

Annual update on Migration in Leeds

Date: 18 October 2023

Report of: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

This report details key developments and progress on the migration agenda over the last 12 months by Leeds City Council and its statutory and non-statutory partners, whilst also highlighting the challenges associated with delivering a range of migration programmes to families and individuals across the city.

In recent years we have seen the ongoing impact of **global events** at national, regional, and local levels. Leeds has continued to respond at pace to these challenges and fast-moving policy developments. This includes the **transition period from the European Union**, the evacuation in **Afghanistan**, the new visa route for **Hong Kong British National (Overseas)**, precarious journeys continue to be made by **people seeking asylum**, the war in **Ukraine**, the evacuation process in **Sudan**, and the introduction of **new legislation** - the **Illegal Migration Act 2023** impacting people and services in Leeds.

The changing nature of policy has also had a considerable impact on the **migrant third sector** (and **wider third sector**) who contribute significantly to supporting the city's statutory services.

As a **compassionate city**, our [strategic coordinated and inclusive approach to migration](#) in Leeds builds upon our **Best City Ambition**, setting out our long-term **strategic direction** on migration which aims to ensure people who migrate to Leeds can settle and establish their lives as quickly as possible.

This report outlines the city's approach to migration through **strong citywide partnerships** to learn, share and embed effective practice.

Leeds City Council and partner agencies continue to work together in solidarity to support people seeking sanctuary in our city. In order to further demonstrate our commitment, Leeds City Council is working towards becoming a **Local Authority of Sanctuary** and using international good practice tools on **interculturalism** and **cohesion** for our work in Leeds.

Appendix 1 provides an update on the work underpinning the council's established **migration framework** and provides information on key **migration population trends**, the response to the **national policy changes** and changes to **immigration rules** including the approach in place to support the government schemes mentioned above. In addition, the appendix summarises activities across the council and the city in relation to supporting new and emerging communities.

Recommendations

- a) Executive Board is asked to note the contents of this annual update on migration report and the full overview and insight at Appendix 1
- b) Executive Board is asked to note the responsibility of the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment for leading this work through the Council's Safer Stronger Communities programme.
- c) Executive Board is asked to note the responsibility of the Chief Officer for Safer, Stronger Communities for leading the work of the Leeds Strategic Migration Board which oversees delivery on the strategic, coordinated and inclusive approach to migration in Leeds and the work of the council's migration and resettlement team to provide strategic and operational direction for the city.
- d) Executive Board is asked to endorse the council's approach to becoming a member of the national Local Authority of Sanctuary Network.
- e) Executive Board is asked to consider and note issues raised in this report that impact current and future Leeds residents as part of the review of the Best City Ambition.

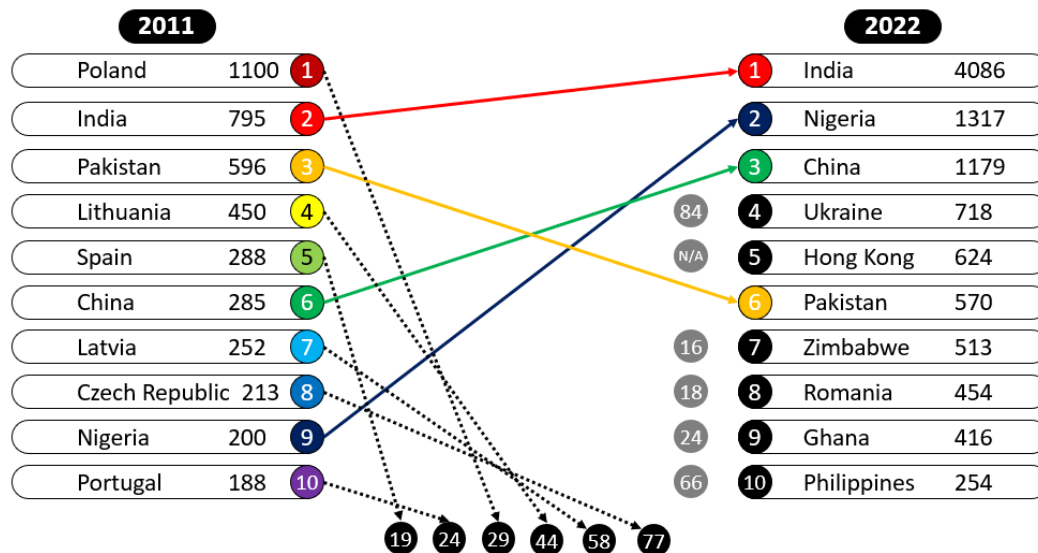
What is this report about?

- 1 This report provides Executive Board members with an update on national policy changes, the delivery of migration activity in Leeds, and an overview of progress made against the migration strategy over the last 12 months.
- 2 Migration continues to be a major topic of discussion and debate across Europe and the UK. During the past twelve months, considerable changes to UK national policy continue to impact locally on statutory services, the third sector, service users and the citizens of Leeds.
- 3 Work carried out under Leeds City Council's migration programme and through a strategic, coordinated, and inclusive approach to migration helps the city to achieve its ambition of being a welcoming and compassionate city. It underpins the work highlighted in the Best City Ambition 2020-2025 'Tackling poverty and reducing inequalities with the city's Inclusive Growth, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Climate Emergency declaration as key drivers and locality working as a core principle'. It supports the Safer Stronger Communities Leeds Plan 2021-2024 to be the best city in the UK with the best community safety partnership and services, by focusing on the people who are new to Leeds and ensuring that their interests and contributions are included in all aspects of city life. Our approach also supports collaborative partnerships across services to identify and address the key issues that create inequalities between our migrant population and the rest of the population of Leeds.
- 4 As a welcoming and compassionate city, Leeds recognises the positive contributions made by migrants but also recognises the challenges this brings both to the city and to new migrants themselves. Migrant communities are valuable contributors to the city's economy, culture and diversity and Leeds aspires to ensure people are welcomed and supported.
- 5 The work taking place contributes to understanding and addressing the needs of new migrants in Leeds, and how we can best manage the competing demands for resources as we respond to major emergencies due to international conflict and national policy, as well as within an environment of financial austerity and ongoing financial pressures. Leeds continues to be an open and welcoming city and strives to protect and provide support to those people who are most vulnerable through partnership working with statutory and third sector organisations.
- 6 National policy changes require considerable expertise, knowledge and experience from the council's Migration, Resettlement and Homes for Ukraine teams, as well as other partners to ensure policy is

implemented effectively at a local level. We are experiencing some changes enacted at short notice and with very little or no consultation with the council. We continue to deliver schemes created at a national level whilst receiving ongoing guidance to help us develop local processes to implement and deliver such schemes.

- 7 The **Leeds Strategic Migration Board** is the council's governance arrangement for managing migration in the city. This year saw the Executive Board Member for Communities join the Leeds Strategic Migration Board, providing positive political representation and a wider political aspect on migration for the city. Representation includes, Council-wide services, West Yorkshire Police, DWP, NHS, Mears, Migration Yorkshire, Migrant Help and Third Sector.
- 8 The **Leeds Migrant Health Board** has set three priorities focusing on migrant health (and health inequalities) in Leeds recognising that migrants continually face complex health inequalities on a multifaceted level. Migrant health partners alongside wider partners focused on reducing these inequalities have achieved much progress against these priorities over the last year. The board aims to be the voice of migrant communities, champion change and shine a spotlight on all the good and positive work being delivered in the city by a compassionate and valued workforce including the partners who go above and beyond to advocate for migrants despite working in extremely challenging circumstances.
- 9 The **Leeds Migration Partnership** is led by the migrant third sector who aim to ensure the voices of migrants are heard to influence decision makers. Task groups are established as required, to progress key pressure points in the system. Currently the lack of legal advice and representation is a national concern. A bespoke session on this matter highlighted that there is a lack of free or low-cost immigration asylum advice available, and this leaves people at risk. Recent research has identified there is no legal aid available in West Yorkshire until 2024.
- 10 The two main **datasets** used to understand local migration trends are census data and National Insurance Number (NINO) applications. This data shows how the pattern of migration is changing and how our local population is affected, as follows:
 - a) The 2021 census for Leeds highlights that 26.6% of the population (811,956) is of ethnic minority groups (compared to 18.9% at the last census in 2011),
 - b) 15.8% are born outside of the UK (compared to 11.1% at the 2011 census) and
 - c) 1.5% arrived in the UK between 2020-21.
 - d) The 2021 census also highlights that 26.6% of the population in Leeds are from 287 unique ethnic groups representing 69 nationalities from 56 different countries.
 - e) In the city, the largest broad ethnic group category within the 2021 census is the 'Asian and Asian British' population, proportionally however, the largest increase in Leeds was the 'Black, Black British, Caribbean or African' group which saw a 75% increase.
- 11 **NINO datasets** show that:
 - a) over 95,000 people have successfully applied in Leeds between 2011 (the year of the previous census) and 2022.
 - b) Between 2011 and 2021, the average number of registrations per year was approximately 7,300.
 - c) Arrivals to Leeds increased in 2022 as 93% more people arrived compared to 2021, whereas across the UK immigration increased by 71%.
 - d) In 2022 there were 15,339 new arrivals to Leeds from a total of 124 countries with a slightly higher percentage of female (52%) than male (48%).
 - e) The areas in Leeds where most newcomers are settling are in Little London and Woodhouse, Headingley and Hyde Park and Kirkstall.
 - f) The top 10 nationalities registering for a NINO in 2022 (in ranking order) were India, Nigeria, China, Ukraine, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Romania, Ghana and the Philippines. Comparing this to 2011, the top 10 nationalities were Poland, India, Pakistan, Lithuania, Spain, China, Latvia, Czech Republic, Nigeria and Portugal.

12 The table below shows how significantly the nationality ranking has changed in Leeds, based on NINO registrations.



13 **Study** - there were 14,795 international students registered at a Higher Education institution in Leeds in the 2021-2022 academic year, an increase of over 1,600 overseas students compared with the previous year. 90% came from outside the EU.

14 **Protection** - Published Home Office figures show that at the end of March 2023, 1,184 people seeking asylum were being supported in Leeds while awaiting a decision on their asylum claim (known as Section 95 support), 1,059 people were being accommodated, and there were 34 people receiving subsistence-only support i.e. no accommodation. There were also around 77 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children being looked after by the local authority at the end of March 2022.

15 The **Nationality and Borders Act 2022** came into force on 28 June 2022 which introduced an overhaul of the UK's asylum system and made several amendments to immigration and nationality law. Stopping the boats crossing the English Channel was one of the five priority promises made by the Prime Minister.

16 On 23 February 2023, the government introduced the **Streamlined Asylum Process (SAP)** to address the backlog of asylum claims still awaiting an initial decision. This fast track of decisions was developed with the intention of clearing cases that are considered well-founded (and which were lodged before the Nationality and Borders Act 2022) with a view to making a quick grant of protection status. The fast track initially applied to five nationalities: Afghan, Eritrea, Libya, Syria and Yemen. However, further nationalities were added to the process to include Iraq, Iran and Sudan.

17 On 19 June 2023, Leeds City Council were notified of **hotel optimisation** to reduce the need for more hotels and deliver the best value for money. This means optimising the existing space through room sharing within the existing hotel estate. On 8 September 2023, the Home Office notified Leeds City Council with their intention to start optimisation at a Leeds hotel.

18 The **Migrant Champions Network** [home \(migrantchampionsnetwork.org\)](http://migrantchampionsnetwork.org) is a cross-party network of local authority councillors committed to championing migrants' rights in their council areas. The [Guide to supporting people in temporary asylum accommodation \(migrantchampionsnetwork.org\)](http://migrantchampionsnetwork.org) is helpful to understand the rationale of Home Office procuring hotels across the country.

19 Last year the government introduced a **full asylum dispersal** process to expand their existing approach of using private rental sector housing to all local authority areas across England, Scotland and Wales. Over the last year, the city has seen an increase in the number of homes used for accommodating those in need. This has resulted in a change of approach from the use of landlord properties to Mears increasingly purchasing their own stock for asylum property procurement as it becomes harder to find

suitable rented homes.

- 20 Leeds City Council continue discussions with Mears and the Home Office about the position in Leeds with regard to property procurement and local pressures in relation to access to services including school places.
- 21 The government has proposed to change the Housing Act 2004 legislation in an attempt to support the dispersal process. A recent announcement [Houses in Multiple Occupation \(Asylum-Seeker Accommodation\)\(England\) Regulations 2023, House of Lords, 16 May 2023 | Local Government Association https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/houses-multiple-occupation-asylum-seeker-accommodationengland](https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/houses-multiple-occupation-asylum-seeker-accommodationengland) proposes a legislative change to temporarily exempt asylum seeker accommodation from houses in multiple occupation (HMO) licensing requirements. These HMOs will be exempt for a two-year period following the date the accommodation begins use as asylum accommodation.
- 22 The Home Office have introduced the **Asylum Dispersal Grant** which opened between 28 March 2022 and 31 March 2023 to support local authorities through payments of £3500 per new and occupied bedspace. This payment is to address the concerns raised by local authorities in relation to pressure on local services associated with supporting people seeking asylum. In addition, the grant will support local authorities through grant payments of £750 per asylum seeker in Home Office supported asylum seeker accommodation as of 1 April 2023.
- 23 As a result of the above, Leeds City Council has established a grants programme to support people seeking asylum in Leeds. These grants are available to Third Sector organisations in Leeds to support people seeking asylum and newly granted refugees who are subject to a 28-day move-on period.
- 24 The ongoing changes to legislation will further impact on **unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)** and families. There are three specific groups of children that Leeds City Council Children Services offer support to. These are UASC, Dublin III (an agreement where a UASC will only have their application considered in one of the countries participating), and families who have no recourse to public funds. The UASCs are numerically the highest number of children that are supported in Leeds of these three groups.
- 25 Up until the summer of 2021 the **National Transfer Scheme** (the mechanism to transfer responsibility for unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children from one local authority to another) was voluntary for all local authorities. At the point of arrival, the Home Office, in their view, have assessed each 'adult' to ensure that when dispersed they are not moving children. However, and unfortunately, upon arrival in Leeds the hotel welfare officers have raised concerns about a number of those adults that they suspect are children. This results in a referral direct to Children's Services in Leeds.
- 26 Following the **large-scale evacuation from Afghanistan** in August 2021, Leeds City Council's Resettlement team provided comprehensive wrap around support in partnership with services to support Afghan refugees in two bridging hotels in Leeds – Holiday Inn, Garforth and Mercure Hotel, Wetherby.
- 27 Refugee Council provided support to Afghan families living in the community as part of an arrangement when the Resettlement scheme was introduced in Leeds. However, this arrangement has now been brought in house to the council as of 1 April 2023. Leeds City Council's Resettlement team provide support to all individuals on the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS), and the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), including Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP).
- 28 In March 2023, the UK government announced its intention to discontinue the use of bridging hotels and serviced accommodation. It also reaffirmed its commitment to assisting Afghan residents in finding stable accommodation within the UK in the following months. In June 2023, Minister Mercer visited Leeds and met with residents to inform them of the closure of hotels.

- 29 Ahead of the closure of the Mercure Hotel, Wetherby on 23 August and Holiday Inn Garforth on 25 August, homelessness assessments were conducted and as a result of considerable partnership work, no family presented as homeless in Leeds. Due to the number of families requiring interim accommodation, the Home Office were unable to find suitable accommodation within the deadline set and arranged for families to remain at the Holiday Inn Garforth until 31 August. One family continue to reside at this hotel on medical grounds and will remain until suitable accommodation is sourced in their preferred area.
- 30 The **Homes for Ukraine Scheme** is one of three routes introduced by the government to support people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine, and one which local authorities were asked to deliver. In response, Leeds City Council established governance arrangements including several operational groups to seek and manage resources to deliver the requirements of the scheme.
- 31 Funding for the scheme was provided from central government based on arrival numbers of Ukrainians and the number of 'thank you' payments made to hosts. The council receives a tariff of £10,500 for each Ukrainian who arrived in Leeds in 2022, and £5,900 for any who arrived in 2023. The council also received some funding to support the education of Ukrainian children in the 2022-23 financial year.
- 32 The support of this scheme has required a Team Leeds approach. As of September 2023, this partnership has delivered:
- a total of 563 properties that have been inspected;
 - support for over 850 Ukrainian refugees who have arrived in Leeds since the scheme started;
 - 55 homelessness applications processed;
 - support to 220 Leeds residents who have hosted or continue to host guests for longer than 6 months;
 - 987 individuals safeguarding and security checks by the police and on the council's Mosaic system;
 - over 500 welfare visits have been completed with 142 cases discussed at safeguarding meetings;
 - 112 virtual and 'in person' 6-month check-ins;
 - 7 unaccompanied minor cases resulting in 5 eligible minors living in 4 households and new cases being progressed; and
 - Completion of over 3,200 individuals 'thank you' payments to hosts.
- 33 The **Together for Ukraine fundraising** appeal raised £158,162 and the council worked in partnership with Leeds Community Foundation to administer the funds to Third Sector organisations who could apply for funding to support newly arrived Ukrainians and wider refugee groups over a 6-to-12-month period. In total, 9 third sector organisations and groups were successful with their project proposals.
- 34 It is difficult to predict future issues, but likely challenges include ongoing recruitment of new hosts. Whilst there is a reduction in government funding, there continues to be considerable demand. The council continues to await further guidance on the future of the scheme beyond the current three-year visa that is issued to eligible Ukrainians.
- 35 Following the **government's bespoke immigration route for citizens from Hong Kong** which opened in January 2020 and arrivals to Leeds following the easing of COVID-19 rules, Leeds has seen the Hong Kong British National Overseas (HKBNO) community settle in different parts of the city.
- 36 Migration Yorkshire estimates that around 5,000-6,000 Hongkongers now live in Leeds. Between April 2021 to March 2023, 728 National Insurance applications from Hongkongers were made in Leeds (this figure would not include elderly residents or those under 16 years of age). Over 300 school places were offered in Leeds to children from Hong Kong in the academic year 2021/2022.
- 37 The Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) offers retrospective funding for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and those who may fall into destitution and therefore request the no recourse to public funds condition is lifted. This funding must be claimed retrospectively on a case-by-case basis. No claims have yet been made for destitution support by Leeds. Following partnership work with Employment and Skills, Leeds City Council has started to claim funding for Hong Kong BNO learners.

- 38 With regard to the **European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS)**, from 1 July 2021, EU, EEA and Swiss citizens and their family members were required to evidence their right to be in the UK by having obtained a valid UK immigration status. Whilst the deadline has now passed, there remains people who still need to apply to the scheme who have not done so. Since the 1 July 2021, the Home Office has been accepting late EUSS applications (for those who were residing in the UK by the 31 December 2020).
- 39 80,300 EUSS applications have been made in Leeds from August 2018 to March 2023 which is the highest in the Yorkshire and Humber region. The top 3 nationalities were from Romania, Poland and Italy. A total of 77,960 EUSS cases were concluded for Leeds up until March 2023.
- 40 The council's **Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) team** supported 89 EUSS visitors to the Compton Centre drop-in. In July 2023, following feedback from a third sector partner supporting families to apply for the EUSS, an article on Leeds for Learning was published with a call to action for all schools and academies to provide supporting information to evidence that children have been registered and in schooling at the point of the EUSS application and not only when asked directly by the Home Office
- 41 In September 2023, a delegation to Full Council requested that Leeds considers further support for those seeking sanctuary in Leeds by committing to the aims of the City of Sanctuary Network. City of Sanctuary UK support a network of groups, across all sectors, and have established an awards programme to recognise and celebrate organisations who go above and beyond in their pursuit of supporting those seeking sanctuary. In response to the delegation, and in line with the **city's ambition of being a welcoming and compassionate city**, the council will be working towards the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network pledge. This commits the council to create a culture of welcome, inclusion and empowerment for people seeking sanctuary, and work alongside other sectors in the city that have already achieved the status of School of Sanctuary, Theatre of Sanctuary, University of Sanctuary, and College of Sanctuary.
- 42 The **Migrant Access Project (MAP)** is a council-led project, set up in 2010, that works to bridge the gap between communities and services, by facilitating thematic training and consultation opportunities for new and settled communities in Leeds. The objectives for 2023-2024 include the delivery of 12 thematic training sessions that will reach out to 120 people; facilitation of an 8-week specialist training programme in Beeston, Harehills and Armley community hubs.
- 43 A range of **migration training and information sessions** have been tailored and delivered to council services. In addition, the council has commissioned Migration Yorkshire to deliver 10 sessions 'Introduction to Migration' training sessions in partnership with the council's Migration Team to provide national and local perspectives on migration and what services can do to influence delivery and support people. This is offered to council staff as well as to external partners.
- 44 The [New to Leeds](#) website exists to help new migrants to Leeds find their way around the city, and to help them to understand how to access support. This has been revised and updated by Leeds Asylum Support Seekers Network (LASSN) and can now be translated into 26 languages.
- 45 The draft **ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Strategy** for the city is currently being reviewed by key ESOL delivery partners. The aim is for the strategy to be signed off by the end of October 2023.
- 46 The **Leeds Volunteering Interpreting Service (LVIS)** steering group arose from the difficulties that third sector organisations working with asylum seekers, refugees and vulnerable migrant communities had when sourcing interpreting services to deliver tailored and emergency support. There is a huge range of languages in Leeds and many organisations do not have a sufficient budget to pay for interpreting. This initiative is currently being developed in partnership with third sector organisations and the council that would offer a wider range of languages and interpreters than any organisation can recruit to on their own.

- 47 This year, **Leeds celebrated Refugee Week's 25th anniversary**. The national theme was 'compassion' and many activities took place bringing people together to learn, share and celebrate.
- 48 **Windrush Day took place on 22 June 2023**, remembering the 75th anniversary. BM Wellbeing Village in partnership with BBSA and Leeds City Council hosted a Windrush event on Friday 16 June 2023.
- 49 The **Equality Assembly** took place in March 2023, this year an update and overview on the migration agenda in the city included a lived experience voice.
- 50 A major challenge currently faced by those seeking refuge is the **Illegal Migration Act 2023** which the government introduced to reform the asylum system and in response to small boat crossings. This item will be tabled at the Leeds Strategic Migration Board meeting in October 2023 to discuss what impact this is having on people and services in Leeds and to explore partnership approaches to respond.
- 51 The **Local Authority Asylum Support Liaison Officer (LAASLO)** is led by Leeds Housing Services to provide support to asylum seekers who receive a positive decision on their asylum claim. Leeds Housing Options work closely with Mears Housing to help meet future accommodation needs of positive asylum cases.
- 52 Since January 2022, Leeds Housing Options have directly assessed 263 Homeless Reduction Act cases where people have been granted refugee status, and who have been given 28 days' notice to leave Home Office accommodation. The council's focus continues to be assessing service users, sourcing accommodation, and providing tenancy support for our network of landlords who provide housing for our refugee service users.
- 53 The emerging increase in customers needing support is due to several factors, the Home Office accommodation provider Mears is continually having to increase its asylum estate which also adds pressure due to there being a lack of affordable, available stock in the Private Sector in order to house people experiencing homelessness within the city. The service will continue to adapt to these pressures. Where negative decisions are received, local authorities do not have a duty to respond, however Leeds Housing Options work closely with third sector partners to ensure service users are supported.
- 54 In order to help local authorities deal with increasing demand and pressure, a capital grant fund of £500m known as **The Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)** (Round 1) was launched on 14 December 2022 and focused on recent schemes including Afghan and Ukraine. LAHF Round 2 was launched on 7 June 2023 which provides a further capital grant of £250m to support local authorities provide sustainable housing for those on Afghan resettlement schemes who currently reside or formerly resided in bridging accommodation, and to ease wider homelessness pressures. These challenges are expected to continue impacting on homelessness services.
- 55 In April 2023, tensions arose between two rival military factions, **Sudan** Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Conflict broke out in the capital of Khartoum and spread throughout the region, destabilising the country. The outbreak of this violence led to hundreds of people being killed and thousands more injured. More than 2450 people were evacuated, the vast majority being British nationals and their dependents.
- 56 It is difficult to capture an accurate number of Sudanese nationals in Leeds. Unfortunately, the census data is lacking for the Sudanese population figures and Sudan would be within the North Africa count, along with Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Western Sahara. Whilst this is not the complete picture, we are able to look at National Insurance Number (NINO) registrations to select Sudanese and this highlights that between 2012-2023, 542 Sudan nationals registered for a NINO in Leeds.
- 57 **Section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999** states that a person will have 'no recourse to public funds' if they are 'subject to immigration control'.
- 58 A **no recourse to public funds panel** is led by Children's Services and consists of council-wide services. The number of cases has continued to decline but cases are extremely complex. The Home

Office are seeking more evidence around domestic violence cases and are taking longer to make decisions. This results in a greater burden to Children's Services to provide financial support for accommodation and personal assistance. Notwithstanding the reduction in the number of families that Children's Services are supporting via the NRPF panel, we can assume that there is likely to be further hardship for these families due to the low rates of financial support offered by Children's Services as is recommended by the central government which is in line with support offered to people seeking asylum.

- 59 Homelessness and housing remain the single largest issue in the city for those who have no recourse to public funds. The best current indication of **destitution** numbers in Leeds may be elucidated from the number of destitute service users who access destitution case work. Two key organisations are British Red Cross and PAFRAS (Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) who support destitute people through casework.
- 60 From July 2022 to August 2023 the British Red Cross supported 309 service users with 208 dependents in Leeds with casework and destitution support. During the same period PAFRAS supported 552 service users with 214 dependents in Leeds with casework and destitution support. In addition, these organisations report that there are high levels of anxiety being experienced by those in the asylum system about the uncertainty of the impact of the new Illegal Migration Act, proposed room sharing, Rwanda plan and the large-scale accommodation sites being proposed.
- 61 The council's **Gypsy Roma Travellers (GRT)** team continue to make an active contribution in supporting Roma families through twice weekly drop-ins. The drop-ins support around 30 individual requests per week and have completed 180 school applications since January 2023. Once per week the GRT team also work in conjunction with St Vincent's to offer European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) application support.
- 62 The introduction of the **Domestic Abuse Act** in April 2021 placed a duty on Leeds City Council to provide support in safe accommodation for victims of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) and their children. Leeds has been giving effect to this duty by allocating £1.8 million New Burdens Funding each year to a range of projects to support victims and children across the city.
- 63 Following on from the success of the Seacroft pilot in 2021, several Local Care Partnerships (LCPs) and Community Committees are developing local action plans to address domestic violence and abuse. A partnership workforce development group has been established, including some members with specialist knowledge around migrant communities, to ensure delivery of learning to partners across the city. A task and finish group is being established to consider learning from recent Domestic Homicide Reviews around honour-based abuse.
- 64 Key amendments to improve the provision of support to migrants, including through the extension of the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) and Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain Rule (DVILR) regardless of their immigration status, were supported by domestic abuse services and members across both Houses, but were unfortunately not supported by the government. In 2021, the Commissioner published her first report, *Safety Before Status: Improving Pathways to Support for Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse*.
- 65 **Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking** can affect people of all nationalities and immigration statuses. However, migrants may be particularly vulnerable to this type of exploitation, particularly during their migration journeys. Further, it is estimated globally that migrant workers are three times more likely to be exploited through forced labour than local workers. The Leeds Pledge to Tackle Modern Slavery was launched on Anti-Slavery Day 2022 (10 October) and the launch event was well attended by the public, private and the third sector with keynote speakers including the former Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Dame Sara Thornton.
- 66 The **Locality Working model** initiated in 2017, sought to establish what the possibilities could be if the council and partners worked differently in specific areas of the city. This was always predicated on the potential to extend the locality working approach to all the city's 1% most deprived communities.

- 67 The new model seeks to continue and build on the good work that has taken place so far, by working more intensively in targeted areas of the city to reduce poverty and inequality through the delivery of a range of innovative and new ways of working.
- 68 The Migration and Prevent teams have undertaken training in Seacroft for partners working in the ward, to address some far-right attention being focused in the area with positive feedback and engagement from a range of services and third sector organisations. Subsequent 'Stand by Me' training was also secured and delivered by Communities Inc, which offered information on how to safely support victims of hate crime.
- 69 In February 2021, **Leeds, and twinned city Dortmund** re-assigned their Memorandum of Understanding for a continued partnership. In 2023, Leeds and Dortmund twinning was successfully selected to take part in a high-level urban diplomacy exchange programme. The [Germany - United Kingdom - Urban Diplomacy Exchange \(urban-diplomacy.de\)](#) is a German programme which aims to reinforce German cities diplomacy and encourage exchanges of good practice.
- 70 As part of the '**European Friendship Days**' the **International Relations team** secured funding which allowed 8 young people from Harehills to visit Dortmund in May 2023.
- 71 The development of the [Leeds, United Kingdom - Intercultural City - Intercultural cities programme \(coe.int\)](#) work has progressed to develop Leeds as an intercultural city supporting the council's Best City Ambition.
- 72 Next steps include the analysis of the citywide community cohesion consultation aligning agendas such as the Local Authority Network award under the City of Sanctuary [Learn, Embed and Share principles](#) which will further embed our focus to create strong communities by being responsive to local needs; build thriving, resilient communities and promote community respect and resilience.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 73 Work under the migration agenda falls within the Public Sector Equality Duty which states: 'A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it.'

Equality Act 2010, c.15 Part 11, Para 149(1) [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- 74 This report is an annual update with no decisions required and therefore it is not necessary to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 75 Our strategic, coordinated and inclusive approach to migration in Leeds builds upon our Best City Ambition. This approach aims to ensure people who migrate to Leeds are able to establish their lives quickly and successfully. We continue to work with partners on our strategic approach to migration as we respond to changes in law, government schemes and the impact of global events.
- 76 To achieve the above, requires a partnership approach with stakeholders across the city and is implicit in the three pillars of the Best City Ambition.

- 77 As the Best City Ambition is currently being reviewed, it is recommended to consider issues raised in this report that impact current and future Leeds residents.
- 78 The strategic approach to migration contributes to achieving the outcomes of the health and wellbeing pillar and has a key focus on investment to ensure better and more equal access to essential services in health and learning, developed with and accessible for every community across Leeds.
- 79 There is an established Migrant Health Board that is accountable to the Health and Wellbeing Board. This aligns closely to the Leeds Strategic Migration Board and the Leeds Migration Partnership. It focuses on reducing health inequalities for our migrant population and is working on three agreed priorities. These are:
- access for all – to learn from lived experience and work to shape services and strategies;
 - communication – interpretation, translation, accessible information and involvement with ESOL and learning English agenda in Leeds;
 - work and austerity – including a workforce equipped to respond to new and emerging communities/strong links to the austerity and poverty agenda.
- 80 The strategic approach to migration contributes to the key elements of the Inclusive Growth pillar. Leeds is a vibrant city with people from across the world with many skills and talents. There are many projects across the city supporting new migrants to establish their roots quickly so that individuals and families can prosper. The key elements that our approach on migration focuses under the Inclusive Growth pillar include:
- a) Best City for Health and Wellbeing - working in partnership with Public Health and Localities, and engagement with diverse and vulnerable communities.
 - b) Putting employers and people at the centre of education and skills system – partnership approach to delivering the ESOL strategy for Leeds; working together to create better jobs, tackling low pay and boosting productivity – collaborating with partners to secure work.
 - c) Leeds as a digital city – continuing close working with partners to provide devices and connectivity to households without equipment.
- 81 It is important to consider the impact of national legislation that prevents people seeking asylum from working in the UK whilst they wait for the outcome of their asylum claim. This has negative consequences for economic integration as well as causing considerable pressure on services and especially within the third sector. This cohort of people are skilled and passionate about contributing to the economy and establishing their lives in Leeds.
- 82 Climate Emergency is defined by the Greenly Institute “*as the movement of people due to extreme weather disasters such as flooding, heat waves, forest fires, drought, as well as on account of slower building climate challenges such as rising sea levels and increasing water scarcity. Climate migration is a growing problem and is expected to get worse in the coming decades*”.
- 83 [The Institute for Economics and Peace](#), a thinktank focusing on measuring and communicating the economic value of global peace, estimated that as many as 1.2 billion people, spread across 31 different countries, do not have the resilience to be able to withstand the growing threat of climate change. This could result in not only internal displacement of populations, but also movement across borders, with huge impacts for both the developing and developed world.
- 84 As migration due to climate emergency is not covered by the 1951 Refugee Convention, the above thinktank recommends that the government create climate visas warning that environmental breakdown, conflict, and demographic growth will likely make mass climate migration a significant challenge in the future. Whilst Europe and the UK are not the most adversely affected regions with regards to climate change, they can expect to see increasing numbers of people wanting to relocate here in an effort to escape climate stressors. In addition, the government’s current position is enforcing new legislation to respond to people seeking asylum which is more restrictive.

- 85 The climate emergency has potentially a greater impact on the migration agenda in Leeds in terms of the changes to migration flows caused by forced migration due to either weather-related hazards and associated impact on livelihoods leading to families becoming displaced, or the emergence of conflict in relation to scarce resources and food insecurity.
- 86 New migrants to the city who have arrived through government schemes often have little or no disposable income to even access public transport. They often travel by foot and many take opportunity to access bicycles through donations and schemes. Whilst this may be an example of action towards the zero-carbon pillar, it can be argued that this is an unintentional action, furthermore, it can be argued that they experience hardship. Migrants can contribute towards a low carbon, greener future if we can remove obstacles and create incentives to harness potential to support our city ambition.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 88 The Leeds Strategic Migration Board includes membership from council and partner agencies and is the key vehicle for consultation, engagement and providing governance on migration activity. The board has representation from Leeds Migration Partnership Strategy Group who work with people with lived experience of migration to share the challenges and opportunities.
- 89 Following consultation in 2022 with each service area represented at the board including statutory services, migrant third sector and private sector, the board focused on tabling key items impacting local services and communities as a result of national policy in relation to migration as well as the impact of the cost of living. The board continues to consider migration issues and activity to inform future direction as well as the board's forward plan.
- 90 Given the high profile of the migration agenda, several partnerships and strategic groups have been established locally and regionally to develop systems and processes to improve health access and outcomes. In addition, local ward members have been consulted on an ongoing basis as policy has developed, for example in relation to hotel optimisation, the closure of bridging hotels, and processes in place to mitigate risk as well as the offer of support provided to refugees and people seeking asylum.
- 91 The Homes for Ukraine scheme gave opportunity to residents across Leeds to open their homes for Ukrainian refugees. Hosts who are hosting Ukrainian refugees represent the majority of wards of the city under this scheme. Several opportunities have been developed to support hosts through information sessions and support and this has informed our local approach to policy developments.

What are the resource implications?

- 92 Our strategic, coordinated and inclusive approach to migration in Leeds provides opportunities to build upon and create effective partnerships and responses to ever changing need, as well as to target our work more effectively based on local intelligence and evidence.
- 93 The rapidly changing nature of migration, added to national policy changes and national requests, requires a considerable amount of resource at a local level to respond as a compassionate city. For example, considerable investment and resource has been required to support refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine. The infrastructure established over the past few years continues to help strengthen our response to emerging migration issues.
- 94 Working on migration issues requires significant capacity and expertise. The range of schemes currently being delivered by Leeds City Council has needed sustained investment. The asylum, resettlement and Homes for Ukraine programmes have been supplemented by government funding that has allowed the council to respond effectively to the range of issues outlined in Appendix 1.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 95 The migration agenda is constantly evolving at a global level as well as at a national level with ongoing parliamentary debates and discussions. Leeds City Council has responded to migration issues and government policy/guidance at short notice to manage need and local impact.
- 96 Adopting a coherent and strategic approach to migration supports the council to deliver its priorities and minimises any associated risks by working closely with lead officers for migration, resettlement, Homes for Ukraine, third sector and wider partners.
- 97 The UK government continues to make changes to immigration policy and it is important that routes into our newer communities to ensure they are able to settle in Leeds, and access services are established. The work we undertake across the council with statutory and third sector partners ensures we can meet the needs of new communities and address gaps and challenges. However, increasing numbers of refugees and people seeking asylum to the city may impact on local services, increasing strain for already stretched services.
- 98 Such issues can impact the council's work, and the corporate risk, on community cohesion as a small minority of groups and individuals seek to exploit the challenges and impact of migration policy. However, the council's approach to migration, as set out in this report and appendix, demonstrates the work being undertaken to integrate new communities into the fabric of Leeds and contribute to the success of the city.
- 99 Leeds City Council has established Migration, Resettlement and Homes for Ukraine teams representing a diverse workforce and includes those with lived experience of migration. These teams have substantial experience on migration matters which are a **key support to services across the city** and continue to horizon scan in order to prepare for change of circumstances arising in the near future.

What are the legal implications?

- 100 There are legal implications arising as a result of national changes. The Law Society state that the [Illegal Migration Act](#) may be incompatible with our international obligations under the European Court of Human Rights and UN Refugee Convention. The Act contains limited safeguards, and it is unclear where those in detention will be held and how they will access legal advice. The Act may also reduce oversight of our courts and more cases could end up in the Court of Appeal in Strasbourg, which puts the UK at increased legal liability.
- 101 The impact of this in Leeds could mean that many people seeking asylum are inadmissible under the Act. They may be able to access Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (*a form of support for some people whose asylum claims are refused and considered to be appeal rights exhausted – the support is made up of accommodation and a financial payment through an Aspen card*).
- 102 The Act implies that people will be swiftly removed, however, this is complex as the government do not have sufficient countries listed as safe to return to, and not enough safe third countries where they have a returns agreement with either to make returns easier. The government could still negotiate returns on an individual case by case basis but this is more difficult without an agreement. Many will be banned from accessing asylum and it is not known what action the government intends to take if they cannot be removed.
- 103 Whilst the Act implies a duty to remove adults, this does not apply to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) until they reach the age of 18 years. This could lead to risks of UASCs absconding in Leeds once they reach the age of 18 years in fear of removal.
- 104 The Act has tightened legislation around the National Transfer Scheme. Not responding within the timeline could result in local authorities being penalised. The Home Office has increased powers to move UASCs and to end their care which could result in unsuitable settings. It is known, that nationally, many UASCs have gone missing. Leeds has seen increasing number of referrals to Children's Services to conduct age assessments on new arrivals who are deemed to be below the age of 18 years.

105 As part of the full dispersal programme, the government has proposed to change the Housing Act 2004 legislation to try and support the dispersal process. A recent announcement [Houses in Multiple Occupation \(Asylum-Seeker Accommodation\)\(England\) Regulations 2023, House of Lords, 16 May 2023 | Local Government Association https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/houses-multiple-occupation-asylum-seeker-accommodationengland](https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/houses-multiple-occupation-asylum-seeker-accommodationengland) proposes a legislative change to temporarily exempt accommodation asylum seeker accommodation from (HMO) licensing requirements. These houses of multiple occupation will be exempt for a two-year period following the date the accommodation begins use as asylum accommodation.

106 Through the Home Office Asylum Dispersal Grant for Local Authorities, Leeds City Council has developed a grant funding opportunity for third sector organisations in the city to support people seeking asylum and newly granted refugees who are subject to a 28-day move-on period. It is recognised there is a lack of free or low-cost immigration legal advice in the city, and this funding provides the opportunity to provide a range of activity as well as exploring legal advice provision.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

107 Not applicable

How will success be measured?

108 The Leeds Strategic Migration Board takes place on a quarterly basis where progress on the strategic, coordinated and inclusive approach to migration is reported against. An annual update report is presented to the council's Executive Board and progress against the Equality Improvement Priority on the approach to migration is reported annually to the Equality Improvement Board.

109 Leeds City Council's migration framework, its approach and delivery of migration initiatives have been recognised both at regional and national levels.

110 The Leeds Intercultural Cities Network (ICC) plays a key role in supporting the council to measure our success and progress against a range of key indicators that include welcoming newcomers, interaction and participation, and anti-discrimination.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

111 The Head of Community Relations and Cohesion manages the council's Migration, Resettlement and Homes for Ukraine team, working alongside key council services and third sector partners and is responsible for the implementation of the migration strategy, incorporating the work highlighted within this report.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Annual update on migration activity in Leeds 2023

Background papers

- None