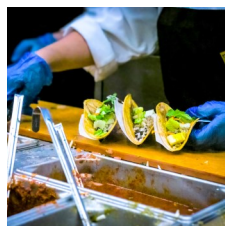


Top items this week

16 DECEMBER 2022



**DLUHC unveils plan for council spending**



**Free School Meals for families with NRPF**



**Government confirms commitment to EMCCA**



**Age assessment processes consultation**

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## Homes for Ukraine support for hosts and councils updated

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has this week announced a series of updates to the Homes for Ukraine visa scheme.

From January 2023, the money given to councils by the Government to help Ukrainian refugees in the area is to be almost halved from £10,500 to £5,900 for each Ukrainian refugee living in the area.

On the reduction, the announcement stated: “In light of wider pressures on the public finances and to reflect the fact that a fraction of Ukrainian arrivals return to Ukraine after arriving in the UK, the government is having to take tough decisions “

Other measures announced include an increase in ‘thank you’ payments to £500 for hosts of Ukrainian guest who have been in the country for over one year, as well as an extension of the scheme from six months to two years.

DLUHC also announced £150 million funding to help councils in the UK support Ukrainian guests to move into their own homes and reduce the risk of homelessness, and a £500 million Local Authority Housing Fund for councils in England to obtain housing for those fleeing conflicts (including in Ukraine and Afghanistan).

The fund can be used by councils to buy housing stock, build new homes, convert existing non-residential properties, and refurbish delapidated housing or empty homes into accommodation for families.

[Read the full announcement.](#)

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## DLUHC unveils 'blueprint' for council spending

Ahead of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, which is due to be published next week, the Government has set out its intentions for the local government finance settlement for the next two years.

The statement reiterated plans in the Autumn Statement to keep the referendum threshold for council tax at 3% for 2023-24, but with an addition 2% precept for authorities with social care responsibilities.

Plans to delay social care reforms, with the funding for implementation retained in council Budgets, and a further £300m going to the NHS to be pooled in the Better Care Fund, as announced by the chancellor last month.

The New Homes Bonus will continue with no changes to calculations and there are no plans to restart local government funding reforms which were postponed.

[Read the full statement.](#)

## **MIGRATION NEWS**

### **PM statement on illegal immigration**

This week the Prime Minister laid out a new five-point strategy to the House of Commons for dealing with illegal immigration in the UK, including plans to fast-track the return of Albanian asylum seekers, and clearing the initial backlog of almost 150,000 asylum cases by the end of next year by doubling the number of caseworkers.

The Prime Minister said a new unit would be created to tackle crossings, and that in future migrants would be housed in disused holiday parks, former student accommodation and surplus military sites rather than hotels.

[Read the full statement](#)

### **Free School Meals for families with NRPF**

A reminder that all eligible children, regardless of parents' immigration status, can apply for Free School Meals. This includes families without any immigration status and families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

In October, The Department for Education permanently extended free school meal eligibility to children in all households with NRPF, subject to maximum income thresholds.

Schools can now provide free school meals to more children and access more Pupil Premium funding by recording this in the annual census . It is crucial that schools record new Free School Meals recipients that were previously excluded from the scheme by February 15 to claim more funding to support their students, parents and staff.

[Read more.](#)

### **Age assessment processes: engagement with councils and consultation**

The Tribunal Procedural Committee is conducting a consultation on the rules that will govern age assessment appeals and are seeking views from legal representatives for councils and HSCs on the changes arising from the NBA 2022 by 19 January 2023.

The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 (NBA) received royal assent on 28 April 2022 and has resulted in significant changes to the UK immigration system. According to sections 53 to 57 a young person who disputes a decision by a council who has assessed their age (known as Merton compliant age assessments) will no longer be restricted to a judicial review. Instead, Merton compliant age assessments will become appealable to the First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber).

The change will affect every council in England, Scotland and Wales, and the Health and Social Care Trust (HSC) in Northern Ireland, and the Home Office's National Age Assessment Board.

[TPC rules consultation](#)

HMCTS is also seeking contact details of those who manage the legal process when an age assessment is challenged and asking those individuals to complete the form linked below by 16 December.

[Contact information form for HMCTS](#)

### **Refugee and Migrant Integration Research for the East Midlands**

This week, East Midlands Councils hosted a research sharing session with the team at Migration Yorkshire, who highlighted their research findings on refugee and migrant integration. Covering topics such as Homes for Ukraine hospitality, ESOL and Youth integration and empowerment, this insightful session offered engaging and thought provoking discussions on integration among attendees. Thank you to all of the guest speakers and members who attended.

## Regional News

### Government confirms commitment to East Midlands Combined Authority

Lee Rowley MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, has reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the East Midlands Combined Authority:

Speaking at a conference about devolution earlier this week, he said: "We all know there is more that can be done and the opportunities to do more are ones we should seriously consider. We have an unrivalled geographical position in our country, brilliant transport links, and fantastic entrepreneurial companies.

"We are serious about wanting to empower the East Midlands."

It is proposed that the new Combined County Authority, which would include representatives from existing local councils, and would cover Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Derby, and Nottingham, would be known as the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA). The EMCCA would be led by an elected mayor representing both counties and both cities.

The devolution consultation opened on 14 November and is due to close on 9 January 2023. It's a chance for everyone in the area to have their say about the devolution proposals, and it is open to residents, businesses, community and voluntary groups, and other organisations.

[Respond to the consultation.](#)

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## Midlands Connect

### Midlands Connect to host Nottingham Transport Summit in January

Join Midlands Connect for this event in collaboration with Nottingham City Council on Monday 16th January 2023.

Hear from Midlands Connect colleagues, Councillors, and transport experts at NTU Events and Conferencing, as they discuss the latest and future transport developments in the city.

Nottingham is at the heart of the midlands and can benefit from many of the schemes championed by Midlands Connect. Two major rail proposals would see Nottingham have better connections to Coventry, Leicester, and Lincoln.

There will be speeches and panels, with opportunities for Q&As.

[Book your space.](#)

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## Upcoming EMC Board meeting dates

- Transport for the East Midlands – 19 December 2022
- HS2 Executive Board - 21 December 2022

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## EMC Leadership

Chair: Cllr Martin Hill OBE

Vice Chair: Cllr Sarah Russell

Vice Chair: Cllr Jonathan Morgan

Conservative Group: Cllr Roger Blaney

Labour Group: Cllr Rob Parker

Lib Dem Group: Cllr David Bill MBE

Independent Group: Cllr Jason Zadrozny

Executive Director: Stuart Young



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