

HKBNO CONNECT

The latest national and regional updates for those who are supporting Hong Kong BNO visa holders in the East Midlands region.



ISSUE #4 TOP ITEMS:

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Welcome

Welcome to the 4th edition of HKBNO Connect. We are the East Midlands Councils Strategic Migration Partnership, and we are funded by UK Government (MHCLG) to provide a welcome for Hong Kong BN(O) in the East Midlands. This newsletter is for organisations (statutory and voluntary) who support this community.

We also have a **Welcome Hub**, **Facebook page** and an **email address** for enquiries:



[East Midlands Hong Kong British National Overseas \(HKBNO\) hub](#)



[HKBNO Facebook](#)



hkbno@emcouncils.gov.uk



STEP: FREE EMPLOYMENT AND ENGLISH SUPPORT FOR HONGKONGERS – SIGN UP NOW



World Jewish Relief has launched a new employment and English language programme to help Hong Kong BN(O) visa holders take their next step in the UK.

Delivered in partnership with the British Council and funded by the UK Government, the STEP Programme offers *free*, tailored 3- or 6-month online courses designed to help you build confidence, improve your English, and prepare for employment in England.

The programme provides:

- Personalised employment support from expert advisors
- High-quality English classes
- Flexible online learning to fit around your life

This follows the success of the STEP Ukraine programme, which supported over 14,000 Ukrainians to gain skills and find work across the UK.

Places are limited and there is not long left to register. Find out more: <https://www.worldjewishrelief.org/step/>



Home Office statement to Strategic Migration Partnerships on the consultation to extend Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) to 10-years from 5-years and its impact on the BN(O) Visa

The Home Office has reiterated that a consultation on “earned settlement”, including the extension of the qualifying residency period in the UK to obtain ILR to 10 years, as well as which visa and migration routes it will impact, will take place later this year.



Contrary to recent reports in the media and those being shared within the Hong Kong community that the UK Government has exempted people on BN(O) route from these changes, no decision has yet been made on which routes the changes will apply to. The Home Office has confirmed that the BN(O) visa route will be part of a consultation planned for later in the year.

The Home Office confirmed that the Government's position, as set out in Parliament on 8th September, has not changed despite recent media reports.

As soon as the consultation is open for responses, we will ensure that this is shared as widely as possible and strongly encourage BN(O) visa holders to respond to the consultation on the potential impacts on them and their families from the proposed changes.

Please see below for the full statement from the Home Office to the Strategic Migration Partnerships across the UK.

“The Government is committed to supporting members of the Hong Kong community who have relocated to the UK and those who may come here in the future.

Settlement in the UK is a prerequisite for becoming a British citizen and brings lifelong benefits. Settlement is also an important step in integrating and contributing to local communities and the wider country. We will therefore reform the current rules around settlement so that individuals must earn their right to privileged immigration status in the UK through the long-term contribution they bring to our country.

The reforms set out in the White Paper will be delivered through Parliament. Some measures will require primary legislation and further consultation, while others will be brought in more swiftly. There will be opportunity for everyone to contribute to the consultation on changes to new earned settlement and citizenship rules, including on the potential impacts on those on the BN(O) route. We will provide details of how the new rules will work after the consultation, including which immigration routes they will apply to and when the changes will be applied.

Further details of all measures announced in the Immigration White Paper will be set out in the normal way in due course.”

Celebrating Mid-Autumn Together: Community Events Across the East Midlands

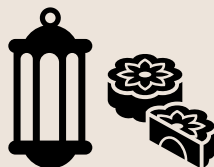
This autumn, communities across the East Midlands came together to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival, one of the most important traditional events for people from Hong Kong.

With support from our small grants programme, several local organisations hosted celebrations that brought together both new arrivals and long-standing residents to share food, music, and friendship.

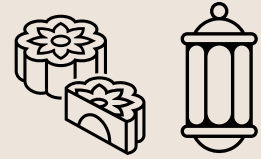


In Worksop, **Christ Church** held a combined Mid-Autumn and Harvest Festival on 5 October, with lantern crafts, quizzes, and festive food and drink.

Attendees were also encouraged to donate tins to the local food bank, combining cultural celebration with community support.



Beeston Rylands Community Association worked with the local Hong Kong community to host a family-friendly festival on 4 October, featuring craft stalls, games, and lantern-making activities.

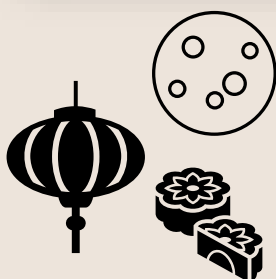


And at St Helen's Church, Stapleford, **Hong Kong Notts, Stapleford Parish Council, and UK Welcomes Refugees** hosted a vibrant Moon Festival and Fayre on 11 October. The event attracted more than 850 attendees, including 72 BN(O) stallholders, 30 performers, and over 45 volunteers from across the East Midlands and beyond.



Performers and volunteers shared how proud they were to showcase Hong Kong culture through art, music, and food. Many also said the experience helped them build confidence, practise English, and connect with their local community.

These events highlight how cultural celebrations continue to play a vital role in helping Hongkongers feel at home in the UK, while strengthening bonds between communities.



Celebrating Hong Kong Culture Through Cantonese Opera



In September, **Hong Kong Notts** brought the beauty and tradition of Cantonese opera to Nottingham through Lingering Echoes – Hong Kong Chinese Music and Operatic Songs, supported by our HKBNO Welcome Programme Grant Funding.

The two-part event, held on 20 and 27 September, featured a pre-show talk and a live performance showcasing the artistry of 14 Hong Kong BN(O) performers. The performances captivated an audience of over 100 people, including both local residents and members of the Hong Kong community.

Local audiences experienced Cantonese opera for the first time, praising the colourful costumes, expressive music, and English subtitles that helped bridge cultures. One attendee said:

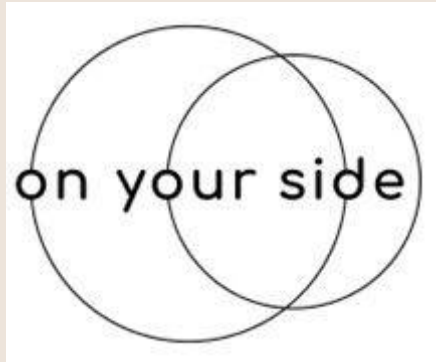
“I really enjoyed the performance overall yet the use of a projector to provide subtitles in English allowed me to better appreciate and the subject material - leading me to look in to the history of Hong Kong, I thoroughly enjoyed it all - the music (ensembles and solo performances) were my favourite part. As someone with very little knowledge of Chinese culture / history I didn't really know what to expect. The quality of the performance, the subject matter and format really went beyond what I expected and I'd highly recommend the experience.”

**Beyond the stage,
the project
fostered cultural
exchange,
confidence, and
teamwork among
participants
while supporting
local venues and
the wider arts
economy.**



**Hong Kong Notts
CIC plans to build
on this success
with more
performing arts
and cultural
workshops in the
year ahead.**

On Your Side – Hate Crime Support for East and Southeast Asians



On Your Side is a UK-wide support and reporting service for anyone who identifies as East or Southeast Asian. It offers a safe, confidential way to report hate crimes and get emotional or practical support from trained advisors.

You can reach out to 'on your side' about:

- Any prejudice or hate against other aspects of a person's identity from strangers, neighbours, friends or family.
- Attacks because of perceived political affiliation
- Offensive graffiti against your community
- Physical harassment, e.g. pushing or shoving in the streets
- Racist or other offensive comments on online platforms
- Verbal harassment, e.g. using offensive names or words

Find out more: <https://www.onyoursideuk.org/about/>



NHS – Mental

Health support HKBNO pay

the Immigration Health Surcharge, and have full access to healthcare in the UK, including mental health services from the NHS:



Mental health - NHS



Nottinghamshire Talking Therapies provides help with mild to moderate mental health conditions and can provide Cantonese interpreters on request.

Nottinghamshire Talking Therapies

The Talking Therapies service is also available in other areas:
[Find NHS talking therapies for anxiety and depression - NHS](#)

Lunar New Year/ Christmas Funding coming soon!

East Midlands Councils are excited to announce funding for voluntary and community groups, to host events to celebrate important calendar dates such as Lunar New Year or Christmas.

Small grants of up to £1000 are available for groups who support or provide important welcome work for the Hong Kong or Ukrainian community. Applications will be shared soon.

The **deadline for submissions is 24 November 2025**.

Funding Opportunity for West Bridgford Community Groups

Community groups and clubs in West Bridgford can now apply for up to £25,000 to help grow their organisation and support local development projects.

Funding is available through Rushcliffe Borough Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which supports initiatives that benefit the town and its residents.

To apply, complete an Expression of Interest form and email it to planningcontributions@rushcliffe.gov.uk by 1 December.

[West Bridgford Expressions of Interest - Rushcliffe Borough Council](#)

Resources

English Language Support

There is additional funding available for local authorities to provide extra courses for Hong Kong BN(O), and this can include courses to help prepare for employment, such as IELTS, GCSE English and the B1 course.

As of 1st August 2025, the UK government's Adult Skills Fund rules have changed, meaning that Hong Kong BN(O) visa holders are now able to access mainstream ESOL courses from the first day of arrival in the UK. Because of this, the additional ESOL funding for BN(O) visa holders will be removed from 1st April 2026.

EMC funds 'Begin' to help you find the right course if you live in Nottingham or Nottinghamshire.

If you live in another part of the East Midlands, you will need to contact your local college to access support. If you are having any difficulties finding a course, please contact us directly.

English Language Support in Nottinghamshire

BEGIN offers free, impartial advice for adults aged 16+ who want to access English Language support in Nottinghamshire.

- Courses for all levels – from Beginner to Advanced
- Flexible study options – Morning, afternoon, or evening
- Face-to-face or online sessions available

Contact BEGIN to register & find out more: [Visit the BEGIN Website.](#)

More information can be found on our website: <https://hkbno.emcouncils.gov.uk/english-language/>

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Support

When you are granted your BN(O) visa, you will have ‘no recourse to public funds’ (NRPF). You can apply for a ‘change of conditions’ if you lose your income, are no longer able to provide food and housing for your family and become destitute. You are also entitled to financial support from your local authority while you wait for this change.

If you successfully apply for a change of conditions whilst you have a BNO visa, it will not impact your ability to apply for settlement through the BNO route after 5 years living in the UK.

Please go to our Welcome Hub page for more details and how to apply and access local authority support: <https://hkbno.emcouncils.gov.uk/immigration-and-visa-info/hongkong-bno-visa-when-you-are-struggling-financially/>

Could you foster a young person seeking safety in the UK?

East Midlands Councils is working with local authorities across the region to help recruit more foster carers for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).

These young people arrive in the UK alone, often after fleeing conflict or persecution. They need stability, support, and a safe home where they can begin to rebuild their lives.

If you or someone you know could offer a safe and supportive home to a young person, find out more at: <http://uasc.emcouncils.gov.uk>

