

The Rt Hon. the Lord Foster of Bath
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0AA

24 March 2026

Dear Lord Foster,

Following the oral evidence session on 10 March, please see below responses on the remaining questions I committed to write on or the Committee sent subsequent to the session.

- 1. Does the Home Office use data on deaths on overstayers to inform data on overstayers - e.g. if someone dies, and it turns out they had overstayed their visa or had failed to secure asylum but had not been removed, is the fact that they were in the UK for however long reflected in the Home Office's data?**

The Home Office does not publish data relating to deaths amongst the overstayer population. However, provided the Home Office receives confirmation of the death of an overstayer, their immigration and, if relevant, asylum records will be updated accordingly. They will no longer be included in the relevant datasets for 'open' immigration and asylum cases, but their case history will remain available for internal analysis.

Specifically for those individuals who have claimed asylum, the Department does publish the number of individuals where we received confirmation of their death prior to a decision being made on their case. In the year ending December 2025, there were seven people in this category (and which can include overstayers, those who entered the UK illegally, as well as those who had current leave to be in the UK when they claimed asylum).

- 2. Can you indicate the number of fee waivers granted in each of the last five years, and whether they related to ILR applications or visa applications, and in the latter case what cost was being waived (e.g. was it a visa application cost, an IHS cost etc). Please can you also indicate what percentage of the overall number of people paying fees received a waiver for visa related fees or settlement application fees.**

Fee waivers are generally only available to applicants making a temporary permission application on in-country and out-of-country human-rights routes, though a small number are available on non-human-rights routes.

Applications for fee waivers are considered on the grounds of affordability, destitution, imminent destitution or because there would be a detrimental impact on a child's wellbeing.

The applicant may be granted:

- a whole fee waiver (both immigration application fee and immigration health surcharge (IHS) where it applies) or
- a partial fee waiver (waiving the IHS where it applies)

There are no general fee waivers for settlement applications, although there are limited destitution-based fee waivers for specific vulnerable cohorts, such as bereaved partners or migrant victims of domestic abuse. Settlement is not deemed essential for someone to remain in the UK; and if an individual cannot afford the settlement application fee, they have the option to apply for further permission to stay, which may include a fee waiver if necessary.

Data on fee waivers is published in the Migration transparency data within the data in the UKVI Immigration and Protection data: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/migration-transparency-data>.
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69a039c73e672177d0bc7716/immigration-and-protection-data-oct-dec-2025.xlsx>

In country Fee Waiver applications, grants, acceptance rate and IHS exemptions (past five years)

Year	Fee waiver Applications	Fee Waiver Grants	Acceptance rate	IHS exemptions
2021	48,081	36,120	75.1%	686
2022	43,907	28,581	65.1%	390
2023	52,506	29,086	55.4%	293
2024	91,938	37,994	41.3%	377
2025	116,275	38,292	32.9%	650

The figures are taken from the Migration Transparency data. 2025 figures in the table are provisional, as Q4 data is incomplete and includes a high number of cases yet to be decided. Figures for partial waivers, meaning those rejected for a fee waiver but granted an IHS only exemption, are not included in the overall acceptance figures and are set out separately. Figures for fee waivers granted for settlement for vulnerable cohorts are not included in the published statistics.

3. Can you confirm whether the Life in the UK questions can be changed before the current tender ends or if they are locked in until then? When does it expire and can you provide timelines for the tendering process?

The Life in the UK test questions can be updated before the current tender ends. We are reviewing the test content and intend to align any changes with the upcoming re-procurement, ensuring a smooth transition with minimal disruption for customers.

The Life in the UK service is currently delivered through two separate contracts: Knowledge of Life in the UK Test Materials (expiring May 2027) and Life in the UK Test Delivery (expiring September 2027).

While procurement timelines are still being finalised, the programme will ensure the procurement is structured to maintain uninterrupted delivery of the Life in the UK service.

4. Taxpayer funded English language courses focused on women from communities who struggled to access courses, specifically funding from 2019 for this purpose. Can you provide any information on the outcomes of this work and whether it is ongoing?

Through the Adult Skills Fund (ASF), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) supports adults aged 19+ in England to access English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision. ESOL allows learners to develop the English language skills they need for everyday life, work or further learning.

Currently, approximately 68% of the ASF is devolved to 12 Strategic Authorities (SAs) and the Greater London Authority (GLA). These authorities are responsible for the provision of ASF-funded adult education for their residents, the allocation of the ASF to learning providers, and deciding how the ASF best meets the needs of their local economy. We are giving local leaders power to drive the skills strategy in their area by combining and devolving adult skills funding to them. This allows them to take decisions focused on the needs of local people and the local economy.

The DWP is responsible for the remaining ASF in non-devolved areas, where colleges and learning providers have the freedom and flexibility to determine how they use their ASF allocations from the department to meet the needs of their communities.

The Home Office launched STEP Ahead in October 2024. It was a small-scale pilot to test an innovative intensive digital approach to delivering English language training and employment support to refugees. The overarching aim was to test if and to what extent virtual service delivery can mitigate or overcome known barriers to accessing services that support employability.

STEP Ahead included support for harder to reach cohorts such as women, those with low levels of literacy and people granted through the asylum system; as well as providing a fast-track option for individuals who can benefit from self-access materials. The project ran from October 2024 – March 2025

The evaluation concluded that STEP Ahead had positive short-term impacts on participant confidence, job readiness, and engagement with learning. 85% of women attended over 80% of employment support sessions, reflecting the active participation and consistent engagement throughout. In particular, women experienced strong positive outcomes due to the flexibility digital delivery provided to fit learning around childcare responsibilities. Participants reported increased confidence in using English conversationally and greater

willingness to engage with employability activities. Strong, trusted relationships with coaches and tutors were identified as a critical success factor, particularly for women. This evaluation will inform future policy development on refugee integration and employment support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mike Tapp', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Tapp MP
Minister for Migration & Citizenship