

Morally and Ethically Bankrupt:

From Preston City of Sanctuary - our response to the Government's announcement on 17th November 2026 to overhaul refugee protection in the UK.

Today, 17 November 2025, the Government has announced sweeping plans to overhaul refugee protection in the UK – some of the most hostile we have seen in recent years. We are saddened, and extremely concerned about the proposed changes and the harmful impact it will have on those seeking sanctuary.

The proposed changes include:

- **Reducing refugee status to temporary protection of just 30 months**, subjecting successful asylum seekers who have achieved refugee status to constant reviews, trapping people in limbo and uncertainty, and extending the wait for permanent settlement from five to twenty years – thereby ballooning bureaucracy, backlog and cost.
- **Making family reunion more difficult** – if not almost impossible for most people. This will force families apart for years on end, hindering people's ability to heal and to rebuild their lives.
- **Revoking the statutory duty to provide support for people seeking asylum, including accommodation.** Research demonstrates that this will exacerbate homelessness and rough sleeping outside. This change will undoubtedly force people into further poverty, homelessness, exploitation and danger.
- Changing the way the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) is interpreted, to enable the **forcible deportation of more people** who have made a life here.
- Creating routes for people to seek asylum in the UK based on talent and skilled employment. **A person's need for safety should not be dependent on their education or employment status.** War, persecution, and violence do not discriminate based on educational or employment attainment, risking leaving the most marginalised behind and without protection.
- **Removing 'high value' items from people seeking safety to contribute to costs of accommodation.** We know from our work supporting men, women and children seeking safety that many arrive with very little. For those who do have 'high value' items such as jewellery, many are sentimental and one of the only things that have from home and their loved ones.

The plans will undoubtedly cause huge harm to people seeking safety in the UK, impeding their ability to heal and to rebuild their lives and integrate into our communities.

- **Increased insecurity:** People fleeing war, persecution and gender-based violence need stability to recover from their experiences. Temporary status – reviewed every 30 months – traps already traumatised people in limbo, forcing them to live under the constant threat of revoked status and forcible deportation.
- **Barriers to healing:** survivors of war, torture and violence require long-term safety to recover. These reforms obstruct survivors' ability to heal and directly undermines basic human rights by systematically treating refugee survivors as second-class and less-deserving.
- **Forcible family separation:** By making settlement precarious and family reunion almost impossible, the reforms risks keeping families apart indefinitely. This will have

a disproportionate impact on women and children who made up 92% of family reunion visas last year.

- **Economic vulnerability and risk of harm:** Without secure status, sanctuary seekers face barriers to stable employment, education and housing. Already, the asylum system exposes people to exploitation, abuse and violence. Trapping more people in precarity will force people into harm and exploitation as a mean to survive.
- **So-called 'safe' countries:** Declaring countries as 'safe' ignores the reality of many sanctuary seekers experiences of persecution. This risks forcibly deporting people back to harm, persecution and violence – or even death.

People seeking safety in the UK deserve more than temporary protection and endless uncertainty. They send the message that only some survivors deserve protection. They tell people who have made the UK their home that they will never be welcome. This is abhorrent.

Preston City of Sanctuary rejects this politics of hostility and division. The Home Secretary asserts that “illegal migration is tearing the UK apart”. It is our contention that what is tearing the UK apart is a politics devoid of humanity, compassion and dignity. This inflammatory language has no place in our society. These plans borrowed from hostile systems around the world and Danish nationalist ideology – represent more cruelty, more uncertainty, more hostility for people whose only ‘crime’ is to seek safety here. They are uncoded and will be hugely expensive to administer especially by a Home Office already characterised by chaos and disfunction.

We urge the Government to show moral courage, rather than chasing headlines and clout.

People seeking safety in the UK are fleeing unimaginable horrors such as war, persecution, violence and torture. It is the UK’s moral and ethical duty to uphold the right to seek protection and to offer a warm welcome to those in need. **After all, it is what any one of us would want if faced with the impossible decision to flee to save our lives.**

We reject these proposals as a dangerous step in the wrong direction. Human rights are not conditional. When we allow them to be dismantled for some , we endanger them for everyone.

Preston City of Sanctuary