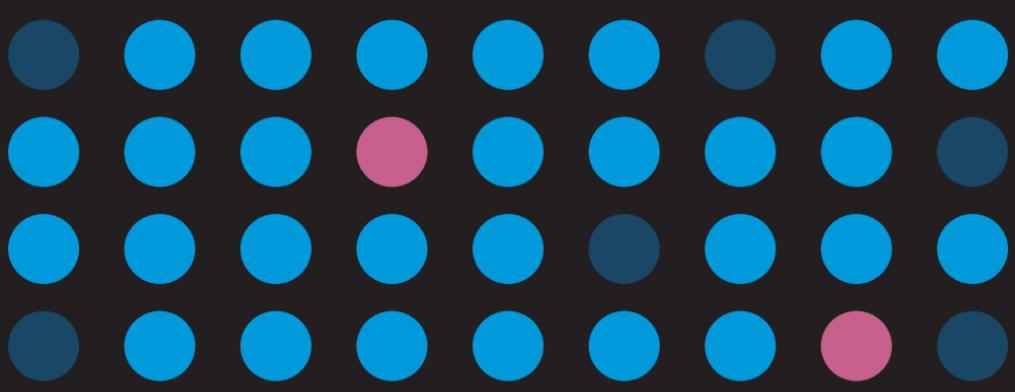


Ryan Shorthouse  
and David Kirkby



# A balanced centre-right agenda on immigration

*A manifesto for immigration*

# **A BALANCED CENTRE-RIGHT AGENDA ON IMMIGRATION**

A manifesto for immigration

Ryan Shorthouse and David Kirkby



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Ryan was previously a Research Fellow for the think tank the Social Market Foundation and was part of the team that won Prospect Magazine's Think Tank of the Year in 2012. At the SMF, he authored ten research papers and designed innovative policies on childcare, welfare, public service reform, higher education and health. He has provided regular analysis and policies to various Ministers and government departments, with many ideas adopted by the Government.

Prior to 2010, he was a researcher for Rt Hon David Willetts MP when he was Shadow Education Secretary, where he authored the Conservative Party's Childhood Review, and an adviser to the Conservative Party on families and education, formulating party policy and managing media relations. He was the Political Secretary of the Bow Group, a centre-right think tank.

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Thanks to Lewis Barber, Roland Mortimer, Austen Saunders and Benji Woolf for their assistance and input which has helped to develop our thinking and support this report.

To inform the development of this manifesto, we launched our immigration commission in 2014. This had two parts. The first part was an invitation for individuals and organisations to submit written evidence by August 18th 2014. The second part was the hosting of an oral evidence session, which took place on September 24th 2014.

The oral evidence session involved the questioning of representatives from different organisations analysing the impact of, or working with people affected by, the UK immigration system. A panel of expert commissioners was assembled to do the questioning. We would like to thank our commissioners: David Goodhart, Professor Matthew Goodwin, Sunder Katwala, Kate Maltby and Dr Carlos Vargas-Silva.

The ideas expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the commissioners or the sponsor.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Immigration is now consistently ranked in polling as the general public's 'most important issue', often above the economy.<sup>1</sup> A majority of the public believes that the number of immigrants coming to the UK is too high and that immigration is more of a problem than an opportunity, much higher than in most other developed countries.<sup>2</sup>

However, most of the public do have a nuanced view of immigration: for example, 61% of the public agree that "immigration brings both pressures and economic benefits, so we should control it and choose the immigration that's in Britain's best economic interests".<sup>3</sup>

The evidence on the impact of immigration is still developing, but overall it supports the idea that immigration is largely economically beneficial to the UK, but bringing challenges. On the whole, immigration boosts the national economy,<sup>4</sup> the wages of native workers (excluding those in the bottom quintile in the short-term)<sup>5</sup> and new

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1. Scott Blinder, "UK public opinion toward immigration: overall attitudes and level of concern", [www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Public%20Opinionoverall%20Attitudes%20and%20Level%20of%20Concern.pdf](http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Public%20Opinionoverall%20Attitudes%20and%20Level%20of%20Concern.pdf) (2014).

2. The German Marshall Fund, "Transatlantic trends: immigration", [http://trends.gmfus.org/files/2012/09/Trends\\_2014\\_complete.pdf](http://trends.gmfus.org/files/2012/09/Trends_2014_complete.pdf) (2014).

3. Sunder Katwala, Steve Ballinger and Matthew Rhodes, *How to talk about immigration* (London: British Future, 2014), 12.

4. Migration Advisory Committee, "Analysis of the impacts of migration", [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/257235/analysis-of-the-impacts.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257235/analysis-of-the-impacts.pdf) (2012).

5. Christian Dustmann, Tommaso Frattini and Ian Preston, *The effect of immigration along the distribution of wages* (London: Centre for Research and Analysis of Migration, 2008).

business growth.<sup>6</sup> The OECD has found that immigration has a net fiscal benefit.<sup>7</sup> However, immigration can have a negative impact on wages towards the lower end of the income scale for a limited period of time, as well as exacerbating pressures on transport, housing and other public services.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the benefits of immigration, mainstream political parties have proposed tougher action on immigration in recent years. The Conservative Party, for example, keeps proposing new ways to clampdown on some forms of migration to meet its net migration target. All political parties are focused on tackling ‘benefit tourism’. Early in 2014, the Conservative Minister for Immigration and Security delivered a high-profile speech to the think tank Demos blaming a “wealthy metropolitan elite” for pushing for mass immigration at the expense of “ordinary, hard-working people”.<sup>9</sup>

But this tougher approach has not succeeded in convincing the public of the Government’s handling of immigration. In fact, the Conservative Party is guilty of fixating in recent years on trying to appease a minority of voters who are attracted to UKIP’s prominent position on immigration, which is heavily negative about the impact of immigration, and wants to see net migration substantially reduced.

If managed correctly, immigration is both economically and culturally enriching. So it is necessary for the centre-right – represented mainly by the Conservative Party – to shape a more positive and compelling vision on immigration, and to construct a competent and fair immigration

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6. Centre for Entrepreneurs and DueDil, “Migrant entrepreneurs: building our businesses, creating our jobs”, [www.creatingourjobs.org/data/MigrantEntrepreneursWEB.pdf](http://www.creatingourjobs.org/data/MigrantEntrepreneursWEB.pdf) (2014).

7. OECD, “Is migration good for the economy?”, [www.oecd.org/migration/mig/OECD%20Migration%20Policy%20Debates%20Numero%202.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/OECD%20Migration%20Policy%20Debates%20Numero%202.pdf) (2014).

8. Migration Advisory Committee, “Analysis of the impacts of migration”, [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/257235/analysis-of-the-impacts.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257235/analysis-of-the-impacts.pdf) (2012).

9. James Brokenshire, “Speech to Demos”, [www.demos.co.uk/files/JamesBrokenshireSpeechoDemos.pdf](http://www.demos.co.uk/files/JamesBrokenshireSpeechoDemos.pdf) (2014).

system that would capture the benefits, manage the challenges and reassure the public. This would serve the national interest.

## A new centre-right approach on immigration

Over the past year, Bright Blue has been undertaking a project to devise a balanced centre-right agenda on immigration. To successfully do this, we have been informed by the views of those on the centre-right on immigration.

We understand someone to be on the centre-right if they are Conservative Party representatives, influencers, members or voters (including prospective or former voters). Broadly, there are two main types of people on the centre-right of British politics: first, centre-right voters. We analysed their views in our first paper from our project, *Understanding how Conservative voters think about immigration*.<sup>10</sup> The second group is opinion formers and decision makers. We established their views in our second paper, *A centre-right plan on immigration from opinion formers and decision makers*.<sup>11</sup>

From these reports, we can identify the following key themes in the views of those on the centre-right towards immigration:

- **Competence.** Conservative voters primarily want an immigration system that is well managed. It was advised by centre-right opinion formers and decision makers that the Conservative Party needs to look beyond the net migration figure in order to establish a record of competence on immigration.
- **Contribution.** Conservative voters prioritise ensuring that only those who ‘contribute’ come into the UK. This is more important to them than restricting the total number of immigrants. So the most important policy relating to immigration for them is restricting

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10. Ryan Shorthouse and David Kirkby, “Understanding how Conservative voters think about immigration”, [www.brightblue.org.uk/immigration.pdf](http://www.brightblue.org.uk/immigration.pdf) (2015).

11. Ryan Shorthouse and David Kirkby, “A centre-right plan on immigration from opinion formers and decision makers”, [www.brightblue.org.uk/images/opinion-formers.pdf](http://www.brightblue.org.uk/images/opinion-formers.pdf) (2015).

migrants' access to benefits. This is more significant than tightening the immigration cap on non-EU migrants or withdrawing from the EU principle of free movement of workers. It also means that they do not want to see a reduction in the number of 'contributing' immigrants to the UK, such as international students, skilled professionals and skilled manual workers. In fact, centre-right opinion formers and decision makers believed we should build a more positive policy agenda around encouraging 'contributing' immigrants to come to Britain, and welcoming those that do.

- **Integration.** Conservative voters are primarily concerned about the cultural impact of immigration, in particular that communities are living separate lives. These anxieties tend to operate at a national level. When asked about their immediate environments, Conservative voters are overwhelmingly positive about their interaction with, and the contribution of, immigrants. Centre-right opinion formers and decision makers suggested that it is possible to address public concerns about immigration by building a consensus around the importance of integrating new immigrants. Such integration would include more social mixing between British natives and migrants, supporting and promoting the economic contribution of immigrants, and strengthening national identity.
- **Balance.** Conservative voters believe that immigration brings both benefits and challenges to our economy and society. The evidence also demonstrates this. Centre-right opinion formers and decision makers believed that the Conservative Party needs to be honest about both the benefits and the challenges which immigration brings, and implement policies that maximise the benefits and address the challenges.

This report proposes a manifesto of ideas (see Chapter Two) to change the UK immigration system so that it better reflects these four priorities for those on the centre-right: that the government competently manages the immigration system, that we build a contributory-based immigration

system, that greater integration of immigrants is encouraged, and that balance is achieved where government better maximises the benefits and tackles the challenges that immigration brings.

This manifesto seeks to provide the centre-right with policies on immigration that are achievable, principled and capable of securing public support. There are no doubt further reforms on different aspects of the immigration system that could be proposed; we consider the ideas detailed in this manifesto to be an important starting point.

## **Our immigration commission**

Our manifesto is also partly influenced by the findings of our immigration commission that we organised in 2014. The aim of the commission was to consult a wide range of individuals and organisations with an interest in the UK immigration system. We wanted to ensure that our recommendations were informed by the best available advice and evidence. In addition, we wanted to bring together a broad coalition of individuals and organisations with differing views and experiences to find common solutions.

The commission had two parts. The first part was an invitation for individuals and organisations to submit written evidence by August 18th 2014. Links to all the written evidence we received are published in Annex one of this report.

The second part of the commission was the hosting of an oral evidence session, which took place on September 24th 2014. We invited individuals from different expert organisations to be interviewed on particular elements of immigration: business and growth; work and poverty; education, research, innovation and skills; local communities and public services; refugees and asylum applicants; border control, visas and detention centres; families and children; and integration. Details of the commissioners we appointed to do the questioning, and the details of the invited expert individuals and organisations, are found in Annex two. Annex two also includes links to films of the different sessions we hosted.

## Chapter 2: **The manifesto**

### **Government machinery and accountability**

1. Immigration has an impact on most government departments. Government machinery should reflect that immigration is a major cross-department issue requiring the perspectives of different Ministers and Civil Servants. In particular, it is important that the impact of immigration on the economy and local communities is given sufficient consideration in future government decision-making on immigration. **We recommend that the Minister for Immigration sit in at least two government departments, including the Home Office and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. We also recommend that any new immigration policies be collectively considered by the Home Affairs Cabinet Committee.**
2. The Conservative Party's flagship policy on immigration has been the net migration target of below 100,000 a year. It has not been met. Largely due to Britain's strong economic growth relative to other developed countries, net migration has risen sharply since 2012, after a fall between 2010 and 2012. From September 2013 to September 2014, net migration was 298,000.<sup>12</sup> This failure is partly due to the fact that it is not possible for the government to restrict the number of EU migrants entering the UK. But it is also the case that the number

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12. Office for National Statistics, "Migration statistics quarterly report, February 2015", [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/february-2015/index.html](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/february-2015/index.html) (2015).

of non-EU migrants has risen. This net migration target has failed to increase public confidence in the immigration system. It is arbitrary, unreliable and indiscriminate. **We recommend that the net migration target is abandoned as a policy aim for government.**

3. It is important that the UK does have targets on immigration so that the public can hold the government to account for its performance. But these targets should meet two key tests. First, they should be targets that the government can meet. For example, for as long as Britain remains a member of the European Union, it is not possible to control the level of migrants coming to the UK from the EU. So a target that includes controlling the number of EU migrants fails this first test. Second, clear targets should exist for different parts of the immigration system. This is because the public clearly differentiates between different types of migrants and there should be different priorities for different parts of the immigration system. **We recommend that any new government introduce a number of clear and achievable Immigration Key Performance Indicators (IKPIs) for the life of the parliament for the four main categories of our immigration system: workers, family members, students, and refugees or asylum applicants. Some suggestions for these different IKPIs are detailed in the relevant sections below.**
4. Immigration remains one of the public's greatest concerns. In recent years, it has often been seen as more important than the economy. To reflect this, we recommend that every year, parliament hosts a Migration Day where the Home Secretary delivers a statement, outlining progress in managing our immigration system and including announcements of any proposed changes to our immigration system over the next year. Parliament would scrutinise the government's performance against its IKPIs and debate any proposed new policies. This would mirror the Annual Budget, with Her Majesty's Opposition responding with an offi-

cial speech in the House of Commons. Civic society would also be given a prime opportunity each year to recommend and analyse government policies on immigration. Similar to the current role of the Office for Budget Responsibility with regard to the Budget, **we recommend that the Migration Advisory Committee be given the resources for a new role in publishing on Migration Day the impact of immigration on our economy, public services and communities, the government's progress on meeting its IKPIs, and the likely effect of any proposed government reforms.**

5. An overwhelming majority of the public clearly believe that the level of immigration into the UK is too high. Instead of the net migration target, one of the IKPIs should seek to put a limit on the overall level of immigration into this country, excluding migration from within the EU. **We recommend that one of the new IKPIs a government introduces be an annual target on gross migration from non-EU countries, which excludes international students. This IKPI should be decided by government after an extensive public consultation and sufficient parliamentary debate, and set at a rate which minimises as much as possible the number of backlogs and avoids the tightening of eligibility which would lead to a reduction in certain skilled occupations.**

## Work

6. The majority of migrants entering the UK come to work. The most common route for a non-EU migrant seeking work is a Tier 2 visa, where applicants must have a graduate job earning at least £20,500 a year. If granted this visa, the migrant can live in the UK for five years, plus another year if they apply for an extension. Most non-EU migrants are not eligible for public funds, specifically benefits. The current Government is rightly attempting to extend the period of time before EU migrants can claim both out-of-work and in-work benefits

to four years.<sup>13</sup> However, all EU and non-EU migrants are immediately entitled to access health and education services, which they should be expected to contribute to the financing of, just as the majority of British citizens have through years of paying tax. The current Government has, from 2015, introduced a health surcharge for non-EU migrants who apply to come to the UK for more than six months. **We recommend that all new non-EU immigrants excluding refugees and students pay a new class of Immigration National Insurance Contributions (INICs) when working for the first two years of their arrival to contribute to Britain's public services.** The rate at which INICs should be paid should be determined by government after extensive consultation and sufficient parliamentary debate. As part of its renegotiation efforts with the EU, the UK government should also seek permission to apply INICs to EU migrants.

7. The Government enables up to 500 non-EU individuals every half-year who are considered leaders or emerging leaders in their fields to enter the UK through a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa. This was introduced in 2011. Successful applicants can stay for five years. These people must be endorsed by a Designated Competent Body (DCB): either the Arts Council England, the British Academy, the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Royal Society or Tech City UK. The current Government has expressed its intention to expand the number of people using this visa and the number of sectors covered. **We recommend that the top-tier of governance in some major cities in the UK – for example, the General London Assembly or the Greater Manchester Combined Authority – be allowed to become DCBs and endorse up to 50 Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visas a year.**
8. The Government enables non-EU entrepreneurs with at least £50,000 investment funds from an approved funding source, or at least £200,000 from their own money, to apply for a Tier 1 (En-

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13. BBC News, "David Cameron urges EU support for migration plans", *BBC*, 28 November, 2014.

trepreneur) visa to live in the UK for a maximum of 3 years and 4 months. **We recommend that the minimum threshold for obtaining a Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) visa through investing your own money be lowered for businesses in particular industries after a consultation led by the Migration Advisory Committee.**

## Students

9. International students are estimated to yield approximately £8 billion annually to the UK economy, as a result of these students paying fees as well as buying other goods and services in Britain.<sup>14</sup> An overwhelming majority of the public does not want to see a reduction in the number of international students. It is concerning that the number of international students enrolled on courses at UK universities declined for two successive years in 2011–12 and 2012–13, especially from countries in the Indian subcontinent.<sup>15</sup> There are likely to be several causes of the two-year decline in international students, including perceptions about our visa system.<sup>16</sup> Technically, there is no limit to the number of students who can enter the UK via a Tier 4 visa. However, international students do contribute to the current net migration target. To clarify that this country is open to as many legitimate international students as possible, and to ensure future governments do not seek to introduce policies that will reduce the numbers coming, **we recommend that the number of international students in the UK should not**

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14. Matthew Taylor, “Immigration crackdown deterring foreign students, says universities chief”, *The Guardian*, 9 January, 2013.

15. Universities UK, “Worrying trends in international student recruitment”, [www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/WorryingTrendsInInternationalStudentRecruitment.aspx#.VRs-POeEY9Q](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/WorryingTrendsInInternationalStudentRecruitment.aspx#.VRs-POeEY9Q) (2014).

16. Hobsons, “Beyond the data: Influencing international student decision making”, [https://static.eloqua.com/Web/HobsonsInc/%7B7e04f1c4-d8e2-494a-837b-08369d29a458%7D\\_Beyond\\_the\\_data.pdf](https://static.eloqua.com/Web/HobsonsInc/%7B7e04f1c4-d8e2-494a-837b-08369d29a458%7D_Beyond_the_data.pdf) (2014).

**contribute to the Government's current net migration target or our proposed new target on non-EU gross migration.** Students on Tier 4 visas who switch to Tier 2 work visas should count towards our proposed target on non-EU gross immigration.

10. Students from high-risk countries have to successfully complete credibility interviews to be granted a Tier 4 visa to study in the UK. It is necessary for the Home Office to ensure the validity of applications. However, when these students arrive, they are also expected to register with the police upon arrival, providing information that has been already given during their application for a visa. This is unnecessary and unwelcoming. **We recommend that government ends the requirement of students on Tier 4 visas from high-risk countries to register with the police upon arrival in the UK.**
11. International students will graduate with skills and knowledge that we should seek to retain in our labour market. We must enable them to develop those skills while studying. Also, they should be given the opportunity to support themselves through work while studying. Currently, those on a Tier 4 student visa are barred from engaging in self-employment during term time. They are also only permitted to work for a maximum 20 hours per week during term time. If they are studying at a Further Education (FE) college, an international student can only work for a maximum 10 hours per week. **We recommend that the government change the rules for those with Tier 4 student visas so they are permitted to work up to 20 hours per week during term time – including in self-employment – whether in a Higher Education (HE) or FE institution.**
12. The UK is home to world-class universities, attracting talented people from around the world. The government should be seeking to persuade international graduates from UK universities to work in the UK labour market. In 2012, the post-study visa route was scrapped: this enabled graduates from UK institutions to remain in the UK for two years, without any employment conditions. A

graduate on a Tier 4 visa now has four months after completing their course to secure employment to be granted a Tier 2 work visa. Alternatively, they can secure a Tier 5 (Temporary Worker Government Authorised Scheme) visa or Tier 5 (Youth Mobility Scheme) visa of up to two years. But the former is only available for people being sponsored by a small number of organisations and the latter is only available to young people from eight countries, including Monaco and Hong Kong. **We recommend that the government grants international graduates who have completed courses lasting longer than a year the right to remain in the UK on their Tier 4 visa for up to 12 months after their studies to be given sufficient time to secure a job and gain a new visa.** The employment they attain to be granted a Tier 2 visa must be a graduate job earning at least £20,500 a year. In some professions, it can take graduates a significant period of time before securing permanent paid employment. In some regions and professions in the UK, £20,500 is a relatively high starting salary. **We recommend that the minimum salary that is needed for an international graduate to secure a Tier 2 work visa be regionalised with government deciding new minimum salaries for different regions.** The starting salary of £20,500 should be the highest and applied to those working in London.

13. An alternative route exists for those international graduates on Tier 4 visas to remain in the UK after their course has ended: they can be granted a Tier 1 (graduate entrepreneur) visa. To be granted this, they need to be endorsed by their university and prove that they have a viable business model. Only Higher Education Institutions can endorse such applicants. This visa is granted for 1 year, with the right to extend it by another year. They then have the opportunity to apply for a Tier 2 work visa or Tier 1 (entrepreneur) visa, for which they will need to prove that they have £50,000 from an approved funding source, or £200,000 of their own money, to invest in their business. The government enabled up to 2,000 of

these visas to be granted in 2014–15, but only a much smaller number were actually granted.<sup>17</sup> **We recommend that Tier 1 (graduate entrepreneur) visas be granted for 3 years for successful applicants to get their businesses established and to be more closely aligned with the period given to those on Tier 1 (entrepreneur) visas. We also recommend that FE colleges with Highly Trusted Status (HTS) are permitted alongside HE institutions to endorse applicants for this visa.**

## Family members

14. In 2012, the Coalition Government introduced a new minimum income requirement for family migration. If a British citizen would like their spouse – who lives outside the European Economic Area (EEA) – to live in Britain, they have to earn at least gross £18,600 a year. This rate was suggested by the Migration Advisory Committee as an income whereby a family would be less reliant on public funds. If a citizen would like one child to join their spouse in migrating to Britain, the citizen needs to earn at least gross £22,400 a year. For every additional child, the citizen needs to earn another £2,400. The Migration Observatory has found that 43% of the UK population does not meet this earnings threshold of £18,600, especially those living outside London and the South-East of England.<sup>18</sup> After this new rule was introduced, the number of family visas granted fell by 22%. In 2013, 24,641 non-EEA partner visas were granted, representing a small proportion of overall migrants.<sup>19</sup> The government must of course ensure

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17. Migration Watch, “Britain is open for business”, [www.migrationwatchuk.org/pdfs/BP1\\_35.pdf](http://www.migrationwatchuk.org/pdfs/BP1_35.pdf) (2014).

18. Migration Observatory, “Love and money: how immigration policy discriminates between families”, <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/commentary/love-and-money-how-immigration-policy-discriminates-between-families> (2014).

19. All-Party Parliamentary Group on Migration, “Family migration: two years on from the new rules”, [www.appgmigration.org.uk/sites/default/files/APPG-Migration\\_Family\\_Migration\\_Two\\_Years\\_On.pdf](http://www.appgmigration.org.uk/sites/default/files/APPG-Migration_Family_Migration_Two_Years_On.pdf) (2014).

that migration is not costly to public finances. But it must also recognise the significant contribution millions of low paid Britons make to our economy and society, as well as the value of having families living together in the same country. **We recommend that non-EEA family visas be granted if the sponsoring British citizen meets the current minimum income threshold or earned above the Personal Income Tax Allowance for the last 30 months.**

## Refugees and asylum applicants

15. Refugees are individuals who have the legal right to be in the UK because they have fled their country of origin because of fear of persecution. They are granted limited leave to remain for five years. After this, they can apply for permanent residency, but the majority return to their country of origin. The UK, in comparison to other EU countries, accepts far fewer refugees per capita.<sup>20</sup> Apart from asylum applicants, the main route to becoming a refugee in the UK is under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Gateway Programme. The UK currently takes 750 refugees per year through this scheme.<sup>21</sup> **We recommend that the government seeks to increase the number of refugees that can be admitted through the UNHCR Gateway Programme.**
16. The Government has introduced the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme for Syrians. By the end of 2014, the UK had admitted 143 Syrian refugees. In comparison, Germany has provided humanitarian admission to 20,000 Syrian refugees, and has agreed

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20. Luc Bovens and Jane von Rabenau, "Contrary to the claims of German politicians, Germany is not taking on more than its fair share of refugees", <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2014/12/01/contrary-to-the-claims-of-german-politicians-germany-is-not-taking-on-more-than-its-fair-share-of-refugees> (2014).

21. Harriet Grant, "Refugees hail UNHCR Gateway programme as a British success story", *The Guardian*, 19 March, 2014.

to take a further 10,000 on individual sponsorship, and the US has now promised to admit in the low thousands each year.<sup>22</sup> **We recommend that the government seeks to increase the number of Syrian refugees that are admitted through the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.**

17. Asylum applicants are individuals who are in the UK seeking refugee status. In 2014, the number of asylum applicants was 24,914, much lower than comparable European countries such as Germany and France, and much lower than the peak of 84,310 in 2002.<sup>23</sup> They are supported by a flat-rate amount of £36.95 per person per week with £75.52 for couples and £52.96 for children under the age of 16.<sup>24</sup> The Home Office seeks to make an initial decision on asylum applications within six months, but only 78% of cases had an initial decision within six months in 2012–13.<sup>25</sup> In fact, delays in applications have increased in recent years, exacerbating hardship.<sup>26</sup> **We recommend that the government introduce a new IKPI that seeks to make an initial decision on 90% of asylum applications within six months.**
18. Though delays in processing asylum cases have worsened in recent years, the number of asylum applications that have resulted in the granting of refugee status has increased.<sup>27</sup> If an asylum applicant has been rejected, the applicant can make an appeal through the judicial system, a process that is costly to the government. To in-

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22. David Martosko, “US has accepted more than 500 Syrian refugees and plans to admit thousands more – and ISIS could slip into the country along with them”, *The Daily Mail*, 18 February, 2015; UNHCR, “Resettlement and other forms of admission for Syrian refugees”, [www.unhcr.org/52b2febafc5.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/52b2febafc5.pdf) (2015).

23. Refugee Council, “Asylum statistics annual trends”, [http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/3935/Asylum\\_Statistics\\_Annual\\_Trends\\_Feb\\_2015.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/3935/Asylum_Statistics_Annual_Trends_Feb_2015.pdf) (2015).

24. Migration Observatory, “Migration into the UK: asylum”, [www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Briefing%20-%20Migration%20to%20the%20UK%20-%20Asylum\\_0.pdf](http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Briefing%20-%20Migration%20to%20the%20UK%20-%20Asylum_0.pdf) (2014).

25. Home Office, “The government response to the seventh report from the Home Affairs Committee session 2013–14 HC 71”, [www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/home-affairs/Cm-8769-Asylum-Government-Response.pdf](http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/home-affairs/Cm-8769-Asylum-Government-Response.pdf) (2013).

26. Refugee Council, “Asylum backlogs”, [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/3720/Asylum\\_Backlogs.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/3720/Asylum_Backlogs.pdf) (2015).

27. Oliver Hawkins, “Asylum applicants” (House of Commons Library Note, 4 December 2014).

centrised government to ensure caseworkers make accurate decisions in the first instance, **we recommend that government introduce a new IKPI that the appeal rate for asylum applications is less than 20% for all cases each year.**

19. Being an asylum applicant is strongly associated with impoverishment,<sup>28</sup> partly because they are banned from working. Before 2002, asylum applicants could work.<sup>29</sup> **We recommend that, after six months if their case is still unresolved, asylum applicants should be able to work legally in the UK.**
20. The stated objective of the UK government is to only use detention of asylum applicants to effect removal and only as a last resort. At the end of 2014, there were 3,462 migrants being held in UK immigration detention centres, a 24% increase on the number detained in 2013, many of whom are awaiting decisions on their asylum cases or claims.<sup>30</sup> None of them are serving a sentence for a crime. There is no limit to how long an immigrant can be detained. Within the EU, the UK is unique in having no time limit and routinely using long-term detention. Over 70% of immigration detainees have been held for more than 28 days and about one-in-six have been held for more than a year. In fact, 60% of people detained for over a year are eventually released and allowed to remain in the UK. We believe that indefinite detention is inhumane. It is also expensive. It costs £47,000 per year per detainee and over the past four years the Home Office has had to pay more than £16 million in compensation for unlawful detention.<sup>31</sup>

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28. Jennifer Allsopp, Nando Sigona and Jenny Phillimore, "Poverty among refugees and asylum seekers in the UK", [www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/iris/2014/working-paper-series/IRiS-WP-1-2014.pdf](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/iris/2014/working-paper-series/IRiS-WP-1-2014.pdf) (2014).

29. Home Affairs Committee, *Asylum: seventh report of the session 2013–14* (London: The Stationary Office Limited, 2013).

30. Migration Observatory, "Immigration detention in the UK", [www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Immigration%20Detention%20Briefing.pdf](http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Immigration%20Detention%20Briefing.pdf) (2015).

31. All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees and All Party Parliamentary Group on Migration, "The report of the inquiry into the use of immigration detention in the United Kingdom", <https://detention-inquiry.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/immigration-detention-inquiry-report.pdf> (2015).

In some cases a short period of detention may be necessary. But indefinite detention imposed without judicial oversight takes away the freedom of the vulnerable. **We recommend that government introduces a limit of twenty eight days for a migrant to be detained.**

21. Community-based alternatives to detention are being tested in countries such as Australia and the United States. Initial evidence suggests they can be cheaper to government and improve compliance rates. **We recommend that government provide the resources to trial and evaluate community-based alternatives to detention.**
22. It is vital that the UK provides access to the legal system for individuals who wish to challenge, and seek legal remedies for, errors and abuses of power by different parts of the UK immigration system. The availability of legal aid has been reduced for different immigration cases as a result of different pieces of legislation introduced over this Parliament. Partly in response to these reductions, the Government introduced 'Exceptional Case Funding' to provide legal aid in more immigration cases. But the number of applications, and then successful applications, for this funding is small.<sup>32</sup> **We recommend the government review Exceptional Case Funding to ensure that it is providing adequate legal aid for migrants.**

## Integration

23. There are some areas of the UK that have experienced high levels of immigration. This has put significant pressure on local services, including schools, hospitals and housing. These areas should be granted additional resources to expand and improve their services to ensure that they can cope with the relatively high inflow of migrants. The previous Government established a Migration Impacts

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32. Ministry of Justice, "Legal aid statistics in England and Wales", [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/358092/legal-aid-statistics-apr-jun-2014.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/358092/legal-aid-statistics-apr-jun-2014.pdf) (2014).

Fund in 2009 worth £35 million a year, which distributed resources largely to local authorities – but also Primary Care Trust and voluntary bodies – that proved they needed extra resources because of experiencing high levels of migration. The Coalition Government abolished this in 2010.<sup>33</sup> **We recommend that the Migration Impacts Fund be re-introduced whereby Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups and voluntary groups will be able to bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government for additional resources if they can prove that they require this as a result of high levels of migration.** If our new proposed target on non-EU gross migration is not met in the year leading up to Migration Day, then the appropriate resources available to communities to tackle levels of migration should be raised above and beyond the initial budget. **We recommend that the government promise to raise the amount of funding available through the Migration Impacts Fund by a specific amount if the new target on non-EU gross migration fails to be met in the year up to Migration Day.** Previously, the Migration Impacts Fund was paid for by an additional levy on non-EU visa fees. The new Migration Impacts Fund could be partly funded through the new INICs that migrants pay. It could also be partly funded through the hypothecation of a certain proportion of visa fees that non-EU migrants pay. In fact, **we recommend that government increase visa and Citizenship Test fees for non-EU migrants year on year at a rate above inflation, to partly pay for this re-establishment of the Migration Impacts Fund.**

24. The public strongly believes that a well-integrated migrant speaks fluent English. Competency in English is crucial for developing relationships and gaining employment. Currently, migrants need to

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33. Home Office, “Money allocated to the Migration Impact Fund, 2009 to 2011”, [www.gov.uk/government/publications/money-allocated-to-migration-impact-funds-2009-to-2011/money-allocated-to-the-migration-impact-fund-2009-to-2011](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/money-allocated-to-migration-impact-funds-2009-to-2011/money-allocated-to-the-migration-impact-fund-2009-to-2011) (2014).

demonstrate that they can speak English, or are at least learning, to receive some out-of-work benefits.<sup>34</sup> **We recommend that the government stipulate that migrants need to demonstrate that they can speak English by having an approved qualification, or are enrolled on a viable course to gain an approved qualification in English language, to receive any form of benefits.**

25. All migrants should be able to access an approved English Language course. At the start of this Parliament, the Coalition Government reduced the number of immigrants who were eligible for fee remission for their English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses.<sup>35</sup> Approved ESOL courses can be costly. The government currently provides income-contingent loans to those aged 24 or above who have resided in the UK for at least 3 years and are studying for a qualification of at least Level 3 at an FE college. These loans are paid back once the learner has graduated and is paying tax. **We recommend that government extend the income-contingent loan system to all migrants paying for an approved English Language course.**
26. To become a British citizen, an applicant needs to have resided in Britain for five years, passed a Citizenship Test, and proved their competency in English. They also pay a fee. **We recommend that government introduce a new fast-track citizenship scheme.** Migrants would be able to apply for British citizenship after 3 years residency in Britain if they have paid National Insurance consistently for three years, have passed an approved English language qualification, and have proof that they have volunteered with a school, childcare setting or registered charity for at least 100 hours over the past three years.

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34. Scott Campbell, "Immigrants who refuse to learn English to have benefits cut under new plans", *Daily Express*, 26 March, 2015.

35. Sue Hubble and Steven Kennedy, "Changes to funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses"; (House of Commons Library Note, 2011).

## Annex 1: **Written evidence**

**Evidence from Amnesty International**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

**Evidence from Bail for Immigration Detainees**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

**Evidence from the Centre for Migration Policy Research, Swansea University, and the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

**Evidence from Senior Research Associate and Research Associate, Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine, University of Manchester**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

**Evidence from Detention Action**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

**Evidence from the Geological Society**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

**Evidence from the Institute for Public Policy Research**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

**Evidence from the Director of the Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham, Reader in Human Geography at Keele University and Professor of Housing and Public Policy at Sheffield Hallam University**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

**Evidence from Research and Policy Assistant to the Chief of Staff, Mayor of London**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

**Evidence from the National Union of Students**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

**Evidence from the Royal Society of Chemistry**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

**Evidence from the Science Council**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

**Evidence from TrustID**

*[Click here to read the submission](#)*

## Annex 2: **Oral evidence session**

Wednesday 24th September 2014

This session had a panel of commissioners who interviewed participating experts: David Goodhart (Chair, Advisory Group, Demos), Professor Matthew Goodwin (Professor of Politics, University of Nottingham), Sunder Katwala (Director, British Future), Kate Maltby (Associate Fellow, Bright Blue), Dr Carlos Vargas-Silva (Acting Director, The Migration Observatory, University of Oxford) and Ryan Shorthouse (Director, Bright Blue).

10:00–10:45

### **Business and growth**

[\*Click here to watch this session\*](#)

Simon Walker, Director General, Institute of Directors

Jonathan Portes, Director, NIESR

10:45–11:30

### **Work and poverty**

[\*Click here to watch this session\*](#)

Owen Tudor, Head of European Union and International Relations, TUC

Neil Jameson, Executive Director, Citizens UK

Professor Alan Mannings, Professor of Economics, LSE

11:45–12:30

**Education, research, innovation and skills**

[\*Click here to watch this session\*](#)

Nick Hillman, Director, Higher Education Policy Institute, and former Special Adviser in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills  
Shreya Paudel, International Students' Officer, NUS  
Matt Smith, Director, Centre for Entrepreneurs

12:30–13:15

**Local communities and public services**

[\*Click here to watch this session\*](#)

Cllr Gary Porter, Leader, LGA Conservative Group

14:15–15:00

**Refugees and asylum applicants**

[\*Click here to watch this session\*](#)

Jan Shaw, Refugee Programme Director, Amnesty International UK  
Dave Garrett, Chief Executive, Refugee Action

15:00–15:45

**Border control, visas and detention centres**

[\*Click here to watch this session\*](#)

Jerry Petherick, Managing Director, Custodial and Detention Services, G4S  
James Slack, Home Affairs Correspondent, Daily Mail

16:00–16:45

**Families and children**

[\*Click here to watch this session\*](#)

Enver Solomon, Director of Evidence and Impact, National Children's Bureau  
Natasha Walter, Founder of Women for Women Refugees  
Don Flynn, Director, Migrant Rights Network

16:45–17:30

**Integration**

*[Click here to watch this session](#)*

Dr Nando Sigona, Lecturer in Sociology, University of Birmingham  
Sam Freedman, Former Policy Adviser, Department for Education

Immigration is now one of the most important issues the public are concerned about. This is despite tougher measures from the current Government to cap and clampdown on immigration. At this crucial juncture, it is imperative that the centre-right develops a balanced agenda on immigration that allows the UK to benefit from the immigration it needs while addressing the challenges it brings. Bright Blue is currently undertaking a year-long project to do exactly that.

This report is the third from this project. Drawing on key centre-right themes and priorities, it outlines Bright Blue's manifesto on immigration. It details a series of policy recommendations for the key elements of the immigration system: workers, students, family members, and refugees and asylum applicants. These are policies that are achievable, principled and capable of securing public support, and taken together, they form a firm but fair centre-right manifesto on immigration.



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