Migration news roundup 2 January 2024



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Stories that inspired us this week

A short documentary has been released about a recent exhibition in Hull, featuring stories of 5 women artists from Ethiopia, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Sudan and their experiences and representations of displacement. It aims to challenge representation of ‘a single repetitive trauma story of refugee women’. (Source: Freedom Festival)

Listen to this podcast about how music is bringing people from diverse backgrounds together. It features stories of Avaovi from Togo and Dilan from Iraq, both members of a Nordoff Robbins music therapy group with Asylum Link in Liverpool. (Source: Apple podcasts)

International news

The European Commission’s Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography has added a new feature to its Atlas of Migrants. (Source: European Commission)

In Germany, vast changes to the country’s immigration and asylum policy are on the horizon – including a Rwanda-style proposal. Meanwhile, refugee rights groups warn that tightening EU rules on those seeking asylum will create a ‘cruel system’

likely to increase the physical insecurity and suffering of prospective migrants. (Sources: the Guardian, Al Jazeera)

In positive contrast, anti-immigrant rhetoric has little political appeal in Spain, even though the country has more migrants arriving via boats than Britain, and the Greek parliament approved a measure granting 30,000 ‘undocumented migrants’ residency rights for up to three years if they already hold a job offer from an employer, in order to address labour shortages. (Sources: the Guardian, InfoMigrants)

UK borders and migration policy

The Home Office has made an unexpected U-turn on the salary requirement for foreign family members to come to the UK, saying it will now be raised initially to £29,000, not £38,700 (still an amount that will be a barrier for many). Before the U-turn on the much-criticized plan, there was a legal challenge planned potentially on the grounds of right to family life, or the government’s approach to the impact assessment of the new threshold. Here are some stories of couples whose lives could be affected by the proposals. This article, written by migration researchers, also explores the potential impact of the changes. Meanwhile a new report highlights the burdensome impact the current requirements already have on family life, even before any changes comes into effect. (Sources: the Guardian, the Conversation, Reunite Families)

There is continuing concern that the plan to prevent care workers from bringing dependants with them to the UK will make it harder to recruit staff – this article features a Scarborough care home. (Source: the Guardian)

The Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC) annual report looks at net migration, and migration driven by social care and international students, raising concerns about exploitation on the health and social care visa route (see below for more on modern slavery), and calling for staff shortages to be addressed by improving funding in this sector, rather than relying on immigration. (Source: GOV.UK)

It's been reported that one per cent of people who have migrated to the UK via small boats since 2020 have been returned to their country of origin. The majority of those returned were from Albania. (Source: Independent)

Specific migrant groups

New guidance from the Home Office on withdrawing asylum claims reduces the window of opportunity for people seeking asylum to inform the Home Office why they failed to attend an asylum interview from ten days to five days before the claim is withdrawn. (Source: Free Movement)

The Guardian reports that suicides in Home Office asylum accommodation have doubled in the last four years. This report looks at the risk to mental health of people from Albania seeking asylum. (Sources: the Guardian, MICLU)

On children and young people:

- A High Court judge has ruled that a former child refugee who was a victim of trafficking had been failed, after receiving no specialist support from either his local council or the Home Office. (Source: ECPAT UK)

- Work has begun on a temporary home for unaccompanied children in Kent. The building is a former care home and it is hoped that it will help Kent County Council to manage their high number of arrivals. (Source: Kent Online)
- The Children's Commissioner has written to thank children's social care teams in local authorities for 'their dedication to ensuring the vulnerable children's voices are heard'. (Source: Children's Commissioner)

On modern slavery:

- A number of organisations have collaborated on this paper on labour exploitation in the social care sector. Recommendations include visa changes enabling workers to move to a different employer. Relatedly, the Care Quality Commission has said exploitation in the sector has become more common. (Sources: FLEX, the Guardian)
- The Salvation Army, which is contracted to deliver support for people within the National Referral Mechanism, has produced its latest annual report – the organisation supported 10,704 people in the year ending June 2023. (Source: the Salvation Army)

- New research spanning four continents considers the benefits of ‘equitable engagement’ of lived experience, to improve policy and practice in tackling modern slavery. Six projects were undertaken, including one on ethical storytelling and on focussing on Self-Organised Lived Experience (SOLEX). (Source: Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre)
- This briefing makes the case for a single labour market enforcement body, suggesting the UK currently falls short of international standards on labour inspections, leaving workers vulnerable to exploitation. (Source: FLEX)
- Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) has designed and delivered modern slavery training to stakeholders in London, as described in its annual report. (Source: LEAP)

On international students, the advice is to consider not only the financial benefits they bring to the UK but also the impact they have on education, knowledge and more. However, this article reports that due to the cost of living ‘the lives of international students are gradually becoming miserable’, including here in Yorkshire. (Sources: The Pie News, Yorkshire Bylines)

Cohesion and integration

A briefing shares the latest data on numbers of migrants becoming citizens. It also explores naturalisation, how foreign-born citizens in the UK feel about becoming citizens and what barriers may still exist. (Source: The Migration Observatory)

The Guardian looks back at 70 years of support for migrants from the Refugee Councils of Britain, with a series of interviews with people who have received their support. (Source: The Guardian)

Research by the Scottish Government's independent Expert Advisory Group calls for people seeking asylum to be given the right to work, to improve their health and wellbeing, reduce the risk of exploitation and boost the economy. (Source: Scottish Government)

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