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The Newsflash is a monthly round up of publications, information, events, funding and jobs relating to asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers for anyone who wants to keep up to date with the latest developments.

The newsflash is produced by the East of England Local Government Association - Strategic Migration Partnership.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees - including refugee resettlement

A letter from the Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts regarding COVID-19 and asylum support and new asylum dispersal housing

The Minister has announced that for the next three months people will not be required to leave their accommodation because their asylum claim or appeal has been concluded. This decision will be reviewed ahead of the end of June 2020. This means that those who would ordinarily have their support stopped because their asylum claim has been refused will remain accommodated. All those who would ordinarily be required to make their own support arrangements because they have been granted refugee status will, similarly, be able to remain in their accommodation. As a consequence, the supported asylum population will grow, as new asylum seekers will enter the system and require housing. In order to meet that growth, the accommodation providers have been asked to source additional capacity across the UK. Ordinarily, housing providers can only procure accommodation within a Local Authority which has agreed in advance that it is appropriate to house asylum seekers in their area (become a “dispersal area”). In order to access as wide a pool of accommodation as possible, the Minister is pausing this requirement and has authorised Providers to identify any suitable properties that they consider appropriate. As the Strategic Migration Partnership will be part of the chain of communication for any activity in this region, please come to us with any enquiries.

Face to face asylum interviews suspended by the Home Office

The Home Office has confirmed that face to face substantive asylum interviews have been halted and they will not be scheduling any new face to face interviews for now. In the meantime, they are exploring other ways to find the information they need to make their decisions; digitally, by telephone and by post/ email, for example. They are looking to set up digital interviews which they hope - availability of staff and applicants allowing – will enable them to conduct substantive asylum interviews again soon.

Asylum seeker housing – changes due to impact of Covid-19

Serco and Clearsprings have written out to their service user population with advice not to contact AIRE unless in an emergency as they will not be able to respond. The communication will also include revised health guidance in respect of Covid-19 in terms of isolation and self-care/hygiene measures. There is translated version of the guidance in 10 or more languages, and this will be included to relevant service users along with an English version of the document. They will only be able to undertake urgent or emergency property repairs or fixes as reported to them as routine inspections will cease.

UK refugee resettlement programme paused

The UNHCR has [temporarily suspended resettlement](#) travel for refugees. UNHCR and IOM will continue to work in refugee-hosting countries to ensure that the processing of resettlement cases continues. The suspension of travel is a temporary measure and they hope to resume full resettlement travel as soon as logistics permit. The Home Office has confirmed that resettlement arrivals to the UK will be postponed until 20 April.

NHS Guidance to register asylum seekers and refugees with no fixed address

The guidance is that practices should continue to register new patients, including those with no fixed address, asylum seekers and refugees. Practices should agree how they can most effectively connect and support locations that are accommodating people who are homeless. More detailed guidance on registering patients is being developed. GP practices are reminded that the absence of photo identification or a fixed address is not a reason to refuse a patient registration. Homeless patients should be registered either at a c/o address where one is available (e.g. a shelter/ support service) or the GP practice address.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/gp-preparedness-update-letter-27-march-2020-.pdf>

Norwich Integration Partnership Operation response to Covid-19: New Routes Integration, English+ The Bridge Plus+ - services to refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant communities in Norwich during Covid-19 outbreak

All three organisations have now closed premises and are working remotely until further notice. Each organisation will be working in collaboration over the coming weeks to continue to deliver essential services to their shared client group. They will consult closely during this period to avoid duplication and ensure the safety and wellbeing of clients, volunteers and staff. **The Bridge Plus+** will focus on access to welfare benefits (Universal Credit, contacting JobCentre, Norwich City Council, Tax Credits etc). Support will be provided over the phone and through Whatsapp. Interpreters are available. Availability and contact: Mondays to Thursdays, 10am-3pm. For support with urgent cases of welfare benefits, clients or referrers are asked to contact The Bridge Plus+ by Whatsapp/phone on: 07717 220209 Email: office@bridgeplus.org.uk For help with letters, clients are asked to email or Whatsapp photos to 07717 220209. Where the client is already receiving help from New Routes Integration, or English+, these may be passed on, with the client's consent, to ease pressure on The Bridge Plus+ services. **New Routes** delivery will focus on online/phone one-to-one support, online ESOL classes, emergency food/financial support, and dissemination of important information. Availability and contact: Mondays – Fridays, 10am – 6pm. Most staff are part time. If you cannot reach one member of staff, please try another.

Dee Robinson (Project coordination, funding): Mon, Tues, Wed & Fri projects@newroutes.org.uk 07799 661009 (Whatsapp only)

Roshan Dykes (Adult support): Tues & Thurs roshan@newroutes.org.uk 07757 853303

Amélie Sells (Development, Comms, Volunteers, Refugee Week): Mon – Fri development@newroutes.org.uk 07969 060779

Cristina Casti (Administration and finance): Tues, Wed, Thurs PM info@newroutes.org.uk

Jenny Wangui (Youth projects): Tues, Wed PM, Thurs, Fri PM youth@newroutes.org.uk 07483 417407

Jenny Coppard (ESOL): Mon, Tues, Thurs esol@newroutes.org.uk

Participants are asked to join the New Routes ESOL Facebook group:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/639220950251480/?source_id=120483404679784 Classes will be online using Zoom: Mondays, 10am -1pm, Women's English class: <https://zoom.us/j/201733859> Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11am – 2pm, Mixed English class: <https://zoom.us/j/2600226080>

The New Routes emergency fund is available to provide financial aid, food aid and mobile phone credit to those with no recourse to public funds, those at risk of destitution due to job loss and delay in universal credit and those who have been dispersed to Norwich without access to their financial asylum support (Aspen card). If you have a concern about someone in need, please contact Dee Robinson. New Routes will be liaising closely with English+ and The Bridge Plus+ to distribute food parcels to people in need.

English+ will provide up regular updates on the services they are offering on their website and Facebook:

www.englishplus.org.uk www.facebook.com/EnglishPlusNorwich English+ will provide updated, translated guidance, provided by Doctors of the World on their facebook page.

Migration

Covid-19 information in multiple languages

<https://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/health-care/coronavirus-information-and-resources/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL1bJJelTk&feature=youtu.be> (Roma Communities)

videos produced in Peterborough in a range of languages to get the Covid19 message across:

<https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/healthcare/public-health/coronavirus/coronavirus-campaign-for-communities>

NHS information in 35 languages: <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/>

<https://www.romasupportgroup.org.uk/resources-for-the-roma-community.html>

Videos in Romanian Romanes dialect, Slovak Romanes dialect, Romanian & Slovak explaining social distancing and Government advice to stay at home and when it's permitted to go out.

<http://www.emro.who.int/ar/health-topics/corona-virus/protect-yourself-and-others.html> - a suite of materials in Arabic.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>

NRPF Network News - Accommodation for people with no recourse to public funds to be provided by councils

The Government has asked to councils to support rough sleepers and other vulnerable homeless people into accommodation. In its letter to council chief executives, the Government has advised councils to utilise alternative powers and funding to help those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) who need shelter and other support due to the pandemic. Councils already have statutory duties to provide accommodation and financial help to families, adults with care needs and care leavers who are NRPF. However, these duties do not apply to adults who do not have care needs or dependent children in their household. The Government is therefore asking councils to act outside of their statutory responsibilities by providing accommodation to people with NRPF as part of the wider homelessness response to the coronavirus pandemic. As well as finding housing for homeless people, councils may need to respond to requests for support from people with NRPF through social care or other housing routes. Additionally, many people who have leave to remain with the NRPF condition have suddenly lost work due to reasons related to coronavirus, and as consequence will be at risk of homelessness and destitution as they are unable to access the safety net offered by the benefit system. In order to help councils with their responses the NRPF Network has produced a [factsheet](#) which includes details about:

- Support for people with NRPF, including good practice already being undertaken by councils and supporting people during the pandemic when social services' duties are engaged
- Rights and entitlements of people with NRPF to government assistance being provided during the pandemic

Windrush Lessons Learned Review report issued

The review report found that the Windrush generation suffered terrible injustices spurred by institutional failings in the Home Office and that there are serious lessons to be learned, at all levels of the organisation. The Home Secretary has apologised on behalf of the Home Office and successive governments who failed them. The Government has already taken steps to give support and compensation to those affected but we know there is more for us to do. The Home Secretary has committed to making sure the Home Office is a place that protects, supports and listens to every single part of the community it serves. As requested by the report's author, independent adviser Wendy Williams, the Government will now take time to study in detail the report's findings and provide an update on its response before Parliament's summer recess. Please follow this link to the [full independent report](#) and the [Home Secretary's statement to Parliament](#). Please follow this link to read the multi-agency response issued by NGOs: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/lwindrush-lessons-learned-review-ngo-joint-statement/>

Free food distribution hub setup in Bedford by SEVA Trust UK and ACCM(UK) to support vulnerable elderly people during Covid-19 difficult times

Two Bedford based charities, Social Education Voluntary Association (SEVA) Trust UK and ACCM (UK) have established a joint project to support elderly people from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities who have no family support. Bedford has pockets of deprivation that fall within the 30% most deprived areas in the country that have a greater proportion of people from BAME groups. Within these deprived pockets, there are large numbers of BAME elderly people who cannot communicate in English. They are unable to access any information or sources of help communicated via letters, social media or mainstream media to help them make informed decisions about their lives, health and wellbeing. COVID-19 is a serious health issue to these vulnerable people as many do not have any family support. SEVA Trust UK and ACCM (UK) are using their community networks to reach out to those who need food and essential items. Following discussions with Public Health, Bedfordshire Police and Bedford Borough Council, they have set-up a free food distribution hub for home deliveries, with all the required hygiene, health & safety measures to meet the Public Health, NHS and the Government guidelines. They are appealing for volunteers who can drive and are willing to do the deliveries. Full PPE and induction will be provided to ensure volunteers can work safely. For more information or to make donations please contact their administration team on m: 07712482568 or e: info@accmuk.com or info@sevatrustuk.org. Their multilingual team will do the best they can to serve the community.

EU Settlement Scheme Applications: Important Message About COVID-19

The EU Settlement Scheme continues. More than 3 million have been granted status with over a year left until the deadline for applications. While applications continue to be processed, during this challenging time they will take longer than usual. In addition, in line with the latest Public Health England advice some of the support services and application routes have temporarily changed – details below:

Settlement Resolution Centre (SRC) - The SRC will no longer be answering telephone calls. It will, however, [continue to respond to email enquiries](#) and provide a call back function when required. Emails from support organisations will be prioritised where possible.

ID document scanner locations - The ID document scanner locations are following all the latest Public Health England advice to protect staff and the decision has been made, to suspend them at this time.

Postal route for submitting identity evidence - The postal route for submitting identity evidence is currently suspended. All documents already sent in will be returned as quickly as possible. Applications can still be made online using the “EU Exit ID Document check app”.

57 grant funded voluntary and community sector organisations - Some services have been suspended but organisations are providing support in other ways, in line with social distancing guidance, for example via telephone and online. Please check with [the individual organisations for further details](#).

Further information - There are still 15 months before the deadline of 30 June 2021 for applications to the EU Settlement Scheme, and there is support available online to help those looking to apply. Additional support is available to those EU citizens in the UK who do not have the appropriate access, skills or confidence to apply online through [Assisted Digital, which can offer assistance over the phone](#). The Home Office has also [translated communications materials](#) into 26 languages and alternative formats can also be requested. The support services outlined above will be kept under regular review. The Home Office, and their delivery partners involved in supporting applicants will endeavour to reinstate these support services to their original status when it is safe to do so. For the latest information on the scheme please visit [GOV.UK](#). Please follow this link for the most up to date data: [/government/uploads/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics-february-2020.pdf](#)

The AIRE Centre's Settlement Guide for vulnerable young people

The AIRE Centre has launched its Settlement Guide! Its aim is to assist vulnerable young people, including those in care or who have recently left care apply for EUSS. It includes explanations about what EUSS is, how to apply and a short quiz which gives a decision about what status they might have. Click here to preview <https://settlementguide.co.uk/>

Home Office announces temporary changes to right to rent and right to work checks

Right to rent and right to work checks have been adapted to make it easier for landlords and employers to carry them out during the coronavirus outbreak. With immediate effect, the temporary changes will mean the Home Office will not require landlords and employers to see original documents and will allow checks to be undertaken over video calls. These temporary changes will mean that during the coronavirus outbreak prospective renters and workers can submit scanned documents, rather than originals, to show they have a right to rent or right to work. Please follow this link to read the announcement in full:

<https://www.gov.uk/temporary-changes-to-right-to-rent-and-right-to-work-checks>

Gyros service update – Covid-19 arrangements

During Covid-19 outbreak, Gyros will not be offering face to face services until further notice. They will be providing support remotely through phone, email and Social Media. Anyone in Suffolk or Norfolk working/supporting any individuals or families who do not have English as a first language, need support with language/cultural barriers or need immigration informed advice- please contact them. Contact hours: Tuesday to Friday 09:00 – 17:00 (Professionals only advice during these hours). Tuesdays and Fridays 09:00 – 12:30 (Clients advice time to contact Gyros directly). Contact them on t: 01493 745260 or 01473 480701 or e:

admin@gyros.org.uk or via Facebook @GYROS East Anglia. Up to date information is also available:

www.gyros.org.uk Twitter: @GyrosOrg

Home Office announces visas extended for those currently unable to return home due to COVID-19

The extension will apply to anyone whose leave expired after the 24 January and who cannot leave the country because of travel restrictions or self-isolation. This will last until 31 May but will be kept under regular review in case further extensions are needed. A dedicated COVID-19 immigration team has been set up within UKVI to make the process as straightforward as possible. Anyone in this situation just needs to contact this team on e: CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk, to let them know their visa has expired and they will be issued with an extension. To help those who want to apply for visas to stay in the UK long-term, the Home Office is also temporarily expanding the in-country switching provisions. This will mean people can apply to switch routes, such as from Tier 4 (student) to Tier 2 (General Worker), whilst remaining in the UK. UKVI will continue to process applications some may take longer than usual due to COVID-19 related operational pressures.

Events

There are no event updates in this edition

Funding

Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund – Launch of new Call for Proposals

The Home Office as UK Responsible Authority (UKRA) announced the launch of a Call for Proposal for projects to assist with the Integration of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) which includes Refugees under the EU Asylum Migration and Integration Fund. They are looking to fund activity in two specific areas:

- ABM3 – activities to assist in the integration of TCNs and Refugees.
- ABM4 – projects from policy makers with a responsibility for integration of TCNs to develop and roll out of projects that support the integration of third country nationals into civic society.

For more information on the requirements and timescales for these campaigns please see

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-asylum-migration-and-integration-fund-2014-to-2020>

If you wish to register an interest in applying for funding, please contact UKRA on e: amifcallforintegration@homeoffice.gov.uk. You will then be sent a Guidance booklet and advice on how to access the Home Office procurement portal. Valid applications must be submitted via this portal. Please note emails to others addresses, and postal correspondence will not be accepted. Applications need to be submitted onto the portal by **4pm on Wednesday 6 May 2020**.

Jobs

There are no job updates in this edition

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