Migration news roundup 2 December 2024



- Stories that inspired us this week

- International news
- UK borders and migration policy
- Specific migrant groups
- Cohesion and integration

Stories that inspired us this week

Watch this one-minute clip of a group of Afghan women celebrating their graduation at Dundee University. (Source: STV News)

Zaid Alqassab, a Ukrainian refugee who has struggled to find a job in the UK as a qualified civil engineer, has opened a Sumerian café in Scotland selling unique teas and coffees. (Source: Glasgow Live)

International news

Dozens of social workers and police officers employed at the Italian asylum centre in Albania have returned to Italy after only 24 people seeking asylum arrived in the first month, before an Italian court ruled their detention unlawful. The agreement with Albania will cost approximately €1 billion over five years. (Source: the Guardian)

In a case brought by an Iranian applicant in Switzerland, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that states should not refuse asylum claims by LGBTQI+ people on the basis that they could act discreetly to hide their sexual orientation. (Source:

Free Movement)

UK borders and migration policy

Quarterly net migration statistics show net migration fell by 20% in the 12 months to June 2024, to 728,000, attributed mainly to previous government measures preventing students bringing dependants. Figures for previous years have been revised upwards, to a new high of just over 900,000 people in the year ending June 2023. (Sources: Office for National Statistics, Sky)

Changes to the Immigration Rules include a requirement for Ukrainians to register biometrics before travelling to the UK. The Ukraine Permission Scheme will open 4 February 2025 where people on one of the current Ukraine schemes can apply to remain for another 18 months. Another change is that Colombian visitors now need a visa to travel to the UK – this is in response to increasing asylum claims from that country. (Source: Free Movement)

Keir Starmer has insisted UK border staff continue undertaking checks at French ports, despite pressure from a group of French mayors calling for a treaty renegotiation that would include legal routes and for UK asylum claims to be processed in France away from coastal areas. (Source: Independent)

Post-Brexit immigration policy has been blamed for a 300% increase in asylum applications in the Republic of Ireland compared with five years previously, with most claimants crossing the border from Northern Ireland. (Source: BBC)

The Home Secretary reiterated her pledge for stronger action on businesses who illegally employ migrant workers, stating that immigration enforcement visits have increased by 20% since the new government came into power, and highlighted more enforced returns. (Source: The Standard)

Specific migrant groups

£20 million government investment into legal aid sector has been announced, including for immigration work, such as to support victims of modern slavery and trafficking, as well as domestic abuse. Anticipating the 10% rise in rates, immigration law experts warned there are not enough qualified solicitors to manage thousands of outstanding asylum cases. A legal aid consultation will begin in January 2025. (Sources: Ministry of Justice, the Guardian)

Migration Yorkshire's local migration data dashboards have been updated with the latest national immigration statistics published for the year ending September 2024. National highlights include:

- There were 99,800 asylum applications in the past year, similar to the previous year. Only 28% of people claiming asylum in the UK arrived on a small boat.

- 89,000 people received grants of leave under ‘safe and legal routes’ to come or remain in the UK, through: the British Nationals Overseas (BNO) visa (31,000), Ukraine schemes (29,000), refugee resettlement (9,600 arrivals in the past year; 95% of these through Afghan schemes) and family reunion (19,000).

- EU Settlement Scheme applications since 30 June 2021 average at over 50,000 per month; most now are repeat applications as people transition from pre-settled status, with a declining proportion of late applications.

- Applications to the BN(O) visa route continue to decrease each quarter, from over 30,000 applications when the scheme opened to just over 5,000 at the end of September.

(Sources: Migration Yorkshire, Home Office)

On asylum:

- The Scottish Government has drafted a proposal to allow asylum seekers the right to work, requesting the UK government engage with them on a pilot scheme. (Source: Scottish Government)

- A new exhibition of photographs in Gateshead shows experiences of going through the UK's asylum system. 'Asylum: a long and painful process' is open until February 2025. (Source: Northeast Bylines)

On modern slavery, in a series of reports on allowing people to work who are within the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), a third report considers how working could support survivor recovery. (Source: Kalayaan)

Cohesion and integration

Imam Adam Kelwick, who embraced protestors outside the Abdullah Quilliam Mosque in Liverpool during the riots, has been awarded a prestigious Beacon Mosque Award for 'most impactful imam'. (Source: BBC)

Catch up on what leaders from around the country said at the 'After the riots' community cohesion summit. The article anticipates a new national cohesion strategy. (Source: British Future)

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