

London Strategic Migration Partnership

5 July 2022

14.00 – 16.00

Hybrid meeting – City Hall and Microsoft Teams

Chair

Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Deputy Mayor for Communities and Social Justice

Attendees

Jane Finn, Home Office

Jack Evans, Home Office

Tim Rymer, Home Office

Mandy Bailey, Home Office

Sherif Elgebeily, Home Office

Scott Dunning, Home Office

Jo Beck, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

Laura Clark, DLUHC

Michelle Berman, DLUHC

Salud Murphy, DLUHC

Jennifer Benjamin, Department for Education (DfE)

Helen Birch, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Julie Billett, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID)

Steven Lakey, Clearsprings Ready Homes

John Hetherington, London Fire Brigade (LFB)

Carolyn Downs, Brent and joint CELC Lead on Refugees and Asylum

Kalyani McCarthy, London National Transfer Scheme Coordinator

Cllr Georgia Gould, Camden and Chair of London Councils

Ella Watson, London Councils

Eloise Shepherd, London Councils

Clive Grimshaw, London Councils

Eva Barnsley, London Councils

Martin Machray, NHS England

Andrew Carter, Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS)

Daniel Kennedy, London Housing Directors

Barbara Drozdowicz, East European Resource Centre (MRAP)

Renaë Mann, Refugee Council (MRAP)

Anna Miller, Doctors of the World (MRAP)

Marina Davidson, Doctors of the World (MRAP)

Nafisah Graham-Brown, ELATT (MRAP)

Phoebe Heneage, ELATT (MRAP)

Yvonne Bizayi, ELATT (MRAP)

Juliet Halstead, Migrant Help

Samantha Tidy, Migrant Help

Anna Yassin, Glass Door (HMAP)

Gemma Deadman, Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)

Alice Bird, MOPAC

Greater London Authority (GLA) staff

Mark Winterburn, Communities and Social Policy unit (CSP)

Khadijah Amani, CSP

Eduardo Lopes, CSP
Hailey Wong, CSP
Hannah Boylan, CSP
Muhammad Abushiri, CSP
Abid Gangat, CSP
George Hanoun, CSP
Ella Johnson, CSP and Health
Emma De Zoete, Health

Apologies

Hannah Doody, Merton and joint CELC Lead on Refugees and Asylum
Yusuf Ciftci, Doctors of the World (MRAP)
Alison Griffin, London Councils
Sean Palmer, Home Office

Agenda

1. Welcome and minutes

- 1.1. Debbie Weekes-Bernard welcomed both in-person attendees and those joining remotely.
- 1.2. Debbie welcomed new members to the group, including: Cllr Georgia Gould, Carolyn Downs, Jennifer Benjamin, Sherif Elgebeily, Jo Beck, Michelle Berman, Laura Clark, Gemma Deadman, Marina Davidson, Samantha Tidy, Juliet Halstead and Kalyani McCarthy. Debbie also noted the contributions made by Cllr Muhammed Butt, Sean Harriss and Ian Lewis to the LSMP Board over recent years.
- 1.4. Cllr Georgia Gould explained that she has taken migration and refugees into her brief in her role as Chair of London Councils, noting that supporting this population will be a key priority for London Councils and local authorities over the next year.
- 1.5. The minutes from the last meeting were approved.

2. Afghan bridging hotels: matching and homelessness

- 2.1. Jo Beck from DLUHC gave a presentation overview of the proposed enhanced matching and homelessness referrals process. Under this policy, where households in bridging hotels do not accept two 'appropriate property' offers for resettlement, they may be given 56 days to leave hotels. A family would be strongly encouraged to consent to a referral being made to a council for assessment of duties owed to them if homeless; a rota model is being proposed to help determine which council will complete that assessment if there is no local connection.
- 2.2. Cllr Georgia Gould noted that boroughs are willing to take a proactive role in finding homes for Afghan refugees. She raised her concerns around the referrals process, expressing her view that not enough is being done to prevent situations where offers are refused in the first place. Issues included:
 - local authorities are not receiving enough data
 - joint working needed to ensure that appropriate offers are given in the best way to families

- boroughs across London lack enough large bedroom properties to house families leaving bridging hotels.

Georgia expressed desire for a piloted approach to look more at greater access to homes in the private rented sector, noting that great flexibility on how to use Home Office funding for bridging hotel residents would support this.

- 2.3. Debbie Weekes-Bernard highlighted that the GLA would work pragmatically to support solutions that worked for London boroughs, but also noted her disappointment that this point has been reached. Debbie added that the GLA is committed to supporting a 'Fair Shares' approach.
- 2.4. Renae Mann and partners echoed Cllr Gould's points, and Renae highlighted opening up housing supply as the key issue, noting that partners should think about how they will work with the private rented sector and engage with landlords in order to do this.
- 2.5. Tim Rymer thanked Cllr Gould for raising her concerns, particularly around data sharing, and noted that the Home Office is keen to pick these up with partners via the Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) and facilitate better joint working.
- 2.6. Andrew Carter asked if there has been an analysis of why partners have been unable to move people out of bridging hotels, and why some families are refusing offers. Andrew also raised his concerns around the financial impact on local authorities once the 6 month period of funding has finished.
- 2.7. Government colleagues noted that there is a big focus at DLUHC and Home Office on how to improve offers, and there is work being done to understand why refusals are happening, noting that there are often varied reasons for this such as families wanting to live in diverse areas in London where they have existing links and/or family. They also noted that the Home Office is considering the ask from local authorities for funding flexibility to better support moves into the private rented sector, and Jo noted that DLUHC is keeping the 6-month funding stream under review.
- 2.7. Cllr Georgia Gould expressed her concerns about the risk of people being made homeless, noting that this is ultimately the result of a policy choice and cannot fully be blamed on pressures that the system is facing.
- 2.8. Carolyn Downs called for officers in the GLA's Housing and Land Directorate to join future LSMP meetings to contribute to discussions around housing. Carolyn also called for greater subsidy to support construction of genuinely affordable housing supply.

3. Full Asylum Dispersal Consultation

- 3.1. Mark Winterburn provided some context for the consultation that the Home Office is running on the future of the asylum dispersal system.
 - We now have a record number of people seeking asylum in contingency hotels in London.
 - The government has introduced new funding for councils to support people seeking asylum.

- The Home Office has asked for regional plans to be developed, with London's plan due to be submitted in August. London is still awaiting its regional allocation of dispersed accommodation which London will need to meet in its plan.
 - Local authority colleagues have discussed London's plan through various fora, including an initial meeting in June chaired by Carolyn Downs as well as working group meetings chaired by Daniel Kennedy.
- 3.2. Tim Rymer noted that the Home Office recently held a first round of regional workshops with local authority officials and SMPs and is now analysing the outputs of these, with key themes emerging around equity, housing and infrastructure. Tim noted that regional quotas are still being calculated but he hoped to be able to share these soon. The Home Office is also looking to shortly confirm the implementation date for regional plans and the funding arrangements for a stream of additional funding for SMPs in recognition of additional work around dispersal.
- 3.3. Carolyn Downs noted that London boroughs are in favour of regional allocation, with a general view that this should be based on population; individual regions should be able to decide how to allocate within their regions. Carolyn noted that housing supply should be the main focus within London, and highlighted key factors against which allocations should be made such as the number of people in temporary accommodation and the number of people presenting as homeless.
- 3.4. Steven Lakey from Clearsprings gave an update on their work. Clearsprings are continuing their work to rebalance the picture in London, with fewer people now in West and East London and more in Inner London.
- 3.5. Steven explained that Clearsprings is currently working on proposals to provide modular build houses that are sustainably sourced and produced in the UK. These homes would be built on plots of land to be divided up as 70% for asylum accommodation and 30% for social housing. Steven also highlighted two key priorities for Clearsprings: firstly, to not exhaust the private rented sector market, and secondly to source large scale accommodation to meet the demand for singles, noting that 70% of the current population in hotels (around 20,000 people) are single males.
- 3.5. Renae Mann welcomed the modular build proposal by Clearsprings as a creative solution to the issue of housing supply. Renae also highlighted her concerns around the provision of immigration and health advice and safeguarding issues for young people in hotels, including children who are being misidentified as adults, and called for greater local coordination on support pathways for these issues.

4. London Asylum and Health Task and Finish Group

- 4.1. Julie Billett and Emma De Zoete gave a presentation overview of the new London Task and Finish Group on the Health and Wellbeing of Asylum Seekers and Vulnerable Migrants. The Task and Finish Group will report into LSMP Board and the Health Equity Delivery Group. Julie and Emma asked for feedback on proposed governance, Task and Finish Group membership, and any issues LSMP Board members would like to see prioritised for early action.
- 4.2. Martin Machray expressed his support of the proposals outlined by Julie and Emma, noting the importance of the Task and Finish Group feeding into both the LSMP and Health Equity

agenda as this is how partners can make change happen within the confines of a national policy. Martin noted that membership should include partners who are best placed to effectively flag operational needs and difficulties. Martin also highlighted the importance of making existing policy and structures work better, as opposed to inventing new systems in response to health challenges for each refugee and migrant population.

- 4.3. Steven Lakey raised data sharing as a key priority issue for the Task and Finish Group, highlighting that the population partners are supporting is a transient one and that the smooth transfer of data between the Home Office, Clearsprings and health partners is key in supporting continuity of care, the planning of services, and joined-up working.
- 4.4. Renae Mann noted that Refugee Council convenes a national mental health forum and delivers therapeutic services in London, and offered to link with Julie and Emma on this work. Renae also highlighted the impact that immigration policy and the lack of certainty around status have on people's mental health, and called for a preventative approach to allow for early intervention in dealing with treatment challenges.

5. Ukraine

- 5.1. Michelle Berman gave an overview of DLUHC's work on stakeholder engagement and representation, which involves a Strategic Engagement Group, informed by cross-sector task and finish groups and operational working groups with specialist expertise, feeding into the Government's Homes for Ukraine programme. Michelle highlighted some key priority issues such as re-matching (due to relationships breaking down), multiple sponsorships (whether these are allowed for those with minimal risk), and discussions around post-sponsorship.
- 5.2. Clive Grimshaw flagged that the demands upon supplementary school provision for Ukraine children in Kensington and Chelsea has increased dramatically: 750 children in 23 boroughs are using the services. There needs to be thought about the implications (e.g. in relation to catering costs) as this local service has de facto become a service for all of London. Michelle Berman offered to escalate these pressures within DLUHC.
- 5.3. Barbara Drozdowicz noted that she is convening a Ukraine Advisory Network and raised her concerns relating to the Homes for Ukraine, around homelessness (with some families being unable to sustain guests), abuse, and the cliff edge caused by 6-month hosting arrangements coming to an end. Michelle Berman and Helen Birch offered to escalate these concerns and the specific cases Barbara has come across. Barbara also called for government to provide the same level of financial support across all Ukrainian schemes, and urged that partners consider the huge amount of work being done by smaller organisations such as EERC in any consultations and strategic discussions.
- 5.4. Sherif Elgebeily from the Home Office confirmed that all those on the government's Ukraine schemes should have recourse to public funds. Sherif expressed his concerns around the abuse issue raised by Barbara, where beneficiaries are being forced to pay rent or work in return for being hosted, and asked that partners escalate any cases of this that they come across.
- 5.5. Andrew Carter welcomed the proposed extension of Ukraine schemes to unaccompanied children, but underlined the importance of ensuring children are not exposed to abuse and unsafe situations.

- 5.6. Renae Mann noted that there is confusion amongst partners around the support expected of wraparound providers for children, and asked for clarity on this. Renae also highlighted inconsistency of practice as an issue, with different support models being used around London, and recommended forming a community of practice. Sherif Elgebeily confirmed that guidance on wraparound support for children should be released shortly.

6. London Hong Kong Welcome Programme

- 6.1. Hannah Boylan gave an update on the London Hong Kong Welcome Programme, noting that Year 1 of the programme is coming to an end this month and the GLA is awaiting public confirmation of receipt of a further grant to deliver a second year. Over £200,000 of funding has been provided across 8 local authorities to support Hongkongers, although Hannah noted that partners were being encouraged to take a place-based approach that might support other populations that arrive in London in the long term, such as boosting the capacity of equity-led civil society, training to improve understand of trauma, and building regional infrastructure to improve access to information and advice such as the Migrant Londoners Hub.

7. AOB

- 7.1. Barbara Drozdowicz raised some issues facing EU nationals, noting that many European Londoners need support to transfer their status from Pre-Settled to Settled Status. Barbara also flagged transfers between legacy benefits and Universal Credit as a concern, noting that, when people are caught between these transfers, their status is less visible and there is increased pressure on welfare services.