

Report of Assistant Chief Executive Citizens and Communities

Report to Scrutiny Board (Citizens and Communities)

Date: 12 October 2015

Subject: Migration and Refugee Update – Leeds’ Position

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

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Scrutiny Board with background information about the current position in relation to migration, with a view to prompting an informed discussion about the Leeds response to the current Middle East refugee crisis, within the context of the wider picture.
- 1.2 It highlights the positive response Leeds has given in relation to the Government call for support for Syrian refugees, which has been agreed by Executive Board
- 1.3 The report gives a flavour of some key areas of work and challenges within relevant services. This shows that these are being recognised and responded to and that there are overarching matters which would benefit from a wider debate. These include the potential tensions arising in communities, media portrayal of refugees. complexity of the topic, and the role and position of the third sector.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members of Scrutiny Board are asked to note and comment upon the information included in the report, recognising the considerable work taking place within each service to address the issues of migration, asylum seekers and refugees.

3.0 Purpose of this report

- 3.1 To provide background information to Scrutiny Board on a range of issues relating to migration in Leeds as well as Leeds' response to the current Middle East refugee crisis. Appendix 1 gives a simplified definition of terms used in relation to migration.
- 3.2 To provide an overview of how specific services are addressing the issues and the implications arising.
- 3.3 This report does not cover everything that is occurring in Leeds and more widely, but provides an overview and flavour to inform discussions, and further conversations. It provides an opportunity to take an holistic view and a discussion of the broader picture.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 Our vision is for Leeds to be a compassionate, caring city that helps all its residents benefit from the effects of the city's economic growth. To support this vision we are actively engaging with the current refugee crisis. We have a long history in Leeds of being a welcoming city and we aim to continue this. In doing so we will be realistic about what is possible, recognising where there are issues and concerns and address these appropriately.
- 4.2 The 23 September 2015 report to Executive Report on migration (Appendices 2 and 2A) provides a detailed picture of:
- The history of migration
 - The demographic data for Leeds
 - Asylum dispersal
 - Ending support for refused asylum seekers – response to consultation
 - The developing refugee crisis
 - Partnership work in Leeds
 - The economic and business impact
- 4.3 The following recommendations were agreed by Executive Board:
1. 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;
 2. endorse the use of up to £100k of local welfare scheme funding to support third sector organisations in dealing with current capacity challenges.
- 4.4 Since the agreement by Executive Board the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) and Head of Migration Yorkshire have spoken to the Home Office and agreed in principle to support the relocation of up to 200 Syrian refugees subject to confirming detailed funding arrangements. We have also discussed relocating 25 of the 200 before the end of the year

and have agreed in principle a funding arrangement for these 25 which we believe adequately covers all of the costs involved.

4.5 Members of Executive Board also agreed to provide up to £100k of funding from the local welfare scheme to support organisations whose principle activity is providing assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. Some criteria to govern decision making for these grants has been developed and is attached at Appendix 3.

4.6 This report does not seek to duplicate the information and discussion resulting from the Executive Board report, but to build on it and to provide further additional council service information

5.0 Main Issues

5.1 There are three specific but separate related types of migration which this paper seeks to address i.e. settled migrant communities, new migrants or asylum seekers to Leeds, and refugees from Syria/Afghanistan who have been granted humanitarian protection status. Whilst there are some similarities in need between these groups there are also significant differences. These are highlighted as appropriate in the following paragraphs.

5.2 **Housing** – The contract for provision of accommodation and support for Asylum Seekers was awarded to the private sector in 2012. G4S Group were the successful contractor for the Yorkshire and Humber Region. The Council, therefore, no longer has any responsibility for the Asylum contract. However, officers have continued to meet with representatives of G4S on a regular basis in order to maintain good relations, to ensure that G4S are delivering their contractual responsibilities and to ensure that properties used within the contract, which are all within the Private Rented Sector, meet the legal requirements. To date these meetings have been productive. One concern has been the concentration of Asylum Seekers in LS7, 8, 9 and 11 post codes and the impact this has on community cohesion in those areas. G4S have recently started to consider other areas of the city but rental costs restrict their ability to make significant change.

5.3 Once asylum seekers receive the outcome of their application for refugee status they leave G4S accommodation and, if granted leave to remain then they need to access mainstream benefit provision. If they are refused leave to remain then there is the potential for them to become destitute as no longer recourse to public funds.

5.4 As Members will be aware Leeds has offered to take an additional 200 Syrian refugees over the course of the next two years as part of the UK's commitment to take an additional 20,000 refugees over the next five years. Refugees to be taken are expected to be mainly families and we are expecting 200 refugees to equate to approximately 20 families for each of the next two years. They will be accommodated in a mix of private sector rented, housing association and our own council housing stock. In addition the council has received offers of vacant accommodation and are

considering the legalities of taking up these offers. A letter has been drafted asking Housing Associations to identify empty properties which might be suitable to house Syrian refugees. Whilst there are currently 21,000 on the council housing waiting list, most of these are not currently homeless and the Syrian refugee position does not conflict with this. There are 4,000 council house properties let per year and less than 10 are expected to be used to house refugees.

- 5.5 In addition it is worth reflecting that there are groups of migrant communities in the city and these are already providing a welcome to newcomers e.g. the Syrian Kitchen.
- 5.6 **Public health** - Public Health reach migrant communities either via work targeting the broader vulnerable population in areas of deprivation or with groups with a range of additional needs e.g. Baby Steps Perinatal Education Programme. There are also specific initiatives targeting migrants including work to raise awareness around health protection issues for migrants and to improve referral pathways for screening; work targeting Eastern European migrants in West Leeds; Choto Moni antenatal education and post-natal support; work to support migrant sex workers around their sexual health; and support to the Migrant Access Project.
- 5.7 **Health and social care needs** - health and social care services provide for the immediate needs of migrants/asylum seekers/refugees. Isolation, feelings of loneliness, and depression are often identified as considerable issues for some migrants, especially those in their early years of arrival. In addition we recognise that some of the Syrian refugees may be particularly vulnerable due to their traumatic experiences, which are likely to impact on their mental health. There may also be support needs arising for Syrian refugees with physical disabilities.
- 5.8 There are currently a small number of refused vulnerable asylum seekers who are being supported by Adult Social Care due to them being destitute. Whilst this is not currently a major issue due to the small number involved, there is concern that changes to legislation and immigration policy may result in larger numbers of vulnerable people being refused asylum, and becoming destitute.
- 5.9 **Community Safety** – with increasing focus on the position of refugees and information in the media there is the potential for increased far right activity and media activity may prompt demonstrations. These will undoubtedly increase tensions. There are no indications at the current time that any are planned in Leeds. Work on the prevention agenda is also an important community safety factor in considering and addressing any wider risks around exploitation and radicalisation.
- 5.10 **Community cohesion** – Leeds has one of the most diverse and changing cultural populations in the UK. The majority of our black and minority ethnic and newly arrived communities are however concentrated in the inner city and less affluent areas. This has created some tension in communities where the impact of new arrivals or changing demographics has been felt

more keenly. Whilst the overall picture is that Leeds communities are generally resilient and tolerant, the significance of intercultural tensions in some of our communities must not be underestimated. Every community in Leeds has its strengths. However, there are communities in Leeds where multiple concerns occur in the same location including poverty, crime and anti-social behaviour, unemployment, truancy and substance misuse. Where these concerns and others all exist in once place it compounds the effects of crime and anti-social behaviour, reduces respect for the environment and limits the potential benefits of community involvement and community action.

- 5.11 Newly emerging or changing communities are especially vulnerable to a range of threats, significant and regular changes in population, especially with short-term residency, inhibits the formation of strong, supportive and integrated communities – and we are working to look at what support needs to be in place to build resilience in these neighbourhoods, and with certain communities of identity.
- 5.12 Locality teams work with services, communities, third sector and other public bodies to understand any current and emerging tensions so that these can be addressed at an early stage. This is recognised as being effective in both immediate responses and also in any ongoing ‘ripples’. We continually strive to both more fully understand how to sustain cohesion and to promote this further.
- 5.13 The work of the Communities Board is likely to focus on this over the next year; informed by the work of Integration Up North project, the Young Foundation work and the knowledge and experience. .
- 5.14 **Migrant third sector** – there are a number of meetings taking place to understand and address the position of the third sector and the response to the current crisis. In addition to raising concerns about the current situation it has brought sharply into focus the precarious position of some organisations. There are therefore two critical factors to consider: working together with the third sector to respond appropriately to the immediate need, reflecting that there is no developed infrastructure to do this; and to consider the long term sustainability of the migrant third sector. In order to facilitate this work is beginning to take place to understand what the Leeds’ offer is to new migrants to the city, and then look at the best way to deliver this. In addition resources are being established to better understand the support required to sustain the migrant third sector.
- 5.15 **Children** – There has been a request from Kent to all local authorities for assistance with unaccompanied asylum seeking children coming through Dover. Children’s Services have responded positively to this and have so far taken 8 children. These are being settled and then further conversations will take place with Kent about the possibility of Leeds taking more children.
- 5.16 It has been noticed that a small number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children have been placed by other local authorities with private fostering agencies who have then located the children in Leeds. Leeds is notified when this happens and, although has no statutory responsibility for the

children, they will be accessing services in Leeds e.g. schools. Work is taking place to more fully understand the position.

- 5.17 Children's Services operates a foster care recruitment process for asylum looked after children and information about the scheme will be publicised.
- 5.18 School placements are planned based on a projections system. The current year outturn has been for slightly more placements (80) than expected. Work is underway to understand how to better capture accurate data to inform school places. Some areas of the city are experienced at dealing with children with limited/no English. Where this is not the case work is ongoing to develop and support schools in this field.
- 5.19 Children's are exploring the potential to develop a child friendly welcome pack for new children to the city. It will include crayons and art tools. This would be particularly useful to help children, coming from difficult and traumatic places to express themselves.
- 5.20 **Employment and skills** – where leave to remain has been granted, or there is freedom of movement then migrants can work. There can be particular needs associated with groups in relation to language, general education, understanding work culture, and the level of independence of young migrants. Addressing these needs is in the context of increasing volumes of learners with reduced funding for adult skills provision from the Skills Funding Agency and particularly the impact on ESOL.

6.0 Overview

- 6.1 It is clear that all the service areas have particular roles to play but these cannot take place in isolation of each other. By being clear about what we are offering to migrants (whether settled community, new migrants or asylum seekers/ refugees/ those granted human protection), in addition to the offer to citizens of Leeds, we can ensure a more strategic and co-ordinated response. This will take account of the individual and the community needs and provide appropriate support to the migrant third sector in delivering agreed and necessary services. By having a holistic view we will also be able to recognise and respond to potential tensions with localities in a measured way, taking learning forward as we do so. .
- 6.2 The third sector has willingly and readily accepted a large role in addressing this area but is struggling with capacity to do so. A clear 'offer' would provide a framework within which to provide support/commissioning arrangements with the third sector. To achieve this we are considering our own capacity to provide coordination to support to the third sector infrastructure.
- 6.3 There are a number of groups which have been established over the years to coordinate work around migration. The main ones which the council are involved in are shown in Appendix 4.
- 6.4 In addition, an officer Refugee Task Force has been established, chaired by James Rogers. This draws members from the main council services

affected, and includes DWP, NHS England, West Yorkshire Police, and members of the Migration Partnership. The main purpose of this group is to:

- 6.5 Provide strategic leadership to address the challenges currently being created by the refugee crisis. The task group will oversee the programme of action which will result in:
- A multi-agency approach which develops a Leeds response to the current refugee crisis
 - Consider the impact and needs of local service provision in planning Leeds' response
 - Ensure the provision of essential services, support and advice to meet the needs of refugees being accommodated in Leeds
 - Effective communications with all interested parties
 - Maximise the contribution from interested parties and stakeholders who want to assist in the Leeds response
 - The provision of timely and effective advice to Elected Members on a proposed Leeds response
- 6.6 Conversations are continuing with the Home Office to ensure that Leeds plays an active role in the refugee crisis and is able to take full advantage of the support available through central government. These discussions are positive and supportive.
- 6.7 There has been considerable national and local media interest, and this helps inform and shape our communities responses. We continue to actively provide positive messages around migration, and to promote our work as a compassionate city. The media interest, combined with work of all sectors has raised people's awareness and information about needs and offers of support has been widely publicised. Where possible offers of support are being signposted appropriately to ensure that these are used to the best effect.
- 6.8 In considering the position of refugees and asylum seekers in Leeds the layered perspective (referenced in para 5.10) needs to be recognised. Where there are new people to Leeds, in addition to their particular specific needs arising from potentially traumatic circumstances and language considerations, they will have all the same needs as other people, and are likely to live in some of the most deprived areas, with all the challenges which these also present. From a community perspective they will also add to the complexity of the area.

7.0 Corporate Considerations

- 7.1 **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.
- 7.2 **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.
- 7.3 **Council policies and the Best Council Plan** – Leeds is a welcoming and compassionate city and the recommendations in this support those values.
- 7.4 **Resources and value for money** – The costs of participating in the refugee relocation schemes are covered by specific grant from the Government. 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.
- 7.5 **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.
- 7.6 **Risk Management** – Specific service risks are identified and addressed as appropriate by the service, The main risk identified in this paper is in relation to the sustainability of the third sector and

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Migration, asylum and supporting refugees is an important issue for the city and this report seeks to raise some of the challenges, whilst reassuring members on the work done in this area and to provide an opportunity to examine this area further.

9.0 Recommendation

- 9.1 Members of Scrutiny Board are recommended to note and comment upon the information included in the report, recognising the considerable work taking place within each service to address the issues of migration, asylum seekers and refugees.

10.0 Background Documents¹

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

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.