

Visa penalties and new powers to speed up removal of illegal migrants

The Home Secretary will be granted new powers to impose visa penalties on countries that refuse to take back their own citizens who have no right to be in the UK, under new reforms in the Nationality and Borders Bill announced today (Friday 15 October 2021).

Under these new powers, the Home Secretary will be able to take a tougher stance on countries that do not co-operate with deportations and removals, by suspending visas entirely, imposing a £190 surcharge on applications to come to the UK or increasing visa processing times.

When used, these powers will help to incentivise other countries to co-operate with the government to remove those who have no right to be in the country.

The new power to impose visa penalties is one of the amendments the government has tabled to the Nationality and Borders Bill, as the Home Secretary delivers on her commitment to create a fair but firm immigration system as part of the New Plan for Immigration.

Together these measures will help prevent dangerous illegal journeys into the UK and break the business model of the criminal gangs exploiting people.

Home Secretary, Priti Patel said:

The UK has a proud history of being open to the world but we rightly expect our international partners to work with us to remove those who have no right to be in the UK, such as dangerous foreign national offenders.

It is unfair on UK citizens and taxpayers that pressure is put on our public services by foreign nationals with no legal right to be here. Through my New Plan for Immigration, and this landmark legislation, I will continue to take the difficult action needed to fix our broken asylum system and deliver on what the British people want – full control of our borders.

More foreign criminals will also be removed sooner. Under changes to the Early Removal Scheme, foreign national criminals will now be eligible for removal up to 12 months before the end of their custodial sentence, as opposed to nine months.

Minister for Justice and Tackling Illegal Migration, Tom Pursglove said:

The New Plan for Immigration provides the only long-term solution

to fix our broken asylum system, and we are taking another step forward in delivering on this commitment as our Nationality and Borders Bill continues its passage through Parliament.

We are ensuring our system is fair for those who play by the rules, but firm on foreign criminals and those in our country illegally.

We have brought forward the most significant reforms to the immigration and asylum system in decades. This is what the British people have consistently demanded. Strengthening the Bill through these amendments will ensure that we continue to deliver for them.

The government has also tabled further amendments to the Bill, including:

- changes to the Special Immigration Appeals Commission Act 1997, to safeguard sensitive material. This will mean that legal challenges on immigration decisions which involve sensitive information can be heard by a court that specialises in protecting sensitive information
- expanding the types of claims that can be dealt with in an accelerated appeal from detention, so that more cases can be resolved while the person is in detention rather than them being released into the community. This includes foreign national offenders

Other government amendments expected to be tabled in Parliament over the coming week include:

- introducing a robust approach to age assessment to better identify children seeking asylum and stop adults accessing children's services
- legislation to establish an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) Scheme, in line with the government's ambition to secure the border. Once introduced, carriers will need to check that all passengers (except British and Irish citizens) have a digital authorisation or some other form of permission before they can travel to the UK