

# MAYOR OF LONDON

## London Strategic Migration Partnership

09 March 2021

10.30 – 12.30

### Chair

Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility & Community Engagement

### Attendees

Councillor Muhammed Butt – London Councils  
Sean Palmer – Home Office  
Barbara Drozdowicz – East European Resource Centre (MRAP)  
Michael Boyle - East London Advanced Tech Training - ELATT (MRAP)  
Lisa Doyle – Refugee Council (MRAP)  
Daniel Kennedy – London Borough of Hillingdon / London Housing Directors  
Steven Lakey – Clearsprings Ready Homes  
Jim Chesters – Clearsprings Ready Homes  
Ian Lewis – Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS)  
Anastasia Mulenga – London Councils  
Mark Earl – Department for Education  
Celine Dignan – Department for Education  
Grace Ashaye – London Asylum Seekers Consortium  
Jane De Burgh – Public Health England (PHE)  
Alison Williams – NHS  
Adam Smith – NHS  
Yusuf Ciftci – Doctors of the World  
Jakub Szukaj – Migrant Help  
David Andersson – Department for Work and Pensions  
Andrew Carter – City of London  
Anna Yassin – Glass Door  
Mani Hayer – Reed in Partnership  
Beau Sukpran – Reed in Partnership  
Varsha Baburam – Migrant Help

### Greater London Authority (GLA) staff

Hannah Boylan – Communities and Social Policy (CSP)  
Mark Winterburn – CSP  
Ayham Alsuleman – CSP  
Bella Kosmala – CSP  
Khadijah Amani - CSP  
Deborah Jenkins – Health Team  
Alice Major – City Intelligence Unit  
Richard Cameron – City Intelligence Unit  
Ella Johnson – CSP & Health Team  
Anna Connell-Smith – Skills Team  
Karissa Singh – Skills Team  
Heather Petch – CSP (short term consultant)

# MAYOR OF LONDON

## Agenda

### 1. Welcome

- 1.1. Debbie Weekes-Bernard welcomed attendees.
- 1.2. Debbie welcomed Daniel Kennedy as the new representative for the London Housing Directors and Yusuf Ciftci as the new representative from Doctors of the World.

### 2. GLA Intelligence Update

- 2.1. Alice Major provided an overview of migration trends in recent months. This included long-term international migration, EU settlement scheme applications, NINO registrations, supported asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, and migrant rough sleeping.

**Action: Sean Palmer to look to see if Home Office can share data on EU Settlement Scheme applications from abroad.**

### 3. EEA Nationals: EU Settlement Scheme deadline

- 3.1. Barbara Drozdowicz expressed concerns on approaching the EUSS deadline where:
  - It is unclear that everyone who is eligible to apply has submitted an application.
  - People who have parents with indefinite leave to remain might think that they do not need to apply
  - People who have complex criminal past are concerned about applying.
- 3.2. Cllr Muhammed Butt shared that London Councils is doing a lot of work to reach out to communities regarding the deadline. However, as a result of the pandemic, it is difficult to do face to face meetings. Hence, access to accurate data is crucial to understand the gaps.

### 4. Asylum Support System

#### 4.1. Contingency Hotels

##### 4.1.1. London Initial & Contingency Accommodation Civil Society Forum

- 4.1.1.1. Mark Winterburn provided an update on the situation in contingency hotels and briefed the attendees on the London Initial & Contingency Accommodation Civil Society Forum which was set up to discuss issues like access to food, education, safeguarding in the contingency hotels.
- 4.1.1.2. Steven Lakey welcomed the involvement of Clear Springs Ready Homes in the Forum and noted that it has been helpful to focus on data to day issues.
- 4.1.1.3. Lisa Doyle noted that the Forum has been helpful for small organisations who are not necessarily part of the conversation about

# MAYOR OF LONDON

people seeking asylum in hotels and that the Forum has helped in highlighting the inconsistency in the system.

- 4.1.1.4. Cllr Muhammed Butt highlighted the need to make an equal distribution among boroughs to help decrease local pressures, adhere to the standards of the accommodation, and consult boroughs to avoid issues like rising rental prices.

## 4.1.2. London Asylum Healthcare (LAH) Task and Finish Group

- 4.1.2.1. Ella Johnson provided an overview of the creation of the LAH which is aimed to address health needs for people seeking asylum in contingency accommodation and share best practices. Ella noted that members of the group have emphasised the need for better data sharing.
- 4.1.2.2. Jane De Burgh shared that a new testing referral process was set up for people seeking asylum in hotels through the introduction of the Standard Operating Procedure and the commissioning of Find and Treat.
- 4.1.2.3. Yusuf Ciftci noted that the challenges with regards GP registrations are still occurring. Ella encouraged attendees to report any similar incidents with the GLA.

**Action: All to feed back to Ella Johnson ([Ella.Johnson@london.gov.uk](mailto:Ella.Johnson@london.gov.uk)) on areas/ incidents where there are challenges for asylum seekers in accessing primary healthcare in London, to enable troubleshooting.**

## 4.1.3. Children's issues

- 4.1.3.1. Mark Earl explained that Department for Education (DfE) policy notes that every child in the UK has the right to access education, including people seeking asylum.
- 4.1.3.2. Ian Lewis noted that a fundamental issue is communication as boroughs are not getting access to information about people arriving and that as a result of concentration of hot in some areas there is a lack of even distribution in boroughs.
- 4.1.3.3. Mark Earl shared that these children fall under the fair access policy. And that boroughs need to place them in the available schools. Mark noted that the DfE put together guidance for parents, and that for British National (Overseas) arriving from Hong Kong was produced.
- 4.1.3.4. Daniel Kennedy shared that there is an issue in the funding mechanism giving that the children are presented to boroughs to access schools after boroughs get their funding from the October census. Daniel noted that when operation Oak starts, there will be a need to collaborate on this matter to avoid pressure on the infrastructure

**Action: Mark Earl to take away for consideration the funding challenges that arise for local authorities through the presence of a transient asylum population in hotels, with a high level of need.**

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Action: Mark Earl to adapt DfE guidance for foreign nationals on accessing education/ registering for schools for the asylum population (I have attached the DfE guidance issued). Sean Palmer to support the dissemination of DfE guidance for foreign nationals on accessing education/ registering for schools**

**Action: Ian Lewis and Mark Earl to arrange a meeting between London boroughs and DfE to discuss in more depth the challenges around education access for asylum seeking families.**

## 4.2. Digital access

- 4.2.1. Varsha Baburam highlighted the issue of lack of digital access for people seeking asylum, which is especially challenging given that many services have moved online after the pandemic and that service users can not always get online or because of the lack of multi-lingual advice.
- 4.2.2. Ella Johnson shared that similar concerns were raised from attendees of the LAH where service users are unable to access GP services, COVID-19 guidance or communicate with others out of their bubble.
- 4.2.3. Lisa Doyle provided outlined her concern about Border Forces confiscating people seeking asylum's phones and there is need to return these phones to people so they can access services.
- 4.2.4. Cllr Muhammed Butt shared that London Councils have been supporting communities to access smartphones and laptops.
- 4.2.5. Sean Palmer shared that Wi-Fi is provided in contingency hotels and the Home Office is considering providing Wi-Fi in the core initial accommodation.
- 4.2.6. Steven Lakey noted that service users have access to handset and to face to face support, but this is not covering the needs.

**Action: GLA to ensure people seeking asylum are considered as part of the "Digital Access for all" Mission. GLA to keep Home Office up to date on developments.**

## 4.3. ESOL access & eligibility

- 4.3.1. Michael Boyle noted the issue that many people seeking asylum are waiting for their decision which means difficulty to access ESOL. Micheal asked if the GLA would consider exempting people seeking asylum from the European Social Fund (ESF) match so they can Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding.
- 4.3.2. Mark Winterburn noted that the GLA is limited in the AEB funding use. Debbie Weekes-Bernard added that the Mayor advocates on the AEB restrictions to be lifted.

**Action: Mark to meet with ELATT outside of LSMP on the issue demand for ELATT services due to growth in asylum population.**

## 4.4. Hotel exit strategy

- 4.4.1. Sean Palmer shared that Home Office plans is to reduce asylum decision time but that will depend on the people coming to the UK and seeking asylum.

# MAYOR OF LONDON

4.4.2. Sean explained that there has been a reduction in hotel use in London and that the Home Office is working with Clearsprings Ready Homes to move people out of hotels to be dispersed including to other regions. Sean shared that there has been a delay in these plans due to COVID-19 restrictions.

4.4.3. Anastasia Mulenga shared that the Home Office asked London local government to help with the procurement of 800 bed spaces and that London Councils has concerns about equitable distribution and the need to adhere to the London Asylum Procurement Framework.

**Action: Home Office and Clearsprings agreed to work within the principles of the London Asylum Procurement Framework during Operation Oak delivery.**

## 5. Vaccination: migrant populations including people seeking asylum and undocumented migrants

5.1. Deborah Jenkins presented the COVID-19 vaccination policy landscape and explained some of the barriers and facilitators for migrant's population groups. Barriers include the issue of GP registration, awareness of eligibility, booking appointments, and concerns of being charged or their information being passed to immigration enforcement.

5.2. Adam Smith presented the vaccine strategy in London which includes:

5.2.1. Working on the access issue and getting people to register with their GP.

5.2.2. Working on the hesitancy issue locally and nationally.

5.3. Yusuf asked about the Home Office policy for vaccinating people seeking asylum in hotels. Sean explained that the Home Office is working with CCGs on vaccination and reminding CCGs to work within the JCVI recommendations.

5.4. Cllr Muhammed Butt emphasised that getting people to access vaccination is critical for the roadmap out of COVID-19.

**Action: Sean Palmer to ensure Doctors of the World vaccine information (eligibility, safety, effectiveness and some other facts), which has been translated into 30 languages, is disseminated across the asylum accommodation estate.**

## 6. Hong Kong Nationals

6.1. Hannah Boylan provided an overview of the British National (Overseas) visa and the uncertainty of the scale of arrivals. Hannah shared that the GLA is working to make sure Hong Kongers receive the welcome they need when they come to London

6.2. Hannah shared that Cllr Muhammed Butt hosted a meeting to brief boroughs about the visa and integration needs. Hannah added that civil society partners are sharing concerns about accessing public funds (AEB in particular) and the lack of routes for Hong Kongers who do not have access to the visa and choose to apply for asylum.

6.3. Anastasia noted that boroughs are concerned about the lack of data on arrivals, especially since it is expected that London will be getting a big share of the population. Anastasia asked if the Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government could provide more data. Cllr Muhammed Butt

# MAYOR OF LONDON

added that without data it will be difficult for boroughs to plan and that there is a need for the Government to fund any new pressures upon boroughs.

**ACTION: Sean Palmer to check if the Home Office and MHCLG can share data on British National (Overseas) arrivals with boroughs.**