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UK Enforcement Operation Results in Nearly 300 Arrests of Illegal Delivery Riders

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A recent UK enforcement operation targeting illegal employment within the delivery sector led to the arrest of 280 individuals suspected of working without proper documentation, according to the Home Office (the UK government's department responsible for immigration and security). This week-long crackdown, conducted from 20 to 27 July 2025, involved stopping and questioning 1,780 people, with asylum support being reviewed for 53 detainees.

The operation focused primarily on delivery riders, a key component of the gig economy, and marks one of the most significant coordinated efforts to date against undocumented workers in this sector. It follows an agreement between the government and major food delivery companies, including Deliveroo, Uber Eats, and Just Eat, to share worker data and prevent illegal hiring practices.

Immigration enforcement officers arrested approximately one in six individuals questioned, reflecting the scale of the issue. Border Security Minister Angela Eagle defended the initiative, stating: “This government is ensuring rules are being respected and enforced.” The government’s firm stance comes amid ongoing political pressure to tighten immigration controls and combat illegal working, a subject that remains central to national debate.

The crackdown did not solely target workers but also employers flouting immigration laws. Authorities issued civil penalty notices to 51 businesses, including restaurants and car washes, risking substantial fines for employing illegal workers. Additionally, police seized 71 vehicles, including 58 electric bicycles used by delivery riders, alongside £8,000 in cash and counterfeit cigarettes valued at £460,000.

This enforcement effort is backed by a recent £5 million increase in funding dedicated to immigration control, signalling an intensification of such operations over the coming months. It also aligns with a new bilateral agreement between the UK and France concerning migrant handling. Under this deal, both countries will exchange an equal number of migrants, with Britain agreeing to accept legitimate asylum seekers from France who have family ties in the UK, while France will take undocumented migrants who arrive in the UK via small boats.

Official data shows that over the 12 months up to July 2025, 35,052 individuals without the right to remain in the UK were removed, marking a 13% increase compared to the previous year. This rise underlines the government’s increasing focus on enforcing immigration laws and its commitment to border security.

Migration remains a politically sensitive issue in the UK. This latest operation reinforces the government’s efforts to appear resolute in tackling illegal working and maintaining control of the nation’s borders, responding to public concerns over border security and employment standards.