

1 November 2019

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

After my last letter, I committed to provide further updates on the progress we are making addressing the difficulties in the delivery of the AIRE services. I set out some of the actions we had undertaken and some further plans to improve access and response time.

Helen Bransfield, our Head of Asylum Services has provided the following information about the progress over the last two weeks:

“Whilst I am aware that things are still difficult, various changes and improvements have taken place over the last two weeks.

We now have a Head of Regional Relationships and Operations who covers the North West, Midlands and East of England region, Marsela Hoxha. Tesfay Waldemichael is fulfilling the same role in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and the North East Yorkshire and Humberside region. We have also appointed a Head of Outreach, Nicola Davies and a Head of MH Welcome, Anna Di Mascio.

The benefits of these roles are:-

- Head of Regional Relationships and Operations will liaise closely with the local communities and groups, working with the Local Authorities and LASLOs. They will also be managing the operations in the Initial Accommodations and in dispersal. They will be able to offer guidance and assist with queries regarding all aspects of the AIRE service including Move On and Outreach.
- Head of Outreach is responsible for making sure that those who need Outreach appointments receive them. She will also oversee the Service Commissioning Framework and contract manage our relationship with Reed in Partnership.
- Head of MH Welcome will closely manage the services within Brigstock House and be the point of contact for the London and South East Region, where a high proportion of service users enter the service.

These changes have been made to ensure adequate resources in each area and to reduce the risk of overstressing individuals.

In regard to our telephone services, more staff have been recruited for the First Response Centre and the EAGL team. We continue to recruit and appoint staff.

We have seen an increase in the number of people using our webchat and “Ask A Question” facility, which takes some pressure off the telephone service.

We have also met with accommodation providers and are jointly making sure that the service users are aware that the Housing / Welfare Offices will also log incidents for them during their visits. They will carry out an inspection of the property and will make sure that anything that needs reporting will be done directly to their own maintenance teams. They will also ask if there is anything that needs to be brought to their attention.

Service users will continue to contact the AIRE service to report issues but are also made aware that faults can be reported directly to their Housing Officer who will take appropriate action, without it having to come through the AIRE Helpline.

We are all hoping that once this message has been widely shared, there will be a reduction in the number of calls being made to our Helpline.

One thing I would ask of you is please can you get the message out that an email to MH should only be sent to one mailbox. A majority of emails being sent are still going to several of our functional mailboxes. Each one of the three, four or even five emails then is assessed and checked that appropriate action is taken. This increases the response time on all our inboxes and greatly inflates demand. I have been contacting some organisations personally with a plea to only send to one email address and those I have spoken to have been most receptive and understanding.

We have also received our first security clearance through for an organisation who is working with us through the Service Commissioning Framework and more will follow shortly. The Service Commissioning Framework re-opens on Monday, so if you are aware of any organisation who is considering becoming part of AIRE delivery, please contact our Head of Outreach (nicola.davies@migranthehelpuk.org).”

We continue in our commitment to make improvements across our AIRE services and apologise for the impact on our mutual service users and organisations working within the sector. We expect to see significant improvement in November and achievement of SLA in December.

I wish to thank colleagues from across the sector who have reached out and are supporting our work to bring about these improvements. We share a desire to improve the service and welcome your continued support.

*Caroline O'Connor*

Regards  
Caroline O'Connor  
Interim Chief Executive  
Migrant Help