



BRIEFING PAPER

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Constituency casework: immigration, nationality and asylum

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Summary

Members of Parliament handle an enormous number of immigration, nationality and asylum enquiries from constituents. Many of them are straightforward and can be answered using information that is readily available, for example on the internet, or by using the Home Office's dedicated MPs' correspondence channels. Others are more complex and require specialist advice from a solicitor or professional adviser. **It is an offence for unauthorised people to give immigration advice.**

This briefing provides a short overview of the UK's immigration and asylum system and basic British nationality law. It also outlines the legal restrictions on giving immigration advice, gives some suggestions on handling constituents' enquiries, refers to some sources of information that may be helpful for straightforward questions, and highlights training courses available to Members' staff.

1. A brief tour of the UK's immigration system

1.1 Relevant Government departments and agencies

The [Home Office](#) is the government department with lead responsibility for immigration, asylum, nationality and border control laws, policies and processes.

Various Home Office directorates handle this work on a day-to-day basis:

- [UK Visas and Immigration](#) (UKVI) is responsible for processing applications for permission to enter or remain in the UK (including asylum cases), and applications for British citizenship.
- [Immigration Enforcement](#) is responsible for ensuring compliance with immigration law (such as preventing illegal working) and removing people without permission to remain in the UK.
- [Border Force](#) is responsible for immigration and customs controls at UK ports and airports, including exit checks.
- [HM Passport Office](#) handles overseas and in-country applications for British passports.

Applications are generally decided by Home Office caseworkers, acting on behalf of the Home Secretary/Minister for Immigration. The Home Office has contracted with some private providers to assist with the administration of the immigration system (such as by operating visa application centres overseas), but the actual decision-making is done by Home Office staff.

Appeals against a refusal decision (where such a right of appeal exists) are processed by [HM Courts and Tribunals Service](#), which is independent from the Home Office. The appeal is initially dealt with by specialist chambers in the Tribunals Service:

- The **Tribunals Service (Immigration and Asylum Chambers)** hear appeals in asylum and immigration matters (other than asylum support). It is a two-tier system ([First-tier Tribunal](#) and [Upper Tribunal](#)). Onward appeals from the Upper Tribunal are to the Court of Appeal/Court of Session.
- Appeals against a decision to refuse, terminate or withdraw accommodation or financial support to an asylum seeker are heard in the [First-tier Tribunal's Asylum Support](#) chamber.
- Sensitive cases involving decisions taken on national security or other public interest grounds are heard by the [Special Immigration Appeals Commission](#) (SIAC).

Rights of appeal have significantly reduced over the years, most recently as a result of measures in the Immigration Act 2014. Many application categories no longer have a right of appeal in the event of a refusal decision. For some of these categories, there is instead the possibility of

requesting a 'reconsideration' or 'administrative review' of the refusal decision by UKVI. Administrative reviews are more limited in scope and focus than appeals to the courts.

There are strict timescales for exercising rights of appeal or requests for administrative review.

The Home Secretary, and her Ministers, are ultimately responsible for the work of the Home Office's immigration directorates. The Government sometimes seeks advice on migration policies and proposals from the [Migration Advisory Committee](#), an advisory non-departmental public body.

The [Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration](#) provides regular independent scrutiny of the efficiency and effectiveness of the UK's border and immigration functions. Immigration Removal Centres ('detention centres') and Short-term Holding Facilities are subject to oversight by [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons](#) and [Independent Monitoring Boards](#).

Individual complaints from members of the public about maladministration or poor service by the immigration directorates can be investigated by the [Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman](#). The Ombudsman will only take on complaints referred by Members of Parliament, and usually only after the constituent has tried to resolve it with the organisation directly.

1.2 An overview of immigration, asylum and nationality requirements

Immigration

European nationals

Current position under EU law prior to Brexit

EU, EEA and Swiss nationals (and their family members) have '[free movement' rights under European law](#)'.¹ They do not need to apply for a visa in order to come to the UK. They can stay in the UK for up to three months, for any purpose. Those staying for longer than three months must be exercising free movement rights as a worker, job-seeker, student, self-employed or self-sufficient person, in order to have certain rights attached to their residence (such as a degree of protection from removal, and potential eligibility for welfare benefits) - this is known as having a 'right to reside'.² They are not obliged to apply to UKVI for documentation confirming their right to reside in the UK under EU law, but may find it convenient to do so (for example, as proof of their rights and entitlements). After five years' residence (or shorter in certain circumstances), they acquire 'permanent resident' status.

¹ 'EEA' – European Economic Area (EU Member States plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein)

² Having a 'right to reside' affects eligibility for welfare benefits

Brexit

There is no change to free movement and the status of EU nationals in the UK prior to 29 March 2019 while the UK remains in the European Union. The status of EU nationals after 29 March 2019 will depend on the outcome of the Brexit negotiations and whether a deal is agreed with the European Union.

The government has proposed a settled status scheme for EU nationals and their eligible family members living in the UK prior to the end of the implementation period on 31 December 2020. This scheme comes under the legal framework provided by the draft withdrawal agreement which gives the UK and Member States discretion to require Union or UK nationals living in their state to apply for a new residence status.³

For more information on the settled status scheme, see the GOV.UK page '[Settled and pre-settled status for EU citizens and their families](#)', and the Library insight '[The status of EU citizens in the UK after Brexit](#)'.

The Library has also published briefing papers on what may happen in the event of a no-deal Brexit.⁴

Non-European nationals

Non-EEA nationals are subject to the UK's immigration laws. Many of the specific visa requirements that non-EEA nationals are subject to are specified in the UK's [Immigration Rules](#), rather than primary or secondary legislation. The Immigration Rules change frequently. Statements of Changes to the Immigration Rules are laid before Parliament and are subject to the negative approval procedure.

All non-EEA nationals must apply for a visa ('entry clearance') in advance of travel if they wish to come to the UK in one of the visa categories for workers, students or family members. Whether or not they require a visa in order to enter the UK as a visitor depends on whether they are from a 'visa national' country.

Most visa categories initially give temporary permission to stay in the UK ('leave to remain'). There are varying possibilities to extend the permission or switch to a different immigration category without leaving the UK, or to apply for permission to stay in the UK permanently ('indefinite leave to remain'), depending on the immigration category.

Applicants must provide biometric information (e.g. fingerprints) as part of the application process and upon arrival in the UK. Since April 2015 the UK has been applying 'exit checks' across all UK ports of departure, by recording travel document data from people departing the UK which can subsequently be reconciled with other immigration databases.

People who do not have a valid immigration status are liable to having their removal from the UK enforced by the Home Office, and being subject to a 're-entry ban' for up to ten years.

³ [Draft Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community](#), 14 November 2018, Article 18

⁴ Commons Library Briefing, '[What if there's no Brexit deal](#)', 12 October 2018

Further Library briefings about the UK's immigration controls and visa conditions are available from the [immigration page](#) on the Parliament website.

Asylum

People who fear persecution in their country of origin can claim asylum in the UK. As a general rule, a person can only claim asylum after they have entered the UK. It is not possible to obtain a visa for the UK with the explicit purpose of seeking asylum.

Asylum claims are assessed by UKVI decision-makers with reference to the UK's obligations under the terms of the [1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#) and [1950 European Convention on Human Rights](#) (ECHR). 'Refugee status' is granted to asylum seekers who are found to meet the Refugee Convention's definition of a 'refugee'.⁵ 'Humanitarian Protection' is granted to asylum seekers who are found to be at real risk of suffering serious harm, but for reasons not covered by the Refugee Convention. Both types of status give permission to remain for five years initially, with the right to work and access mainstream welfare benefits.

If a case is not eligible for protection, but removing the person from the UK would breach the UK's obligations under the ECHR (e.g. due to the strength of the person's private or family life in the UK), they may be given temporary permission to remain in the UK, subject to conditions (e.g. 'no recourse to public funds').

If an application has been refused and the appeal rights exhausted, the refused asylum seeker is expected to leave the UK. If they do not make a voluntary departure, they are liable to have an enforced removal arranged by the Home Office.

The UK operates a couple of limited refugee resettlement schemes, which enable selected refugees to come to settle in the UK without having to go through the asylum process. One of these programmes is specifically for vulnerable Syrian refugees.

Library briefings with further information about the UK's asylum process, including asylum seekers' rights to work, and accommodation and financial support provision for asylum seekers, are available from the [asylum page](#) on the Parliament website.

Nationality

Put very briefly, under the British Nationality Act 1981 (as amended), since 1 January 1983, people born in the UK only automatically acquire British citizenship at birth if one of their parents was a British citizen or living in the UK without an immigration time restriction at that time. People born overseas are only automatically British citizens if their parent(s) were not also born overseas (subject to limited exceptions).

⁵ Namely, a person who is outside their country of nationality, and unable to seek protection from the authorities in their country of nationality due to a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group

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People who do not automatically acquire British citizenship at birth may be able to apply to become a British citizen on account of their residential or ancestral ties with the UK. For example, an adult can apply to 'naturalise' as a British citizen after five years' continuous legal residence in the UK in a qualifying immigration category (subject to other conditions).

'British citizenship' is one of six different types of British nationality status – generally speaking, the other types do not automatically give the right to enter and leave, and live and work in the UK without being subject to immigration controls ('the right of abode').

Only British nationals are eligible for British passports.

Further Library briefings on nationality and passport topics are available from the [nationality page](#) on the Parliament website.

2. Dealing with constituency casework

2.1 Important warning about giving constituents advice

Many immigration, nationality and asylum enquiries come from constituents who really need professional legal advice.

The Library cannot try to be a substitute for professional legal advice, not least because **it is a criminal offence for a person who is neither registered, authorised nor exempt to provide immigration or asylum advice or representation in the course of a business.**⁶

The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) regulates immigration advisers. It investigates complaints and can prosecute those who operate illegally.

The Library is **currently not able** to provide guidance to MPs and their staff on the risks of providing immigration advice classed at OISC Level 1. This is because, as explained in more detail below, the OISC has withdrawn its previous guidance on the provision of immigration advice by MPs' offices. This paper will be updated when further information is available but for now MPs should be aware that the position is unclear.

If in doubt, you should be careful to keep the information general rather than trying to suggest specific solutions for the individual case, and recommend that the constituent seek advice from a specialist solicitor or immigration adviser. This may seem unhelpful, but a constituent will be helped much more by correct professional advice.

A [position paper](#) published by the OISC in October 2011 set out its view on how the regulation of immigration advice affects MPs and their staff. **However, this position paper was withdrawn by the OISC on 1 April 2016** and there is no published policy on their current view. The previous position of the OISC was that 'Members of Parliament, their staff, local councillors and ministers of religion may provide free immigration advice and services at OISC level 1 as part of their constituency or pastoral roles, and without OISC authorisation' Even though the position was that MPs and their staff were allowed to provide immigration advice at Level 1 without OISC authorisation, the OISC advised considering whether doing so is in the best interests of the constituent, or whether it would be better to refer them to a more appropriate source of advice.⁷

The OISC's [2012 Guidance on Competence](#) describes what type of work falls under 'Level 1' (see the table on p.12)⁸ Put briefly, "basic applications within the Immigration Rules" are included, but once a case

⁶ [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, Part V](#)

⁷ OISC, '[Elected officials and Ministers of Religion: OISC position](#)', October 2011

⁸ OISC, '[Guidance on Competence](#)', 2012 (see in particular p.12-16)

becomes more complicated (such as if an application is refused, or a person has entered or remained in the UK in breach of immigration conditions), the person must be referred to an adviser authorised at a higher level.

The Library also cannot advise about how the immigration authorities might deal with casework scenarios to the same extent as Home Office staff. The Library can signpost Members and their staff to sources of general information which are publicly available, such as Home Office websites and policy guidance documents. However, **published policy guidance does not cover every possible scenario, and the information in the public domain might not be up to date or the most relevant** - some pieces of operational and policy guidance are not publicly available, for example. For these reasons the Home Office's MPs' correspondence channels are often better-placed to deal with specific enquiries (see section 3 below).

The Library uses a standard disclaimer in all replies to case-specific enquiries, which emphasises that the Library cannot provide advice specific to any particular individual, and includes links to some sources of professional immigration advice:

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in the performance of their parliamentary duties, and may not fully address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon by either Members or others as legal or professional advice, or a substitute for it. If specific advice is needed, a suitably qualified professional should be consulted. The website of the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner explains about the regulation of immigration advisers and ['How to find a Regulated Immigration Adviser'](#). The Immigration Law Practitioners' Association publishes a [list of specialist practitioners](#), and the Gov.uk website pages on ['legal aid'](#) may also be helpful.

The Library standard note [Legal Help: Where to go and how to pay](#) may also be useful.

2.2 Useful initial information to get from the constituent

The following type of questions can help identify the problem and what your office might be able to do to assist:

- Is the applicant/would-be applicant already in the United Kingdom?
- If not, will they need entry clearance (a visa)?
- If they are already here, what is their current immigration status?
- If they are waiting for a decision on an application, have they been waiting for longer than the [published processing time](#)?
- If their application has been refused, do they have a right of appeal?
- Do they have a legal representative?

In some situations it may be appropriate to ask for further details, for instance about the constituent's family, date and place of birth, or immigration history. Bear in mind, however, that you are unlikely to get all the relevant information about a person's circumstances – another reason why they should go to a professional adviser.

It is sometimes helpful to look at the relevant paperwork, such as decision letters and appeal determinations, in order to clarify what has already happened. It might also be worth contacting the constituent's legal adviser (if they have one) to check whether they think there is anything you can usefully do to assist.

If you intend to make enquiries with the immigration authorities, you will need to be able to provide sufficient details about the constituent so that they can identify the case (such as the applicant's name, nationality, and Home Office reference number).

Sometimes you might be contacted directly by a legal representative on behalf of a constituent, for example because UKVI is not responding to their representations. The OISC has published guidance on the [relationship between immigration advisers and MPs](#) which it has since withdrawn.⁹ It stated that MPs can assist an immigration adviser or their client with problems which are the responsibility of Parliament or central government. However, advisers were warned that there is no guarantee that the MP will take up the matter, or that they will be able to make a difference. It also warned that it is unacceptable for OISC regulated advisers to use an MP's office to do their casework for them.

The 'working for an MP' website has guides on [immigration casework](#) and [asylum casework](#) which include some more detailed checklists for different circumstances.

2.3 Contacting the Home Office officials on behalf of constituents

The Home Office has dedicated MP Account Managers to help Members of Parliament deal with immigration, asylum and nationality queries. The MP Account Managers can help deal with more complex enquiries and can work with your office on immigration issues. They also organise regular events for Members of Parliament and their caseworkers in Westminster and around the UK.

The Home Office's preferred method of contact is either by telephone or email as this will usually provide a quicker response. It has several hotlines and dedicated post and email addresses for immigration, asylum and nationality enquiries from Members of Parliament and their staff. A current list of these and other hotlines is available on the [Parliamentary intranet](#), but is available only to those with PDVN access.

The hotlines list also contains a link to some dedicated website pages for Members of Parliament and their staff. These contain some general information about how the Home Office handles constituency casework

⁹ OISC, '[Guidance Note on the Relationship Between OISC Advisers and Members of Parliament](#)', April 2012

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enquiries from Members of Parliament and a link to an ‘information document’ for Members of Parliament dealing with immigration and asylum casework produced by the UK Border Agency (as then was) in November 2012, as well as links to information fact sheets on topical issues.

On no account should these numbers be given out to constituents or others, who must instead use the UK Visas and Immigration [general enquiry numbers](#).

2.4 Making representations to Government Ministers

The Secretary of State has a wide discretion when it comes to immigration and asylum matters, and in some aspects of nationality applications.

It is therefore always open to Members to raise cases with Ministers if they wish them to review the initial decision and/or step outside the rules to make a decision in the constituent’s favour. However, it is rare for a decision to depart entirely from the rules set out in the Immigration Rules and published policy documents – the most exceptional compassionate circumstances would usually have to be shown. This is because there is a concern that, should the published rules be departed from as a matter of routine, the rules-as-published would no longer bear any relation to the rules-as-implemented. Moreover, Ministers will not normally intervene in any way if an appeal is outstanding, and are unlikely to reverse a decision which has been through the independent appeals process unless new and compelling information has become available.¹⁰

Members should not submit initial asylum applications or further submissions on behalf of a constituent, since these must be made by the applicant in person, although they can make representations about the handling of the case.¹¹

The Home Office does not provide substantive replies to enquiries from Members of Devolved Legislatures on individual cases, since immigration is a reserved matter, but does provide substantive replies to general and policy-related queries. Enquiries about individual cases raised by Ministers of Devolved Legislatures in their ministerial capacity do receive substantive responses.¹²

2.5 Training courses for MPs’ staff

Free training courses for Members’ staff on immigration law are available through the House of Commons. See the ‘training’ section of the [Working for an MP](#) website.

¹⁰ See for example UK Border Agency Enforcement Instructions and Guidance ch59 [‘Members of Parliament representations’](#)

¹¹ [HC Deb 22 February 2010 cc329-330W](#)

¹² [HC Deb 13 October 2011 cc507-8W](#)

3. Useful sources of general information

3.1 GOV.UK

The [GOV.UK website](#) is the main official source for practical information about the UK's immigration, asylum, nationality and border controls. It contains a lot of general information which is often sufficient for answering many common casework enquiries.

The following sections, which are accessible from the homepage, are particularly relevant:

['Visas and immigration'](#) - for practical information about UK visa requirements and processes, including:

- information for applicants overseas and in the UK about the UK's visa requirements, associated eligibility criteria and conditions, how to apply, application fees and processing times
- information for employers who wish to sponsor a migrant worker
- information about [how to find an immigration adviser](#)
- details of UKVI's [dedicated public enquiry lines](#) available to members of the public
- a guide to [asylum applications](#) and asylum support arrangements
- links to the [Immigration Rules](#) and related [policy guidance](#) used by Home Office decision-makers

['Citizenship and living in the UK'](#) - the 'British citizenship' pages contain practical guidance on British nationality law. Including:

- information about eligibility for British citizenship and how to check if a person is already British
- information about how to apply for British citizenship, including satisfying the knowledge of English language and life in the UK test, and citizenship ceremonies
- [UKVI contact details](#) for members of the public with nationality enquiries

['Passports, travel and living abroad'](#) the 'Passports' section contains practical information about applying for a British passport, including:

- application forms, fees and guidance on making urgent applications
- contact details of the [Passport Adviceline](#) service for members of the public
- links to more detailed information about how passport officials handle applications, contained in HM Passport Office's ['Passport policy guidance'](#) and ['Guidance on Passports'](#)

['Your rights and the law'](#) - these pages (which are not specific to immigration law) contain information about:

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- how to find a legal adviser
- how to check eligibility for legal aid
- how to complain about a legal adviser

3.2 Departmental pages on GOV.UK

[Home Office](#) / [UK Visas and Immigration](#) / [Immigration Enforcement](#) / [Border Force](#) / [HM Passport Office](#)

The departmental pages on GOV.UK provide quick access to recent government announcements, policy consultations, publications and statistics.

[Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner \(OISC\)](#)

The OISC is an independent public body responsible for ensuring that all immigration advisers fulfil the requirements of good practice. Its website provides:

- information about the regulation of immigration advisers
- an online '[adviser finder](#)' and details of [suspended advisers](#) and [how to complain](#) about an adviser

Tribunals Service (Immigration and Asylum Chambers)

There are separate web pages for the [First-tier Tribunal](#) and [Upper Tribunal](#), where you can find:

- appeal forms, practice notes, guidance and directions for judges
- reports of past cases, including Country Guideline determinations which give a detailed analysis of the situation facing a particular individual or group of individuals in a country
- Frequently Asked Questions

[First-tier Tribunal \(Asylum Support\)](#)

If an asylum seeker is refused financial or accommodation support or it is stopped or withdrawn, they can appeal against the decision. The appeal will be considered by the First-tier Tribunal (Asylum Support). Its website includes the following:

- glossary of terms used by the Tribunal
- forms and guidance for appellants
- Tribunal decisions
- Frequently Asked Questions

[Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#)

Here you can find the contact details and websites for all [UK embassies overseas](#) and for [foreign embassies in the UK](#) (useful for people in the UK who want to travel abroad).

3.3 UK Parliament websites

Parliament intranet and website

The [House of Commons Library](#) pages on the intranet site includes a large number of Library briefing papers and statistical information on the following [subject pages](#):

- asylum
- immigration
- nationality

We try to update briefings to take account of recent developments, within the constraints of other workload, but cannot promise to do so comprehensively. Each note states clearly the date on which it was last revised; if there is any doubt, please contact the author to check whether it is entirely up-to-date.

The briefings are also publicly available from the [topics](#) section of the [Parliament website](#), alongside links to recent Select Committee reports, Early Day Motions and RSS feeds.

[Working for an MP](#)

This website contains practical guides on immigration casework and asylum casework written by and for people who work for MPs.

3.4 Books and journals about immigration law

The Library holds many books and journals on immigration, asylum and nationality law. The following may be helpful for some casework enquiries, though parts of the books are now out-of-date and so should be used with care. Please contact the Home Affairs Section on x3636 if you wish to consult any of our holdings.

Gina Clayton & Georgina Firth, *Immigration and Asylum Law*, 8th edition 2018

An easy to read textbook for law students. Provides an overview of the history and sources of immigration, asylum and nationality laws, and how immigration controls operate in practice.

Ian A Macdonald QC and Ronan Toal (general editors), *Macdonald's Immigration Law and Practice*, 9th edition 2014

The main practitioners' textbook in this area. Comprehensive but quite technical as it is aimed primarily at lawyers.

Laurie Fransman, *Fransman's British Nationality Law*, 3rd edition 2011

The main nationality law textbook, with a detailed history of British nationality policy and legislation and a large section on nationality laws in other states.

Journal of Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Law

Quarterly academic journal comprising news, in-depth and shorter articles, commentaries and case-notes, practice notes and decisions of the European Court of Justice.

4. Organisations providing free/not for profit practical assistance

The following national and regional organisations may be useful sources to signpost constituents to, depending on the nature of the case. It is advisable also to find out about any local free/not-for-profit advice services, such as Law Centres or Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Asylum/refugee specific

[Advicenow](#) - Advicenow was founded by the Advice Services Alliance, the umbrella organisation for independent advice services in the UK.

[Asylum Aid](#) - Asylum Aid is charity that assists asylum seekers in the UK by giving them free legal advice and representing them in their asylum application. It also does policy work and campaigning. It operates an advice line twice a week which is able to provide free one-off advice to asylum seekers, refugees and people working with them, and its website contains further practical information about the asylum process.

[Asylum Support Appeals Project \(ASAP\)](#) - This charity provides free legal advice and representation to asylum seekers appealing against a refusal of asylum financial and/or accommodation support, and lobbies for changes to asylum support policies and procedures.

[British Red Cross](#) - The British Red Cross provides various types of support to refugees and asylum seekers in the UK including emergency assistance to those who are destitute, and family reunion and resettlement services.

[Jesuit Refugee Service UK \(JRS UK\)](#) - JRS provides some services for destitute asylum seekers and outreach services in some Immigration Removal Centres.

[Refugee Action](#) - Refugee Action is a national charity providing advice and support to asylum seekers in the UK. It also runs the EU/Home Office funded 'Choices assisted voluntary return' service for refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants who want to return permanently to their country of origin.

[Refugee Council](#) - The Refugee Council is a national charity with offices across the UK. It provides practical advice and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees and undertakes policy and campaigning work. It operates telephone advice lines on asylum support and the asylum process. Its website has advice leaflets on a range of asylum-related topics, translated into many different languages, as well as briefings, campaigns and policy papers.

[Scottish Refugee Council](#) - The Scottish Refugee Council provides a range of information and advice services to asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland, and campaigns on their behalf.

[UNHCR in the UK](#) - The 'Frequently Asked Questions' page explains that UNHCR cannot provide legal advice to asylum seekers in the UK, but contains details of various organisations that may be able to assist asylum seekers in the UK and some general information which may be useful to them.

[Welsh Refugee Council](#) - The Welsh Refugee Council provides advice services to asylum seekers and refugees in Wales as well as seeking to influence related government policies.

Immigration specific

[The AIRE Centre](#) - The AIRE (Advice on Individual Rights in Europe) Centre is a charity that provides information, free legal advice and representation on individuals' rights under European human rights law and European Union law, such as free movement rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.

[EU Rights Clinic](#) - The Clinic, based at the University of Kent in Brussels, helps EU citizens who cannot afford legal advice in resolving problems they may encounter when moving around the EU and assist them in enforcing their rights under European law, including access to benefits and visa issues.

[Kalayaan](#) - Kalayaan is a charity for migrant domestic workers in the UK. It is able to give basic free employment and immigration advice and hosts free advice sessions provided by immigration and employment solicitors. It also provides other services, including English language classes, and campaigns for migrant domestic workers' rights.

[UK Council for International Student Affairs \(UKCISA\)](#) - UKCISA represents the interests of international students and those who work with them. Its website includes a range of useful information guides for international students about their rights and entitlements in the UK, including immigration and visa requirements. It also operates a student advice line.

Asylum, immigration or nationality

[Bail for Immigration Detainees \(BID\)](#) - BID is a charity that works with asylum seekers and migrants in removal centres and prisons, to secure their release from detention. Its website contains practical information for immigration detainees and advisors, as well as research and policy publications. It provides free information and assistance to immigration detainees who wish to apply for release from immigration detention.

[Bar Council Guide to Representing Yourself in Court](#) - A guide written by barristers in April 2013 to assist litigants-in-person, such as persons who are ineligible for legal aid and cannot afford legal representation. It includes sections on preparing for appeals before the Tribunals Service's Immigration and Asylum Chamber, and Judicial Review cases.

[Coram Children's Legal Centre](#) - This charity's Migrant Children's Project provides free advice and legal representation concerning the rights of migrant children and young people, whether they are unaccompanied

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or in families in the UK. It operates an advice line and outreach services, and also undertakes policy and lobbying activities.

[Detention Action](#) - Detention Action provides support to immigration detainees in Harmondsworth and Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centres and persons held under immigration powers in London prisons. It also campaigns against indefinite immigration detention.

[Immigration Law Practitioners' Association \(ILPA\)](#) - ILPA does not provide immigration advice, but has a list of members who do. Its website includes information sheets on recent developments in policy and law, parliamentary briefings and responses to consultations on immigration and asylum matters.

[Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants \(JCWI\)](#) - JCWI provides legal advice and assistance to individuals, as well as training and campaigns on immigration, asylum and nationality matters. It operates a free advice line for undocumented migrants, and takes on other cases under legal aid or as private fee-paying clients.

[Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman](#) - The Parliamentary Ombudsman considers complaints from members of the public that government departments (including the Home Office) have not acted properly or fairly or have provided a poor service. The Ombudsman will only take on complaints referred by Members of Parliament. Its website contains information for MPs and their staff about how it can help with constituents' complaints.

[Right to Remain](#) - Right to Remain (formerly, the National Coalition of Anti Deportation Campaigns) is a voluntary organisation that provides practical help and advice to groups and individuals who wish to campaign for the right to remain in the UK.

5. Policy issues, international comparisons, etc (non-government sources)

The following sources are often useful when responding to policy questions raised by constituents.

Non-departmental bodies and international agencies

[Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration](#) - The independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration is responsible for assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the UK's border and immigration functions. His inspection reports are available on his website.

[Migration Advisory Committee](#) - The Migration Advisory Committee provides advice to government on migration issues, including the impact of current immigration provisions and government proposals for reform.

[European Union](#) - Summaries of EU legislation and policies related to free movement of persons, asylum and immigration are available from the European Union's Europa website.

[Library of the European Parliament](#) - The Library of the European Parliament's blog often contains posts and briefing papers on asylum and immigration issues.

[International Organisation for Migration \(IOM\)](#) - The UK branch of the IOM, an inter-governmental organisation, is involved in several projects including the Gateway resettlement scheme for recognised refugees, counter-trafficking initiatives and reintegration assistance to migrants returned to their countries of origin.

[Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#) - The International Migration section of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development publishes reports on member countries' migration movements and policies.

[United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#) - UNHCR is the UN's refugee agency. Its aim is to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. On its website you can find:

- the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees and other international conventions
- international statistics on refugees and asylum seekers

NGOs, think-tanks, etc.

[Asylum Information Database \(AIDA\)](#) - An interactive website which provides comparable information about asylum practices in 14 EU Member States (including the UK). The project is led by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles.

[British Future](#) - A think-tank concerned with issues related to identity, integration, migration and economic and social opportunity.

[Detention in Europe](#) - A website hosted by the Jesuit Refugee Service which includes information about the use of immigration detention in various European countries.

[European Council on Refugees and Exiles \(ECRE\)](#) - A European network of asylum NGOs seeking to influence European asylum policymaking. Produces a weekly email bulletin about asylum developments in Europe.

[Global Detention Project](#) - A project researching the use of immigration detention worldwide. The website includes profiles of detention policies in countries in Europe, Africa, Asia - Pacific, the Americas and Africa.

[Rights Info](#) - A website which aims to enhance non-specialist audiences' understanding of human rights laws and judgments, through use of infographics, stories and social media.

[Migrant Integration Policy Index](#) - An interactive website which provides comparable information about integration policies in over 30 countries. The project is led by the British Council and Migration Policy Group.

[Migration Observatory](#) - Based at the University of Oxford's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, the Observatory produces topical evidence-based analysis of data on migration and migrants in the UK, to inform media, public and policy debates.

[Migration Policy Institute Europe](#) - A Brussels-based research institute focussing on asylum and migration issues in Europe; linked to the US-based Migration Policy Institute, which has an international outlook.

[Migration Watch UK](#) - This is a voluntary organisation concerned about the present scale of immigration into the UK. Its website includes a series of briefing papers on topical issues.

[Refworld](#) - A **UNHCR** database featuring a wide range of sources on asylum law and policy issues. The website compiles country of origin information from the UNHCR, international, governmental and non-governmental sources, legal information including international treaties and agreements, and case law from international regional and national courts.

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