

## Leeds Strategic Migration Board Meeting Minutes – 10<sup>th</sup> October


### Meeting Theme: Illegal Migration Act 2023 and City of Sanctuary

#### Attendance

Service	Members	Attended	Apologies
<b>Safer Stronger Communities</b>	<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 Programme Manager	✓	
	<b>Becca Evans (BE)</b> – Migration Project Officer (minutes)	✓	
<b>Elected Members</b>	<b>Councillor Mary Harland</b> – Executive Board Member for Communities	✓	
<b>Customer Contact</b>	<b>Lee Hemsworth (LH)</b> – Chief Officer for Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support	✓	
<b>Housing</b>	<b>Mark Ireland (MI)</b> - Private Rented Sector Service Manager	✓	
	<b>Philip Windle (PW)</b> – Leeds Housing Options Manager	✓	
<b>Employment and Skills</b>	<b>Hannah Kirkham (HK)</b> – Employment and Skills Senior Manager		
<b>City Development</b>	<b>Dawn Hall (DH)</b> – Executive Manager of Employment and Skills		
<b>Children and Families</b>	<b>Jonathan Nevill (JN)</b> –Service Delivery Manager <b>Jancis Andrew (JA)</b> Head of Virtual School	✓	✓
<b>Adults and Health</b>	<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		
<b>NHS Leeds CCG</b>	<b>Deborah McCartney (DM)</b> - Head of Primary Care	✓	
	<b>Martin Earnshaw (ME)</b> – Pathway Integration Leader		✓
<b>DWP</b>	<b>Chris Joyce (CJ)</b> - Leeds and Keighley Senior Operational Leader	✓	
	<b>Gemma Sharratt (GS)</b> - Senior Partnership Manager	✓	
<b>Migration Yorkshire</b>	<b>Adam Atack (AA)</b> - Refugee Integration Service Manager <b>Stefan Robert (SR)</b> - Integration and Partnership Manager	✓	
<b>West Yorkshire Police</b>	<b>Lucy Leadbeater (LL)</b> – Chief Inspector <b>Nick Berry (NB)</b>	✓	✓
<b>Leeds Migration Partnership</b>	<b>Karen Pearse (KP)</b> – Director of PAFRAS	✓	
	<b>Roger Nyantou (RN)</b> – Director of RETAS	✓	
<b>Migrant Help</b>	<b>Tesfay Waldemichael (TW)</b> - Head of Regional Service	✓	
<b>Mears</b>	<b>Sophie Hepworth (SH)</b> Partnerships Manager – West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire	✓	
<b>Strategy and Resources</b>	<b>Mike Eakins (ME)</b> - Head of Policy <b>Shaun Corbett (SC)</b> - Senior Support Officer (Research)	✓	✓
<b>Asylum Matters</b>	<b>Mary Brandon (MB)</b> – Campaigns Manager, Asylum Matters	✓	

Summary of Actions		
4.4	Pria to develop a template and engage with partners to capture the implications of the Illegal Migration Act, assessing the current situation and what can be done to prepare. To present at a future Board meeting.	<b>PB</b>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	
	Nadeem Siddique (Head of Community Relations and Cohesion) welcomed all to the meeting.	
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Matters Arising and Previous Meeting Minutes (18<sup>th</sup> July 2023)</b>	
	All actions from previous meeting have been completed. Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.	
<b>3.0</b>	<b>National, Regional and Local Updates</b>	
3.1	<p><b>Migration Yorkshire - national policy updates</b></p> <p>Stefan provided an update on a range of aspects including the following:</p> <p><b>Streamlined Asylum Process</b></p> <p>Stefan shared that there has recently been a letter from the Home Office clarifying the streamlined asylum process (SAP) for children’s claims; where a preliminary information meeting has not taken place, but a questionnaire has been received, the questionnaire acts as the statement of evidence form. The Home Office will look to make a decision based on the submitted questionnaire, without the requirement of having a sit-down meeting with the children.</p> <p>Nationalities: the original five plus Iran, Iraq, and Sudan. These have been extended to post-legacy claims. Most notable is the inclusion of Albanian claims.</p> <p><b>Discontinuations</b></p> <p>From 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023 onwards the Home Office made a change in their operational approach to asylum discontinuations. There has been no change to policy, they are instructing providers to strictly follow asylum support regulations by issuing a 7-day Notice to Quit where possible. Discontinuations have increased since August as the Home Office looks to clear the backlog and move people out of hotels to free up space for new arrivals. We are seeing instances of people who have not had a 28-day discontinuation support letter that they would traditionally see. The information is included in the asylum decision letter (around page 4-6) regarding support being discontinued, therefore it is seen as sufficient. However, this has caused some confusion as people may not have seen this in the letter. Going forward, the Home Office have said people will continue to receive a 28-day discontinuation notice letter as normal, and Local Authorities should be informed within two days.</p> <p>One significant change is where people don’t yet have the sufficient documentation to move on (for example BRP) and support is reinstated, previously a 28-day discontinuation notice would be re-issued, however support will now be re-instated for 7 days at a time.</p> <p>Phil Windle (Housing) highlighted the extreme pressure on housing and the capacity issue with emergency accommodation.</p> <p>Karen (PAFRAS) asked if there’s an estimation on how many positive or negative decisions there may be. This detail is not available.</p> <p>Stefan advised that Migration Yorkshire have been liaising with DWP regarding discontinuations to make sure they are aware as it is likely to have an impact on their service. Gemma (DWP) noted they have not yet seen any increase across their sites so it is currently business as usual, however if they do see an increase, they will look at tailoring support. Sophie (Mears) commented that Mears have been looking into how</p>	

	<p>they can signpost and support with regards to DWP and could work with Gemma to see how they can support if DWP does see an increase.</p> <p><b>Full dispersal</b> discussions continue but there has been no developments since the last meeting.</p>	
3.2	<p><b>Mears</b> (Home Office asylum accommodation provider)</p> <p>Sophie Hepworth provided an update:</p> <p><b>Hotel Optimisation</b></p> <p>A ministerial decision was made to implement room sharing, and Mears as the accommodation provider across Yorkshire and Humberside are now implementing room sharing across the region. This only applies to single adult males. All four hotels across Leeds have now moved forward with room sharing, two men to a room. Rooms have been fitted with additional furniture to ensure they are suitable for sharing. Mears wrote to the Local Authority to inform them of the commencement of room sharing, and service users were also informed. Service users were asked if they had a preference regarding who to share a room with. Where they didn't have a preference, the room sharing criteria was used to match people, which looks to match those with the same cultural background and language.</p> <p>Any service users who are unable to share a room were advised to raise this with welfare officers on site. The Mears safeguarding team and the Home Office are reviewing these on a case-by-case basis, including recommendations made by health partners. Those undergoing an age-assessment are in single rooms.</p> <p>Weekly operational meetings are in place with partners such as Local Authority, Yorkshire Migration, Health, Police, Childrens and voluntary sector. These will take place initially for the first 6 weeks and then be reviewed with the possibility of moving to monthly meetings.</p>	
3.3	<p><b>Leeds Migration Partnership</b></p> <p>Roger (RETAS) asked if Mears receive notification of discontinuations, can they inform the service users directly if there is an issue with people not receiving their 28-day discontinuation notice letter. Sophie advised there has been no change to process, service users will still receive the 28 days' notice and Mears will send a 7 day reminder letter. Stefan commented that going forward the Home Office say everyone should receive a decision letter <i>and</i> a 28 day discontinuation notice letter.</p> <p>Karen (PAFRAS) noted the Local Authority have no duty of care to those with negative discontinuations, so the pressure is on the Third Sector. It is difficult to plan without knowing the expected figures, or percentages of negative discontinuations. Third Sector housing is also at limited capacity. Nadeem responded that figures will be sourced if possible and shared through LMP. Stefan will also look into whether there's any national figures that may help.</p>	
4.0	<p><b>Key Theme: Illegal Migration Act 2023</b></p>	
4.1	<p><b>National Overview and Understanding the Impact in Leeds</b></p> <p>Stefan (Integration and Partnership Manager, Migration Yorkshire) shared a presentation:</p> <div data-bbox="280 1899 331 1962" data-label="Image">  </div> <p>IMA Leeds slides.pdf</p> <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Act was passed on 20<sup>th</sup> July. Some provisions are already in force, some will come in later.</li> <li>• 2 key provisions in the Act; the legal duty to remove and permanent inadmissibility.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The duty to remove does not apply to unaccompanied children, who will have temporary permission to stay until they reach 18. Although they could be removed if they come from a safe country.</li> <li>• Inadmissible asylum seekers who are not detained and cannot be removed may be able to access Section 4 support however we are awaiting clarification on this.</li> <li>• The Home Office is consulting with Local Authorities on the future of safe and legal routes and implementing an annual cap, the consultation starts on 20<sup>th</sup> October.</li> <li>• Consideration will need to be given to what happens to those who are deemed inadmissible who can't be returned- where will they be accommodated and what support will they be able to access.</li> <li>• Children's Services will need to familiarise themselves with changes to NTS.</li> </ul>	
4.2	<p><b>Third sector perspective of the implications</b></p> <p>Mary Brandon (Campaigns Manager, Asylum Matters, Yorkshire and Humber) shared a presentation:</p> <div data-bbox="284 813 339 875" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>LSMB- Illegal Migration Act briefing</p> <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact assessment by the Refugee Council estimates between 225,000-257,000 will have their claims deemed inadmissible and won't be able to seek asylum. This includes between 39,000-45,000 children.</li> <li>• People likely to be stuck in limbo as there isn't the capacity to detain this many people or the capacity to remove them to third countries such as Rwanda, but they will have no legal route.</li> <li>• People (including unaccompanied children) may choose to remove themselves from the asylum process rather than being detained or removed which creates a risk of an undocumented population who cannot work and have no recourse to public funds and who will be at risk of modern slavery and exploitation. There is a risk of them not engaging with services, leaving them isolated and marginalised. This will have a negative impact on mental health.</li> <li>• There is a pressure on voluntary community services who cannot alleviate the stress for people in this process. Services will be supporting people with complex trauma and in turn their staff are likely to face burn out.</li> <li>• Impact on Local Authorities, likely to be a vast increase in Section 17 support.</li> <li>• Legal services will be further impacted, under pressure to present concerns within 8 days in cases threatened with removal.</li> <li>• Investing in migrant homeless strategies will be important. Destitution and homelessness will be increasing, especially in large cities such as Leeds.</li> </ul>	
4.3	<p><b>Board Discussion</b></p> <p>Nadeem thanked Stefan and Mary for their helpful presentations which highlight potential implications for Local Authorities and other partners.</p> <p>Catherine Ward (Adults and Health) shared this link: <a href="#">NHS England » A national framework for NHS – action on inclusion health</a></p> <p>Phil Windle asked to link in with Mary especially around staff burnout and ways to help alleviate this.</p> <p>Sam Powell (Safer Stronger Communities) echoed Phil's comments and noted support should be extended to volunteers as well as staff. A lot of people who volunteer in the</p>	

	<p>Third Sector have been through the asylum process themselves or are possibly even still going through this and could be impacted.</p>	
<p>4.4</p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>Nadeem recognised there's a need to have a co-ordinated response to the issues coming out of the Act. There's lots of complexities and impacts for services and communities.</p> <p><b>Action</b> Pria agreed to develop a template to capture the implications of the Illegal Migration Act to helps us to assess where we are and what we need to do to prepare, and then present to colleagues at a future meeting.</p>	<p>PB</p>
<p>4.5</p>	<p><b>City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network Award</b></p> <p>Nadeem explained that the City of Sanctuary is a national charity working towards building a movement of welcome to refugees and those seeking sanctuary across the UK. Leeds as a Local Authority joined the City of Sanctuary Local Authority network in May 2023. We are currently working towards becoming an awarded and accredited member of the network. Mary Brandon, who sits on the steering group, is assisting us with our work towards this, and it has been approved by our leader James Lewis and Cllr Harland. Mary and colleagues took a deputation to full council on 13<sup>th</sup> September and full council passed the motion to take this work forward. A response to this has been included in the annual Exec Board which is going to Exec Board on 18<sup>th</sup> October. A steering group has also been established to help progress the work which is chaired by Cllr Harland and met for the first time on 9<sup>th</sup> October.</p> <p>Jenny shared a presentation:</p> <div data-bbox="276 1153 331 1211" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>City of Sanctuary Presentation.pptx</p> <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The awards programme recognises those who go above and beyond to welcome people seeking sanctuary and refugees. Several universities and colleges in Leeds are already awarded members. The award period is for three years.</li> <li>• They support organisations to turn compassion into action and provides opportunities to share best practice with other Local Authorities, strengthen partnership work and also works to ensure the voice of those seeking sanctuary is heard at a strategic level.</li> <li>• Link to full video shared in presentation <a href="#">here</a></li> <li>• Jenny is currently producing an action plan and collating evidence of how we welcome people seeking sanctuary through council policies using the 'learn, embed, share' principles. We would welcome any work people are aware of to be included within the mapping document as it will include all directorates.</li> <li>• Asks: Can members of this board help us to champion this work within their service? Can members attend the steering group as guests when the theme is relevant to them? There will be an internal task and finish group- can members of the board identify council officers to be part of this?</li> </ul> <p>Jonathan Nevill (Children and Families) suggested including their very successful UASC Football Team (see video on LeedsLive) and their work with the British Library called 'cook with love' and ongoing work. Both significant pieces of work with our UASC's. Also, Our Children Looked After Social Work Teams have also been nominated for a National Award titled 'Supporting Child Refugees'.</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p><b>Afghan Bridging Hotel</b></p>	

5.1	<p><b>Cath Dearlove (Resettlement Programme Manager) Update and Shared Learning</b></p> <p>Cath shared an update that the Afghan bridging hotels closed on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> August 2023. The Resettlement Team and housing colleagues have been trying to facilitate move on for those families.</p> <p>A Fun Day was held in August attended by Cllr Harland and others. There was some uncertainty as to whether the event should go ahead but the team felt going ahead with the day was the best thing to do and it was a really positive day, with one child from the hotel saying it was the best day of her life.</p> <p>There are many families in the community now, and work is still being done. Staff are trying to adjust to this big change. The team are currently putting together a timetable on what is available out in the community and what is missing, to see what we need to put in place. Claire has visited the Hamara Centre, Shantona and other places to see what support and resources are available in the city.</p> <p>The weekly drop-in on a Tuesday is busy, it is attended by Housing, the Refugee Council and DWP.</p> <p>A questionnaire came out from the Home Office about shared learning; what worked well and what didn't, what could have been done better. This has gone to all Local Authorities and the team collectively looked at it along with housing colleagues to respond to it.</p> <p>Cath's team are putting together a newsletter about their time in the hotels which will hopefully be shared by Christmas.</p> <p>Nadeem shared his appreciation for the team's hard work along with partners from across the city. Not one family presenting as homeless was an achievement. There is still lots of hard work to come as those families integrate into Leeds across the city.</p> <p>Sam Powell commented on the great work from the team and was pleased the Fun Day went ahead. It will be interesting to see how the questionnaire could feed into the Illegal Migration Act as the Act will make the legal routes the only way to seek sanctuary. Cath would be happy to discuss this with Sam outside the meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Harland summed up that we will continue to do what we can to make people feel welcomed in the city. Staff are under pressure and Cllr Harland noted the great work that teams continue to do.</p> <p>The Exec Board update report on migration will be heard at the Exec Board on 18 October. Both Cllr Harland and Nadeem recommend everyone reads this once it is published.</p>	
6.0	<b>Forward Plan</b>	
6.1	<p><b>Next meeting theme:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's Services - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in Leeds</li> <li>• Illegal Migration Act 2023 follow up</li> </ul>	
7.0	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
7.1	<p><b>Any Other Business</b> N/A</p>	
8	<b>Close and Future Meetings</b>	
	Nadeem thanked all for their contributions at the meeting.	