

Migration news roundup 25 September 2023



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Stories that inspired us this week

In Leeds, campaigners from Leeds City of Sanctuary received a standing ovation from councillors after calling for Leeds to become an official council of sanctuary. (Source: West Leeds Dispatch)

‘The Old Oak’ is Ken Loach's new film, featuring a Syrian family settling into a community in the UK and how there can be hope in a hostile environment. (Source: Big Issue)

‘Hear Our Stories: An Anthology of Writing on Migration’ is a collection of poetry and prose featuring 38 migrant and refugee authors giving a personal perspective on the experiences of people who came to the UK looking for a better life. (Source: IMIX)

International news

Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni has launched an appeal for EU solidarity in dealing with the increase in arrival of migrants in Lampedusa. She argues that the way to ‘resolve’ EU migration issues is not through ‘redistribution policy’ but by ‘stopping departures’ altogether. Meanwhile, Germany requested detailed information from Poland over the alleged visa fraud which granted migrants from Africa and Asia entry to EU zones including Germany. (Sources: the Guardian, AP news)

Outside Europe, the Biden administration made Temporary Protection Status available to more than 200,000 Venezuelans, enabling them to access employment. However, plans to strengthen the Southwest border security to control border crossing were also announced. (Source: NBC News)

UK borders and migration policy

The report of the inquiry into the 2017 abuse at Brook House immigration removal centre has now been published. Instances of mistreatment identified included inappropriate use of force, subjection to pain, and racist comments. The Home Office has issued this statement in response, saying that it is considering the recommendations in the report, and setting out reforms implemented since the incidents occurred. Meanwhile immigration chief inspector David Neal has criticised the government's decision to discontinue the annual reviews relating to safeguarding measures for vulnerable detainees. Neal has also recently published a report on measures to identify and mitigate risks of insider threat to Border Force, and has critiqued the Home Office for the number of redactions made. (Sources: Home Office, BBC, the Guardian, Free Movement)

This new briefing on immigration fees has been published ahead of imminent increases to fees and charges announced earlier this year. (Sources: House of Commons Library, Free Movement)

This article provides an overview of mandatory and discretionary reasons for refusal of applications to enter or remain in the UK.

(Source: Free Movement)

Specific migrant groups

The cost of housing people seeking asylum has risen to £8 million a day according to figures provided in the Home Office's annual report (note the Home Secretary gave figures of £6 million earlier in the week). Labour says it will end the use of hotels and reduce spending on asylum accommodation through clearing the backlog. Meanwhile, the government has been accused of failing to meet its duty to provide access to justice due to the lack of legal aid provision for asylum and immigration matters. (Sources: the Guardian, Home Office, Sky News)

The government published a statement confirming that all refugees arriving through Afghan schemes have now exited bridging hotels, with 55 hotels closing and 15,000 individuals being moved or matched to new housing. Meanwhile, Barnsley Council has approved the proposal to purchase 13 properties to house Afghan refugees in Barnsley with the help of a government grant. (Sources: Home Office, The Star)

The government has published its latest modern slavery statement, setting out measures to prevent modern slavery in its supply chains. Meanwhile a man trafficked to the UK as a child, has had his conviction for drugs offences quashed by the Court of Appeal. The commentary highlights the fact that under recent legislative changes, someone in a similar position might not receive the positive conclusive grounds decision that was

crucial in this case. (Sources: Home Office, Free Movement)

The number of unaccompanied children who are under 16 and accommodated in hotels keeps increasing, despite the practice has been ruled unlawful. In other news, Kent Council is receiving new funding from government to support more unaccompanied children and improve the pace of transfers to other local authorities under the National Transfer Scheme. (Sources: The National, BBC)

The team within the Home Office tasked with making the department's approach to migration more compassionate, one of the Windrush report's recommendations, has been disbanded. The Home Office stated that 'due to significant progress' there is no longer need in a special taskforce, and that now their programme will be embedded in day-to-day operations and activities. Campaigners, however, described the news as 'insulting', 'disappointing' and 'upsetting'. (Source: the Guardian)

This article on destinations of BNO(British National overseas) visa holders features Leeds and Hongkongers attending Café Connect activities at a local church. (Source: Spectator)

Cohesion and integration

A concerning article about how those in power can find it useful to have their prejudices mirrored by those from minority groups to effectively shield them from criticism. Meanwhile, far-right activists have been targeting the Royal National Lifeboat

Institution in Kent. (Sources: the Guardian, Kent Live)

In contrast, Carlisle Refugee Action in Cumbria are urging communities to stand united against rising tensions around people seeking asylum being housed in hotels. And on the occasion of Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), Rabbi David Mason, calls for 'more than spiritual asylum', encouraging the befriending of those in the asylum system. (Sources: News and Star, Jewish News)

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