

Migration news roundup 21 August 2023



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Stories that inspired us this week

People seeking asylum housed in Lambeth, London, are now eligible for 12 months free off-peak access to 'Active Lambeth' leisure facilities. Councillor Donna Harris said: 'the asylum seekers I have met say their mental and physical health is in the gutter. ... Providing free access to leisure centres to keep them fit and healthy is a small but significant step.' (Source: BrixtonBuzz)

Also in London, kites were flown in a park on 15 August to show solidarity with the people of Afghanistan on the second anniversary of the Taliban takeover of Kabul. (Source: Independent)

The UCI Cycling World Championships featured a refugee team for the first time this year in Glasgow including Amir Arslan Ansari who fled Afghanistan when he was 16 and is now based in Sweden. (Source: STV)

International news

Poland's ruling party began a campaign this week leading up to elections in October when it will also hold a referendum that includes an anti-immigration question. (Source: InfoMigrants)

Following reports of Poland increasing its military presence at the border with Belarus, Latvia is now doing likewise, recalling border guards from leave and bringing in armed forces to reduce attempted border crossings. (Source: Al Jazeera)

This article sheds light on the stark 'business' of people smuggling on the route from Syria to Europe via Libya, still ongoing 12 years into the conflict. A smuggler is quoted saying, 'the first year we started, we only sent one group. Today, we send a batch every month' to Libya. (Source: Al Jazeera)

UK borders and migration policy

Listen to this analysis reflecting on government's 'small boats week' which includes an interview with the Migration Observatory. Meanwhile the number of people arriving on small boats continues to be lower than this time last year, at just over 17,200 (compared with almost 20,500 last year). There are reportedly doubts over UK hopes of striking a deal to return migrants to EU countries. (Sources: Sky, BBC, inews)

Several outlets reported that newly granted refugees are receiving a shorter notice period than usual to leave supported asylum accommodation. This appears to be a change in the implementation of existing policy although there's no official information available at the time of writing, with slightly differing media interpretations of what's happening. (Sources: the Guardian, Evening Standard)

Chair of the Bar Council, Nick Vineall KC, criticised the Conservative party for its attacks on 'lefty lawyers', highlighting the case of Jacqueline McKenzie who has received threatening messages after being identified in an anti-Labour dossier. (Source: the Guardian)

Specific migrant groups

Over 1,000 refugees have been brought to the UK by members of the public under the Community Sponsorship Scheme since it launched in 2016. (Source: Home Office)

The decision to temporarily house refugees from the Ukraine and Afghan schemes on a new housing development in Lincolnshire has been defended by local councillors, with some local residents unhappy. Meanwhile, this article reflects on the Homes for Ukraine scheme and questions whether it could be applied to other refugee groups, having found that members of the public feel less connected to other groups. (Sources: My Local Lincolnshire, The Conversation)

There are a few modern slavery stories this week:

- Statistics from the system for identifying and supporting modern slavery survivors, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), have been released for the second quarter of 2023. They show a fall in the number of referrals to 3,998, the lowest number since the first quarter of 2022. Albania remains the top nationality, followed by the UK. The proportion of positive 'reasonable grounds' decisions has fallen for the second consecutive quarter, from 58% the previous quarter to 48%, having stood at 85% in the final quarter of 2022 before provisions from the Nationality and Borders Act came into force in January. (Source: Home Office)
- A new report 'Leave in Limbo' recommends that trafficking survivors should be automatically granted leave to remain and a route to settlement. (Source: Helen Bamber Foundation)
- This article gives an overview of some academic research on modern slavery and mental health and describes an exhibition on the topic created by Syrian artist Sara Shamma. (Source: King's College London)
- This report provides an overview of modern slavery in 2023 at an international level and includes recommendations for the UK. (Source: US Government)

The Home Office announced a priority service, costing £500, for HongKongers to have their British National (Overseas) visas processed more quickly, within five working days. (Source: Hong Kong Free Press)

Cohesion and integration

Here's a look at the impact of 'small boats week' and the Bibby Stockholm accommodation on the far-right, on asylum seekers and on communities. (Source: Hope Not Hate)

In Italy a new integration project is enabling unaccompanied young migrants to immerse themselves in the culture of their new city through learning and study tasks to create an intercultural guidebook. (Source: InfoMigrants)

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