

London Strategic Migration Partnership (LSMP) Board

6 December 2022

13.00 – 15.00

Hybrid meeting – Committee Room 2, City Hall and Microsoft Teams

Chair

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

Attendees

Councillor Georgia Gould, Chair of London Councils

Hannah Doody, Chief Executives London Committee (CELC) Joint Lead on Refugees and Asylum

Mark Billings, Hillingdon (covering for Dan Kennedy, London Housing Lead for Asylum and Migration)

Kalyani McCarthy, London National Transfer Scheme Coordinator

Robert Shaw, London Councils

Clive Grimshaw, London Councils

Eva Barnsley, London Councils

Nancy Hunt, London Councils

Toby Gould, Interim Head of London Resilience, London Fire Brigade (LFB)

Dr Leonora Weil, UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)

Martin Machray, NHS England

Nick Jariwalla, Director, Resettlement, Asylum Support and Integration (RASI), Home Office

Helen Hurley, Home Office

Mandy Bailey, Home Office

Laura Curran, Home Office

Bryony Todd, Home Office

Nicole Stansfield, Home Office

Christina Jones, Home Office

Steven Lakey, Clearsprings

Liz Maifredi, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

James Hadley, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

Salud Murphy, DLUHC

Reginald Oko-Flex Inya, Migrant Help

Samantha Tidy, Migrant Help

Dr Jo Wilding, University of Sussex

Barbara Drozdowicz, East European Resource Centre (EERC)

Marina Davidson, Doctors of the World

Rena Mann, Refugee Council

Anna Yassin, Glass Door

Yvonne Bizayi, ELATT

Greater London Authority (GLA) staff

Tom Rahilly, Assistant Director, Communities and Social Policy (CSP)

Mark Winterburn, CSP

Hannah Boylan, CSP

Marc Simo, CSP

Tamara Smith, CSP

Siobhan Gosrani, CSP

George Hanoun, CSP

Laila Aziz, CSP

Lidia Estevez Picon, CSP and Rough Sleeping and Homelessness

Katherine Radlett, Skills and Employment
Veronica Tuffrey, City Intelligence
Emma De Zoete, Health

Agenda

1. Welcome and minutes

- 1.1. Debbie Weekes-Bernard welcomed attendees and introduced new members Nick Jariwalla, Toby Gould and Mark Billings (deputising for Dan Kennedy) to the group.
- 1.2. The minutes from the last meeting were approved.

2. Update: London Core Group and ARCSEG meetings

- 2.1. Debbie Weekes-Bernard noted that a number of urgent meetings have been set up in the past couple of months in response to emerging issues, and thanked partners for their responsive work. Debbie highlighted that the Mayor of London wrote to the Home Secretary on 3 November raising safeguarding and homelessness risks amongst the asylum population, including reference to reports of sexual assault against children, and calling for these issues to be urgently resolved.
- 2.2. Hannah Doody gave an overview of ongoing work by the multi-agency Core Group of the LSMP, and the Asylum Refugee Council Senior Engagement Group (ARCSEG).
 - Members of the Core Group have held a series of meetings with the Minister for Immigration, Second Permanent Secretary at the Home Office and senior officers across the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Colleagues are now establishing local authority working groups that sit under ARCSEG.
 - A joint oversight group co-chaired by a Second Permanent Secretary at the Home Office and the Chief Executive of the Local Government Association has also been set up.
- 2.3. Hannah also highlighted a number of key ongoing issues and concerns:
 - Communication and consultation around accommodation – Hannah welcomed the introduction of the 24-hour notification period for local authorities before asylum contingency hotels are stood up as a step forward, but noted that this is still quite limited.
 - Spot bookings – Hannah highlighted these a serious concern, underlining that whilst they were necessary in response to the situation at the Manston asylum centre to secure accommodation, they should otherwise not be continued going forward carrying large safeguarding risks.
 - Data sharing – Hannah emphasised the need for this to be robust. Whilst boroughs are looking at how they can collect local data, a real gap exists and partners are heavily reliant on Clearsprings to share information.
 - Safeguarding – Hannah noted that partners will be discussing how to manage this on a sub-regional level with integrated care system (ICS) leads.

- Age assessments - Hannah also highlighted inaccurate age assessments by the Home Office continue to mean that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are placed in adult accommodation.
- 2.4. Dr Leonora Weil gave an overview of the recent paper shared on system issues, challenges and potential solutions through lessons from the recent dispersal from Manston. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and health partners are focusing on five core areas: access to data, health protection, access to care and treatment (including obtaining HC2 certificates), quality of care and treatment, and safeguarding (including clarity of processes in escalation and reporting) in the context of the national work. Leonora also highlighted the management of diphtheria as a current area of focus but that the issues and potential solutions highlighted are intended to support a discussion at LSMP of the opportunities for strengthening the asylum health pathway, and for improving the system response to any future outbreaks and incidents, rather than supporting a specific discussion of the current incident and its management. The request was for a clear understanding from colleagues, about where and how these issues are progressed and the timelines for these.
- 2.5. Nick Jariwalla and Nicole Stansfield gave a summary of updates from the Home Office, noting that issues around data sharing, health and safeguarding are its top priorities. Key points included:
- A Home Office and UKHSA tactical group has been set up to improve data sharing. Nicole added that, whilst the Home Office is currently bound by data protection law to only share data where relevant to its statutory obligations to house and care for people seeking asylum, it is seeking legal advice on this to see if sharing data with health partners can be expedited.
 - Nicole noted that colleagues are working on infectious disease standard operating procedures (SOPs) with UKHSA. These will include management of diphtheria and potentially scabies, depending on the advice given by UKHSA.
 - UKHSA is advising the Home Office on the robustness of assessment and screening processes. The Home Office continues to take the advice of UKHSA including at the highest level.
- 2.6. Martin Machray underlined the importance of better communication from the Home Office for the NHS, noting that this is vital to improve data sharing and ensure health perspectives are central to all policy decisions. Nicole Stansfield welcomed Martin's offer to make links and noted the Home Office's openness to including NHS colleagues in its tactical work. Nick offered to set up a group to bring operational colleagues working within London health systems into this work.
- Action: Home Office to establish an operational group to ensure that the detailed learning from the situation arising from Manston can feed into ongoing management in relation to the health response. Home Office to liaise with Martin Machray (NHS England).**
- 2.7. Emma De Zoete added that there is a lot of national work on health that is well advanced, including data sharing, and called for this work to be finalised and monitored in order to support the response to current and future issues, and asked for a timeframe for completion to be set out.

Action: Home Office to update LMSP Board on the work of National Asylum Health Steering Group (NAHSG).

2.8. Colleagues raised a number of issues around safeguarding. Key points included:

- Nick Jariwalla acknowledged an increase in safeguarding issues across the asylum estate, and noted that the Home Office is looking to bring local authorities into a discussion around how the referrals process is managed (including at which point data is shared as part of this) and how to respond to emerging trends in a collaborative way.
- Cllr Georgia Gould underlined that a sufficient response to safeguarding issues must include the involvement of local authorities as they have a statutory responsibility; councils need to have sight of and be involved in safeguarding referrals.
- Hannah Doody underlined the need for local authorities to receive data from Providers on the number of children referred from them to boroughs, noting that this information is vital to understand the scale of the challenge. There are concerns that the figures may actually show that issues are being under-reported. Nick Jariwalla offered to feed this ask through the safeguarding forum being developed by the Home Office.
- Dr Leonora Weil highlighted the need to ensure that the various reports of safeguarding concerns across the various accommodation settings are brought together across Home Office. Nick Jariwalla highlighted that this is now in place.

Action: Home Office to explore sharing data on safeguarding referrals with London local government.

2.9. Nick Jariwalla acknowledged colleagues' concerns around Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, including those being moved to hotels as adults and then being identified as children thereafter, and noted that the Home Office is carrying out a review of these cases. Emerging findings suggest that there may be systemic issues in the age assessment process as well as issues relating to individual cases. Cllr Georgia Gould welcomed the review of cases and noted that children's services directors across London are willing to work with the Home Office on this issue. Cllr Gould also noted the ask for the time limit for the Merton Age Assessment to be extended beyond 28 days if the person claiming to be a child was found to be over the age of 18.

2.10. Renae Mann also welcomed the review of cases and asked if the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector could be involved in this, as civil society colleagues have useful knowledge on children's experiences they can contribute. Nick Jariwalla responded that he would be happy to bring in VCSE colleagues.

Action: Renae Mann (Refugee Council) and Home Office colleagues to liaise about VCSE participation in the Home Office's review of the age assessment process.

2.11. Hannah Doody reiterated her concerns around the use of spot bookings in large numbers, highlighting that guaranteeing safe and suitable accommodation is a key factor in councils' duty to prevent harm. Nick Jariwalla noted the Home Office's agreement that this model should not be used for hundreds of people and desire to avoid this as far as possible going forward. Nick highlighted that emergency procurement may still be necessary at any time but noted that the 24-hour notification policy for local authorities is now in place and that bookings will be exclusive and not next to members of the public.

- 2.12. Steven Lakey highlighted the work of the North West London health team in terms of vaccination, infection control and GP registration and encouraged colleagues to meet with them.
- 2.13. Steven acknowledged data sharing of medical information as a key issue, but noted that Clearsprings has information on arrivals and departures from hotels, and that all health and local authority colleagues can access Clearsprings' data portal as an interim measure to receive information on people in hotels. Steven encouraged partners to get in touch if they do not yet have access to the portal. Nick Jariwalla highlighted that he is keen to hear from partners on the gaps between the information the portal provides and what is still required.

Action: Health system and local government partners to review arrangements on access to Clearsprings' data sharing portal and identify any areas for improvement upon the data sharing portal.

3. London Regional Asylum Plan and Place-Based Approach

Governance

- 3.1. Nick Jariwalla and Helen Hurley gave an update from the Home Office on the progression of regional plans and governance as part of this process.
- The Home Office's is reviewing the responses to its (now completed) informal consultation into the development of a Place-Based Approach.
 - All regional plans from across the UK have been submitted and twelve workshops on 'variance' between plans and Provider expectations have been completed.
 - The Home Office will work with local authorities and Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs) to develop a high-level governance framework for regional asylum plans delivery. The Home Office is appreciative of the needs expressed by London in the draft Terms of Reference for a London Regional Plan Oversight Group shared with the Home Office. Freedom will be allowed for regional partners to continue their regular governance processes.
- 3.2. Hannah Doody called for local government colleagues to be able to input into the governance structure before it is signed off by the Home Office, noting that there are particular challenges in London relating to housing and accommodation that are different to those in other regions across the UK. This should be a topic of discussion at the next ARCSEG meeting.
- 3.3. Mark Winterburn gave an update on London's regional plan and response to the Place-Based Approach. He noted that Clearsprings Ready Homes and the Home Office had accepted the local-authority level asylum accommodation put forward by London local government. Mark also underlined the ask by local authorities to ensure that the voices of health partners, VCSE partners and people seeking asylum and refugees themselves are included in the development of the Place-Based Approach.
- 3.4. Steven Lakey gave an update from Clearsprings. Key points included:
- Clearsprings are continuing their push to rebalance the dispersal picture across London, and the next step will be to implement London's regional plan.

- Steven highlighted success in South England and Wales regions in procuring bed spaces.
- Clearsprings are continuing to look at procuring large-scale accommodation sites with local authorities, and are looking to produce a paper setting out options such as a combination of brownfield sites and potential modular builds to be shared with local authorities. The circulation of the paper was an action from the last LSMP Board meeting.

Action: Clearsprings to share its options paper on new models of housing procurement with the LSMP Board.

- 3.5. Cllr Georgia Gould underlined the need for an increase in housing supply in the private rented sector to ensure that London's plan will be deliverable and effective, and reiterated the asks by local authorities regarding housing acquisitions and the housing benefit cap.
- 3.6. LSMP members confirmed their agreement in principle for a London regional plan oversight group to be set up, with details to be agreed at a later date.

Action: London Regional Plan Oversight Group to be established to report into LSMP Board once finalised.

Immigration Advice and Legal Aid Needs

- 3.7. Dr Jo Wilding gave a presentation summarising key findings from her research into access to immigration and asylum legal advice in London. In particular, Dr Wilding highlighted the lack of available provision compared to need. This has proliferated as a consequence of policy decisions. She underlined the importance of effective referral networks and systems in local areas. Dr Wilding also highlighted potential opportunities and solutions in this area, including the possibility to develop pan-London approaches.
- 3.8. Steven Lakey highlighted the issues caused by the delay in dispersal. Since many people are now staying in initial accommodation for months instead of weeks and so they need to seek legal aid before they are dispersed. This leads to people accessing legal aid in a different area to the one in which they are subsequently dispersed. Steven suggested creating a hub and using technology to allow people to access legal aid as a central resource, instead of making access geographically-linked.
- 3.9. Dr Jo Wilding gave reflections on the current situation around immigration advice and legal aid access, highlighting that remote advice provision is not always appropriate, such as for those suffering from trauma, and that a key solution for current systemic issues is to reduce demand in the system by making the process quicker and easier for service users.
- 3.10. Anna Yassin thanked Dr Wilding for illustrating the human impact caused by legal aid deserts and underlined the importance of people seeking asylum receiving good quality immigration advice at the beginning of their journey in the system. She noted that one third of service users at Glass Door are non-UK nationals who arrive requiring immigration advice.
- 3.11. Cllr Georgia Gould called for sharing of best practice in this area, including creative approaches taken by boroughs, to be shared across London. Hannah Boylan noted that learning can be shared not only from the data and insights from Dr Wilding's research, but also from work the GLA has done in coordinating sub-regional immigration advice for

migrant rough sleeping and work on children's specialist immigration advice in social services, which has been piloted in boroughs.

Action: The GLA, London Councils and Dr Jo Wilding to take forward the action to work to share best practice by boroughs around immigration advice and legal aid provision across London.

- 3.12. Hannah Boylan highlighted the areas Dr Wilding spoke to that are within Home Office control, such as policy on asylum decisions and routes to settlement. Hannah asked if the Home Office is engaging with the Ministry of Justice to prevent cliff edges for people, noting that decision-making on asylum applications is impacted if people are unable to access good quality advice. Nick Jariwalla noted he is happy to discuss this further to ensure ministers have the best advice possible and that operational delivery is as supportive as it can be.

Action: GLA to follow up with Home Office to discuss the implications of Dr Jo Wilding's research for Home Office asylum operations.

- 3.13. Lidia Estevez Picon gave an overview of the GLA's work in coordinating sub-regional immigration advice services for migrants rough sleeping.
- Together with London Councils, the GLA secured funding this year from the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-2025 to put together new immigration advice services for migrants rough sleeping or at clear risk of rough sleeping in London
 - These services are organised sub-regionally and include capacity for initial advice, complex casework as well as dedicated Legal Aid capacity. The services are funded until March 2025.

4. Update: Cumulative Asylum and Refugee Housing Needs

- 4.1. Mark Billings gave a presentation on current cumulative asylum and refugee housing needs in London. Key points included:
- London is in a severe housing affordability crisis, driven by wider changes to the private rented sector.
 - Since September, housing and homelessness pressures relating to refugees and evacuees from Afghanistan and Ukraine, accommodated asylum seekers and newly recognised refugees have remained very high and may now be more acute.
 - According to data from DLUHC and London Councils, London boroughs have accepted 686 homelessness applications from Ukrainian households since February, and two thirds of this total are families with children. There are concerns about rising homelessness presentations since many families have reached the 6 month mark for sponsorship under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.
 - Local authorities have a number of key housing asks for government regarding support for Ukrainians, including:
 - Clarity on whether there will be alignment between the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the Ukraine Family Scheme and the other visa routes
 - Clarity on the Homes for Ukraine funding arrangements beyond year one of the scheme

- Consider doubling the thank you payment for hosts under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme to £700 to help prevent sponsorship arrangements from ending after 6 months
 - Innovative approaches to increase housing supply for Ukrainians and all asylum and refugee cohorts
 - Improved data sharing across all asylum and refugee cohorts.
- 4.2. Salud Murphy from DLUHC noted that ministers are holding conversations on the future of the Homes for Ukraine programme, and they are aware of the pressures on local authorities and the ask to provide certainty on future arrangements. Salud confirmed that a new director of Homes for Ukraine taskforce will be named in due course as the incumbent is leaving for a new role.

5. London Migration Data Hub

- 5.1. Mark Winterburn gave an update on the London Migration Data Hub. Mark noted that a Beta version of the Hub has now been shared with LSMP board members, and welcomed colleagues to register, take a look and provide any feedback. The Hub will be rolled out to wider statutory partners in the coming weeks and months.
- 5.2. Regarding access to the Hub for VCSE partners, Mark noted that this depends on the data owners but there is also the potential to create a version of the Hub further down the line that will be publicly available, using statistics in the public domain.

6. GLA Asylum Welcome Programme

- 6.1. Mark Winterburn gave an update on the GLA's Asylum Welcome Programme. The Asylum Welcome design labs are funded by the Mayor of London to work with local authorities to maximise access to services and connections for people seeking asylum in London. Mark noted that 10 London boroughs will be taking part in a series of Design Lab workshops as part of the programme, with the first workshop taking place in January 2023.