

# Migration news roundup 25 March 2024

View of Houses of Parliament from bridge over river Thames

Image

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## Stories that inspired us this week

The Hong Kong story market, part of the Hong Kong March events aiming to promote the Hong Kong culture in the UK, has taken place in Wakefield last weekend. (Source: Experience Wakefield)

The University of Bristol was celebrated as a 'University of Sanctuary' by students and staff on 18 March 2024. Since 2016 the university supported 76 student through Sanctuary scholarship. (Source: University of Bristol)

## International news

The EU has signed agreement with Egypt with intention to increase border control and limit irregular migration. This is similar to deals EU has previously signed with Turkey, Tunisia and Mauritania. (Source: POLITICO)

Beyond Europe, in Australia 'migration hit another record high,' resulting in its government to implement tougher visa rules for international students. And in Texas, the USA, a new law which allows local police to arrest and prosecute anyone they think has entered the country illegally, came briefly into effect before it got blocked by an appeals court. Finally, in Hong Kong, a tough security law known as Article 23 was passed. Article 23 expands on the Beijing – imposed national security law and covers offences such as theft of state secrets, national security, treason, insurrection and external interference. (Sources: Reuters, BBC News)

## UK borders and migration policy

The National Audit Office's new report on asylum accommodation has exposed that costs of accommodating people seeking asylum in large alternative sites are significantly higher than in hotels, despite the government proceeding with these plans on the basis that they would be a cheaper alternative. While the cost difference is set to be £46m higher, over £3.4m has also been spent on developing sites that ultimately have not been used. The report undermines Home Office's long term plans around asylum accommodation. (Sources: NAO, the Guardian)

More scrutiny on Home Office spending this time regarding the Rwanda scheme. After analysing the recent findings from the NAO's report on the programme, IPPR estimates that the total payments to Rwanda could be as high as £3.9bn. Reports reveal that the government hopes to remove up to 2,000 people seeking asylum to Rwanda in the first six months, aiming to complete the first removals in May. However, the Bill's passage received a further setback this week after 7 defeats on amendments in the House of Lords. (Sources: IPPR, inews, the Guardian)

More than 500 people are believed to arrive in the UK shores via small boats on Wednesday, the highest number this year. This included a man who had presented with stab wounds after being attacked in Calais prior to departure. (Source: ITV News)

## Specific migrant groups

More on asylum accommodation sites this week as the Prime Minister confirmed that the former RAF site, Scampton, has had its maximum capacity slashed from 2,000 to 800. Meanwhile, a Home Office press statement declares that the 100th asylum hotel closure will take place next week. (Sources: BBC News, Home Office)

On modern slavery:

- This blog offers some analysis of the recently published end of year National Referral Mechanism (NRM) statistics, which provide an overview of numbers of people identified and supported as modern slavery survivors. (Sources: Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre, Home Office)
- Following a recent report, this article focuses on the ongoing concerns about exploitation of migrant workers in the care sector, highlighting shocking experiences including rape and sexual harassment as well as a range of labour abuses. (Sources: Citizens Advice, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism)
- This new leaflet is aimed at overseas care workers and explains their employment rights. (Source: Justice and Care)
- A new report highlights the experiences of Black and Asian survivors accommodated in safe houses in the UK. (Source: UK BME Anti-Slavery Network)

Lord Alf Dubs highlighted the risk of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children being sent to Rwanda, if changes are not made to the bill. Based on the current Rwanda bill, if a young person claims to be under 18 but two immigration officials think they are an adult at first sight, they will be processed as adults without a social worker age assessment. (Source: inews)

Amendments made to the BN(O) visa route through the latest changes to the immigration rules are making it easier for adult dependent relatives of BN(O) sponsors to come and stay in the UK.

This means that from the 4th of April they will no longer have to apply at the same time as the main applicant and their leave will be granted for 5 years, rather than being in line with the sponsor. Other changes include allowing BN(O) visa status holders who have British citizenship to sponsor family members to come to the UK. In other news, details of VCSE funding for year 4 of the Hong Kong Welcome Programme have been announced. (Sources: Home Office, DLUHC)

A report has found that at least 15 universities in the UK have announced job cuts following decrease on their number of international students. And, Vivienne Stern MBE, chief executive of Universities UK, responded to mainstream media accusations saying that enrolments of overseas students does not reduce the number of places available to home students. (Sources: The Independent, The PIE News).

## **Cohesion and integration**

The Commission on the Integration of Refugees published its final report, collating findings from interim reports and submitted evidence from thousands of stakeholders from across the country, including Migration Yorkshire. The recommendations include devolving asylum and refugee support systems, greater authority for strategic migration partnerships, and improved access to employment and education. There's more on the proposals here. (Sources: Commission for the Integration of Refugees, the Guardian)

British Future shared the results of a poll on the public's opinions of the Safety of Rwanda Bill. The poll finds that a strong majority of the public believes that there should be a system in place to check that the UK and Rwanda have implemented safeguards set out in the treaty they signed, and the government complies with domestic and international law. (Source: British Future)

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## **Contact us about research**

If you have any questions about our research, contact us:  
[research@migrationyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:research@migrationyorkshire.org.uk)  
0113 378 8188

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