

Illegal Migration Bill - GLA Emergency Summit

A photo showing panellists taking part in the GLA's Emergency Summit on the Illegal Migration Bill

Key information

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1. Context

On 25 May 2023, the Greater London Authority organised an emergency summit concerning the Illegal Migration Bill, convening more than 200 attendees including Local Authorities, civil society organisations, and statutory bodies. The purpose of this gathering was to deliberate on the anticipated consequences of this legislation and discuss potential measures to alleviate its effects.

Here, you will discover a summary of the conversations held during the summit. Additionally, you can [watch the recording of the summit's opening panel discussion](#).

Please be advised that these notes reflect the content of the discussions during the summit and are based on the draft legislative text of the Illegal Migration Bill accessible in May 2023. They do not necessarily reflect the position of the GLA or attendees at the meeting.

2. Introduction from the Deputy Mayor

I was privileged to welcome over 200 participants to the Greater London Authority's Emergency Summit on the Illegal Migration Bill on 25 May 2023.

The sheer number of people who joined us for this Summit reflects the level of concern and the desire to understand the far-reaching consequences of the Bill. Many of the organisations that joined us are stalwarts in the sector, fighting for the rights of displaced people; supporting people facing destitution, exploitation, and slavery; delivering on London boroughs duties to accommodate families, and care for unaccompanied children.

While I am proud of that work, and I am proud to be Deputy Mayor of a brief that enables me to work with our brilliant migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking communities; the conversation around the Bill is testament to the hostile environment facing people seeking sanctuary in the UK.

I remain deeply concerned that this Bill removes vital protections for victims of Modern Slavery, increasing the power of traffickers over their victims. There are worrying provisions that impact the right of the child against the advice of experts in child protection and safeguarding; there are consequences for levels of economic vulnerability, destitution and homelessness resulting from this legislation. We know that this Bill will disproportionately impact Black, Asian and minority ethnic Londoners, LGBTQI+ refugees and pregnant people.

We have a responsibility to provide safe routes for people seeking sanctuary. One of the reasons that London is the greatest city in the world is the contribution of successive generations of migrants, including refugees. It is vital that we do more to help welcome, build belonging, and celebrate everyone that has made London their home.

The Mayor and I will continue to champion migrant rights, celebrate our diversity, and strategically invest in services that ensure migrants can access their rights and entitlements in London.

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

3. Summary of recommendations

Learning:

- All sectors should be taking steps to learn about the implications of the Bill and develop mitigations, working across statutory and voluntary sectors to achieve this and meaningfully including experts by experience.
- Services should invest in training frontline staff to understand how to meet the needs of Londoners with immigration needs, and ensure their services are able to offer the best possible support to people impacted by the Bill.
- All sectors should seek to learn from best practice, whether at the grassroots level, or other cities, to ensure that effective initiatives can be replicated or expanded.

Strengthening:

- All sectors should take steps to establish, improve or expand partnership working, including robust referral mechanisms, to ensure effective and efficient multi-agency working.
- All sectors should maximise access to fundamental rights and entitlements, considering networks that help promote this such as the Borough of Sanctuary programme, the NRPF Network, and the Safe Surgeries initiative to maximise access to rights and entitlements.
- 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.

Responding:

- All sectors need to consider holistic needs of frontline organisations, considering the mental health impact and burn-out for organisations dealing with the impact of the legislation, especially ‘by and for’ organisations.
- All sectors should be empowered to understand what they can achieve within existing resources, and what statutory duties they can rely on, to ensure that people impacted by the Bill have access to support.
- All sectors should build a robust evidence base of the impact of the legislation and take a collaborative approach to identifying and addressing vulnerabilities arising from the legislation.

4. Panel discussion - the impact of the Illegal Migration Bill

The summit opened with a panel discussion about the impact of the Illegal Migration Bill, involving the following participants:

Chair:

- Zoe Gardner, independent expert on Migration

Panellists:

- Zoe Bantleman, Legal Director, ILPA
- Fiona Colley, Director of Social Change, Homeless Link
- Lucila Granada, CEO, Focus on Labour and Exploitation (FLEX)
- Nazek Ramadan, Director, Migrant Voice

The sections below provide an edited summary of the contributions from panellists. For the full remarks, please [view the full recording of the discussion](#).

4.1 Summary

This Bill is far-reaching in its effects. It represents an assault on the rights of migrants and the rule of law in the UK.

For most refugees, the Bill is a ban on seeking safety in the UK. It would ban almost anyone who reaches the UK through means that the Home Office deems irregular, on or after 7 March 2023, from making an asylum claim in the UK. Any person that arrives irregularly into the country will be detained for 28 days without adequate safeguards to challenge that detention – there is no right to receive bail in those first 28 days.

The Bill will scrap existing protections for victims of human trafficking and labour exploitation, with the majority of those seeking asylum expected to be returned to either their home country, a safe third country such as Rwanda, or to remain in indefinite 'legal limbo' with no access to the rights or support usually available to people seeking asylum in the United Kingdom before their claims are decided.

This legislation is set to lead to an increase in destitution and homelessness, raises grave concerns over the welfare of children, who also face returns, and those with protected characteristics such as women or LGBTIQ+ people.

4.2 Key issues highlighted

Inadmissibility

This is a key change brought by the Bill. Any human rights or asylum claim that is declared inadmissible will not be considered, and there will be no right of appeal against that decision. EEA, Swiss and Albanian nationals, included on the 'safe countries' list, can have their claims deemed to be inadmissible and be returned to their own countries. As for everyone else who doesn't come within that set of nationalities, their claims will be declared inadmissible, they'll have no right of appeal, but they will be permanently in limbo and unremovable from the United Kingdom. At present, the UK only has one third country removal agreement with the Government of Rwanda, which is currently being litigated in the Court of Appeal. It is not anticipated that Rwanda will be able to accept the hundreds of thousands of people who are likely to be impacted by the Bill, according to the Refugee Council's impact assessment.

Erosion of existing safeguards

Existing safeguards for unaccompanied children, families, and pregnant people in detention will be overturned and removed. Victims of trafficking will not be eligible to receive support. There will be additional powers for unaccompanied children to be accommodated in Home Office hotels, from which there are already concerns about children that have gone missing.

Children and scientific age assessments

The Home Secretary will be under a new duty to remove any adult deemed inadmissible under the Bill. For children, including unaccompanied children, she will have a power to remove them, with very limited exceptions. The government is also creating a power to decide whether individuals should be treated as adults if they refuse to consent to scientific age assessment procedures, which the Nationality and Borders Act brought in only last year. Should an individual not consent to an age assessment procedure, they will be treated as an adult. The Government intends to make it so that if an age assessment is made for a person who comes under the conditions of the Bill, including by a Local Authority is who making that assessment for the purposes of functions under the Children Act 1989, then that person will have no appeal against that age assessment. If they try to make a judicial review challenge, that does not stop them from being removed from the United Kingdom.

Retrospective application of the Bill

The Bill affects anyone who arrives irregularly on or after 7 March 2023, regardless of whether their journey here was dangerous. It does not relate only to small boat crossings.

Legal aid crisis

The legal representatives who provide advice, assistance and representation to people seeking asylum in the United Kingdom, are already at breaking point. They're overstretched and have no capacity. There's also a legal aid crisis resulting from the fact that legal aid rates haven't risen for the past 15 years. This means that legal aid practice is unsustainable and unviable for most representatives practicing in the United Kingdom.

- The very real impact that this has on people affected by this Bill and migrants more generally is that they are unrepresented and have very little access to representation because they cannot afford private representation and they have no access to legal aid representation. This Bill does nothing to address it. In fact, it only exacerbates the situation. In addition to making these claims inadmissible, the Bill also creates fast track procedures for suspensive claim processes, with short and unreasonable timeframes for representatives and for applicants to make claims and creates more difficult and complex law and policy. And we know that busy, overstretched representatives will have to come to grips with it. In addition to the new procedures which are already going to come into play from the Nationality and Borders Act, this exacerbates the situation rather than relieving it.
- The Bill does have one legal aid provision in it, but it's dependent on a person receiving a removal notice. However, it is unclear when a person is going to receive a removal notice which will then be the trigger for them accessing legal advice.

Legislative timeline

The government's intention is to have the Bill passed this summer. A lot of it will depend on timetabling and the House of Lords. Committee stage day one took place recently, with committee stage happening until 14 June. The Bill will then enter the report stage third reading and then something that's called ping pong, where the Bill goes between the House of Lords and the House of Commons. This would have to take place before the house rises for recess, which is on 20 July 2023 for the House of Commons. That will be the ultimate date, if it was to pass this summer. If not, it will be whenever the House returns and before The King's Speech, which is due to take place on 4 November.

- As to when the provisions of the Bill take effect, that is a different question. There is a commencement provision in the Bill, but not everything in the Bill comes into effect on the date when it receives Royal Assent. In fact, very few things do. The entry, settlement and citizenship provisions come into effect on the date the Bill passes, and so does the provision which makes first tier tribunal judges upper tribunal judges. But the rest of the provisions in the Bill are to come into effect whenever the Home Secretary decides to lay secondary legislation to bring it into effect.

Homelessness

In the context of what is already a homelessness crisis, successive policies during the pandemic sought to end homelessness including through 'everyone in' accommodation approach, including non-UK nationals – however, we are now back to seeing homelessness rising rapidly to levels not seen over the past 5 to 6 years. In the last year alone, there was a rise of 25% in rough sleeping in the whole of the UK. Around half the people sleeping on the streets of London are non-UK nationals, many of them with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), limited or unclear entitlements and immigration status. We have a system that is designed to be hostile, designed to be unwelcome, designed to push people away. The result is that it pushes people to destitution and pushes people into homelessness. People can be very fearful of approaching services for support. And that is one of the big concerns about this Bill, that it is making the environment more hostile, more fearful and pushes people away from services.

- We are expecting a very significant rise in destitution and homelessness. The Refugee Council has estimated that 190,000 people over the first three years could have their applications deemed inadmissible but not be removed from this country.
- The homelessness services sector has had a decade of austerity funding cuts, frozen contracts, and has faced the impact of the cost-of-living crisis which has made the situation even worse. Organisations are facing the impacts of the rise in the cost of living, the rising energy bills, rising staffing costs, with some having no option but to close services. At the very time that we may need those services most, they themselves are at risk of not being there to pick up the pieces.

- The ways in which local authorities can support non-UK nationals with unclear or limited entitlements to public funds can be challenging to navigate, but there are local authorities doing really good work. Local authorities that speak out against hostile policies, for example, show leadership and make a difference. Boroughs that have declared themselves Boroughs of Sanctuary and talk about refugees being welcomed - that attitude makes a real difference. We need to encourage local authorities to take those issues and to be creative, to work with the third sector, with migrant sector, with homelessness sector, with the advice sector, together we can be creative.

Modern slavery and exploitation

The Bill will block anybody arriving in the UK via one of the routes that the Home Office will deem as irregular from accessing any kind of modern slavery protections and from claiming asylum, making potential victims also subject to detention and removal from the UK. No victim that will fall within the conditions of the clause two of this Bill will receive support for their recovery or protection.

- As the Bill is retrospective, this also will impact people that are already in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The NRM is the system that is available in the UK for victims of trafficking to access support and protection.
- This Bill will remove the obligation to grant the potential victim leave to remain and will allow these individuals to be removed from the UK before a conclusive grounds decision is made.
- The Bill will increase fear among victims to approach authorities because this will put victims at risk of being removed, which in turn will prevent people from escaping situations of exploitation and from reporting perpetrators. It will increase the chances of continued exploitation and trafficking.
- The Bill will empower traffickers and give them a new tool that they can use to coerce people into exploitation. It will also force victims of trafficking and modern slavery to choose between remaining in a situation of exploitation or facing indefinite limbo or detention and removal from the UK.
- Organisations can continue to highlight the UK's legal obligations towards victims and find alternatives to provide support to people, both in terms of their physical and mental health, risk of homelessness, and wider welfare needs.

Lived experience

People seeking asylum who we have engaged with have labelled the Bill as brutal and inhumane. People are often forced to leave their home countries to protect their lives and those of their families. The journeys they embark on are dangerous and traumatic. People come to the UK to seek protection because they have no other option.

- It is important to talk about who is going to be impacted by the Bill. Migrant Voice spoke to around 200 people seeking asylum living in hotels just to find out from them what the situation is on the ground.
- Most are from countries like Sudan, Iran, Eritrea, Syria, Afghanistan. These are people fleeing wars and persecution. Once their application for asylum is processed, the success rate is very high. It is cruel to criminalise them for exercising their right under international law to seek protection.
- Most people don't come to the UK. Most people stay in neighbouring countries, often countries with fewer resources to cope. And there are reasons why people end up here; Some speak the language, some have families here, and some have other connections.
- Once they arrive, they can't work, study, or access any support. They are forced to stay in a hotel. They may receive no communication from the Home Office for up to a year and a half or two years. They may have no access to information and no access to legal support.
- Those people have already been made vulnerable by their experience, in the UK and before arriving in the UK, and this is what happened when they arrive here. There are families and children who are in hotels having to live on processed and unhealthy hotel foods for a year.

- Policymakers are out of touch with the people who are impacted by those policies. This Bill punishes all those that seek protection in the UK.
- Some people might go underground and become more vulnerable. We should expect the worsening of mental health of people seeking asylum.
- This Bill benefits the business model for the smugglers because they will fund more dangerous routes and they charge more money to people who are desperate for protection. People will, in turn, be much more hesitant to approach authorities and seek protection from abusers and traffickers.
- Some local authorities like Islington or Lambeth provide some support in hotels in their areas, allowing people to access some of the services they support, some local authorities have drop-in sessions for those people to have somewhere to go, someone to talk to. Providing safe spaces for people to socialise and get the information they need makes a big difference, and there is a lot of good practice in London of these types of activities.

Intersectional needs

The Home Office has now published the Equality Impact Assessment of this Bill, which shows the many ways in which this Bill affects people with protected characteristics. What is different about this piece of legislation from prior pieces of legislation is that there is a schedule of ‘safe third countries’, but there's no individualised assessment about whether it's safe to remove a particular person to a country which the Home Secretary deems safe in general. So, although a country might be safe in general on a generalised assessment, for a particular person with particular characteristics, it might be unsafe, but there is no provision to have that kind of individualised assessment under this Bill, and that means people with protected characteristics could be sent to a country which is unsafe for them.

- Women in particular may have risk factors for returning to Albania, which is designated as safe country for return under this Bill. A person can be returned to Albania without having their human rights claims heard. And there's very clear guidance from the Upper Tribunal that Albania is not a safe country for many women who are trafficked, and the Home Office's own country of origin information reflects this.
- A lesbian woman, or a transgender man, for example, may be returned to a country the Home Office deems ‘safe’, but where homophobia or transphobia is common and may endanger them. LGBT+ people fleeing oppression and persecution, should they meet the conditions to have their claims deemed inadmissible, will be detained and potentially removed from the UK. Children and pregnant people will face similar outcomes, with little regard to their protected characteristics and particular needs.
- The Bill overturns well-established common-law principles that it's for the Court to decide whether a period of detention is reasonable or not. Instead, the Bill says it's up to the Home Secretary to make that decision. All human rights claims from European Economic Area, Swiss and Albanian nationals will be automatically declared inadmissible.

4.3 Resources

- [ILPA Briefing on Illegal Migration Bill for Second Reading in the House of Commons on 13 March 2023](#)
- [Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group \(ATMG\): ‘Illegal Migration Bill’ briefing – House of Lords Committee Stage](#)
- [NACCOM & Praxis: ‘Impact of the Illegal Migration Bill on Homelessness & Destitution’](#)
- [Migrant Voice: No rest. No Security. – Report into the experiences of asylum seekers in hotels](#)
- [Refugee Council resources, contains various briefings on the impact of the Bill](#)
- [Local Government Association: ‘Illegal Migration Bill, House of Lords Second Reading, 10 May 2023’](#)

5. Thematic discussions

5.1 Children and young people

Summary of discussion:

- The Bill creates a ‘power’ to remove children deemed inadmissible, which becomes a ‘duty’ when they turn 18. This creates huge anxiety and removes incentives for them to stay in contact with authorities, increasing the risk of exploitation, abuse and destitution. There are concerns that families are already experiencing high levels of poor mental health. Now children won't even want to be known to services that could support them.
- The Bill appears to conflict with the Children's Act 1989 and the duty on local authorities to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in need in their area. Where there are conflicts, these may override the Bill. Children's Services and Social Workers should be empowered to understand what actions can be taken to prioritise and protect the safety and wellbeing of children.
- The legislation means that people can be removed either to their own country or to a safe third country, however it was noted that Albania has been deemed a safe country and concerns were raised about the blanket labelling of Albania as safe given more than 60% of applicants are granted asylum. For Albanian children, this could have a significant impact on them.
- The impact of the Bill will be felt in a variety of settings, in schools, communities and Local Authorities (LAs) and it is important that LAs understand the implications for children across the entire system, and the lack of funding to accompany local authorities fulfilling their duties towards children and young people.
- There were concerns about the use of scientific methods for age assessments, which have been shown to be unreliable and could be considered exploitative. If young people refuse to submit to them, they can be treated as adults by the Home Office. LAs need to understand the implications of assessing someone as an adult as it could lead to separation from services and removal from UK.
- Organisations working with migrants will need additional support, as they may start to face challenges carrying out their work, more likely to see children and young people in crisis and requiring more urgent support, with limited routes into help.
- There is already a great deal of anxiety and serious mental health needs amongst children and young people going through the asylum process, and we need to be careful not to increase this in how we respond to the Bill or create further risks for young people.
- There are concerns about the lack of legal aid and legal representation as people often can't access it or when they can it is of poor quality. Many legal aid lawyers are leaving the sector due to the low fee rates.

Recommendations arising from the discussion:

- Local authorities should take steps to understand the implications of the Bill, adopt a "do what we can" attitude and take a people-centred approach. They should generate senior leadership buy-in to help mitigate the impact of the Bill and be creative in their approach.
- Local authorities should take steps to understand the extent of, and how best to utilise, powers they have in relation to child protection, for example under Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989, and how this could apply to children detained within their local authority area, as well as others negatively impacted by the legislation.

- Local authorities should invest in children’s specialist immigration advice for children in their care and care leavers, as well as supported NRPF families.
- Community and Voluntary Sector organisations should be working with local authorities to understand the implications of the Bill and jointly identify mitigations. All sectors should identify and learn from existing good practice.
- Investment in training for frontline staff should be considered, particularly Social Workers, so they understand the needs of migrant children in their care, the implications of the legislation, and how best to provide support for children and young people impacted by the Bill. This is especially important where policy is changing quickly, and where trust in services may be low due to the impact of the legislation.
- Young people themselves should be involved in coming up with solutions.

Resources:

- [Disbelieved and denied: Children seeking asylum wrongly treated as adults by the Home Office | Helen Bamber](#)
- [Refugee Migrant Children's Consortium \(RMCC\) briefings on the Bill](#)
- [Immigration Law Practitioners' Association \(ILPA\) joint briefing covering the Children Act 1989 Act and the Bill's incompatibility with it \(page 32 onwards\)](#)

5.2 Human trafficking and labour exploitation

Summary of discussion:

- The Bill creates a scenario where people deemed ‘inadmissible’ under it’s measures will have no route to access support, including for most victims of trafficking and/or modern slavery. We know that the majority of survivors of trafficking enter the UK via irregular means and therefore will be subject to the Bill. They 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 because without conclusive decisions via the NRM, the government can’t investigate trafficking. less reporting will result in less persecution and more impunity, building an evidence base is crucial.
- People already refuse to access the NRM because it already doesn’t provide adequate support or protection. Rather than improving the gaps in support, we are creating more barriers. This will further deter people from coming forward.
- There is a danger that with less people in the NRM, the Government will be able to argue that victims of trafficking don’t need support, as none come forward.
- Support services are seeing an increase of undocumented women approaching authorities. 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.
- 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 would likely be knock-on impacts on multiple services, including public health needs.
- There is a need for improved partnership and multi-agency work between statutory, frontline and community organisations. In Lewisham, being a Borough of Sanctuary has helped to shape this approach.

- There are particular concerns for trans women who may not be safe if removed to Rwanda. Trans women also face additional vulnerabilities in the UK.

Recommendations arising from the discussion:

- Collective advocacy for secure reporting pathways to create a system where people feel able and empowered to come forward without risk of removal.
- Investment in holistic support, including trauma informed mental health support so people don't become isolated and vanish under ground.
- Prioritise enhanced partnerships and referral mechanisms so that people don't fall through the gaps and can access good quality and independent advice, across the intersection of employment, welfare and immigration rights.
- Increased training for frontline workers on recognising and addressing modern slavery and the spectrum of exploitative work.
- Investing into the advice sector to ensure that there is capacity to meet demand, recognising there is a role for regulation, such as through the Office of the Immigration Service Commissioner to ensure robust and good quality supply of immigration advice, and challenge unscrupulous advice.
- Collective advocacy to push for legal aid reforms so that supply can meet demand and services can be sustained.
- Improved partnership and multi-agency work at a local borough level, with clear accountability at a regional and national level to address modern slavery and exploitation.

5.3 Homelessness and destitution

Summary of discussion:

- 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.
- The Home Office haven't said where people subject to the Bill, who can't be detained and removed, are going to be accommodated – it is likely that many will seek support in communities and will have no recourse to public funds putting them at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 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 are various plans that the Government has, including contingency hotel accommodation and barges, but there is a real risk that people will leave that 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 HO/DLUHC's ending homelessness strategy, 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. With limited access to routes off the street this could lead to services only providing humanitarian assistance to destitute people.
- 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.
- Dire situations in current hotels are forcing people to leave and be homeless. This is largely due to mental health because of factors such as food, poverty, loneliness, being put in rooms with strangers. The Bill may also hinder those deemed admissible to access community mental health services (a chargeable service), so it is only going to get worse.
- There are concerns around the existing contingency hotel provision from the Home Office and the way they work with LA's, including a lack of information sharing and inadequate safeguarding practices. There were suggestions that organisations should work jointly to push for improved standards from the HO and Clearsprings. Poor quality of accommodation, overcrowding, lack of support and poor communication already lead to people becoming homeless.
- There was discussion on looking at similar situations in other countries, such as USA and Australia, and how civil society responded through collective action or instances of healthcare professionals challenging policy.
- The prospect of a rise in rough sleeping is extremely real.

Recommendations arising from discussion:

- Prioritise collaboration across sectors to prevent people from falling through the gaps, ensure consistency in widening access to services as much as possible, and best practice approaches get shared and mainstreamed quickly.
- Take international learning from other cities dealing with the ramifications of similar policies, including actions taken at the city level as well as local community-based organising.
- Have robust systems in place to oversee existing, and any new, accommodation solutions for people impacted by the Bill – ensuring that robust measures are in place to hold providers to account to ensure safe and good quality accommodation is available.
- Build evidence base of homelessness and rough sleeping impact of the legislation, and mapping out where the impact will be disproportionately felt.
- Seek clarity for services on how best to transition their support to be inclusive, trusted and offer meaningful assistance to people impacted by the Bill.

Resources:

- [Open letter to Michael Gove | The Illegal Migration Bill risks pushing thousands more people into homelessness and destitution – NACCOM](#)
- [Joint briefing | Risks of homelessness and destitution posed by the Illegal Migration Bill – NACCOM](#)
- [COSLA has published No Recourse to Public Funds \(NRPF\) local authority data highlighting the crucial role of local government in preventing destitution](#)
- [Supporting non-UK nationals training programme - Homeless Link](#)
- [OISC training - Refugee Action Good Practice](#)
- [Training - Project 17](#)
- [NRPF Network](#)

5.4 Civil society

Summary of discussion:

- If hundreds of thousands of people are deemed inadmissible, the sector will not have capacity to cope. People affected will not have access to the basics of life, but they will also lose hope that they will be able to stay in the UK. This is an unprecedented situation and important for the sector to lean into this, think about how to work together and support both service users and each other.
- Refugee Council have commissioned research to look at the impact of the Bill, this will involve partners and will be shared over the next few months.
- There is concern that people will not want to engage with services and will be driven underground. Already some people are reluctant to approach statutory services when they do have an entitlement to support. This will only get worse.
- Civil society is good at building trust with vulnerable people, but we are running out of places to refer them for support.
- The sector needs to build closer relationships with LAs to help them better understand the role they can play in supporting people.
- A lot of progress has been made with LAs in terms of understanding the importance of immigration advice as a route out of destitution, this Bill will make that more challenging and can harm those relationships, while creating thousands of people with no route out of destitution.
- There were concerns about what the Bill says about the direction of government policy, for example of whether we could see criminalisation of groups supporting undocumented people.
- There should be an effort to try to have a more joined up approach to support. The anti-trafficking sector has historically looked at cases in isolation, but many victims also have an asylum claim; the sector will need to become better at working across issues.
- We should look at wider protections, for example looking at more proactive labour market protection to make sure work doesn't degrade to the point where there is a risk of exploitation as people will be reluctant to engage with authorities.
- Any funding from donations provides greater flexibility in the support that can be offered, for example in paying for hotel rooms. It will not meet scale of problem, but organisations should explore all avenues to provide support.
- The Albanian community will be greatly affected by the Bill, may have been trafficked here and further traumatised if they are treated as criminals. There is concern about the demonisation of this community and the impact this has on them.
- There is concern about using the language of the Illegal Migration Bill, when what we are really talking about is something that will increase child poverty, exploitation, violence against women and girls and hugely impact communities of colour.
- There is a need to think beyond the migration sector There may be a need to go back to working more like grassroots organisations.
- Councils that have pursued the Borough of Sanctuary approach have found it has been beneficial in a number of ways including better partnership working and in supporting refugees in hotels and NRPF populations.

Recommendations arising from the discussion:

- Look at the ecosystem of support and map out the range of organisations that can provide support. We may need to rethink the way we work as a sector and reshape our work around the needs of people impacted, as well as diversify income to enable that work.
- Organisations may need to work more closely with grassroots organisations or adopt a similar approach.
- Improved partnership working and collaboration across organisations and sectors will be key, breaking down organisational silos and improving referral mechanisms.
- We should build relationships with other cities and regions, but also think through where there may be new migrant populations as a result of the Bill.

5.5 Funding

Summary of discussion:

- The funding of casework and 1-2-1 support is essential to ensure help is accessible and holistic to meet complex needs, including and covering interpreting, transportation, and other ‘hidden costs’ in service delivery.
- It is crucial to develop information and resources to safely help people understand their rights and entitlements.
- There is a fundamental need for a functional legal aid system. Communicating with people about why legal aid is so crucial is needed. Already before the Bill, the gap between demand for immigration advice and supply was enormous for hundreds of thousands of people. We need to find ways to work together more with statutory funders of advice and policy makers, like addressing the issues with the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office to address the intersectional needs of migrants who will be trapped between the two institutions.
- There is a need to fund ways for organisations to maintain knowledge and expertise. Organisations and support workers are already exhausted and now more people with NRPF will seek support as a result of the Bill.
- Employing and compensating people with lived experience that the sector works with requires investment and new ways of working. There is a need to have a conversation between funders and service providers about good practice to meaningfully include people with lived experience from co-design to co-delivery. A lot of organisations reach out to lived experienced specialists to provide time and emotional accounts of their circumstances, but they are neither employed nor compensated. Funders should work with orgs to develop a structured approach to the inclusion of lived experience, such as paid traineeships and mentorship spaces for people with lived experience to contribute and lead them to spaces of commentary.
- The sector needs to identify what success regarding funding looks like before it is able to plan. There is a need for organisations to define and demonstrate impact in order to be eligible to receive funding. Funding should be long-term, flexible, and trusting of the people who know where the needs are.
- Burn-out for people working in the sector: while the service users are most impacted by the Bill, people working in the sector feel like they are under siege, and they are burned out and leaving their roles at high rates.
- There are issues to be addressed with the accessibility of funding and the process of applying. Often small organisations are left out and funds go to the large ones, leaving smaller organisations with a massive workload and are dealing with inflation and staff burn-out and turn-over. Core funding is vital to continue the work.

Recommendations arising from the discussion:

- Collaborate to create funder coalitions on related social justice issues like climate and workers’ rights which all intersect with migration.
- Funders should focus on funding organisations addressing the intersectionality needs of migrants, ending criminalisation of victims of VAWG and modern slavery and tackling race inequality.
- Funding should be long-term, flexible and trusting of the people doing the delivery, and funders should learn from each other to implement best practice in the design of funding.
- Inclusion of lived experience should be central to everyone’s work, but this should be done in a meaningful way that is not extractive – building this into funding , and ensuring that lived experience engagement includes adequate funding to compensate people for their time is key.

- Funding to organisations should be holistic, considering the mental health impact and burn-out for organisations working on the frontline, especially for ‘by and for’ organisations.

Resources:

- [Trust for London: 'The Illegal Migration Bill explained, and what the sector can do to challenge it'](#)

5.6 Health

Summary of discussion:

- The Bill will not necessarily create new health issues but will exacerbate already existing issues in health and social care, including increasing demand on the already stretched NHS services.
- Concerns were raised about the existing health challenges in contingency hotel accommodation and detention centres. There were reports of challenges in accessing dental care, high demand for translation services, challenges in managing primary care access for transient population.
- Challenges around access to primary care were already significant, often lack of information and awareness about GP registration regardless of immigration status or accommodation status, alongside barriers to registration experienced at receptions.
- There was a lack of clarity about what access to secondary healthcare would be possible for people deemed inadmissible under the Bill, for example they may not be chargeable if they have access to Section 4 support. Lack of understanding or trust in the system could still pose barriers. Pressure on GPs, and confusion about referrals to secondary health care, could create significant issues for some surgeries.
- There was concern that exclusion from healthcare and mainstream support could increase demand for A&E services, especially amongst homeless and destitute populations.
- There could be an increased risk of unsafe discharging of patients, where they are homeless or destitute but have no recourse to public funds and are made permanently inadmissible under the Bill. This could maintain high demand in the NHS.
- Particular concerns were raised about detention sites, and contingency accommodation. Reports of untrained subcontracting staff with hotels unable to support residents with healthcare. Additional concern around poor safeguarding and discrimination due to subcontracting services to other providers. Pregnant women were at particular risk.

Recommendations arising from the discussion:

- Ensure clear access to information about healthcare rights and entitlements at every stage of someone’s journey from arrival.
- Ensure basics of accessible primary care utilising best practices such as [Safe Surgeries Practice](#).
- Improve coordination of services, for example through multidisciplinary services to support migrant holistically with their health, social and financial needs.
- Support organisations who can help excluded migrants navigate their healthcare entitlements through a trauma-informed approach.

Resources:

- [Joint briefing: The medical consequences of the new 'Illegal Migration Bill'](#)
- [RESPOND services for healthcare professionals](#)
- [Translated health information for patients \(Doctors of the World\)](#)
- [Translated health information for patients: How the NHS works \(Doctors of the World\)](#)

5.7 Local authorities

Summary of discussion:

- This Bill puts Local Authorities in conflict with their statutory obligations, particularly towards children. The pressures already felt in homelessness services and migrant support will only be exacerbated by the effects of the Illegal Migration Bill.
- The Bill is expected to create a cohort of people needing support and becoming homeless very soon. LAs do have the power to support through the Care Act and Children's Act, but a lot of LAs are already under immense pressure and lack funding in many areas. Further legal advice may be needed to understand eligibility to some council services for people deemed inadmissible under the Bill.
- The ways in which Local Authorities (LAs) respond to the Bill are important. Some have political leadership to challenge the Bill, but at the same time there was a concern about not wanting to create more anxiety and uncertainty in the system.
- It was noted that the Bill does significant damage to trust towards government and local authority services, undermining careful work to build engagement with marginalised communities in need of support.
- It is challenging for LAs to deal with the complexity of the context around huge numbers of people rough sleeping with NRPF.
- The voluntary sector has been trying to help and they have been doing great work, but due to funding issues, this is not sustainable.
- Advocacy is needed and should include the voices of people with lived experience and the increased financial costs for LAs due to the Bill.
- It is unclear exactly how the Bill is going to impact people and what support will still be available. There is going to be a massive spike in demand for support.
- More clarity is needed on detention sites and what kind of regulations they fall under, and where the role for LAs is in enforcing standards and fulfilling safeguarding responsibilities.
- A place-based response that looked at access to multiple services, and the holistic needs of people going through the system is beneficial.

Recommendations arising from the discussion:

- Joint work, partnership and coordination would support local authorities to respond to the Bill, there is a role for the GLA, London Councils and others to support strategic cooperation – including across sectors such as healthcare and civil society.
- It is crucial for LAs to be able to collectively learn how to speak about the impact of the Bill on various issues, including children, housing, mental health, and adult social care.
- Creating some collective guidance/toolkits to empower LAs' frontline services, e.g., children and adult services, rough sleeping services.
- Local authorities can use their levers as funders to invest in services for migrants, including independent immigration advice, and ensure their services are accessible to newcomers, and build trust with marginalised communities.

6. Other formats and languages

For a large print, Braille, disc, sign language video or audio-tape version of this document, please contact us at the address below:

Greater London Authority
City Hall
Kamal Chunchie Way
London E16 1ZE

Telephone **020 7983 4000**
www.london.gov.uk

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If you would like a summary of this document in your language, please phone the number or contact us at the address above.

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