

MAYOR OF LONDON

London Strategic Migration Partnership

11 September 2019

Chair

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

Attendees

Andrew Carter, City Of London (ALDCS)
Anna Miller, Doctors Of the World
Barbara Drozdowicz, East European Resource Centre
Carrie Golding, Home Office
Cllr Muhammed Butt, London Councils
Ian Lewis, City Of London
Jackie Odunoye, London Housing Directors
Judith Dennis, Refugee Council
Mark Winterburn, London Councils
Nafisah Graham - Brown, ELATT
Paul Morrison, Home Office
Peter Keeling, Home Office
Primrose Muparutsa, Migrant Help
Steve Lakey, Clearsprings
Tom Daly, Migrant Help
Vanya Leslie, Reed in Partnership

GLA Staff

Hannah Boylan, Communities and Social Policy
Janaki Mahadevan, Communities and Social Policy
Molly Petter, Communities and Social Policy
Ramiye Thavabalasingam, Communities and Social Policy
Richard Cameron, Intelligence
Rupinder Parhar, Communities and Social Policy
Theo Cadbury, Communities and Social Policy

1. Welcome

- 1.1 Debbie Weekes-Bernard welcomed attendees and invited members to introduce themselves.
- 1.2 Minutes from the previous meeting were **agreed**.
- 1.3 Debbie updated on GLA recruitment. Key points included the recruitment of a new insecure immigration status co-ordinator, London Strategic Migration Partnership senior policy officer and an ESOL Coordinator job share post in the Social Integration team.

2. Intelligence Update

- 2.1 Richard Cameron from the GLA Intelligence Unit gave an update on relevant data, including national migration trends, national insurance number registrations and European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) statistics
- 2.2 Tom Daly noted the 22% increase in rough sleepers shown in the Intelligence Update and members discussed this further. Key points included:
 - Whether there was an opportunity for this data to be broken down further. Richard noted that this has not been actioned to date

MAYOR OF LONDON

- The movement of rough sleepers from other areas in England to London, and the importance of this issue in a national context
- Debbie emphasised that the GLA recognises the gap in availability and affordability of legal advice, especially for rough sleepers, and is leading work to address this.

2.3 Richard introduced the Survey of Londoners, a new source of the GLA's Social Evidence base, and highlighted some key points including:

- The sense of belonging to London was recorded as lower for EU nationals than British nationals
- EU8 nationals have higher levels of insecure employment but lower levels of fuel insecurity
- People who have arrived between 1983-2003 have higher levels of food insecurity

2.4 Debbie noted that the GLA are proud of the Survey of Londoners and the wealth of information it provides about Londoners. Debbie noted that although the Survey of Londoners remains a one-off survey, there is a large amount of detailed data and the GLA is still working through this to provide new findings.

2.5 Members discussed Richard's presentation. Key points raised included:

- The accessibility of the Survey of Londoners. NatCen Social Research were commissioned to conduct the survey and Richard noted the GLA worked to make this survey the best and most accessible that it could be.
- Whether Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) were included in the Survey of Londoners. Richard noted that he is not certain that this group was included, however the age limit of 16+ suggests it is possible.

2.6 Debbie noted the findings around food insecurity that were highlighted in the Survey of Londoners and asked members for their reflections on this in their own work. Attendees highlighted possible connections with insecure employment and insecure immigration status.

2.7 Debbie noted that the present attendees were important to the conversation around the findings because of their work with people who might not appear in the survey.

Action: Hannah Boylan to circulate link to Survey of Londoners with members.

Action: Richard to confirm whether a specific question around immigration status for Non - EU migrants was used in the Survey of Londoners.

3. EU Settlement Scheme

3.1 Peter Keeling from the Home Office provided an update on the EU Settlement Scheme. Peter highlighted that while free movement will be ending, under current plans EU citizens arriving in the UK after Brexit will receive temporary leave to remain for up to three years visa free. The Immigration White paper is currently under review.

3.3 Members discussed the following points:

- As free movement is due to end in December 2020, which is in the middle of an academic year, there needs to be clarity on how EU nationals will be able to continue to access ESOL provision. Peter noted that the Home Office is working with DfE and will share this feedback with them.

MAYOR OF LONDON

- Clarity needs to be provided on the future of the £9m fund for civil society organisations to help support vulnerable EEA migrants. Peter noted that the current funding has been agreed on a one-year basis. Participants noted that any clarity would be appreciated so that civil society organisations can plan and train more advisors where possible.
- Whether London Councils has a view on local authorities should be charging people for support to apply to the scheme. Cllr Butt stated that there was no collective view.
- Concerns were raised about the risk that children in care, adults in care, rough sleepers, third country nationals who are estranged from EU national family members and victims of domestic abuse may face significant challenges in applying to the scheme. Peter highlighted that there are ongoing conversations with local authorities regarding these concerns, and where there are worries about providing evidence of residency, the Home Office's policy on acceptable evidence is as flexible as possible. It was noted, however, that central government had still not yet made a decision on who is responsible for supporting vulnerable adults in care to apply for the scheme.
- There are issues around people incorrectly accepting pre-settled status. Peter updated that he is working with the design team to make it clear that people do not have to accept pre-settled status.
- The concern that schools have been giving parents incorrect information about their children's right to education. Peter highlighted that the Home Office are engaging with schools and employers, and that nothing changes until December 2020. It has been made clear to employers that no checks will need to be done before this date. Peter agreed to raise this issue with DfE.
- Whether there will be a single body or agency who will be responsible for following up on complaints and cases of misuse or misinformation about settled status (e.g. schools) who voluntary organisations should direct people to. Peter noted that at the moment there are no plans to set up a new body specifically for this purpose however such issues should be raised with the Independent Chief of Borders Inspectorate. Peter agreed to look into whether there are plans to change this. It was highlighted that if a complaint was specifically about a local authority, the person could go to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Action: Home Office to check if there is any data breakdown of applications based on vulnerability and data on how many people have been given pre-settled status incorrectly.

Action: Home Office to raise concerns about schools providing incorrect information with DfE.

Action: Home Office to check if there are plans to create a new body specifically to monitor complaints or cases of misuse in connection with the EU Settlement Scheme.

4. Asylum Accommodation and Support

4.1 Steve Lakey updated on the transition process for the new asylum accommodation contract. With the transition period now complete, Clearsprings received their full permit to operate as of 1 September.

4.2 Steve highlighted that in the period of this new 10-year contract, there will be a heavy focus on continuous improvement. There is now a post-transition period audit in London, and Clearsprings are taking control back from subcontractors a lot of the responsibilities for upkeep and support for service users. Steve proposed that the results of the audit process be shared with attendees.

MAYOR OF LONDON

4.3 Steve stated that issues raised in a recent Guardian article regarding a particular building in Ealing were dealt with straight away. Clearsprings decided to move the people living there elsewhere as the property in question did not lend itself to long term occupation.

4.4 Steve highlighted that Clearsprings are happy to work with local authorities and local authorities have full access to do any inspections.

4.5 Steve updated that Clearsprings plans to reduce the number of properties in East London and stated that they had already stopped increasing numbers in this region.

4.7 Tom Daly updated on Migrant Help's contract as the asylum support provider. Migrant Help have been releasing a newsletter every two weeks to provide a full overview. This newsletter started during the transition period but they have decided to continue with this for the first part of the contract.

4.9 Vanya Leslie updated that Reed in Partnership are leading the move on programme for those who receive a positive outcome from their asylum application. Reed will be supporting these refugees with information by signposting, contacting them face to face and via email and phone. 70% of contact will be by phone, with 30% face to face. This programme went live in July.

4.10 Vanya noted that some of the key challenges included:

- Housing generally, and particularly understanding how local authorities would like referrals
- Banks and other organisations requiring a proof of address from refugees, with their dispersal address not being accepted. Reed have therefore directed refugees to Monzo, however this is not always accessible for all refugees.
- Job centres not always providing translators despite this being a requirement. Theo Cadbury highlighted that this has been picked up at meetings with Refugee Resettlement coordinators and that the GLA are collating a log of issues, including the names any specific job centres failing to provide translation services, to pass onto DWP. This group are also welcome to feed into this log.

4.11 Members raised the following points:

- Whether Reed provide any guidance and support in terms of healthcare. Vanya confirmed that they provide information on GPs but that this is dependent on their dispersal accommodation.
- That Doctors of the World are doing some advocacy work on people with an insecure address being able to register with a GP and they are developing a factsheet as part of this. It was suggested that once finalised, this is shared with the ESOL sector to disperse. Steve also suggested this is added to Clearsprings' welcome pack.
- That it would be useful to invite DWP to the next meeting.
- That Refugee Council have been advocating about the move on period for years. Steve asked if there is anything Clearsprings can do to support and prepare applicants for the move on period before they receive their decision. Vanya suggested providing some housing advice around guarantors, deposits and references would be useful at this stage.
- That Monzo can be a good short term solution but there are some limitations around setting up direct debits.
- That Reed in Partnership should attend the Home Office's Move On group meetings.

MAYOR OF LONDON

- That this issue is a priority for housing directors, and both Clearsprings and Migrant Help have been engaging with them.

Action: Steve Lakey to present the results of Clearsprings' audit process at the next meeting.

Action: Attendees to raise any issues regarding job centres, particularly around providing translation services, with the GLA, who will then share these with DWP.

Action: DWP to be invited to attend next meeting.

5. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

5.1 Ian Lewis updated on the pan-London rota for UASC. He noted that, while still under pressure, the rota was not as overwhelmed as it was at the last meeting. There were also fewer unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in Croydon this summer compared to previous years.

5.2 Ian highlighted that a proposal for significant reform to the National Transfer Scheme has been developed by London and the East of England SMPs, as there have not been any interregional transfers since the beginning of 2019. The proposal would be presented to the UASC Governance Board in October. Ian highlighted that the aim of proposals is also to reverse some of the less child-centred outcomes, for example by moving children promptly and not leaving them in long periods of uncertainty.

5.3 Ian noted that many boroughs in the north of England accept higher numbers of adult asylum seekers and therefore are not prepared to accept children as well. There are proposals around the dispersal of adult asylum seekers as well, as it is important to bring the two in line.

5.6 Members discussed the following points:

- Whether under these proposals the DfE and Home Office NTS protocol will still apply. Ian updated that operations would need to be renegotiated, and if accepted by the governance board then there will be a formal consultation on protocol changes.
- Concerns around the full costs associated with this work, as there remains a £32m funding gap for local authorities in London.
- The issues around care leaver costs are also a barrier, and the care leaver review is still ongoing. Ian highlighted that he recognises the care leavers barrier, however it is not within his powers to change this.
- Whether the National Transfer Scheme would be using the pan-London rota as a model under the model being developed. Ian emphasised that while the National Transfer Scheme reform would build on the success of the rota system, a different model will be used.
- What a "fair" distribution of UASC across the country would look like. Ian highlighted that of 220 local authorities, 18 are above the 0.07% threshold, however, if all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were equally distributed across all local authorities, this would equate to 0.03% in every local authority area.
- That the Home Office chairs a group with local authority chief executives which looks at all types of migration. Paul Morrison emphasised that he had pushed for the funding for UASC and there will be further pushing for care leavers. The Home Office will find a way to close the gap but will need local authorities to bear some of the costs.

MAYOR OF LONDON

6. AOB

6.1 Debbie updated that the GLA are planning to write to the Director General of Immigration Enforcement regarding undocumented families of victim of the Grenfell Tower fire.

7. Close