

The current rising racism and anti-immigrant discourse creates the conditions in which people seeking sanctuary can be exploited for profit. Today, we know that **asylum hotel billionaires** have profited by over £380 million. These huge sums of government money are not going to people seeking sanctuary, but to private service providers and hotel owners. Those living in the asylum system are forced to survive on £1-1.40 per day and often report harsh conditions. As documented by independent research and the media, overcrowding, inadequate nutrition, mental health issues, and 'prison-like' conditions are prevalent in collective accommodation centres. However, the political right distorts the truth, portraying the money earned by billionaires as the cost of asylum seekers: an absolute lie. This lie benefits the billionaires, because the political right is also funded by these billionaires. This allows them to continue lying and hiding the fact that a few individuals are profiting by exploiting people who have been forced to flee their countries and now have no choice but to build their lives here in the United Kingdom. These asylum hotel billionaires are taking government money - effectively stealing from UK taxpayers. If there is any anger about this, it should be directed at the hotel kings and right-wing politicians.

In opposition to right-wing and neoliberal mindsets, we do not feed on hatred, we spend our limited time in this world at least leaving a smile on people's faces, which is much more important than the pursuit of profit that seems to shape so much of today's materialistic behaviour.

As an immigration team, we provide support to individuals who are unable to access legal counselling services due to financial constraints. However, RAMA is not only a civil society organization that provides legal support to vulnerable immigrants and communities, but also assists with school applications, doctor visits, referrals, transportation, job applications, English lessons, furniture provision, and toy procurement, among other matters. Our sole aim is to make this world a just and liveable place for everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, colour, national or social origin, class, citizenship status, language, religion or belief, sex, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, or any other status.

We are here for people, not to exploit hatred for material gain, and we serve people. As Arif Sağ, one of the leading figures in modern Turkish folk music and a survivor of the Sivas Massacre, in which people were burned alive because of hatred towards the Alevi community in Turkey, said, "In essence, I came here to be a human being."

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More Compassionate Community Champions in Colchester!

It's always a joy to see the work of partner organisations acknowledged in the monthly community awards at the Town Hall. Most recently awards have gone to **Les Nicoll**, the founder and driving force behind NEST (North Essex Support Team), nominated by RAMA for the support he has given our clients in recent years; **Jahanara Loqueman**, founder, director and chair of the Bangladeshi Women's Group for over two decades; and **Onche Godwin Daudu**, counsellor, community-builder, formerly of C360 and now Program Lead at Afiuk. Compassion is certainly the foundation of all they do.

www.StHelena.org.uk/Compassion



Don't forget you can find us on social media, and also on our new LinkedIn page
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/rama-refugee-asylum-migrant-action/>



The **UK and France** have agreed a **migration deal** aimed at reducing the number of people who cross the Channel in small boats, the so-called '**one in one out**' deal. Announced in July, an 11-month pilot scheme will see some people who arrive in the UK by irregular means returned to France, while an equivalent number, including those with family connections in the UK, will be brought from France to the UK.

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has welcomed the proposal, suggesting it could "help achieve a more managed and shared approach, offering alternatives to dangerous journeys, while upholding access to asylum". The Refugee Council stressed the importance of it being "implemented in a way that treats all those seeking asylum fairly and with respect and dignity". The Immigration Law Practitioners' Association was cautious while "we have no details as to how the deal will work in practice, who will be chosen for return, whether it will create another backlog of 'inadmissible' asylum claims, leaving people lingering in limbo and detention, how the UK will ensure it does not unlawfully discriminate, or how individual rights and access to justice will be upheld." Grassroots NGOs were even more critical. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) likened it to reducing men, women and children to "exchangeable tokens", while Care4Calais described it as a "gimmick that lacks any operational credibility" and was also doubtful about how individuals could be selected in a fair and impartial way.

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Sportsflash!

On a rare rainy day in August the **RAMA football team** took part in a football match against a team from Wethersfield Immigration Centre.

The Wethersfield team were organised by SimplyActive (<https://www.simplyactive.com/>) who also jointly organised the fixture with RAMA. The match was played in great spirit and keenly contested, with the Wethersfield team eventually coming out on top with a 4-3 victory.



The RAMA partnership with the **Real Oddies Cricket Club** (<https://realoddiescc.co.uk/>) continues to blossom and RAMA clients, who are now fixtures of the Real Oddies CC team, have been involved in matches all summer long with clients taking wickets and scoring runs week in week out. The compassion and generosity shown by the Real Oddies CC prompted RAMA to nominate them for a Compassionate Community Champion Award which they will receive at a ceremony at the Town Hall in September accompanied by RAMA staff.

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Photos courtesy of Roger Cuthbert LRPS

I recently read 'I seek a kind person' by Julian Borger (highly recommended) and within it I discovered a quote, unfamiliar to me, yet quite apposite for our work at RAMA. Holocaust scholar Yehuda Bauer suggested there should be three additional commandments to Moses' original ten: 'thou **shalt not be a perpetrator, nor a victim, and thou shalt never, ever, be a bystander.**' I believe at RAMA we live by this last proposition. We pride ourselves on not standing by, but taking action to ease the lives of those who society increasingly deems undeserving. We don't stand by whilst our clients struggle and suffer, we take a humanitarian approach and through our casework alleviate as many of their issues and needs as we can. Our name is short but our reach is long. And this work is even more important in these challenging times where the far right feels so omnipresent, and the general public are so very misinformed. We also try to ensure our clients are not defined by, or more importantly not limited by, the label 'refugee' or 'migrant'. As the well-known 'campsite rule' states, leaving the world a better place, or just leaving things better than you found them, is an excellent motto by which to live. We should go beyond trying not to do harm, should try to remediate harm done by others... and never, ever, be a bystander.

MMC

Children enjoying Forest School at
Highwoods Country Park



Donate!

£5 will give a day's destitution payment for somebody with no recourse to public funds.

£10 will pay for a charity shop token worth £40 enabling a client to buy a change of clothes.

£20 will facilitate outreach work in the county's most deprived areas.

£50 will provide a hotel room for a domestic abuse victim who, owing to immigration rules, cannot access a refuge.

Immigration White Paper

The following changes, outlined in the above [White Paper](#) in May 2025, came into effect on 22 July:

- Raising the skilled worker visa threshold back to degree level (RQF 6).
- Increasing salary requirements for work visas.
- Limiting employers' sponsoring of skilled workers from overseas in line with a time-limited, interim Temporary Shortage List.
- Closing the social care worker visa route to overseas recruitment.

Further changes will be introduced 'over the course of this Parliament':

- Increasing the standard qualifying period for permanent residence (also known as indefinite leave to remain (ILR) or settlement) from five to ten years, with some people qualifying sooner based on criteria yet to be decided.
- Reducing the standard length of the Graduate visa for international students to stay on and work in the UK, from two years to 18 months.
- Stricter English language rules: higher standards for those already taking language tests and requiring accompanying partners to have basic English to qualify for a 'dependant' visa.
- Making it harder for universities to keep their licence to sponsor student visas by introducing tougher compliance rules.
- Exploring a levy on universities' income from international student fees.
- Finally, the only measure designed to increase immigration: making it easier for people to come to the UK on certain visas aimed at highly skilled migrants, such as the Global Talent and High Potential route.

None of these changes, bar the penultimate, require an Act of Parliament or statutory instrument, as they can be made by amending the [Immigration Rules](#).

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Asylum figures — the FACTS!

Asylum applications to December 2024

- In 2024, 84,200 applications for asylum made in the UK - highest annual number ever recorded.
- Applications peaked at a similar level in 2002 (84,100 applications). Within a few years numbers dropped to a low of 17,900. Between 2011 and 2020, numbers stabilised at an average of 27,500 applications per year.

Proportion of all migrants who are asylum seekers and refugees

- In 2023, asylum seekers and refugees made up *around 11%* of immigrants to the UK. If the British National (Overseas) scheme is included in the category of humanitarian routes, up to 14% of immigration in that year would fall into that category.

Decisions and refusals

- In 2024, 53% of asylum applications were refused at initial decision (not counting withdrawals). The annual refusal rate was highest in 2004 (88%) and lowest in recent times in 2022 (24%).
- Between 2004 to 2021, around three-quarters of applicants refused asylum at initial decision lodged an appeal and almost one third of those appeals were allowed.

Asylum caseload

- As of June 2024, the total 'work in progress' asylum caseload consisted of 224,700 cases. Of these, 87,200 cases were awaiting an initial decision and 137,500 cases had received an initial refusal and were awaiting some kind of further action.
- The total asylum caseload has *quadrupled in size since 2014*, driven both by applicants waiting longer for an initial decision and a growth in the number of people subject to removal following a negative decision.

Nationality of asylum seekers and refugees

- In 2024, the most common origin region of asylum seekers was Asia and the most common single nationality was Pakistani, followed by Afghan. In previous years, the Middle East was the most common origin region, with Syrian and Iranian the most common nationalities.
- If considering exclusively **small boat arrivals** (ie people who don't have the option of arriving by plane or other route), the highest numbers in past two years have come from Eritrea and Afghanistan.

Small boats

- The number of asylum seekers arriving in small boats across the Channel has increased in recent years, from being a route which was almost never used prior to 2018. In the 6 years since, around 148,000 people arrived in small boats, 95% of whom applied for asylum. These individuals accounted for *less than one third* (29%) of the total number of people who applied for asylum in the UK between 2018 and 2024.

*NB It's hard to argue that those coming on small boats are not fleeing war, famine or other calamitous situation in their home countries—they are **not** economic migrants!* (Ed)

European context

- In 2022, there were around 13 asylum applications for every 10,000 people living in the UK. Across the EU27 there were 25 asylum applications for every 10,000 people. The UK was therefore below the average among EU countries for asylum applications per head of population, ranking 17th among EU27 countries plus the UK on this measure.

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Irr_02b: Small boat arrivals, by nationality, 2018 to end June 2025 [Notes 1, Link to notes, Link to table of contents, Source: Irr D01 - Detected attempts to enter the UK irregularly, Home Office]

Nationality	2024	2025 (Jan - Jun)
Eritrea	3,480	3,543
Afghanistan	6,065	2,318
Sudan	2,748	2,087
Somalia	697	1,693
Iran	4,214	1,688
Vietnam	3,657	1,026
Yemen	1,300	977
Ethiopia	508	784
Iraq	2,142	747
Stateless	138	742
Syria	4,693	686

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House of Commons Library current figures

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN01403/SN01403.pdf>