The New Plan For Immigration Consultation

# What is it?

The New Plan for Immigration (<https://newplanforimmigration.com/en/>) is the government’s proposal for the future of a number of policy areas concerning immigration. It is mostly concerned with the asylum and refugee system, but there are also sections on modern slavery and on citizenship and nationality rights.

The stated purpose of the Plan is:

* Firstly, to increase the fairness and efficacy of our system so that we can better protect and support those in genuine need of asylum.
* Secondly, to deter illegal entry into the UK, thereby breaking the business model of people smuggling networks and protecting the lives of those they endanger.
* Thirdly, to remove more easily from the UK those with no right to be here.

The full set of proposals can be found on the website link above or at <https://ilpa.org.uk/new-plan-for-immigration-consultation-documents-24-march-2021/>

The government has asked people to respond to a consultation on the proposals which will run until 5 May 2021.

# What’s in it?

The plan has nine chapters:

* Chapter 1: Overview of the Current System. Provides some statistics and details on the current system.
* Chapter 2: Protecting those Fleeing Persecution, Oppression and Tyranny. This section provides details of the proposed future of resettlement schemes, family reunion, community sponsorship and refugee integration.
* Chapter 3: Ending Anomalies and Delivering Fairness in British Nationality Law. This chapter focuses on correcting some current issues in nationality law.
* Chapter 4: Disrupting Criminal Networks and Reforming the Asylum System. This chapter is focused on so-called illegal migration and abuses of the asylum system. It introduces a two tier system for assessing asylum claims, with claims that have been made by people who have arrived illegally deemed inadmissible. It establishes a new temporary protected status for those refused asylum, brings in new age verification and well-founded fear of persecution tests and looks to end the practice of housing asylum seekers in hotels by expanding the detention estate.
* Chapter 5: Streamlining Asylum Claims and Appeals. Is a chapter which rpesents proposals for making the claim and appeals process faster and fairer. Introduces demand that people making an asylum claim operate in good faith at all times.
* Chapter 6: Supporting Victims of Modern Slavery. Introduces a number of measures designed to prevent abuse of the system, including a new public order exemption and a change to the Reasonable Grounds decision criteria. Also introduces a route to temporary leave to remain for victims, new training for first responders and a review into child victims.
* Chapter 7: Disrupting Criminal Networks Behind People Smuggling. This chapter introduces a number of measures to increase the deterrent against people smuggling and illegal migration and increases border force powers.
* Chapter 8: Enforcing Removals including Foreign National Offenders (FNOs). This section introduces new tougher measures for removing foreign criminals, and also those whose asylum claim has been refused.
* Chapter 9: Introduces the public consultation.

# Who should respond?

Anyone can provide a response to as many or as few of the consultations questions as they would like (each chapter has between 2 and 6 accompanying questions, a mix of multiple choice options and text boxes where you can reflect at length). The consultation covers a broad range of questions including several which are highly technical. We world encourage people to read the questions and think about which ones they might be able to answer based on your experience of working on these issues.

We would like to particularly encourage churches and faith-based organizations that have worked with asylum seekers, refugees and victims of modern slavery over recent years to take time to read through the proposals, to reflect on their experience in recent years and to provide responses based on that practical expertise. The consultation is designed to understand how people feel about the current asylum system and where it can be improved.

Please note that to use the <https://newplanforimmigration.com/en/> requires you to set up an account. You can also send responses directly to newplanforimmigration@britainthinks.com by email if you would prefer not to register an account.

# What should I say?

You should respond honestly based on your own experiences and reflections on the current system and the changes you would like to see. You can respond to as many or as few questions as you are comfortable responding to.

If you are looking for further pointers we would encourage you to discuss this issue with your diocesan lead contact on migration issues or with the Church of England’s national adviser (ben.ryan@churchofengland.org)

For guidance on how the Church has responded to these issues in the past, perhaps the most comprehensive summary of the Church of England’s position on asylum and refugee matters was the 2015 General Synod Motion:

- That this Synod, recognising that almost 60 million individuals have been forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict or generalised violence, a fifth of them because of the tragic conflict in Syria, and noting the compassionate response of British people to the suffering and needs of those displaced by conflict and other causes:

(a) urge parishes and dioceses to work closely with local authorities and other community partners, to provide practical and sustainable resources and structures for the resettlement of vulnerable refugees and to pray for all those seeking to address the causes as well as the symptoms of this crisis;

(b) welcome both the scale of the aid provided by Her Majesty’s Government to those suffering as a result of the conflict in Syria and its decision to resettle vulnerable Syrian refugees, while calling on it to increase the number significantly beyond its initial target of 20,000 over five years;

(c) call upon the Government to work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to ensure that vulnerability to religiously motivated persecution is taken into account when determining whom to receive into Britain;

(d) call upon the Government to work with international partners in Europe and elsewhere to help establish safe and legal routes to places of safety, including this country, for refugees who are vulnerable and at severe risk; and

(e) call upon the Government to take a fair and proportionate share of refugees now within the EU, particularly those with family already legally resident in the UK.’.

At a national level we have continued to advocate in the intervening years for resettlement programmes, for a lift on the ban on asylum seekers work, against indefinite detention and in favour of a system that prioritises human dignity and compassion.

# What is the Church of England saying at a national level?

The Bishop of Durham, who is the lead bishop on refugee and asylum issues has said:

Everyone in the refugee and asylum sector recognises that reform is needed to the system. The commitment to develop more safe and legal routes for refugees is welcome. So too is the clear commitment to grow community sponsorship. We all want to see trafficking tackled robustly internationally. However there are deep concerns that the proposals will create an unhelpful two-tier system, and do not respond to asylum seekers primarily from asking why they are seeking asylum rather than the route undertaken to reach our country. I encourage people to respond to the consultation, as I shall do. The Home Office says it is committed to a culture that is Respectful, Compassionate, Collaborative and Courageous. A key question regarding these proposals is ‘Do they match up to these?’ Do they put humanity before programme?

The Mission and Public Affairs Council will be submitting a response to the consultation in the coming weeks. This response will focus on highlighting the positives of the commitment to resettlement and community sponsorship, while pressing for more ambitious targets. It will also raise concerns about the prospect of the two tier system and around the level of support and help available to those fleeing persecution.