Migration news roundup 12 February 2024



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Stories that inspired us this week

To raise awareness of issues facing LGBT+ refugees, Joel Mordi has begun a world record attempt to ‘retro walk’ 15,000km backwards during 2024. (Source: Peterborough Matters)

Photography students have created an exhibition about refugees in their community in Dudley. You can see some of the images in this article. (Source: Express and Star)

More locally, a Lunar New Year market celebrating Chinese and Hong Kong cultures, took place at Leeds Minster. The event was organised by St. Barnabas Church in partnership with local Chinese churches and supported by Migration Yorkshire’s Hong Kong Hub. (Source: Church of England Diocese of Leeds)

International news

This article describes the history of migrants trying to reach the UK through the Channel Tunnel, the many people who have died in their attempt, and the impact on drivers who feared hurting people. (Source: Open Democracy)

A mass legal action is challenging the practice of tied labour under Canada's temporary seasonal worker scheme. If allowed to go ahead, the case will include migrant workers under this scheme for the past 15 years. (Source: Al Jazeera)

UK borders and migration policy

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak made headlines when he appeared to agree to a £1,000 bet with presenter Piers Morgan that flights to Rwanda would take off by the general election. There's criticism of the Rwanda scheme and its potential to expose individuals to treatment breaching their human rights in a Council of Europe report focusing on detention in the UK, following a visit last year. It expresses concern about 'prison-like' detention centres, although it also refers to some positive practice in relation to trauma. (Sources: BBC, the Guardian, Council of Europe)

1,335 people arrived having crossed the Channel by small boat in January, compared with 1,180 in the same period last year. (Source: BBC)

In the week that the annual Immigration Health Surcharge rose to £1,035 from £625, this article highlights the impact on household finances, with a Nigerian nursing assistant and mother of two contemplating going into debt in order to pay the fee. (Source: Sky News)

Specific migrant groups

Home Office plans to exempt asylum accommodation from HMO (houses in multiple occupation) licencing rules have been shelved following backlash over the proposals. (Source: Landlord Today)

This article discusses how criminality can affect whether someone can be granted refugee status. (Source: Free Movement)

New analysis concludes that the Safety of Rwanda bill is inconsistent with international law specifically in relation to victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. This week marked 20 years since the tragic deaths of 23 Chinese cockle pickers at Morecambe Bay. Police think the criminal gangs responsible are still active. In the wake of the disaster, the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority was established. (Sources: Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre, ITV, BBC)

A care company operating in Leeds has been accused of charging migrant workers thousands of pounds to arrange work in the UK, and providing so little work on arrival that some workers have resorted to food banks to survive. Workers report living in overcrowded accommodation and facing threats to report them to the Home Office if they complain. Relatedly, this article gives an insight into the stories of Zimbabwean healthcare workers in the UK. Some remain in touch with former patients in Zimbabwe, feeling a sense of responsibility for them, whilst others seek second jobs to make ends meet here. (Sources: the Guardian, Al Jazeera)

On EU nationals, the Supreme Court refused the government application for permission to appeal the judgement allowing destitute EU nationals with pre-settled status to access Universal Credit. This means that the Court of Appeal's decision from December is final and the Department for Work and Pensions must implement the judgment. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) updated their resources for advisers to reflect the change. Meanwhile, the press reports another story of an EU national who had difficulties securing his status under the EU settlement scheme and now faces deportation. (Sources: CPAG, the Guardian)

There has been a positive change to the BN(O) visa for unmarried partners. The amendments to the immigration rules removed the need for partners to have been living together for at least two years prior to applying. The guidance has been updated. Meanwhile, an event celebrating the third anniversary of the BN(O) visa launch, was attended by a security minister. (Sources: Hong Kong Watch, Home Office, Welcoming Committee for Hong Kongers)

A survey exploring perceptions of current international students on the increase of the Immigration Health Surcharge documents that they are finding it too high and making the UK feel more oppressive, while for prospective students the popularity of MBA courses may fall as a result of changes in international student visa. (Sources: The Student, Financial Times)

The latest data on Windrush compensation shows that by the end of December 2023, nearly £76 million had been paid out to individuals through the scheme, and over 80% of claims have had a final decision. (Source: Home Office)

Meanwhile the government is facing a legal challenge over its failure to provide proof of immigration status to people who are on '3C' leave while waiting for their visas to be extended. (Source: The Standard)

Cohesion and integration

5-11 February was Race Equality Week across the UK, with five day challenges taken up by a range of organisations across our region, including University of Huddersfield. Nationally, two high-profile examples of Black British stories have been highlighted – Edward Enninful, stepping aside as the first Black male editor of Vogue magazine, stating there is still much to do to reflect the 'incredible array of voices' in fashion and the media; and broadcaster Gemma Cairney, who shares her experiences of racism and misogyny in the media industry. (Sources: Race Equality Matters, University of Huddersfield, the Guardian)

Here are two items to listen to: this audio piece examines the 'weaponisation of migration' and how countries exploit failed migration policies, while the Experts by Experience podcast from refugees and those seeking asylum explores what 'removing barriers to power' means to them. (Sources: the Guardian, 26 minutes, Spotify– Refugee Action, 35 minutes)

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