



Consultation on the New Plan for Immigration: A Guide

WOMEN FOR REFUGEE WOMEN

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The Plan

The Government has opened a public consultation on the 'New Plan for Immigration'.

This guide is for members of the public who want to respond, and are worried about the plan's impact on women seeking asylum.

We know that there are concerns about the consultation – how genuine it is, whether our voices and experiences will be heard.

But we believe it is important to participate, as not doing so would be an easy win for the Home Office. It is also a vital first step towards building a movement against these inhumane proposals.

You could start by looking at the [plan](#) itself.

It's not easy to read though and is pretty long!

So you may want to look at a summary of it instead:

- Here is coverage [by the BBC](#), with some comments from refugee organisations.
- Here is Women for Refugee Women's [initial response](#).



Why is the plan bad for women?

- The changes will harm men and women.
- But women are likely to be affected in a different way to men, and we want to make sure that these experiences are not forgotten, as they too often are.
- Women are very likely to have suffered sexual abuse in their countries of origin or violence that was inflicted on them because they are women.
- This includes trafficking for forced prostitution, forced marriage or rape during war.

We are really concerned that the proposals would mean that some of the most vulnerable women who come to our country are either refused asylum or don't get the protection they need to rebuild their lives.



Everyone deserves safety

There are lots of things that worry us about the new plan. But here are two of our main concerns:

1. The proposal to give **only temporary protection** to vulnerable people who have arrived to the UK by boat or lorries, and other irregular routes (Chapter 4 of the Plan).

When your life is in danger you usually don't have options – you do whatever it takes to leave as quickly as possible. Some women are trafficked across borders.

The women we support have fled extreme sexual and other violence. **We don't think they should be punished by the way in which they came to the UK.**

2. The 'one stop' process – to make people who claim asylum present all the reasons for why they need protection from the very beginning (Chapter 5 of the Plan).

This sounds sensible in theory but it's not the way it works for traumatised women who've survived trafficking or sexual violence. Many of these women aren't able to fully share their stories right away.

Apart from serious trauma, some women who've been trafficked here may still be under threat from their traffickers during their asylum interview, so that they can't speak openly about what they've gone through.

We know there's a big backlog in the system – but this isn't the way to solve it.



Background on refugee women

Do take a further look at the experiences of women seeking asylum and the challenges they face.

- Take a look at our recent report, [Will I Ever Be Safe?](#)
- This explores the experiences of many women who came to the UK for protection but instead became homeless, hungry and at risk of abuse. It shows how we need to do more to protect women fleeing persecution.
- Take a look at [this article](#), which tells the story of one women we work with, Gloria, and how she could be affected by these changes.

Gloria was imprisoned for her politics in the Congo, and then trafficked to the UK and forced into prostitution. She still doesn't have protection here, and the recent changes could make it even harder for her.

“Every month I have to report to the Home Office in London Bridge. I must stay in the system and report. I have been detained once already so there is always that fear. But I don't want to get lost. I want to stay in touch with the Home Office and one day I will get my papers and then I will be able to rebuild my life. I still have that dream.”

I don't want to get lost, by Ann



Everyone should be heard

- It's totally normal to find the consultation a bit daunting or confusing!
- We think the confusion is deliberate – to make it hard for people to share negative feedback. But we hope to make it easy as possible with this guide! 😊
- You may be feeling unsure about whether it's worth doing this consultation. Will the government listen to the responses? Will your voice be heard?
- We can't be sure that the government *will* listen. But it is definitely worth doing! We have to try to show the government the strength of feeling against the new plan.
- And **WE are listening!** If you have time to share responses with us, we would love to read them and share them with our supporters (anonymously if you prefer).

We are stronger together!

The deadline for responses is
11:45PM on Thursday 6th May!



How to respond to the consultation

Step 1: Make an account

- To take part in the consultation, you will need to go to the [website and register](#).
- You'll be invited to register with an email address. Once you've created your account, you will be given three ways to take part.
- The session today, and this guide, focuses on **personal responses**.

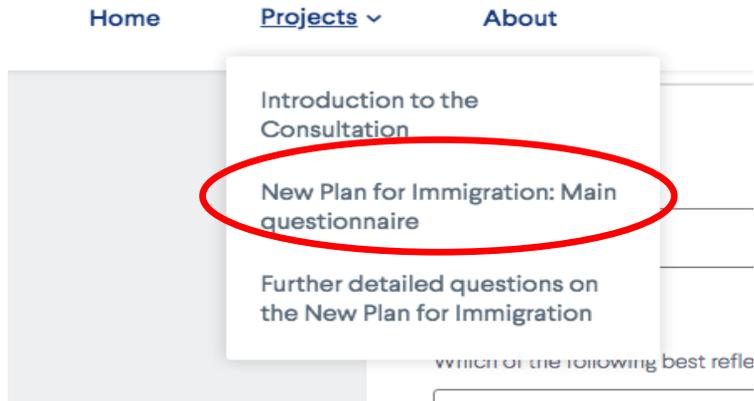
I / the organisation I work for was invited directly by the Home Office
I am responding in a professional capacity, but was not invited by the Home Office
✓ I am a member of the public submitting a personal response 

Step 2: Enter the survey

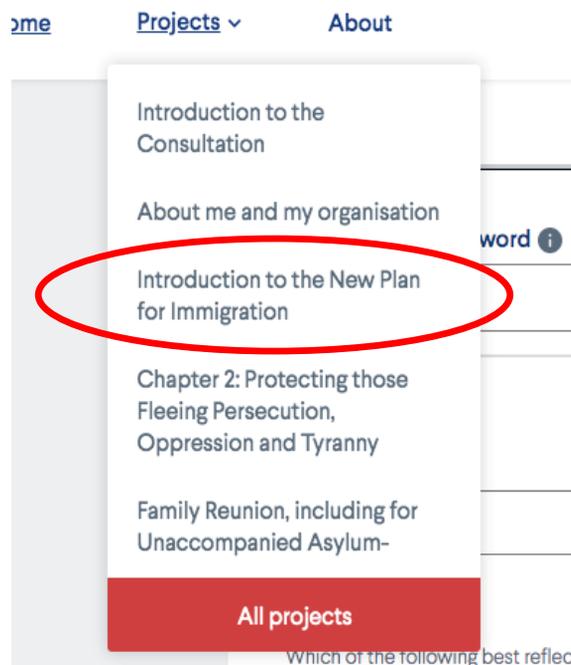
- Once you've registered, you can enter the survey.
- There is actually more than one survey. But if you register as a 'member of the public', you will find yourself with the shortest one.
- Click on 'Projects'

- You may see different things on your screen at this point!

If you see the below, click on **‘New Plan for Immigration Main Questionnaire’**.



Or if you see this, click on **‘Introduction to the New Plan for Immigration’**.



Step 3: Send your response

- We are encouraging our supporters to **answer three questions** – one of which is multiple choice. Of course you can answer many more, but we think these three are key.
- If you are working your way through the short survey, they are numbered **1, 40-41, and 45**.
- *If you have opened the PDF guide to the questionnaire, which is available on the website, you will find different numbering. In that PDF file, the three questions are numbered 1, 21-22, and 24.*
- *And if you are in the longer survey (there are different surveys in the consultation), you will still find these questions easily, at the very beginning and end of the longer survey.*



The first question (Question 1)

- 1 → The foreword provides a high level outline of the New Plan for Immigration, including reforms to make the system fair, but firm.

Overall, how far do you support or oppose what is being said here?

Please refer to the foreword of the New Plan for Immigration to help answer this question.

A Strongly support

B Tend to support

C Neither support nor oppose

D Tend to oppose

E Strongly oppose

F Don't know



0 of 50 answered

Powered

- You can choose from a list of options.
- Women for Refugee Women will be answering **'Strongly oppose'**.

Equality Question: 40-41

These questions are about the government's duty to make sure that everyone is treated equally.

- There will be a list of ways in which people can be discriminated against. 'Sex', in this list, is particularly relevant to us because we are concerned about the impact of the plan on women.
- Other characteristics may be particularly relevant to your response, including sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, race, age, or maternity.

This is what the list in the Equality Question looks like:

40 → Below is a list of protected characteristics under the Equalities Act:

Age

Disability

Gender reassignment

Marriage and civil partnership

Pregnancy and maternity

Race

Religion or belief

Sex

0 of 50 answered

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- You will then have to select the bits of the plan you are concerned about when it comes to unfair impact on women.
- The temporary status and the ‘one stop’ process are presented in **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 5** of the plan. So you should tick both of those:

From the list of areas below, please select any areas where you feel intended reforms present disproportionate impacts on individuals protected by the Equalities Act.

Choose as many as you like

<input type="checkbox"/>	A	Protecting those Fleeing Persecution, Oppression and Tyranny (Chapter 2)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	B	Ending Anomalies and Delivering Fairness in British Nationality Law (Chapter 3)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C	Disrupting Criminal Networks and Reforming the Asylum System (Chapter 4)	✓
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	D	Streamlining Asylum Claims and Appeals (Chapter 5)	✓
<input type="checkbox"/>	E	Supporting Victims of Modern Slavery (Chapter 6)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	F	Disrupting Criminal Networks Behind People Smuggling (Chapter 7)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	G	Enforcing Removals including Foreign National Offenders (Chapter 8)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	H	None of these	



- You will then have space to say why you think the proposals could be harmful to women.

It will look like this:

- 41 → Please expand on your answer for any areas you have selected, providing data (where applicable), further information and detailed reasons.

If you need to revisit the protected characteristics, please click the up arrow on the bottom right of your screen.

Type your answer here...

Shift ⬆ + Enter ⬆ to make a line break

OK ✓ press Enter ⬆

Answering the Equality Question

1. You should start by making it clear that you are concerned about the impact of the changes on women. For example:

“I am really worried about the impact of the proposals on women, with the protected characteristic of sex.”

2. And then say why you are worried.

Some issues you could include in your response, examples of which are included overleaf:

- Sexual and gender-based violence
- The impact of trauma
- Problems women currently experience in the asylum system
- Lack of support



Sexual and gender-based violence

Many women who claim asylum in the UK have suffered extreme sexual abuse or other violence because they are a woman. You could give some examples of this violence: forced prostitution, rape, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, domestic violence etc.

Trauma

You can talk about the impact of trauma that this violence has on women – the time they need to heal and properly share their stories with government officials, people who are *complete strangers*.

Current problems for women

Many vulnerable women already struggle in the current asylum system to prove the sexual and gender-based violence they have faced. You could say how the changes could make it even more difficult for women to be protected.

Support

You could talk about the impact of proper legal and mental health support. Many women who go through the asylum system don't currently have the support they need at the beginning of their asylum claim to share their traumatic experiences.



The final question (Question 45)

We also encourage supporters to answer the final question in the survey:

45 → Please use the space below to share any other feedback on the New Plan for Immigration that you would like to submit as part of this consultation.

In particular, if there are any other objectives that the Government should consider as part of the New Plan for Immigration.

Type your answer here...

Shift ↑ + Enter ↵ to make a line break

OK ✓ press Enter ↵

- This open question is space for you to put your own views.
- You might want to talk about your own experiences – in the community, in your work or day to day life.
- You might have views based on what you've read in the media.
- If you've been through the asylum system, you can speak about that experience.

Responses from people who have claimed asylum

- You could say whether you think the proposals are fair based on your own experience of having gone through the asylum system in the UK.
- **Don't give specific dates or lots of information about the persecution you have faced.**
- It is enough to say, for example, *"My life was in danger. I was a victim of forced marriage and my country couldn't protect me."*

If you came to the UK in a lorry, on a boat or with false papers:

- You might want to say why you were forced to leave the way you did.
- Do you think it would be fair to give temporary status to certain asylum-seeking people based on how they came to the UK?



If you made a late claim for asylum:

- You might want to share why you couldn't make an earlier claim.
- Is it important that the Home Office allows people like you to make late claims?

If you got refugee status after making a fresh claim:

- You might want to say why the fresh claim process was important to you.
- Did it give you more time to heal so that you could speak openly about your story?
- Did it give you more time to find a good lawyer?
- Was your fresh claim based on a different reason to your original claim?
- What if you weren't able to make a fresh claim – would that have been fair?



An example response from a volunteer

“I am concerned about the wellbeing and safety of people who come here as asylum seekers. I’m particularly concerned about the proposal to treat asylum-seeking people differently, depending on how they arrive in the UK. I have read that people who arrive in certain ways will only be given temporary status.”

“I volunteer teaching English at a community centre and I have met women who have been trafficked into the UK, who had no choice about how they arrived here. They are very brave women and they have a lot to offer this country. They need to be given the chance to feel safe and to settle here.”

“I have also read that the government wants to reduce the number of appeals, but I have heard that the Home Office often delays responding to people’s claims and leaves them in limbo for a long time. This needs to be tackled - but this is the fault of the Home Office, not the fault of asylum seekers. It is not fair to stop people making a new claim, especially if they’ve been traumatised or if they didn’t have a good lawyer. Everyone who needs protection should be heard.”

An example response from a refugee woman

“I myself came running to this country with no choice about how I was brought here.

In fact it was a trafficker who took me from the prison where I had been locked up for my political activities. He brought me to London – I didn’t even know where he was taking me.

I have experienced a lot of violence in my home country and if I am sent back I know I will be tortured again or even killed.

I am hoping that now I have a good lawyer, with the help of a charity, I can get refugee status.

I am very worried that this plan says that because I was brought here like this I will only have the right to stay for 30 months. This means I will not feel safe even if the government decides I am a refugee.

Why am I to be punished like this?”



Lastly...

- We're here if you have any issues! If you have trouble making an account or writing a response, please feel free to message **Natasha** at Women for Refugee Women natasha@refugeewomen.co.uk
- If you have any questions about Women for Refugee Women's plans to push back against the government's proposals, please email **Priscilla**, priscilla@refugeewomen.co.uk
- We would also love to hear from you if you would like to share your answers with us. Particularly if you have included any of your experiences as a refugee, or working with or being friends with refugees. Let us know if we can publish and share these (anonymously if preferred) so we can inspire others!
- Please reach out to your friends and networks, let them know you are responding and encourage them to do likewise!
- Please also [share on your social media](#) that you think it's important to respond. We will be using the hashtag **#TellPritiPatel** – please use it too!
- And remember, the **deadline is Thursday 6th May!**

*“Thank you for speaking up for refugee women in this consultation. It warms my heart to know that so many people in Britain are concerned about women who have had to escape danger at home and that people want to make sure that we are protected. **Every kind heart is a light in the darkness.**”*

‘Anna’, a woman seeking asylum in London

