

London Strategic Migration Partnership Board

Tuesday 24th June 2025

11:30-13:30

Microsoft Teams

Committee Room 1 (CR1) City Hall, Kamal Chunchie Way, London, E16 1ZE

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

Attendance:

Adam Thompson, Home Office

Adam Norris, GLA

Anna Yassin, Glass Door (HMAP Representative)

Barbara Drozdowicz, Eastern European Refugee Centre (MSAP Representative)

Beverley Jones, Home Office

Catherine Houlcroft, NRPF Network

Charlotte Maguire, GLA

Claudia Harvey, Ministry of Defence

Diletta Mastria, GLA

Edward Russel, Home Office

Elizabeth Leach, GLA

Emira Ben Amara, GLA

Emma Neill, Clearsprings Ready Homes

Fawad Shah, Home Office

Francesca Rowson, London Councils

Hannah Boylan, GLA

Helena Carrizosa, MHCLG

Jack Rigby, Home Office

Cllr Janet Mote, London Councils (and Leader, London Borough of Harrow)

Josie Garrett, GLA

Juliet Halstead, Migrant Help

Juliette Frontier, London Councils

Karen Thomas, MOPAC

Kalyani McCarthy, Westminster (London National Transfer Scheme Coordinator)

Katerina Kokkinou, Ministry of Defence

Lidia Esteves Picon, GLA

Lisa Kunwar-Deer, MOPAC

Louisa Le Roux, Home Office

Marc Simo, GLA

Mark Winterburn, GLA

Molly Bishop, GLA

Nafisah Nafisah Graham-Brown, ELATT (MSAP Representative)

Nazee Akbari, Chief Executive Officer, New Citizens' Gateway (Migrants' Advisory Panel)

Paul Bilbao, Home Office

Philip Baker, GLA

Phoebe Blagg, MHCLG

Rahiella Ashraf, Home Office

Rukshan Rajamanthri, GLA

Siobhan Gosrani, GLA

Stephen Mayne, Department for Education

Steven Lakey, Clearsprings Ready Homes
Tamara Smith, GLA
Tanya Dewey, Home Office
Tim Rymer, Home Office
Tom Rahilly, GLA
DCI Angela Thompson, MPS

Apologies:

Alison Griffin – London Councils
Tom Copley – Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, GLA
Eleanor Walker-Todd – London region (South West London)
Julie Billett – Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID)
Maxine Holdsworth – CELC Royal Borough Kensington and Chelsea
Cllr Anthony Okereke – London Councils (and Leader, Royal Borough of Greenwich)
Det Supt Andrew Furphy – MPS

1. Welcomes, Minutes and Actions

- 1.1 Debbie welcomed the board members. She especially thanked Cllr Janet Mote for covering for Cllr Anthony Okereke, and DCI Thompson for deputising for DSI Andrew Furphy.
- 1.2 Apologies were given on behalf of Alison Griffin (London Councils), Cllr Okereke (London Councils), Julie Billett (OHID), Maxine Holdsworth (CELC), DSI Andrew Furphy (MPS) and Deputy Mayor Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, GLA).
- 1.3 Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.
- 1.4 Mark Winterburn shared updates on key actions from the last meeting. He referred to the ESOL-related actions which have been fulfilled or are being addressed through conversations between the GLA and DfE. He mentioned that the review of options for future asylum accommodation and support delivery is just getting going and that the GLA will be in touch with partners about the review in due course. Lastly, he noted that Immigration Advice Capacity as an issue is integrated into LSMP Objectives.

2. LSMP Objectives

- 2.1 Mark recapped on suggested edits to the Terms of Reference from the version agreed at the last LSMP Board, which are in response to feedback subsequently received from a member of LSMP Board. LSMP Board agreed to the suggested edits.
- 2.2 Mark provided a context for this discussion on LSMP Objectives. He explained that there are a set of goals set out in the LSMP Board Terms of Reference. In addition to these goals, there will be objectives set for the financial year. A document setting out draft objectives and further detail under each of them (e.g. with measures of success) was circulated to LSMP Board members, and anyone can reach out regarding with comments or suggested changes to the document.
- 2.3 Mark led a discussion on some of the objectives which may be less familiar territory for LSMP Board, or where the way forward is a little less clear. Discussion covered

objectives that seek to make London more coordinated in response to future evacuations; improve age assessment processes; strengthen links between London and national structures to ensure that key migrant health priorities of the city are progressed at the national level; establish senior and strategic oversight of Modern Slavery in London; and strengthen the capacity and capability of London local government to collectively provide leadership on NRPF issues. Of note:

- Concerns were raised that some data suggest a reduction of children being accepted into the National Transfer Scheme, and that this may point to a worsening issue with children being mis-aged assessed as adults. This was disputed by the Home Office; however, the shared interest of all parties in getting age assessments right was firmly emphasised by both Home Office and local government representatives.
- The NRPF Network have been working with the GLA and London Councils on a potential joint position statement. This would provide a reference point to build understanding and consensus around work on NRPF.
- Problems with the NRM have been increasingly presenting across other priority briefs, including rough sleeping (i.e. people are rough sleeping because they cannot access NRM support). The GLA emphasised that traction on this issue is urgently needed over the next year, which was echoed by Cllr Mote.

2.4 Mark clarified he will be updating this LSMP Objectives document with progress and circulating it in advance of future meetings, in addition to other reporting on other LSMP functions.

2.5 Mark explained that the LSMP Objectives will shape the discussions of LSMP Board in future meetings as they may necessarily require steer, agreement or discussion from the Board; but because LSMP Board may need to address blockers or challenges to progress the objectives.

2.6 Tom Rahilly asked that Mark give a forward look to LSMP Board on when we will return to the different objectives, to aid with forward planning.

Action: LSMP Board members to provide further feedback on the LSMP Objectives 2025-26 document in writing.

Action: GLA to provide a forward look on when different objectives will be addressed at LSMP Board.

3. Rough Sleeping Plan of Action

3.1 Debbie noted that the Rough Sleeping Plan of Action was launched by the Mayor in May of this year.

3.2 Molly Bishop (GLA) provided an overview of the Plan of Action. Key points included:

- The aim of the plan of action is to establish what the strategic goals are going forward to end rough sleeping - identifying the actions that the GLA will take but also roles in the wider system to create systemic change, and the framework for measuring and tracking progress.

- The plan identifies our capital goals to develop new housing options and has clear asks to the Government on rough sleeping and homelessness. These asks were developed jointly with London Councils.
 - Many of those sleeping rough have insecure immigration status and difficulty accessing housing. Key actions relevant around migration cohorts include:
 - improving the accessibility of ESOL provision for Londoners facing additional barriers such as homelessness
 - reviewing outreach provision in London, including culturally competent support for Roma people rough sleeping in London
 - hosting and supported lodging schemes
 - increasing capacity of specialist immigration advice services
 - maximising the positive impact of the Asylum Move On Liaison Officers (AMLO) programme.
 - The next step focuses on governance and leadership as a priority, to make sure that any actions are coordinated and led as effectively as possible.
- 3.3 Anna Yassin said that Glass Door were grateful to be involved in developing the Plan of Action. Glass Door are particularly interested in the structures being put forward to work on the plans.
- 3.4 Cllr Janet Mote stressed the importance of mental health and wellbeing for people rough sleeping, whether or not they say they want to be on the streets.
- 3.5 Daniel Kennedy highlighted the pressures that councils are under as a result of Home Office asylum contingency hotel evictions. The majority of those evicted are single men not in 'priority need'. Even though they may have access to benefits, they do not have sufficient financial support to access Private Rented Sector accommodation. The successful pathway to resettlement for this cohort is to access affordable move-on housing, and to have the English and skills needed to prevent rough sleeping.
- 3.6 Hannah Boylan noted that through CHAIN data London has quite rich, near-live data on people's last settled accommodation. This shows that there continues to be a high number of people rough sleeping whose last address was asylum accommodation. She also noted that the Rough Sleeping Plan of Action called for the 56 day move-on period for newly recognised refugees to be made permanent.
- 3.7 Usman Khan noted that colleagues within his team are very focused on the support that needs to be provided for rough sleepers, and that their partnership is proving very effective in this area, with a strong liaison with both councils and VCSOs. His team continues to monitor the most appropriate services to provide.
- 3.8 Barbara Drozdowicz pointed out that for EERC's work with Eastern Europeans clients who are sofa-surfing and rough sleepers, physical health is also a problem. She explained that many of their service users face challenges registering with a GP. She asked if there is an action in the Mayor's Plan of Action to facilitate access to healthcare for rough sleepers to mitigate the problems with bureaucracy affecting them.
- 3.9 Francesca Rowson noted that the 56-day move-on period has been crucial to tackle rough sleeping, and has helped relieve some pressure on council emergency budgets.

- 3.10 Anna Yassin explained that organisations in the rough sleeping sector have had to move to an emergency response to support people seeking asylum and newly recognised refugees. The majority of people in Glass Doors' Winter Night Shelter were newly recognised refugees this year. Glass Door support the extension of the move-on period and welcome the AMLO project, which is a useful service. She noted that the interface of the integration support provided by Reed in Partnership, which is subcontracted by Migrant Help, with the AMLO project is not yet fully clear.
- 3.11 Anna Yassin welcomed that integration is mentioned in the Immigration White Paper but said that it does not really address the extensive needs of newly recognised refugees. She referred to a previous scheme (Sunrise Project) where newly recognised refugees were provided one year of support for integration. The type of emergency response by Reed and AMLOs is not sufficient because people still end up in rough sleeping without ongoing support. Further discussion needs to be had on what is required support this cohort and to prevent them needing homelessness services.
- 3.12 Tim Rymer noted that the decision on the 56-day move-on period will be a Ministerial one. There have been benefits to the 56-days, as will be reflected in the evaluation.
- 3.13 Tim acknowledged the pressures in Hillingdon and other councils. It is important to get people through the asylum system more quickly; but the Home Office understands that it is a challenge that people are coming out the asylum system in greater numbers. There are no easy answers to solve this and there is a need to work together as partners to ensure a smooth transition for everyone.
- 3.14 Katie Clement-Evans said that any changes on the 56 days will be communicated to partners with sufficient notice.
- 3.15 Rachel Churney noted that outside of the asylum space, rough sleepers also often have insecure immigration status.
- 3.16 Molly said it was really helpful to hear about the concerns and about making a priority around health and support. She said she would feedback on next steps and progress on the different elements of the plan, particularly around governance and coordination. She said she be in touch shortly following up on Anna's offer to engage.
- 3.17 Daniel Kennedy stated that he would be happy to join any groups and support coordination arrangements, pointing out that they all have access to different ideas and different support networks.

Action: GLA Rough Sleeping Team to follow up with Anna Yassin and Daniel Kennedy to explore how to take forward elements of the plan.

4. Inclusive Talent Strategy

- 4.1 Debbie noted that the Inclusive Talent Strategy is one of the key strands of the London Growth Plan.
- 4.2 Adam Norris provided an overview of the Inclusive Talent Strategy.
- The purpose of the strategy is to get people into quality jobs make the system more employer-led and to join up services across London's skills and employment

system. The plan will be inclusive of health, employment support, skills (including ESOL), maintaining a focus on inclusion and supporting Londoners who are most disadvantaged in the labour market.

- The written consultation concluded on the 21st of July, while the Easy Read and BSL versions will stay open until September. The GLA also launched a platform to receive feedback from those with lived experience with the skills system, which closed on the 31st of July. The strategy will launch in Autumn.
- Adam asked for insight from board members on what an integrated skills system should look like. He asked members their views on how the strategy can support migrant Londoners, and how services can be coordinated at different geographical levels to improve provision for people with English language needs.

- 4.3 Nafisah Graham-Brown stated that, being an employer-led proposed system, it is important to leverage employers. From ELATT's experience there are different levels of engagement, from light touch (i.e. visiting offices) to apprenticeships or internships, which are really pathways into employment. Refugees may not come with the ready-made qualifications that employers expect, and their qualifications may not fit within DfE categories or higher skills. There is an opportunity to discuss this challenge across Government Departments.
- 4.4 Stephen Mayne explained that he would like to work together with the GLA on data sharing. DfE gather a large selection of data, and some of these data could probably be shared; he would like to understand what others might want to use these data for.
- 4.5 Stephen also explained that DfE are doing some research on changing the types of ESOL that are being taught, looking at the ESOL core curriculum. DfE are speaking with providers, including the GLA, trying to understand what is working and what changes they can make. Stephen said he was keen to have further conversations with people in the room.
- 4.6 Hannah Boylan noted the role of employers in supporting pathways from ESOL into employment but also that a lot of people with ESOL needs are in employment already. Employers need to dedicate the space and time, and funding, to help people progress. There can be business cases around EDI, progression, health and safety for this. Hannah also pointed out the intersection of ESOL needs with the need for newly recognised refugees to have the tools to navigate the system and avoid rough sleeping.
- 4.7 Barbara Drozdowicz explained, learning from working with the Ukrainian cohorts, that many migrants already have qualifications, but face challenges in recognition of these qualifications, and so often end up in low-skill jobs leading to frustration. There is no obvious place to refer these people to in order to guide them through their career options. It would be useful to bring together these points under the Careers Advice Service.
- 4.8 Debbie agreed that challenges to recognition of qualifications is a longstanding issue. She noted this that this intersects with other issues like ESOL and homelessness.
- 4.9 Nafisah noted that for a long time, using European funds, lots of providers were able to provide support for categories of migrant Londoners and/ or categories of learning need that would not otherwise be covered by funding. There is need to think about how to replace that funding that has been lost to continue offering support. Also, the Home Office as a Department is not focusing these issues in the broader sense as there used to be to manage AMIF.

- 4.10 Nafisah explained that grassroots organisations and VCSOs were delivering very good work in this area but they have disappeared due to lack of funding. Some people may no longer receive the support they used to as a result.
- 4.11 Nafisah explained that NATECLA are calling for a clear ESOL strategy; but there is a need to work together on this and have a broader conversation about what kind of strategy is needed. There are many good examples out there. NATECLA has presented these multiple times to DfE.
- 4.12 Nafisah also endorsed the SPOC model, which is currently being discussed.
- 4.13 Robert Pilkington explained that in terms of strategy, the Immigration White Paper is the most useful document to be aware of. One of the key things in White Paper is English proficiency and how this is crucial to integration. The government is committed to increasing English language ability across migration groups. This includes provision of ESOL and employment support to meet the needs of those who come to the UK. Many of the measures are envisaged to be implemented during the course of this Parliament but there are no clear timescales yet. With regards to the increase in English language capabilities expected and the levels needed for integration there is an understanding that there will be an impact on the demand for ESOL. The Home Office needs to determine what the measures will look like. Robert is happy to share future updates with this group.
- 4.14 Debbie asked for updates on timelines on upcoming measures.
- 4.15 Hannah Boylan stressed the importance of English language requirements in the White Paper and how crucial it is to the funding point; and that the strategy needs to work to remove the structural barriers for people to access ESOL. It would be useful to have the Government's perspective on that.
- 4.16 In line with Hannah's comment, Nafisah drew attention to the fact that the English language level required for ILR applications indicated in the White Paper is higher than what is generally accessible through DfE Adult Skills funding. Learners can usually only get to Entry Level 3 in ESOL through DfE-funded provision, because the availability of ESOL provision at Level 1 and Level 2 is very limited. Nafisah and Robert agreed to connect offline on this
- 4.17 Adam Norris noted that it was encouraging to see things being raised that the GLA are looking at internally already, such as learner pathways to ensure there is a clear journey into good work. Adam welcomed further contributions following the meeting.

Action: NATECLA to discuss with Home Office issues with DfE-funded provision only going up to Level 2 in ESOL, and implications of the Immigration White Paper given this.

Action: Home Office to provide an update on funding commitments and timelines connected with English language requirements in the Immigration White Paper at a future meeting.

5. Afghan Resettlement Programme – transitional accommodation

- 5.1 Hannah Boylan provided an overview of MoD's ask of London for transitional accommodation for Afghan refugees, as well as settled accommodation for move-on after 9 months.
- LSMP and London Councils have engaged extensively with boroughs to ensure that a response is led by a collective position on this work. A 'Success Factors' paper sets out a range of 'red lines', as well as a success factors on what needs to happen to avoid homelessness and make a success of the programme.
 - As things stand one borough is in active discussions about whether they may be able to offer transitional accommodation, and pan-London conversations are happening on what mutual support might be possible for any borough which ends up taking that transitional accommodation.
 - Hannah noted that the LSMP objectives for this year include some work to understand how best London might be able to collectively respond to big asks like this in the future.
- 5.2 Cllr Mote set out borough priorities to make a success of the scheme.
- Cllr Mote noted the need to prioritise families that meet what is affordable in London for move-on accommodation. Large families are incredibly difficult to house in London.
 - Cllr Mote raised concerns that the current tariff is not sufficient to meet homelessness costs, and argued that additional funding is needed to meet needs and lessen the homelessness risks. She pointed out that if the tariff is used for families who are homeless after 9 months, there is even less funding available for integration. Boroughs spend £4,000,000 daily on temporary accommodation.
 - Cllr Mote stated the need for extensions to unmatched families beyond 9 months in transitional accommodation in exceptional circumstances, noting that the pressures are unprecedented with one in 50 Londoners in temporary accommodation. Incentives and additional funding are needed to create adaptations for those who need them.
 - Cllr Mote stated that Find Your Own (FYO) moves into London should only should not be supported unless in exceptional circumstances (such as for employment or family links). If FYO moves take place, this should be included in the regional allocation.
 - Cllr Mote asked for LSMP board for support and direction.
- 5.3 Katerina Kokinou explained that MoD had stabilised the most urgent requirements for accommodation, but they was still looking for accommodation for the second part of the year to respond to the anticipated arrivals. MOD continued to work closely with SMPs and they were put in touch with a borough for further discussion. MoD re happy to discuss serviced accommodation as a disperse model across the city if that works better to help manage pressures. The department have also looked at local authority-led pilots.
- 5.4 Katerina Kokinou noted that the current state of play was that they continue to work with the SMP but concerned about what will happen the second half of the year. They are committed to the regional allocation model and want to see how it will develop. At least for now, they want to see an even distribution across the UK to achieve better integration outcomes.
- 5.5 Rahiella Ashraf stressed the will to work collaboratively towards a regional allocation model to avoid no one region is overburdened.

- 5.6 Hannah Boylan thanked colleagues for coming on those points, but also stressed that it was disappointing that we have not yet had a response to the Success Factors paper.
- 5.7 Katerina Kokinou shared that policy colleagues will consider changes on the basis of feedback, but the answers may not be as quick as partners hope. She noted that MoD was respecting the red lines in the paper.
- 5.8 Hannah Boylan noted that coming forward for transitional accommodation was presented by MoD as a short-term ask, but for councils this is a long-term one and so there is need to answer the longer-term questions. Hannah was keen to pick up with policy colleagues to see what is feasible.
- 5.9 Francesca Rowson echoed that from a London Councils perspective, key concerns are around homelessness and ways to mitigate that after 9 months. She noted that boroughs had shared via London Councils and LSMP some concerns about the use of serviced accommodation. London Councils will continue to work with London Housing Directors on this.
- 5.10 Katerina offered a policy discussion to consider the points in the Success Factors paper in detail.

Action: Arrange a policy discussion between MoD, Home Office, MCHLG, LSMP and London Councils to look at the policy recommendations in the 'Success Factors' paper.

- 5.11 Katerina also clarified that families would not come all at once, and so reach the 9 months at the same time, creating a housing emergency. She offered to discuss what can be done in the short-term to mitigate issues that could come out in the longer-term.
- 5.12 Debbie said that we need to recognise the urgency of the situation while acknowledging the long-term issues; the policy discussion needs to address both long term and short terms issues.