

London Strategic Migration Partnership

29 March 2022

14.00 – 16.00

Microsoft Teams meeting

Chair

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

Attendees

Tim Rymer, Home Office
David Andersson, DWP
Russ Aziz, DLUHC
Kate Cornish, Department for Education
Alison Griffin, London Councils
Eva Barnsley, London Councils
Clive Grimshaw, London Councils
John Hetherington, London Fire Brigade
Sean Harriss, Harrow
Daniel Kennedy, Hillingdon
Cllr Muhammed Butt, London Councils
Steven Lakey, Clearsprings
Martin Machray, NHS England
Maha Saeed, UKHSA
Bunmi Shodeyi, UKHSA
Leonora Weil, UKHSA
Sarah Crowther, REAP
Marsela Hoxha, Migrant Help
Renaë Mann, Refugee Council
Barbara Drozdowicz, EERC (MRAP)
Nafisah Graham-Brown, ELATT (MRAP)
Yusuf Ciftci, Doctors of the World (MRAP)
Matteo Besana, Doctors of the World (MRAP)
Anna Yassin, Glass Door (HMAP)

GLA staff

Joanna Davidson, Executive Director, Communities and Skills (outgoing)
Tunde Olayinka, Executive Director, Communities and Skills (incoming)
Karissa Singh, Skills and Employment
Veronica Tuffrey, City Intelligence Unit
Tom Rahilly, Assistant Director, CSP
Leticia Ishibashi, CSP
George Hanoun, CSP
Mark Winterburn, CSP
Ayham Alsuleman, CSP
Hannah Boylan, CSP
Hailey Wong, CSP
Ella Johnson, CSP

Apologies

Sean Palmer, Home Office

Agenda

1. Welcome and minutes

- 1.1. Debbie Weekes-Bernard welcomed attendees, noted apologies and introduced new members to the group. The minutes from the last meeting were approved.
- 1.2. Debbie noted that this meeting is taking place during the pre-election period preceding upcoming local elections on 5 May 2022, and so some attendees are limited in what they can say during this meeting. Debbie added that any relevant social media or public communications from the meeting should be reviewed by GLA staff to ensure it is compliant.

2. GLA Intelligence update

- 2.1. Veronica Tuffrey gave a presentation updating on London's migration and population.

Action: Mark Winterburn to circulate presentation slides.

3. Ukraine

- 3.1. Hannah Boylan gave a summary of the current pathways available for Ukrainian refugees to come to the UK: Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family Scheme. Hannah noted that there are also undocumented Ukrainians arriving outside of these schemes and that the number of Ukrainians seeking asylum is expected to rise.
- 3.2. Hannah noted that a Core Group of the LSMP Board was established to convene quickly in a multi-agency way following the Afghanistan crisis last year, and was stood up in response to the Ukraine situation. Hannah added that the GLA is receiving concerns from boroughs responding to Ukraine around gaps in guidance, accessing data and teething issues in the new pathway schemes.
- 3.3. Partners discussed the response by boroughs, London Councils, and government departments:
 - Partners praised the work in partnership that has taken place between the GLA, boroughs, London Councils, civil society, the NHS and government agencies such as DLUHC in response to the crisis, particularly given its speed and scale.
 - Sean Harris listed the current key priorities for boroughs as: ensuring suitable standards of accommodation, ensuring appropriate safeguarding checks are made, and ensuring wraparound support is available from both statutory and non-statutory services to promote integration. Sean welcomed that there is funding available to support integration which is in line with that for the Afghan schemes.
 - The biggest concern for boroughs on a practical basis is long-term uncertainty, as hosts are currently only required to offer accommodation for 6 months and visas last for 3 years. There is a risk of Ukrainians being in the UK longer than there is accommodation available to house them.
 - Sean highlighted that work is being done at points of entry in London such as Heathrow, Kings Cross and Victoria bus station to stand up support for Ukrainians entering the UK.

- Russ Aziz from DLUHC noted concerns over safeguarding issues, whether transfers between schemes would be possible, and uncertainty around accommodation standards.
- Councillor Muhammed Butt noted that London Councils is sharing and collecting data as it comes in and is working with the Home Office and DLUHC to get clarity on government guidance. Cllr Butt also raised ESOL provision as a priority and called for there to be uniformity between partners' support for the Ukrainian cohort and that for other cohorts, noting that Afghans should not be forgotten.
- Kate Cornish from the Department for Education called for partners to get in touch if they receive any intelligence or feedback and/or have any concerns on the ground regarding safeguarding.

3.4. Martin Machray, Leonora Weil and others updated on the response by health partners. Key points include:

- Importance of data sharing for health partners as well as for boroughs.
- High levels of trauma (both physical and mental) among those coming to the UK.
- Services need clear guidance on GP registration for all Ukrainians coming into London, down to the practice level including what documents should not be required to provide for eligibility.
- UKHSA has put together a public health group of specialists who are working closely with partners and the NHS, and meeting weekly to pull together resources from across London and share good practice.
- UKHSA is launching work on 7 April that looks at the health lessons learned from the Afghan schemes. The work covers safeguarding, data collection, language access and translation, access to primary care and mental health.
- Yusuf Ciftci raised that partners on the ground are coming across many barriers to GP registration, such as asking for proof of address which many of those arriving from Ukraine will not have.
- Yusuf highlighted the change in NHS charging, noting that, although Ukrainians arriving in the UK will not be charged for secondary care, this doesn't apply to undocumented Ukrainians already in the UK, presenting a challenge for health partners.
- Renae Mann underlined the importance of early intervention in turning trauma into recovery, and noted that this can be improved with more thought on design.

3.6. Nafisah Graham-Brown highlighted the need to provide support for long-term integration, noting that, though partners have understandably been focusing on providing immediate crisis support, past experiences from the Afghan and Hong Kong BN(O) schemes show that the support that comes after this is often not thought through, such as the lack of ESOL capacity.

3.7. Barbara Drozdowicz raised her concerns around the capacity of the immigration advice sector and homelessness sector in London to meet the needs of Ukrainians, noting that it is the volunteering sector that often receives the brunt of crises. Barbara called for further support from partners to mitigate this.

3.8. Partners raised a number of concerns around hosting:

- Boroughs are considering how to support people presenting to councils for homelessness support after their arrangements with hosts break down.
- Eastern Europeans who are hosting Ukrainians in London will also need support, as many of them may themselves be in destitution.

- There are concerns among London Housing Directors about overcrowding.
- 3.9. Debbie Weekes-Bernard confirmed that the feedback given in this meeting will be shared with DLUHC, and that the LSMP core group will continue to meet over the next few weeks.

4. LSMP Board Terms of Reference and update on Governance Review

- 4.1. Mark Winterburn gave an update on the London Migration Governance Review, which was undertaken by the GLA to ensure that systems are working as effectively as possible. Mark noted that some tweaks have been made to the LSMP Board Terms of Reference in response to feedback, and governance arrangements will be kept under review until the end of the next financial year. Partners are also looking to expand membership of the LSMP Board, and Mark noted that the core group stood up in response to Ukraine makes LSMP more resilient.
- 4.2. Sean Harriss gave his reflection on the current governance arrangements, arguing that they are working well in practice and allowing partners to react quickly, be more effective and bring disparate bits of the system together.

5. People seeking asylum

- 5.1. Mark Winterburn gave a presentation updating on the situation for people seeking asylum in London. Mark noted that the number of people accommodated in London asylum hotels has risen significantly since summer 2021.

Action: Mark Winterburn to circulate presentation slides.

- 5.2. Tim Rymer noted that the Home Office is beginning to see a number of asylum claims from Ukrainians coming through, and the arrival of people on small boats is continuing to put pressure on the system. Tim noted that the Home Office is keen to maintain joined-up working through this forum and others going forward.
- 5.3. Daniel Kennedy gave an update from the London Asylum Procurement Framework Governance Group. Daniel listed some core issues that have reflected the rise in the number of people seeking asylum, these are: some boroughs coming under disproportionate pressure compared to others; the number of unaccompanied children entering local authority care from hotels; the absence of system-wide data sharing; a higher standard of bridging accommodation than for asylum contingency accommodation; the long-term use of contingency hotels; concerns around local support such as foodbanks and meeting dietary requirements; the need for greater communication and forewarning around procurement; and the need for a regional strategy.
- 5.4. Sarah Crowther from REAP gave an update on mental health for people seeking asylum.
- A series of meetings has been set up via Zoom which has brought together over 50 GPs, practitioners and clinicians to share best practice on supporting people seeking asylum in hotels.
 - Colleagues are finding that people seeking asylum have a very high level of need, and data is an issue as some will not present via traditional routes. There is also now a consensus that this population should at least be able to access coping strategies in the meantime if they cannot access therapy due to the huge backlog, and that high levels of people seeking asylum in London is the 'new normal' and so authorities should always be prepared for this.

- Staff knowledge on the ground is key, particularly in terms of awareness of migrants' rights and entitlements and trauma-informed approaches, and cross-sector communication is vital to this.
- There is a desire for one partner to take the lead on developing a coherent overall strategy on clinical pathways and ensuring service users know where to go to for next steps. S

5.5. Renae Mann highlighted that legal issues are exacerbating the mental health crisis for those in hotels, caused by slow decision-making and a lack of casework in the system. Renae also underlined that accommodation standards must be improved as these are long-term homes for service users and therefore represent a long-term need, and flagged that age-disputed young people are often suffering from stress.

5.6. Tim Rymer noted that the Home Office has set up a steering group and invested £1 million in wellbeing grants, it is also keeping in touch with SMPs across the UK on mental health.

5.7. Martin Machray underlined that partners should talk about mental health and wellbeing together, and noted that different mental health challenges require different interventions.

6. AOB

6.1. Debbie Weekes-Bernard highlighted the publication of a [new report commissioned by the GLA](#) that presents a social cost-benefit analysis of the no recourse to public funds (NRPF) policy in London.