# UK ministers to tighten asylum rules for international students after Reform Party gains



Ministers in the UK are preparing to implement stricter measures targeting international students seeking asylum, as part of a broader initiative aimed at reducing immigration figures. This proposed crackdown follows significant setbacks for the government in local elections, where the Reform Party emerged as a dominant force.

An immigration white paper is expected to be unveiled in mid-May, detailing reforms intended to curb the number of international students who subsequently file for asylum. Home Office sources have indicated that these policy changes, which are designed to address what the government perceives as abuses of the visa system, have been under consideration for several months.

In March 2024, the Home Office released statistics revealing that of the approximately 108,000 asylum claims made in the UK, around 16,000 were from individuals holding student visas. Yvette Cooper, the Home Secretary, articulated concerns about the integrity of the visa system, suggesting that many individuals misrepresent their financial stability upon entry to the UK, only to claim asylum as their visa nears expiration.

To bolster this campaign, the government is also contemplating restrictions on the employment of international students in low-wage jobs. Such proposals are likely to encounter opposition from the Department for Education and universities which rely heavily on the financial contributions of these students.

The renewed focus on immigration reform seems to have been influenced by the recent electoral performance of the Reform Party, which succeeded in winning several key local elections, including council seats and mayoralties. Labour representatives from northern constituencies have reportedly urged the government to take more decisive action on migration issues in light of these results. Jo White, a Labour MP, emphasised the need for a more robust approach, invoking strategies akin to those of former President Trump in an article for the Sunday Telegraph. She suggested the introduction of digital ID cards as a means to better control immigration.

Further complicating the political landscape, Labour MPs have expressed differing views on the party's direction. Rachael Maskell, MP for York Central, underscored the importance of Labour prioritising the needs of the working class and providing a protective voice for constituents. Meanwhile, Emma Lewell, the Labour MP for South Shields, urged a reevaluation of strategy, criticising the Prime Minister's insistence on advancing current immigration protocols without a substantial policy shift.

Labour leader Keir Starmer acknowledged the discontent reflected in the recent elections, attributing public dissatisfaction to issues such as "uncontrolled immigration" and declining local services. He asserted the need for accountability within party ranks while steering clear of attributing election losses to external factors.

Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey has cautioned against capitulating to the populist rhetoric of the Reform Party, advising Labour against pandering to their agenda. He pointed to examples from Canada where leaders successfully countered populism by maintaining a commitment to principled governance rather than yielding to divisive politics.

The proposed measures are set within a broader context of turbulent political dynamics in the UK, as parties navigate public sentiment regarding immigration, regional needs, and the future of governmental policies in response to evolving electoral landscapes.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.ft.com/content/197d3cf6-8719-49dd-b3b4-63fa41382d65> - This piece reports on the Reform Party's significant gains in local elections, including council seats and mayoralties, supporting the article's claim that the Reform Party emerged as a dominant force following local elections.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/dd6dff7d-c2c4-49ec-a11e-eb9e2130ccbb> - This article highlights the rise of right-wing populism in the UK, marked by the electoral success of Nigel Farage's Reform UK in the 2025 local elections, corroborating the article's assertion of the Reform Party's influence on immigration reform.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/50eb9b29-a662-45b3-a75d-0c642e4d96b4> - This piece details Nigel Farage's return to frontline politics and Reform UK's significant gains in recent local elections, supporting the article's mention of the Reform Party's impact on the political landscape.
5. <https://www.apnews.com/article/33fa773d553d022c6af527656e54ac21> - This article reports on Reform UK's substantial gains in the latest UK local elections, including council seats and mayoralties, aligning with the article's claim of the Reform Party's electoral success.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5y6v02vv6wo> - This BBC article provides details on the Reform Party's victory in the Runcorn and Helsby by-election, including the narrow margin of victory and the impact on the Labour Party, supporting the article's mention of the Reform Party's electoral success.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/03/labour-targets-international-students-claiming-asylum-after-losses-to-reform-in-local-elections> - Please view link - unable to able to access data