

**Report of Assistant Chief Executive Citizens and Communities**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015**

**Subject: Migration and Refugee Update**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**1 Summary**

1.1 This report updates Members of Executive Board on a range of issues relating to migration in Leeds as well as Leeds' response to the current Middle East refugee crisis. It provides context on migration and asylum issues as they historically and presently affect the demography of the city as well as responding to the current refugee crisis and making proposals to ensure Leeds meets its aspirations of being a compassionate city.

**2 Recommendation**

2.1 Members of Executive Board are recommended to:

- authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) to liaise with Home Office colleagues to support the relocation of up to 200 Syrian refugees over the next two years and;
- endorse the use of up to £100k of local welfare scheme funding to support third sector organisations in dealing with current capacity challenges.

### **3 Purpose of this report**

- 3.2 To update Members of Executive Board on a range of issues relating to migration in Leeds as well as Leeds' response to the current Middle East refugee crisis.

### **4 The History of Migration**

- 4.1 The UK and Leeds has a long history of migration. The city, in common with many other UK cities, saw significant levels of migration following the end of World War 2. At this time migrants predominantly came from Commonwealth countries and in particular the Caribbean, South Asia and parts of Africa. These migrants arrived to work in industry as well as parts of the public sector where there were shortages of labour.
- 4.2 During the 1990's a further wave of migration to the city occurred due to the policy of dispersing refugees and asylum seekers from London and the South East of England. This brought migrants from new areas such as French speaking Africa, Somalia and Afghanistan, making the range of communities in the city much more diverse.
- 4.3 More recently there has been a significant rise in the numbers of migrants from the European Union, particularly following the expansion of the EU into Eastern Europe.
- 4.4 Across Europe the single most significant factor currently driving change in city populations is international migration. The United Nations has concluded that countries in Western Europe will for the foreseeable future continue to see fairly stable birth rates, but will experience relatively high levels of foreign immigration leading to an estimated population growth of 15% in the UK.
- 4.5 It is important to recognise that migration is a very diverse issue. Migrants come to the city and UK to join family, to work, to study or to claim asylum.

### **5 Demographic Data for Leeds**

- 5.1 Leeds is one of the fastest growing cities in the UK, and is home to over 140 different ethnic groups – making Leeds' black and minority ethnic population the most diverse outside of London, with the single fastest growing ethnic identity in Leeds being of "mixed race".
- 5.2 Data from the 2011 Census on country of birth, together with new questions on age and year of arrival for those born overseas, provides a reliable indication of internationally migrant communities of Leeds.
- 5.3 It shows that between 2001 and 2011, the number of Leeds residents born outside of the UK almost doubled from 47,636 in 2001 to 86,144 in 2011, currently making up just over 11% of the Leeds population. Of those, more than two-thirds were born outside of the EU, and just over half arrived at some point in the last 10 years.
- 5.4 There are over three times as many residents in Leeds who were born in a "third" country, outside the EU, than were born in the EU. 77,200 compared to 20,300

respectively; this difference is common across the region, but a little more pronounced in Leeds.

- 5.5 The migrant population of Leeds is on average younger than the general population, which reflects the demography of newer communities. Many international migrants change countries for reasons of work or study and this often skews the data towards working ages – 60% of non-UK born residents were between the ages of 16 and 34 when they first arrived in the UK, and 30% arrived as children (0-15 years old). Just over 40% of people born in EU Accession countries are aged 25-34 years.
- 5.6 English is overwhelmingly the main language used in Leeds with 93% of the population using it as their main language at home as well as at work. Of the 51,221 people for who would not describe English as their main language, 39,863 speak English well or very well.
- 5.7 Currently 15,000 pupils in Leeds have a first language that is not English. This is equivalent to 18% of primary and 13% of secondary pupils. Both are a small increase on the previous year, and similar to the Yorkshire and Humber average
- 5.8 Looking forward, further work is planned to identify and understand the numbers, geography and economic circumstances of migrant populations around the City. In particular, what migrant cohorts exist, where they are located and what their priority service needs are.

## **6 Asylum Dispersal**

- 6.1 Leeds has been one of the established 90 asylum dispersal areas since they were introduced 15 years ago. Up until 2012 Leeds City Council held a contract with Government to disperse asylum seekers in the city. In 2012 this work was contracted out by Government to the private sector on a regional basis significantly reducing the Council's role and influence in dealing with asylum dispersal in the city.
- 6.2 The private sector provider is now responsible for dispersing asylum seekers across the region in agreed dispersal areas. Whilst we can still inspect properties to ensure they meet required standards, as well as being a statutory consultee when properties are being sought by the private sector provider to house asylum seekers, our wider influence and powers are limited.
- 6.3 The authority receives regular information on asylum dispersal in the city and as of August 2015 there were 563 asylum seekers being accommodated in Leeds. Whilst this figure has risen in recent months, it is still quite a bit less than the peak seen in the middle of the last decade.
- 6.4 From a regional perspective there are currently 4,000 supported asylum seekers in Yorkshire and the Humber which has increased steadily from a low of 2500 in 2012, although significantly less than the peak of 10,000 seen during the middle of the last decade. Yorkshire and the Humber currently accepts above average numbers of asylum seekers per head of population within the UK, and the three

Northern English regions currently accommodate half of all of the UK's asylum seekers.

- 6.5 It is a current priority for the Immigration Minister to widen the number of dispersal areas in the UK beyond the current 90 and Leeds is supportive of this intention.

## **7 Ending Support for Refused Asylum Seekers**

- 7.1 The Home Office recently released a consultation on 'Reforming support for failed asylum seekers and other illegal migrants'. There are a number of far-reaching changes to asylum support, mainly in ending accommodation and financial support to refused ('failed') asylum seekers, described in the consultation as 'illegal migrants'. This will primarily impact families, of which the Home Office estimate up to 10,000 family members could lose support in the UK.
- 7.2 The Home Office assumptions are that Local Authorities would have minimal responsibilities under human rights or the Children Act as the families would intentionally be making themselves destitute by not returning. The consultation suggests Local Authorities would be reimbursed for any of these minimal costs. The Home Office also assume this policy will lead to significant 'behaviour change'.
- 7.3 There are serious concerns across Local Authorities and other organisations nationally about these proposals and there is some scepticism of the validity of some of the assumptions underpinning the policy, and therefore limited chance of success. The risks of failure are high with potentially significant additional responsibilities and costs for Local Authorities, safeguarding and exploitation issues and impacts on children and families.
- 7.4 Leeds City Council in common with a number of authorities responded to this consultation which closed on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015. A copy of the response sent from Leeds is attached as appendix 1.

## **8 The Developing Refugee Crisis**

- 8.1 The United Nations have estimated that 9.3 million people are in need of humanitarian aid within Syria. Of these at least 6.5 million people in Syria have been forced to flee their homes and there are almost 2.7 million refugees in neighbouring countries.
- 8.2 On 29 January 2014 the Home Secretary made a statement to Parliament outlining the Government's intention to relocate 500 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees, displaced to neighbouring countries by the ongoing conflict to the UK.
- 8.3 This initiative was known as the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme and was introduced on a similar basis to the Gateway Protection Programme that has been running for the past 12 years. A separate Afghan Locally Engaged Staff Relocation Scheme was established as part of the UK's military draw down in Afghanistan in 2013.
- 8.4 After that announcement the Government asked Local Authorities to volunteer to participate in the Syrian relocation programme and Leeds City Council was one of

those authorities who did agree to participate, agreeing to take part in both Syrian and Afghan relocation schemes. Leeds City Council agreed to take 50 people under these two schemes and over the last few months we have seen the first Afghan families relocated to the city with the first Syrian refugee families expected to arrive in the next few weeks.

- 8.5 Members will also be aware that Kent County Council recently asked other authorities for assistance in accommodating unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Leeds City Council is working closely with Kent County Council and has so far agreed to accommodate eight unaccompanied children as part of our own looked after children arrangements.
- 8.6 On the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2015, David Cameron announced that the UK would take an additional 20,000 refugees over the course of the current parliament and would be looking for local authorities to volunteer to take refugees in their area. At the time of writing this report we await further detail on the proposals. However, in anticipation of the need to respond quickly the Leader of Council confirmed Leeds' commitment to support the refugee crisis in a press statement issued on the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> September.
- 8.7 On the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015 a further press statement was issued confirming that Leeds had established a newly-formed task force of senior officers from key partners to discuss how the city can best support plans to accommodate more refugees affected by the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East. This task force is chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) and met for the first time on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September.
- 8.8 Subject to receiving final confirmation from Government on their specific proposals, the task force have recommended that Leeds should take up to 200 additional Syrian refugees over the course of the next two years. All partners involved believe this demonstrates Leeds' firm commitment to do all that it can to support the current refugee crisis and consider it to be a manageable number in terms of finding appropriate accommodation and meeting other needs such as school places and health needs. This approach will also enable the council to review the position in two years' time to determine whether any further assistance should be provided.
- 8.9 Whilst the council has received a range of views on the refugee crisis, there has been a positive response from many individuals and organisations wishing to do their bit to assist. In response to these offers we are working closely with colleagues in the third sector to ensure offers of support and assistance are best directed to where people can most appropriately assist. The next sections details the range of partnership work undertaken in Leeds on this agenda.

## **9 Partnership Work in Leeds**

- 9.1 Leeds City Council works in partnership with a range of well-regarded Third Sector organisations across the city as well as other parts of the public sector to meet the challenges and take advantage of the many positive benefits that migration is bringing to the city.

- 9.2 MESH, the Migrant English Support Hub is a partnership between Leeds City Council, the University of Leeds, RETAS (Refugee Education Training Advisory Services) and LASSN (Leeds Asylum Support Seekers Network). It aims to support the coordination of adult English language provision in the community sector in Leeds. The aim is to enable thousands of people to find the right class for them to improve their written and spoken English, enabling them to access further education and employment in the future.
- 9.3 The Migrant Access Project is designed to help reduce pressures on statutory services and to help new arrivals settle in Leeds. It provides trained community people who speak the same language as new arrivals to help empower and connect people with the up-to-date information they need to successfully settle and integrate.
- 9.4 Leeds is a 'City of Sanctuary' within the UK wide network of Cities of Sanctuary. It is a mainstream, grassroots movement which works to create relationships between local people and those seeking sanctuary.
- 9.5 LASSN (Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network) has over 850 volunteers who have befriended those seeking asylum and helped them integrate into life in Leeds.
- 9.6 PAFRAS (Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) works with refugees, asylum seekers and the wider community to counter the effects of enforced destitution on vulnerable migrants. Its work includes providing immediate humanitarian relief and long-term support, advice and advocacy aimed at assisting service users to make lasting improvements to their situation.
- 9.7 The Leeds Migration Partnership is a cross sector, citywide strategic forum for those working with all migrant communities in Leeds and consists of approximately 40 organisations. It's a mechanism for developing and influencing policy and driving forward good practice in relation to migrant communities. It reports to the Communities Board.
- 9.8 Migrants are affected by many of the same issues that affect mainstream society. However there are also a number of areas of particular need for migrant groups e.g. access to English language learning, immigration advice or qualification equivalency; as well as areas where there are particular vulnerabilities for migrants from certain arrival routes e.g. specific Post Traumatic Stress counselling for those fleeing warzones or persecution, safe spaces for trafficked individuals or access to specific health services for victims of Female Genital Mutilation. Many of these support and advice services are provided by partners and third sector organisations connected through the Leeds Migration Partnership.
- 9.9 We know that the majority of migrant support organisations operating in the city work with only adults, and a small number only with women. The Children's Society have an advocacy worker who supports young people in an holistic way to access education, advice, mental health support and housing. They also provide a weekly youth programme covering rights and entitlements, education pathways, sexual health and hate crime. The programme is for 14 to 19 year olds and has a

mixture of young people in families and others who are unaccompanied. They come from Sudan, Syria, Eritrea, and Iran.

- 9.10 Nationally, advice provision for refugees and asylum seekers has also been subject to change following the review to the Home Office contract in April 2014. Previously advice was provided by a national organisation that provided a range of face-to-face services to asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants and Leeds was supported well. However, this service provision has changed and advice from the new provider is now carried out via a telephone only service with no nationally funded face-to-face services being provided locally. This has resulted in additional pressure on other advice providers in the city.
- 9.11 The council is working closely with the Migration Partnership on work it is doing on preventing destitution in Leeds, which follows on from a report to Executive Board in July 2013. This work will highlight current issues, numbers and impacts.
- 9.12 The council has also been working with a number of third sector organisations to co-locate them together in a migrant support hub, located alongside the one stop centre in 2 Great George Street. This will enable migration organisations and services to increase co-operation and partnership working to minimise back office costs as well as making it easier for clients to access services.

## **10 Economic and Business Impact**

- 10.1 The overwhelming majority of recent research shows that migrants have a positive economic impact on the UK economy paying more in taxes than taking in benefits.
- 10.2 For example, Dustman and Frattini show an overwhelming net fiscal benefit of EU migrants contributed over £20bn to public finances. ONS analysis of the census shows that a greater percentage of foreign nationals are more economically active than UK nationals. However, there are some studies with other findings, for example, Migration Watch concluded a neutral net contribution of migration.
- 10.3 The specific contribution of migration to some sectors of the economy, for example health services and social care, is significant. For example, around a quarter of doctors in the NHS are foreign nationals. New Philanthropy Capital reported that work done in Leeds to retrain refugee doctors provided a saving of nearly £240,000 compared to retraining a doctor from scratch, a return of 6,000%.
- 10.4 Skilled migrants in the workforce are shown to be positively associated with labour productivity, migrant recruitment fills skilled and specialist roles, their skills complement rather than replace those of colleagues to make for more dynamic teams, and some organisations have expanded as a consequence (e.g. NIESR report by H Rolfe et al Nov 2013).

## **11 Corporate Considerations**

- 11.1 **Consultation and Engagement** – whilst there hasn't been any recent formal consultation on the matters considered within this report they have been subject

to significant media reporting and many people have offered their thoughts on the issues, and in particular the developing refugee crisis in the Middle East.

- 11.2 **Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration** – the issue of migration, asylum and refugees clearly has significant equality and cohesion issues and these will be carefully considered in any work that is progressed on this matter.
- 11.3 **Council policies and the Best Council Plan** – Leeds is a welcoming and compassionate city and the recommendations in this support those values.
- 11.4 **Resources and value for money** – The costs of participating in the refugee relocation schemes are covered by specific grant from Government and whilst specific details are still awaited, any agreement to accommodate refugees will be subject to such funding being confirmed and being appropriate to cover the costs involved. . As regards the proposed use of local welfare funding, this funding is currently available and uncommitted. Work will be progressed to determine the appropriate criteria to support funding decisions.
- 11.5 **Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In** - There are no specific legal implications or access to information issues with this report. The report is subject to call-in.
- 11.6 **Risk Management** – The key risk is associated with ensuring that adequate grant funding is provided through the contractual arrangement with Government to cover the costs involved. These terms will be subject to further discussion with Government colleagues and we shall only proceed if terms can be agreed.

## **12 Conclusion**

- 12.1 Migration, asylum and supporting refugees is an important issue for the city and this report seeks to reassure members on the work done in this area and the positive impacts migration has on the city.

## **13 Recommendation**

- 13.1 Members of Executive Board are recommended to:
- authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) to liaise with Home Office colleagues to seek to agree the terms and funding arrangements for relocating up to 200 Syrian refugees in Leeds over the next two years and;
  - endorse the use of up to £100k of local welfare scheme funding to support third sector organisations in dealing with current capacity challenges with the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) agreeing specific proposals in consultation with the relevant Executive Member.

## **14 Background Documents**

- 14.2 There are no specific background documents linked to this report.