

## Summary notes of the Leeds Strategic Migration Board 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023

### Attendance

Service	Members	Attended	Apologies
Stronger Safer Communities	<b>Paul Money (PM)</b> – Chief Officer for Safer Stronger Communities (Chair)	✓	
	<b>Pria Bhabra (PB)</b> - Migration Programme Manager (Coordinator)	✓	
	<b>Nadeem Siddique (NS)</b> – Head of Community Relations and Cohesion	✓	
	<b>Samantha Powell (SP)</b> - Third Sector and Migration Partnership Manager	✓	
	<b>Cath Dearlove (CD)</b> - Resettlement Manager	✓	
	<b>Jennifer Jennings (JJ)</b> – Migration Support Officer (note taker)		✓
	<b>Laura Ruiz Duarte (LRD)</b> – Migration Project Officer (note taker)	✓	
Customer Contact	<b>Lee Hemsworth (LH)</b> – Chief Officer for Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support	✓	
Housing	<b>Mark Ireland (MI)</b> - Private Rented Sector Service Manager	✓	
	<b>Philip Windle (PW)</b> – Leeds Housing Options Manager		✓
Employment and Skills	<b>Hannah Kirkham (HK)</b>		✓
City Development	<b>Dawn Hall (DH)</b> – Executive Manager of Employment and Skills	✓	
Children and Families	<b>Jonathan Nevill (JN)</b> –Service Delivery Manager		✓
	<b>Karen Jessup (KJ)</b> – Principal Education Psychologist		✓
Adults and Health	<b>Sibi Hanif (SH)</b> - Service Delivery Manager	✓	
	<b>Catherine Ward (CW)</b> - Health Improvement Principal	✓	
	<b>Anthony Cooke (AC)</b> - Chief Officer Health Partnerships		✓
NHS Leeds CCG	<b>Deborah McCartney (DM)</b> - Head of Primary Care	✓	
	<b>Martin Earnshaw (ME)</b> – Pathway Integration Leader		✓
	<b>Francesca Strachan (FS)</b> – Senior Partnership Manager	✓	
	<b>Chris Joyce (CJ)</b> - Job Centre Plus		✓
Migration Yorkshire	<b>Adam Atack (AA)</b> - Refugee Integration Service Manager	✓	
West Yorkshire Police	<b>Andrew Loftus (AL)</b> – Chief Inspector		✓
	<b>Kevin Pickles (KP)</b> -		✓
Leeds Migration Partnership	<b>Karen Pearse (KP)</b> – Director of PAFRAS	✓	
	<b>Roger Nyantou (RN)</b> – Director of RETAS	✓	
Migrant Help	<b>Tesfay Waldemichael (TW)</b> - Head of Regional Service	✓	
Mears	<b>Sophie Hepworth (SH)</b>		✓
CAB	<b>Nick Morgan – (NM)</b> CEO - Chapeltown Citizens Advice	✓	

Summary of actions	
<u>Housing: Delivering Against the Migration Strategy</u> <b>Action:</b> Mark to send slides and data for south area <b>Action:</b> Mark to connect with Dawn for further discussion on bespoke training for communities. <b>Action:</b> Housing team to link up with Leeds Migration Partnership and the Migrant Health Board	<b>MI</b> <b>MI/PW/DH</b> <b>MI/PW/</b> <b>SP/CW</b>
<u>Cost of Living Crisis:</u> <b>Action:</b> Francesca to connect with Nick for further discussions on this agenda. E.g., money management and budgeting courses. <b>Action:</b> Lee Hemsworth to share dashboard that is currently being produced on cost of living and will share with the board.	<b>FS/NM</b>  <b>LH</b>

<b>Action:</b> Sam to bring back State of the City event report for further discussion.	<b>SP</b>
<u>Homes for Ukraine:</u> <b>Action:</b> Pria/Sam to provide an update on evaluation at end of delivery	<b>PB/SP</b>
<u>Partner Updates:</u> <b>Action:</b> Sam to request briefing note from Cath Ward on the work updated of Leeds Migrant Health Board (LMHB) - Asylum Hotel Project and share it with the board. <b>Action:</b> Members of the board to contact Sam or Pria in case they would like to present something or provide any update on the following or future meetings.	<b>SP/CW</b> <b>ALL</b>

### **Key theme discussions: Housing and the Cost of Living Crisis**

Housing Leeds shared an overview of the local picture including the housing market changing dramatically over the last 20 years, the significant increase in the private sector, significant decrease in the level of social housing, the size of housing associations has grown slowly over the last 10 years. Demand for social housing remains high and there is an increased demand in people going into temporary accommodation.

Poor housing conditions continue to be an issue within the private rented sector, therefore improving the quality of the private rented sector remains a priority for the council. The Private Sector Housing Teams' role is to ensure landlords meet the minimum legal standards.

Even though the council has a number of homeless prevention initiatives, over 5,500 people present themselves as homeless or in need of help each year. Housing Leeds support people to stay in their existing homes or make planned moves to alternative accommodation. Other initiatives include the Landlord Letting Scheme, to support people into the private rented sector and The Evict Alert, that allows an early intervention, enabling landlords to come forward and work with the service to try and keep people in their homes.

#### How do the housing team support Migration?

1. LAASLO (Local Authority Asylum Support Liaison Officer) works with Housing Leeds, to facilitate the smooth transition of new refugees from Home Office supported asylum accommodation into mainstream support during their 28-day 'move on' period
2. Supporting the Resettlement Team and the Refugee Council to help people find homes and move on with their lives.
3. Working in partnership with colleagues in this sector, which has been highly successful, such as the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.
4. Profiling areas.

#### Asks for the board

- Housing Leeds want to improve understanding of their service including the pressures, and to encourage communities to access early intervention
- Private Sector Housing want to improve access to support and reduce the barriers people may be experiencing.
- The Private Rented Team are delivering Selective Licensing in Harehills and Beeston crossing the threshold of peoples home and therefore see a diverse range of community need. How can services support this area of work for example employment fares etc?

#### **Does the housing strategy include the housing provision for asylum seekers?**

- Karen from PAFRAS highlighted the poor conditions that a lot of asylum seekers are currently living in and the quality of housing, whilst Roger at RETAS has witnessed many cases where clients are contacted for housing assessments without interpreters.
  - **Response:** The role from the Private Rented Team is to visit private rented accommodation and address housing conditions. They prosecute and take legal action against landlords who fail in their duty. The current issue for the Housing team is the lack of knowledge and not knowing where to go and ask for help.

Challenges around communication have been highlighted, not just within housing, but across the council and other statutory organisations. It is reassuring to know that the problem has been identified and the

housing team is happy to encourage people to report these issues and want to work with organisations, so people are aware of support available.

Action: Sam to link up with LMP Ops and the Migrant Health Board.

Nick Morgan from Chapeltown Citizens Advice Bureau provided an overview of the Cost-of-Living Crisis: an insight and the impact on migrant communities. Citizens Advice in Leeds are experiencing record breaking demand for their services. As people attempt to grapple with the cost-of-living crisis. The organisation is experiencing the most significant increases in the need for energy advice, food bank referrals and emergency charitable support.

Top issues for people in Leeds include:

- Energy advice; Welfare benefits (particularly personal independence payments, housing and employment); Legal advice for migrant communities; Housing (predominately relating to private sector accommodation); Systemic discrimination

The report "Deep poverty - everyday financial crisis in Leeds" also provides qualitative evidence of the impact of financial crisis and who will be most impacted.

Information around support available can be accessed here: [Together Leeds](#)

CAB recommended:

- Collaborative work e.g. The letter presented to the Chancellor of the Exchequer
- National and local discussions around Personal Independence Payments and enforced the installation of prepayment meters.
- Build upon existing collaboration between local authorities and third sector to support organisations, to improve data infrastructure and jointly publish information that includes collection of demographic data to enable gap analysis.
- Review service design and delivery to ensure this is responsive to those on the lowest incomes and those 'slipping through the cracks'
- Tailor engagement and communication so that in-person, telephone or online options are available depending on the needs and preferences of those in financial crisis.
- A call for the suspension of benefit deductions if household incomes fall below a minimum income guarantee and reduce the rate of benefit deductions to 10% of the standard allowance and the abolishment of the five-week wait for Universal Credit.

Discussion

- Concern raised about the enduring aftermath of this crisis, the level of poverty faced by the migrant communities and the impact on those most vulnerable and feeling isolated.
- From a city point of view, we are trying to respond to that challenge, but all the work it is not going to be felt immediately. There is a lot of work going on in a multidimensional way, there is work on race equality, priority neighbourhoods and locality working. The current joint work between the third sector and the local authority is phenomenal, but the board agrees we should be thinking on the implications on a long term and bring discussions on how we should support the communication of information.
- Francesca Strachan DWP leads different measures and teams, and one specifically is the Social Justice Team within Leeds, but she is also part of a group called the race disparity group that is internal within DWP.
  - **Action:** Francesca to connect with Nick for further discussions on this agenda.
- Additional discussions on this priority area have taken place in other boards led by the council Financial Inclusion team. Leeds Migration Partnership held a focused session on this same topic and Third Sector Partnership is looking at the impact of this crisis on the third sector. In addition, the State of the City event held an event focused on the cost of living crisis and are currently working on an event report which will write-up the discussion and put forward a series of recommendations or areas for further discussion/work.

**National, Regional and Local Updates**

On 30<sup>th</sup> December 2022, the government set out a new five-step strategy which are highlighted in the attached document. Key areas that may have relevance right now are:

- No more hotels
- Doubling the number of caseworkers - going up to 2200 to be able to start processing claims.
- Albania is to be deemed a safe country.

Critically, in addition to the above, all asylum claims made before June 2022 when the Nationality and Borders Act came into force will be resolved – this is a total of 92,061 cases which will receive a negative or positive decision. This is a critical point for services including a higher demand within the housing sector. Migration Yorkshire will continue to share updates to support housing and link with the voluntary sector.

**Questions and comments:**

Karen referenced the importance of getting figures beforehand, to be able to support those people that are most vulnerable. Knowing in advance numbers of people that are receiving negative decisions, that are going to be homeless or destitute has a huge impact on organisations such as PAFRAS.

**Leeds Migration Partnership**

Raised concern of the lack of legal aid and how the cost of living is disproportionately affecting people from vulnerable migrant communities.

Most legal aid firms in Leeds have handed back their legal aid contracts in the last few months and it is challenging to access a solicitor and there is currently only one trusted provider. This has a huge impact on people by not having immigration advice on their first claims, asylum interviews and appeals. Some members of the Leeds Migration Partnership have gotten together with the third sector and organisations who are OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) accredited and are looking at setting up a pilot to look at what could be provided to fill small gaps. Initially they are looking at OISC Level 1 advice around a few key matters e.g. travel documents. This could then lead to apply for more funding for Level 2.

Additional burden to charities as there is an element of communication and lack of information from services contracted to offer additional support.

**UK Resettlement**

The council were asked to stand up a second Afghan bridging hotel. This requires significant work from the council in providing wrap around support but adds to the pressure alluded to earlier around housing. 11 additional staff that we will be placed into posts over the next couple of weeks to uplift capacity for the hotels. Working in partnership with other teams from the council such as health, ensuring people can get appropriate medical help and support for those that might need it urgently.

**Homes for Ukraine**

National Picture:

- Over 263,500 visas have now been issued, of which almost 151,000 are for the Homes for Ukraine scheme, in comparison to just over 65,000 for the family scheme.
- A total of 113,000 approx. have arrived under this scheme.

How has the council responded?

- Leeds City Council has developed a Ukraine Strategic Group to oversee the delivery of the scheme in line with the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) requirements. This partnership is chaired by the Paul Money, Chief Officer for Safer Stronger Communities.
- There are a range of themed sub-groups that report into this partnership that support the delivery in collaboration, completing the required checks, raising concerns, feedback to DLUHC and claiming funds. This partnership also includes work with the council Communications Team, Emergency Planning and with the Ukrainian community.
- The council has a dedicated Homes for Ukraine team with a single point of access email to support enquiries.

Local picture:

- There are 350 active sponsors across Leeds with an additional 35 Expression of Interest (EOI) hosts.
  - To clarify the difference between these two – the sponsor is linked to the visa application of their Ukrainian refugee and EOI host is someone who has expressed an interest in becoming a host and are used to place refugees who have already arrived in the UK but need to move on from their sponsor.
- In total 764 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Leeds.
- The age breakdown for total applications and for those that have arrived highlights that the majority of those under the age of 18 are between 11 to 18.
- The most popular areas are LS17, LS16 and LS8 postcodes.

- The council created the Leeds Together for Ukraine fund which attracted donations from businesses across the city. This fund aims to give opportunity to third sector organisations to apply for grants to deliver activities to Ukrainian and wider refugees and people seeking asylum in the city. Some organisations have started to deliver activities across the city.

**Partner updates**

Members of the board can contact Sam or Pria should they like to bring an agenda item or provide any update for the following or future LSMB meetings.

Next Meeting Theme: People with Lived Experience

Tuesday 18th April 2023 2-4pm Teams Conference