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| **LMP Strategy Group Action Notes**  **Date: Tuesday 30th April 2024**  **Time: 10.00-12.00**  **Venue: RETAS, 233 – 237 Roundhay Road, Leeds, LS8 4HS** |
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1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies – Karen Pearse (Chair)

Karen welcomed partners to the strategy group meeting and reviewed previous minutes for corrections and actions.

1. Minutes, Amendments and Actions from the last meeting

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| Summary of actions from the last meeting 11th January 2024: |
| Asylum Discontinuations - Actions:   * Amber to share a blank version of the ‘priority in need test’ to partners. * Action complete: Sam shared document by email on 8th Feb 2024 * LHO to confirm where LMP can find out if Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is activated. * Update - action pending: Leeds Housing Options (LHO) are exploring further regarding the appropriate place to locate SWEP information alongside clear guidance. * Do Mears share (as a safeguarding referral) information on mental or physical health problems with LCC in the context of rehousing? Action*:* Mears considers on both points further clarification required from the safeguarding team. * Update - action complete: Mears provide discontinuation information to Leeds Housing Options (LHO) including known physical/mental health needs. LHO confirmed information is received however there can be minimal information, undisclosed needs or needs arise following Mears’s accommodation departure. LHO have measures in place to obtain customer consent to contact GP. * LHO to explore how Homes for Ukraine (HFU) move on resources can this be replicated for refugees. * Update - action in progress: Item also raised at Leeds Strategic Migration Board. LHO and the HfU team are reviewing the current resources to develop future resources. * Jon Beech to arrange a LMP conversation to explore if the ICB (Integrated Care Board) money set aside for refugees and asylum seekers can support refugee move on (potentially with Kerrie Murray, Catherine Ward, Karen Walker and Martin Earnshaw in February). * Update - action pending: Jon has not received a reply from ICB. Vicky suggested a contact and will share with Jon. * DWP reported lack of Universal Credit claims by new refugees. Sam to meet with DWP to compare the number of homelessness assessments completed by LHO with new refugees and DWP numbers. * Update - action complete: Sam met with Jo Harris from DWP on 15th January. DWP unable to extract refugee data from the total, therefore unable to evidence concern. LCC and third sector already signpost toward UC. Asylum decisions guidance flyer was recirculated to LRF and Migrant Access Project to support community knowledge.   + During the meeting Jenny Curry confirmed DWP hasn’t seen an increase in UC applications however DWP unable to extract refugee details from data. |
| Asylum Hotels and Hotel Optimisation - Actions:   * Mears to clarify how diligent the weekend and night checks are to prevent further street homelessness. * Action complete following LMP’s discussion during meeting. * Sam, Jade and Natasha to explore how asylum hotel activity can be shared with LMP. * Action in progress: Sam summarised up to date activity into a document for sharing with LMP. Sam met with Jade (Mears) to confirm and agree a process to ensure information remains up to date. * Next steps: Sam to update document following Mears feedback and work with Jon Beech to progress sharing with LMP. |

1. Key Themes:
   1. Asylum Discontinuations - Leeds Housing Options: Kerrie Murray, Head of Homelessness

* Biggest challenge currently for LCC Leeds Housing Options relates to how LHO respond to the sheer volume of approaches affecting all residents of Leeds.
* There has been a spike in landlords serving Section 21 notices, LHO are continuing to look at how to get landlords on board for schemes. The Rent Reform Bill is making a lot of landlords nervous, who are continuing to sell up or moving toward Airbnb models and holiday lets.
* The service is not able to prevent the lack of private rented move on options and recognise there is a lack of landlords wanting to work with this cohort.
* Significant pressure around the financial challenge as accommodation models are shifting and becoming very expensive.
* Second spike impacting demand relates to family / friends not being able to accommodate.
* Since the last LMP meeting the number of households living in temporary accommodation (TA) had more than doubled. Over 250 households now in TA and there is a block in terms of move on, particularly for single people.
* LHO are doing better than other areas, but the challenges are getting increasingly more difficult. Subsequently a reset as a service is in process to identify ways to manage the volume of demand.

New Refugees and Move On - Leeds Housing Options: Amber Khan, Senior Housing Advisor

* As discussed with LMP in recent meetings, since Sept 2023 there has been a significant increase in people seeking asylum receiving positive decisions. LHO receive information on positive decisions from Mears in relation to people living in asylum accommodation. Information is not received in relation to people who are subsidence only and those who receive a negative decision.
* LHO engaged with on average of 60 new refugees per month between Oct 2023 – Jan 2024, with a peak of 32 evictions on just one day, 3rd Jan 2024. Over the last two months numbers have returned to average of 25 to 26 households a month.
* For the move on process, LHO continue to look at concerns about safety as previously referenced, and community links.
* LHO are carrying out private rented consultations with customers and refer to supported housing providers where it is clear the customer would benefit from a supported housing placement.
* LHO are doing more outreach, recently the service has completed two sessions including with services supporting pregnant refugees and services supporting people to find private rented properties.
* LHO are also engaging to address misconceptions (e.g. if you have children, you will not automatically get council housing) and promote realistic options in the current housing market.

Discussion / Q&A

* How does the street homelessness headcount work, is it physically people who are rough sleeping on the streets?
* *Response:* Yes, coverage includes inner and outer areas and known locations. Locations may fluctuate from month to month relating to where an increase is occurring.
* Are people counted who are sleeping in places of worship?
* *Response*: No, only people who are street homeless. LHO are keen to build relationships with the faith sector who are likely reluctant to share information, however LHO are keen to provide support to explore ways out of homelessness.
* Amber commented that we are trying to collect that information. We’re seeing is a lot of people with no local connection to Leeds coming via faith orgs not realising LHO are not able to support, however we can offer support in connecting with other local authorities to assist. My team would be your best contact [LAASLOenquiries@Leeds.gov.uk](mailto:LAASLOenquiries@Leeds.gov.uk) We can usually respond within 2 days and your email needs to include basic information including name, date of birth and if available customer contact number.
* Nadeem stated the council have a Religion and Belief Network and have strategic faith leaders meeting, information can be shared through this forum.
* Action: Amber will link in with Nadeem to provide information for the update.
* The Leeds Housing Strategy is around the development for private sector accommodation, where can these strategies be located?
* *Response:* Action: Kerry will send to the group.
  + Give a Gift are seeing a lot of Swedish nationals often Syrians who’ve settled in Sweden and have now decided to come to Leeds and don’t know where to send them.
* *Response:* Give a Gift to share information and Kerry, Amber and Sam to investigate.
* Housing benefit policy change - some clients are struggling to get the letter from the doctor.
* *Response:* LHO advise doctors letter are not needed, just require the *patient summary* as there is no charge for this. It’s a bit more difficult to overcome the barrier of evidencing that a person would benefit from a supported accommodation placement. LHO need letters about a medical diagnosis/medication. We are advising all the customers, even those at assessment stage, to obtain a patient summary. This provides evidence needed to support decision making.

DWP: Jenny Curry, DWP

* Jobcentres not seeing an increase in UC applications for new refugees.
* Social Justice Team do outreach sessions and drop-in session.
* DWP have got some funding to do ESOL for female only customers. Funding is through DWP, and activity must be unique to be able to obtain funding.
* Any questions contact DWP Partnership Team.

Migration Yorkshire Update: Vicky Mulhern, Integration and Partnerships Officer

* LAs only gets notification of people in receipt of a positive decision who are living in a Mears’s accommodation. There are also people who have negative decisions and have their case withdrawn.
* **LMP noted** some partners have seen withdrawn cases, however little information is coming through from the Home Office.
* Decision making has been patchy as there’s been a series of different legislative powers that have come in over the last few years. We’re now at the stage where the vast majority of people who are waiting for a decision are those who claimed under the Nationality and Borders Act and Illegal Migration and therefore inadmissibility rulings come in. For further information see [Additional statistics relating to Illegal Migration (April 2024)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-relating-to-the-illegal-migration-bill/additional-statistics-relating-to-illegal-migration-march-2024)**.** There’s a distinct lack of operational detail about how any of that is going to play out. Therefore, in terms of discontinuations for positive cases we don’t know what that flow is going to look like now and we don’t know the rate that the Home Office are going to be making decisions. Vicky advised to talk to Sheffield Council because the way that they coordinate their services through City of Sanctuary after the Free Project is phenomenal. As a city they are reasonably well-coordinated.
* Jon asked in terms of the lack of information - where is the best place to raise concerns?
* *Response:* Vicky suggests [Asylum Support and Advice Network](https://www.asaproject.org/resources/asylum-support-advice-network) (ASAN) as they are a lobbying group. The problem is the government only need to notify LAs of positive decisions due the local connection (the only bit of legislation that applies, therefore not duty bound to share anything else).
* LMP agreed it would be less effective trying to lobby on this, energies would be better spend looking at what we can do right now at this given time.
* Sam commented the Leeds Strategic Migration Board (LSMB) have had discussions around the Illegal Migration Act. Consultations have taken place across the council, statutory services (and ongoing with LMP), to increase awareness and consider how to prepare for the policy, although we do not yet know how it will be administered. Recent LSMB agenda items has also included updates from Childrens and Adults as it is expected NRPF is likely to increase under this Act.
  1. LMP and upcoming elections – what’s our role? Jon Beech
* Jon talked LMP through the [resources referenced on the agenda](https://migrationpartnership.org.uk/leeds-migration-partnership-strategy-meeting-30th-april-2024/) including:
* Local activity - Third Sector Leeds 4 key lobbying messages
* National activity – Asylum Matters building compassionate refugee protection system and campaigning ahead of the 2024 general election.

LMP had a discussion as follows:

1. What’s already happening/what resources are available?
2. Is anything important “missing”?
3. What do we have time/capacity to add?

Actions - LMP agreed:

* What can LMP partner to do in the run-up to the upcoming national elections: piggyback on bigger campaigns e.g. #togetherwithrefugees; providing briefing sheets to clients and supporters; and engage/meeting candidates.
* Work together to develop key lobbying messages in relation to migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking communities. Suggestions include: access to advice, legal aid. Jon, Mary, Nick and Kathryn to take this action and other partners in LMP will offer support. Further conversation to take place at LMP Operational Grop on 17th June.
* To share information and resources to aid communities in understanding their voting rights and voting requirements ([see items linked in the agenda](https://migrationpartnership.org.uk/leeds-migration-partnership-strategy-meeting-30th-april-2024/)).
* Connect with West Yorkshire/ Leeds Citizens who had a recent vibrant meeting with the Mayor of West Yorkshire in relation to getting free bus fares for asylum seekers.
* Asylum Matters are looking to organise a session in summer to bring people together to think collectively about the general election and influencing leads. Mary will put a date in diary soon.
* To continue to promote hate crime reporting which could potentially increase.
* **Promote opportunities for people to work on elections** - LCC information available [here](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/your-council/elections/information-about-working-on-elections)

1. Updates on [Priorities](about:blank)

* Housing, Health, Safety and Inclusion, Employment and Learning, Legal Advice and the Cost of Living Crisis
  + Safety and Inclusion
* The refresh of the Safer Leeds Strategy was discussed at the Third Sector Leeds meeting, Ali and Rifhat attended and fed in migration perspectives.
  + Health
* West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (WY ICB) are re-contracting the interpreter service for GP surgeries on a WY footprint. LMP are seeking to engage to ensure there is understanding around the challenges communities experienced accessing and engaging with language support.
* Kathryn stated there are a series of GP template letters on the Yorkshire and Humber Public Health Network website to make it easier for GPs to support requests for letters from refugees and people seeking asylum. Further information is available [here](https://www.yhphnetwork.co.uk/links-and-resources/coi/migrant-health/asylum-seekers/medical-letter-and-report-requests/).
  + Legal Advice
* RETAS are delighted to announce their recent OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) regulation registration particularly at a time when demand is at an all-time high. A summary of the provision was shared on the [LMP blog](https://migrationpartnership.org.uk/retas-is-oisc-registered/)
* Cost of Living Crisis
* Dave commented that the Household Support Fund has been extended for another 6 months and hopefully will be extended till March 2025. There is funding for B&Bs for refugees and asylum seekers and hopefully extend it to advice and money towards food and hardship payments.
* Update on LCC Asylum Grant Funding
* A summary of funded activity has been shared on the [LMP Blog](https://migrationpartnership.org.uk/grant-funding-to-support-people-seeking-asylum-a-summary-of-funded-activity/)
* Additional
* Chapeltown Citizen Advice has received funding from Leeds University to fund a family reunion project.

1. National, Regional and Local Updates

* Migration Yorkshire Regional Updates – Migration Yorkshire
* The latest VCS update has been shared on [LMP blog](https://migrationpartnership.org.uk/vcs-update-from-migration-yorkshire-march-24-solace-resources-comic-relief-funding-and-phd-opportunity/)
* Mears Update – Sam Powell and behalf of Jade Raybould
* Hotel engagement update
  + Thank you to Give a Gift colleagues for their support throughout Ramadan via provision of hot food parcels for Leeds hotels.
  + First Vision will provide drop-in eye clinics (optician) at all Leeds sites 12/04/2024 – 15/05/2024.
  + Refugee Council delivering a workshop focused on post-asylum decision housing support workshop at 1 hotel site at the end of April.
  + Liaising with WEA regards on site ESOL sessions in Leeds hotels.
  + If any partners wish to provide any engagement opportunities within Mears accommodation, or off site in the community targeting hotel service users, Mears will welcome any updates to understand practicalities and discuss how we can help to engage service users. Please contact [Jade.Raybould@mearshousing.co.uk](mailto:Jade.Raybould@mearshousing.co.uk)
* Leeds hotel closure
  + All residents have received a letter providing notice of closure, LA, Police, Health and VCS contacts notified and decant is not yet underway. Service Users (SU) will be allocated onward accommodation either in dispersal accommodation or alternative contingency accommodation.
  + No arrivals to this hotel since notification of closure. Mears accommodation team will agree a decant strategy with the Home Office for all service users accommodated in the hotel. Mears will be led by Home Office with regards to routing of any SUs, as usual.
  + Once decant begins GP registers will be sent to health colleagues (Bevan) to assist with the cleanse of data and any deregistration’s, this will be on a daily baisis, rather than weekly, as per the standing process.
  + Regarding ongoing medical needs/care, throughout the decant process, Mears Welfare Team will assess any known ongoing support needs which suggest the SU should stay in the area, and will liaise with Mears accommodation team and relevant partners/services with regards to those support needs.
  + If third sector partner receive any concerns/queries from an SU with regards to a request to go to, or stay in, a specific area, they should refer them to report to Migrant Help.

Comments:

* Jon reference a community group called [Leeds Anti Raids](https://migrationpartnership.org.uk/introducing-leeds-anti-raids-action/) which is part of an alliance of groups and individuals united by the belief that they must oppose the hostile environment and resist immigration raids.
* LMP Operations Group update – Ali Maghoub
* The LMP Operational Group was on the 4th of March and sector raise similar housing issues.
* Lots of support from 100% Digital around training people and providing data for the phones.
* Leeds Strategic Migration Board – Sam/Roger.
* The next LSMB on the 7th May and the key agenda theme is Adult Social Care.

1. Any Other Business

* Next thematic meeting
* The next LMP Strategic Group Meeting will be held on Thursday 18th July 2024 venue TBC.

Future meeting dates for 2024/2025:

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| **Meeting** | **Date** | **Venue** |
| [**LMP Strategic Group**](about:blank) | * Thursday 18th July 2024 (10am-12pm) * Tuesday 15th October 2024 (10am-12pm) * Tuesday 21st January 2025 (10am-12pm) | * LASSN * Solace * TBC |
| [**LMP Operational Group**](about:blank) | * Monday 17th June 2024 (10am-12pm) * Monday 9th September 2024 (10am-12pm) * Monday 16th December 2024 (10am-12am) | One Community Centre, Cromwell Street, Lincoln Green, Leeds LS9 7SG |