

LMP Strategy Group Action Notes

Thursday 6th October 2022

10.00-12.00 meeting

**Venue: Unity 1 Business Centre, 26 Roundhay Road, Leeds,
LS7 1AB**

Following on from the last strategy group meeting, an update on legal advice/representation was shared and the group discussed the key theme, financial inclusion and the cost-of-living crisis.

Feedback from the Legal Advice and Representation Meeting

- Manuel Bravo Project are seeing an unprecedented number of asylum seekers turn to them for legal advice. They currently run a level 2 OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) registered drop-in every week at St Vincent's.
- A mapping exercise of level 1 OISC registered advice has been undertaken, with support from the migration partnership. Small organisations with staff/volunteers who are OISC registered were included within the map – St Vincent's, Refugee Council, PAFRAS, Manuel Bravo Project, Chapeltown Citizens Advice Bureau and RETAS (not OISC). The partnership proposes the following to address the gap in provisions:
 - Pool OISC level 1 provisions in the city to deliver OISC level 1 clinics by theme.
 - Provide supervision to volunteers helping people access asylum advice.

Action: Karen and Becky are meeting to discuss how to progress this work. If anyone is interested in getting involved, please contact Karen karen@pafRAS.org.uk and/or Becky rebecca.rayment@manuelbravo.org.uk.

Key Theme: Financial Inclusion and the Cost-of-Living Crisis

Nick Morgan, from Chapeltown Citizens Advice Bureau (CCAB), shared a presentation about the impact of the financial crisis on communities and shared the **Citizens Advice National Data [website](#)**.

Local data for Leeds from January - June 2022 shows:

- Almost 17,000 people sought advice from CCAB and almost 50,000 cases were dealt with on a range of issues (including fuel, food, and level 1 and 2 OISC registered asylum advice).

- The majority of people lived within the 10% Lowest Super Output Areas of the city.
- 43% of those seeking advice represent diverse communities.

The government have implemented a number of measures, to alleviate the impact on communities, but the guidance on how people access this support is confusing:

- £650 to be given to the lowest income families.
- £300 to be given to pensioners.
- £150 to be given to people with a disability.
- £400 will be given to all households due to the increase in fuel cost.

The partnership was asked the following questions:

- **What can we do practically?**
 - CCAB are running a project that looks at how information is shared with people with a learning disability which will lead to simple communications being shared. The national [Citizens Advice](#) website has information that can be translated.
 - Partners discussed ways to communicate information and suggested community conversations and sharing videos in different languages as they were useful during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Actions:

- Partners to share resources providing financial advice on the LMP blog.
- Samantha Powell will attend the fortnightly Financial Inclusion partnership meeting to feedback the Leeds Migration Partnership feedback.

- **What can we do to influence policy?**
 - The CCAB are asking for the £30 household support fund to be added back to Universal Credit and Personal Independent Payments (as paid through the pandemic).
 - Nick attends the Third Sector Leeds partnership meeting. [Third Sector Leeds](#) is a formal network of organisations with an interest in sustaining and developing a thriving third sector in Leeds. They recently launched a [cost of living position statement](#).
- **How is your organisation impacted by the financial crisis?**
 - Organisations require more funding to deliver support, especially those working with asylum seekers.
- **What are the barriers to accessing support?**
 - There is still a hostile environment, where policies are making life difficult for many.
 - Many people are likely going to struggle to afford to apply to secure indefinite leave to remain status.

Actions:

- Refugee Council's policy team are looking at the impact of delays to Indefinite Leave to Remain applications (i.e., benefits being stopped). Partners are invited to share concerns with alice.tooley@refugeecouncil.org.uk
- Partners to share feedback on the above questions with Nick via a Google form that will be shared on the blog.
- Nick will feedback partners response with the Third Sector Leeds partnership.

Updates on [Priorities](#)

Safety and Inclusion

- The Leeds City Council Prevent team, who support people at risk of radicalisation, held an event at the Civic Hall to share their resources to support communities.

Health

- A [Leeds Mental Health Strategy](#) for 2020-2025 has been launched.

Employment and Learning

- Leeds Refugee Forum are seeing an increase in the number of people losing jobs and needing advice.
- CCAB continue to support people not being paid their wages.

National, Regional and Local Updates

Migration Yorkshire Regional Updates

- [Migration Yorkshire's dashboard](#) of data is available on their website and is updated frequently.
- The weekly round-up of policy changes are being included within the quarterly reports.
- The government introduced policy to arrange the full dispersal of asylum seekers across the country, meaning all local authorities will have asylum seekers dispersed into their area. Migration Yorkshire are working closely with local authorities where asylum seekers were not previously dispersed. The Red cross are offering peer support to existing third sector organisations in these areas.
- Hotels continue to be used as initial accommodation for asylum seekers, but the long-term plan is for Mears to accrue properties for dispersed accommodation.

Asylum Matters Update

- The current political climate is fostering a hostile environment with the new Home Secretary wanting more flights to Rwanda.
- Asylum Matters have pledged to defend the right to claim asylum in the UK and challenge the UK Government's hostile new laws and launched a plan to get local authorities to pass a pledge to fight anti-refugee laws. The aim locally is to support Leeds City Council to recommend a proposal to full council to pass the pledge.
- Mary Brandon shares regular updates from Asylum Matters on the blog.

Actions:

- Partners are invited to support local Members of Parliament and Councillors to introduce policies that care for migrant communities and invite them to [pledge to fight against anti-refugee laws](#).
- Partnership to consider how best to engage with elected members and ward members.

West Yorkshire Sub-Regional Migration Group (WYSRMG) update:

Councillor Mary Harland will continue to chair the WYSRMG for another year. The next meeting agenda includes; an update on Ukraine, an update on full dispersal, an update on Urban House, and a local authority conversation about safeguarding. Ally Swaddling continues to represent the partnership at the WYSRMG and raised the following concerns at the last meeting:

- **Delays within the Home Office in processing asylum applications.**
This concern was raised with the Home Office, and they recently recruited case workers to speed up the processing of applications.
- **Capacity issues with legal aid representation.**
The mapping of legal provision within Leeds is an example of good practice.
- **Mears entering bedrooms without notice.**
Complaints need to be taken up with Mears.
- **Age disputes.**
Age disputes are raised with the local authority who carry out an additional age assessment. The national conversations indicate there is a lack of appropriate adults available to attend these assessments. PAFRAS are recruiting volunteers to act as appropriate adults for these assessments.

LMP Operations Group update:

- The last operations group meeting was on the 5th of September.

- Matthew Sidebottom, Regional Lead for NHS England for Inclusion Healthcare, and Paula Sherriff, Program Manager for Yorkshire Health Services West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, shared information on support available to asylum seekers to access healthcare.
- The next meeting is on the 5th of December.

Leeds Strategic Migration Board (LSMB)

- The meeting in September was cancelled and the next meeting will be on the 15th of December 2022.

Any Other Business

- **Next thematic meeting**

Labour exploitation and modern slavery will be the key theme to discuss at the next strategy group.

Actions:

- Sam Powell will invite colleagues from the council modern slavery team to attend.
- LMP partners to share meeting theme ideas for future strategy group meetings with Karen: karen@pafras.org.uk

Future meeting dates for 2022:

| Meeting | Date | Venue |
|---|--|---------------------|
| LMP Strategic Group | 19 th January 2023 (10am-12pm) | tbc |
| LMP Operational Group | 5 th December 2022 (10am-12pm) | Leeds Refugee Forum |
| Leeds Strategic Migration Board (LSMB) | Thursday 15 th December 2022 2pm-4pm | Teams Conference |