Migration news roundup 23 December 2024



- Stories that inspired us this week

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

Content warning: this week's news roundup contains themes around suicide and death which some readers may find distressing.

Stories that inspired us this week

What can a bike do for a person? Watch the Mayor of London in this two minute video describing the Bike Project, which provides bicycles and lessons to people seeking asylum into to boost their mobility, confidence, and sense of freedom. Another cycling story comes from a new exhibition in Glasgow with the story of Nahla Abdulla, a Sudanese refugee, whose participation in a local cycling project gave her hope and community connection. (Sources: The Standard, BBC)

Saeid Hashemi, an electrical engineer from Iran who settled as a refugee in Sheffield, has been helping elderly residents gain digital skills. (Source: BBC)

International news

Since the recent changes in Syria, it’s been reported that hundreds of Syrian asylum seekers in Bulgaria have been interrogated and forced to sign pledges to 'voluntarily' return to their home country. (Source: the Guardian)

New asylum legislation passed quickly in Egypt has been described as being ‘a step backwards’ for the protection of refugees. Instead of UNHCR, a new body will assume responsibility for registering asylum seekers and determining refugee status. (Source: Human Rights Watch)

UK borders and migration policy

A report on the lack of immigration legal aid in South-west England states that including providers who provide legal aid remotely from outside the local area creates a ‘mirage’ of capacity. It found many providers listed by the government as available for service were in fact unable to take on work, asylum appeals in particular. (Source: Public Law Project)

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC)’s annual report reviews the current position on net migration policy, the skilled worker visa and the seasonal worker route. (Source: MAC)

The government announced that nearly 13,500 people have been removed from the UK since it took office in July, with human rights groups expressing concerns about the consequences for some of those forcibly returned. Enforcement activity in relation to illegal working has also increased. (Sources: the Guardian, Home Office)

Still on enforcement, a new data briefing describes the use of immigration detention in the UK, noting that numbers of people detained has fallen in recent years, after peaking at around 32,000 in 2015. Relatedly, a coroner criticised Mitie, a detention

centre operator, for only permitting a detainee and his mother to meet in a ‘closed visit’ behind glass. The detainee was a Colombian man who later died by suicide. Mitie has since apologised. (Sources: Migration Observatory, The Independent)

A judge has found that the UK unlawfully detained the group of more than 60 Sri Lankan Tamils on Diego Garcia who were initially rescued while trying to reach Canada to seek asylum, most of whom are now in the UK. One man giving evidence described the camp there as ‘hell on Earth’. (Source: the Guardian)

Specific migrant groups

On asylum:

- A Home Affairs Committee inquiry into asylum accommodation will investigate how asylum accommodation is delivered, including how services and local authorities are affected and how the Home Office works with local partners. Written submissions are invited until 3 February. (Source: UK Parliament)

- The government announced the closure of seven asylum hotels in the new year due to a reduction in the backlog of cases. (Source: Sky)

- A new report urges government to avoid ‘short-sighted measures aimed at conjuring an illusion of control’ when developing asylum policy; recommendations include an annual Migration Plan, using evidence, and for councils, Strategic Migration Partnerships and combined authorities to have more involvement in providing accommodation and support. The report points to regional Hong Kong ‘welcome hubs’ as a potential support model. (Source: Institute for Government)

- Similarly, this briefing focusing on current problems in the asylum system, recommends priority should be given to competence and quality of decision making, saying the system has been overwhelmed by mismanagement rather than arrivals. It points out that while the backlog of decisions on asylum claims has fallen, the number of appeals has increased significantly. (Source: Free Movement)

The European Commission is taking the UK government to court for violating the rights of EU citizens in the UK, particularly in relation to workers and to extended family members. (Source: European Commission)

A pilot scheme funded by the London Mayor will allow people with ‘insecure’ immigration status to report workplace exploitation without fear of their details being shared with the

Home Office. Also on modern slavery, this report brings together findings from research on preventing exploitation and trafficking of children. (Sources: The Standard, Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre)

69,905 international undergraduate students were accepted at UK universities in 2024, a drop of 2.3% from the previous year. (Source: The Standard)

Cohesion and integration

In case you missed it - the Women and Equalities Committee launched an inquiry into community cohesion, inviting evidence about assessments, barriers, threats, the role of social media, and examples of practice, including in schools. Written submissions can be made until 31 January. (Source: UK Parliament)

Source URL:
https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/news/migration-news-roundup-23-december-2024