

ASAP's top priorities for the new government July 2024

For years we have watched the asylum system crumble. People's lives have been cruelly and unnecessarily put on hold as they wait longer and longer for a decision on their asylum claims. Worse still, tens of thousands of people have been left with little hope of their claim being processed as they languish in the inadmissibility system. Too many people have lived with the threat of being forcibly sent to Rwanda. In the meantime, people have no option but to live on inadequate levels of support, housed in poor, sometimes appalling, conditions which actively contribute to the deterioration of their health and well-being. This is not a situation any society should be proud of. The system must change.

To repair the asylum system in the UK, the government's first priorities should be:

1. **Restoring the right to claim** asylum by:
 - a. Putting a permanent end to the Rwanda scheme and repealing the Safety of Rwanda Act 2024.
 - b. Repealing the Illegal Migration Act 2023.
 - c. Repealing the inadmissibility laws which prevent people from having their claims heard in the UK in a timely way or at all.
2. Properly **resourcing the immigration advice sector** to ensure everyone claiming asylum has access to legal advice.
3. Ensuring that the Home Office has **sufficient decision-making capabilities** with staff that are properly trained and supported to make asylum decisions. The focus should not be on speed at the expense of quality.
4. Creating a **database** accessible to all Home Office teams with up to date records of people's addresses, contact details for current representatives and which accurately tracks the progress of their asylum claim.
5. Ensuring there is **sufficient capacity in the asylum appeals process** by recruiting additional judges.
6. **Housing people in communities**, not camps.
 - a. Immediately ceasing the use of large sites and the Bibby Stockholm barge.
 - b. Working with organisations looking at innovative housing solutions to move away from the use of hotels.
 - c. Improving the inspection regime in asylum accommodation.
7. Reviewing the **AIRE and AASC contracts** to ensure they provide a good service to people in the asylum system and represent value for money to the taxpayer.
8. Creating proper, transparent **safeguarding processes** by working with safeguarding experts to:
 - a. Improve and publish policies and procedures on safeguarding in asylum accommodation
 - b. Review the training provided by their contractors
9. Creating a **web-based portal** which enables people to track the progress of their asylum applications and download key documentation.

This is only a starting point. There are plenty of other things that could and should be done to make the experience of claiming asylum a more humane one. But these first, most urgent, priorities would go a long way towards restoring a minimum standard for those living in the asylum system in the UK.