

Government Moves to Overhaul UK Asylum Appeals to Cut Backlogs

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The government has announced plans to introduce significant reforms to the United Kingdom's asylum appeals system, aiming to reduce the backlog of cases, speed up decisions, and ease the strain on taxpayer-funded accommodation. The proposed overhaul comes as pressure grows on ministers to deal with long delays and rising costs in the immigration system.

The Home Office confirmed that the current tribunal process, which handles appeals from asylum seekers and foreign offenders facing removal, will be replaced with a streamlined adjudication body. Officials said the changes are designed to reduce the average waiting time for appeal decisions, currently more than 50 weeks, and to clear a backlog that has left thousands living in hotels and temporary housing.

Government figures show more than 32,000 people are being housed in hotels, costing an estimated £5.4 billion last year.

Under the plan, a new fast-track commission would process appeals more quickly, with a target of resolving cases within 24 weeks where it is reasonably practical. The government said the changes will ensure decisions are fair but timely, focusing resources on those with legitimate claims while allowing for the swift removal of those without a right to remain. Officials also signalled that the reforms will tighten the scope for appeals based on Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which deals with family and private life and has often been used to challenge deportations.

The proposals include additional funding for judicial resources, with more judges recruited and more hearings scheduled to support the new process. The government also plans to phase out the use of hotels for housing asylum seekers by 2029, moving to alternative accommodation models to reduce costs and community tensions. Ministers argue that these measures are essential to restore control and confidence in the immigration system, which they say has been undermined by years of delays and inconsistent decisions.

Legal and rights groups have raised concerns. The Law Society has warned that the 24-week target could prove unrealistic given the

complexity of many cases and the large volume of appeals already waiting to be heard. Critics also caution that reducing the ability to appeal on human rights grounds may increase the risk of wrongful removals and could draw legal challenges. Campaigners argue that speeding up the process should not come at the expense of fairness or due process.

Despite these objections, ministers believe the reforms are necessary to address a growing problem. Official figures show the number of asylum appeals has surged in recent years, with the backlog increasing nearly fivefold since early 2023. Government sources insist that without significant changes, the system will continue to be overwhelmed, putting pressure on local authorities, courts, and taxpayers.

The proposed legislation is expected to be introduced in the autumn. It will likely face scrutiny in Parliament and may become a flashpoint in the broader debate over immigration and border control. For ministers, the challenge will be to deliver faster outcomes while maintaining the legal safeguards that underpin the UK's asylum process.