Migration news roundup 28 November 2022



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Stories that inspired us this week

As Wales makes it to the World Cup for the first time in many years, Welsh team Swansea FC are providing opportunities for young people seeking asylum to play football and have fun with friends. (Source: Swansea City)

'The Swimmers' is a new film on Netflix telling the amazing story of Syrian swimmer Yusra Mardini, who almost drowned at sea fleeing her country and went on to compete at two Olympics. (Source: Tribune)

International news

The FIFA World Cup 2022 commenced amid calls for the host country, Qatar, and FIFA to pay compensation to families of migrant workers who died in building the infrastructure, such as these families in Nepal who tell the stories of their lost loved ones. (Sources: Human Rights Watch, Open Democracy)

With attacks on civilians and rising armed conflict UNHCR reiterated a call for a ban on returns to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including those who have had their asylum claims rejected. (Source: Info Migrants)

UK borders and migration policy

Official immigration statistics publications published include the following:

- Net migration to the UK reached 504,000 in the year ending June 2022, levels not previously recorded, made up of mainly non-EU citizens.
- 86,000 people made an asylum claim in the year ending September 2022. The number of people awaiting an initial decision has reached 143,000 with 68% of people now waiting more than six months.
- 44,500 people arrived on small boats in the year ending September 2022, with nearly half arriving in July to September.
- An update on the National Transfer Scheme up to September 2022 was also released.

(Sources: Home Office, Office for National Statistics)

The government published a next stage of the New Plan for Immigration, setting out steps for the transformation of the UK border into a fully digital system. While the head of the Confederation of British Industry urged government to address labour shortages by increasing migration, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak reiterated his priority to reduce 'illegal migration' and Labour leader Keir Starmer spoke about reducing dependence on workers from overseas. (Sources: Home Office, BBC, ITV)

There's continued coverage of people crossing the Channel in small boats:

- In the week marking a year since the tragedy in which at least 27 people died, it emerged that the UK investigation has not yet spoken to victims' families and won't conclude for at least six months. Meanwhile, French coastguards could be liable for criminal charges. (Sources: the Guardian, Metro)
- An Iranian man has described how smugglers forced him and his family to board a dinghy by threatening to kill his children. (Source: BBC)
- Here's a personal account of an Albanian man who was deported soon after arriving, having disclosed that his reason for entering the UK was to work rather than seeking asylum. (Source: BBC)
- There was a radio debate on Channel crossings and asylum, while this article takes a look at the mixed welcome for new arrivals in Kent. (Source: BBC, the Guardian)
- Finally, there's a new briefing on the history of UK-French co-operation on border controls. (Source: UK Parliament)

Last year 8% of deportation appeals were allowed on human rights grounds, which some contend calls into question the government's justification of its plans to reform human rights law. (Source: Free Movement)

At a hearing of the Special Immigration Appeals Commission it's been argued that Shamima Begum should have been considered as a possible trafficking victim, as she was only 15 when she left the UK to marry an Islamic State soldier. (Source: the Guardian)

Specific migrant groups

This resource explains routes to immigration status for people who are undocumented. (Source: The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants)

It was confirmed that a man died in hospital having become unwell at the Manston processing centre. The site has since been completely emptied with people thought to have been transferred to hotel accommodation. When questioned by the Home Affairs Select Committee about the problems at Manston, Home Secretary Suella Braverman blamed new arrivals and people smugglers. The meeting also highlighted contradictions in UK asylum policy, with the Home Office unable to explain how someone might be able to come to the UK and seek asylum legally. (Sources: BBC, Parliament Live, Sky)

Home Office 'insiders' told BBC's Newsnight that the department's drive to recruit asylum decision-makers is causing further delays to processing the backlog of casework, with many staff dropping out due to the pressures of the role. The programme also revealed that caseworkers were using travel books as part of their country research. (Sources: YouTube, Independent)

Following changes to the Immigration Rules, Home Office guidance on refugee family reunion has been updated to clarify eligibility for those arriving on Afghan schemes. Arrivals under pathway 2 of the Afghan Citizens Relocation Scheme (ACRS) are

eligible sponsors for refugee family reunion, unlike those who came under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) or pathways 1 and 3 of the ACRS. (Source: Home Office)

A follow up survey on Ukraine Scheme visa holders by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) found nearly half of arrivals are facing challenges accessing privately rented accommodation. Although half reported difficulties accessing the labour market mainly due to language barriers, there is a notable increase in the number of visa holders now in employment. (Source: ONS)

The latest EU Settlement Scheme statistics reveal nearly 7 million applications had been received by 30 September, with over 800,000 after the deadline. Meanwhile, in their report to the Independent Monitoring Authority, the3million highlight the impact of decision-making delays and digital borders on travel for EU nationals, and warn that changes planned as part of the 'New Plan for Immigration' will further increase travel chaos. (Sources: Home Office, the3million)

The latest immigration statistics show a decline in British National Overseas visa applications from Hong Kongers, with only 10,000 received in the latest quarter. In total, just over 150,000 visas have been issued under the route. For those already in the UK, transferability of existing professional qualifications has been a key issue, which is being addressed by a pilot with nurses led by East Midlands Council. In other news, the second episode of 'Hong Kong's Fight for Freedom' has been aired. (Sources: Home Office, Welcome Committee for Hong

Kongers, Klik2learn, BBC)

Cohesion and integration

Migration Yorkshire research partner IPPR has published a toolkit about encouraging social connections in local communities. It's aimed at council officers, employers and the voluntary community sector, and draws on data collected in Yorkshire and Humber. (Source: IPPR)

The Mayor of London has lifted eligibility restrictions for courses funded through the Adult Education Budget, enabling all migrant groups to access English learning from the first day of their residence in London. (Source: Deputy Mayor of London on twitter)

A report has found that Black people are three and a half times more likely to experience statutory homelessness than White British people. The report is the first in a three-year programme that studies experiences of homelessness amongst Black and other ethnic minorities. (Source: Heriot Watt University)

A new briefing reveals that 17% of NHS staff are from abroad. (Source: UK Parliament)

Labour Peer Ruth Smeeth reflects on how language used to refer to migration today bears similarities to that used to refer to Jewish migrants historically. She writes about the experiences of her family coming to the UK from Eastern Europe in 1890 and how those memories inform her response to the position of the

current government. (Source: The Jewish Chronicle)

Loughborough University found that football is a source of aspiration for many new migrants and remains a ‘possible dream’ for those living in precarious situations. (Source: The Conversation)

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