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The Newsflash is a bi-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.

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Asylum Seekers and Refugees - including refugee resettlement

National Audit Office asylum accommodation and support report

This [report](#) assesses the Home Office's early progress towards achieving value for money from the new contracts, measured against its key objectives and taking into account lessons learned from the COMPASS contracts.

Migrant Help AIRE newsletter June issue

Migrant Help are committed to keeping stakeholders informed about the transition to the AIRE (Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility) contract to support asylum seekers in the UK. Read their latest [newsletter](#) about the progress they are making.

Exceptional increase in asylum support rates to £39.60 a week

The government announced in parliament its decision to raise asylum support rates from £37.75 to £39.60 as of 15 June 2020. This increase applies to both Section 4 and Section 95 support. The increase is an interim decision pending a full review of support rates. For further information please see the [letter](#) that was sent to chief executives.

Refugee resettlement and COVID-19

Since 12 March 2020, activity to resettle refugees in the UK has been halted due to the global impact of COVID-19 and many travel restrictions. On 29 June 2020, a joint [IOM and UNHCR statement](#) was made regarding the commencement of refugee resettlement after the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Although this is good news, the timeframes for resumption of refugee resettlement in the UK will continue to depend on COVID-19 restrictions, such as availability of flights from refugee hosting countries, the continued closure of UK's visa application centres, the limited capacity of local authorities and sponsors to receive refugees and the provision of public health measures to protect refugees and communities.

Assisted Voluntary Returns Service resumes

After a few months of being paused due to COVID-19, from 13 July 2020 assisted voluntary returns have resumed. Individuals and families who are in the UK without leave and who wish to return home can contact the Voluntary Returns Service to discuss the support options available to them:
Telephone: 0300 0040 202 Opening hours 09:00-17:00 or through the [online form](#).

Changes to Application Registration Card (ARC) issue reporting

The process of reporting issues with Application Registration Cards (ARC) is changing. The Home Office has created a [new tool on the gov.uk website](#) for asylum seekers and third-party organisations to use.

The following should be reported via [this enquiry form](#):

- I have no ARC – it has been lost or stolen
- I have no ARC – I have never received one
- I have an "old style" of the ARC
- My ARC has expired
- I have reported a change of circumstances to the Home Office including my right to work status – but my ARC has not been changed
- It is not my photograph on the ARC

Migrant Help will no longer be able to process these requests and will be signposting clients to the above tools.

Commissioning Framework Update – Migrant Help

Five organisations including Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum and New Routes have now signed up to work on the commissioning framework, with telephone outreach now being used due to COVID-19 restrictions. Demand for outreach services increased in June, with the first cases using the framework being successfully completed. A further 23 organisations are in the process of joining the framework, you can read the full update [here](#). For further details on the outreach commissioning service, email outreach@migranhelpuk.org.

Funding uplift for local authorities caring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

On 8 June 2020, Chris Philp MP - Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts – announced a targeted 25% increase in funding for those local authorities in the UK who are looking after the highest numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children when compared to their child population. Those local authorities will receive a tariff of £143 per child per night instead of the standard rate of £114 per child per night. Funding for former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are now care leavers was also increased to a single rate of £240 per week from the previous rates of £150 and £200 per week. The announcement can be read [here](#) and updated funding instructions are available [here](#).

Government announces targeted funding for some local authorities looking after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

£6 million of the £500 million allocated for councils in England to help deliver essential services for residents during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic will be allocated to a small number of local authorities who are facing cost pressures associated with looking after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The full announcement can be found [here](#).

The Refugee Council appoints new Chief Executive

The Refugee Council has appointed a new Chief Executive, Enver Solomon, to replace Maurice Wren who will be retiring in December after eight years in post. Maurice Wren has been an extraordinary driving force for change for refugees and people seeking asylum, and though he will be sorely missed by everyone at Refugee Council, the Refugee Council are confident that Enver Solomon's appointment marks the start of an exciting new chapter for the organisation. You can read the full announcement [here](#).

Freedom from Torture report 'Beyond Belief: How the Home Office fails survivors of torture at the asylum interview'

Published in June 2020, [this report](#) looks at the experience of victims of torture during the asylum interview and throws light on a process that can be fraught with difficulty, leaving those at the heart of it feeling unheard, dehumanised and re-traumatised.

Migration

EU Settlement Scheme statistics

The Home Office has now (9 July 2020) received more than 3.71 million applications to the EU Settlement Scheme, according to the [latest internal figures](#). More than 3.4 million applications were concluded up to the end of June 2020, of which 57% were granted settled status and 41% were granted pre-settled status. Of the remaining applications, 32,200 received a withdrawn or void outcome, 23,100 were invalid and 2,300 were refused. A small proportion of the more than 3.3 million applications concluded up to the end of June 2020.

'Looked after children and the EU Settlement Scheme: A guide for local authorities'

Produced by the Children's Society, [this guide](#) acknowledges the challenges to local authorities and seeks to provide constructive guidance to ensure swift action to prioritise EU Settlement Scheme applications for looked after children in their areas.

'Brexit, EU Settlement Scheme and the Roma communities in the UK'

This [report](#) by the Roma Support Group reflects the EU Settlement Scheme situation within the Roma community by the end of March 2020.

The Roma Support Group has also organised an online event regarding the EU Settlement Scheme, a [recording](#) of which is available in Romanian with Romanes interpreting. There are also two new videos: 'The difference between pre-settled status and settled status' in [Romanian](#) and [Polish](#), and 'How does Brexit affects my rights' in [Romanian](#) and [Polish](#).

COVID-19 and the immigration system, May 2020 – Official Statistics

Published on 28 May 2020, these [provisional statistics](#) reflect the effects of COVID-19 on the UK immigration system. During April 2020 there was a sharp decrease in arrivals into the UK, with 99% fewer arrivals by air, 97% fewer arrivals by sea, and 98% fewer by rail compared to April 2019. Visa applications reduced from 281,000 in March 2019, to 129,000 in March 2020. Decision on visa applications fell from 248,000 in March 2019 to 145,000 in March 2020. In April 2020, 250 visa applications were recorded and fewer than 100 decisions on visa applications were made. The number of grants of extension of leave to remain in the UK also fell. In April 2020 there were 77% fewer extensions granted than in April 2019. EU Settlement Scheme applications also reduced, with 46% fewer applications in April 2020 than in the previous month. In the four weeks prior to lockdown, there were around 2,500 asylum applications, however in the first four weeks of lockdown there were less than 800, a fall of 69%. There were around 300 initial decisions made on asylum applications in the first four weeks of lockdown. This was around one sixth of the number in the four weeks prior to lockdown. The number of people in the detention estate has fallen since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and the beginning of restrictions in the UK. At the start of May 2020, there were 313 people detained in the detention estate. This compares to 1,278 at the end of December 2019 and 555 at the end of March 2020.

Covid-19 Migrant Information Service from IOM UK

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the various measures the government has taken to combat it, has changed almost every aspect of life for people living in the UK, including the country's diverse migrant community. Yet for various reasons migrants' livelihoods are often at greater risk. IOM UK has designed a Covid-19 Migrant Information Service to provide extra support to migrants in the challenging context of the Covid-19 crisis.

The info service includes:

- a multilingual [website](#)
- a telephone service 0800 464 3380.
- provision of information to migrants living in the UK on 5 key topics: health, work, benefits, visas and immigration, housing and homelessness.

The website also provides a comprehensive overview of the various governmental and non-governmental support schemes that are available to migrants. Finally, it provides signposted information for users to get further information and/or begin the process of accessing support. The website is currently available in many languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, Arabic, Chinese, Albanian and Vietnamese, with Polish to be added soon. The telephone service provides information to callers in any language and is available on Freephone 0800 464 3380.

East of England Strategic Migration Partnership website COVID-19 guidance

Please check our [website](#) for the latest COVID-19 translated materials, information and updates.

Translated COVID-19 information sheets on Suffolk County Council's website

Suffolk County Council have produced a range of [information sheets](#) covering Stick With It Suffolk: keep each other safe, Wearing face coverings, Test and trace and Contact tracing which are available in several languages.



Translated resources for survivors of domestic abuse

Women's Aid have produced COVID-19 safety and support [resources](#), translated into several languages, for survivors of domestic abuse.

UK points-based immigration system

The Home Office has published updated information about the UK points-based immigration system [here](#), and has produced guides for employers, EU citizens and EU students which are available [here](#).

New Hong Kong BN(O) Visa

On 22 July 2020, the government released more information on the new Hong Kong BN(O) Visa, which will create a bespoke immigration route to enable British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) citizens ordinarily resident in Hong Kong, and their immediate family members, to move to the UK to work and study. The UK Government's decision to introduce a new Hong Kong BN(O) Visa follows the imposition by the Chinese Government of a national security law on Hong Kong that restricts the rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong and constitutes a clear and serious breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. The full policy statement can be found [here](#).

Home Office response to the Wendy Williams Windrush Lessons Learned Review

On 21 July 2020, the Home Secretary set out the action the Home Office is taking in response to the Wendy Williams Windrush Lessons Learned Review. This will include comprehensive training for everyone working in the Home Office to ensure they understand and appreciate the history of migration and race in this country. Every existing and new member of staff working for the Home Office will be required to undertake this learning. Greater emphasis will be placed on taking a more compassionate approach to individual applications and decision makers will be empowered to use their own discretion and pragmatism. The department will also increase engagement with civil society and the public at an early stage to build evidence for policy. A move which the Home Secretary said would change the Home Office's openness to scrutiny. To ensure the Home Office reflects the diverse communities it serves, diverse shortlists for senior jobs and specialist mentoring will be introduced. This will ensure more Black, Asian and minority ethnic people will be in senior roles to drive cultural change. More information can be found [here](#).

30 local authorities in England to receive English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for Integration Fund funding

The £5.1 million will fund classes and language learning activities in 30 areas across England. Successful local authorities have all designed programmes that will best meet the needs of residents with little or no English language skills, who may feel disconnected, and will help them to fulfil their potential and improve their connections within their local communities. Further details can be found in the announcement [here](#). More information about the funding awarded to Bedford Borough Council is available [here](#).

Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract

The new Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract, which was awarded to The Salvation Army on 29 June 2020, will provide a service that better meets the needs of each victim, including those with specialist and complex needs. As part of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), it will ensure the safeguarding and protection of victims as well as provide tailored support to individual recovery needs, lifting victims out of situations of exploitation and putting them in a position where they can begin to rebuild their lives. The new contract will go live later this year, following a period of transition from the current service. The full announcement can be viewed [here](#).

Interpretation of the guidance on rough sleepers with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

An explanation of the guidance issued to local authorities is contained within [this newsletter](#) from Housing Rights.



NRPF policy amended following legal challenge

Following a legal challenge, grounds on which Home Office must grant recourse to public funds have been extended. More information about the case is available [here](#). The updated guidance is available [here](#).

'A Lifeline for All' report by The Children's Society

This [report](#) highlights how the NRPF condition affects children in migrant families and calls on the government to suspend the NRPF condition during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Events and Training

UNHCR Online training

Training is being provided on 4 August 2020 at 3.00pm - 4:45pm as a live webinar covering UNCHR's procedures abroad, identification of Resettlement needs and Resettlement Submission Categories. The session is around 90 minutes (including a Q&A session) for a maximum of 50 attendees. Please contact Enoch Kunarajah at enoch.kunarajah@eelga.gov.uk for further details.

CFAB International Child Protection Lecture 2020

On the occasion of their 65-year anniversary, CFAB will be holding a half-day conference in partnership with King's College on 23 November 2020 from 9.30am - 12.30pm on the theme Protecting Children in a Globalised UK. The conference will cover a wide range of issues including international surrogacy, international adoption, international kinship care, international child abduction and more. See [here](#) for further information.

ECPAT UK child trafficking, exploitation and modern slavery training now available online

Due to COVID-19, ECPAT UK have adapted their training to be delivered online. Available training is listed [here](#).

Modern Slavery Training module for First Responders

This 45-minute [online training module](#) developed by the Home Office provides guidance on how to spot the signs of modern slavery, and what to do when you come across a potential victim of modern slavery. This programme aims to give you confidence to follow procedures swiftly and with compassion.

Funding

COVID-19 support fund for the specialist migration sector

Barrow Cadbury Trust is partnering with the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) to distribute COVID-19 emergency response funding to the migration charity sector in England. The trust has £5 million to distribute for work that will relieve hardship caused by the pandemic among refugees and asylum-seekers and by migrants experiencing barriers to accessing services.

Grant applications are open to charities and not for profit organisations registered in England with an income of between £10,000 and £1 million whose main focus is on providing support to refugees, asylum seekers or migrants. The maximum that can be applied for is £50,000 or three months' expenditure, whichever is the smaller. The programme will open for applications on Monday 13 July and close on **Sunday 2 August**. Decisions will be made by mid-October and grants must be spent within six months. Further information and eligibility criteria are available [here](#).

BAME Infrastructure Support Fund

The UK Community Foundations (UKCF) has launched this new fund to support Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups who have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The funding is intended to support BAME-led groups and organisations that can, in turn, help other BAME organisations to access their local Community Foundation and secure National Emergencies Trust (NET) funds from them. Grants of between £5,000 and £20,000 over a maximum of three months are available and up to 20% of core costs can be funded. BAME-led organisations can apply. This includes a range of not-for-profit organisations such as registered charities, faith groups which are exempted from charity registration, and uniformed groups. There are no deadlines. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. The application form is [available to download](#) from the UK Community Foundations website.

For further information on how to obtain this grant locally, please contact the following:

Enquiries

UK Community Foundations

Unit 1.04 Piano House

9 Brighton Terrace

London, SW9 8DJ

E-Mail: b.a.m.e.support@ukcommunityfoundations.org

Jobs

Citizens Advice Bureau, Ipswich

Paid positions available in several areas, initially on a 12-month fixed term basis, with full training provided:

- Advisors to offer support and guidance to community through face to face, telephone and email
- Community Advisers to work with GP services and health care professionals
- Money Advisers to support and guide those struggling financially
- Administrative support

Deadline: 14 August 2020.

For further information, email Administration@ipswichcab.org.uk or visit their [website](#).

Community Intervention Team

As part of the Public Health response to COVID-19, a new Community Intervention Team is being set up which will be hosted by Suffolk County Council's Localities and Partnerships Team. The team will deliver advice and support to the community, undertake contact tracing and will be liaising with workplaces, businesses and other settings. Applicants will need a sound working understanding of social and cultural influences on vulnerable and minority communities in Suffolk and the ability to engage with community members from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. **Deadline: 7 August 2020**

The roles and further details are:

[Community Intervention Support Officer](#)

[Community Intervention Officers](#)

[Senior Community Intervention Officer](#)

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