

HKBNO CONNECT

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



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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



HKBNO: WELCOME PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Government has announced that the HKBNO Welcome Programme will conclude on **31 March 2026**, and HKBNO Visa Holders will transition to support via mainstream public services.



The following three bespoke services are still being funded by MHCLG:

1. Online Welcome Pack:

[Welcome Pack for arrivals from Hong Kong on the British Nationals \(Overseas\) visa](#)



2. Specialist training and employment programme



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:

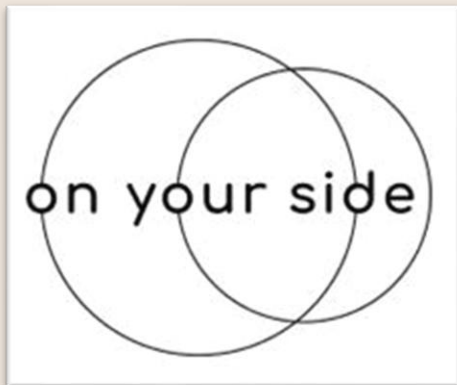
- Personalised employment support from expert advisors
- High-quality English classes
- Flexible online learning to fit around your life

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/>



3. Hate Crime reporting services from On Your Side



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/>



Migration Statistics

There were 10,012 grants of BN(O) visas issued in the year ending September 2025, bringing the total number of grants to 184,203 since the scheme opened in January 2021.

In addition, there were 47,830 in-country grants for people already in the UK to extend their stay, with 6,530 in the year ending September 2025. Extensions also peaked in 2021, with 20,839 grants.

While numbers remain relatively small, nearly 1,500 individuals on the BN(O) route have been granted settlement up to the end of September 2025.

[How many people come to the UK via safe and legal \(humanitarian\) routes? - GOV.UK](#)

Consultation Open for Earned Settlement Proposals

The 2025 UK Immigration White Paper, [Restoring Control over the Immigration System](#) introduced significant reforms to how migrants can settle in the UK. Settlement will no longer be granted automatically after a fixed period.

These proposals are under open consultation and full details can be found here:

[Earned settlement - GOV.UK](#)



This important consultation is open to anyone who wishes to share their views, including individuals, organisations, and other stakeholders who may be affected by or have an interest in the proposed changes. The consultation period ends on **12 February 2025**. East Midlands Councils will be submitting a regional response.

The UK government confirmed on the 20th November that individuals who have resettled into the UK under the Hong Kong BN(O) route will be given a five-year reduction from the proposed 10-year qualifying period (subject to meeting mandatory requirements).



Christmas and Lunar New Year Events

East Midlands Councils recognises the importance of cultural traditions for those arriving from Hong Kong, and we have recently awarded funding to 12 voluntary organisations across the East Midlands, to host Lunar New Year and Christmas' events for both the Hong Kong and Ukrainian communities.

These events will run from the **6th December 2025 to 22nd February 2026** and will be hosted by organisations across the region covering Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Nottingham City, North Northants and West Northants.

We will share details of the event dates and locations on our [HKBNO Facebook page](#).





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](#)

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>

