



REAP

Refugees in Effective
and Active Partnership



Thrive
LON

Briefing for professionals to help support Hong Kong people arriving in London

Developing a wider community of support

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Who created this?

This briefing was developed by Refugees in Effective and Active Partnership (REAP) in collaboration with various community and NHS partners who work with Hongkongers, the wider refugee and asylum-seeking community, and mental health.

Special thanks given to the Greater London Authority (GLA) for information around BN(O) arrivals in London.



Aims and objectives of this briefing

1. **Raise awareness and inform discussion**, to increase the level of conversation about supporting Hong Kong people
2. Facilitate voluntary sector and other professionals to work effectively with Hong Kong people, to...
 - appreciate the need, and **reach out**
 - **engage well**, interacting and communicating with trust
 - build up a **community of support**
 - take a **trauma-informed approach** - structure services in ways that recognise the possible impact of traumatic experiences
 - share and provide information and links to resources for you to draw on
 - **improve access** to meaningful support for people arriving from Hong Kong
3. **Support connections** between people and professionals across sectors in London
 - e.g. Thrive/GLA, Hong Kong individuals and organisations, wider VCS and local bodies
 - Link MH specialists and other VCS and local organisations that don't specialise in MH

Background and Context

Provided by the GLA - Hong Kong Integration Programme Update
Last modified 23/5/22

- Following China's imposition of the National Security Law on the people of Hong Kong in July 2020, the UK government introduced a new immigration route for Hong Kong BN(O) status holders, providing the opportunity for them and their family members to live, work and study in the UK.
- From January 2021 to end of 2021, 103,900 applications were submitted for the visa, with London deemed a popular destination.
- The Government estimates that between 123,000 and 153,000 BN(O) status holders, and their dependants, could take up the route in its first year, with between 258,000 and 322,000 over five years.
- In April 2021 the government granted £917,000 to the GLA to establish a 'welcome hub' for BN(O) arrivals, co-ordinate practical advice and improve access to services for the community.
- In February 2022 the visa expanded its criteria for adult children i.e those aged 18 - 24 of eligible residents to apply for the BN(O) visa independent of their parents. The changes are expected to go live in October 2022.

Visa and entitlements for Hong Kong Arrivals

*Please note: Not to be used for legal or advice work. For further information please visit [Hong Kong British Nationals \(Overseas\) - BN\(O\) visa | London City Hall](#)

Last modified 29/7/2022

	Who is eligible to apply?	Time period	Entitlements			
			Work	Benefits/Govt Support	School/Study	NHS
BN(O) British National Overseas Visa	Any person (and their dependents) who registered for BN(O) status in Hong Kong before July 1997 or permanently living in Hong Kong on 1 st July 1997 who had no other nationality. Who can show they can support themselves and family for at least 6 months in the UK and pay the fees/NHS surcharge.	2.5 years or 5 years, Extendable, Option to apply for Indefinite Leave and British Nationality.	Yes	No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) (No Benefits and Housing support) Unless they gain a change of conditions on their visa.	Yes School for children University but paying fees.	Must pay the NHS Surcharge Then access to full NHS services and care including mental health support.
Asylum-Seeker	Anyone, arriving any way.	Until Home Office makes a final decision on their claim	No	If destitute, Home Office will give essential support and accommodation e.g., hotels. No access to other Benefits.	Yes- School for children, and free school meals if needed. Some college/ ESOL once here over 6 months. University but paying fees.	Full NHS services and care including mental health support.
Refugee Status (may also include other forms of Leave to Remain)	A person the Home Office decides has a reasonable claim to stay in the UK because they will be in danger if they return to their country of origin.	5 years+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Full NHS services and care including mental health support.
BN(O) Visitors		6 months	No	No	No	Health surcharge

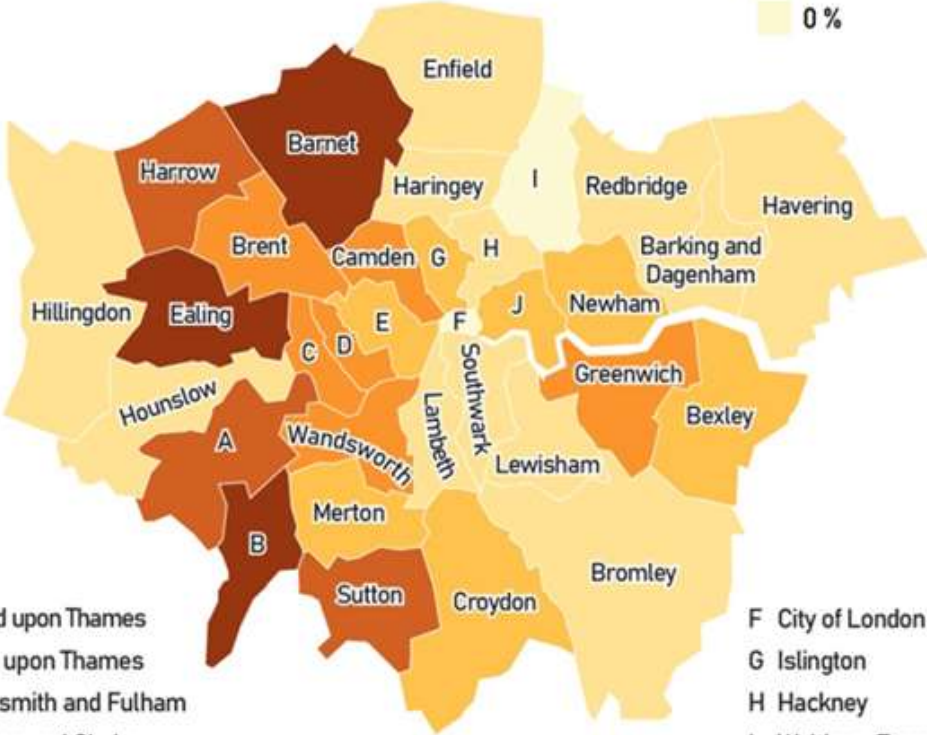
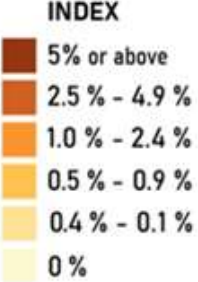
Where are they settling?

Provided by the GLA - Hong Kong Integration Programme Update

**PLEASE NOTE – This is an estimation using data published late 2021

Greater London

Greater London Boroughs Preferred by Hong Kong BNOs for Settlement in the First 6 Months by Percentages of Mentions in 2021



- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| A Richmond upon Thames | F City of London |
| B Kingston upon Thames | G Islington |
| C Hammersmith and Fulham | H Hackney |
| D Kensington and Chelsea | I Waltham Forest |
| E Westminster | J Tower Hamlets |

Forecast BN(O) population in London*

- Jan 2022: 27,400 - 44,400
- Jan 2026: 57,500 - 93,200

Southwest London (south of Thames)

- Hotspot boroughs are *Kingston, Sutton, Richmond*

Northwest London (north of Thames)

- Hotspot boroughs are *Barnet* (especially Colindale), *Ealing, Harrow*
- with an extension to surrounding boroughs e.g. Brent, Camden and Hammersmith and Fulham

Far fewer Hongkongers preferring East London, except

- Greenwich
- Canary Wharf or Tower Hamlet

Profile of BN(O) Applicants

Provided by the GLA - Hong Kong Integration Programme Update
Last modified 23/5/22

Age: Main applicants are likely in their late 30s to 40s.

Families: The vast majority (64%-88%) come with their families with children.

Education: The majority (60% to 85%) of the BN(O)s received a university degree or above

Working experience: 70% with 11 years +

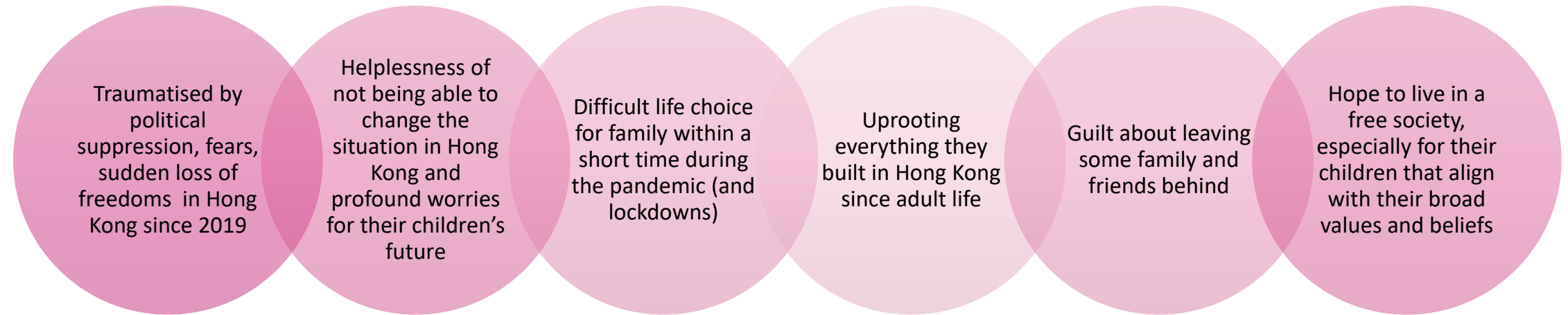
Finances: 70% owned asset of £100,000+; 25% asset of £200,000+ (Note: there are vulnerable people in the diaspora who don't have access to such resources)

Property ownership: 9% live in owned properties 68%+ will buy within 2 years

Potential entrepreneurs

Hong Kong Diaspora - who are they?

Provided by the GLA - Hong Kong Integration Programme Update



- Coming to the UK for good, rather than as a temporary sanctuary
- Not coming for economic benefits due to the BN(O) visa conditions
- Feel more like “political refugee”

Hong Kong diaspora - Identity

Provided by the GLA - Hong Kong Integration Programme Update

Shared British Values

Democracy, freedoms, rule of law, tolerance, human rights

Self-helping, Self-organising

*Strong social media networking
Many VCSEs and self-help groups being formed*

The Hongkonger Identity

Most probably “Yellow Ribbon”

Those sympathetic with the democracy protests in Hong Kong and usually hold a negative view of Communist China

Strong Work Ethic

*Embrace efficiency and task oriented
Many ready to start businesses*

Theoretical Case Study



ML is 32 years old, born in Hong Kong in 1990, she was in the 2014 Umbrella protests. Her best friend was hurt and other friends from University were arrested. Her brother was much more active and was arrested and imprisoned briefly. After this she got on with building her career as a physiotherapist. In 2019 she was involved again in the crowds and helped people who were injured. At work her boss heard this and told her to look for another job.

Her father had died in 2018 and she decided to apply for the BN(O) visa and her mother decided to come with her as a dependent - her brother decided to remain in HK. They sold the family's flat in Hong Kong, and the two women arrived at Heathrow in January 2022, moving into a one-bedroom flat in Balham, Wandsworth that they had rented online before arriving. It was much colder than they expected, and ML felt scared going out at night. They both caught Covid shortly after arriving and her mother was very unwell and since then seems to have lost all her energy and enthusiasm for life. ML can't leave her mother alone for long so she can't work full time.

She has also found it difficult to get work because she could not get a CNCC and clearance to work in the NHS or as a physiotherapist. She has started a part time job as a receptionist in a private sports physio clinic. One of her colleagues keeps joking that ML gave the UK Covid. She doesn't know anyone locally, though she and her mother have attended two HK community events together in Richmond and Kingston.

She finds it hard to understand Londoners' mixed accents and hates to speak to strangers when they find it hard to understand her, which makes her job stressful. She is very anxious about money as they only have her job and enough savings for eight more months. Increasingly she can't sleep at night and is anxious about her brother and guilty that she has done the wrong thing for her mother.

Experiences of seeking refuge



Changing Experiences as people respond to the situation they are in at that point.

Adaptation in original country: (Anticipation and Adversity)

Surviving and resisting and tolerating growing and perhaps aggressive (state sponsored/ tolerated) discrimination, persecution, danger, threat, oppression.

Coping, adapting, changing lifestyles and livelihoods, actions, aspirations, plans.

Poverty, exclusion.

Departure – a series of departures: (Survival)

Temporary moves?

Trigger, Crisis, Danger, Violent Conflict, Current threat

Opportunity e.g., BN(O)

Separation, social and emotional loss, disruption and disapproval, family/friend responses

Financial / educational / career loss/risk

Transit: (Movement beyond borders) (Survival)

Mobility,

Separation and dispersal (e.g., Canada)

Transience and temporary residency, e.g., other visas like BN(O) Visitor

Networks and connections,

Costs, charges e.g., Fees, also flights/sales

From 'Application' / arrival BN(O) to British Nationality (Survival, Integration)

Decision in another country/another Govt,

Caution about conditions of visa e.g., NRPF

Waiting time 5 years+

Costs, constraints e.g., NRPF, CNCC

Belonging, Home, Integration.

Hints for reaching out and connecting

1. Be aware of anxiety about Chinese Government surveillance
2. Utilise Hong Kong organisations for trusted connections into the community
3. ALSO make connections via non-Hong Kong organisations, as some Hongkongers will be concerned about privacy
4. Use events to draw attention and make direct contact
5. Although people can read English, they don't. Include words in Cantonese/Traditional characters on any communications
6. Presentation/'badging' refugee mental health - be aware of Eurocentric language
7. Facebook not TikTok (privacy and confidentiality) as well as private messaging apps (Telegram, Whatsapp)
8. Hong Kong staff or volunteers recruited from and for new arrivals.

Hints for engaging and maintaining relationships

1. Treat them as partners and equals in all work
2. People's expectations of UK Govt and UK charities - expect we work together effectively and are all connected
3. Utilise your wider connections to effective networks
4. Be aware of language barriers and use trusted interpreters (fear of pro-Chinese gov interpreters)
5. Public Funds - 'NRPF' constraints - know what is and isn't considered a 'Public Fund'
6. Diversity and different experiences - younger people arriving with different profile
7. Awareness of the impact of trauma on people's ability to engage with you - keep trying!

Building a community of support

- This is a very new ‘community’: ever-evolving and learning quickly from each other
- What do Hong Kong organisations want from you?
 - For you to understand the situation with the Hong Kong / Chinese governments
 - Appreciate why they are here - freedom, critical thinking, democracy
 - Appreciate what they have gone through - what they have lost
 - Practical solutions on specific points - quite action-oriented
 - Joint activities to help build connections, and then progress the relationship from there
 - Your connections, networks, and knowledge of the system
 - To merge, mingle, share, connect
 - You to be aware of the fear of Chinese government, surveillance, instances of racism

Further Resources

Article quoted in this Briefing: <https://www.politico.eu/article/hong-kong-united-kingdom-exile-visa-year-of-the-tiger-celebration/>

[From Lantau to Ealing: Hong Kong's homesick exiles in Britain greet the Year of the Tiger](#) Downloaded 28/07/22

Regarding protests in Hong Kong [Hong Kong protests: The flashpoints in a year of anger - BBC News](#)”

Regarding BN(O) Visas, fact sheet from Government <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2022/02/24/media-factsheet-hong-kong-bnos>

Regarding younger HKers to join BN(O) scheme in Oct <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/hong-kong-aylum-china-bno-home-office-uk-b1942935.html>

Regarding general profile, age, children, professional status etc. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/survey-of-hong-kong-british-national-overseas-visa-holders-2021/hong-kong-bno-survey-results-accessible-version>

Regarding indications of where people are settling (Govt Education placement statistics) [School placements for children from outside of the UK, July 2022 education statistics - GOV.UK](#) Monthly update on locations in London where there are the highest number of school placement for Hong Kong arrivals.

Regarding NRPF [Public funds \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Regarding DBS *Keeping children safe in education 2021 (please refer to paras. 261-267 on p.67-69)*

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1021914/KCSIE_2021_September_guidance.pdf

Keeping children safe in education 2022 (to be effective on 1st September 2022, please refer to paras. 278-284, on p.71-73)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1080047/KCSIE_2022_revised.pdf

Regarding ESOL in [English Language \(ESOL\) for Resettlement | GLA \(london.gov.uk\)](#)



Thank you

If you have any questions please get in touch.

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