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| RESTRICTED **WEST YORKSHIRE SRMG:**  **JUNE 2024** | Logo - Migration Yorkshire |

**RESTRICTED MINUTES OF THE WEST YORKSHIRE SUB REGIONAL MIGRATION GROUP MEETING THAT TOOK PLACE ON 5 JUNE 2024**

**Attendees**

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| Adam Atack (Chair) | Migration Yorkshire |
| Cllr Hannah Appleyard | Wakefield Council |
| Kathryn Ashworth | Solace |
| Colette Beatson | Kirklees Council |
| Pria Bhabra | Leeds Council |
| Dick Davies | Wakefield Council |
| Bill Dennis | Kirklees voluntary sector MAG |
| Ben Foord | Migration Yorkshire |
| Sophie Ford | Home Office |
| Kirsten Fussing | Calderdale Council |
| Sophie Hepworth | Mears |
| Ewa Jamroz | Migration Yorkshire |
| Ebonie Kenifeck | Mears Housing |
| Tabana Khalid | Wakefield Council |
| Beth Kirby | West Yorkshire ICB |
| Vanessa Lendzionowski | Migration Yorkshire |
| Hiron Miah | Bradford Council |
| Susan Morley | Red Cross |
| Isabel Nicholson | Calderdale Council |
| Jade Raybould | Mears |
| Stefan Robert | Migration Yorkshire |
| Sara Robinson | St Augustine’s Centre |
| Tesfay Waldemichael | Migrant Help |
| Jane Williamson | Migration Yorkshire |
| Simon Whitworth | Home Office |

**Apologies**

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| Beverley Adams | West Yorkshire Police |
| Azizzum Akhtar | REMA |
| Cllr Noreen Akhtar | Bradford Council |
| Rachel Ashman | Wakefield Council |
| Mary Brandon | Asylum Matters |
| Dave Brown | Migration Yorkshire |
| Cllr Maureen Cummings | Wakefield Council |
| John Donaldson | Kirklees Council |
| Grzegorz Dyrak | Migrant Help |
| Kevin Finnegan | Home Office |
| Emma Fitzpatrick | Mears |
| Jane Fowden | I-ASK |
| Juliet Halstead | Migrant Help |
| Becky Hellewell | St Augustine’s Centre |
| Kathryn Howard | Kirklees Council |
| Cllr Kamran Hussain | Bradford Council |
| Edmore Hute | Red Cross |
| Gary Jeffers | Home Office |
| Sadia Khan | Home Office |
| Sarah Mitchell | Kirklees Council |
| Vicky Mulhern | Migration Yorkshire |
| Nadeem Siddique | Leeds Council |
| Sarah Sturdy | Home Office |
| Ally Swadling | PAFRAS |
| Louise Williams | Bradford Council |

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| **1.0** | **Welcome, introductions and apologies** |
| **1.1** | The Chair welcomed attendees and introductions were made. |
| **2.0** | **Minutes of the last meeting held on 31 January 2024** |
| **2.1** | The minutes were agreed as an accurate record. |
| **3.0** | **Matters Arising** |
| **3.1** | * The action log was reviewed and updated. * A FAQ document has been shared at Appendix 1, which provides information on a number of issues have regularly been reported in both strategic and operational meetings. |
| **4.0** | **Hong Kong Community Security Concerns** |
| **4.1** | * On 13 May, three people, including two Hongkongers (who have British nationality), have been arrested and charged under the National Security Act on suspicion of spying for Hong Kong security service. * People were arrested in the Yorkshire area under this investigation. * This news has caused anxiety and fear within local Hong Kong BN(O) communities. There is also a concern that this will have a negative impact on the engagement of the community with services and exacerbate sensitive community tensions between Hong Kong and mainland Chinese communities. * The Government issued the following statement on this incident and urge anyone who believes that a crime has been committed or is concerned for their safety to contact the police and/or security services directly.   + ‘The police are in the process of finalising new resources to raise awareness and capabilities of frontline officers across the UK, which will be launched over the next few months. This will enable frontline officers to increase their understanding of the threats that foreign powers present, support their engagement with communities who may be at risk, and respond appropriately to reports from members of the public.’ * Service providers be aware that there may be tensions within the BN(O) community between those with differing political affiliations. There may be feelings of mistrust within the community but also towards UK authorities. * There are a number of organisations / services funded regionally and nationally to support for Hong Kong BN(O) visa holders, including:   + [On Your Side](https://www.onyoursideuk.org/), the third-party reporting and support service for BN(O)s and other East and South-East Asian communities to report hate crime and other harassment including political harassment, led by Protection Approaches.   + Barnardo’s Boloh Helpline [Support for Hong Kong BN(O) | Barnardo's Helplines (barnardos.org.uk).](https://helpline.barnardos.org.uk/boloh-helpline/hong-kong-bno)   + Local organisations supporting Hongkongers in Yorkshire and Humber listed at [Social Activities, Peer Support and Volunteering Opportunities | Migration Yorkshire.](https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/hong-kong-hub/local-services-in-yorkshire-and-humber) * For further information about this briefing please contact Ewa Jamroz, Hong Kong BN(O) Programme Lead; * [ewa.jamroz@migrationyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:ewa.jamroz@migrationyorkshire.org.uk) or [HK@migrationyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:HK@migrationyorkshire.org.uk) |
| **5.0** | **Overview of health and social care visas and current issues** |
| **5.1** | Jane Williamson from Migration Yorkshire delivered a presentation and the following points were noted. The presentation is available at Appendix 2.   * The Health and Social care visa was introduced in August 2020. The Visa offers 50% visa fee reduction, and an exemption from the Immigration Health Surcharge. After five years under this route, individuals can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK. * In February 2022, social care worker, care assistant and home care worker roles were added to the Shortage Occupation List. At that time there were 165,000 vacancies in the care sector. In April 2024 the Shortage Occupation List was replaced by the Immigration Salary List. * Over 500,000 sponsorship visas have since been awarded, the main sponsorship countries are Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and India. * The modern slavery helpline recorded a 600% increase in calls about migrant care workers from 2021 - 2022. The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) has been inundated with cases and it is now their number one area of work despite the care sector being unlicensed. * People who have been waiting over a year for a decision on an asylum claim can apply for permission to work in these roles. * Issues that have arisen include:   + Rogue recruitment agencies abroad and in the UK charging excessive fees (up to £50,000), often with debt bondage attached.   + Promised work does not materialise. Workers are offered reduced hours or farmed out to other agencies.   + Workers are being left destitute with no recourse to public funds. Victims rarely meet the threshold for the NRM.   + If a migrant care worker loses their job, for whatever reason, they have only 60 days to find another sponsor. * The Government response includes: tightening of sponsorship regulations; changes to on bringing dependents; GLAA proposal to regulate care sector; DHSC International Recruitment Fund. * The Government issued a £15M national fund in 2023/24 to tackle the barriers of international recruitment in the Adult Social Care sector, including upholding ethical recruitment and employment practices. * Yorkshire and Humber received £1.38M. Over £1M was distributed to SME social care providers across the region to support 360 bursaries for international care workers. * On 09/05/24, the Department for Health and Social Care published guidance on the £16 million support fund for regional partnerships to prevent and respond to exploitative employment practices of internationally recruited care staff. * There is a lack of data to evidence the scale of the problem both nationally and at a regional level. It is difficult to put resources in place when there is a lack of understanding of the number of individuals that require support. * In December 2023 Migration Yorkshire received queries from employment hubs regarding how people can find other sponsors for those applying under the health and social care visa. * Migration Yorkshire continues to monitor the situation. |
| **6.0** | **Safety of Rwanda Act briefing & resources** |
| **6.1** | * The Migration Observatory has launched a new resource to map the immigration policies of the various political parties, in the run up to the election. [UK election 2024: immigration policy tracker - Migration Observatory - The Migration Observatory (ox.ac.uk)](https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/commentaries/uk-election-2024-immigration-policy-tracker/) * Rwanda flights will not happen until after the general election. * Migration Yorkshire is developing an internal briefing on the Safety of Rwanda Act. Also, the Migration Yorkshire website will be kept up to date with the latest resources and information. * An addition has been made to the Rwanda treaty by the Government, whereby it will include relocation of refused asylum seekers. * Challenges cannot be made on the grounds that Rwanda is an unsafe country in general. * The detention of service users is continuing. Right to Remain has produced some information which is available at the following link [Immigration Detention and Reporting – Right to Remain](https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/detention/)   Concerns that the perceived risk of detention is having a significant impact on the mental health of service users and staff that support them.   * There is anecdotal evidence of community tensions and cohesion issues, and there has been far-right activity at contingency accommodation sites. * Local authorities are mindful of what they can do to support pressure on VCS partners. |
| **7.0** | **Supporting people in dispersal accommodation – sharing of best practice** |
| **7.1** | * In Calderdale, the majority of the work is done through St Augustine’s Centre in Halifax.   + 90% of the DA population is in one ward in the town and the local authority has been pushing Mears to procure properties in other areas.   + Calderdale Council provides funding to St Augustine’s Centre and part of the aim of this is to develop the skills of those VCS organisations supporting service users in the new dispersal areas.   + St Augustine’s Centre provides high quality support to service users in the area and has a good relationship with Mears.   + Peer to peer work is very important, as is volunteering, and the centre has a very thorough new arrival process for service users.   + VCS organisations are not permitted to know the location of dispersal accommodation in the area so the displaying of posters and promotion of the centre’s services through word of mouth is important in raising awareness amongst service users of the support that is available.   + Open data shows how many service users were housed in the previous three months and St Augustine’s bases their provision on this data. * In Kirklees the main VCS organisation is I-ASK and there are a number of smaller ones.   + The VCS in Kirklees is at capacity and a significant increase in the number of service users in the area would be very challenging. * The local authority in Bradford has commissioned VCS partners to set up a ‘Your Space’ hub in the city to support service users.   + It is difficult to maintain VCS support without a funding structure. |
| **8.0** | **Any other business** |
| **8.1** | * Work continues to be carried out around the full dispersal agenda. * Migration Yorkshire is still pursuing postcode-level data to enable the mapping of service users. |
| **9.0** | **Date of next meeting** |
| **9.1** | * TBC |

Ben Foord, Migration Yorkshire

5 June 2024