

Home Office Launches Nationwide Blitz on Asylum Seekers Working as Delivery Riders

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— Categories: Economics



The Home Office has announced a nationwide enforcement campaign targeting asylum seekers working illegally, particularly those taking delivery jobs while housed in taxpayer-funded accommodation. This action follows media revelations of individuals using delivery platform accounts to supply food orders while their asylum claims are pending.

In a statement, officials described the effort as a “major operation to disrupt this type of criminality,” involving intelligence-led teams operating across the UK. The focus is on the gig economy, and specifically on food delivery riders suspected of working illegally while receiving state support or accommodation. Consequences include potential loss of housing and benefits for asylum seekers, and fines up to £60,000 per worker for businesses found to be hiring unauthorised individuals; directors may also face disqualification or criminal charges.

The announcement comes after Conservative shadow home secretary Chris Philp highlighted the issue, sharing a video showing delivery bikes outside a London asylum hotel. In response, Uber Eats, Deliveroo, and Just Eat agreed to strengthen facial-recognition checks for riders after a meeting with Home Office ministers this week.

Delivery companies are implementing platform changes, with Just Eat increasing its facial-verification frequency and others committing to enhanced fraud detection measures. Border Security Minister Angela Eagle and Employment Rights Minister Justin Madders emphasised the importance of stopping illegal working to protect wages and deter exploitation.

The Home Office noted that arrests and enforcement activity have risen since Labour took office, and ministers view tackling illegal work as essential to reducing the “pull factor” that draws people into unauthorised migration. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said that while migration isn’t solved by one measure alone, this crackdown forms part of a broader strategy, including international agreements targeting smuggling networks.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Keir Starmer plans to meet French President Emmanuel Macron next week to explore potential “one in, one out” agreements, returning those crossing the Channel irregularly in exchange for admitting cleared asylum seekers via legal routes.

Despite the enforcement drive, critics argue that a tougher checks regime could miss deeper issues in the asylum system. Labour MP Preet Gill cautioned that focusing on “performance politics” without addressing root causes may fail to deliver meaningful changes. Yet the Home Office maintains that stronger enforcement, combined with systemic reforms, is essential in managing migration pressures effectively.