

## **London Strategic Migration Partnership (LSMP) Board**

29 June 2023

11.00 – 13.00

Hybrid meeting – City Hall, Kamal Chunchie Way, London, E16 1ZE and Microsoft Teams

### **Chair**

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

### **Attendees**

Councillor Georgia Gould, Chair of London Councils

Councillor Grace Williams, Leader of Waltham Forest Council

Maxine Holdsworth, Chief Executives London Committee (CELC) Joint Lead on Refugees and Asylum

Kalyani McCarthy, London National Transfer Scheme Coordinator

Dan Kennedy, London Housing Lead for Asylum and Migration

Paul Bilbao, Home Office

Kerry Hodges, Home Office

Russell Bramley, Home Office

Chris Hennigan, Home Office

Scott Dunning, Home Office

Steven Lakey, Clearsprings

Juliet Halstead, Migrant Help

Nii Thompson, Reed in Partnership

Det Supt Andy Furphy, Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)

Toby Gould, London Fire Brigade (LFB)

Hasan Ozbeyhun, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Philip Adekunle, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

Eva Barnsley, London Councils

Nancy Hunt, London Councils

Johara Borbey, Refugee & Migrant Forum of Essex and London (RAMFEL), HMAP

Renae Mann, Refugee Council (MRAP)

Anna Miller, Doctors of the World (MRAP)

Barbara Drozdowicz, East European Resource Centre (EERC) (MRAP)

Phoebe Heneage, ELATT (MRAP)

Yvonne Bizayi, ELATT (MRAP)

### **Greater London Authority (GLA) staff**

Mark Winterburn, Migration (LSMP Manager)

Hannah Boylan, Migration

George Hanoun, Migration

Phil Baker, Migration

Tamara Smith, Migration

Marc Simo, Migration

Rukshan Rajamanthri, Migration

Healah Riazi, Migration and Rough Sleeping

Ramiye Thavabalasingam, Migration and Rough Sleeping

Elizabeth Kirk, Migration and Rough Sleeping

Joy Adeyemo, Senior Advisor to the Deputy Mayor

Tom Rahilly, Communities and Social Policy

Emilia Silvas, Communities and Social Policy

Lauren Evans, Skills and Employment

## Agenda

### 1. Minutes & actions

- 1.1. Debbie Weekes-Bernard welcomed attendees and introduced first-time attendees to the meeting: Maxine Holdsworth, Cllr Grace Williams, Kerry Hodges, Nii Thompson, Paul Bilbao, Roger Hadwen and Johara Borbey.
- 1.2. The minutes from the last meeting were approved.
- 1.3. Colleagues provided updates on actions from the last meeting. Key points included:

Action from March 2023 LSMP	Update at June 2023 LSMP
Action: Det Supt Andy Furphy and Andy Davis to explore potential for MPS and/ or MOPAC to map relevant hate crimes against people seeking asylum and share these findings at LSMP Board.	<p>Det Supt Andy Furphy presented the results of some risk terrain modelling carried out by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to understand the geospatial relationships between reported hate crimes and asylum contingency hotel locations over the past year, which found that although there is some statistical correlation between these two factors, the correlation is very weak. Andy surmised that it is not the actual hotels, but the general nature of the areas where they are located, that correlates with hate crime.</p> <p>Renae Mann highlighted that a bigger exercise is needed to raise awareness amongst people seeking asylum that what they have experienced may be a hate crime and how to report this, with Andy agreeing and adding that the MPS data relies heavily on recorded crimes which is likely to not be fully representative.</p>
Julie Billett to share guidance on the prevention of outbreaks and infectious disease in asylum accommodation once this is finalised.	Julie updated that this will be shared in the next few weeks.
Tim Rymer to provide a written update on the progress of the Home Office's review into age assessments before the next LSMP meeting.	Tim confirmed that this update has been circulated by Mark Winterburn.
Follow-up meeting involving Richard Williams to be arranged to discuss the current situation regarding the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and First Responder Organisational capacity.	Mark Winterburn updated that this meeting was held and a summary note was circulated earlier this week. The meeting was productive, however partners may be concerned that the Home Office is unable to commit to a timescale to consider and

	implement changes that might increase NRM First Responder capacity.
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## **2. LSMP Board Terms of Reference & Priorities**

2.1. Debbie Weekes-Bernard noted that this is the first LSMP meeting of the 2023-24 cycle, and thus invited colleagues to note and approve the below, all of which were circulated by Mark Winterburn earlier this week:

- the current London Migration Governance arrangements
- a lightly updated version of the Terms of Reference for LSMP Board
- the LSMP Priorities for 2023-24.

2.2. Colleagues approved all of the above.

## **3. Sudanese Conflict & Evacuation**

3.1. Phil Baker gave an update on the current situation. Key points included:

- The UK Government's evacuation effort for British citizens and their families has ended; this managed to evacuate around 2,500 people.
- There was an expectation that as the evacuation only included British Citizens and their family members, the challenges and support needs would be minimal. However, this has not been the case: it seems many of those evacuated were British Citizens of Sudanese origin who had lived in the country for a number of years and did not necessarily have family and support networks to return to in the UK. Many people fled with nothing and so are reliant on statutory services and benefits system for support.
- In London, the highest number of homelessness presentations are around north west London and outer east London. GLA officers are continuing to seek up to date data on homelessness presentations and where Sudanese communities in London are based.
- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has instructed local authorities to exempt eligible Sudanese evacuees from the habitual residence test. Although this is welcome, there are reports of families being asked to evidence the fact that they were part of the evacuation process, and it is unclear what they could provide.
- Issues affecting the Sudanese community are being raised through the London Communities Emergencies Partnership (LCEP). The community has raised a number of challenges that they are facing, including the fact that many who arrived in the UK were initially given 6 months leave to enter, but there is a lack of clarity on how evacuees can regularise their immigration status.

3.3. Dan Kennedy gave an update on the current housing and homelessness situation for Sudanese evacuees. Dan highlighted that if similar numbers are being replicated across London to those in Hillingdon, this will place a strain on local authorities that are already under significant pressure.

3.4. Renae Mann highlighted that there is a general call across the migrant civil society sector for safe and legal routes and/or schemes, similar to those created for Ukrainians, to be established for Sudanese people to come to the UK.

- 3.5. Hannah Boylan highlighted the similarities between London's responses to the Sudanese and Ukrainian crises, and suggested carrying out a lessons learned review to inform preparation for any similar responses in future.

**Action: GLA officers to prepare a report into lessons learned from London's response to the Sudan crisis.**

- 3.6. Paul Bilbao provided a response on behalf of the Home Office. Key points included:
- Sudanese claimants have been added as a priority cohort to the Streamlined Asylum Process (SAP), as Sudan is now considered to be a country where the likelihood of asylum claims being successful is high.
  - The family reunion route is a potential option for Sudanese people, and permission can be granted in exceptional circumstances for applications to be made within the UK.
- 3.7. Hannah Boylan asked if the advice for Sudanese people in need to establish long-term residency is to go through the asylum system, highlighting some questions that need answering if so.

**Action: Paul Bilbao to check with Home Office colleagues and confirm in writing whether, for Sudanese nationals who claim asylum while they have leave to remain, the conditions of their leave (e.g. permission to work) will continue until their asylum claim is decided.**

#### **4. London Regional Asylum Plan**

- 4.1. Maxine Holdsworth gave an update on the work of the London Regional Asylum Plan Oversight Group. There has been some progress made on data sharing, including that data on moves in and out of asylum accommodation is now being shared on Clearsprings' data portal. However, local authorities still have concerns around a lack of access to data on procurement and SAP, HMO licensing and accommodation standards, with Maxine calling on the Home Office to share greater detail on these standards with local authorities.
- 4.2. Dan Kennedy gave an update on the impact of the Hotel Maximisation policy. Key points included:
- Most local authorities in London have had confirmation that they will be affected. If numbers are fully maximised, then four boroughs will be over the 1 in 200 threshold.
  - There are serious concerns around the impact on public services, safeguarding concerns around room sharing, public health concerns around overcrowding, and concerns around community tensions.
  - Local authorities are asking for greater communication and engagement by the Home Office, particularly to understand what the red lines and tipping points are.
- 4.3. Colleagues raised a number of further concerns around the Hotel Maximisation policy. Key points included:
- Cllr Georgia Gould and Cllr Grace Williams highlighted their concerns that proper risk assessments of the impacts of room sharing are not being carried out. Cllr Gould noted that the vast majority of boroughs are receiving either no safeguarding

reports at all or very limited ones, and so are carrying out their own assurance checks.

- Anna Miller highlighted that those most affected by the Hotel Maximisation policy will also be those most affected by the Illegal Migration Bill.
- Colleagues highlighted the impact that this policy will have on the mental health of people seeking asylum, many of whom will already be suffering from trauma.

4.4. Cllr Grace Williams gave an update on safeguarding. Key points included:

- Local authorities have raised serious issues around safeguarding in hotels, including children being sexually assaulted, vulnerable women being groomed and babies assessed to be co-sleeping in rooms, but without any firm resolution as of yet.
- The safeguarding referral system needs to be fixed as boroughs are struggling to receive notifications of safeguarding risks for vulnerable populations. Boroughs are also keen to find out more about the training taken by staff in hotels.
- Local authorities are keen to work together on safeguarding. We need to help boroughs to figure out which regulatory frameworks they can focus on to ensure safeguarding protections are in place.

4.5. Det Supt Andy Furphy highlighted that the MPS is now delivering safeguarding training to staff in hotels as part of Operation Seascare, which involves officers going into businesses to train staff to spot the signs of exploitation. Debbie Weekes-Bernard welcomed this, calling on colleagues to raise awareness so that take-up of the training is as high as possible.

**Action: Local authorities to get in touch with Det Supt Andy Furphy about arranging safeguarding training for staff in hotels as part of the MPS' Operation Seascare.**

4.6. Cllr Grace Williams raised some concerns around unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), calling for an urgent resolution to the fact that some children are being wrongly age-assessed and therefore sharing rooms with single men, and noting that some children are being placed in hotels that are not suitable.

4.7. Renae Mann underlined the importance of giving agency to people in hotels to understand their rights and entitlements and how to proactively raise issues, and called for a model of co-production that centres the voices of service users.

4.8. Paul Bilbao responded to a number of points raised by colleagues on behalf of the Home Office. Key points included:

- The Home Office's key goal is to increase the amount of dispersed accommodation in its estate through the delivery of regional plans agreed across the UK. Nationally there has been good progress towards achieving this. However there remain significant challenges in London with around 6,000 bed spaces still left to procure amidst a very challenging property market, but multiagency forums and the London Regional Asylum Plan are providing a helpful framework to bring partners together and address issues.
- Hotel maximisation policy – the Home Office recognises the risks and challenges around this policy and is committed to working with local authorities to address these, such as by standing up multiagency forums where hotel maximisation is happening.

- Safeguarding – the Home Office and Clearsprings fully recognise the issues raised by colleagues and are committed to working with partners to mitigate all risks as much as possible, resolve issues and embed real change. The Home Office is looking at governance structures around safeguarding and welcomes the deep dive work being done with London Councils at local authority level, such as in Hounslow, which it will use to inform clear action plans.
- Data – the Home Office recognises that there is much more work to be done, but the London Regional Asylum Plan will help to enable the sharing of more data and the Home Office will be clarifying with asylum accommodation providers that it fully expects them to share data around (for example) arrivals and departures and live property lists.
- Accommodation standards – the Home Office has agreed through the London Regional Asylum Plan Oversight Group to conduct a gap analysis between what is set out in contracts on standards and assurance activity and what is actually happening on the ground; progress on this will be followed up on through the Oversight Group. The current agreement is to inspect properties once every six months, although inspections can take place more regularly where this is needed.

## 5. **Illegal Migration Bill Summit: key issues & next steps**

5.1. A member of the GLA migration team gave a summary of the Illegal Migration Bill summit of over 200 people, across civil society and statutory partners, convened by the GLA on 25 May 2023. Key points made by partners at the summit included:

- Participants were concerned that this Bill removes vital protections for victims of modern slavery, impacts child protection and safeguarding, and may be a cause of increased destitution and homelessness in London.
- Attendees discussed the introduction of a duty for the Secretary of State to make arrangements for the removal of people from the UK whose asylum claims are deemed inadmissible, and how this may lead to some groups of people being left in limbo.
- The fact that there is no right of appeal against a decision on inadmissibility was also raised as a concern by attendees, and this is exacerbated by the fact that there is a legal aid crisis in the UK, with legal representatives often overstretched and with no capacity.
- The impact of the Bill on people with protected characteristics was also highlighted, particularly the lack of individualised assessments on whether it is safe to remove a particular person to a country the Home Secretary deems safe.
- Attendees stressed the need for cross-sector collaboration to better understand the impacts of the Bill and develop mitigations, ensuring the inclusion of voices of lived experience. All sectors should look to establish, improve or expand partnership working, and establish robust referral mechanisms to ensure multi-agency working. Organisations were urged to build a robust evidence base of the impact of the legislation and take a collaborative approach in identifying and addressing vulnerabilities resulting from the Bill.
- The need for training of frontline staff was raised, as well as the need to learn from and spread existing best practice, with City of Sanctuary Programme, the NRPF Network, and Safe Surgeries Initiative being pointed out as positive examples.
- Funders should consider coalitions to further shared aims, address the intersectional needs of people impacted by the Bill, and to maximise ability to fund in a flexible long-term way.

- Attendees also stressed the need to support frontline staff in a holistic way, considering the mental health impact and burn-out that may result from the impacts of this legislation on the sector.
- Attendees were concerned that the new power and duty given to the Secretary of State to remove children once they turn 18 may lead to the removal of incentives for young people to be in contact with authorities, increasing the risk of exploitation, abuse and destitution.
- Attendees questioned the compatibility of the Bill with the Children's Act 1989 and the duty of Local Authorities to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in their local area. There were also concerns raised over the use of scientific age assessments.
- It was recognised that there are already serious mental health needs amongst children and young people going through the asylum system, and the need to not exacerbate them.

5.3. Phil Baker gave a summary of the discussions held at the summit on the potential impacts of the Bill on modern slavery and labour exploitation. Key points made by partners at the summit included:

- The Bill creates a scenario where people deemed 'inadmissible' have no route to access support, which will include most victims of trafficking and/or modern slavery, and survivors will be faced with a choice between remaining in a situation of exploitation or being removed from the UK if they come forward.
- There will be even less prosecution of traffickers as without conclusive decisions via the NRM, the government cannot investigate.
- People already refuse to access the NRM because it does not provide adequate support or protection. This will further deter people from coming forward.
- Participants expressed concern that with fewer people in the NRM, the Government will be able to argue that victims of trafficking do not need support, as none come forward.
- Support services noted they are currently seeing an increase of undocumented women approaching authorities and that there is currently a high risk of sexual exploitation, which the Bill will exacerbate.
- Overseas domestic workers are particularly vulnerable; some sectors have a high-risk factor for exploitative work. This could apply even where people entered legally and are not subject to the Bill as they will fear approaching the authorities.
- It was noted that monitoring, measuring and evidencing the impact of the Bill would be extremely important especially as many of the impacts of the legislation could force people away from support and mainstream services.
- There are particular concerns for trans people who may not be safe if removed to Rwanda. Trans people also face additional vulnerabilities in the UK.

5.4. Healah Riazi gave a summary of the discussions held at the summit on the potential impacts of the Bill on homelessness and destitution. Key points made by partners at the summit included:

- The sector already works with many people who are forced into destitution as a result of immigration policies, this Bill is going to make that situation much worse by making people permanently inadmissible.
- There are still many uncertainties around the Bill which is worrying for the sector. It is unclear what access to Home Office accommodation will be for people who are

deemed inadmissible. There is also a real risk that people will leave the Home Office accommodation system and fall into destitution.

- There are concerns about the impact of detention, and that if people are released without stable accommodation this will also lead to destitution.
- There is concern about how the Bill will impact on the Government's strategy to end homelessness, and how stakeholders can continue to work with them on this.
- There has been real progress made in reducing destitution through joint working between statutory services and the immigration advice sector, as immigration advice can provide a route out of homelessness. The Bill cuts across all this and we could see people destitute with complex needs and no route out of this situation.
- Rough sleeping services have always been agile, but the demand of the Bill on services is going to be extremely significant, potentially unprecedented, and quite likely unsustainable with no clear routes out of destitution.
- There is currently no slack in the system, and concerns about where funding will come from to meet the need. The impact will be felt not just in homelessness services, but mental health services, A&E, even police because people will be in crisis.
- There are concerns around the existing contingency hotel provision from the Home Office and the way they work with local authorities, including a lack of information sharing and safeguarding practices. Issues with quality of accommodation, overcrowding, lack of support and poor communication were described by attendees as leading to people becoming homeless.
- In response to these points, a number of recommendations arose from the discussion, including a call for greater partnership working, the sharing of best practice, better data sharing, regulation of Home Office provision, learning from international models, the importance of fostering trust, and the need for trauma-informed work.

5.5. Renae Mann thanked the GLA for organising the summit and raised her concern that there seems to be a large disconnect between central government, local government and civil society in understanding how the Bill will land, highlighting that the government's impact assessment of the Bill excludes the 190,000 people that Refugee Council estimates may be detained or forced into destitution in the first three years of its implementation.

5.6. Det Supt Andy Furphy noted that he is representing the MPS on the Enforcement Working Group, which held its first meeting yesterday. Debbie Weekes-Bernard highlighted that it would be useful for LSMP colleagues to hear more about the work of this group going forward, particularly around modern slavery.

**Action: Mark Winterburn to look into opportunities for involving the Enforcement Working Group in the LSMP Board going forward.**

5.7. Dan Kennedy highlighted that local authority Housing Directors across London are extremely concerned about the increased risks of homelessness and rough sleeping arising from the Illegal Migration Bill, whilst Directors of Adult Social Services are also concerned about the Bill's implications for modern slavery. Dan noted that local authority leads are asking central government for safeguards and assurances that the risks set out earlier in this item will not materialise once the Bill is passed into law.

5.8. Hannah Boylan highlighted two key themes arising from the GLA's summit: firstly, that colleagues are keen to think of new ways to evidence the impact of the Bill and, secondly,



the importance of building London's resilience as a city by getting the basics right (for example, ensuring that all people are registered with a GP as is their right).

5.9. Paul Bilbao and Russell Bramley responded to a number of points raised by colleagues on behalf of the Home Office. Key points included:

- Children and young people – Paul noted that the duty in the Bill to remove unaccompanied asylum-seeking children will only be exercised once they are over 18 years of age, and it is envisaged that the power to remove them before they turn 18 will only be exercised in very limited circumstances.
- Modern slavery – Russell noted that whilst there is still some way to go to see what the final Bill will look like, there is no intention to do away with the NRM system – instead, the Bill aims to make the NRM more robust to ensure it can support as many people as possible.
- Homelessness – the government will provide an element of support for people in the existing detention estate, and the Home Office is committed to working with DLUHC, local authorities and established multiagency forums to monitor and address the impacts on homelessness.

5.10. Phil Baker put forward the following questions for colleagues to consider in response to the Illegal Migration Bill:

- What are the existing forums and networks that we can use or build on to increase partnership working, particularly bringing together statutory and third sector organisations? What are the opportunities for building an evidence base on the impacts of the Bill and utilising the resources?
- Given the expectation that the Bill will increase destitution, have DLUHC thought about the implications for their Ending Rough Sleeping for Good strategy?
- What will be the Home Office approach to resourcing local authorities on an ongoing basis, providing accommodation for those deemed inadmissible, or contingency plans if the Rwanda scheme is not able to take sufficient numbers or the Bill does not have the intended deterrent affect?

**Action: Mark Winterburn to circulate the summary note of the GLA's Emergency Summit on the Illegal Migration Bill.**

## **6. Skills and employment**

6.1. Lauren Evans gave an update on the GLA's Skills Strategy, including how it is working to improve access to skills provision for migrant Londoners through the Mayor's Skills Roadmap and the Adult Education Budget (AEB). Key points included:

- The Mayor published his Skills Roadmap for London in January 2022, which aims to make skills provision more locally relevant, impactful and accessible.
- The Mayor has introduced several flexibilities to the AEB to widen its accessibility, such as extending eligibility for those in low-paid work (earning below the London Living Wage), full funding for people seeking asylum, and removing long term residency requirements for migrant Londoners.
- The GLA has commissioned a research project to the Learning and Work Institute (LWI) to review how the Mayor's skills policies and programmes (including the AEB

flexibilities) have supported refugees, people seeking asylum and recent migrants to London to access skills provision.

- The GLA recently launched the London Learner Survey (LLS) to gain insight on learner outcomes, including economic and social outcomes. The results have been positive, with 52% of learners reporting a positive economic outcome and 96% of learners reporting that they felt their course had led to positive social change.
- The Mayor has launched the [Skills for Londoners Community Outreach Programme](#) to further support on making adult education more locally relevant and accessible.
- The Mayor also launched the [No Wrong Door](#) (NWD) initiative, which is being delivered in partnership with London's 4 sub-regional partnerships, London Councils and DWP/Job Centre Plus to address key structural barriers to Londoners gaining employment and facilitate the greater integration of skills and employment provision across London.
- A NWD Research & Innovation programme is also underway, with a comprehensive report into the barriers Londoners face in accessing support due to published on 12 July.

**Action: Mark Winterburn to circulate Lauren's slides containing updates on the GLA's Skills Strategy.**

**Action: Mark Winterburn to circulate details of the GLA's Skills for Londoners Community Outreach Programme.**

6.2. Kerry Hodges and Nii Thompson gave a summary of the aims and initial plans for the Refugee Employability Programme (REP). Key points included:

- The REP is funded by the Government and being delivered in London by Reed in Partnership. It aims to support refugees into employment or self-employment, with tailored support being delivered across three areas: employment support, English language support, and integration support.
- The programme is targeted at those entering the UK through safe and legal routes (primarily UKRS, ACRS, ARAP and Community Sponsorship), and London will have the highest number of eligible participants in the UK.
- The programme is launching in September 2023 and will be delivered on a 2 year contract. Reed in Partnership are currently standing up regional contracts and sub-contracts in preparation for the launch.
- Reed in Partnership have expertise on the employment side and currently deliver the Advice, Issue Reporting & Eligibility (AIRE) service in partnership with Migrant Help, providing positive move on support to people seeking asylum. They therefore have some familiarity in working with this population, but Nii welcomed any continued guidance and input from LSMP colleagues.
- Nii also highlighted that Reed in Partnership will be integrating trauma-informed practice into its services, which was welcomed by colleagues.