

Annual update on migration activity in Leeds

Date: 20 October 2021

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

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- This report provides Executive Board members with an update on the delivery of migration activity in Leeds, giving an overview of progress made against the migration work and follows on from the 21 October 2020 Executive Board report where the recommendation to receive a further update on progress in 2021 was approved.
- The work carried out under the Leeds City Council's migration programme and under the 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 Council Plan 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 Stronger Communities Benefiting from a Strong City programme 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.
- This work taking place is significant to understand and address the needs of migrants in Leeds, and how we can best manage the competing demands for resources. Leeds is part of a national movement to build a culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary in the UK and has a local branch of the City of Sanctuary movement. Leeds continues to be open and welcoming and strives to protect and provide support to those people who are most vulnerable through partnership working with public and third sector organisations. There are a growing number of anchor organisations joining the sanctuary movement such as Universities of Sanctuary, Theatre of Sanctuary, College of Sanctuary and Schools of Sanctuary. The council is in the process of applying for a Council of Sanctuary award to become a member of the City of Sanctuary local authority network. This is a long term commitment and will be renewed every three years.
- The report provides information on key migration population trends and the response to the **national policy changes** including the approach in place to support EU citizens living in Leeds; the Government's New Plan on Immigration; a new bespoke visa route for Hong Kong British National Overseas; Afghan Resettlement; national asylum contract and asylum

dispersal; and activities across the council in relation to supporting new and emerging communities and continued engagement around public health.

- The above national policy changes require considerable expertise, knowledge, experience and capacity from the council's Migration and Resettlement teams, and wider services to ensure policy is implemented at a local level. Some of these changes have been enacted at short notice and with little or no consultation with the council. There are also inconsistencies between the different national asylum and resettlement schemes which creates additional pressures on resources and staffing. Improved communication with the council would reduce the council having to react to increasing requests for support and would ensure that the effectiveness of the support provided in this area could be maximised and that Leeds' experience and expertise could be fully utilised.
- The term '**migration**' covers a whole range of communities from economic migrants to those seeking asylum, fleeing war and persecution or arriving in the UK to study. Within the context of this report and reference to new and settled communities: new arrivals/newly arrived refers to a person(s) who arrived from another country at some point in the last 10 years. Settled communities refer to person(s) who have resided in the UK for more than 10 years. Please note, people may have become established more quickly or resided for over 10 years, however circumstances may result in shared experiences to a person(s) who is newly arrived.
- **Recent migration trends** information is detailed on page 5 of appendix 1 including the reasons why people migrate to Leeds. It highlights a total of 8226 new arrivals to Leeds from a total of 112 countries with a slightly higher percentage of female than male. The areas in Leeds where most newcomers are settling are in Woodhouse and Little London, University and Little Woodhouse, and Harehills South. 49% of all arrivals were from the EU and that was 9% fewer than in 2018. The top 3 nationalities were Romanian, Indian, and Italian. Arrivals to Leeds increased in 2019 as 16% more people arrived compared to 2018. Arrivals from Ghana changed the most as 338 more people arrived than in 2018. Across the UK, immigration rose by 18%.
- There were 12,780 international students registered at a Higher Education institution in Leeds in the 2019-2020 academic year, an increase of almost 1,900 overseas students compared with the previous year. Almost 85% came from outside the EU
- Published Home Office figures show that at the end of December 2020, 846 people were being supported in Leeds by the Home Office while awaiting a decision on their asylum claim (known as Section 95 support): 798 people were being accommodated, and there were 48 people receiving subsistence-only support i.e., no accommodation.
- Since January 2021, Leeds Housing Options have directly assessed 87 Homeless Reduction Act cases where people have been granted refugee status, and who have been given 28 days' notice to leave Home Office accommodation. At the point of when positive decisions are received Leeds Housing Options can start to work with new refugees as they have access to public funds. Not all refugees with newly granted status will choose to remain in Leeds. Leeds Housing Options provide advice and assistance to service users as well as services and have supported 409 approaches from service users (mixture of families and single people) who had some form of humanitarian protection and requested housing advice.
- **Leeds Strategic Migration Board:** continues to provide governance for the city on migration, bringing together key partners to address issues and ensure support for the key migration programmes described in this report, as well as strengthening links to opportunities presented through the work with wider communities and in our priority neighbourhoods.
- **Leeds Migrant Health Board:** Given the high priority of health and access to health for migrants to Leeds, the Leeds Migrant Health Board has been reconvened this year and reports into the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board.

- **Leeds Migration Partnership:** representing the migrant third sector has supported several of the city's key agendas including *Everyone In*, the government scheme to end homelessness during the pandemic.
- **Covid-19 pandemic:** the council's migration team has led and contributed to some of the key citywide programmes in response to the pandemic with the aim of supporting new migrants and settled communities. Key input to cross-council service delivery has been around supporting engagement by overcoming language and cultural barriers.
- **Migration projects:** such as Community Connectors and the council's flagship Migrant Access Programme, have worked with migrant households and community leaders to ensure support for the most vulnerable throughout the pandemic.
- **Learning English in Leeds:** under this project, key activities such as mapping resources available for self-study for adults and families and exploring methods of improving access to digital ensured people were able to continue with their English language learning. Language Hub projects that adapted to online delivery maintained crucial social contact with people to alleviate social isolation.
- **Events:** of importance to our diverse communities in Leeds such as to commemorate Windrush and to celebrate the annual Refugee Week were sustained and delivered partly online this year.
- **Strategic, coordinated and inclusive approach:** requires a citywide response involving collaboration cross-council and with a range of stakeholders, on housing; work and money; health and wellbeing; education and language; advocacy, advice and legal; safety, belonging and support networks; basic needs (food, shelter, money).
- **Destitution:** a number of concerns have arisen this year resulting in an increased risk of a rise in destitution: the suspension of Home Office decision-making during COVID-19 created a backlog in the system; the New Plan for Immigration proposes additional circumstances where the no recourse to public funds condition will be imposed; the grace period for applying to the EU Settlement Scheme ended on the 30 June 2021. In addition, COVID-19 and ongoing restrictions have increased pressures on public and third sector services contributing to capacity and sustainability concerns.
- **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF):** the council's NRPF panel has seen increased numbers of cases due to the impact of COVID-19 and as a result of Brexit.
- **Modern Slavery:** the council has produced a Modern Slavery strategy and delivery plan.
- **Domestic Abuse Act:** received royal assent in April 2021. There has been attention on the Migrant Domestic Violence Abuse Bill and victims who have no recourse to public funds, who are at risk of destitution.
- **Honour Based Abuse (HBA):** The Steering Group has carried out a quality assurance exercise on cases of HBA.
- **Gypsy Roma Traveller Team:** this council team has continued to support Roma Eastern European households through a partnership working approach.
- **Locality Working:** migration is a key theme in the council's approach to Locality Working and it's work in Priority Neighbourhoods. The pandemic has seen engagement with religious organisations, community groups and mutual aid groups to coordinate the food response, build trust and relationships and to improve access to services.
- **New Plan for Immigration:** this government plan was published on 24 March 2021 in which it has three objectives: to increase the fairness and efficacy of our system so that we can better protect and support those in genuine need of asylum; to deter illegal entry into the UK, thereby breaking the business model of criminal trafficking networks and protecting the lives of those they endanger; and to remove more easily from the UK those with no right to be here. The government's new 2025 Border Strategy also highlights its vision for a fully digital border. The council is working to understand the implications of the new legislation, and the impact it will have on present and future residents in Leeds.
- **EU Settlement Scheme:** the 'Grace Period' for applications to the EU Settlement Scheme closed on 30 June 2021. The council intensified partnership efforts to provide support to

those needing to register who faced barriers such as language, digital access and lack of documentation in the lead up to the deadline following an extensive programme of promotion and engagement. Following the deadline, as part of an exit strategy, there is an ongoing partnership to deliver support with council services and third sector. All EU children in local authority care were assisted to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme by the deadline.

- **Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas):** in June 2020, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government informed all councils of the government's announcement of a Hong Kong Visa for British Nationals (Overseas) and the creation of a new bespoke immigration route for citizens from Hong Kong. This decision is a result of the imposition by the Chinese Government of a national security law on Hong Kong that restricts the rights and freedoms of people in Hong Kong and constitutes a breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. This new route allows Hong Kong citizens with British National (Overseas) status to come to the UK and live and work. As of the 31 January 2021, people with BN(O) status could apply for a Hong Kong British National (Overseas) visa to come and live and work in the UK for an initial period of 30 months with an option to extend this for a further 30 months or 5 years. The council is working closely with Migration Yorkshire who are leading on this at a regional level and has developed a council partnership for a local response.
- **UKRS (UK Resettlement Scheme):** in April 2021 the Home Office changed the name of the VPRS (Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme) and (Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme) to **UKRS**, this is an amalgamation of the schemes which also includes the GPP (Gateway Protection Programme). Local authorities were given a one-year extension of the current contract and asked to pledge additional numbers. There were no arrivals in 2020 due to the pandemic, arrivals recommenced in January 2021. Leeds City Council gained approval to pledge an additional 60 people for arrivals between April 2021 to March 2022. Leeds is currently supporting 303 people (70 families) under the UKRS.
- **The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP):** the UK has been running a scheme to support Locally Employed Staff (LES) in Afghanistan, often in dangerous and challenging situations, in recognition of their commitment and bravery shown supporting UK forces since 2013. The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) was launched in April 2021 and reflected the changing situation in Afghanistan, and consequent risk to LES. As a compassionate city we are already working alongside other councils across the region as part of the current Afghan Relocation Scheme, coordinated by Migration Yorkshire to rehouse Afghan refugees.
- **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs):** Leeds continues to be a fully participative member of the National Transfer Scheme to accept unaccompanied asylum seeking children. The National Transfer Scheme was halted due to the pandemic, however, further to the National Transfer Scheme being put back in place, Leeds made a unilateral decision to reach out to the Home Office and Kent Local Authority to offer a number of UASCs the opportunity to move to Leeds and to be supported by Children's Services. Leeds has welcomed 16 UASCs in the last cohort and there are ongoing plans to take more.
- **Asylum Dispersal:** Leeds as a dispersal city for asylum seekers continues to welcome and support new arrivals who are dispersed and settled in our region. The Home Office is responsible for procuring properties for asylum seekers which it does through contracted providers. Mears is the accommodation provider contracted by the Home Office for the North East and Yorkshire and Humber regions. Accommodation procured is not from local authority housing stock but is procured through the private sector. Council services have continued to work closely with Mears, local ward members, statutory services and the voluntary sector to provide local support and engagement. As a result of recent events, the city has seen an increase in the procurement of properties for asylum seekers due to the demand for houses under Operation Oak. This is a Home Office initiative to reduce the numbers of asylum seekers residing in hotels and to ensure dispersal into a home environment. The council has and will continue to work with the Home Office and Mears to ensure appropriate housing standards are maintained as part of the procurement process.
- Although overall numbers of arrivals have gone down nationally since 2019, there are increasing numbers of asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their case. Over the past two

years, the number of hotels stood up by the Home Office in Leeds has increased to 4 across the city. Further details are available in the Appendix on page 30-31).

- Proposed changes in the New Immigration Plan risk further establishing a two tier system for people seeking sanctuary in the UK. Reliance on Resettlement Schemes doesn't fully recognise that many asylum seekers are unable to access such schemes and, therefore, take decisions to travel independently. On arrival in the UK, the routes taken dictate the service that is received with individuals on the Resettlement Schemes receiving far greater support. In future, those who arrive outside of such schemes will be described as being in the UK illegally and will only be allowed protection for thirty months with no recourse to public funds.
- **International links:** Leeds continues to support its migration work through international links, notably through the city's membership of the EUROCITIES network and the Intercultural Cities network.
- **Migration Yorkshire**, the regional body which provides support to local authorities in the region on migration, is developing a regional Refugee Integration Strategy, to strengthen partnership working and improve outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Part of the support provided to local authorities includes Introduction to Migration training sessions, the Migrant Info Hub website which has collated translated and culturally-specific resources during the pandemic, and the regional resource to map English language learning opportunities which is managed by the Migrant English Support Hub (MESH).

Recommendations

- a) Executive Board is asked to note the contents of this update report and full overview in the appendix on migration and endorse the approach adopted within our strategic, coordinated and inclusive approach to migration for Leeds.
- 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 Stronger Communities Programme.
- c) Executive Board is asked to note the responsibility of the Chief Officer for Safer, Stronger Communities in 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 team to provide strategic and operational direction for the city
- d) Executive Board is recommended to agree that the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment writes to the Home Office requesting improved communication structures between Government and the Local Authority to ensure that the effectiveness of the support provided is maximised and that Leeds' experience and expertise is fully utilised.
- e) Executive Board is asked to approve a further annual report on migration activity in Leeds.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 In 2016, the then Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Group requested a report to the Executive Board outlining recommendations of the Scrutiny Board and the recommendation to establish a strategic, coordinated and inclusive response to migration in the city. The Executive Board endorsed the approach being taken to establish what Leeds 'support' is for new migrants to the city; and requested that a report detailing the progress of the Leeds Strategic Migration Board be submitted to Executive Board in 2017. Subsequently, **Executive Board have requested an annual update on migration.**
- 2 Migration is an ongoing agenda in the modern, globalised world and for a diverse city such as Leeds, with a long history of migration. Over the past two years, considerable changes to national policy have, and continue to impact locally on the council, wider services, service users and the citizens of Leeds. The update report provides the opportunity to acknowledge and discuss the rapidly changing nature of migration.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

3. 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 -
(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.'
Equality Act 2010, c.15 Part 11, Para 149(1) www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance
Improving the approach to migration in Leeds is one of the council's Equality Improvement Priorities and as such is reported on annually. Migration also has implications for community cohesion and several of the characteristics protected by law.

This is an update report with no decisions required so it is not necessary to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

4. The Leeds Strategic Migration Board's membership includes council and partner agencies and is the key vehicle for consultation, engagement and providing governance to migration activity. The Board builds upon the processes that already exist across the council and with partners, aiming to embed best practice and maximise the benefits of engagement for all our citizens and communities. The Board has representation from the Leeds Migration Partnership strategy group who work with people with lived experience of migration and the challenges and opportunities.
5. Given the high profile of the migration agenda currently, there are a number of partnerships and strategic groups being set up locally and regionally to develop systems and processes to improve health access and outcomes.

What are the resource implications?

6. Our approach to migration in Leeds provides **opportunities to build upon and create effective partnerships and responses to ever changing need and to target our work more effectively based on local intelligence and evidence.** The infrastructure established over the past few years has helped strengthen our response to emergencies such as the pandemic, supporting partners across the council and third sector.
7. The migration agenda requires a considerable amount of resource at a local level to respond as a compassionate city, to national policy and requests.

What are the legal implications?

8. There are legal implications arising from national changes such as the UK's future points-based immigration system following the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 which ended freedom of movement, the new bespoke visa route for Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas), the New Plan for Immigration and Afghan Resettlement.

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

9. Having a coherent and strategic approach to migration supports the council to deliver its priorities and minimises any associated risks.

10. As the UK government continues to make changes around immigration policy, it is important we have routes into our newer communities, to ensure they are able to settle in Leeds and access services and communities. The work we undertake cross council, with statutory partners and with the third sector ensures we can meet the needs of new communities and address gaps and challenges.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

11. Our Strategic, Coordinated and Inclusive approach to migration in Leeds builds upon our 'Best City' ambitions. This approach aims to ensure people who migrate to Leeds are able to establish their lives quickly and successfully. We are working with partners to establish our strategic direction on migration to respond to the changes in law and government schemes.
12. To achieve the above, requires a partnership approach with stakeholders across the city and is implicit in the three key pillars of council strategy.
13. The strategic approach to migration contributes to key elements of the Inclusive Growth Strategy, which focus on allowing of individuals and their families to prosper, see below with examples:
- Best city for health and wellbeing: working in partnership with Public Health on the vaccine inequalities plan and engagement with diverse and vulnerable communities.
 - Putting (employers and) people at the centre of the education and skills system: partnership approach to developing an ESOL Strategy for the city
 - Working together to create better jobs, tackling low pay and boosting productivity: collaborating with Localities and third sector on the NHS pilot into secure work
 - Leeds as a digital city: working closely with 100% Digital Leeds to provide devices and connectivity to household without equipment and access to Wi-Fi.
14. The strategic approach to migration contributes to achieving the outcomes of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy as follows:
- People will live longer and have healthier lives
 - People will live full, active and independent lives
 - People's quality of life will be improved by access to quality services
 - People will be actively involved in their health and their care
 - People will live in healthy, safe and sustainable communities
- There is an established structure to feed into the Health and Wellbeing Board via the Leeds Migrant Health Board, and the Leeds Migration Partnership has health as a strategic priority in the city and works with statutory partners to fulfil the shared action plan.
15. The council has been involved in developing awareness of the climate emergency in Leeds through project work and in partnership with Environmental services. However, 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. Whilst the 1951 Refugee Convention does not make provisions for people displaced by climate change, the idea of a 'climate refugee' is gaining some ground. UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) describes climate change as a 'risk multiplier' or 'threat multiplier' for other drivers of displacement ([*Climate change is the defining crisis of our time and it particularly impacts the displaced.*](#))

16. The office of the UNHCR, November 2020 have also highlighted that 'when people are forced to move by climate change and conflict, it is very rare for them to return due to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation rendering areas of return too dangerous to live in or too fragile to support large populations, many people have nowhere viable to go back to. It changes how UNHCR has to look at and approach durable solutions in the future'. This reality has obvious implications for migrants who have made their home in Leeds who may need to secure their immigration status to remain in the country. The council will continue to work with academic partners, the third sector and special interest organisations to stay abreast of socio-political factors giving rise to displacement and the impact on migration to seek sanctuary or economic stability.

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

17. Not applicable.

b) How will success be measured?

18. Progress on the strategic, coordinated and inclusive approach to migration is reported to the quarterly Leeds Strategic Migration Board; an annual report is presented to the Executive Board; progress against the Equality Improvement Priority on the approach to migration is reported annually to the Equality Improvement Board. A time-limited action plan is currently being co-produced with key stakeholders to include success measures.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

19. Ongoing, as above, to reflect the continued development and importance of the migration agenda to the city.

Appendices

20. Appendix 1 – Annual update on the strategic approach to migration in Leeds

Background papers

None