

The Mayor's Migrant & Refugee Advisory Panel (MRAP)

14.00 -16.00

27 January 2020

Committee Room 2, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, SE1 2AA

Attendance

NB this list will be subject to change and correction:

Hannah Boylan, GLA (Chair)
Mark Winterburn, GLA
Rupinder Parhar, GLA
Ayham Alsuleman, GLA
Hannah Goulding, GLA
Theodora Cadbury, GLA
Lydia Volans, GLA
Rebecca Bicocchi, GLA
Rita Dayoub, Doctors of the World
Lisa Doyle Refugee Council
Michael Boyle, ELATT
Tamara Flanagan, New Europeans
Barbara Drodowicz, East European Resource Centre
Kahiye Alim, Council of Somali Organisations
Eleanor Brown, CARAS
Leticia Ishibashi, Flex
Maria Iglesias, Praxis
Anna Janczuki, Poles in Need
Caitlin Boowel, JCWI
Dolores Modern, Latin American Women's Resource Centre
Fariha Bhatti, REAP
Fizza Qureshi, Migrants' Rights Network
Gisella Valle, Latin American Women's Resource Centre
Gracie Bradley, Liberty
James Banks, London Funders
Lena Mohamed, Migrants' Rights Network

Agenda

1. Welcome and London Strategic Migration Partnership (LSMP) update

- 1.1 Mark updated members on the creation of the London Asylum Group (LAG), which will report to LSMP to have a strategic and operational oversight of the asylum dispersal in London. The Group will escalate any issues to LSMP where necessary. The group will complement the work of the LSMP and MRAP, particularly in relation of the delivering of the Home Office commissioned AIRE and AASC contracts. Lisa Doyle from Refugee Council will be a key point between MRAP and LAG. Mark will be looking to have further representation from civil society to the LAG.
- 1.2 Ayham gave an update on the Community Sponsorship event at City Hall on 23 of January where Deputy Mayor, Debbie Weeks-Bernard welcomed London Community Sponsorship Groups as well as stakeholders in the banking sector, the housing sector, NHS and local government.

1.3 Mark gave an update on Deputy Mayor's advocacy in relation the victims and survivors of the Grenfell Tower tragedy with insecure immigration status. The focus is on the shortcomings of the current Grenfell family policy. After the last LSMP meeting, there was a constructive conversation with relevant directors at the Home Office. At the next LSMP meeting, someone form the Home Office will provide an update on the operation of the policy.

2. GLA Better Renting Project

2.1 Lydia and Rebecca gave an overview of the Mayor's Better Renting programme.

2.1.1 London's private rented sector (PRS) has grown massively and will continue to grow in the coming years. The will be home for families from protected characteristics such as age, race and ethnicity, and pregnancy and in maternity women. The PRS also hosts many migrants and low-income Londoners.

2.1.2 There are concerns and problems on the standards and conditions of the PRS. These poor conditions have specific impact on vulnerable Londoners. Recent GLA commissioned research explored this impact and found some real concerns. Boroughs struggle with the capacity to deal with these issues.

2.1.3 The better renting programme is funded by MHCLG and aims to improve the capacity of councils to take action against rogue landlords and letting agents. The programme has four strands: a) a new qualification focused on improving standards and practices in PRS. b) training courses for existing practitioners, based on need, to expand their skills, including in tenancy mediation and sustainment. c) a new PRS Forum to enable learning and sharing of best practice between officers. d) promotion of careers in PRS environmental health.

2.1.4 The programme is considering the impact of this programme of vulnerable communities such as BAME, young people, low-income households, migrants, and people with insecure status. The focus in these cases is making sure that tenants who are impacted by action against their landlords are given the support they need.

2.1.5 The Mayor has been clear through this programme that he opposes any immigration enforcement approaches in PRS standards enforcement.

2.1.6 The programme also addresses the health issues of the poor housing standards and will ensure that Council Officers understand how these conditions affect mental and physical health of vulnerable groups.

2.2 MRAP members raised serious concerns that, without parallel work to increase access to the PRS for migrants with insecure status or who are financially disadvantaged, then it the work of the programme could see a reduction in the properties accessible for the groups that they represent. Landlords make a decision to cater for this market, for people who are unable to access the mainstream PRS. Closing down this market could simply lead to homelessness for the hundreds of thousands of migrants who rely on it within London.

2.3 Members noted that communities like the Somali community might provide assistance to those in this cohort who are within the community, it is the most marginalised and those who don't have these communities to fall on who will be most affected.

2.4 MRAP members also highlighted the importance of immigration and legal advice for affected renters. Lydia and Rebecca clarified that this was a part of the Programme.

2.5 Lydia and Rebecca thanked MRAP members for their feedback. They noted that improving standards and tenancy sustainment were an integral part of the programme – closing down rental properties is a last resort.

2.6 Hannah Boylan noted the importance of continued MRAP oversight of the Project to ensure members' concerns are taken into account, and that it does not have a negative effect on the migrant groups which MRAP members represent.

Action: GLA Housing Team to report back to a future MRAP meeting to ensure continued of the programme.

Action: Slides from better renting project to be circulated.

3. GLA Refugee and Migrant Data Programme

3.1 Hannah G explained that as a result of recommendations from the MRAP members to focus on data capacity building among migrants and refugee organisations, a project was delivered last year in partnership with Data Kind UK, Super Highways, and Rita Chadha, a freelance consultant.

3.2 The project was a six-month pilot project funded by the GLA with the following aims:

- Develop and pilot data skills training to refugee and migrant sector organisations
- Support a cohort of organisations to gain new knowledge and skills, providing tailored one to one support
- Co-design further training and partnership building between participating organisations
- Develop ethical principles for data collection, use and sharing.

3.3 The project conducted a baseline survey on six organisations and an introductory workshop which aimed to benchmark the sector in terms of their data maturity.

3.4 Based on feedback from an introductory workshop, six sessions were developed and delivered. They included: GDPR – making sure you are doing it right; Developing an Ethical Framework; Developing a Theory of Change; Database options and tips for small charities; Using data sources; Data Visualisation.

3.5 42 charity staff, volunteers and trustees attended the 6 workshops, consisting of 34 unique attendees from 28 different refugee and migrant organisations. The partnership also worked with four organisations who expressed an interest in receiving bespoke data support.

3.6 Datawise London is up and running and looking forward to engaging with more organisations. The summary and the link to the project site: <https://superhighways.org.uk/training-advice-and-technical/data-skills/>

3.7 More detail can be found at <https://e-voice.org.uk/randmdataproject/>

3.8 Eleanor shared the impact of the programme on CHARIS and how it improved the data and the reports the organisations and how it helped the staff the trustees to speak the same language.

Action: Hannah G details to be shared with MRAP members.

4. Undocumented Londoners Report

4.1 Rupinder noted that supporting young people to access routes to secure immigration status is a Mayoral priority.

4.2 The report estimated the size of the foreign national population, the size of the EEA population, and the size of the undocumented population, and the number of undocumented children and young people. Rupinder outlined the methodology and the key report findings.

4.3 Rita noted that Doctors of the World will start using these numbers from the report to inform their programmes. Hannah B asked that, if possible, would MRAP members please at the GLA know when the report is used to help the GLA to understand its impact.

4.4 The GLA is talking to the Home Office about the results of this research.

Action: Rupinder to share the summary of the report.

5. Hostile Environment research project

5.1 Mark explained that the GLA commissioned this research to expose at any conflicts for public sector staff in delivering public services and the hostile environment policy.

5.2 Qualitative in-depth interview with 24 public sector workers across NHS, teaching, housing, social work, and the police. Half were an independent sample. Half were an informed sample.

- Most professionals in the independent sample saw implementing government hostile environment policy as essentially a core element of the job. Immigration related rules are just seen as another set to implement. Only one who was interviewed had heard of the hostile environment. The motive behind the relevant policies seen as rationing of finite public resource and about being fair, rather than reducing net migration.
- Informed colleagues noted that Changes have come gradually over more than a decade, with no clear point of departure; Many processes and behaviours are embedded and entrenched; Processes are often automated E; or dealt with somewhere else in the system so frontline workers aren't aware

5.3 Mark stated that the report highlights an alarming picture and the GLA is looking how to use this report. Mark asked MRAP members to share their thoughts on how the best to share this report and whether to share it publicly or only among the sector.

5.4 MRAP members confirmed that results of the research aligned with their own experience. The hostile environment is now ingrained and normalised. Public sector workers are poorly informed about their own rules. "Rationing" of resources by excluding migrant groups is seen as part of doing the job well and being fair – so there is actually a problem of people going beyond the actual requirements under hostile environment polices to do so. An example cited was GP registration refusals.

5.5 Leticia shared that FLEX has done a similar piece of research to map out the different ways the labour inspectors and the Met police are sharing immigration status with the Home Office. Leticia explained that theses process has been internalised as a norm although they are not required.

5.6 MRAP members agreed that it would be useful to publicise the fact that public sector workers were uninformed about the rules they are working within.

Action: GLA team to share the report when published

Action: GLA team to look to publicise findings with messaging seen as helpful by MRAP members.

6 ESOL for Refugees report

6.2 Michael summarised the result of the consultation event hosted by the GLA, to support a project Migration Yorkshire is leading on develop an ESOL toolkit. Key issues discussed at the event included the barriers to access to ESOL , such as geographical “cold spots” and lack of child care; and the link between immigration status and access to ESOL.

6.3 Hannah invited members who are interested to feed into this consultation to email Mark with any thoughts.

7 Access to healthcare for non-UK national Londoners

7.2 Rita shared that Doctors of the World have analysed the data they have from their Stratford centre clinic. 30% of their attempts to register with GPs have been incorrectly refused.

7.3 Rita shared that Doctors of the World is concerned about a potential increase in refusals to EU Citizens after Brexit

7.4 Rita shared that there is still a concern about secondary care charging been applied inaccurately.

8 AOB

8.2 Hannah B invited MRAP members to the London is Open event on the 31st of January.

8.3 Hannah B shared that the MRAP comes to a review at the end of each financial year and that Mark will be developing the plan for next year. Hannah invited MRAP members to share any ideas and thoughts with Mark.

9 Close