been domestic abuse. Last year we worked with **836** people with NRPF. The numbers this year will be higher. People come to us because we are a trusted organisation within the migrant community. With our outreach and current programmes, we have made concerted efforts to reach some of the most marginalised and vulnerable migrants in Essex.

These include victims of modern day slavery, trafficking, honour-based violence and forced marriage, people who have NRPF for complex reasons – and have therefore become destitute – eg Europeans who failed to make their Settled Status claims after we left the EU and now have no right to benefits or housing; unregularized migrants who have often been exploited and who may have children; international students whose country exchange rates fall and who cannot continue with studies; victims of sponsorship arrangements who arrive to a non-existent or abusive job; people receiving palliative treatment who may not be eligible for the medication to control their pain.... There is no end to the ways in which a migrant may fall through the cracks and find themselves vulnerable.

The one thing every case has in common is the need for **safe accommodation** while we make applications to relieve destitution and ensure that clients, and their dependents, are safe and able to manage. Many clients have a 'condition' on their visa that prevents them from having recourse to public funds, meaning they cannot access statutory benefits, and this includes the night shelter, council accommodation or even emergency relief housing or domestic abuse refuges. They are also not eligible for benefits such as housing benefit, child benefit, Universal Credit or PIP. RAMA can assist by making a specific application to 'lift' that condition temporarily, so these clients have more help available to them. There is a risk, though, since such an application *could* result either in a variation of their existing visa and expulsion from the country, or loss of their Leave to Remain.

Our Immigration Advice service – regulated by the Home Office – provides support and guidance to make various applications. One of the most common (157 this year) is called an MVDAC - Migrant Victim of Domestic Violence Concession. This can award 'leave outside the rules' (giving the person eligibility for public funds) to those formerly on a spousal visa and married to a British citizen and also, after a subsequent application, an award of Indefinite Leave to Remain.

Applications are often granted within a week, but benefits and housing applications can take time to come through and spaces in refuges are limited. Some applications take a few weeks. We are often the **ONLY** service that people can turn to (technically nobody has responsibility for these individuals). We have a great partnership with both the local Colchester refuges, but owing to the 'no recourse' condition they are unable to support during this interim period. We strive to keep individuals safe at this vulnerable time by booking nights in local hotels; we also support with destitution payments, food, and sometimes even clothing as people often flee with nothing.

For victims where there is no spousal visa, we often have a longer period of consultation to investigate whether there is another route available. Where there is not, we try to support a paid voluntary return – but for the Home Office to allocate a caseworker can take up to 15 weeks – during which time people are also destitute and homeless.

Given all this, we were absolutely delighted recently to be introduced to the **Colin Bennett Charitable Trust**, which distributes funds in the local area specifically targeting homelessness and destitution. The Trust aims to support people when they are at their most vulnerable, by providing them with dignity, sustenance and shelter... a perfect match for RAMA! The charity visited our office to see the team at work and to share our usual Friday lunch. They heard in depth about the scope of what we do and who we serve, including all the challenges faced by our clients and the current difficulties in finding new funding.

Ultimately, we could not have wished for a better outcome: Mr Bennett provided a generous donation that was far in excess of the modest sum we had requested. This will assist with the costs of emergency accommodation for very vulnerable people and potentially help us to establish new connections and partnerships with others who can help to support our clients.

MW & EL



New Carpentry Workshop Supporting Refugees, Asylum Seekers & Migrants

We at **S.T.E.P.** (Skills and Training Engagement Programme) are delighted to share that our new premises for our carpentry workshop for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants is now up and running and already proving to be a fantastic success. The workshop offers a welcoming space where participants can learn practical skills, build confidence, and connect with others in the community through hands-on creativity. This project has been made possible thanks to the incredible generosity and partnership of local organisations.

Colchester City Council has supported the project through their City of Sanctuary grant program. Essex Community Fund has also been invaluable. The Men's Shed has kindly donated a wide range of tools, while Emmaus and Spindler's Reclamation Yard have provided much-needed wood and materials, ensuring the workshop was fully equipped from day one. Support from Kingsland Church and Emmaus was incredible during the first year, and we cannot forget their role in getting us started before we had our own premises. RAMA has played a key role right from the beginning: supporting S.T.E.P with office space, encouraging with the programme, making referrals, and offering valuable mentoring throughout the funding application process to S.T.E.P. CEO **Busiswa Madikazi**. It's inspiring to see such strong collaboration helping people feel empowered, skilled, and connected. We look forward to watching the workshop and its brilliant participants continue to grow. We extend thanks to all the community actors and especially to RAMA.



<https://stepcic.co.uk>

BM



Carpentry students: in the workshop, building a shed, and at the Minorities handing over their newly completed activities cart, with Busi and members of Essex Art Society.



Hello everyone! My name is **Floran** and I am (relatively) newly employed in the RAMA legal team. I first moved to the UK from France in 2015, which was my first experience of the British immigration system. Some of you may remember me from my time at Colchester Sixth Form College (almost eight years ago!), where I was part of the student-led group Friends Not Foes. That experience was my first time working with refugees and, although I had initially intended to become an engineer, it convinced me to study law at university and pursue a career in the field of immigration.

I've now completed a first-class dual degree in French and English law, following two years at the University of Leicester and two years at the University of Strasbourg. At the end of my degree, I returned to RAMA for a one-month placement. The immigration team was much smaller then, but I enjoyed the experience so much that I decided to apply for a Master's degree in European law, specializing in Freedom, Security, and Justice. This allowed me to focus on EU migration policies, freedom of movement, and the protection of fundamental rights within the EU. As part of my course, I spent three months in Northern Ireland working for the Centre for Border Cooperation, looking at how Brexit has affected local communities in Ireland. I also spent two months working at the government offices in the Strasbourg Prefecture, working on the Dublin III regulation (the rules that decide which EU country is responsible for examining a person's asylum claim).

I have now returned to Colchester and to the RAMA immigration team. I'm currently working towards the Immigration Advice Authority Level 1 exam, with the hope of contributing to policy making in the future. I'm thrilled to be part of such a wonderful team and I have already learnt so much from my amazing colleagues.



FE

The Bigger Picture

It's been easy to see over the past year how a large section of the British public objects to asylum seekers coming to the UK and believes we are the prime destination for people on the move. But how true is this, statistically? How do numbers in the UK compare to those in the rest of Europe?

The most recent comparative data for the EU+¹ is for the year ending September 2025. At this point, there were **871,240** people claiming asylum in the EU+, 22% fewer than in the previous year. This contrasts with a 13% *increase* in the UK over the same period. In the year ending September 2025, the UK received **11%** of all asylum seekers across the UK and EU+ combined. That put the UK **fifth** in terms of overall numbers, but **fifteenth** when numbers are considered per capita. Even the Home Office recognizes this, stating the UK is "below the average among EU countries for asylum applications per head of population". Smaller countries such as Greece, Cyprus, Luxemburg, Slovenia, Switzerland and the Netherlands all accept more people per capita than the UK.

Country of claim	Total number of people claiming (proportion of total claims in the EU+ & UK)	Top nationality claiming asylum (percentage of total for that country)
Germany	177,355 (18%)	Afghanistan (28%)
France	157,945 (16%)	Haiti (9%)
Spain	151,265 (15%)	Venezuela (55%)
Italy	133,740 (14%)	Bangladesh (20%)
United Kingdom	110,051 (11%)	Pakistan (11%)

Source: [Eurostat Asylum statistics](#) and [Asylum claims and initial decisions – Asy_D01](#)

To year end December 2025, the largest individual nationalities of **people claiming asylum in the UK** were Pakistani (11%), Eritrean (9%), Iranian (7%), Afghan (6%) and Bangladeshi (6%). These five nationalities accounted for 39% of asylum applicants that year. [Of the claimants from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, between 71% and 89% arrived on a visa before claiming asylum, a result of a large increase in work and study visa grants since 1 January 2021, following changes to the immigration system].

At RAMA we see more from among the asylum seekers who have arrived in the UK through **irregular means** (52% of overall claimants last year, the majority on small boats). These individuals and families, picked up and dispersed to Colchester by the authorities, are more likely to be desperate and destitute, having survived hardship and danger on their journeys.

Between 2018 to 2024, nationals of six countries accounted for **70%** of all small boat arrivals – Iran (17%), Afghanistan (15%), Iraq (12%), Albania (10%), Syria (9%), and Eritrea (8%). While Afghanistan was the top country of origin in both 2023 and 2024, other arrivals have remained relatively stable in composition, with significant numbers from Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Eritrea every year since 2021. For other nationalities, numbers have fluctuated: for example, arrivals from Albania have almost ceased, while arrivals from Vietnam more than tripled in 2024 compared to the year before. At RAMA our numbers more or less align with the national picture, with highest number of clients being from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.²

In terms of positive decisions for asylum seekers, there is great variation depending on country of origin. While applications from nationals of countries such as Sudan, Eritrea, Syria and Afghanistan historically saw award rates between 93% and 99%, others were lower (eg Bangladesh at 16% and India at under 3%). It should be noted, though, that even the high-grant countries have seen a reduction in positive decisions over the past year, with grants for Afghans dropping from 51% to 34%, and most shockingly, positive grants for Syrians, which in 2024 stood at 98%, dropping to 9% !

These statistics are a tiny fraction of the very complicated picture of immigration and asylum in the UK. Unfortunately, it is too easy for political agitators to cherry-pick numbers and/or conflate different groups to present an erroneous and misleading picture that suits their anti-migrant narrative. It's an uphill struggle, but we all need to keep advocating for a tolerant and compassionate approach to those seeking refuge in the UK.

EL

¹ The term 'EU+' refers to the 27 EU member states, together with Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

² Our largest cohort is actually from Ukraine. We also have large numbers from Nigeria – the vast majority of whom arrived in the UK on a legitimate visa but subsequently encountered problems; then claiming asylum owing to risks faced in their home country.