

Migration Yorkshire policy update March 2022

March 2022

An overview of the latest statistics, policy and research on migration issues affecting partner organisations in Yorkshire and Humber.

Summary

- Initial government announcements about options available to Ukrainians to come to or remain in the UK largely focused on those already in the UK or British nationals with family members in Ukraine. (para. 3)
- Over 28,000 people crossed the Channel in small boats in 2021, over three times the number in 2020. In November, 27 people lost their lives on a single day. (paras. 5,7)
- Report stage of the Nationality and Borders Bill has begun in the House of Lords with voting on amendments, amid continued criticism. (para. 17)
- With continued labour shortages, the Seasonal Worker visa route is extended to the end of 2024 and care workers were added to the Shortage Occupation List. (para. 24)
- Immigration statistics for 2021 show the highest number of asylum applications in the UK since 2003. The cost of housing asylum seekers and Afghan refugees in hotels was revealed at £4.7 million a day. (paras. 40,41)
- Government announced the Afghan Citizen's Resettlement Scheme would open in January. (para. 50)
- All councils are now required to care for unaccompanied children through the National Transfer Scheme. (para. 52)
- The Supreme Court ruled the Home Office can continue to charge whatever it wishes for children to register as British citizens. (para. 57)
- The BN(O) visa scheme is being extended to more young Hongkongers. 47 national and regional projects have been funded to support new arrivals. (paras. 84, 87)
- The White Paper 'Levelling Up the United Kingdom' was published, proposing ways to 'spread opportunity more equally' across the country, including a proposal for a 'Strategy for Community Spaces and Relationships'. (para. 100)
- Broadcasters agreed to stop using the term BAME where possible. (para. 109)
- The situation in Belarus dominated international news over the winter. (paras. 127-130)
- During the Australian Open, Novak Djokovic was held in a hotel used to detain asylum seekers, giving renewed attention to treatment of asylum seekers. (para. 136)
- Local stories about migrant communities include nurses recruited through a scheme for refugees, Afghan footballers arriving in Leeds, a royal visit to a hotel hosting Afghans, and a Sheffield student represented Jamaica in the Winter Olympics. (para. 143)

UK migration trends

1. [The latest migration statistics published by the Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS) provide the first net migration figures released since March 2020, showing how much net migration (the difference between immigration and emigration) plummeted during 2020 because of Covid and Brexit: by 88% to 34,000 people

(compared to 2019 when it was 271,000). [India remains the top non-UK country of birth, and Polish is still the top non-British nationality](#) according to estimates of the EU and non-EU population (year ending June 2021). (Source: ONS)

2. [Latest Home Office immigration statistics for 2021](#) cover a range of migration issues – travel for work, study, family and protection reasons as well as visa extensions and citizenship grants – details for different groups are provided throughout this paper. (Source: Home Office)

UK borders and migration policy

Ukraine

3. [The Prime Minister made a statement about Ukraine](#) (and earlier to Parliament on 22 February) followed by Home Office confirmation that [Ukrainians in the UK will be able to extend or change their visa types](#), as well as measures to support family members of British nationals who are in Ukraine or now in a neighbouring country. [The Home Secretary also introduced the promise of a humanitarian sponsorship route](#). [Home Office guidance is available](#) and being regularly updated. (Sources: Prime Minister's Office, Home Office, UKVI)

4. In this radio interview extract [the Chief Executive of Refugee Action calls on the government to respond to the unfolding Ukrainian refugee crisis with more safe routes](#) to the UK via the resettlement scheme, and challenges the government not to use the Nationality and Borders Bill to criminalise those, including Ukrainians, who may be forced to arrive by other routes. (Source: Times Radio on Twitter)

Sea crossings

5. At least [27 lives were lost in November when a boat sank in the Channel](#). A [survivor shared his experience](#) and the BBC published an [hour-by-hour account of the tragedy](#). A [French NGO has initiated legal action against British and French officials](#) while French journalists claim they have [evidence of contact between the people in the boat and French rescue services](#) that was previously denied. (Sources: BBC, Sky News, Independent, RFI)

6. Prior to the tragedy pressure had been building, with [Steve Barclay asked to lead a review](#). The [Home Office apparently refused to release evidence for its claims about 'pull factors'](#). The Home Secretary laid blame on both [the EU and civil servants](#) although later [issued a statement of gratitude for her staff's hard work](#). (Sources: the Guardian, Mirror)

7. [Over 28,000 people crossed the Channel in small boats in 2021](#), more than three times the number in 2020. In November [crossings on a single day exceeded 1,000](#) for the first time. There are predictions that [up to 65,000 people could use the Channel route this year](#). There's consternation in some quarters that [daily figures may no longer be released](#) but instead published quarterly, with the Home Office responding to [concerns raised by the statistics watchdog](#). (Source: BBC, Daily Mail, Office for Statistics Regulation)

8. Tension between the UK and France intensified. Even before November's tragedy, amid [plans to strengthen UK-France cooperation](#), [Home Office 'insiders' allegedly accused France of not caring about migrant deaths](#). Following the fatalities [the Home Secretary was uninvited from talks with European ministers](#) after an open letter from the Prime Minister to French President Macron was posted on Twitter, pushing for joint maritime border patrols (since [formally rejected by France](#)) and a bilateral readmissions agreement. French ministers claimed [migrants are encouraged by opportunities to work illegally in the UK](#). A [deal with France to tackle Channel crossings looks unlikely](#) before French elections in April. [President Macron reportedly wants people to](#)

[be able to claim UK asylum from within France](#). (Sources: Guardian, Daily Mail, Politico, BBC, City AM)

9. The Home Secretary was [criticised for suggesting most arrivals aren't fleeing persecution](#), a stance contradicted by recent statistics showing two-thirds of applicants were granted refugee status when first claiming asylum. Refugee Council [analysis found that people on small boats are largely from countries with the highest asylum grant rates](#). [Government ministers continued to describe crossings as 'illegal'](#) despite December's court ruling that people trying to reach the UK to seek asylum are not committing a crime. [12 people seeking asylum prosecuted for people smuggling offences](#) after steering dinghies, have had their convictions quashed. (Sources: Independent, Refugee Council)

10. The [Royal Navy has been given overall responsibility for operations dealing with small boat Channel crossings](#), although the Ministry of Defence says it [will not enforce the dinghy 'pushback' policy](#). [Yorkshire MPs have commented on the plans](#). Meanwhile [Border Force staff are reportedly considering strike action](#) over the issue, and the union is pursuing a legal challenge jointly with Care4Calais (apparently the [Home Office would likely lose a court challenge](#)). (Sources: BBC, the Guardian, Yorkshire Post)

11. There are reportedly plans for a [new fast track system where asylum claims are assessed within a fortnight](#) of arrival. A [former Australian minister](#) involved in establishing asylum offshoring system will undertake a review of Border Force and assist with the response to small boats arrivals. (Sources: Arab News, Independent)

12. [Inspectors have criticised conditions in holding facilities in the south east](#) for migrants arriving on small boats. Underlining the need for appropriate facilities, it's been reported that in the first 6 months of 2021, [two-thirds of arrivals via small boats were suffering from hypothermia](#). An article highlights the ['less than optimal' standards at a new, temporary reception centre](#) in Kent. (Sources: HM Inspectorate of Prisons, the Guardian, Express)

13. The [Home Office accepts it's been unlawfully confiscating new arrivals' phones](#). However, [the Nationality and Borders Bill will allow for the confiscation of electronic equipment](#), for counter-terrorism purposes. (Independent, Middle East Eye)

14. There have been two recent opinion polls: one found that [4 in 5 people disapproved of the government's handling of the issue](#); in the other [over half agreed migrants arriving in boats should be returned immediately](#). (Sources: YouGov, Express)

15. Here's a reminder of the [reasons people make this dangerous journey](#). Along with others who came to the UK on Kindertransport at the outbreak of World War Two, [Lord Dubs has called for safe and legal routes for refugees](#), and here's an [overview of campaigners' suggested solutions](#). (Sources: Infomigrants, Guardian)

16. Finally, here's a ['fact check' explanation of common questions about small boats](#) (also available on audio) (Source: the Ferret).

Nationality and Borders Bill

17. The [Bill completed the committee stage at the House of Lords](#). [Report stage](#) began, where amendments are voted on. [Amendments tabled](#) would [enable unaccompanied children to join family members in the UK](#), lift the ban on asylum seekers working, and remove clauses on aspects such as offshoring, inadmissibility, and the differential treatment of refugees based on means of entry to the UK. The Home Office published [nine new factsheets relating to the Bill](#) on topics such as safe and legal routes, modern slavery, and powers to stop small boats. Some of the earlier [amendments](#) (80 were tabled by government) are [summarised on this twitter thread](#).

There has been widespread consternation about a [government amendment](#) that would allow the [removal of an individual's British citizenship without informing them](#), in certain circumstances. (Sources: UK Parliament, Home Office, Twitter, New Statesman, Free Movement)

18. [Albania, Ghana and Rwanda are rumoured as possible destinations](#) for 'offshoring' asylum seekers. (Sources: Sky News, Independent, the National)

19. The [annual cost of implementing the bill has been estimated at £2.7 billion](#). (Source: Together with Refugees)

20. [The Scottish Parliament voted against the Nationality and Borders Bill](#), refusing to consent to the Bill in a motion that said the Bill will damage communities, and [the London Assembly also voted through a motion against the Bill](#), branding it potentially racist in making ethnic minorities second class citizens. Continued commentary, criticism and [protest](#) comes from many directions, including [150 organisations in a joint letter](#), [the Welsh government](#), [Refugee Action](#) and [Amnesty International](#). [Afghan refugees in the UK have voiced their concerns](#) and polling suggests [the public disagrees with plans](#) for a two-tier system. (Sources: The National, Independent, IMIX, Welsh Government, Refugee Action, Amnesty International)

21. The Joint Committee on Human Rights argues that [the proposed offence of arriving in the UK illegally would contravene the UN Refugee Convention](#) and that pushback measures are not 'consistent with our human rights obligations'. It also warned [the Bill could make it harder for stateless children born in the UK to acquire British nationality](#) and is critical of [planned changes to age assessments, and deprivation of citizenship orders](#). (Sources: UK Parliament, Independent)

22. There are concerns that [the Bill will make it harder for women \(especially trafficking survivors\) to gain refugee status](#), and that [restrictions to family reunion rights will increase the vulnerability of women and children](#). [Peers have tabled an amendment](#) opposing Clause 32 that, critics say, will make it harder for gender-based persecution victims to successfully claim asylum. Sheffield Hallam MP Olivia Blake has spoken out about the [potential impact on people who are LGBT+](#). (Sources: gal-dem, Refugee Council, Guardian, Independent)

23. It's argued the [proposals on modern slavery](#) will [make it more difficult to identify and support victims](#) and [prosecute traffickers](#). (Sources: UK Parliament, Independent)

Post-Brexit immigration

24. There have been continued labour shortages including in the [agricultural](#) and [hospitality sectors](#). The [Seasonal Worker visa route is being extended to the end of 2024](#). Following recommendations in the [Migration Advisory Committee's annual report](#), [care workers have been added](#) to the [Shortage Occupation List](#). The MAC report also [recommended reviewing on the ban on asylum seekers working](#). (Sources: the Guardian, Gov.uk, Free Movement, Twitter)

25. [Adult Dependent Relative Visas were debated in the Commons](#). A GP warned that [medical staff are leaving the NHS](#) and returning to their countries of origin to care for ageing parents due to the difficulties of them obtaining such a visa, thus adding to staff shortages. (Sources: Hansard, Pulse)

26. There have been [no applications for the new visa scheme aimed at the winners of Nobel prizes](#) and other prestigious awards. [The Home Office closed its 'Golden visa' route](#) (the Tier 1 Investor visa route) amid concerns over security and corruption; this article explores how [Russian oligarchs exploited the visa route](#). (Sources: New Scientist, Home Office, Open Democracy)

27. [Many Turkish businesspeople are reportedly in limbo](#); they arrived on European Community Association Agreement visas, but the route ended with Brexit. They can apply for visa extensions, but delays are causing destitution. (Source: Independent)
28. A report concluded that the [new immigration system is unlikely to have a major impact on the economy](#). New analysis found [London is the most attractive UK location for skilled work visa holders](#), with health being the most popular sector in other parts of the country. (Sources: Resolution Foundation, Migration Observatory)
29. Here's a useful [review of immigration policy changes in 2021 and a look ahead to 2022](#). (Source: Free Movement)

The hostile environment

30. [Checking the right to work and rent is changing in April](#): all biometric visa holders will have to evidence their right to work digitally and will no longer be able to use physical cards. A Home Office [review into data sharing between the police and Immigration Enforcement](#) (following a super-complaint about the treatment of crime victims with insecure immigration status) concluded it would be harmful to stop data sharing, and suggested measures such as collaborative partnerships. (Source: Home Office)
31. [Councils had extra funding to support, vaccinate and accommodate rough sleepers over the winter](#) regardless of immigration status. Analysis has been published of the [numbers of people housed through the No Accommodation Network](#) including a case study from South Yorkshire. (Sources: DLUHC, NACCOM)
32. A Citizens Advice report exposes the struggles of people without access to the welfare safety net, finding [81% of people with no recourse to public funds \(NRPF\) visa conditions are behind on at least one essential bill](#). Pending a policy review, [those on the family route applying to remove the NRPF condition from their leave will no longer be automatically moved to a 10-year route to settlement](#). (Sources: Citizens Advice, UK Parliament)
33. [The systemic issues related to the arrangements for charging migrants for access to healthcare are outlined in this think tank report](#), which suggests a range of alternatives happening in Europe. (Source: IPPR)
34. It's been reported that [immigration raids on care homes have continued during the pandemic](#). (Source: Care Home)
35. The [Joint Committee on Human Rights has criticised the Judicial Review and Courts Bill](#), which would make it harder for claimants to challenge appeal refusal decisions – the majority of the reviews affected would relate to asylum and immigration cases. (Source: Wired Gov)
36. A range of developments on detention include:
- Amid apparent [plans to detain all men arriving on small boats](#) there's reportedly been a [significant increase in the number of modern slavery victims identified from within detention](#), and there's continued [critique of the practice of detention](#). (Sources: Daily Mail, Focus on Labour Exploitation, inews)
 - A [public inquiry has begun into mistreatment of detainees at Brook House](#) - [whistleblower accounts of abuse](#) have been heard. A Home Office investigation is underway after [reports of racist Whatsapp messages amongst staff of a Home Office sub-contractor](#) Mitie, who escorts migrants to detention centres. (Sources: BBC, the Guardian, Independent)
 - Derwentside, a [new women only detention centre](#), opened in County Durham. [Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre has been criticised](#) for [housing women alongside men with a history of sexual violence](#).

(Sources: Gov.uk, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, BBC)

- An [evaluation found that women asylum seekers experienced better health and wellbeing while supported in the community](#) than in detention. (Source: Action Foundation)

37. On enforced removals:

- Government's [consultation on reforming the Human Rights Act](#) closes on 8 March, and includes [proposals to make deportation easier](#), despite the right to family life. (Sources: Gov.uk, Free Movement)
- Modern slavery guidance revealed [new decision-making powers for immigration enforcement officers](#) in relation to people facing removal. There are fears of [decisions made with a greater emphasis on immigration status than on protecting victims of crime](#). (Sources: Home Office, the Independent)
- [A Syrian refugee faced removal from the UK to Denmark](#), making him the first known person to be removed under 'inadmissibility' rules. (Source: Morning Star)
- A controversial [deportation flight left for Jamaica](#) with reportedly only two or three of the 50 or so originally intended passengers on board, and at an [estimated cost of £50,000 per person](#) removed. [One of the intended passengers was later identified as a potential victim of trafficking](#). (Sources: Guardian, Independent)
- The Home Office published a [factsheet on returns and charter flights](#). (Source: Home Office)

38. The [government announced a returns agreement with Serbia](#). An interesting [case is presented for the UK re-joining the EU 'Dublin system'](#) despite the UK previously having been a net recipient of refugees under that system in recent years. Some [people hoping to claim asylum here reportedly believe Brexit has improved their chances](#) of success, as individuals can't now be returned to EU countries where they've been fingerprinted. (Sources: Gov.uk, Free Movement, the Guardian)

39. The [government has faced criticism for failing to prevent vulnerable citizens being trafficked to Syria](#) and refusing to repatriate those still detained in North East Syria. This podcast gives [a lawyer's perspective on the Home Secretary's power to remove citizenship](#). (Sources: APPG on Trafficked Britons in Syria - scroll to the end of the page for the report link, Free Movement)

Specific migrant groups

Asylum seekers and refugees

40. [Latest immigration statistics for 2021](#) show the highest number of asylum applications in the UK since 2003, with over 48,500 applications and over 100,000 people awaiting an initial decision at the end of the 2021. When compared with the 27 EU+ countries for the year ending September 2021, the UK was 18th in terms of asylum seekers when measured per head of the population. (Source: Home Office)

41. [The cost of housing asylum seekers and Afghan refugees in hotels was revealed as £1.2m a day](#) when the Home Office appeared in front of the Home Affairs Committee, [but later corrected to £4.7 million a day](#). The error was because the initial figure covers the costs of hotels for Afghans only. These revised costs account for approximately 37,000 asylum seekers and resettled Afghan refugees. (Sources: BBC, Independent)

42. Critique of housing sites includes:

- The All-Party Parliamentary Group ([APPG](#)) on [Immigration Detention](#) published a [report on 'quasi-detention'](#) recommending closure of army barracks and immigration detention contingency sites accommodating asylum seekers. It also opposes plans for reception centres. (Source: APPG on

Immigration Detention)

- A report from the voluntary and community sector highlights harmful [experiences of people seeking asylum housed in hotels, barracks and initial accommodation centres](#) and urges the government to abandon plans to use new large scale accommodation centres. (Source: Asylum Matters)
- Concerns have been raised about [Home Office plans to re-use a former RAF site](#) in Norfolk as asylum accommodation for 180 people. The site was previously used by the Home Office but received complaints from residents and police and has been described as ‘not suitable for anything other than emergency stop-gap’. (Source: Norfolk Live)
- Two asylum seekers caught up in Glasgow hotel stabbings last year are bringing a [High Court challenge against the Home Office and Mears](#), the housing contractor. (Source: the Guardian)

43. Scrutiny of the Home Office in relation to asylum processes continues:

- Findings from a [new inspection report on the initial stages of asylum casework](#) include the increasing length of time to provide asylum decisions (an average 449 days for adults in 2020, 550 days for unaccompanied children) and the relatively new declaration of a case as ‘inadmissible’ due to travelling through a safe third country, was applied to over 3,000 cases in 2021 yet none of the claimants has been returned – leading the inspector to conclude that the ‘inadmissibility’ rule only serves to defer the consideration of a claim. The Home Office accepted eight of nine recommendations in full; this includes for example, reintroducing a service standard, prioritising claims from unaccompanied children and tackling the culture of the workplace. There’s [further external analysis available](#). (Sources: ICIBI, Free Movement)
- Oral evidence to the [Joint Committee on Human Rights outlined problems in the Home Office’s asylum decision-making structure](#), claiming poor quality of asylum decisions, successful appeals and delays at the forefront. (Source: Parliament)
- The [Home Office has been criticised for placing too much emphasis on quantitative data](#) when producing country guidance used by asylum decision-makers assessing claims. (Source: Free Movement)
- A report highlights the [failings in the recent transition to new providers](#) for the asylum support payments card system (ASPEN) which has left many asylum seekers facing periods without any financial support. It calls on the Home Office to publish a lessons learned review. (Source: Asylum Matters)

44. Three reports discuss the experiences of service users in the asylum system:

- A research study of forced migrant survivors of sexual and gender-based violence found that the [UK asylum and immigration system exacerbates trauma](#). (Source: University of Birmingham)
- [A report on destitution in the asylum system](#) from a multi-partner destitution project in Glasgow revealed difficulties experienced by asylum seekers such as a challenging initial six months and the need for better early support and advice to avoid destitution later. (Source: British Red Cross)
- [This report shares the perspectives of women with lived experience of the asylum system](#). It found that for many women the asylum system is not gender sensitive, with participants for example recalling having to disclose experiences of sexual violence to male interviewers. It calls for the Home Office to involve women seeking asylum in plans to reform asylum processes. (Source: British Red Cross)

45. [There are reported plans for piloting the electronic tagging of asylum seekers](#). (Source: the Guardian)

46. An amendment to the Asylum Support Regulations means [asylum support rates rose from £39.63 to £40.85 per person per week](#) with effect from 21 February. The payment rate of £8 per week for those living in full board accommodation is increasing to £8.24. [Refugee Council expressed concern that the payments will still be too low](#) to allow people to support themselves. For more detail on how the payment level is broken down, the

official annual [review of the 2020 cash allowance for asylum seekers](#) for essential needs includes the expected breakdown of the previous £39.63 allowance for food, travel, toiletries, clothing and communications. (Sources: Legislation.gov.uk, Refugee Council, Home Office)

47. A [bombing incident in Liverpool](#) made headlines when an asylum seeker carried out a suicide attack outside Liverpool Women's hospital; [Priti Patel described the incident as indicative of a 'dysfunctional asylum system'](#). [A charity highlighted the potential local impact](#) and the [Church of England was criticised](#) for helping people 'play' the system. (Sources: BBC, Independent, The Guide Liverpool, BBC/Telegraph via Twitter)

48. There were [cross party calls for asylum seekers to be allowed to work](#) but after a review of the evidence submitted by Lift the Ban coalition, government concluded that [no changes will be made to the right to work policy](#). The [government has been criticised for not publishing evidence](#) to support its decision. (Sources: Independent, Free Movement)

49. A Court of Appeal ruling should mean newly-granted [refugees can claim backdated Child Tax Credit](#) from the date of their asylum claim. (Source: Free Movement)

50. On Afghans in the UK:

- This briefing provides [statistics on Afghan asylum seekers and refugees in the UK](#), where they are dispersed to, and where Afghan communities exist. (Source: Migration Observatory)
- Many former [Chevening scholars still in Afghanistan face a desperate dilemma](#) of whether to stay or leave the country. (Source: Research Professional News)
- A [Home Office factsheet on Operation Warm Welcome](#) outlines the support in place for new arrivals from Afghanistan. Subsequently, [the criteria for Afghans to be resettled under the ARAP scheme were narrowed](#). Just before Christmas, [government announced the Afghan Citizen's Resettlement Scheme \(ACRS\) would open in January](#) and has since confirmed [the first resettled family has been granted indefinite leave to remain \(ILR\)](#) and [updated ACRS guidance](#). Those already in the UK as part of the evacuation will be among the first to be resettled under the ACRS, with UNHCR able to make referrals from Spring. (Sources: Home Office, the Guardian)
- Fears exist that Afghan refugees brought to the UK under the Afghan evacuation programme are at [risk of becoming undocumented and subject to the hostile environment](#) policies with temporary visas due to expire soon. (Source: BBC)
- [Afghan refugees in hotels will no longer receive additional support for non-essential toiletries](#), prescription costs and transport to appointments, as they should be receiving Universal Credit. (Source: the Guardian)
- Kirklees features in this article about needing to find [homes for Afghan families](#) while [York City Council confirmed it will resettle 38 people from Afghanistan](#). (Sources: Yorkshire Post, Yorkshire Live)

Children and young people

51. Home Office [data about transfers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children](#) under the National Transfer Scheme showed 119 transfers into Yorkshire and Humber during 2021. (Source: Home Office)

52. In a significant change to national policy, [all councils are now required to care for unaccompanied children](#) who cross the Channel, rather than taking part on a voluntary basis (as has been the case with the National Transfer Scheme so far). [The Home Office wrote to all councils](#) giving them a fortnight to declare reasons for not participating. Subsequently, [a final group of councils was directed to participate in the National Transfer Scheme](#), meaning that now every council in the country is legally required to participate in the scheme. (Sources: BBC, Home Office)

53. A freedom of information request found in the past year over [600 unaccompanied asylum seeking children have been housed in hotels](#) as temporary accommodation, with Ofsted saying placements posed ‘unacceptable safeguarding risks’ and could effectively be classed as unregistered children’s homes. There are more [reports of children going missing from hotels on the south coast](#) and [in Teesside](#). (Sources: BBC, The Times)
54. The Home Office has proceeded with [plans to introduce 'scientific' methods for age assessments of asylum seekers](#), announcing a Scientific Advisory Committee to advise on what methods should be adopted. The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and children’s charities say [the Nationality and Borders Bill will undermine local social workers’](#) expertise with the introduction of the proposed ‘National Age Assessment Board’. (Sources: Home Office, Community Care)
55. [The Home Office also updated its written policy about how they assess the age of a young person upon arrival](#) – bringing in the change where they can assess a person as an adult if they appear significantly over 18 (rather than 25). (Source: Free Movement)
56. [Ministers were questioned about children living in poverty with NRPF conditions](#) particularly during the pandemic; here’s recent written [information on the Work and Pensions Committee inquiry](#) on this topic. This blog post explores [how the Nationality and Borders Bill could affect children](#), given that the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) clause could be applied at some point to families with the new ‘temporary protection’ status. The author points to research about the impacts of low incomes and the NRPF clause upon children. (Sources: Parliament TV/Parliament, London School of Economics)
57. [The Supreme Court ruled that the Home Office can continue to charge whatever it likes for children to register as British citizens](#). At over £1,000 the current fee is unaffordable for many. The law says the fee can reflect the likely benefits of becoming a citizen and subsidise other parts of the immigration system. (Source: Free Movement)
58. At least [18,000 children and young people in care face unresolved immigration issues](#), according to a report by Coram Children's Legal Centre and South London Refugee Association who call on councils to sign an immigration support pledge. (Source: Electronic Immigration Network)
59. New research calculates the difference in educational markers for children who have fled to the UK. Worryingly, [unaccompanied children are over three years behind their peers](#) by the time they take their GCSEs, and they are more likely to be excluded or absent from school. (Source: EPI)
60. The University of Glasgow has produced a [resource on picture books](#) for anyone working with displaced children and a toolkit for those working with children in education or health settings. [Here’s a short article describing the project](#) (click the 7th item on the list) or [watch this two minute Youtube video](#). (Sources: Children’s Literature in Critical Contexts of Displacement, Universities UK International)
61. This recording of a recent [webinar concerns how schools can welcome children who are refugees](#). (Source: The Bell Foundation)

International students

62. Universities UK revealed [that 28% of the student population and 21% of university staff are international](#). According to an international student recruitment marketplace, [the UK remains a top destination for international students](#), with healthcare courses such as nursing attracting a significant increase in applications in the past year. [A briefing on international students’ graduate visa rules](#) provides guidance on requirements and clarifies that this

visa can't lead to settlement. (Sources: Universities UK, FE news, Free Movement)

63. [Universities UK wants government to amend the Visitor immigration route](#) so that exchange students can stay in the UK for a year on a visitor visa rather than a student visa. Around 38,000 exchange students come to the UK each year (who are registered at a university overseas and come to study here for a short time). Fewer immigration controls mean students stay longer – this happened in the past with EU students. (Source: Wonkhe)

64. Various universities are offering scholarships for people with forced migration backgrounds, including [University College London](#) (UCL) and [St Andrews](#). Another list of [university scholarships for people with limited leave to remain](#) includes Leeds University and York St John. [York University is offering summer school scholarships for young people](#), including a specific one for refugees and asylum seekers. (Sources: UCL, University of St Andrews, We Belong, University of York)

65. A study on [the impact of having 'limited leave to remain' on young students](#) claims that this status *reverses* their integration progress. (Source: We Belong)

66. A recent update from the High Court suggests that [access to finance should not be denied to students affected by suspension of services due to the pandemic](#). (Source: Free Movement)

EU nationals

67. [A new briefing on migrants in the UK labour market](#) suggests workers born in EU14 countries are more likely to be in high skilled occupations than the UK born, while those from newer EU member states (EU8 and EU2) dominate occupations classified as low-skilled. In 2020 around half of highly educated workers born in EU8 and EU2 states were in low and medium-low skilled jobs. (Source: Migration Observatory)

68. There are some [new video resources for seasonal workers](#) who are speakers of Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian and English produced by Leeds University as part of their '[Feeding the nation](#)' project. (Source: New Europeans, University of Leeds)

69. [EU nationals are three times more likely to experience homelessness](#) than the general population, with job loss the main underlying reason. (Source: the Guardian)

70. Back in December [Bradford launched their Roma strategy](#), while a new report covers [lessons learned from supporting the Roma community during the pandemic](#). (Sources: CNET, Roma Support Group)

71. The [guidance for border staff on treatment of EU nationals post-grace period](#) was updated clarifying those waiting for status are allowed into the UK. Meanwhile, [there was an increase in the number of EU nationals refused entry to the UK](#), with the majority of those stopped being from Romania. (Sources: Home Office, City AM)

72. EU settlement scheme (EUSS) statistics nationally show:

- Over [6 million EUSS applications were made up to the end of January 2022](#) with almost 400,000 made after the 30 June 2021 deadline. (Source: Home Office)
- [Romania continues to be a top nationality of EUSS applicants](#) followed closely by Poland; each nationality has exceeded 1 million applications. (Source: Home Office)
- Over 300,000 applicants are still waiting for a decision of which [more than 25,000 claims were paused due to pending prosecution](#); some of these were caused by outdated Police National Computer records. (Source: Independent)

73. In Yorkshire and Humber,

- Close to [350,000 EUSS applications have been made in Yorkshire and the Humber](#) up to the end of December 2021; this is now [available in an interactive data dashboard format](#). (Sources: Home Office, Migration Yorkshire)
- Top nationalities of applicants in our region remain broadly the same – Poland (26%), Romania (20%), Slovakia (9%), Italy (5%) and Lithuania (5%), with non-EU applicants continue to account for 5% of applications.
- The rate of applications from children in the region continues to be higher than nationally, with under 18s accounting for 21% of applications, compared to 17% nationally, while older applicants (over 65) account for 2% of applications in Yorkshire and Humber, slightly lower than 3% nationally.
- 52% have been granted settled status and 39% pre-settled, while other outcomes account for 9% (compared to 52%, 41% and 7% nationally). Over 20,000 are still awaiting a decision.

74. Updated [data on applications under the EUSS from looked after children](#) published in December indicates 95% of eligible children have applied to the scheme. In Yorkshire and Humber, 534 children were identified as potentially eligible to apply for status, with 503 making applications (94% of eligible children). The highest number of eligible children were in Bradford (147), Rotherham (118) and Leeds (86), with no children in East Riding and York. (Source: Home Office)

75. A Supreme Court judgement on [access to benefits for EU nationals with pre-settled status](#) overturns last year's ruling, confirming that pre-settled status is not sufficient to meet the 'right to reside' test for the purpose of claiming benefits. The [implications of the judgement](#) are discussed in the recent Housing Rights newsletter. (Sources: Free Movement, Chartered Institute of Housing)

76. More from the courts - [EU nationals appealing deportation orders have their rights protected](#) by the Withdrawal Agreement, while [non-married EU partners lose their residence rights, even in cases of domestic violence](#). (Source: Free Movement)

77. In the [response to a Select Committee report on citizens' rights](#) the Home Office confirmed they will be reminding holders of pre-settled status holders to upgrade their status before it expires. Meanwhile, the Independent Monitoring Authority (IMA) [issued judicial review proceedings](#) against the Home Office in relation to conversion of pre-settled to settled status. (Sources: Parliament, IMA)

78. Landlords' [right to rent guidance now includes information on late EUSS applicants](#), while a memo from the Department for Work and Pensions ([DWP](#)) [clarifies rights to benefits for applicants who are still waiting for a decision](#) on their status. The NRPF Network's [guidance for local authorities on supporting EU nationals](#) is updated. (Sources: UKVI, DWP, NRPF Network)

79. The Home Office accepted most of the recommendations from the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration ([ICIBI](#))'s [report inspecting the EUSS](#) between July 2020 and March 2021, except for the collection of data on vulnerability and protected characteristics. (Source: ICIBI)

80. The [Home Office is currently overlooking the lack of comprehensive sickness insurance in applications for citizenship](#) and this approach is expected to continue. (Source: Free Movement)

81. Generated by EU nationals to show their immigration status for the purpose of proving their right to work, rent and access services, [a share code is now valid for 90 days](#) instead of 30 days. (Source: Home Office)

82. Recent issues reported in relation to the progress of the EUSS include:

- A [change of approach to late applications which follow a refused application made by the deadline](#) has been signalled in updated EUSS caseworker guidance. Such repeat applications are now to be mandatorily refused. [Further explanation of these changes](#) is provided on a legal blog. (Sources: Home Office, Free Movement)
- A freedom of information request revealed that [over a half of calls to EU Settlement Resolution Centre between November 2020/21 went unanswered](#). [Delays in decision-making continue to cause distress](#) to EU nationals and their family members. Many of those who applied using paper applications are still [waiting for the return of their documents](#). (Sources: Free Movement, Ferret, Politico)
- There is a continuing issue of [non-EU family members holding settled status who are unable to return to the UK](#) due to their biometric documents expiring. (Source: Independent)

Hong Kong

83. [103,900 applications for the British National \(Overseas\) \(BN\(O\)\) visa were made by the end of 2021](#). Over 90,000 visas have been granted. There were 80 visa refusals last quarter, the first recorded refusals on the BN(O) route. (Source: Home Office)

84. [The BN\(O\) visa scheme is being extended to more young Hongkongers](#), enabling individuals aged 18 or over who were born on or after 1 July 1997 and who have at least one BN(O) parent to apply to the route independently. The changes are expected to go live in October. (Source: Parliament)

85. Findings from [a survey on the migration intentions of BNO status holders](#) shows 6% of the eligible Hong Kong population were planning to come to the UK, with a further 32% considering the move. Those planning to relocate were younger and more educated, and London is the most popular destination. Meanwhile a [Home Office survey of BNO visa holders](#) from January 2022 provides more details on characteristics of this group, including family composition. The survey indicates that most visa holders intend to stay in the UK long term. (Sources: Migration Observatory, Home Office)

86. [A survey of medical professionals](#) was carried out to support NHS recruitment plans. Relatedly, the NHS is working on [a toolkit aimed at Hong Kong nurses](#) to share good practice and support this cohort in applying for NHS vacancies. (Sources: Hongkongers in Britain, NHS)

87. In February the [results of a grant scheme were announced](#) with [47 national and regional projects allocated funding](#) to offer a range of support to new arrivals from Hong Kong between now and end of June. Seven organisations are delivering national projects covering employment, mental health support and hate crime reporting, while three organisations – Sheffield Chinese Christian Church, Health for All and Faith Action – are providing more localised support in our region. (Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)

Modern slavery

88. The latest [modern slavery statistics show a 33% increase in referrals](#) in quarter 3 2021 compared to the same period last year (although last year's figure was likely lower due to lockdowns). Only [7% of trafficking victims were granted leave to remain in the UK](#) between 2016-2021. (Sources: Home Office, the Guardian)

89. This report provides [an overview of child trafficking in the UK](#) over the past year. (Source: Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner)

90. [Government departments published modern slavery statements](#) for the first time. The [government's modern slavery annual report](#) highlights achievements such as further investment in the police response, and the roll out of the Independent Child Trafficking Service to two-thirds of councils. (Source: Home Office)
91. Annual reports are available for the [Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority](#), the [Salvation Army](#), responsible for delivering support to survivors, and the [West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority Policing and Crime Annual Report 20/21](#) which highlights work to tackle modern slavery, including efforts to raise awareness of domestic servitude. (Sources: Home Office, Salvation Army, West Yorkshire Combined Authority)
92. The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre published a [briefing to inform the government's review of its 2014 Modern Slavery Strategy](#). Recommendations include partnership and prevention work, and inclusion of people with lived experience in policy and research. In a separate briefing, the Centre also described how [Covid-19 increased vulnerability to modern slavery](#). (Source: MSPEC)
93. A report to help set up or improve [Local Modern Slavery Partnerships](#) includes recommendations to government including: sustainable funding, a national framework, and local coordinators. (Source: Shiva Foundation)
94. This [guide for police officers and labour inspectors](#) highlights that fear of deportation can prevent victims of exploitation from coming forward, and recommends developing secure reporting mechanisms. (Source: Focus on Labour Exploitation)
95. Reports giving new insights on this topic include:
- A report from the Chief Inspector for Borders raises concerns that [new ePassport gates may make it more difficult to identify vulnerable passengers](#) such as victims of modern slavery. (Source: ICIBI)
 - The Anti-Slavery Commissioner concludes greater preventative efforts are needed in this [new report examining the issue of re-trafficking](#). (Source: Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner)
 - Research on [labour abuse in the app-based delivery sector](#) found that restrictive immigration policies encourage undocumented migrants to enter the sector, putting them at risk of exploitation. (Source: FLEX)
 - This report explores [migrant workers' vulnerability to labour abuse and exploitation](#) during the pandemic. (Source: FLEX)
 - A [new report calls for needs-based support for modern slavery victims](#), highlights delays in decision-making, and argues that survivors should be seen above all as crime victims. It recommends an additional 12 months of support on leaving the National Referral Mechanism, leave to remain and access to public funds. Commenting on the findings, [the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner argues that victims should not be seen as part of an 'immigration problem'](#). (Sources: Centre for Social Justice, Express)
96. Government recently consulted on [plans to improve victims' experience of the justice system](#); proposals include pre-recorded evidence for modern slavery offence complainants and a new modern slavery strategy. (Source: Ministry of Justice)
97. Some [modern slavery survivors can now claim backdated support](#) after having had their support rate incorrectly reduced where they had access to alternative support such as asylum support. (Source: Gov.uk)

Windrush

98. A [law reform group analysed how the Windrush compensation scheme is operating](#). Of the 15,000 individuals estimated to be eligible for compensation, at the end of August 2021 2,761 had applied, of whom 837

had received payments. There have been [calls from a parliamentary committee](#) as well as [calls from lawyers and campaigners for the scheme to be independent](#). (Sources: JUSTICE, the Guardian, The Justicegap)

99. Local authorities, charities and community [organisations can apply for a Windrush day grant](#) for education on, commemoration and celebration of the Windrush Generation. Applications close 18 March. (Source: DLUHC)

Cohesion and integration

100. The government's White Paper '[Levelling Up the United Kingdom](#)' was published, proposing ways to 'spread opportunity more equally' across the country. There is a lot in the paper, but [one commentary draws attention to a proposal for a 'Strategy for Community Spaces and Relationships'](#) (p.214) of particular relevance to community cohesion and integration. Relatedly, [Hope Not Hate launched a 'bid builder tool'](#) to support local authorities access existing funding to help develop community resilience. (Sources: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, British Future, Hope Not Hate)

101. [Government needs to 'jump-start' efforts to promote integration](#) according to a think tank, through investment in communities through social infrastructure, reform in the immigration system, and adopting the principles of sanctuary and co-production and ensuring they run through integration strategies. (Source: IPPR)

102. New insights into the impacts of the pandemic include:

- [A research report on how coronavirus has impacted on social cohesion and integration](#) identified Bradford, Hull, Scarborough and Selby within a group of [52 council areas where one consequence of the pandemic could be far right extremism](#) as they have a combination of high covid impact, low economic resilience and less liberal attitudes to migration and multiculturalism. (Sources: Hope not Hate, the Observer)
- [Lockdown led to greater isolation for refugees and asylum seekers](#), particularly single mothers and single men, according to this research study. (Source: University of Newcastle)
- A report on [the experiences of undocumented migrants during the pandemic](#) shows how the lives of undocumented migrants have become even more precarious especially in the fields of housing, work and healthcare, and how issues arising from the pandemic have been further exacerbated as a result of the 'hostile environment' policy. (Source: Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants)

103. Campaign groups have called for [all migrants to come within the scope of the public inquiry](#) into the government's handling of the pandemic, including those who are undocumented or have no legal status. (Source: The National)

104. Recent items on homelessness cover:

- A National Audit Office (NAO) report on private renting notes that migrants are three times more likely to live in private-rented accommodation and that privately rented homes are more likely to be unsafe or lower in standard than privately-owned homes or social housing. Disparities are most pronounced in Yorkshire and Humber compared to the rest of England. Alarming, it also found that [a quarter of landlords are unwilling to rent homes to non-UK passport holders](#). (Source: NAO)
- Bradford is a case study in this [briefing on a universal homelessness response for non-UK nationals](#) - which reflects on the government's 'Everyone In' policy and analyses local authority approaches to ending homelessness and how these can include those facing immigration-based restrictions. (Source: Homeless Link)

- [An article 'How racism impacts homeless people'](#) reveals how structural racism impacts access to homelessness services for people identifying as Black or belonging to minority ethnic groups. 'Black households' are more than three times more likely to experience homelessness than all other ethnicities. Partially this is the result of disparities driven by labour market inequalities, immigration policy and the design of the social security system. (Source: Inside Housing – subscription only)

105. [Azeem Rafiq gave evidence to the parliamentary inquiry on racism in cricket](#), including his experiences at Yorkshire County Cricket Club. Some suggest his testimony is not a surprise; stories from other people in cricket identifying as British Asians indicate they were encouraged to see racist abuse as 'banter'. What seems different this time - according to some - is that [Azeem Rafiq is being listened to](#). In response to Azeem Rafiq's testimony, many [stories have been shared by Yorkshire residents who identify as part of the 'British Asian community'](#) about how racism plays a big part in their day-to-day life. (Sources: BBC, the Guardian)

106. [A recent article argues depictions of black people in documentaries are still largely based on stereotypes](#), mainly covering topics such as racism, crime and music. Better representation of black people in more powerful roles, such as editing and commissioning, is needed. (Source: the Guardian)

107. A two-part [documentary features people discussing what it means to be black and British](#). (Source: BBC)

108. [Psychiatrist Holan Liang explores the human need to belong and reflects on her personal experiences of racism](#), growing up in the UK as the daughter of Chinese migrants. (Source: the Guardian)

109. [Broadcasters have agreed to stop using the term BAME](#) where possible, following a BBC-commissioned [report by Birmingham City University](#) that recommends the acronym stops being used as it groups people from very diverse backgrounds, different practices, traditions and values under one umbrella, and may hide discrimination. Instead, more specific terms should be used to describe ethnicity. (Sources: BBC, Birmingham City University)

110. [10 things we learned about public attitudes in 2021](#) includes issues relating to migration. Most people (70%) agree government is handling migration badly, but for different reasons. 'Taking the knee' has become the focal point of talk about race and racism, and now six out of ten football fans back players when taking the knee. Many still do not know much about terminologies around 'Culture Wars', with the exception of the term 'white privilege'. (Source: British Future)

111. Following Little Amal's arrival in our region, here's an [opinion piece reflecting on the giant puppet](#) in context of UK hostility towards sanctuary seekers. (Source: inews)

112. New research suggests that [people are more willing to help if an image of suffering exposes an identifiable individual](#) rather than a group of anonymous, 'faceless masses'. They found that viewers dehumanised people fleeing persecution if the images of them were in big rather than small groups. Furthermore, dehumanisation seems to increase in cases when images show faceless individuals in the sea (as opposed to the land). The researchers suggest it is very easy to depict people instead of being *in crisis* as *being a crisis*. (Source: The Conversation)

113. [Unpacking the myth of the 'good refugee' podcast](#) is a conversation about the impact of the tendency to classify refugees as 'good' or 'bad' – and how the 'good refugee' label can also be problematic. (Source: Philanthropy Age, 49 minutes)

114. A research publication found that [exposure to celebrities, such as Liverpool Football Club's Mohamed Salah, can reduce prejudice](#) by supporters and the wider community. (Source: Migration Observatory)

115. The International Federation of [Red Cross and Red Crescent](#) launched the [#PowerToBe](#) campaign to change negative perceptions of refugees. (Source: IFRC)

116. New [research explores how Scotland's image of being welcoming to migrants fits the experiences of migrants](#) living there. While young adult migrants felt Scotland was welcoming overall, the findings suggest it is less tolerant than how it is presented. Many felt that their 'look' and their accents do not fit the image of what they see as Scottish identity. (Source: The Conversation)

117. Some encouraging stories on the topic of integration and cohesion include:

- [Chef Yotam Ottolenghi shares his story of migration to the UK](#) and speaks up for the importance of diversity, telling us how multiculturalism has made food in the UK better. (Source: the Guardian)
- [In the past year many more UK employers have employed refugees](#). There's a call for firms to be supported to address barriers. (Source: Consultancy UK)
- [Micro Rainbow reflects on their work](#) supporting the integration of LGBTQI+ asylum seekers and non-UK nationals, to mark LGBTQI+ history month. [An asylum seeker and LGBT activist based in Doncaster has shared his story](#) of arriving in the UK and adapting to life here. (Sources: Homeless Link, IMIX)
- To address asylum seekers' travel needs, [Wales is trialling a new program to offer free public transportation to asylum seekers](#). (Source: Forbes)
- Leeds GATE project is highlighted as an example of 'a better approach' at a time when [the Policing Bill threatens to criminalise the Gypsy and Traveller way of life](#). (Source: The Conversation)
- 'That man to man, the world, o'er, Shall brithers be for a' that'- [can poetry connect communities?](#) Read about a Burns Supper with the Yemeni community where people were brought together through poetry and food. (Source: Glasgow Times)

International news

EU

118. During a visit to Lesbos, [Pope Francis criticised European countries for their treatment of migrants](#), while an NGO report states that [LGBT+ asylum seekers are facing 'double discrimination' across Europe](#), including in countries with good records on LGBT+ matters. (Sources: BBC, Euronews)

119. In **France**, [frontline services at Calais were at risk](#) with funding ending and as winter approached. (Source: the Guardian)

120. [Cyprus wants to temporarily stop accepting new asylum applications](#), asking the European Commission to approve such a move. (Source: InfoMigrants)

121. [The former Danish immigration minister was sentenced to two months in prison](#) after ordering several couples who were asylum seekers to be separated. (Source: the Guardian)

122. A [Vietnamese man was sentenced to 15 years in prison](#) in **Belgium** for being the leader of a gang that trafficked migrants found dead in a lorry in the UK in 2019. (Source: BBC)

123. The [new German coalition government announced changes to migration policy](#) and later [followed with a proposal to allow dual citizenship](#) for non-EU migrants as a way to integrate people from Syria, but with huge implications for their large Turkish population. As outgoing Chancellor, Angela [Merkel reflected on her decision to open the country to refugees back in 2015](#) and claims it to have been a success. Indeed, it was reported that

[over half of the refugees who arrived in Germany in 2015 are now employed](#) and 44% speak excellent German, concluding 'Merkel's decision to admit one million refugees in 2015 has had immense economic and social benefits for Germany'. (Sources: Info Migrants, Times Now News, the London Economic)

124. [Over 12,000 Venezuelans have been granted humanitarian protection in Spain](#) fleeing the political situation in 2021, and thousands of [undocumented migrants will have a pathway to Irish citizenship](#) under a one-off government scheme. (Sources: UNHCR/CE Noticias Financias, BBC)

125. [Refugees in Italy have found hope and business success in the design and music worlds](#), despite the challenges posed by the EU's asylum system and restrictions. (Source: the Guardian)

The EU border region

126. Across the EU the topics of pushbacks and walls have dominated.

- Over [11,900 asylum seekers were pushed back at EU borders](#) during 2021. This article considers [what's happened to the 7,000 migrants 'pushed back'](#) from countries like Poland and Lithuania? (Sources: Info Migrants, BBC)
- Here is a [summary of the border walls built across Europe](#) over the past ten years, while this [interactive investigation tracks 1,800km of walls and fences](#) at European borders. (Sources: Agence France Presse, the Telegraph)
- [EU ministers met to discuss border protection](#) as well as rules for repatriating migrants. Some eastern EU countries asked for EU funds for the construction of border walls, but EU Home Affairs Commissioner Johansson stated that 'Pushbacks are clearly illegal. People have the right to apply for asylum'. However, [border checks in the 26-country Schengen area may be tightened](#) due to coronavirus restrictions and the possibility of migrants crossing from Belarus. (Sources: Infomigrants, AP News)
- In a fast-moving situation, many of [Ukraine's neighbouring countries have made plans to receive refugees](#) following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, whilst [the three-kilometre-wide zone between the Poland and Belarus border will remain restricted](#) until the end of June. (Source: Infomigrants)

Belarus

127. A parliamentary [briefing summarises the current Belarus-EU migrant crisis](#) by November. The situation escalated after [a tenth person was found dead on the Belarus-Poland border](#). [Migrants denied entry to the EU have had to deal with dropping temperatures](#) and little support. [The UN condemned Belarus](#) for its handling of the crisis. Read about [an underground network sheltering displaced people](#) on the Poland-Belarus border. (Sources: House of Commons Library, Info Migrants, The Observer, BBC, the Guardian)

128. New measures were introduced by different parties:

- [The EU introduced sanctions](#) against anyone facilitating migrant travel through Belarus to the Polish border, and [the number of countries and airlines preventing certain nationalities from flying to Belarus is growing](#). Indeed, Iraq will repatriate its citizens *from* this area. (Sources: the Guardian, Al Jazeera)
- [The EU Commission was criticised for restricting the rights of asylum seekers](#) and suspending EU law at the Belarus border, at the same time as a controversial border protection law came into force in Poland. (Source: DW)
- [Polish troops used water cannon and tear gas against migrants](#) trying to cross the border from Belarus and [Poland began a \\$400 million border wall](#) leading to outcry from [scientists who warned it could lead to an environmental disaster](#). (Sources: the Guardian, UNHCR covering Al Jazeera)

- [Lithuania plans camera surveillance along its eastern border](#) costing €40 million. (Source: UNHCR covering Deutsche Presse-Agentur)

129. There were [warnings of further deaths](#) happening as the number of migrants grows, the area becomes more militarised, and claims for international protection are denied. This led to [Germany expecting thousands of irregular migrants to cross the border](#) from Poland and Belarus. (Sources: the Guardian, InfoMigrants)

130. [Belarus cleared a migrant camp at the border with Poland](#) and claimed [it will facilitate the return of 5,000 people if the EU allows 2,000 people to enter](#). Indeed, a return flight to Iraq already took almost 400 people. [In a giant, freezing warehouse 1,000 asylum seekers were being held](#) at the end of 2021 just inside the Belarus border. Poland's deputy commissioner for human rights more recently said [at least 1,500 people are still stranded in detention centres](#) with poor conditions. (Sources: UNHCR, Reuters, the Guardian, EUobserver)

The Mediterranean Sea

131. [Sea crossings have increased in the Mediterranean](#) with hundreds of migrants needing rescue. [Deaths of people crossing from Africa to Spain passed 4,400](#) in 2021, more than double the 2020 figure. (Sources: Infomigrants, UNHCR/The Times)

132. Gianni Infantino [the FIFA president sparked outrage in his campaign to introduce a biennial World Cup](#) when he implied it would be a solution to migrant crossings of the Mediterranean. He said to the Council of Europe it would create opportunities for Africans who might otherwise make fatal crossings. (Source: the Guardian)

133. Two Tunisian social influencers drew criticism [by crossing the Mediterranean in a small boat](#). Oxfam raised concern about the [disappearance of over 20,000 migrants who've been taken back to Libya](#) by coastguards. This interactive article allows you to [explore what happens in the central Mediterranean](#) as countries try to prevent people from crossing from Libya to Italy. (Sources: Independent, Info Migrants, The New Humanitarian)

134. In 'an unusual and special case' [Greece allowed a cargo ship in distress travelling from Turkey to dock in Kos](#), with nearly 400 refugees disembarking to claim asylum. It has been reported that [Greece is seeking to return passengers from Pakistan and Bangladesh](#). (Sources: the Guardian, InfoMigrants)

135. On the Canary Islands, [centres for unaccompanied children have reached saturation point](#), with nearly 2,800 young people arriving in recent years. (Source: Info Migrants)

Beyond the EU

136. [Australia's detention policy](#) became a global talking point. Denied entry to play in the Australian Open, [Novak Djokovic was held in a hotel used to detain asylum seekers](#) known for having poor conditions and food, and later deported. [The situation gave renewed attention to treatment of asylum seekers](#) in Australia. [PM Scott Morrison was accused of lying](#) for saying those detained in the same hotel as Djokovic weren't refugees. [A journalist and former detainee offshored by Australia to Manus Island reflected on the story](#), while [another former detainee, now a writer and translator, called for attitudes to change](#). (Sources: the Guardian, the Telegraph, UNHCR/The Washington Post, Open Democracy)

137. In the US, numerous [rallies marked the national 'Day Without Immigrants'](#) calling for President Biden to keep his promise to create a pathway to citizenship for undocumented people. The Biden administration plans to

place [hundreds of immigrants on house arrest as an alternative to detention](#) as a part of his campaign for a more humane approach to immigration policy than the previous administration. (Sources: The Philadelphia Inquirer, New York Post)

138. [Low income countries still bear the greatest responsibility in hosting refugees](#), according to a progress report on the Global Compact on Refugees (and bearing this out, [UNHCR and the Ethiopian government called for more international support](#) for almost a million refugees from 29 countries hosted in Ethiopia) yet, an IOM report notes, [refugees have been increasingly displaced within their countries](#) as a consequence of the pandemic. [UNHCR called on governments to do more to protect refugee women and girls](#) following a surge in violence, exploitation and abuse linked to the pandemic. (Sources: UNHCR, the Guardian, Info Migrants)

139. Relating to **Afghanistan**:

- [Central Asian countries remain closed to Afghan refugees](#). NATO's offer of funding to these countries to look after more people has been rebuffed as an attempt to deflect responsibility for the situation. (Source: The Diplomat)
- It's been reported that [Iran has been regularly deporting tens of thousands of Afghans](#), but recently [500,000 Afghans have fled to Iran](#) as the economy collapses. (Sources: Al Jazeera, UNHCR)
- ['The Left Behind' series captures stories of those trapped in Afghanistan](#), such as a former senior policewoman, a British taxi driver and his family, and officials from the former Women's Affairs Ministry. (Source: the Guardian)
- [Sharbat Gula has recently been evacuated to Italy](#) – she was the Afghan girl with striking green eyes whose image became familiar across the world in 1985. (Source: NBC News)

140. There was increasing concern about refugees fleeing **Myanmar**, [with 20,000 people on the Indian border](#) and a further [13,000 on the border with Thailand](#). (Sources: Outlook India, RFA)

141. [Palestinian refugees in Lebanon went on strike](#) to protest alleged inaction to combat the spread of Omicron in refugee camps. (Source: Middle East Monitor)

142. The arrival of migrants is a sensitive subject in many South and Central American countries because of deep economic woes in Venezuela, Haiti, and Guatemala. Governments are proposing controversial solutions to stop migrants crossing into their countries; for example, [in Chile a ditch is being dug along the border with Bolivia](#) and [in Dominican Republic a wall is being built along the border with Haiti](#). (Sources: The Rio Times – subscription needed, Aljazeera)

Local stories

143. Stories about migrant communities in Yorkshire and Humber include:

- Thanks to an NHS pilot scheme, [Yorkshire is benefiting from a new group of nurses who are Palestinian refugees from Lebanon](#). They'll be working in hospitals in Dewsbury, Pontefract and Wakefield. (Source: Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust)
- In Bradford, [ESOL students](#) were invited to the Royal Shakespeare Company Showcase and a VIP trip to Downing Street. [Refugee entrepreneurs in Bradford will benefit from the recently launched 'New Dawn' initiative](#). Through virtual reality the [BReaThe project enables displaced people to visit digitally recreated historical sites](#). (Sources: Bradford College, The Telegraph and Argus, Bradford University)

- In this video, [a Calderdale primary school share what they've been doing to learn about and support refugees](#). (Source: Calderdale Valley of Sanctuary)
- Local media highlighted Welcome House, a project delivering [a face to face multi-agency service for people seeking asylum in Hull](#). (Source: Hull Daily Mail)
- [‘More than a migrant’ features three people from different walks of life who have made Kirklees their home](#). Kirklees Council put together this video for International Migrants Day. (Source: Kirklees Together)
- In Leeds, there was a [visit by the Duke of Cambridge to a hotel housing Afghan families](#) in Leeds. ‘A modern-day Schindler’s List’ – the [Afghan junior women’s football team arrived safely](#) with the support of [Kim Kardashian and Leeds United](#). On Holocaust Memorial Day, [Ilkley Civic Society unveiled a blue plaque](#) and planted an oak tree to commemorate a hostel for Jewish refugee children in World War II. (Sources: Yorkshire Post, the Guardian, Sky News, Ilkley Gazette)
- [A North Yorkshire veteran created the ‘Buddy Box’ to support Afghan children](#) learning English – it’s already been used in places like Selby. (Source: BBC)
- [A new play opened in York telling the story of a Rohingya boy](#) who spent his life in a detention centre in Australia, a timely production as the Home Secretary explores using similar models here in the UK. (Source: York Press)
- In Sheffield, [a Sheffield Hallam student represented Jamaica’s bobsleigh team](#) in the Winter Olympics in Beijing. [Submissions were invited for the Migration Matters Festival](#) in Sheffield to celebrate the positive impact of migration. Take a moment to enjoy this poem [‘A Sonnet for Sheffield’](#), by award-winning British-born Somali poet and Sheffield-based teacher, Warda Yassin. (Sources: Yorkshire Post, Migration Matters Festival, Good Neighbours Project)

About this issue of the policy bulletin

This update was prepared in February 2022 by a team at Migration Yorkshire: Pip Tyler, Kate James, Vanja ? elebi?i?, Ewa Jamróz, Rosie Cooke, Stefan Robert, Vicky Ledwidge, Alex Fox, Laura-Maria Ruiz Duarte, Sarah Botterill, Caris Etherington, Sophie Tong, Qamran Hussain, Liz Maddocks, Akosiwa Agbokou and Michael Crowe.

Contact us

For more information, please contact us at:

admin@migrationyorkshire.org.uk

[0113 378 8188](tel:01133788188)

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