Migration Yorkshire Policy update November 2021

An overview of the latest statistics, policy and research on migration issues affecting partner organisations in Yorkshire and Humber.

Summary

- Immigration statistics to mid-2021 show rises in work and family visas but falls in asylum claims. (para. 1)
- The number of people crossing the Channel rose to new levels during 2021, with the Home Office exploring ways to reduce crossings. (paras. 4, 7)
- The Nationality and Borders Bill is at Committee stage. The Committee includes four Yorkshire and Humber MPs. Proposed amendments to the Bill include using x-rays or DNA tests in the age assessment process for young people. (paras. 9, 58)
- Labour shortages in a growing number of sectors led to a series of short-term visas being issued, although government wants a higher skilled UK workforce. (paras. 12-13)

- Most attention on asylum has focused on housing: standards in temporary accommodation, finding placements for young refugees and housing availability for Afghans. ‘Operation Warm Welcome’ was launched and an Afghan Citizens’ Resettlement Scheme will resettle 20,000 people. (paras. 27-31, 40-41, 60-61)
- Thousands of modern slavery victims could be granted leave to remain in the UK following a high court ruling. (para. 66)
- Sheffield Central tops all UK constituencies in terms of net impact of international students on the UK economy. However, there have been falls in international student applications to UK universities. (para. 80)
- A range of reports have considered social and economic impacts of and responses to the pandemic, and some positive polling on migration issues. (para. 85,91)
- An increasingly tense situation has developed between Belarus and its neighbours as it has been encouraging migrants to cross into Europe through its territory. (para. 94)
- The number of people trying to reach Europe by sea rose in the first half of 2021 compared to 2020, as did the number of people who died in their attempt. Far fewer migrants now live on Greek island camps. (paras. 95-96)
- It was the 70th anniversary of the Refugee Convention and the first Olympics with a Refugee Paralympic Team. (paras. 98, 101)

- Despite resettlement places for Afghan evacuees, it's increasingly difficult for people to leave Afghanistan and enter neighbouring countries or Europe. (para. 105)
- Local stories identify new places of sanctuary, including a CCG and a cinema. (para.109)

UK migration trends

1. The Home Office immigration statistics provide data up to the end of June 2021. Key information includes:

- There has been a sharp rise in skilled work visas almost to pre-pandemic levels, but also growth in seasonal worker visas, family visas and family permits (an impact of the EUSS deadline)
- There has been a total of 64,900 applications overall under the BNO route since it opened in January, over 47,000 grants and a 99% grant rate
- 82% of grants of protection in the last year were grants of 'refugee status' to people who have come through the asylum route
- Asylum applications fell by 4% compared to the previous year. Top countries of origin are Iran, Albania, Eritrea, Sudan and Iraq (Afghanistan is 8th) – but the greatest changes are increases from Sudan and Ethiopia then Eritrea and Syria, the greatest falls were from China and India.
- In comparison to EU countries, the UK would come 4th in the total number of asylum applicants (after Germany,

France and Spain) but 17th per head of the population.

- Initial decisions on asylum applications are much lower than applications (almost 14,000 decisions, but there were 31,000 applications)
- The initial grant rate is 55% (and for unaccompanied children it is 85%), the appeal success rate is 48% (both are up by a couple of percent). Once you take appeals into account, the 'final' grant rate is 59%.
- Asylum support applications are down by a third, but the number of people on support is up by 11%.
- There have been 310 refugees resettled under the new UKRS scheme since it began in March
- In 2020 almost 3,200 citizenship ceremonies were attended in Yorkshire and Humber, taking place in every council area (from 873 in Leeds to 24 in NE Lincolnshire).

2. Other data includes 'Migration Transparency Data' that shows National Transfer Scheme cases, ASPEN cards and support enquiries, the number of online views of EUSS status, right to work/rent checks by employers and landlords and applicants and Windrush task force, grants of status. (Source: Home Office)

3. It has been calculated that over the past seven years Yorkshire and Humber has welcomed the most refugees in England under resettlement programmes. (Source: Yorkshire Post)

UK borders and migration policy

Sea crossings

4. The number of people crossing the Channel in small boats rose to new levels during 2021, with a doubling in the number of people crossing the Channel by September compared with 2020. Many media outlets published stories of record numbers of people arriving on individual days of the year. An indication of increasing risk of travelling this way is the average number of passengers in each boat was 16.7 last year, compared with 7.3 in 2018. (Sources: the Guardian, Kent Online, inews)

5. The risks of prosecution have shifted. New guidance on smuggling charges confirms that migrants steering dinghies will no longer face prosecution if claiming asylum. However, people helping those in precarious boats face new risks themselves. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) crews have faced abuse for rescuing migrants at sea, and RNLI faces the prospect of criminalisation for sea rescues under the Nationality and Borders Bill - yet it had a 3,000% increase in donations. (Sources: Metro, CPS, BBC, Marine Industry News, Independent, the Guardian)

6. In the summer, the UK and France agreed to double the number of French police patrolling beaches (at a cost to the UK of £54 million), but subsequently traded criticism for the lack of progress in deterring crossings. Eventually, the government has said it will start paying the £54 million promised in return for

extra security. A further possibility is UK-funded asylum reception centres in France. (Sources: Home Office, BBC, Latest Page News, Daily Mail)

7. The Home Office has been considering other ways of responding to people crossing the sea, with plans to turn boats back on reaching UK waters and Border Force using jet skis to turn back dinghies. Union representatives for Border Force staff say it's unlikely the strategy will be used because of the criteria involved such as ensuring there's no chance of loss of life. In her party conference speech the Home Secretary referred to 'new sea tactics' in the Channel and she is seeking legal protection for Border Force officials in the event of migrant deaths at sea. Patel has been criticised for her comments to a parliamentary committee where she asserted that most people arriving on boats are 'economic migrants' wanting to stay in hotels, rather than genuinely seeking safety. This parliamentary overview of international law in relation to turning back migrants at sea is worth a read. (Sources: BBC, Independent, the Guardian, Free Movement, House of Commons Library)

8. Other stories report it costs £500K a year to store the boats, and many migrants arriving on boats abscond from their quarantine hotels. A government website to deter migrants from travelling was criticised as unethical by Chartered Institute of Public Relations as it's not explicit that On The Move is a Home Office site. The 'Common Sense Group' of Conservative MPs called for the Human Rights Act to be replaced to help tackle irregular entry to the UK. (Sources: Daily Mail, the Guardian,

Migrants on the Move, the Express)

Nationality and Borders Bill

9. The Nationality and Borders Bill was published, had its first two readings and is now at Committee stage. The Commons Committee includes four Yorkshire and Humber MPs: Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central), Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby), Holly Lynch (Halifax), and Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) who have begun scrutinising the Bill. A Migration Yorkshire briefing on the Bill is available. (Sources: UK Parliament, Migration Yorkshire)

10. When passed, the Bill will bring into force some of the proposals in the New Plan for Immigration, on which the government has now published the outcome of its consultation. It also published the equality impact assessment for the Bill which acknowledges there is limited evidence of the effectiveness of the proposed approach, but states these risks are justified as supporting the overall objective of decreasing illegal migration. (Sources: Home Office, the Independent)

11. Commentary and criticism of the Bill include that it is 'anti-refugee', should have been informed by the consultation, raise doubt about how new or effective the measures might be to stop Channel crossings, could make it harder to identify modern slavery victims, will breach the UN refugee convention and the European convention on human rights and will create a two-tier asylum system and hinder integration. A national 'week of

action’ protesting against the Bill - including Bradford and Halifax - culminated in a demonstration outside Parliament. (Sources: Refugee Council, Free Movement, Migration Watch, the Independent, Metro, LSE, Twitter)

Post-Brexit immigration

12. Labour shortages in a growing number of sectors pressured the government into announcing a series of short-term visas, including HGV drivers, poultry workers and pork butchers, with some later extensions to ensure food supply in the run up to Christmas despite warnings that a three month visa has limited appeal. The short term visa scheme to attract 5,000 HGV drivers received 300 applications by mid-October, so government was expected to relax the rules on deliveries that overseas lorry drivers can make in the UK. (Sources: Department for Transport, Free Movement, BBC, the Independent, the Guardian)

13. However, at the Conservative party conference the Prime Minister reiterated that government aspires to having a higher skilled UK workforce rather than reliance on overseas labour, backed up by the Business Secretary who spoke of transition from a ‘low-wage, high-immigration’ model. (Sources: the Guardian, the Evening Standard)

14. The short term visas did not impact the problem of fuel shortages, since by being introduced under the agricultural seasonal worker scheme, the haulier visa didn't include those delivering to petrol stations. Visa overstayers with HGV licenses

received letters asking them to step in to help, despite having no right to work. Rather, the military began delivering fuel and government announced 300 temporary visas for overseas fuel drivers to last to the end of March. There are calls for a similar scheme for care workers, and suggestions for changes to improve the system and help address the current shortages. (Sources: Free Movement, BBC, the Independent, Cabinet Office, the Guardian)

15. Greatest labour shortages include HGV drivers, nurses, IT professionals, care workers, teachers, and chefs, and there are growing calls for the Shortage Occupation List to be extended. The City of London Lord Mayor raised concerns about the financial sector. Government shared an independent review of immigration routes for adult social care workers in different countries, finding, for example, only a few OECD countries have a specific migration scheme for this sector - under the UK's points-based system only senior care workers meet the criteria. (Sources: Sky, City A.M., Home Office)

16. Other stories relating to post-Brexit immigration include:

- What are the costs of sponsoring someone on a work visa to come to the UK? This article estimates costs of just under £7,000. (Source: Free Movement)
- Barnsley football team is frustrated at visa delays impeding their new signings from joining the club. (Source: Yorkshire Post)

- A new guide for seasonal agriculture workers (holding seasonal worker visas or pre-settled status) explaining their rights, was co-produced by New Europeans and University of Leeds. (Source: New Europeans)
- Some NHS staff are leaving the UK to care for elderly relatives, due to changes made to the immigration rules that make it harder to get adult dependent visas. (Source: Independent)
- A briefing from the Migration Observatory focuses on migrants with longer routes to settlement and challenges they face. (Source: Migration Observatory)

The hostile environment

17. Data about destitute households supported by councils during 2020/21 has been released, including some from Yorkshire and Humber, building on an earlier report showing a 30% rise in households with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) accommodated by social services. (Source: NRPF Network)

18. An estimated 1.3 million migrants have NRPF visa conditions, and the number of people at risk of destitution could increase in light of the EU settlement scheme closing and the Nationality and Borders Bill. Report authors conclude that the policy undermines integration; they recommend suspension of NRPF conditions during the pandemic, and more funding and decision-making roles for councils. (Source: IPPR)

19. Councils accommodating destitute people during the pandemic began to diverge in their practice in relation to those with no recourse to public funds following ambiguous government messaging and were told earlier this year to stop using hotels or risk losing Rough Sleeper Initiative funding. (Source: House of Commons Library, Inside Housing)

20. Ten English councils reportedly signed up to the Home Office's Rough Sleepers Support Service. There are concerns that in some cases, data shared by councils could result in migrants being deported, given the recent guidance that states rough sleepers can be removed if they have refused offers of support and engaged in anti-social behaviour. However, more than 100 charities and 9 councils in London and Bristol have said they won't play a role in the policy to deport migrant rough sleepers. (Sources: Gov.UK, the Guardian, Inside Housing)

21. In the 'Safety before Status' report, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner calls for funding to support people with NRPF escaping 'immigration abuse' whereby a person cannot escape an abusive situation because of their immigration status. (Sources: Domestic Abuse Commissioner, ITV)

22. Two new parliamentary briefings provide up-to-date information on: Eligibility for benefits for people born abroad, including EU nationals, non-EEA nationals, asylum seekers and refugees. (Sources: House of Commons Library)

23. An investigation suggested nearly two-thirds of GP surgeries would not register an undocumented migrant as a

patient. Even when refusing to register undocumented migrants, GP surgeries are often assessed as good by the Care Quality Commission. A parliamentary debate on issues for undocumented migrants touched on health issues. (Sources: Bureau of Investigative Journalism, the Independent, JCWI)

24. The Judicial Review and Courts Bill 2021 will reduce migrants' appeal options. (Sources: Gov.uk, Free Movement)

25. In contrast to the research findings of a detention support organisation, the prisons inspectorate was broadly positive about immigration removal centres in its annual report, while expressing concerns about short-term holding facilities, and the conditions in mainstream prisons, where some immigration detainees are held. (Sources: BID, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, Free Movement)

26. Over 1,000 people have been removed from the UK on charter flights since the start of the pandemic, the majority to Romania and Albania. The UK signed a removals agreement with Albania, enabling the quicker deportation of refused asylum seekers, those in prison and visa overstayers. A controversial deportation charter flight left for Jamaica carrying seven people on board, that had been planned to remove 90 people. Under new powers announced by the government there will be visa penalties for countries not cooperating with removals from the UK. The Home Office published a deportation factsheet. (Sources: inews, Home Office, the Guardian, the Independent)

Specific migrant groups

Asylum seekers and refugees

27. Most attention in the news has been around accommodation issues.

28. Plans are proceeding for accommodation reception centres to house asylum seekers. The Home Office posted initial information about the contract for accommodation reception centres for interested parties to deliver in England and run for up to 8,000 service users, including wraparound services. Commentators have raised questions around the feasibility and desirability of such a project. (Sources: Gov.uk, Danny Shaw, PoliticsHome)

29. A Freedom of Information request revealed 95 people have died in asylum accommodation since 2016. Scottish Refugee Council is calling for an inquiry into the discrepancy between figures that the Home Office provided to different organisations on this matter. (Source: the Guardian)

30. In August there was another COVID outbreak at Napier barracks. The full inspection report on former military barracks sites as asylum accommodation revealed some staff working for Home Office contractors were living on-site in sub-standard conditions and appear to have been breaching their own visa conditions. Some charities say the Napier site must close due to its unsuitability. (Sources: the Independent, ICIBI, the Daily Mail,

BBC)

31. A report by Edinburgh Napier University is critical of the conditions in hotels where asylum seekers were housed during the pandemic. The High Court later ruled that Home Office support provided to asylum seekers accommodated in hotels is inadequate. Despite a previous ruling resulting in an additional £8 a week for residents, the court found this was below the advised £12 per week and failed to cover phone calls. The Home Office may have to provide backdated support payments. Some new potential hotel sites include a hotel in Leicester but not in Blackpool, after outcry from local elected members meant a proposed hotel site for asylum seekers on Blackpool promenade has been paused. The local council raised concerns about the appropriateness of the site and informed the hotel they'd need planning permission. (Sources: the Guardian, Leicester Mercury, BBC)

32. Other developments within the asylum system include:

- Ghana and Albania have been rumoured as potential offshore locations for processing asylum claims, further elements of the New Plan for Immigration. The rumours were dismissed by the Albanian government but the Ghanaian Foreign Ministry deleted tweets on the matter. (Sources: inews, Sky News)
- The Home Office published new policy on medical evidence in asylum claims which means they'll consider medical evidence regardless of the type of clinician it came from,

but there are tighter requirements for those wishing to delay for pending medical evidence. (Sources: Home Office, Free Movement)

- The reported causes of delays in asylum decision making include checks on 'admissibility' if individuals passed through a third country and the pandemic (highlighted by Immigration minister Chris Philp in a parliamentary debate). (Sources: The Ferret, TheyWorkForYou)
- There was renewed debate about the right to work after Justice Secretary Dominic Raab said he'd be open to allowing asylum seekers to work in response to the UK's labour shortages. (Source: the Guardian)

Afghanistan

33. Following Operation Pitting to evacuate people from Afghanistan in late August, 'Operation Warm Welcome' was launched as the cross-government initiative to support Afghans in the UK. Further, under a new Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) the government pledged to resettle 20,000 people in total and 5,000 in the first year, with priority given to women, girls and religious minorities. (Source: Home Office)

34. It is not clear how many evacuated Afghans fall into which resettlement initiatives, but there have been subsequent evacuations of other small groups include the Afghan women's football development team and a group of LGBTQ+ Afghans. Media coverage has also included Chevening scholars in the UK anxious about family members still in Afghanistan, and the fears

of prospective and former scholars still in Kabul. (Sources: BBC, FCDO, the Guardian)

35. Over time, government has released various policy statements to explain their approach to supporting Afghan nationals now in the UK, the most detailed of which was the Afghan resettlement immigration policy statement of 13 September. (Source: UKVI) Other information published in this period includes:

- (In early August) guidance on support for British and non-British nationals in Afghanistan and a letter by the Home Secretary and Defence Secretary regarding ARAP (the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy), allowing those who had already left Afghanistan to apply. (Source: Home Office)
- An Afghan resettlement factsheet
- Confirmation of extra support around housing and healthcare to arrivals on the two Afghan schemes
- A new country guidance policy on Afghanistan after placing decision-making on hold for Afghan asylum claims. The previous policy relied on the safety of Kabul, arguing many claimants could relocate to the capital.
- A guidance page for Afghan evacuees in the UK with information on the different resettlement and immigration routes open to them.

(Sources: Home Office, Ministry of Defence, UKVI, DHSC)

36. Useful parliamentary briefings on this matter include:

- UK immigration routes for Afghan nationals (published October)
- 'Afghanistan 2021' (published September) on schemes assisting British nationals and others remaining in Afghanistan, key resources and helplines.
- Resettlement scheme for locally employed civilians in Afghanistan on the ARAP scheme (published September).

(Sources: House of Commons Library)

37. Critical commentary has included whether allocated funding can meet the support needs of Afghans, UNHCR questioning how measures in the Nationality and Borders Bill will affect Afghans seeking asylum in the UK and articles looking at how Afghans fare in the UK asylum system, such as the UK's record of granting refuge to Afghan refugees and the prospects for Afghans in the UK asylum system. (Sources: BBC, the Guardian, inews)

38. There was much coverage of Afghans who have already arrived in our region, as well as statements of support by local authorities including Calderdale, Bradford and Leeds councils, and Harrogate offering to take *more* than their quota. Others pledging to help included hotel owners in Huddersfield. Political leaders in North England said they would welcome arrivals but want fairer distribution across the country. A Home Office Director issued a response to the tragic incident in Sheffield where a young Afghan refugee died in the summer. (Sources: Yorkshire Post, the Telegraph and Argus, the Halifax Courier,

Yorkshire Live, BBC, Examiner, the Guardian, the Telegraph)

39. The public response included Brits offering spare rooms to Afghans and a Scarborough charity described the local response as 'amazing'. In contrast, far right groups have targeted hotels hosting Afghans, protesting, making videos and encouraging negative Tripadvisor reviews. (Sources: the Telegraph, BBC, the Guardian)

40. It's been reported that there could be difficulty finding housing for Afghan refugees due to the uneven concentration of asylum accommodation and government's decision not to disperse to new areas. Local press confirmed hotels in Leeds and Scarborough being used to temporarily accommodate Afghans. The military was called on to collect information about Afghans in hotels to provide the Home Office with information needed to identify suitable accommodation, such as English language skills and local connections people already have in the UK. (Sources: the Guardian, Leedslive, The Scarborough News, The Times)

41. There have been many calls for detail about how and when the ACRS will function. The Home Office has yet to reveal details of how many Afghan citizens were relocated, how many have moved into longer-term housing, nor the system to place people around the UK (this story mentions Yorkshire and Humber councils). Most recently, over 200 families from Afghanistan have registered as homeless in London in an attempt to leave hotels and find new homes rather than wait any longer for the Afghan resettlement scheme to be implemented. (Sources: the

Guardian, BBC)

EU nationals

42. From 1 October 2021 EU nationals cannot use their ID cards when travelling to the UK unless they have EUSS status (or have applied for it). (Source: Home Office)

43. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) kept its estimate of the UK's EU population at 3.5 million, cautioning that EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) applications are not the best measure of the size of this group. (Source: ONS)

44. Applications for British citizenship by EU nationals rose by over 80% compared to the previous year and now account for more than a third of all naturalisation applications. Italian nationals were the top EU nationality granted citizenship in the latest year, followed by Romanian and Polish nationals. Children born after 1 July may become British automatically if their EU parents are facing delays in receiving settled status. (Sources: Home Office, gov.uk)

45. Latest EUSS statistics show over 6.22 million applications by the end of September 2021 from an estimated 5.5 million applicants (8% were from repeat applicants). Close to 400,000 applications are awaiting a decision. Applications received since 30 June 2021 include late applicants, joining family members and those moving from pre-settled to settled status. An 'unprecedented' level of applications for an administrative review, a process which challenges a refusal or incorrect grant of

status, are causing delays in decisions. (Source: Home Office)

46. The latest local authority statistics (to the end of June 2021) show over 327,000 applications to the scheme in Yorkshire and the Humber.

- The top nationalities of applicants in our region remain mainly the same: Poland (27%), Romania (19%), Slovakia (8%), Italy (6%) and Lithuania (5%).
- Polish remains the top nationality in most of our local authorities, except Romanian is top in Barnsley, Doncaster, Leeds, NE Lincolnshire, Ryedale and Scarborough while Slovak continues to be top in Bradford, Sheffield and Rotherham.
- The rate of applications from children in the region continues to be higher than nationally, with under 18s accounting for 21% of applications (compared to 17% nationally). In local authorities such as Bradford, Rotherham and Kirklees, this rate is much higher; between 24 and 27%.
- Older applicants (over 65) account for 2% of applications in Yorkshire and Humber (slightly lower than 3% nationally) though some North Yorkshire districts such as Richmondshire and Craven have much higher take up from this group at 6%, while Barnsley, Doncaster and Hull are lower at 1%.
- There are close to 38,000 outstanding applications in the region, which account for 12% of all applications, an increase from 7% last quarter.

- 53% have been granted settled status and 41% pre-settled, while other outcomes accounts for 6% (compared to 52%, 43% and 5% nationally).

47. Temporary protection was announced for EU nationals making late applications to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), that they can take up new employment while waiting for an outcome and late applicants can now access benefits and services once their application is validated and identity verified. The Home Office extended funding for voluntary organisations offering support with applications under the EUSS to at least end of March 2022. Updated guidance documents for employers and landlords confirm that no retrospective checks are required in respect of those employed or having tenancies signed before the EUSS deadline. EU nationals who did not apply before the deadline have 28 days to apply before immigration enforcement action is taken, yet there have been reports of homeless EU nationals with pre-settled status being offered 'voluntary reconnection' to their countries of origin despite being legally entitled to stay in the UK. From 6 October, joining family members who arrived in the UK as visitors can apply from within the UK. (Sources: Home Office, Justice Gap. Free Movement)

48. As many EU migrants worked in hospitality and retail sectors, an increase in EU nationals claiming benefits has been reported quoting DWP statistics for 2020 that reflect the impact of the pandemic. The EU Court of Justice determined it is justified to refuse Universal Credit to EU citizens with pre-settled status, but the UK's Supreme Court hearing on the same issue

remains adjourned. The latest position on housing and benefits for different groups on EU nationals, including late applicants to the EUSS, is in the October edition of the Housing Rights newsletter. (Sources: Express, DWP, Free Movement, Chartered Institute of Housing)

49. From 1 August family members of EU nationals are not eligible to access courses funded through the Adult Education Budget until they have met three years UK/EEA residency requirements. Updated guidance on access to student finance for late EUSS applicants and joining family members clarifies that unlawful residence from 1 July to the date of the late application is to be treated as lawful when considering the three year residence requirement for student loans. (Sources: Education and Skills Funding Agency, Department of Education)

50. There's new legal action against the Home Office regarding pre-settled status as people could lose their residency rights without settled status. (Source: IMA)

51. The lack of physical documentation and difficulties with accessing digital status have been the most prevalent problems since the EUSS deadline, as flagged by the European Affairs Committee and the3million. There are press stories of EU nationals with valid status receiving letters from HMRC or DWP asking them to apply to the scheme due to no record of their leave or submitted applications, and an online glitch for people applying to upgrade from pre-settled to settled status means they can't evidence their rights to access services despite

having status. The Home Office's Employer Checking Service needs improving according to a charity briefing. The checking service is used by employers to confirm a migrant's right to work . (Sources: Parliament, 3million, Public Technology, the Guardian , Work Rights Centre)

52. Other reports on the experiences, delivery and the impact of the EU Settlement Scheme cover complex cases, Roma communities and role of local authorities. (Source: Law Centre Network, University of Leeds, EU Rights Hub)

Hong Kong

53. In addition to the latest statistics in para.1 on applications for the BN(O) *visa* route, nearly 500,000 applications for BNO passports were received by the UK government between 2019 and 2020.

54. There are growing calls for the BN(O) visa to be extended to younger people (born after the handover in 1997) from a parliamentary committee and Hong Kong Watch; indeed some young people are claiming asylum in the UK. (Sources: Home Affairs Committee, Hong Kong Watch, the Independent)

55. People on a BN(O) visa are more likely to rent, than buy a property, taking time to find the right place to settle permanently, although many face difficulties when looking for a place to rent. A survey of newly arrived Hongkongers revealed jobseekers from Hong Kong identify the top obstacles in finding work as language barriers, lack of relevant qualifications and

proving the right to work. (Sources: South China Monitoring Post, the Guardian, Hongkongers in Britain)

56. Rotherham MP and vice-chair of the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) on Hong Kong Sarah Champion called for government to 'come up with practical measures' to enable Hongkongers to have fair access to accommodation and employment in the UK. (Source: the Guardian)

57. Since October, a main applicant can move to the UK to sort out living arrangements before dependent partners and children join them. (Source: Immigration Barrister)

Children and young people

58. Proposed amendments to the Nationality and Borders Bill include using x-rays or DNA tests in the age assessment process for young people whose age is disputed by the Home Office; these measures were previously ruled out as unethical. Plans to use dental x-rays have been withdrawn after objections by the British Dental Association. Earlier Welsh Government guidance for social workers carrying out age assessments of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children makes it clear that medical methods should not be used due to results being inconclusive. (Sources: the Telegraph, the Guardian, Inews, Welsh Government, Free Movement)

59. Government announced recovery fund for children's social care; within this, each region will be allocated £50,000 to help in accommodating unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

(Source: Wired.gov)

60. There has been much coverage of temporary housing conditions where newly-arrived unaccompanied asylum seeking children have been placed in the south of England - that has included office floors and camp beds in the Kent Intake Unit, a facility called the Atrium and a hotel in Brighton – drawing criticism from council leaders, the Home Affairs Committee, the Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium and Ofsted. There have also been concerns raised about the ability of professionals to work with these young people, including council officers and lawyers. (Sources: the Guardian, Brighton and Hove City Council, Coram Children's Legal Centre, BBC)

61. The response of local authorities to take some of these young people into their care has been mixed, with some like Croydon and Kent struggling to take young people because they had reached capacity, and others offering new placements such as Norfolk County Council and Southend Council. The Green Party wrote to all councils in England asking them to take their 'fair share' of children, as well as urging the government to increase the funding to councils. (Sources: Inside Croydon, LGC online, Eastern Daily Press, Echo news, the Green Party)

62. Local authority estimates suggest that hundreds of child refugees are going missing from care after they arrive in the UK, including a 15 year old boy who disappeared from hotel accommodation, many of whom have been subjected to modern slavery. (Source: the Times)

63. Charities wrote to the health minister Nadine Dorries about high rates of suicide amongst young asylum seekers in the UK, an issue also picked up by the BBC asking if there is a national crisis given there is a recurrence of suicides amongst young asylum seekers. (Sources: the Guardian, BBC)

64. A number of legal developments relating to children include:

- Children denied family reunion in the UK may now be able to challenge decisions on their case. A judicial review found a change in April 2020 to Home Office policy on family reunion was unlawful. The change meant if caseworkers couldn't work out within two months whether a child qualified for a transfer to the UK from Europe, they refused the request. (Source: Free Movement)
- A change to Home Office policy means many 18-25 year old young people born or raised in the UK will be able to apply for settlement after 5 years after the Home Office conceded the 10 year route to settlement was not appropriate for many children. (Sources: Home Office, Free Movement)
- A court ruling means in future, children in families might be considered to have a separate asylum claim to their parents , rather than being assessed together. (Source: Freemovement)
- The Supreme Court has handed down its judgment that concerns the Home Office's policy in relation to age assessments by immigration officers. The Court confirmed the previous 'significantly over 18' policy was lawful; if on

initial assessment a young person is assessed as ‘significantly over 18’, they can be detained as an adult. Since 2019 this had been set at ‘significantly over 25’. (Source: EIN)

65. An informal mentoring programme in this story of mentor Sohail and mentee Ahmed in Bradford will be rolled out nationally to support young refugees including those from Afghanistan. (Source: the Independent)

Modern slavery

66. Thousands of modern slavery victims could be granted leave to remain in the UK following a high court ruling. Currently, discretionary leave to remain for trafficking victims is granted in certain limited circumstances, leaving many seeking asylum or humanitarian protection and facing lengthy waits. (Source: the Guardian)

67. Referrals to the NRM are increasing (National Referral Mechanism, the UK system for identifying and supporting victims) having fallen during the pandemic. 3,140 individuals were referred in quarter 2 this year, up 42% compared to last year. Labour exploitation remains the most common exploitation type for adults and the top nationalities are the UK, Albania and Vietnam. (Source: Home Office)

68. 80% of appeals in trafficking cases were successful last year - these are cases that initially were not recognised as trafficking by the Home Office through the National Referral

Mechanism process (255 of 325 decisions); the Home Office countered that these figures were misleading and represent only 2% of decisions. (Source: the Guardian)

69. Contemporary practice in relation to modern slavery is discussed by several experts:

- The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) has recommended the UK improve the identification of trafficking victims (Source: Council of Europe)
- The Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC)'s annual report raises concerns about the impact of Brexit, the New Plan for Immigration, policy on rough sleeping and deportation, as well as the continuing issue of victims not coming forward due to fears of being reported to Immigration Enforcement. (Source: IASC)
- This short article summarises the possible impact of the Immigration and Borders Bill, while another describes the changes in the Nationality and Borders Bill (Sources: Politics Home, Free Movement)
- A report shows the pandemic could place more people at risk of modern slavery. Bulgarian and Romanian agricultural workers in the UK have been more vulnerable to exploitation during the pandemic, according to other research. (Sources: Salvation Army, Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre)
- This report examines labour abuses in the hospitality sector with participants reporting unpaid work, inability to take

time off sick, dangerous work conditions and work-related violence. EEA workers also mentioned insecurity linked to changes to their immigration status. (Source: the Guardian)

- A new study compares access to legal aid for victims in six European countries. In England and Wales some good practice was identified, but highlighted issues such as funding structures, fixed fees, and scarcity of legal aid providers outside London. (Source: RENATE)

70. Recent research found children of modern slavery victims are not getting enough support. (Source: Hestia)

71. New online training on child victims for First Responders and safeguarding partners is available, and e-learning on slavery in supply chains for public sector commercial staff was developed. (Sources: Focus on Labour Exploitation, Home Office)

72. 80% of UK supply managers surveyed think the law should be strengthened relating to corporate reporting requirements under the Modern Slavery Act. (Source: Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre)

73. There are claims that thousands of potential trafficking victims have been held in immigration detention over the past five years. There are concerns that Vietnamese nationals vulnerable to trafficking have been detained under the 'Detention Asylum Casework' system, designed to facilitate the prompt removal of asylum seekers without a valid case. (Source: the Guardian)

74. A short animation tells the story of a woman who moved to the UK and survived domestic servitude. (Source: West Yorkshire Combined Authority)

Windrush

75. In July, a parliamentary committee asked when those affected by the Windrush scandal would get their redress. It found at least 21 people had died since the compensation scheme was announced, and only 412 out of 2,367 who have submitted a claim have received their final payment. By the end of August, the Home Office reported over £30 million in compensation had been paid across 837 claims. Two claimants launched legal proceedings against the Home Office over delays in compensation and lack of clarity on how to expediate the claims. The average waiting time to receive compensation is 434 days. (Sources: Public Accounts Committee, Home Office, the Guardian)

76. In response to the Windrush Lessons Learned Review, the Home Office committed to increasing the number of senior staff that identify as Black, Asian or a minority group. (Source: Home Office).

77. A statue celebrating 40,000 Commonwealth NHS nurses and midwives was unveiled outside a London hospital, and government is considering issuing a Windrush 50p coin to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Windrush ship's arrival in the UK. (Sources: the Guardian, Inews)

78. Stories from the Windrush generation include an exhibition 'Chesterfield Black Stories' and this 4min video about Lutalo Muhammad, a medal winning Olympian whose life has been shaped by the experiences of his grandparents who arrived from Jamaica in the 1960s, and his father. (Sources: Derbyshire Times, BBC)

International students

79. Higher education is the topic for a forthcoming immigration inspection. Professionals and people with personal experience can submit evidence until 15 November. (Source: Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration)

80. Sheffield Central tops all UK constituencies in terms of net impact of international students on the UK economy. The report claims that every part of the UK is financially better off because of international students, on average by £390 per person a year. This comes amidst a 50% drop in EU students applying to study in the UK due to Brexit, and uncertainties around Covid leading to fewer international students applying to study here. (Sources: Higher Education Policy Institute, the Guardian, the Independent)

81. UK universities have had record numbers of applications from China and India which is helping to deal with a reduction in EU students. Summer language schools, which prepare international students for university, are reportedly near to collapse due to the pandemic, which could have a negative

impact on applications from international students. A former Olympian athlete and an aspiring nurse describe facing financial, legal and practical obstacles to attending university due to their immigration status. (Sources: Merco Press, Times Higher Education, The Economic Times, Student Action for Refugees)

82. Some Nigerian students are studying consecutive degrees in Europe in order to find ways to settle permanently, while thousands of British students are delaying their studies in Europe or changing courses due to difficulties in obtaining the correct visas, particularly for Spain. (Sources: BBC, the Guardian)

83. The BBC reported on the experiences of international students who had their courses deferred and returned home during government lockdowns, only to find their visas expired whilst away or that they face additional costs due to travel restrictions and visa requirements. (Source: BBC)

84. Funding has been announced under The Turing Scheme which replaced the ERASMUS programme after Brexit, that allows students to take up study, train or work placements overseas. It will enable 40,000 students to benefit. (Source: the Turing Scheme)

Cohesion and integration

85. A range of reports have considered societal impacts of and responses to the pandemic:

- 'Building stronger communities in post-pandemic Britain' is a cross-party report considering what helps make social connection stronger, such as volunteering, support provided by businesses, English lessons in the workplace, and the development of important locations such as high streets or other shared spaces like libraries. (Source: APPG on Social Integration)
- A report on the impact of Covid-19 on migrant workers and the labour market in Europe found migrant workers more vulnerable to health risks and precarious work, and their cultural and economic integration has been hindered given the sectors in which they often work. It highlights the precarious situation for women in particular. The report proposes ways for recovery strategies to be inclusive, such as investing in entrepreneurs and the social sector, as well as developing partnerships with employers as part of employment support services. (Source: Migration Policy Institute)
- ‘Between a Rock and a Hard Place’ is a report on the response to COVID 19 in West Yorkshire which aims the share stories of achievement despite the barriers, and reveals the important role migrant community advocates had in their communities during the lockdown. The report discusses how fear and suspicion prevented people from accessing help and how those with precarious status felt they had to work – even when they had Covid symptoms – out of fear of becoming destitute. (Source: Racial Justice Network).

- ‘Barriers to wellbeing’ is a report considering the unmet health needs of migrants with insecure immigration status during the pandemic. It calls for access to GP registration, alternatives to online registration, access to health services from asylum initial/contingency accommodation, wifi for people to access online services, and increased understanding of charging in the healthcare system. (Source: University of Birmingham)
- Alongside examples of good practice and recommendations to increase social cohesion at a local level both during and post-pandemic, this report suggests government should build on the Integrated Communities Strategy where at the centre of the approach is the *idea of place* and understanding that different places need different strategies to deal with social cohesion. (Source: Belong Network)

86. A think tank report describes a ‘collapse’ in community and belonging among young people. It found that people under 25 are three times more likely to distrust their neighbours than people over the age of 65, with only around half trusting their family ‘completely’. (Source: Onward)

87. The oldest children in Syrian families may need more immediate literacy support, due to a combination of factors such as having less fluency in English and needing to develop academic language before leaving school. (Source: The Conversation)

88. ‘Gardens are better when migrants and refugees are included’ concludes this research which describes how refugees can be excluded from community gardening because of management structures and cultural expectations around gardening practices. The article calls for investment in volunteer groups managing these types of sites. (Source: the Conversation)

89. Racist abuse towards England football players on social media generated discussion within the Conservative party, many feeling ‘uncomfortable’ with kneeling before matches being seen as ‘gesture politics’ and calling for understanding of the motives behind the act. (Sources: the Express, the Guardian)

90. A bit of thoughtfulness is needed for a more ‘inclusive society’, as suggested by an example from Blackburn. Simple acts can make a massive difference in how one feels welcomed, such changing training sessions or how membership fees work to accommodate the needs of different religious and ethnic groups. (Source: the Guardian)

91. Recent polling suggests a range of findings:

- Public attitudes on immigration have softened over the last few years and the public is now more likely to see the impact of immigration on Britain as positive (46%) than negative (28%), (in contrast to 2015 when 35% saw the impact as positive and 41% as negative). Most respondents agreed that British businesses should be allowed to recruit from abroad to address labour shortages. (Source: British

Future)

- However, immigration and asylum are returning to be top issues among the public (after health, joint 2nd with the economy), a consequence of what has happened in Afghanistan. (Source: YouGov)
- While there are mixed views amongst the public about NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan, most people in the UK support the government's commitments to refugee resettlement according to different public opinion polls. Similarly, polling commissioned by the Red Cross suggests voters support prioritising asylum seekers from Afghanistan . (Sources: British Future, inews)
- Two reports on public attitudes to labour migrants in the pandemic look at health and welfare and nationalities and occupations. (Sources: Migration Observatory)
- Most people in Wales say migration changed their local area for the better although there are growing pockets of hostility, according to an opinion poll on identity. (Source: BBC)

92. There was a 9% increase in hate crime offences recorded in England and Wales in year ending March 2021 compared to previous year, with 124,091 hate crimes recorded. The majority were racially motivated. A new report found evidence of antisemitism on every social media platform including Facebook and Youtube. (Sources: Home Office, Hope not Hate).

93. Children's author Michael Rosen, who recently won award for his poems on migration, has written about why children's

books should explore themes of migration and persecution. (Source: the Guardian).

International news

Europe

94. Since the summer an increasingly tense situation has developed between Belarus and its neighbours. In retaliation for EU sanctions, Belarus has been encouraging migrants to cross into Europe through its territory. This has led to a stand-off with neighbouring EU countries including Lithuania and Poland who have built physical barriers at their borders, detained people at the border and stationed troops while Germany offered to support them with joint patrols and logistical support. UNHCR requested access to asylum seekers stranded there, but at least seven people trapped between borders are known to have died. The EU has said it will not fund any physical border barriers to stop migrants and UNHCR has urged for an end to the stalemate. (Sources: BBC, EU Observer, Info Migrants, PBS, the Guardian, UNHCR)

95. People trying to reach Europe by sea rose in the first half of 2021 compared to 2020, for example in Italy and the Canaries, although there are indications of a shift from this route to the Balearics. As agencies reported that deaths of migrants crossing the sea to Europe soared in the same period, including up to 2,000 people estimated to have died trying to reach Spain, the

EU border agency Frontex was criticised for failing to protect asylum seekers. (Sources: The National, Reuters, Infomigrants, UN, the Guardian, IOM)

96. Far fewer migrants now live in camps on Greek islands (5,400 in September compared to 40,000 in April 2020). This follows the transfer of thousands of people to the mainland who are likely to be granted asylum, as well as tighter border surveillance. However, NGOs are outraged by a new migrant camp on the island of Samos, likening it to a prison. (Sources: UNHCR, the Guardian)

97. Criticism of returning migrants includes in Italy where a boat captain has been convicted for taking migrants back to Libya and Spain was accused of violating international law and children's human rights by sending unaccompanied asylum-seeking children back to Morocco from the enclave of Cueta. (Source: Aljazeera, Euronews)

Beyond Europe

98. On the 70th anniversary of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention the High Commissioner Filippo Grandi and former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon both reflected on their concerns about asylum policies of the 'Global North'. (Sources: UNHCR, Time)

99. A Yemeni organisation, Jeel Albena, won this year's Nansen Refugee Award for supporting many displaced people in deprived and dangerous areas of Yemen. The Nansen Award is

for ‘going above and beyond the call of duty to protect refugees, other displaced and stateless people’. (Source: UNHCR)

100. A refugee from Zanzibar who fled to the UK in the 1960s won the 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature. Abdulrazak Gurnah’s writing covers the effects of colonialism in East Africa, and its effects on the lives of uprooted and migrating individuals. (Source: the Guardian)

101. This year was the first Olympics with a Refugee Paralympic Team, who said they wanted to provide hope for people being forced to flee Afghanistan. The Refugee Olympic Team was set up for Rio 2016 to allow refugee athletes to take part. A significant story of the Tokyo Olympics was that a Belarusian athlete was granted a humanitarian visa at the Polish embassy after her family warned her about her safety in Belarus. (Sources: IRC, Irvine Times, IOC, Sky)

102. The UN Children’s Fund found there were 15 million displacements of children in 2020 in total (41,000 per day). The ‘Uncertain Pathways’ report explores how this experience of child migration is often gendered, with most unaccompanied asylum-seeking children making it to Europe being male. (Sources: UN News, UNICEF)

103. Back in August, the UN voiced concern over worsening living conditions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. UN agencies say almost the entire Syrian refugee population in Lebanon cannot afford the basic goods and services necessary for survival. The UN Food Programme has welcomed a $20 million contribution

from Germany that will help avert planned cuts in food assistance for 110,000 refugees in Jordan this October. (Sources: Xinhua, UNHCR)

104. In the lead up to the withdrawal of NATO forces in Afghanistan, UNHCR warned of a 'worst case scenario' of up to 500,000 Afghans fleeing the country while EU leaders tried to coordinate responses to stop irregular migration to avoid repeating the 'migrant crisis' in 2015, with most EU members only welcoming a limited number of Afghans. Some 'entry countries' along the eastern borders of the EU such as Poland, Lithuania, Greece and Turkey announced new border wall construction to stop crossings. (Sources: Reuters, New Humanitarian, the Guardian, Irish Times)

105. Since then, a number of countries announced resettlement schemes and places for evacuees, including Canada (pledging 40,000 places) and the US (pledging 50,000 places) while some neighbouring countries closed their borders. It's becoming increasingly difficult for people to leave Afghanistan and enter neighbouring countries, while Turkey and European countries have been reported as turning people back at their borders. Tens of thousands of Afghans are currently Europe seeking protection. (Sources: New York Times, CBS News, National Review, Infomigrants, Chatham House)

106. The ongoing crises in Afghanistan and Ethiopia dominated the recent annual UN refugee conference with concern expressed that Afghan society was 'barely functioning' since the

Taliban takeover. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) subsequently predicted the Afghan economy could shrink by up to 30%, escalating the refugee crisis. G20 members pledged help in relation to Afghanistan at a special summit, though China and Russia were absent, and the EU has since pledged a €1billion Afghan aid package. (Source: UNHCR, Reuters, Info Migrants)

107. Other stories of displacement around the world include:

- This August article describes twice-daily flights from Hong Kong to London, a falling population and withdrawals from the city's pension fund suggesting permanent moves. Many people left before new measures came into effect on 1 August that can bar people leaving the city. Hongkongers continue to withdraw funds from their mandated retirement plan, only allowed for those leaving the city permanently. (Sources: the Guardian, Bloomberg)
- In South Asia, the killing of a prominent Rohingya community leader brought attention to the need to ensure protection of people in Bangladesh's refugee camps. (Sources: Aljazeera, Human Rights Watch)
- As many migrants from Haiti have been travelling across Latin America and up to the Mexico-US border, UN agencies have been calling for a regional approach to protect them. There are further tensions in Chile where many Venezuelans have sought refuge. (Sources: Reliefweb, UNHCR, Daily Mail, Reuters)

- Current situations causing displacement within Africa include 400,000 Somalis displaced by armed conflict and climate disruption this year, and over a million people in Burkina Faso are fleeing violence by unknown groups. (Sources: UNHCR, Deutsche Welle)

108. This critical reflection argues that rich countries increasingly outsource their migration controls to circumvent international laws, while other research explores links between migration related to climate change and modern slavery. In the run up to the Glasgow climate summit, leaders were warned more people will be displaced without a radical climate solution. Wealthy countries reportedly spend 2.3 times more on borders than climate aid. (Sources: World Politics Review, Anti-Slavery International, Open Democracy, Gizmodo)

Local stories

109. Stories about migrant communities in Yorkshire and Humber include:

- Recent celebrations of diversity and migration include Migration Matters 2021 festival in Sheffield, Bradford Intercultured Festival, the Platforma 6 Festival (until November) and #BlackHistoryMonth – that includes a resource pack with some eye-catching posters. (Sources: Migration Matters Festival, Telegraph and Argus, Platforma, Black History Month)

- Places of sanctuary are expanding. Hull has the first ‘CCG of Sanctuary’ in the UK, so healthcare joins the city and university in holding Sanctuary status, a formal declaration of support to asylum seekers and refugees. A West Yorkshire cinema became the UK’s first ‘Cinema of Sanctuary’. Relatedly, a local theatre of sanctuary was retelling stories of young refugees. (Sources: the Hull Story, Hebden Bridge Picture House, Twitter, Leeds Playhouse)
- A North Yorkshire ESOL student from Iraq won a national English Language Learning award; he explained how learning English has helped him to feel more confident, settled and closer to requalifying as a nurse. (Sources: Northern Echo, Festival of Learning)
- Great exam results for these students with a migrant background. Zainab Fadhal, originally from Iraq, is coming to study medicine at Leeds, her subject choice influenced by her mental health experiences, while Miriam Solomon, the head girl at Leeds Grammar School will study to become a paediatrician at Hull York Medical School, with a plan to return one day to Eritrea to open a clinic. She explained that her English skills affected her ability to settle in here at first, but now she speaks 5 languages. More exam success included GCSE and A level Rohingya students in Bradford. (Sources: BBC, Yorkshire Post, Telegraph and Argus)
- Pupils at a local school raised funds for St. Augustine's Centre by creating friendship bracelets. The money will go to the centre’s work with refugees and asylum seekers**.**

Primary school children in Sheffield have been preparing clothing for Afghan children facing their first winter here. (Sources: Halifax Courier, ITV)

- A gallery in Scarborough organised a welcoming event for people who fled Afghanistan, and new arrivals were given annual passes to a local museum and gallery. (Source: The Scarborough News)
- The Syrian teenager Jamal Hijazi, who won damages from English Defence League founder, plans to set up a charity to help young people of any race with bullying. (Source: London Economic)
- Short documentaries about Roma pupils in Bradford during the pandemic show bringing Roma staff into the school helped to build trust and strengthen school bonds with Roma families. (Sources: YouTube, the Guardian)
- Fascinating stories include the tales of people brought to Yorkshire as children fleeing Nazi Germany and were housed temporarily in a Bradford hotel, and how Mouseman furniture made by an Austrian carver was sold at a North Yorkshire auction. (Source: Yorkshire Live, Yorkshire Post)
- This photo journal of Little Amal, the giant puppet who made it to the UK after walking through Europe from Turkey. She has been to Sheffield then Barnsley on her way to Manchester, raising awareness of the experiences of many young refugees. (Source: the Guardian)

About this issue of the policy bulletin

This update was prepared in November 2021 by a team at Migration Yorkshire: Pip Tyler, Kate James, Vanja Čelebičić, Ewa Jamróz, Rosie Cooke, Stefan Robert, Vicky Ledwidge, Alex Fox, Laura-Maria Ruiz Duarte, Sarah Botterill, Caris Etherington, Sophie Tong and Qamran Hussain.

Source URL:
https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/policy/policy-briefings/migration-yorkshire-policy-update-november-2021