Migration news roundup 16 January 2023



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Stories that inspired us this week

In Greater Manchester a retired estate agent and his wife raised £200,000 to help 18 Ukrainian refugee families with rent-free accommodation, while a new children's e-book inspired by the Homes for Ukraine scheme and co-written by a Ukraine guest aims to encourage compassion towards refugees. (Sources: ITV, BBC News)

To be happier we need to be kind! Suggestions for 52 acts of kindness for 2023 include volunteering as an interpreter or helping someone with English language, donating a coat or helping someone seeking asylum with adapting to life in the UK. (Source: the Guardian)

International news

On international sea crossings, 24 volunteers who rescued migrants at sea have been charged with human trafficking offences in Greece, a move considered an attack on human rights by NGOs and some members of the European Parliament. Also in Greece, a man from Somalia who saved more than 30 lives at sea, and then wrongly convicted and sentenced to 142 years in prison was released at an appeal. Meanwhile outside Europe, Morocco has increased the sentence of 13 migrants accused of the deadly crossing attempt into Spain, punishment

the Moroccan association of Human Rights considers severe and unjust. (Source: Info Migrants)

In other news, Pakistan deported more than 600 Afghan refugees to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, while in Rwanda, President Paul Kagame threatens to deport Congolese refugees as a response to criticism of the country's role in the conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo, prompting further concern about the appropriateness of the country as a destination for some people seeking asylum in the UK. (Sources: the Guardian, VOA, iNews)

UK borders and migration policy

There are a few stories about people arriving on small boats this week:

- The planned new legislation will reportedly remove the need for a removal agreement with another country, for an asylum claim to be declared inadmissible.
- In response to plans to detain all new arrivals, the chief prisons inspector has said the UK prison system doesn't have the capacity to house them.
- The 'Project Kraken' campaign is encouraging coastal residents to report unusual activity.
- In a poll for GB News only 4% of respondents were either completely or fairly confident that the government can 'solve the small boats crisis'. (Sources: Times, Telegraph)

Elsewhere, 2,285 British citizens were told to leave EU countries between January 2021 (the end of the Brexit transition period) and September 2022, with many of these cases thought likely to relate to post-Brexit residency rules, while this article considers whether in-country visa delays, particularly issues with Section C leave, which is issued when people await the outcome of an application to extend or vary their leave, might start deterring people from migrating to the UK to work. (Sources: the Guardian, Free Movement)

Specific migrant groups

A report on London councils' responses to Ukraine Scheme from Workers Rights Centre has revealed that under the Homes for Ukraine scheme visas were issued to fake and unvetted sponsors. This was a result of Home Office issuing visas before local authority housing and safeguarding checks had taken place. Other notable findings include the risk of homelessness and increasing pressures on frontline staff. It recommends government develops a long-term refugee integration strategy and housing strategy. Meanwhile, the latest homelessness data confirms that over 200 Ukrainians have been supported by local authorities in Yorkshire & Humber. (Sources: Works Right Centre, GOV.UK)

A legal challenge against the Home Office is underway after some Afghan refugee families were moved between bridging hotels across the country, disrupting children sitting GCSEs and potentially undermining Home Office's duties to safeguard and

promote the wellbeing of children. (Source: BBC)

Some UK universities found themselves rolling back support amid soaring cost of living, however, chief executive of UK Council of International Students Affair urges institutions to inform and make hardship funds available to all students including international students, regardless of their visa conditions. Furthermore, there has been concerns as well as hopes regarding the higher education sector's recent visa reforms discussed by the government which would affect not only international students and their dependents, but also the reputation of the sector as a whole. (Sources: The Pie News, University World News)

The man convicted of manslaughter for the deaths of 39 trafficked Vietnamese people in a lorry in 2019, has been ordered to pay compensation to their families. (Source: Daily Mail)

The NHS charging regulations were updated to clarify access to healthcare for EU citizens. The main change relates to the position of EU nationals and family members who are waiting for a decision on their status. (Source: Department of Health and Social Care)

Hongkongers who are involved in political activities in the UK continue to face retaliation from the Chinese government. In other news, Friendship Festivals for Hongkongers have started with an event in Nottingham. In our region, Leeds is hosting an event this Saturday, coinciding with the Lunar New Year

celebrations. (Sources: Financial Times, BBC News, Eventbrite)

The Age Estimation Science Advisory Committee provided recommendations on using scientific methods to assess age of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The committee recognises that there is no infallible method to determine age and proposes the use of scientific methods to determine if the age 'is possible' rather than exact. (Sources: Home Office, the Guardian)

Following last week's news of apparent Home Office plans to abandon many of the reforms promised following the Windrush review, there are now indications that ministers are still committed to delivering them. (Source: Evening Standard)

Cohesion and integration

Read this short but powerful letter from a host, highlighting how a young person seeking asylum has enriched the UK, and the importance of recognising the strengths and contributions migrants bring to their destination countries. (Source: the Guardian)

Research finds that being bilingual can be positive for children with developmental disabilities, as it can help in forming social connections, developing identity and enabling them to feel close to their community. (Source: the Conversation)

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