

## **London Strategic Migration Partnership, March 2019**

### **Chair**

Debbie Weekes-Bernard, LSMP Chair; Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement

### **Attendees**

Councillor Muhammed Butt, London Councils  
Paul Morrison, Home Office  
Mark Winterburn, London Councils  
Rebecca Collings – Home Office  
Mahesh Nandha - MHCLG  
Rita Chadha, GLA Migrant and Refugee Advisory Panel  
Lisa Doyle, GLA Migrant and Refugee Advisory Panel  
Barbara Drozdowicz, GLA Migrant and Refugee Advisory Panel  
Mulat Haregot, GLA Migrant and Refugee Advisory Panel  
Jackie Odunoye, London Borough of Redbridge  
Grace Ashaye, London Asylum Seekers Consortium  
Ian Lewis – City of London, UASC Strategic Lead  
Steve Lakey - Clearspings  
Tom Daly - Migrant Help  
Varsha Baburam – Migrant Help  
George Fry - MOPAC  
Melissa Caslake, ALDCS

### **GLA Staff**

Hannah Boylan, Communities and Social Policy  
Theo Cadbury, Communities and Social Policy  
Janaki Mahadevan, Communities and Social Policy  
Ramiye Thavabalasingam, Communities and Social Policy  
Imman Laksari-Adams, Skills and Employment  
Ann Raymond, Intelligence Unit

### **1. Welcome**

- 1.1 Debbie Weekes-Bernard welcomed attendees and invited members to introduce themselves.
- 1.2 Minutes from the previous meeting were **agreed**.

### **2. Immigration Data update (Ann Raymond)**

- 2.1 Ann Raymond provided an update on the latest immigration data. Key figures included: a rise in the number of UK citizenships granted to EU nationals since 2015; non-EU net migration is at its highest level since 2008; and 12% of asylum seekers in receipt of Section 95 support are being supported in London.
- 2.2 Other issues discussed included:
  - Concerns around the increase in rough sleepers, though it was noted this data is from prior to the rollout of the Rough Sleeping Initiative, the impact of which will be seen in next year's statistics. It is also important that information about Brexit is given to rough sleepers from EU countries.
  - the importance of recognising hate crime against migrants specifically, as well as hate crime that is race and faith based.

- Boroughs would find this immigration data useful. It would also be helpful to present the London picture of immigration at national-level meetings.

### **Actions**

- Hannah Boylan to look into how this data can be shared for national meetings and with London boroughs.

### **3. EU Settlement Scheme (Rebecca Collings)**

- 3.1** Rebecca Collings updated on the EU Settlement Scheme, which will be going live at the end of March. Rebecca highlighted the scrapping of the fee, the results of the pilot phase and what is being done to support vulnerable applicants.
- 3.2** Since August over 150,000 applications were made during the pilot phase of the scheme. 75% received a decision within three days. 71% received full Settled Status, while the rest received Pre-settled Status. 80% of feedback described the online application as easy or fairly easy to complete.
- 3.3** Regarding vulnerable applicants, there will be extensive communication and engagement work to reach and support vulnerable individuals. Other actions being taken include:
- The Home Office will be providing targeted guidance, e.g. for children, and arrangements have been made with the Department for Education for local authorities to take responsibility for making applications for looked after children. Arrangements are still being made for adults in care.
  - Information about the application process will be translated into EU languages and Welsh.
  - The assisted digital service has been set up and can be accessed over the phone or at 157 centres, and the resolution centre can be accessed by phone or email.
  - The scheme will be as flexible as possible in terms of forms of evidence demonstrating residency in the UK.
  - The Home Office is working with a range of third sector organisations and £9 million funding will be announced and mobilised in April.
  - The Home Office would like to work with local authorities and other organisations on targeted information events.
- 3.4** Members raised concerns about financial exploitation from lawyers charging clients to fill out their applications, with some charging as much as £500 per application.

### **4. Asylum Accommodation and Support (Steve Lakey, Tom Daly, Varsha Baburam)**

- 4.1** Hannah Boylan introduced Steve Lakey from Clearsprings, the Asylum Accommodation provider for London, and Tom Daly and Varsha Baburam from Migrant Help, the Asylum Support (AIRE) provider for London.
- 4.2** Steve Lakey updated that Clearsprings has been contracted to provide Asylum Accommodation in the South and Wales for the next ten years. Their aim will be to redistribute Asylum Accommodation, widening dispersal across the South East and South West. Clearsprings have stopped all dispersals in Barking and Dagenham and Redbridge.
- 4.3** The new contracts have an increased focus on safeguarding, with Clearsprings having a new safeguarding team, and for the service user to be at the centre of the service. Clearsprings are working in partnership with Migrant Help so that the service user has a single point of contact for both services.
- 4.4** Tom Daley updated that Migrant Help have introduced a new first response centre for accommodation issues as well as support and advice lines. They also now have a dedicated

eligibility advice and guidance team and the new contract also enhances move on support in terms of setting up longer term pathways and integration.

**4.5** Migrant Help plan to do more face to face outreach through direct migrant help provision and working with partners to invest more in outreach. There is now an additional outreach service for any person who has a vulnerability that requires a particular service e.g. face to face.

**4.6** Tom Daley highlighted that Migrant Help work in initial accommodation as well, developing integration services, counselling and education from day one. Following the new contract, there will be greater emphasis on this.

**4.7** Members raised the following points:

- It is positive to hear that steps are being taken to reduce the pressures on Redbridge and Barking and Dagenham
- Whether it is possible for Clearsprings/Migrant Help to fund the voluntary organisations they work with. Whilst Clearsprings cannot offer funding but can provide resources such as meeting space, equipment etc., Migrant Help are bringing in voluntary sector partners to deliver particular aspects, for which there is remuneration.

## **5. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (Ian Lewis)**

**5.1** Ian Lewis updated on his role as the new Strategic Lead for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in London. The role is based in the City of London and Ian has been in post since January. The main purpose of the Strategic Lead is to improve the functioning of the National Transfer scheme (NTS).

**5.2** Ian highlighted that it is important to be able to deliver a good quality support to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, however there are pressures around capacity in London. Inter-region transfers have not been taking place and regional transfers through the National Transfer Scheme have effectively stopped, given the limited availability of placements being offered by other regions. There are similar challenges for the Dubs amendment and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme.

**5.3** Ian updated that there are also challenges for the pan-London rota as there are more unaccompanied asylum-seeking children coming into London boroughs than capacity is becoming available. This is putting Croydon in particular in a critical position as it is often the port of entry for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

**5.4** Members raised the following points:

- The funding review for the National Transfer Scheme needs to report as soon as possible.
- It is worth further conversation about the relationship between the LSMP and Ian as the new Strategic Lead.

## **6. ESOL and the Integrated Communities Action Plan (Theo Cadbury)**

**6.1** Theo Cadbury introduced herself as the new regional ESOL coordinator at the GLA. Her role will involve supporting local authorities to provide access to suitable ESOL for resettled refugees, and her post is match-funded by the GLA through ESOL Plus to lead on innovative pilot work, including ESOL pilots that better meet the needs of learners with childcare responsibilities.

**6.2** Members raised the following points:

- ESOL is key for social integration as it enables people to contribute to society. Asylum seekers should therefore have access to ESOL provision earlier.
- Through the devolution of the Adult Education Budget there is now more flexibility on eligibility for ESOL funding – there have been good discussions with the Department for Education on this however getting ESOL provision for all asylum seekers remains difficult. There are ongoing conversations about this in Government.

- The learnings from the Controlling Migration Fund would be useful for both local authorities and the Home Office for Government conversations about ESOL provision and the Integrated Communities Action Plan.
- While there has not been a Spending Review, the Government would be interested in how costs relating to asylum seekers could potentially be reduced e.g. through social integration and ESOL. Any evidence of how initiatives can make a financial difference would be helpful for the Home Office.

### **Actions**

- Members are invited to share any examples of how social integration and ESOL initiatives can make a financial difference to costs relating to asylum seekers with the Home Office.

## **7. Resettlement – housing proposals and next steps (Hannah Boylan)**

**7.1** Hannah Boylan updated on housing proposals and next steps for the Syrian Resettlement scheme. In London 24 out of 32 boroughs have accepted Syrian refugees despite the shortage of affordable housing. The future of the scheme post-2020 remains unclear.

**7.2** Heather Petch recently began a piece of work for the GLA on this topic, including considerations such as meanwhile housing stock that is available temporarily, social investment, crowdfunding etc.

**7.3** Members discussed:

- the need for confirmation of what will be happening with the scheme post-2020 as soon as possible. However, the Home Office highlighted that there is a need to manage expectations about this as there has not been a Spending Review and therefore the Home Office cannot guarantee when there will be an announcement.
- The need to recognise the homelessness crisis in London alongside this work – it is important that the housing needs of both refugees and the homeless does not lead to a competition between these groups.
- Concerns around the rent differential and what happens after two years if a refugee family is not in work.

## **8. AOB**

**8.1** Debbie Weekes-Bernard thanked Rita Chadha for her contributions to LSMP over the years as this was her last meeting.

**8.2** Rita Chadha suggested an item at the next meeting should focus on citizenship following the Mayor of London's Citizenship Ceremony in February.

### **Actions**

- Citizenship to be an agenda item at next meeting.