

London Strategic Migration Partnership Board

Tuesday 30th September 2025

14:00-16:00

Microsoft Teams

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

Attendance:

LSMP Members

Dan Kennedy – LB Hillingdon & London Lead Housing Director for Asylum and Migration
Catherine Houlcroft - NRPF Network
Jonathan Featonby – Refugee Council (MSAP)
Joseph Webb – Royal Borough Kensington and Chelsea
Meltem Dincer - East London Advanced Tech Training - ELATT (MSAP)
Leon Elliot – NACCOM (HMAP)
Samantha Tidy – Migrant Help
Liz Maifredi – Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
Jon Gough – The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC)
Tim Rymer – Home Office
Kalyani McCarthy – Westminster, NTS Coordinator
Beverley Jones – Home Office
Tanya Dewey – Home Office
Fawad Shah – Home Office
Maxine Holdsworth – Royal Borough Kensington and Chelsea & CELC Lead on Refugees and Asylum
Jo Beck - London Councils
Giorgia Bianchi – London Councils
Anna Friel – London Councils
Samira Islam – London Councils
Angela Thompson - MPS

GLA & MOPAC Staff

Mark Winterburn – Communities and Social Policy
Hannah Boylan – Communities and Social Policy
Phil Baker – Communities and Social Policy
Tom Rahilly – Communities and Social Policy
Marc Simo – Communities and Social Policy
Charlotte Maguire – Communities and Social Policy
Emira Ben Amara – Communities and Social Policy
Nicoletta Enria – Communities and Social Policy
Elisabeth Pop – Communities and Social Policy
Gina Kass – Communities and Social Policy
Tamara Smith – Communities and Social Policy
Shipra Ogra – Communities and Social Policy
Ramiye Thavabalasingam – Housing and Land / CSP
Lisa Kunwar-Deer – MOPAC
Karen Welsh – MOPAC
Josie Garrett – Public Health

Molly Bishop - Rough Sleeping and Homelessness
Poppy Woodcock – Strategic Partnerships

Guests

Angela Thompson – Metropolitan Police
Catherine Bennion – MHCLG
Cllr Grace Williams – Leader, Waltham Forest & Deputy Chair and Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration, London Councils
Peter Keeling – Home Office
Jenny Briggs – DfE
Kama Petruczenko – Refugee Council
Dr Helen Connolly – University of Bedfordshire
Ilona Printer – LSE
David Johnson – MHCLG
Jim Carroll – MHCLG
Joseph Webb – Royal Borough Kensington and Chelsea
Katie Clement-Evans – Home Office
Avanti Kirar – Home Office
Rachel Churney – Home Office
Kalvin Page – Home Office
Nasheen Singh – Westminster

Apologies

Alison Griffin – London Councils
Tom Copley – Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, GLA
Julie Billett – Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID)
Cllr Anthony Okereke – London Councils & Royal Borough of Greenwich
Barbara Drozdowicz – East European Resource Centre (MSAP)
Sarah Newman – ALDCS & RBKC
Eleanor Walker-Todd - NHS London region (South West London)
Suzanne Elwick – UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)
Usman Khan – NHS England
DSI Andrew Furphy – MPS

1. Welcomes, Minutes and Actions

- 1.1 Debbie Weekes-Bernard welcomed the board members. She welcomed new members to the LSMP Board, and thanked Cllr Grace Williams for covering for Cllr Anthony Okereke.
- 1.2 Apologies were given on behalf of Alison Griffin (London Councils), Cllr Okereke (London Councils), Julie Billett (OHID), DSI Andrew Furphy (MPS) and Deputy Mayor Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, GLA), Barbara Drozdowicz (East European Resource Centre), Sarah Newman (ALDCS & RBKC), Suzanne Elwick (UKHSA), Usman Khan (NHS England).
- 1.3 Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.
- 1.4 Mark Winterburn shared updates on key actions from the last meeting. He highlighting feedback received on the LSMP Objective on age assessments from the Home Office. He also noted that feedback was received on the LSMP Terms of Reference, leading to one small amendment. Mark also noted that a meeting between the GLA Rough Sleeping Team, Anna Yassin and Daniel Kennedy occurred to explore how to take forward elements of the Rough Sleeping Plan of Action.

2. LSMP Reporting

2.1 Debbie noted that that board members should have received documents on LSMP reporting on 24 September 2025. The two documents are: an update on LSMP Objectives for 2025-26, tracking progress, issues and challenges; and an Insight Report which covers the whole LSMP function fulfilled by the GLA and the Westminster City Council in the previous quarter.

2.2 Mark asked for any comments or questions on LSMP reporting, either now or over email.

2.3 Mark highlighted the following key updates:

- Following the productive discussion on **Afghanistan transitional accommodation** at the last LSMP Board meeting, a solution was put forward to MoD that would have seen London host its entire allocation for this year, but it was not taken forward. Work on this area is still ongoing in anticipation of future need.
- To advance the objective of **linking London and national structures on health issues**, NHS England and Home Office leads presented at a meeting of the London Migration Place-Based Board and offered partners the opportunity to apply to join National Asylum Seeker Health Oversight Group (NASHOG) subgroups. Mark offered to circulate more information on this if people are interested in joining the subgroups.
- Progress on **modern slavery oversight in London** continues to be stalled.

Action: GLA to circulate information on National Asylum Seeker Health Oversight Group (NASHOG) subgroups.

3. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

3.1 Debbie introduced the agenda item, linking it to the LSMP's fifth objective which relates to the issue of age assessments.

3.2 Peter Keeling (Home Office) explained that he chairs the Home Office and Local Government Association (LGA) Age Assessment Group and the UASC Service Working Group which bring together the partner organisations, local authorities, Department for Education and the Home Office look at system-wide challenges. He underlined that the Home Office accepted all eight recommendations made by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) in [his report on age assessments](#), and that the main deadlines for next steps are December 2025 and Spring 2026. He added that the Home Office are working on a draft for standard operating procedures for asylum accommodation providers, for when someone in accommodation claims to be a child.

3.3 Cllr Grace Williams (London Councils & Waltham Forest) emphasised that the [report commissioned by London Councils and the Association of London Directors of Children's Services on the needs of UASC in London](#) highlights the importance of the work left to do. She noted that London Councils wants to work with the Home Office and Department for Education to make sure changes can be implemented to the age assessment process.

She underlined the need for there to be a clear process, where referrals are made systematically to local authorities when an individual claims to be a child at port but is assessed to be an adult, noting that this is in recommendation 5 of the ICIBI report.

- 3.4 Peter confirmed how this relates to recommendation 5, underlining that it is on the agenda for the upcoming meeting of the Age Assessment Working Group he chairs. He said there are key challenges in terms of logistics and process, and Home Office are keen to hear from local authority partners on how to overcome these. He said if there is interest in joining the working group, which is a practitioner-led space looking at legal frameworks and processes, that councils get in touch with Peter. He also mentioned that the Home Office also have a steering group on the issue open to local authorities on the LSMP Board, which can get in touch with him directly if interested to join. Cllr Grace Williams confirmed she will check within London Councils to see if they wish to add anyone else to either of these groups.

Action: London Councils to check whether any local authority representatives are available, interested, or appropriate to join the Government's age assessment working group.

- 3.5 Kalyani McCarthy (Westminster, NTS Coordinator) underlined that the ICIBI recommendations were very welcome. She also mentioned that there was an update this week on the age declaration form.
- 3.6 Kama Petruczenko (Refugee Council) welcomed the ICIBI insights and recommendations, as well as the fact that the Home Office accepted all of them. She provided an update on work Refugee Council have been doing in this space, including four amendments to the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill they put forward with London Councils addressing safeguarding provisions for children in the asylum system.
- 3.7 Helen Connolly (University of Bedfordshire) and Ilona Printer (LSE) presented research on The Needs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Young People Living in London. The research was commissioned by London Councils and the Association of London Directors of Children's Services to drive evidence-based discussions with Government and inform change to address challenges that undermine the chances to deliver effective care and protection for this group of young people. It was a participatory project, involving children and young people as stakeholders. The key recommendations of the research were:
- The government should establish a system of independent legal guardianship for all unaccompanied children from the moment they come into contact with authorities.
 - All children and young people should have timely access to free, expert legal representation which is child-centred, receiving the holistic support they need to be able to engage effectively with their legal case.
 - Children should only be subject to age disputes where there is a significant reason to doubt their age and as a last resort.
 - Consistent integration and belonging support provided for unaccompanied young people.
- 3.8 Debbie thanked Helen and Ilona for their presentation, and for bringing the voices of young people to discussions we have about them, which is rare.

- 3.9 Nasheen Singh (Westminster) shared that local authority practice leads have taken on board the recommendations. Councils have been tasked to go away and have a discussion with frontline social work teams and gather feedback on how they can change practice to support the recommendations.

4. Protests and Cohesion

- 4.1 Debbie introduced the agenda item, noting her concerns about recent events and the general fear of many Black and brown and other minority communities across the city. She underlined that it is very important to both the GLA and London Councils to acknowledge the profound effect that demonstrations, particularly those outside hotels hosting people seeking asylum, have on London's diverse communities, as well as on professionals working in this field. It is essential to recognise this toll.

- 4.2 Hannah Boylan (GLA) highlighted how the London Strategic Migration Partnership has been working with many partners throughout the summer, culminating in a meeting on Monday 29 September with 100 people including local authorities' leads for asylum, community safety and communications. She provided the following overview from the meeting:

- Potential flashpoints were identified, including the movement of people within the estate and hotel closures. Boroughs emphasised the need for live and consistent data from the Home Office.
- Concerns were flagged about the intersect with rough sleeping and the highly visible, vulnerable population of newly recognised refugees. Concerns were also flagged about the impact of the pausing of the 56 day move on pilot for single adults.
- Attendees were clear that this was not just about flashpoints. Issues are still ongoing. There is a need for a long-term approach, and address ongoing drivers and community relations.
- This was mirrored in conversations with civil society, who felt a disconnect from both local and national response work often facing the same challenges of mis/disinformation, staff safety and increased needs from vulnerable clients. Organisations have taken decisions to remove public listings of organisations where there is a fear that this could lead to targeting, which has limited signposting.
- There was a sense of disconnect from the existing resilience structures, a keenness for spaces for organisations involved in the response to come together and share best practice and coordinate on the response, and opportunities for mutual aid between boroughs. Specifically, there was an ask for more support from the Metropolitan Police in assessing local risks and digesting the sheer amount of intelligence being received locally to provide robust but proportionate response.
- Attendees highlighted a clear role for providers, with CTM providing a good level of detail on welfare, mental health support for people seeking asylum hosted in their sites. Participants were keen to know where this is replicated within Clearsprings estate and where best practice is being disseminated or where accountability is being provided.

- 4.3 Debbie noted that it is particularly concerning that the VCS sector have had to make decisions for staff safety to remove information from their websites, which leads to a cumulative impact for those seeking support.

- 4.4 Maxine Holdsworth (CELC Lead on Refugees and Asylum & Royal Borough Kensington and Chelsea) emphasised that speedy wraparound support from the Home Office and early agreement on core messages to protests and tension flashpoints is key. She said she is encouraged to hear about the Home Office work in collecting mis/dis information intelligence through a functional mailbox, but that the messages are not getting out quickly enough and there is a worrying escalation of repetitive protests and tensions,. She also noted that colleagues have consistently reported that the police has handled the protests well and has communicated well with local authorities.
- 4.5 Cllr Williams emphasised that people across the GLA, London Councils and VCS sector have worked above and beyond their responsibility because addressing this unrest is becoming a big part on how we support people seeking asylum and how we create community cohesion across London. She mentioned that London leaders have worked hard to ensure that messaging is getting to national government that we need a strong approach to foster cohesion and ensure safety for all.
- 4.6 Cllr Williams thanked the Mayor for his work and messaging on London, and the importance that he provides this counter narrative of unity.
- 4.7 Jon Featonby explained that, in relation to mis/disinformation, VCS play a big role in reassuring people in hotel asylum accommodation and, similarly to local authorities, they have felt that they do not have the tools to do so. They have relied heavily on the work of Hope not Hate and IMIX, but, as charities, they are realistic about the impact of their voice compared with other voices (e.g. on TikTok). Jon echoed Cllr Williams' praise on the positive narrative by the Mayor, noting that it is countered by the narrative promoted by central government, including Home Office posts.
- 4.8 Dan Kennedy (Hillingdon & London Housing Directors) provided insights from Hillingdon, highlighting how they have seen significant escalation and volatility. He highlighted the importance of working with the police, which have really stepped up their plan in Hillingdon in this context. He said misinformation can be countered more effectively through coordinated communications and partnerships, including with faith leaders and community organisations.
- 4.9 Leon Elliott (NACCOM & Homeless Migrant Advisory Panel) explained how migrant and refugee support organisations are facing hostility online and on the ground. He noted they had to close a West London service due to protests. He stressed the importance of myth-busting and community cohesion.
- 4.10 Tanya Dewey (Home Office) explained that a formal Home Office framework is now in place with a central inbox and triage to address misinformation/ disinformation/ malinformation on hotels housing people seeking asylum, aiming for calm, consistent, fact-checked rebuttals and aligned referral routes to support cohesion.
- 4.11 Tim Rymer (Home Office) said there is strong work under way on communications, partnerships, and countering mis/disinformation, and that the Home Office are keen to build on discussions referenced.

5. Welcome and Integration Work

- 5.1 Jim Carrol (MHCLG) introduced the Social Cohesion Taskforce, which was set up by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister earlier this year to look at cross-cutting

cohesion issues across government (from DfE to the Home Office). They are keen to engage with partners on actions government may take forward.

- 5.2 Jim noted that MHCLG's Community Cohesion Unit is working closely with the Home Office team to monitor tensions and share best practice, and invited anyone with concerns to get in touch.
- 5.3 A GLA staff member gave an overview of the Hong Kong Integration programme, funded by the MHCLG, which is entering its fifth year. The programme has met its immediate integration support needs of Hongkongers every year, with funded projects reaching 38,000 participants cumulatively over the past three years. There are a range of learnings from the programme. It has also identified legacy-building opportunities to work beyond cohort-specific design, including co-commissioned work with the Ukraine programme and Migrant Londoners Hub.
- 5.4 Elisabeth Pop (GLA) gave an overview of the Loved and Wanted campaign and the Loved and Wanted Fund. Through the Loved and Wanted Fund the GLA is looking to fund 19 Loved and Wanted spaces - existing places where Londoners can come together, share their stories, meet one another, access resources and services, put forward stories of who we are, and ultimately create a network through which they can amplify stories, counter misinformation, and potentially come together in moments of crisis. She added this is testimony to the relationships and the ability to work with all partners, and she asked colleagues to share the opportunity through their networks and to feed back.
- 5.5 Mark mentioned that from the SMP perspective, they are happy to connect the Social Cohesion Taskforce with partners from different sectors across London.

Action: Social Cohesion Taskforce to discuss options to connect with different sectors across London with LSMP.

6. Homelessness

- 6.1 Jo Beck (London Councils) provided an overview on the extent of homelessness as an issue in London, highlighting the importance on building better systems and being more innovative to tackle this. There has been the first meeting of the Homelessness Accelerator Delivery Board, chaired by Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development Tom Copley and Cllr Grace Williams, Deputy Chair and Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration, London Councils. The priorities of the London Ending Homelessness Accelerator Programme are:
 - Building the capacity and knowledge to prevent homelessness.
 - Ending rough sleeping and preventing single homelessness.
 - Reducing the cost of and demand for temporary accommodation.
- 6.2 Jo noted that a significant proportion of new rough sleepers are in London identified their last settled bases as asylum support accommodation. She added that people tend to come to services when they are actually homeless, rather than during the 28 or 56 day move on period. She added that the 56-day pilot was very welcome, but not enough to create a pathway that prevents homelessness.

- 6.3 Molly Bishop (GLA) presented the Asylum Move On Test and Learn work. This entails a deep dive into asylum move on pathways in London and mapping the current system operating model. Molly added that this is to identify ways of optimising asylum homelessness prevention and improving value for money, and nationally influence and support an asylum system that can effectively prevent homelessness and have ambitious outcomes on move on and integration.
- 6.4 Jo added that the next steps for their programme are: building out London-wide governance; Establishing the Shared Outcomes Framework; Mobilising test and learn projects; and Engaging with system leaders who will champion the development of programme interventions.
- 6.5 Cllr Williams highlighted the collaboration between those involved in the housing sector from both the community side and government which is required to prioritise system leadership. She noted that getting the system right on asylum and resettlement is crucial to addressing homelessness.
- 6.6 Leon highlighted that the GLA and Homeless Migrants Advisory panel (HMAP) survey of local responses to refugee homelessness was insightful, demonstrating good local practice that should be scaled up.
- 6.7 Leon that SOAS researchers are conducting research on London borough responses, due to be published in November. Mark noted that the GLA is planning to host an event at City Hall in partnership with SOAS in November, using the research Leon mentioned as a starting point for discussions about models of support.
- 6.8 Hannah reiterated Debbie's point about the pause to the 56-day move-on period for single adults, noting the GLA's deep concern about the likely impact on homelessness ahead of winter and amid high community tensions in London. She added that the GLA is keen to discuss this with the Home Office and to assist in evidencing the impacts of the policy decision, given the significant correspondence received from London stakeholders.
- 6.9 Tim acknowledged Hannah's comments and confirmed that the Home Office would follow up with her on this.
- 6.10 Leon added that, while decision-making is now faster, people are leaving the system with limited support, and the scale of current support is far smaller than 15 years ago.
- 6.11 Jon Featonby shared that the Refugee Council is conducting research with people with lived experience of the move-on period, examining the impact of the 56-day policy since last December.
- 6.12 Catherine Houlcroft (NRPF network) raised concerns from the NRPF Network that, as the appeal backlog is reduced, more people who are Appeal-Rights Exhausted may leave asylum accommodation and face rough sleeping. She highlighted potential knock-on effects for adult social care, which may need to support those with care needs, and asked whether this group would be considered within ongoing work.

7. AOB

- 7.1 Hannah mentioned that the GLA funded a needs assessment of Palestinians in London, similar to how we have approached other groups with humanitarian needs. She

highlighted need to provide targeted support to new arrivals and improve service access; and a need to fund and strengthen community-led initiatives. She will bring a fuller item to the December LSMP Board meeting. She highlighted need to provide targeted support to new arrivals and improve service access; and a need to fund and strengthen community-led initiatives. She will a fuller item to the December LSMP Board meeting.

Action: Next LSMP Board to include item on the needs assessment of Palestinians in London