Migration news roundup 4 September 2023



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Stories that inspired us this week

A group of refugees in Birmingham are fixing old bikes and donating them to survivors of domestic abuse, saying they have ‘a sense of affinity with those escaping dangerous situations’. (Source: Birmingham Mail)

Listen to this inspiring interview with 25 year old Fatima Haidari, Afghanistan's first and only female tour guide from Herat, who is now based in Italy. (Source: BBC Sounds – 2nd of two interviews, starts at 24:00)

In Scotland, after initially having concerns about people seeking asylum moving to a nearby hotel, locals in Westhill are now coming together to support the new residents. And Scottish Refugee Council is hosting ‘Love Glasgow Hate Racism’ – a fundraising concert at the famous Barrowland Ballroom in Glasgow. (Sources: The Press and Journal, Scottish Refugee Council)

International news

The Afghanistan women’s national football team, resettled in Australia, has been blocked from competing internationally as FIFA refuse to recognise a team not sanctioned by its national federation. Malala Yousafzai, the Nobel peace prize recipient and activist, joined the call for Afghan women’s rights restoration

and for FIFA to recognise the team. (Source: the Guardian)

Meanwhile, Lebanon is considering a new mechanism to stop Syrians entering the country irregularly and to sanction locals who help migrants in any capacity. (Source: InfoMigrant)

A new study shows that ‘first-generation migrants’ from China in Australia have concerns about Australian media coverage of China, feeling it creates suspicion and even racism towards migrants. (Source: the Guardian)

UK borders and migration policy

The UN Refugee Agency has published the final evaluation report for the Refugee and Migrant Advice Service (RMAS) pilot, which was a model for supporting people to resolve their immigration case in the community, rather than in detention centres. This was the follow-on project from the Community Engagement Pilot (CEP) series launched in 2019. Further information on outcomes of RMAS are in this blog. (Sources: UNHCR, King’s Arms Project)

Home Office spending reports show that they have hired ‘resilience practitioners’ to provide mental health support to border force officers dealing with small boats arrivals following trauma assessments. (Source: the Guardian)

The Bibby Stockholm is back in the news again, this time for plans to move migrants back in before essential plumbing maintenance has been completed that would ensure that it is

legally compliant with water legislation. (Source: the Guardian)

There are some new briefings for MPs on dealing with constituency queries on issues such as appeal rights, immigration casework, and British citizenship. (Source: House of Commons Library)

It is reported there is potential tracking of migrants via new Home Office reference numbers being added to NHS records. This follows a failed attempt at tracking those 'breaching immigration rules' via their medical records in 2018. Elsewhere, the government is asking for feedback on its migrant health guide – the deadline is 29 September. (Sources: the Guardian, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities)

Specific migrant groups

Government ministers are considering the use of electronic tagging as an alternative to detention for asylum seekers. The government plans to increase detention capacity in the future though currently is looking for short term solutions. This very useful article explains the changes around asylum support discontinuations. (Sources: the Guardian, Free Movement)

This article looks at the ‘Destitution Gap’, the time between the end of government asylum support and the point when someone whose asylum claim was granted gains access to universal credit and other services. It looks at the obstacles new refugees face in accessing job centres, social housing and local services, and the long-term effect this has on their personal and mental

health. (Source: The Conversation)

There are growing worries about older Hongkongers arriving to the UK on a British National Overseas (BNO) visa, who would be unable to qualify for a state pension. Campaigners have been calling for government to enable BNO visa holders to make voluntary payments to top up their contributions. (Source: Telegraph)

While government urges local authorities to continue cooperating with the National Transfer Scheme and complying with their duties under the Children's Act 1989, Kent County Council warns about the impact of increased arrivals for unaccompanied children on their care system. More locally, Leeds City Council received 35 referrals of young people who were wrongly assessed as adults and shares that there is a likelihood of more referrals to be sent in the future to their care. (Sources: Community Care, Sky News, BBC)

Cohesion and integration

Theresa May has expressed regret about using the term 'hostile environment' when she was Home Secretary, and has said she was unaware of the potential adverse impact on the Windrush generation of the 2014 and 2016 immigration acts. (Source: the Guardian)

An evaluation report on the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy has been published. The report looks at how far the strategy has achieved its goals and what could be improved for

subsequent strategies in the future. (Source: Scottish Government)

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