



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2020/0112, 14 October 2020

Debate on E-petition 321862 relating to immigration

By Melanie Gower
Georgina Sturge, Maria
Lalic

Summary

A Westminster Hall debate “that this House has considered e-petition 321862 relating to immigration” has been scheduled for Monday 19 October 2020 in the name of Tom Hunt.

The text of the petition reads:

Take action to stop illegal immigration and rapidly remove illegal immigrants.

Illegal immigrants are entering the UK in many different ways, including small boats from France which are not stopped by either French or British forces.

The Government should take action to reduce illegal immigration into the UK and enable the rapid removal of immigrants found to be here illegally.

This debate pack contains background information about the Government’s response to the e-petition and irregular migration and small boat crossings in general, and other recent relevant background material.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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1 The petition

The [full text of the e-petition](#) reads:

Take action to stop illegal immigration and rapidly remove illegal immigrants

Illegal immigrants are entering the UK in many different ways, including small boats from France which are not stopped by either French or British forces.

The Government should take action to reduce illegal immigration into the UK and enable the rapid removal of immigrants found to be here illegally.

The petition has attracted over 120,000 signatures so far. It will close on 8 January 2021.

The Government's response

The Home Office's formal response was published on 8 October. It gives a broad overview of Government policy towards deterring irregular immigration to the UK, recent action taken, and plans to reform the UK asylum system next year:

The Government is committed to tackling illegal migration. We are working to strengthen borders, tackle organised immigration crime, overcome rigid legal barriers to removal, and overhaul the system.

We have a duty to prevent loss of life and to protect our borders. That's why we are doing everything we can to stop these dangerous and illegal Channel crossings and all forms of clandestine entry and bring to justice the criminals behind them.

The UK has long been a sanctuary for those in need of international protection, but the UK Government is clear that those in genuine need should seek that protection in the first safe country that they reach. France is such a safe country, with a fully functioning asylum system – over 100,000 asylum claims lodged last year; EU Member States are manifestly safe countries. People needing to seek protection who are in France can and should claim asylum there. They have no reason to travel in a highly dangerous way to the UK instead. In setting to sea in unseaworthy craft across one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, migrants risk their lives and the lives of those who rescue them. This is unacceptable behaviour which will not be tolerated.

As such, the dissuasion, disruption and deterrence of migrants using these routes is a cross-departmental priority. The Home Secretary and her officials, including recently-appointed Clandestine Channel Threat Commander Dan O'Mahoney, are working with their counterparts across Government and law enforcement, and with European partners, to tackle those who do this and to punish the criminals who profit from them.

We are working closely with the French to prevent these crossings. That engagement has seen us invest significantly in security and surveillance, including the use of cutting-edge technology and patrols of the beaches by French officers, some of whom we fund, and the foundation of a Joint Intelligence Cell. This year alone, over 3,000 crossing attempts were stopped by the French authorities – nearly 50% of all attempts. But more needs to be done.

Border Force has a Cutter and two Coastal Patrol Vessels patrolling the Channel, monitoring and securely escorting any small boats evading French partners. Safety of life at sea is paramount, so our focus is on preventing crossings and rapidly returning those who do get across. We intend to use legislation and reach further agreement with the French Government to develop our tactical response. Our goal is to render use of small boats unviable by linking this with an inability to remain in the UK.

The UK has obligations under the Refugee Convention and, until the end of this year, the Common European Asylum System. Where the UK is responsible for determining a claim, it must do so fully even if these appear unsubstantiated, suspect, or made in order to overturn otherwise sound immigration decisions. Accounts which may appear dubious or self-serving cannot be simply dismissed without due process under domestic and international law.

There are a number of legal routes for migration. Denying the use of dangerous routes from safe third countries does not deny people the right to seek asylum in those countries. We are clear that if a migrant has chosen to evade immigration control or enter the UK illegally, then they can have no expectation of remaining in the absence of a genuine claim for UK protection, but the current operation of the Human Rights Act 1998, EU's Common European Asylum System, and in particular the Dublin Regulation, make that a cumbersome and lengthy process. At the end of the transition period in January 2021, however, we will be free of the Dublin Regulation and the Common Asylum System and will be able to negotiate new returns agreements on our own terms. Asylum seekers entering from safe countries will remain a priority for removal, along with foreign national prisoners and those whose removal is justified on grounds of public policy, public security or public health. We also continue to seek to prosecute under UK law those that facilitate illegal entry, and to turn that heinous trade from an easy profit into a life-changing personal risk for those who engage in it. We are working with the National Crime Agency to go after those who profit from such misery.

We are currently working to return nearly 1,000 cases where migrants had previously claimed asylum in European countries and, under regulations, legally should be returned there. Over 250 arrivals are ready to be returned to Italy, Germany and France, and we have made requests under the Dublin Regulation to return over 400 more people who have arrived this year alone. We are committed to returning as many as possible of the migrants who have chosen to use these dangerous methods.

The Home Secretary has signalled her intention to fix our broken asylum system, where the most vulnerable are stuck in a bureaucracy and the least deserving are rewarded through meritless cynically-timed legal interventions, making it fairer for those genuinely in need of a safe haven and firmer against those

who seek to abuse it. We will bring forward legislation next year, in the biggest overhaul of our asylum system in decades.

2 Background

2.1 Statistics on irregular migration to the UK

Historically, one of the main methods for entering the country illegally has been to stowaway on a vehicle crossing the English Channel by ferry or tunnel. The available data suggests that between April and September 2015 there were at least 6,429 people detected after entering the country in this manner, followed by a further 1,119 in 2016/17 and 882 in 2017/18 (ICIBI (2016)).¹ No data has been released since 2018.

Since late 2018, a growing route for clandestine entry to the UK has been to cross the English Channel in small boats. There are no routinely published statistics on illegal Channel crossings. The only official information we have comes from ad hoc statements made by the Government, the latest being made in a [letter from the Home Secretary to the Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee](#) in September 2020.

In the absence of comprehensive official data, some news outlets have compiled their own estimates, which are based on reports from local sources on the South Coast. The BBC compiles such estimates, which it regularly sends to the Home Office to be confirmed or clarified.

According to a combination of official data and BBC estimates:

- 299 people were recorded as having illegally crossed the Channel by boat in 2018,
- Around 1,835 arrived in 2019, and
- Around 7,050 have arrived in 2020 so far.

There is no available data prior to January 2018 but Channel crossings in small boats were relatively unheard of before this date.

The number of migrants crossing per month has been much higher than in previous months since April of this year. Four-hundred and sixty-five people were recorded as having crossed in small boats from January to March, while this figure was 2,012 from April to June and around 4,573 from July to September²

The increase is largely due to measures taken to limit the spread of Covid-19, which were recently explained as follows by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Home Office:

¹ ICIBI, [A short notice inspection of the Home Office response to 'lorry drops'](#), July 2016; [An inspection of Border Force operations at south coast seaports](#), November 2018

² Home Affairs Select Committee, [Letter from the Home Secretary to the Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee](#): Annex A, 02 September 2020; BBC estimates for August and September.

The numbers have escalated dramatically, and there are a couple of reasons for that. One is that the weather in April, May and particularly June was unusually benign. The sea was very calm. Combined with that, the other two routes that are often used for clandestine or illegal entry into the country became much more difficult due to coronavirus. The first route was people arriving by aeroplane without proper documentation, so inadequately documented passengers. As you can imagine, this went almost to zero in April and has remained low ever since, because the number of international flights, certainly for April, May and June, was extremely low, almost zero, and to this day remains quite low.

The second route that had been used was coming in on the back of a lorry. Although freight traffic continued to come across, to supply food and so on, the passenger traffic that would ordinarily cross the channel reduced to almost zero in April and May and continues to be very low. The opportunities to use that as a cover for jumping on the back of a lorry diminished considerably, so we saw this switch to small boats.³

2.2 Statistics on returns

In evidence given to the Public Accounts Committee in October 2020, the Permanent Secretary to the Home Office stated that 231 individuals who arrived on small boats had been returned since January 2019, however this figure appears to refer only to those transfers under the Dublin III Regulation.⁴

The Home Office publishes quarterly data on returns of people who do not have the right to remain in the UK. This includes people who entered the country in a legal manner and those who entered illegally and there is no way to separate these groups out in the statistics.

Between January and June 2020, 3,053 people were returned from the UK (Home Office, [Immigration statistics data tables, year ending June 2020](#), table Ret_D01). Since the start of 2018, 48,373 people have been returned. The majority of these were 'voluntary' returns, whereby the person agrees to return if the Home Office provides them with flights (and sometimes other incentives), as opposed to 'enforced' returns.

2.3 Recent topical issues

Preventing arrivals in the UK

There is a [long history of UK-French co-operation](#) to deter irregular migration from northern France to the UK. Over the past couple of years, the UK and France have made various pacts to work together to address the problem and its underlying causes, notably through the [Sandhurst Treaty](#) in 2018, the [joint action plan](#) in January 2019, and the [enhanced action plan](#) of October 2019. These have all contained funding commitments for the UK, including for improved security

³ Lords EU Security and Justice Committee, [Uncorrected oral evidence: Brexit: future UK-EU co-operation on asylum and international protection](#), 29 September 2020, Q26

⁴ Public Accounts Committee, [Oral evidence: Asylum Accommodation and Support Transformation Programme, HC 683](#), Q23-25.

measures in France and contributions to support the French asylum system and reception conditions for asylum seekers in France.

A further phase of engagement with the French Government and officials began this summer. Chris Philp, Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts, gave an update on UK-French discussions in a recent evidence session with the Lords EU Security and Justice Committee:⁵

You asked specifically about discussions with the French. Those discussions are ongoing. They have not reached a definitive conclusion, but elements of cooperation have been agreed already. For example, on 12 July, so before my visit, the Home Secretary and I visited Calais and met with Gérald Darmanin, the newly appointed Interior Minister of the French Republic. At that meeting, we agreed with him the establishment of a joint intelligence cell, whereby officers from the UK, including officers from the National Crime Agency, would work with French colleagues to try to disrupt the criminal gangs that often organise and facilitate these crossings. The JIC has been established and work has started on that. Earlier in the year, we agreed to fund some gendarme reservists, currently 45 in number, who are deployed on and near the beaches, with the purpose of preventing embarkations. That work is going on. Overall, the French are successful in preventing approximately 50% of attempted embarkations, which, last time I checked, a few weeks ago, amounted to about 3,000 crossing attempts up to that point in 2020. They stop quite a few people attempting the journey, but a very large number still get across. Discussions are ongoing to reach a fuller agreement with our French colleagues. We hope, on our side, to reach a fuller bilateral agreement on this specific topic as soon as we can. We are actively discussing that with them at all levels, at official level and by ministerial exchanges.

He alluded to a difference in approach between the UK and French Governments on the issue of interceptions of boats at sea:

The French, certainly their land forces, are working as best they can to help prevent the embarkations, and we are working closely with them in a spirit of constructive co-operation on that. I would not want to suggest that they are not doing everything they can, but there is scope to do more. We are actively proposing to our French colleagues ways in which we can work more closely together, do more step-up activity and so on. Those proposals are with our French colleagues at the moment. When it comes to activity on the sea, the French Government take the view that they do not want to conduct interceptions of these vessels in French waters unless the vessels get into distress. If a migrant vessel embarks, refuses assistance and continues on its passage towards the median line dividing the UK and French territorial seas, the position of the French Government is to not intercept it using force. They let it continue. The only circumstance in which they pick people up and take them back to France is if the boat starts sinking and of necessity they have to pick up the people on the boat. That is their posture at sea.

⁵ Lords EU Security and Justice Committee, [Uncorrected oral evidence: Brexit: future UK-EU co-operation on asylum and international protection](#), 29 September 2020, Q26

The Home Office's Clandestine Channel Threat Commander, Dan O'Mahoney, has reportedly developed a ["four stage plan"](#) to address the problem of illegal migration across the English Channel, which centres around:

- communications campaigns to dissuade migrants in Africa and the Middle East from migrating to the UK via illegal routes;
- reducing the number of migrants leaving northern France to travel to the UK, such as by dismantling camps;
- physically preventing entry to the UK, such as by using nets to disable the boats and using British vessels to return the people on board to France; and
- reforming the UK's asylum system to reduce the perceived "pull factors" for migrating to the UK.

Mr O'Mahoney said that the UK was not currently intercepting boats and returning the people on board to France because France is unwilling returns in this way.

How are cases processed in the UK?

According to a Home Office media rebuttal, people who make the Channel crossing undergo medical checks and are then interviewed by immigration officers and held in immigration detention.⁶ Over the summer the Home Office reportedly re-purposed Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre into initial reception facilities for recently-arrived Channel migrants. It has also begun using disused army barracks as contingency asylum accommodation. The precise nature of the accommodation arrangements is unclear, including how long it is intended that people stay there whilst their claims are processed.

Returning people to EU Member States

The Dublin III Regulation gives scope for the UK to remove people seeking asylum in the UK to EU countries if, under the terms of the Regulation, that State should be responsible for processing their asylum application (for example, if the person irregularly entered that country or already applied for asylum there).

The Regulation will no longer apply to the UK from next year.

Whilst the Regulation remains in effect, the Government continues to use it to pursue transfers of asylum seekers to other European countries. In some cases, people have successfully challenged their transfer out of the UK through judicial review, sometimes at short notice.

Securing the removal of people who have travelled through 'safe' third countries en route to claiming asylum in the UK appears to be a priority within the package of asylum reforms that the Government is currently developing, as recently trailed in media reports and the Home Secretary's Conservative Party conference speech.⁷

⁶ Home Office in the media blog, ['Response to Mail on Sunday story on Channel migrants'](#), 9 August 2020

⁷ See, for example, *The Telegraph*, 'Asylum seekers who enter the UK via Europe will have claims rejected', 30 September 2020; Conservatives.com, ['Priti Patel: Fixing our broken asylum system'](#), 4 October 2020

Recent Government statements have expressed confidence that gaining the ability to negotiate new returns agreements will improve processes for returning people seeking asylum to other European countries. Some immigration law commentators are sceptical that the UK will find it easier to return asylum seekers to other countries without the framework of the Dublin Regulation.⁸

In a [recent oral evidence session](#), the Home Affairs Committee pressed Home Office officials to confirm what will be the default legal position on returning third-country nationals to EU countries after 31 December 2020. The officials were unable to provide immediate clarity.

Calls for more safe and legal routes of entry to the UK

Some observers and asylum rights campaigners [argue](#) that a lack of 'safe and legal' routes of entry to the UK for people seeking asylum is a significant cause of people trying to reach the UK by irregular routes.

There is no visa category which caters for people overseas who want to claim asylum in the UK. The Home Office's longstanding asylum policy instruction on [Applications from abroad](#) (September 2011) explains:

As a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the UK fully considers all asylum applications lodged in the UK. However, the UK's international obligations under the Convention do not extend to the consideration of asylum applications lodged abroad and there is no provision in our Immigration Rules for someone abroad to be given permission to travel to the UK to seek asylum.

Similarly, it is not possible to lodge an application for asylum in the UK with a British embassy overseas – people can only claim asylum once they are physically present in the UK.

People overseas face other legal and practical obstacles to travelling to the UK to access the asylum procedure, such as country-specific visit visa requirements, and statutory obligations on transport operators to check passengers' travel documents and prevent clandestine entries to the UK.

A Foreign Affairs Committee report, published in November 2019, made a connection between the absence of accessible legal routes and dangerous irregular journeys to the UK:

(...) In the absence of robust and accessible legal routes for seeking asylum in the UK, those with a claim are left with little choice but to make dangerous journeys by land and sea.⁹

The Committee called on the Government to create "more ambitious targets for resettlement" and "expand[...] the legal pathways to apply for asylum from outside Europe and work[...] with EU partners to encourage them to do the same.

It further recommended, in relation to the concentration of migrants in northern France wishing to travel to the UK

Focusing on increasing border security without improving conditions in the region may have the counterproductive effect

⁸ See, for example, EU Law Analysis, '[Updated Qs and As on the legal issues of asylum-seekers crossing the Channel](#)', 8 August 2020

⁹

of forcing migrants to make desperate journeys across the Channel. We recommend that, in addition to its work to increase security in northern France, the UK should work closely with French authorities to improve the conditions for migrants. It should ensure efficient processing of asylum claims by those with relatives in the UK, and make it a priority to maintain close bilateral cooperation with France after Brexit, including on these claims. (Paragraph 11)¹⁰

The Government has not yet formally responded to the Committee's report.

Recent governments have increased expanded refugee resettlement opportunities in the UK but have not indicated an interest in creating overseas asylum application routes.

Successive recent governments have tended to point to the existence of the UK's refugee resettlement/relocation schemes, and the refugee family reunion rules, to counter arguments that the UK is failing to provide adequate safe and legal routes of entry to the UK. Governments have also argued (in the context of irregular crossings of the English Channel by migrants in small boats) that "the safe and legal route to refuge is to seek asylum in the first country in which you arrive".¹¹

¹⁰ Foreign Affairs Committee, [Finding a diplomatic route: European responses to irregular migration](#), HC 107, 4 November 2019

¹¹ E.g. [HL Deb 7 January 2019 c2099](#)

3 Media

3.1 Press releases

[Home Secretary appoints small boat commander](#)

Home Office

9 August 2020

[Two charged in small boat people smuggling investigation](#)

Home Office

5 August 2020

[Press release: Eleven arrested linked with illegally facilitating Channel crossings](#)

Home Office

26 July 2020

[Priti Patel and new French Interior Minister agree action on Channel crossings](#)

Border Force

12 July 2020

[French patrols doubled to tackle migrant crossings](#)

Home Office

15 October 2019

[UK statement on irregular migration](#)

UK Delegation to the OSCE

05 February 2020

[UK and France sign action plan to tackle small boat crossings](#)

Home Office

24 January 2019

3.2 News articles

[British plan for nets to snag migrant boats](#)

Times

12 October 2020

[Exclusive: Britain to use nets to 'disable' dinghies carrying migrants across Channel](#)

Telegraph

10 October 2020

[Priti Patel says Tories will bring in new laws for 'broken' UK asylum system](#)

Guardian

04 October 2020

[Channel crossings, migration, and Franco-British cooperation](#)

UK in a Changing Europe

01 October 2020

[Illegal Channel Crisis Part of Larger European Debacle](#)

Migration Watch UK Blog

10 September 2020

[Comment: The Channel "crisis" and the politics of compassion](#)

Free Movement

07 September 2020

[Channel Migrants: How The UK Should Start To Solve The Issue](#)

EachOther

05 September 2020

[Channel crossings are undermining the Government's narrative about 'taking back control' of immigration](#)

Conservativehome

04 Spetember 2020

[The UK and EU fail to reach an agreement on child asylum seekers](#)

International Observatory Human Rights

04 September 2020

[I stopped two unlawful removals last week – how does that make me an “activist lawyer”?](#)

Free Movement

01 September 2020

[UK rhetoric collides with reality as migrant crossings surge](#)

FT

30 August 2020

[Can refugees enter the UK illegally?](#)

Full Fact

28 August 2020

[Migrant crossings: What happens to migrants who reach the UK?](#)

BBC

19 August 2020

[Why are more small boats crossing the English Channel – and why are border forces struggling to stop them?](#)

The Conversation

14 August 2020

[UNHCR, IOM: Interception at sea is not the solution to channel crossings](#)

UNHCR UK

13 August 2020

[Asylum seeker removal flight takes off despite last-minute court actions](#)

Guardian

13 August 2020

[Asylum seekers launch legal challenge against their removal from UK](#)

Guardian

11 August 2020

[Boris Johnson accused of scapegoating migrants over Channel comments](#)

Guardian

10 August 2020

[Response to Mail on Sunday story on Channel migrants](#)

Home Office in the media blog

9 August 2020

[UK and France working 'at pace' on plan to halt migrant Channel crossings](#)

Guardian

11 August 2020

[Boris Johnson accused of scapegoating migrants over Channel comments](#)

Guardian

10 August 2020

[Home Secretary: op-ed on small boats](#)

Home Office in the media blog

12 June 2020

[Media factsheet: Small boats](#)

Home Office in the media blog

15 May 2020

[Media factsheet: Small boats](#)

Home Office in the media blog

5 March 2020

4 Parliamentary material

4.1 Ministerial statements

[Migration](#)

28 January 2019 | Written statements | HCWS1280

[Migrant Crossings](#)

HL Deb 07 January 2019 cc2094-2102

4.2 Debates

[Cross-Channel Illegal Migration](#)

HC Deb 28 September 2020 cc9-10

[Channel Crossings in Small Boats](#)

HC Deb 02 September 2020 cc167-8

[Channel Crossings in Small Boats](#)

HL Deb 03 September 2020 cc516-19

[Illegal Channel Crossings](#)

HC Deb 08 June 2020 cc8-9

4.3 Parliamentary questions

[Asylum: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much they have paid (1) to the government of France, and (2) organisations based in France, in the last five years to limit asylum seekers crossing the English Channel illegally; and what assessment they have made of whether the government of France has met the commitments of any agreements in place to limit such crossings.

Answering member: Baroness Williams of Trafford | **Department:** Home Office

The UK and France maintain a longstanding relationship on tackling illegal migration at the shared border and the UK has committed several funding packages to supporting this work in recent years. These include:

- o In September 2019 the Joint Action Plan on Combatting Illegal Migration Involving Small Boats ('Small Boats Action Plan') was signed. The UK committed €3.6m (£3.25m) to tackling the issue. These funds were utilised for the delivery of strategic communications campaigns and the provision of equipment to improve detection of small boats crossings. This was later supplemented with a further €2.5m (£2.25m) in the 19/20 Financial Year, which was dedicated to the deployment of Gendarme Reservists and further strengthening preventive security measures at the French coast.
- o In January 2018 both countries signed the Sandhurst Treaty, under which the UK made a commitment of €50 million (£45.5m) for activity to prevent illegal migration.

The UK and France are committed to ensuring value for money in investment. The UK and France carried out a joint review of bilateral cooperation under the Sandhurst Treaty, which concluded that this programme of work has made a difference to illegal migration. France also continues to invest significant resource into tackling this issue as part of a joint response with the UK.

In addition to the above sums outlined, we have also invested the following:

- o The September 2014 Joint Declaration committed £12m for security improvements at Calais, Dunkirk, and the Eurotunnel terminal at Coquelles. This was supplemented by £1 million for fencing and by £1.7 million to support an enhanced secure freight zone at Calais.
- o In 2015, both countries signed a Joint Declaration which committed £45.96 million (majority to Eurotunnel) towards security enhancements of the juxtaposed controls and to moving migrants into reception centres across France.
- o This was followed by payments in 2016 (£17 million) and a further (£36 million) to strengthen the border and maintain the operation of the juxtaposed controls.

02 Oct 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL8269

Date tabled: 18 Sep 2020 | **Date for answer:** 02 Oct 2020 | **Date answered:** 02 Oct 2020

[Asylum: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Lord Blencathra

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking over reports that French Navy patrol boats have been aiding asylum seekers to enter UK waters illegally.

Answering member: Baroness Williams of Trafford | **Department:** Home Office

The UK has a duty both to prevent loss of life and protect the integrity of our border. In doing so we have domestic and international laws to comply with. Search and Rescue (SAR) legal provisions derive from a number of international conventions, in particular the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea 1974 (SOLAS) and the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue 1979 (the SAR Convention). Under these provisions both the UK and France both have a duty to save lives, and if a boat encounters difficulty and is in distress then there is a need to protect life.

French authorities and vessels do attempt to persuade migrants to abandon their journey and allow themselves to be rescued but are at times met with extreme hostility from migrants. French assets will generally remain with the migrant vessel to ensure they are on-hand in case a rescue is required. The French do not believe forcible interceptions would be safe or permitted under SOLAS or SAR operations.

We are doing everything we can to stop these dangerous Channel crossings and bring to justice the criminals behind this organised immigration crime.

We are also continuing to engage with our French counterparts both on an operational and political level, exploring all options to reduce the number of people attempting this dangerous crossing.

02 Oct 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL8268

Date tabled: 18 Sep 2020 | **Date for answer:** 02 Oct 2020 | **Date answered:** 02 Oct 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Wakeford, Christian

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many immigrants who have crossed the English Channel illegally since 1 January 2018 remain in the UK.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

Details on the number of people who have crossed the Channel in small boats between January 2018 and June 2020 was published, via a letter from the Home Secretary to the Home Affairs Select Committee, in September 2020. The information is available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/2333/documents/22962/default/>

We remain committed to removing those with no right to be in the UK, and who do not comply with our immigration laws.

The Home Office continues to work closely with EU Member State partners to enact transfers as soon as possible and ahead of the six-month timeframe for a return.

The Home Office publishes data on the number of asylum seekers transferred under the Dublin regulation in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>

Data on the number of asylum seekers transferred out of the UK under the Dublin Regulation, broken down by the EU member state they have been transferred to are published in tables Dub_D01 of the asylum and resettlement detailed datasets.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets>

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to the year ending December 2019.

Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the 'summary tables'. The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar

https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics?keywords=immigration&content_store_document_type=upcoming_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=home-office&order=relevance

22 Sep 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 82644

Date tabled: 28 Aug 2020 | **Date for answer:** 02 Sep 2020 | **Date answered:** 22 Sep 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Lord Pendry

To ask Her Majesty's Government what provision they have made to assist the children of those illegal immigrants crossing the English Channel who have been separated from their parents.

Answering member: Baroness Williams of Trafford | **Department:** Home Office

All unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) who arrive in the UK are treated in line with established processes. Upon arrival, an unaccompanied child will undergo a number of mandatory checks and will be interviewed in order to identify any safeguarding concerns. On completion, a child will then be handed to a local authority for them to provide the necessary support under their statutory duties as set out in the Children Act 1989.

14 Sep 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL7696

Date tabled: 02 Sep 2020 | **Date for answer:** 16 Sep 2020 | **Date answered:** 14 Sep 2020

[Military Aid](#)

Asked by: Jones, Mr Kevan

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September to Question 84972, whether the UK possessed good existing radar coverage in the area; and for what reasons his Department deployed the P-8 aircraft in the English Channel.

Answering member: James Heappey | **Department:** Ministry of Defence

The UK possesses good existing air surveillance radar coverage over the English Channel. Defence tasked the P-8A Poseidon aircraft to conduct missions in support of the Border Force operation to detect and track small boats crossing the English Channel from France with suspected migrants. The P-8A Poseidon is equipped with a maritime search radar that can detect surface contacts, including small boats.

14 Sep 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 87497

Date tabled: 09 Sep 2020 | **Date for answer:** 14 Sep 2020 | **Date answered:** 14 Sep 2020

[Asylum: Undocumented Migrants](#)

Asked by: Holloway, Adam

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to bring forward legislative proposals to make it harder for migrants who are in the UK illegally to make an asylum claim.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

The UK has a long and proud history of providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with our international obligations.

The Prime Minister has been clear that we will address the rigidities in our laws that make this country a target for those who would exploit vulnerable people in this way. We will also take advantage of leaving the EU by changing the Dublin regulation on returns.

10 Sep 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 81652

Date tabled: 28 Aug 2020 | **Date for answer:** 02 Sep 2020 | **Date answered:** 10 Sep 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Hayes, Sir John

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of section 31 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 on the rate of illegal crossings of the English Channel.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

Section 31 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 sets out the defences available to a refugee if charged with certain offences connected to entering the UK, and is in accordance with the United Kingdom's obligations under the Refugee Convention.

The Home Secretary has been clear that she will explore all options to review the UK immigration system in order to deter people from making dangerous journeys such as crossing the Channel, and promptly return those who have no right to be in the UK.

07 Sep 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 81518

Date tabled: 28 Aug 2020 | **Date for answer:** 02 Sep 2020 | **Date answered:** 07 Sep 2020

[Europe: Undocumented Migrants](#)

Asked by: Hayes, Sir John

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what support her Department is providing to the (a) Maltese and (b) Italian authorities to help deter and prevent boats carrying illegal migrants from reaching Europe.

Answering member: James Cleverly | **Department:** Department for International Development

The UK and Italy have a regular dialogue on migration and last met in February 2020. The UK and Malta signed a bilateral MoU on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking in December 2018, and a UK-Malta Migration dialogue took place on 27 July led by the UK's Migration and Modern Slavery Envoy.

The UK Government has a comprehensive whole-of-route approach to global migration, working in countries of origin and transit to address the drivers of migration, reduce the need of migrants to leave their home country or to enable migrants to stay in a safe third country where possible. This whole of route approach is the only way to achieve long-term and sustainable reductions in irregular migration.

01 Sep 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 78499

Date tabled: 22 Jul 2020 | **Date for answer:** 01 Sep 2020 | **Date answered:** 01 Sep 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Lord Marlesford

To ask Her Majesty's Government under what circumstances migrants seeking to travel by sea from France to the UK who are picked up in distress from international waters by UK ships can be returned to France.

Answering member: Baroness Williams of Trafford | **Department:** Home Office

The decision as to where to take a person rescued in international waters is a matter for the Coastguard who are responsible for that rescue zone and the master of the ship which has picked them up.

Usually persons will be taken to the nearest safe Port or the home Ports of the rescuing vessel (particularly if a Lifeboat) but there are many factors which could come into play such as any immediate medical or welfare issues.

06 Aug 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL7235

Date tabled: 23 Jul 2020 | **Date for answer:** 06 Aug 2020 | **Date answered:** 06 Aug 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: France](#)

Asked by: Ribeiro-Addy, Bell

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 17 March 2020 to Questions 27050 and 27051, how many Gendarmes reservists have been deployed; and how many small boat crossings have been prevented under the 2019 Small Boats Joint Action Plan.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

As noted in the Addendum to the Small Boats Joint Action Plan, signed in September 2019, the UK has since October 2019 funded deployments of 45 officers per day along the French coast to bolster existing French resources. These deployments have proven to be an effective method for detecting attempted crossings across the English Channel.

Over the course of April and May 2020, the French stopped over 1,000 migrants from making this perilous journey. They also prevented over 200 migrants from making the journey last week. The National Crime Agency, Immigration Enforcement, Border Force and the UK Police will continue to work closely with French authorities to crack down on the criminals who facilitate the crossings.

30 Jul 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 74744

Date tabled: 15 Jul 2020 | **Date for answer:** 20 Jul 2020 | **Date answered:** 30 Jul 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)**Asked by:** Ribeiro-Addy, Bell

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 3 February 2020 to Question 1927, for what reasons there was a sixfold increase in the number of migrants crossing the English Channel in 2019 compared to the previous year.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

Nobody should be making these dangerous and illegally-facilitated crossings from France to the UK. France is a safe country with a well-run asylum system.

Government departments, including the Home Office and the National Crime Agency are working around the clock, in collaboration with the French Government and the relevant international law enforcement agencies to stop these illegally-facilitated crossings. We are working to identify and dismantle the organised crime groups that facilitate illegal immigration.

Strengthened security at the juxtaposed controls between the UK and France has also meant it is increasingly difficult for migrants to enter the UK without permission, in line with the UK's immigration rules, leading to more reckless attempts by boat.

The UK Government has returned over 155 small boats arrivals back to Europe since January 2019 using the legal channels available.

24 Jul 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 74746

Date tabled: 15 Jul 2020 | **Date for answer:** 20 Jul 2020 | **Date answered:** 24 Jul 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)**Asked by:** Rosindell, Andrew

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with her French counterpart on migrants illegally crossing the English Channel.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

The UK and France maintain a strong and active relationship on the issue of migration and those attempting to access the UK illegally, ensuring that the necessary support is delivered to vulnerable migrants whilst upholding security at our shared border.

The Home Secretary met with her new counterpart, Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin, on the 12th July: both ministers reaffirmed their commitment to put a stop to small boat crossings and to returning boats to France rather than allowing them to reach the UK. Additionally, the ministers agreed to the creation of a joint intelligence cell to help deter and dismantle the organised criminal gangs facilitating these journeys.

15 Jul 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 65956

Date tabled: 29 Jun 2020 | **Date for answer:** 01 Jul 2020 | **Date answered:** 15 Jul 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Brereton, Jack

What steps her Department is taking to stop migrants crossing the English Channel illegally.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

We have a duty both to protect our borders and prevent loss of life. That's why we are doing everything we can to stop these dangerous Channel crossings and bring to justice the criminals behind this evil trade.

No one should be making these dangerous and illegally-facilitated crossings. France is a safe country with a well-run asylum system.

The National Crime Agency, Immigration Enforcement, Border Force and UK Police are working closely with French authorities to stop ruthless criminals who facilitate the crossings, putting lives at risk. A UK-France Coordination and Information Centre was opened in Calais in November 2018 to co-ordinate law enforcement activity.

13 Jul 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 904603

Date tabled: 07 Jul 2020 | **Date for answer:** 13 Jul 2020 | **Date answered:** 13 Jul 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Offord, Dr Matthew

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps have been taken by the National Crime Agency with its French counterparts to (a) increase surveillance, (b) step up patrols and (c) target organised criminal gangs orchestrating the transportation of people across the English Channel by boat.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

The National Crime Agency, Immigration Enforcement, Border Force and the UK Police are working closely with French authorities to crack down on the criminals who facilitate the crossings. There is a UK-France Coordination and Information Centre opened in Calais which opened in November 2018 to co-ordinate:

Preventing attempts to cross and prosecuting criminals who facilitate it;
Exchanging real-time intelligence between UK and French agencies;
Preventing threats to public order and cross-border infrastructure; and

Providing joint analysis of cross-Channel traffic flows.

This law enforcement response is delivering results. French law enforcement prevented over 1000 people from crossing by small boats in April and May 2020.

In 2019, Immigration Enforcement made 418 arrests, leading to 203 convictions for a total of 437 years. Out of these, 259 arrests and 100 convictions were for people smuggling. Immigration Enforcement carried out 841 disruptions against organised crime gangs and individuals engaged in organised immigration crime, 404 of which were related to people smuggling. So far in 2020, 21 people smugglers have been convicted and put behind bars as a result of Immigration Enforcement investigations, with more investigations underway.

10 Jul 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 68332

Date tabled: 02 Jul 2020 | **Date for answer:** 06 Jul 2020 | **Date answered:** 10 Jul 2020

[Deportation: Undocumented Migrants](#)

Asked by: Hayes, Sir John

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with which countries the UK has deportation agreements for the return of nationals found illegally in the UK.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

To support the facilitation of removing those individuals with no right to remain in the UK, the UK has formal returns or readmission agreements with the following countries:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, China, Georgia, Hong Kong, Iraq, Macau, Macedonia, Malaysia, Moldova, Montenegro, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Somalia, South Korea, South Sudan, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and Vietnam.

There are also formal returns arrangements for third-country nationals to other European countries through the Dublin Regulations.

To all other countries to which returns are enforced, the Home Office utilises informal bilateral processes.

10 Jul 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 68278

Date tabled: 02 Jul 2020 | **Date for answer:** 06 Jul 2020 | **Date answered:** 10 Jul 2020

[Undocumented Migrants](#)

Asked by: Hayes, Sir John

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number of detected attempts of people trying to enter the UK by clandestine in 2019 (a) in the back of lorries or in lorry containers, (b) in small boats via the English Channel and (c) entering via the Common Travel Area.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

Border Force does not routinely publish this level of data on clandestine entry or attempts to enter the UK.

Border Force continues to work closely with partners in the UK and overseas to strike people smuggling at the source – identifying and dismantling the organised crime groups that facilitate illegal immigration. They use an array of search techniques including sniffer dogs, carbon dioxide detectors, heartbeat monitors and scanners - as well as visual searches - to find well-hidden stowaways, illegal drugs, firearms and tobacco.

Additionally, the UK works abroad to reduce factors that may push or force people to attempt such journeys - through creating jobs, tackling modern slavery, providing education and delivering life-saving humanitarian assistance in response to conflicts and natural disasters.

10 Jul 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 67528

Date tabled: 01 Jul 2020 | **Date for answer:** 06 Jul 2020 | **Date answered:** 10 Jul 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Hayes, Sir John

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number of people who have entered the UK after crossing the English Channel in small boats in the last five years.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

Information regarding the number of migrants who have crossed the Channel via small boat, can be found using the following links:

<https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/home-affairs/Correspondence-17-19/19-03-05-Letter-from-Sir-Philip-Rutnam-KCB-Permanent-Secretary-Home-Office-Migrant-boats-in-the-channel.pdf>

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/the-work-of-the-home-secretary/oral/103955.htm>

In April a parliamentary question was tabled by Tracey Crouch MP asking the UK government how many people have crossed the English Channel to enter the UK in January to March of 2020. The answer to

this question can be found on the parliament website at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-04-20/37575/>

The Home Office also provides information on topical subjects via a blog posted on gov.uk:

<https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/03/05/media-factsheet-small-boats/>

The Government is working flat out to put a complete stop to these crossings, and all attempts to reach the UK clandestinely and action is being taken on a daily basis.

The National Crime Agency, Immigration Enforcement, Border Force and the UK Police are working closely with French authorities to crack down on the criminals who facilitate the crossings.

This law enforcement response is delivering results. French law enforcement prevented over 1000 people from crossing by small boats in April and May 2020.

10 Jul 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 67517

Date tabled: 01 Jul 2020 | **Date for answer:** 06 Jul 2020 | **Date answered:** 10 Jul 2020

[Asylum: EU Countries](#)

Asked by: Sobel, Alex

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average length of time for a transfer under the Dublin III regulation procedure is from when a Member State accepts responsibility to the transfer from the UK to that Member State.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

The Dublin III Regulation is a long-standing mechanism between EU Member States to determine responsibility for examining asylum claims. It is not an application route for transfer to the UK. At present we do not publish data on cases covered by the Dublin Regulation. Eurostat, the EU's statistics agency, regularly publishes Member State figures, which can be found at:

http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_dubto&lang=en

Under the Dublin III Regulation, member states have two months from receiving a request from another participating Member State to accept or reject responsibility for processing the asylum claim. Once a Dublin request has been accepted, the Regulation provides that the sending Member State has six months to enact the transfer. The Home Office works closely with EU Member State partners to enact transfers as soon as possible and ahead of the six-month timeframe.

The latest guidance on the Dublin III Regulation was published in April 2020 and can be found via the link below:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/797216/Dublin-III-regulation-v2.0ext.pdf

The UK is committed to providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with its international obligations. It is an established principle that those in need of protection should seek asylum in the first safe country that they enter and not put their lives at risk by making unnecessary and dangerous onwards journeys to the UK. Illegal migration from safe countries undermines our efforts to help those most in need.

Controlled resettlement via safe and legal routes is the best way to protect refugees and disrupt the organised crime groups that exploit migrants and refugees. We support these principles by:

treating asylum claims made in the UK as inadmissible if the claimants have suitable protection in another safe country from where they would not face refoulement (that is, the country would not force the claimant to return to another country where they would be at risk of harm or persecution)

treating asylum claims made in the UK as inadmissible if the claimant has travelled through or has a connection to another safe country which is not their own, on the basis that the claimant has, or could have lodged their asylum claim there

progressing to removal stage those who undertake illegal journeys and subvert immigration control, to demonstrate that such action will not lead to entry to, or settlement in the UK.

Information regarding how many inadmissible decisions based on the concept of safe third country, first country of asylum and which designated safe third country those decisions relate to is not recorded or held in a reportable format.

Full guidance on which asylum claims must be treated as inadmissible was published in October 2019 and can be found via the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inadmissibility-third-country-cases>

30 Jun 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 14017

Date tabled: 07 Feb 2020 | **Date for answer:** 12 Feb 2020 | **Date answered:** 30 Jun 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Lord Maginnis of Drumglass

Her Majesty's Government what evidence they have about whether French border patrol ships are systematically monitoring or shadowing migrant boats across the English Channel into UK waters; and what that

evidence shows, if anything, about the outcome when such boats reach the English coast.

Answering member: Baroness Williams of Trafford | **Department:** Home Office

Border Force vessels covering the South East Channel are usually tasked to identify migrant events by the Coastguard, with the priority being search and rescue and the safety of life. Border Force work closely with the Coastguard and French authorities to ensure we provide an effective response to migrant events at sea. Migrants undertaking these dangerous journeys in unsuitable and overloaded small boats are putting the lives of themselves and others at considerable risk and the priority for all assets deployed at sea is safety.

At sea, under international law, the preservation of life is paramount. In some cases, French boats will remain with migrants if they refuse rescue. But we are clear no-one should be crossing at all and we are developing plans to reform policies and laws to help to stop these crossings completely.

16 Jun 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL5035

Date tabled: 02 Jun 2020 | **Date for answer:** 16 Jun 2020 | **Date answered:** 16 Jun 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Hayes, Sir John

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to prevent migrants from crossing the English Channel illegally.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

Keeping our border secure is the Government's highest priority and we are committed to doing everything we can to stop these dangerous Channel crossings which are putting vulnerable lives at risk.

The Home Office liaises directly with the French Interior Ministry on addressing the issue of illegal migration, engaging at an official, diplomatic level and supported at an operational level through regular UK-French Migration Committees.

Through joint-working with France, the UK has funded the continued deployment of French law enforcement along the coast of northern France, who are patrolling constantly in order to detect attempted crossings by migrants. Funding has been allocated, among other projects, for further security improvements at ports in northern France and on the ground, which includes drones, specialist vehicles and detection equipment to stop small boats leaving European shores.

Intelligence flows are also key to dismantling the organised crime groups behind crossings. We have restructured and repurposed our approach to support to better inform and direct how and where law enforcement is deployed.

09 Jun 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 53300

Date tabled: 02 Jun 2020 | **Date for answer:** 04 Jun 2020 | **Date answered:** 09 Jun 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: France](#)

Asked by: Osamor, Kate

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, from which Government budget was funding allocated to the (a) 2015 Joint Declaration, (b) 2018 Sandhurst Agreement and (c) 2019 Joint Action Plan.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

The funding which was committed under these three agreements was allocated to the Home Office budget and was provided within the financial year in which the respective agreement was signed.

This funding was utilised to implement the obligations as detailed in the agreements, including investments in improving border infrastructure at the ports of Calais and Dunkirk, the delivery of strategic communications campaigns, cooperation on return charter flights, and developing access to French asylum services.

The funding allocated under the Joint Action Plan was committed to the delivery of strategic communications campaign as well as the purchase of equipment to improve detections of boats making crossings.

09 Jun 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 52283

Date tabled: 01 Jun 2020 | **Date for answer:** 03 Jun 2020 | **Date answered:** 09 Jun 2020

[Undocumented Migrants](#)

Asked by: Wiggin, Bill

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle criminal gangs involved in the smuggling of illegal immigrants into the UK.

Answering member: James Brokenshire | **Department:** Home Office

Organised criminal groups (OCGs) continue to facilitate the majority of migrant journeys to the UK. The threat we are facing from organised immigration crime spans multiple countries, nationalities and criminal methodologies.

It is complex, and we are working to tackle the criminal groups who facilitate the travel from source countries to Europe and the United Kingdom.

The migrants making the dangerous journey to Europe include illegal migrants who have paid to travel, trafficked people, as well as refugees and asylum seekers. Each of these groups of individuals has very different needs in terms of our response towards them. However, in all cases we are tackling the OCGs who make profit from them all.

The UK is playing a leading role in tackling organised immigration crime and protecting UK borders is just one element of that. We work with and support our European partners to detect and pursue these OCGs as well as raising awareness of the dangerous methods they use to move migrants and the exploitation that occurs in many cases.

Preventing organised immigration crime upstream is a core objective of Immigration Enforcement. Its network of staff based in embassies and consulates in over 30 key source and transit countries carries out the following key activities:

Working with carriers around the world to reduce the threat of inadequately documented people (IDPs) reaching the UK by air, through training and a 24/7 advice service which is staffed both locally and in the UK;

Developing intelligence packages related to the visa or air threat for subsequent criminal investigations and prosecutions overseas and in the UK;

Targeted capacity building programmes to improve capability of local partners to tackle immigration crime; and

Providing intelligence support to the visa operation.

Additionally, the UK has established the Organised Immigration Crime Taskforce, which brings together officers from Border Force, the National Crime Agency, Immigration Enforcement and the Crown Prosecution Service. The Taskforce takes a “whole of route” approach to identify and tackle the groups involved in organised immigration crime, seeking to use every opportunity to disrupt them in source countries, in Europe and in the other countries migrants travel through to reach the UK. It has successfully disrupted organised crime groups involved in immigration crime through participating in intelligence development and sharing, as well as arrests and prosecutions.

09 Jun 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 51639

Date tabled: 01 Jun 2020 | **Date for answer:** 03 Jun 2020 | **Date answered:** 09 Jun 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Wiggin, Bill

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with her French counterpart on tackling the illegal movement of immigrants from France to the UK across the English Channel.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

The UK and France maintain a strong relationship on the issue of migration and those attempting to access the UK illegally, ensuring that the necessary support is delivered to vulnerable migrants whilst upholding security at our shared border. Officials from both governments maintain a regular pattern of engagement on tackling the issue.

The Home Secretary and French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner spoke most recently on the 6th May and discussed cooperation on tackling Covid-19 as well as our bilateral response to migrants crossing the English Channel using small boats. They are due to hold a follow-up call within the coming week.

08 Jun 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 51644

Date tabled: 01 Jun 2020 | **Date for answer:** 04 Jun 2020 | **Date answered:** 08 Jun 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Stafford, Alexander

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to increase the presence of Border Security forces in the English channel to stop immigrants reaching Britain illegally.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

Border Force and Immigration Enforcement will always have the resources needed to tackle these illegal and dangerous crossings.

We are using all the skills of Border Force BF, the national Crime Agency, Immigration Enforcement and French law enforcement to dismantle and arrest the criminal gangs who trade in people smuggling.

Assets on the ground in France have been enhanced and now provide 24/7 cover of the northern beaches.

And we're also continuing efforts to crack down on the criminal gangs who facilitate the crossings. The NCA and the Home Office introduced a permanent presence France, with operational leads now based in Paris and Calais, to aid intelligence sharing between the two countries and target the criminal networks involved.

08 Jun 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 49881

Date tabled: 20 May 2020 | **Date for answer:** 02 Jun 2020 | **Date answered:** 08 Jun 2020

[Boats: Undocumented Migrants](#)

Asked by: Stafford, Alexander

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many boats illegally transporting migrants to the UK have been stopped in French waters in each month of the last three years.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

To provide information regarding the number of boats illegally transporting migrants have arrived in the UK in each month of the last three years would require a manual check of individual records which would exceed the disproportionate cost threshold.

However, we can provide information that the number of migrants arriving in the UK crossing the Channel by small boats for the months of January to March 2020 is approx. 450.? These are provisional figures based on operational management information. The figures for April have not passed through a data quality check and cannot be assured. The final figures for all months will be published at a later date, once they have been verified and fully quality assured.

Interceptions of migrants at sea is carried by UK and French authorities, migrants will be taken to the appropriate country determined by the interception's location in territorial waters.

In April 2020 more than 500 migrants have been stopped from getting to the UK using a small boat. This includes French law enforcement at sea, on beaches and on the inland roads network.

The UK continues to work closely with France and other countries to return migrants who have entered the UK by small boat in order to provide a strong deterrent against these dangerous crossings.

Since January 2019, over 155 people who entered the UK illegally on small boats have been returned to Europe. However, as a result of COVID-19 the vast majority of EU member states have temporarily paused accepting returns under the Dublin Regulations, but we are tracking those individuals and where appropriate will seek to return them when routes are available.

The Home Secretary together with her French counterpart have reaffirmed their shared commitment to end the crossings and have put forward new measures and approaches to tackling the issue – looking again at ways to return more migrants to France.

04 Jun 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 45529

Date tabled: 11 May 2020 | **Date for answer:** 13 May 2020 | **Date answered:** 04 Jun 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Crouch, Tracey

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many migrants have crossed the English Channel to enter the UK in (a) January, (b) February and (c) March 2020; and what the countries of origin were for those migrants.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

The data showing the number of migrants intercepted crossing the English Channel to enter the UK for the months of January, February and March is shown in the table below, including the claimed nationalities for those migrants:

(a) January 2020 – 94; (b) February 2020 – 182 and (c) March 2020 – 187.

By nationality:	Jan	Feb	March
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	53	109	104
Iraq	16	40	63
Syria Arab Republic	16	18	13
Afghanistan	5	3	5
Kuwait Bidoun			1
Yemen		5	1
Pakistan	4	1	
Mali		2	
Cote D'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)		1	
Senegal		1	
Egypt		1	
Guinea		1	
Grand Total	94	182	187

The total number of migrants for the April period cannot yet be released as the figures have not passed through a data quality check and cannot be assured. The figures will be published at a later date, once they have been

verified.

27 May 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 37575

Date tabled: 20 Apr 2020 | **Date for answer:** 22 Apr 2020 | **Date answered:** 27 May 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Foxcroft, Vicky

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate her Department has made of the number of unaccompanied child migrants that have crossed the English channel from France and subsequently been granted asylum in the UK in each year since 2016.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

The Home Office does not routinely publish breakdowns of asylum claims by method of arrival to the UK.

However, the Home Office does publish data on Initial decision on asylum applications from unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), by outcome. This data can be found at Asy_02b, of the published Immigration Statistics, year ending December 2019, published on 27 February 2020:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-december-2019/list-of-tables#asylum-and-resettlement>

However, this data is not yet published for the period up to March 2020.

26 May 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 47369

Date tabled: 15 May 2020 | **Date for answer:** 19 May 2020 | **Date answered:** 26 May 2020

[Undocumented Migrants](#)

Asked by: Stafford, Alexander

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many migrants have arrived in the UK illegally in each month of the last three years.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

The Home Office does not publish data on the number of individuals who have arrived illegally in the UK. By its very nature, it is not possible to know the exact size of the illegal population, or the numbers who successfully enter the UK illegally, and so we do not seek to make any official estimates of the illegal population.

Keeping our border secure is the Government's highest priority and we are focused on making it harder for people to enter and live in the UK illegally whilst ensuring those who have the right to reside in the UK can do so.

Foreign nationals who abuse our hospitality should be in no doubt of our determination to deport them and while legal challenges and problems obtaining travel documents can frustrate immediate deportation, we never give up trying to deport FNOs and making our communities safer or seek to return people who do not have any legal right to stay in the UK.

The Home Office publishes data on the number of returns from the UK in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of Returns (of which deportations are a subset) are published in table Ret_D01 of the [Returns detailed datasets](#).

The term 'deportations' refers to a legally-defined subset of returns which are enforced either following a criminal conviction or when it is

judged that a person's removal from the UK is conducive to the public good. Information on those deported is not separately available and therefore the published statistics refer to all enforced returns.

Please note that only some of those returned will have previously entered the UK illegally; others may have entered legally, for example those who enter on a visa and overstay their period of valid leave and are therefore not separately identifiable in the data.

19 May 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 45525

Date tabled: 11 May 2020 | **Date for answer:** 13 May 2020 | **Date answered:** 19 May 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Chope, Sir Christopher

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish her assessment of the progress achieved in implementing the joint action plan by the UK and France on combating illegal migration involving small boats in the English Channel; and when the objective set out in paragraph 6 of the addendum of ensuring that by Spring 2020 successful migrant crossings have become an infrequent phenomenon will be achieved.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

Since the signature of the Joint Action Plan in January 2019, my department has successfully worked with the French Government to deliver on the commitments made, including (i) the purchase of equipment to assist detections by French law enforcement partners (ii) the delivery of a strategic communications campaign and (iii) increased intelligence sharing through the CCIC. Additionally, under the terms of the Addendum to the Action Plan, the UK has supported the deployment of French gendarme reservists along the French coast, whose efforts have been vital in preventing boats crossing the English Channel.

However, as recognised under the Addendum, this threat continues to evolve, with the recent good weather and Covid-19 lockdown having an impact on migrant behaviour, resulting in a rise in the number of arrivals in the UK. My department is working with the French government to respond to this evolving threat as a matter of urgency to reduce the number of crossings.

11 May 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 41376

Date tabled: 29 Apr 2020 | **Date for answer:** 04 May 2020 | **Date answered:** 11 May 2020

[Undocumented Migrants: English Channel](#)

Asked by: Crouch, Tracey

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with representatives from (a) Kent County Council and (b) Kent Police on the potential merits of providing additional Government support to help deal with illegal migrants crossing the English Channel to enter the UK during the covid-19 outbreak.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

In line with existing processes, we are in regular contact with Kent Police and the Local Resilience Forum regarding migrant crossings in the Channel. These discussions have continued during the covid-19 response and have been factored into operational planning.

Border Force and Immigration Enforcement are continuing to keep the UK's border secure and have robust contingency plans in place to respond to the covid-19 pandemic driven by the latest scientific and medical advice. In line with that advice to date, no changes have been required at the UK border.

Working with the Department for Transport and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Border Force Maritime have worked with commercial operators and Port Security Officers to ensure that sightings of potentially suspicious small vessels are reported immediately.

Additionally, Border Force have worked with HM Coastguard to increase safety broadcasts to all vessels in the Channel, encouraging them to look out for and report small vessels. Border Force Maritime continues to encourage the public and industry to report suspicious activity and reduce the threat from organised crime and terrorism. Regional General Maritime teams have been bolstered to further improve their capability to receive and process migrants.

The Kent Multi-Agency Hub brings together officers from the police, National Crime Agency, Border Force, HMRC and Immigration Enforcement to share, develop and analyse intelligence between agencies.

29 Apr 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 37578

Date tabled: 20 Apr 2020 | **Date for answer:** 22 Apr 2020 | **Date answered:** 29 Apr 2020

[Undocumented Migrants](#)

Asked by: Robertson, Mr Laurence

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that migrants who have illegally entered the UK from continental ports are returned safely to their countries of origin; and if she will make a statement.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

The UK continues to collaborate with France under the terms of the Sandhurst Treaty to tackle illegal migration across the shared border. Under the Treaty, significant improvements were made to the security at northern French ports such as Calais, Dukirk, and the Eurostar Terminal at Coquelles. Last year, more than 35,000 attempts to enter the UK illegally were prevented at our juxtaposed controls in northern France and Belgium. The UK-FR Migration Committee takes responsibility for oversight of these projects, for discussing current pressures and agreeing new joint projects.

Senior Home Office officials and operational partners are in regular discussions with officials from the Belgian government to identify immediate action that can be taken at the Port of Zeebrugge to tackle illegal migration through the port and reduce the risks to migrants.

The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with our international obligations under the Refugee Convention and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Protection is granted where a claimant has a well-founded fear of persecution under the Refugee Convention or their circumstances engage our obligations under Article 3 (ECHR). Those found not to need protection are refused and if unsuccessful at a subsequent appeal will be removed from the UK.

09 Mar 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 24234

Date tabled: 03 Mar 2020 | **Date for answer:** 09 Mar 2020 | **Date answered:** 09 Mar 2020

[Overseas Visitors: Visas](#)

Asked by: Gethins, Stephen

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of facilitating visa applications by human rights defenders to allow them to travel more easily to the UK.

Answering member: Dr Andrew Murrison | **Department:** Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Human rights defenders wishing to travel to the UK are able to do so, provided that they comply with existing immigration rules, which in some cases will mean applying for a visa. However, there is no provision in the Immigration Rules to allow someone to travel to the UK for temporary protection, or to claim asylum. Those human rights defenders who may need to travel outside their home country in emergency situations are advised to go to the first country of safety they can reach, which is often a neighbouring country.

08 Jul 2019 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 270752

Date tabled: 28 Jun 2019 | **Date for answer:** 02 Jul 2019 | **Date answered:** 08 Jul 2019

[Asylum: Children](#)

Asked by: Creasy, Stella

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for asylum in the UK were made by unaccompanied minors that arrived in the UK by their own means since 2016.

Answering member: Caroline Nokes | **Department:** Home Office

There were 9,512 applications for asylum made by unaccompanied children in the UK from 1 January 2016 to 31 March 2019. This information is published by the Home Office in its quarterly Immigration Statistics release. The latest edition can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/803159/asylum3-mar-2019-tables.ods. The exact method of entry for asylum applicants is not recorded in published statistics as it would require an examination of each individual case, which could only be carried out at disproportionate costs.

The UK recognises its humanitarian responsibilities towards unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children. The Government is fully committed to the timely and efficient operation of the Dublin III Regulation including the provisions determining responsibility for examining the claims of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The Regulation provides that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are given information on the Dublin procedure by the State in which the child has lodged his or her application, the State in which they are present.

The Commission's Regulation implementing Dublin III contains a specific leaflet with information for unaccompanied children pursuant to Article 4 of the Dublin III Regulation EU 604/2013, including that the authorities where the application has been lodged should be told as soon as possible if the child thinks they have family in another Dublin State.

As part of the Sandhurst Treaty, signed by the UK and France in January 2018, we have allocated £3.6 million to fund the development of the Dublin process to support transfers of eligible children to the UK (including training for those working with unaccompanied children, family tracing and targeted information campaigns). We are also funding access to the French asylum accommodation service, the provision of health services, psychological and legal support as well as the cost of transporting asylum seekers from reception centres to locations where their asylum claims are considered.

27 Jun 2019 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 268477

Date tabled: 24 Jun 2019 | **Date for answer:** 27 Jun 2019 | **Date answered:** 27 Jun 2019

4.4 Committee reports

Public Accounts Committee, [Immigration enforcement, Seventeenth Report of Session 2019–21, HC 407](#), 18 September 2020

Public Accounts Committee, [Home Office “has no idea” of the impact of immigration policies](#), 18 September 2020

Public Accounts Committee on Immigration Enforcement – [oral and written evidence](#)

Home Affairs Select Committee on Channel crossings, migration and asylum-seeking routes through the EU – [oral and written evidence](#)

Foreign Affairs Committee, [Responding to irregular migration: a diplomatic route, First Report of Session 2019, HC 107](#), 4 November 2019

5 Further reading

5.1 Commons Library Briefing

Commons Library Briefing, [Asylum claims in the UK: common questions](#), CBP 9000, 8 September 2020

Commons Library Briefing, [Asylum Statistics](#), SN01403, 3 September 2020

Commons Library Briefing, [The UK's refugee family reunion rules: a comprehensive framework?](#) CBP 7511, 27 March 2020

Commons Library Briefing, [Refugee resettlement in the UK](#), CBP 8750, 6 March 2020

Commons Library Insight, [Migrants crossing the English Channel](#), 4 November 2019

5.2 Government departments

UK Visas and Immigration, [Collection: Asylum decision making guidance \(asylum instructions\)](#), last updated 7 October 2020

Asylum policy guidance for decision making in asylum applications.

Home Office, [Dublin III Regulation](#), 14 August 2020

Transferring asylum claimants into and out of the UK where responsibility for examining an asylum claim lies with the UK or with another EU Member State or Associated State.

Home Office and Border Force, [Policy paper: Response to the report on an inspection of Border Force operations at south coast seaports](#), last updated 11 August 2020

Home Office response to a report on an inspection of Border Force operations at south coast seaports.

UK Visas and Immigration, [Policy paper: Policy statement: section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016](#), last updated 27 July 2020

Policy statement on transferring unaccompanied children under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016.

5.3 Organisations

Free Movement, [Home Secretary party conference speech on asylum – full text](#), 05.10.2020

Migration Watch UK, [What happens to those crossing the Channel illegally?](#), 14 August 2020

JCWI, [Safe and Legal Routes of Entry to the UK](#), 12 August 2020

National Audit Office, [Immigration enforcement](#), 17 June 2020

This report assesses whether the Home Office's activities for enforcing immigration rules are achieving its vision to reduce the size of the illegal population and the harm it causes.

Migration Watch UK, [Unauthorised Channel Crossings](#), 08 May 2020

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