

# HKBNO CONNECT

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



## ISSUE #6 TOP ITEMS:

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## Welcome

Welcome to the 6<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:hkbno@emcouncils.gov.uk)



## EXPANSION OF HKBN(O) VISA

Thousands more Hong Kongers will be able to build new lives in Britain as the government strengthens safe and legal routes to the UK.

Adult children of British National (Overseas) status holders who were under 18 at the time of Hong Kong's 1997 handover to China will now be eligible to apply for the route independently of their parents. Their partners and children will also be able to move to the UK under the expanded route. It is estimated 26,000 people will arrive in the UK over the next 5 years.



[Hong Kongers offered new lives as UK expands safe and legal routes - GOV.UK](https://www.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 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**

*Specialist Training and Employment  
Programme (STEP) from World Jewish  
Relief for Hong Kong BN(O) and  
Ukrainians:*



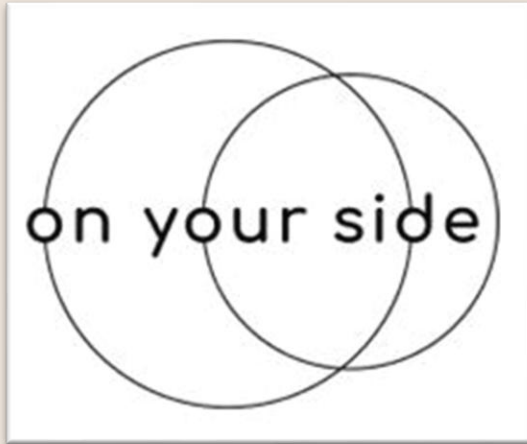
The programme provides:

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



[Specialist training and employment  
programme](#)

### 3. Hate Crime reporting services from On Your Side



The 'On Your Side Hate Crime Reporting Service' will cease to operate from 1 April 2026.

If you need to report a hate crime, please contact the police or for support we recommend contacting Victim Support:

[Hate crime - Victim Support](#)

*This website also provides helpful information on the definition of 'hate crime' or 'hate incident,' and what help is available.*

### Migration Statistics

BN(O) out-of-country visa applications peaked in the year ending March 2022, with 86,439 granted, soon after the scheme opened. The general trend has seen BN(O) visa grants decrease each year since this initial 'wave.'



There were 8,927 grants of BN(O) visas in the year ending December 2025, bringing **the total number of grants to 185,507 since the scheme opened in January 2021.**

In addition, there have been 50,296 in-country grants for people already in the UK to extend their stay, with 7,098 in the year ending December 2025.

## Earned Settlement Consultation

The 2025 UK Immigration White Paper, [Restoring Control over the Immigration System](#) introduced significant reforms to how migrants can settle in the UK.

*The consultation for 'earned settlement' proposals closed on 12 February 2026, and East Midlands Councils submitted a regional response based on partner feedback.*

[Earned settlement - GOV.UK](#)



The UK government confirmed on the 20<sup>th</sup> 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).

## Updates from the East Midlands



### Celebrating Lunar New Year in the East Midlands



From the team at East Midlands Councils' HKBNO Welcome Hub, we are wishing you all a very happy Lunar New Year! May the year of the horse bring you energy, courage and prosperity!

**We are proud** to have once again supported a variety of community-led events **to celebrate Lunar New Year**, bringing together different cultures to celebrate tradition.

## **Christ Church Worksoop**

**Christ Church, Worksoop, hosted a Lunar New Year and Valentine's Event on Sunday, 8 February 2026, for Hongkongers and the local community.** The event was attended by around 140 HKBNO visa holders and 60 local residents, and included market stalls, a quiz with prizes, Chinese calligraphy and lots of festive foods! Attendees praised the vibrancy event and the opportunity for diverse cultures to connect.

## **Hong Kong Notts**

**Around 5,000 people came together to celebrate Lunar New Year on 21 February 2026 in Rushcliffe.** The event included a variety of performances, workshops and 26 market stalls and information booths.



**Attendees came from across the East Midlands to celebrate**, including participants from Derby, Lincolnshire and outside of the region too.



**Performers and volunteers expressed gratitude that their hard work and artistry could be seen and appreciated by local audiences.**





They were proud to promote Hong Kong culture and celebrate our traditional festival even while living in the UK, helping keep their culture alive and meaningful in their new home.



**Beeston Rylands Community Association and Stapleford Parish Council also held events. Thank you all for your continued work in supporting and celebrating the HKBN(O) Community.**

## **£223,000 Invested to Strengthen ESOL Support Across the East Midlands**

East Midlands Councils (EMC) has distributed £223,000 of UK Government funding to strengthen English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) coordination and capacity across the East Midlands. The programme supports people arriving through the Hong Kong BN(O), Homes for Ukraine and Afghan resettlement routes, with all activity due to be completed by the end of March 2026.

The funding is supporting a range of initiatives across the region, including local ESOL provider networks, continuing professional development for tutors, and a community grant programme for voluntary and community organisations delivering informal English learning. Fourteen VCSE organisations have received funding to expand community-based ESOL provision, supporting around 1,800 learners.

Find out more: <https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/223000-invested-to-strengthen-esol-coordination-and-capacity-across-the-east-midlands/>



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## New Online Tool Helps Hong Kong BN(O) Residents Find English Classes

A new online resource has been launched to help refugees and migrants across the East Midlands find English language classes and support in their local area. *Learning English in the East Midlands (LEEM)* is a free, searchable website that brings together ESOL provision from across the region in one place, making it easier for learners, support organisations and local services to identify appropriate courses.



Developed by East Midlands Councils with support from Migrant English Support Hub and funding from the UK Government, the platform builds on regional research carried out in 2024. LEEM covers both formal and informal ESOL provision and supports people arriving through routes including Hong Kong BN(O), Homes for Ukraine and Afghan resettlement.

Please share the website with ESOL providers who are not yet listed on the platform, as well as individuals or organisations who may benefit from the resource.

Visit the website: <https://leem.org.uk/>

## 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](#)

## Learning English in the East Midlands (LEEM)

A purple banner with white and orange text. On the left is a white speech bubble containing the word 'MESH' in purple. To its right is the 'Learning English in the East Midlands' logo, where 'Learning' is in white, 'English' is in white with an orange 'D' shape behind it, and 'in the East Midlands' is in smaller white text below. In the top right corner is the 'East Midlands Councils' logo, featuring a white checkmark icon and the text 'East Midlands Councils' in white. Below the logos, the text 'Find English classes close to you at' is in white, followed by the website address 'www.leem.org.uk' in a larger white font.

Find English classes close to you at  
[www.leem.org.uk](http://www.leem.org.uk)

Use our website [www.leem.org.uk](http://www.leem.org.uk) to find ESOL classes across the East Midlands. You can find

- Classes close to where you live
- Free classes
- Classes with childcare
- Women only classes
- Online classes
- Support to help you on your learning journey



Learning English in the East Midlands (LEEM) is a free online tool designed to help people find English language classes and ESOL support across the region. The website brings together both formal courses and informal, community-based provision in one searchable place, making it easier to identify suitable learning opportunities locally.

The resource may be particularly useful for Hong Kong BN(O) residents looking to improve their English, but it also supports people arriving through other routes, including Homes for Ukraine and Afghan resettlement. It can also be used by support organisations, community groups and local services to help individuals find appropriate ESOL provision.

Visit the website: <https://leem.org.uk/>

## 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>

