

# MAYOR OF LONDON

## London Strategic Migration Partnership

9 March 2020

14.00 – 16.00

Committee Room 3, City Hall

### **Chair**

Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement

### **Attendees**

Councillor Muhammed Butt – London Councils

Kate Carr – RASI

Tom Pickup – London Councils

Rita Dayoub – Doctors of the World (MRAP)

Esther McConnell – East European Resource Centre (MRAP)

Mike Boyle – East London Advanced Tech Training - ELATT (MRAP)

Jackie Odunoye - London Housing Directors

Anna Di Mascio - Migrant Help

Vanya Leslie - Reed in Partnership

Ian Lewis – ALDCS/ City of London

Annie Campbell - North Kensington Law Centre

Grace Ashaye – LASC

Andrew Carter – ALDCS/ City of London

Dan Hobbs – Home Office

James Vyvyan Robinson – Clearsprings

Stephen Cork – Home Office

James Boyes – Home Office

Andy Jolly - Institute for Community Research and Development

### **GLA staff**

Hannah Boylan – Communities and Social Policy

Mark Winterburn - Communities and Social Policy

Ayham Alsuleman – Communities and Social Policy

Nathan Davies – Economic and Business Policy Unit

Alice Major – Intelligence Unit

Vivienne Avery - Intelligence Unit

### **Apologies**

Moushami Aktar - MOPAC

Steve Lakey - Clearsprings

Lisa Doyle – Refugee Council (MRAP)

## **1. Welcome**

- 1.1. Debbie Weekes-Bernard welcomed attendees and the minutes from the last meeting were agreed.

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## 2. Intelligence Update & Undocumented Londoners Research

2.1 Vivienne and Alice provided an Intelligence Update. Some key trends included:

- More people from EU 8 countries continue to leave than enter the UK
- Despite the high number of applications to the EU Settlement Scheme, the largest number of applicants left to apply are Polish nationals
- The number of asylum seekers in dispersed accommodation has increased six-fold since the end of 2015
- Boroughs with the highest concentration of asylum-seeking households receiving section 95 include are Newham, Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge, Hillingdon and Ealing.
- As of Jan 2020, figures show that 4,494 UASC and former UASC care leavers were supported in London, up from 4,032 in Jan 19. Of these, 61% were former UASC care leavers
- 1048 refugees have been resettled by London boroughs since 2014, with 57 refugees resettled in Q4 2019
- In the latest quarter, 52% of rough sleepers had a UK nationality, 35% had a European nationality and 13% had a nationality outside the UK or Europe.

2.2. Andy Jolly outlined the findings of the GLA-commissioned undocumented Londoners research.

- The report's central estimates suggest that more than half of the UK's 674,000 undocumented adults and children live in London (397,000).
- There are now estimated to be 215,000 undocumented children in the UK, with 107,000 living in London. There are a further estimated 26,000 undocumented young Londoners aged 18-24.
- It is estimated that around half of all children with insecure immigration status were born in the UK
- Only around 10% of the estimated 215,000 undocumented children aged under 18 in the UK have applied to secure their immigration status.

2.3 Cllr Butt noted the importance of learning from programmes being run to support rough sleepers, and expressed interest in seeing the impact these initiatives are having on the numbers of rough sleepers.

2.4 Esther outlined concerns of the migrant sector about meeting the needs of those EEA nationals at risk of marginalisation and thus not accessing the EU Settlement Scheme. She explained how this group includes those who face direct barriers – lack of evidence, language barriers, digital exclusion, age and disabilities - as well as those who do not trust the Home Office or want a physical proof of their status.

2.5 Andrew Carter asked what nationalities are most likely to become undocumented, and whether there was any qualitative research on the experience

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of undocumented children. Andrew referenced new research being undertaken on the experiences of young people and the impact on their mental health.

**Action: Andy Jolly to share information on nationalities most likely to become undocumented**

**Action: Andy Jolly to share any qualitative research he is aware of on the experience of undocumented children**

**Action: Intelligence update presentation slides to be circulated**

## 3. EU Settlement Scheme

3.1 Stephen Cork updated members on the EU Settlement Scheme. Key messages included:

- Additional support is available to those who do not have the appropriate access, skills or confidence to apply. This includes over 300 assisted digital locations across the UK where people can be supported through their application
- The Home Office estimate that there are 3.5 million EEA nationals (excluding Ireland but including Switzerland) in the UK who are eligible to apply. Over 3 million have now applied.
- Under 16s are an increasingly important audience

3.1 Andrew asked about the number of vulnerable people who have applied (including rough sleepers and children in care). Stephen did not have the data. However, he noted that the new Burdens assessment meant the Home Office received estimates from local authorities about children in care, which means some information is beginning to be collected.

3.2 It was noted that the government had announced the extension of government funding, which is to be designed to help vulnerable EU citizens apply to the EU Settlement Scheme. Hannah raised concerns about the impact of the short notice on the funding extension: some organisations had to issue redundancy notices as a consequence of the delay in announcement.

3.3 MRAP representatives shared some of the trends currently facing the sector. They explained how cases are becoming much more complicated, and it is the 'hard cases' that are now yet to apply. They flagged that an increasing part of the caseload they are dealing with is people who have been scammed. These cases are proving difficult to unpick (e.g. where the wrong information is uploaded as contact details). The Home Office condemned fraudulent "advice" and explained the OISC regulate the services and are therefore responsible for this.

3.4 The Home Office plan for hyper-local targeted campaigns was discussed. It was noted that it was important that the information was available in community

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languages. It was also noted that it would need the support of stakeholders and community groups to facilitate and guide any such campaign.

**Action: GLA to continue to collate feedback from civil society to send to the Home Office in relation to the EU Settlement Scheme.**

**Action: Home Office presentation slides to be circulated**

## 4. Future Immigration System

4.1 Hannah gave an overview of planned changes to the immigration system, as set out in the Home Office's policy paper. Significant changes from the White Paper published under Theresa May's government include: a reduction of the proposed general salary threshold to £25,600, and the closure of any low-skill work visa route.

4.2 Jackie reiterated concerns held by local government about the potential loss of the construction workforce for housebuilding as a result of the proposed changes.

4.3 Rita and Esther shared her concerns about access to healthcare for EU citizens after the end of the transition period. Migrants already face barriers in GP access, and there are concerns about the consequences of loss of physical ID documents for EU citizens seeking healthcare.

4.4 Mike explained that the proposed changes to the immigration system posed a long-term threat to the health of the ESOL sector. He said the proposed system is designed to keep out the sort of people that ESOL exists to support, but also that he was worried that people would be pushed into insecure status and have fewer rights. In the short-term there is a great deal of uncertainty about how the transition will go (in terms of changing eligibility of students).

4.5 It was noted that workplace exploitation is a potential risk as a new immigration system comes into force, and that MOPAC have a role in monitoring this.

**Action: MOPAC to feed back to LSMP members their approach to monitoring workplace exploitation and modern slavery.**

4.5 Tom described the impact on the social care sector in particular of any reduction in "low-skill" immigration. He also raised a concern that the proposed system could see an increase in those with the no recourse to public funds condition, which would have an impact upon local authorities.

## 5. Grenfell – Families of Victims & Survivors

5.1 Dan Hobbs provided an outline of the Grenfell survivors policy and relatives policy. He noted that the Home Office has published its first set of statistics about on those accessing these policies.

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- 19 people came forward to access the survivors' policy. 15 applications were granted, and four were refused because they meet the criteria.
- 29 people have been granted leave under Grenfell relatives' policy. Dan stated that no relatives have been refused entry or leave to remain, but Annie said a participant has been refused and excluded.

5.4 Mark noted the successes of the two policies and welcomed the willingness of the Home Office to continue to engage with the GLA and stakeholders on the policies. However, he outlined concerns about the relatives policy in its current form. In particular, he noted how the 6 months' leave to remain is too short and is therefore causing hardship. He also outlined how a range of people with important caring responsibilities fall outside of the policy.

5.5 Dan Hobbs committed to continue to engage with LSMP on the policies.

**Action: Civil society to provide further intelligence to Mark on how the 6-month leave to remain period under the Grenfell relatives policy is causing hardship. Mark to compile these findings to and present them to the Home Office.**

## 6. Asylum Accommodation & Support

6.1 James gave an operational update from Clearsprings. He noted that there are 500 bed spaces for Initial Accommodation (IA) in London, but there are currently 700 – 800 people in need of this accommodation. As a consequence, Clearsprings are having to use hotels to accommodate hundreds of asylum seekers.

6.2 Jackie asked what the response to Covid-19 was. James explained that asylum seekers were checked on their entry and put into isolation if tested positive.

6.3 Jackie updated on the London Asylum Group which met for the first time, and explained the inter-borough accommodation agreement (IBAA). Clearsprings have expressed interest in being a part of the IBAA, but no commitment has yet been made by them.

6.5 Jackie shared her concerns about the use of hotels. She welcomed the greater transparency in place from Clearsprings about numbers but expressed concern that numbers in hotels are rising steeply. She also explained how transport between Redbridge and Croydon is not accounted for considering all the health work being done in Croydon, meaning there is lots of travel. Jackie warned that politicians may become interested in this issue again if the numbers keeps spiking.

6.6 Kate noted the sustained high intake of asylum seekers being felt across the country. Kate explained how her team are working on a national rebalancing but there is a lot more to do, not helped by the extended high intake and Covid-19 affecting the length of stay.

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6.7 Tom also outlined a recent report by the Red Cross report on the asylum move-on period. The report estimates that extending the move-on period to 56 days would have an overall public sector financial benefit of between £4 million and £7 million each year.

6.9 Dan Hobbs noted that a question was raised in the House with the Immigration Minister regarding the report, and that the Minister committed to look at the extension of the move-on period. Two potential reservations are: Would an extension reduce the capacity of asylum providers to accommodate the total asylum population? And will 56 days just delay things and create another cliff-edge?

## **7. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children**

7.1 Ian explained that there is a planned consultation on the future of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS), but the date is still being discussed with ministers. This is expected to be a joint consultation with Department of Education. The consultation is expected to run for 2 months. It will include senior level engagement events, which should include local politicians as well as senior officers.

7.2 The NTS is not operating on an inter-regional basis and the pressures in London continue to be high as a result of this.

## **8. AOB**

8.1 A concern was raised that Public Health information in relation to Covid-19 is not being translated into languages other than English and migrants face additional barriers to accessing healthcare.

8.2 A concern was raised that problems arising from self-isolation are much more complicated for people who need to be cared for, including children.