



**Leeds**  
CITY COUNCIL

# Appendix 1

**Executive Board: 19 October 2022**

**Annual update on migration activity in Leeds**



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## Introduction

The Best City Ambition for Leeds is to be the best city in the UK: compassionate and caring with a strong economy; which tackles poverty and reduces inequalities; working towards being a net zero carbon city by 2030.

We want Leeds to be a city that is distinctive, sustainable, ambitious, fun and creative for all, with a council that its residents can be proud of as the best council in the country. But most of all, in light of the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic as well as global events impacting on people, we want Leeds to be a safe city.

As part of the council's vision to be the best city we want a city where people can be active and involved in the life of their communities and able to take action for themselves to make those communities stronger.

Migrant communities are **valuable contributors to the city's economy, culture and diversity** and Leeds aspires to ensure people are welcomed and supported. Leeds has a long-held commitment to support asylum seekers and refugees and is dedicated to being a City of Sanctuary.

The term 'migration' covers a wide range of communities from economic migrants to those seeking asylum, fleeing war and persecution, and the diversity of these groups in Leeds has continued to enrich the city.

The council recognises the challenges in ensuring fair access for all in the city and we continue to strive to tackle inequalities through a **strategic, coordinated and inclusive approach to migration** encouraged by the Executive Board, to ensure that the voice of migrant communities is at the heart of the three pillars of Inclusive Growth, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Climate Emergency in Leeds.

We continue to see the **migration agenda grow at a rapid pace** in Leeds, much of which can be attributed to changes in legislation; The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 was implemented earlier this year; asylum seekers continue to arrive at the UK coast having made the dangerous crossing across the Channel and some of whom have arrived in Leeds; we have seen arrivals of Afghan refugees to Leeds and more recently Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war; and arrivals in Leeds of Hong Kong British National (Overseas) under the new visa route which was opened on 31 January 2021. As a compassionate city, we are working in partnership to welcome new arrivals, so they are safe and have access to basic essentials and support to settle in the city.

The council's Migration and Resettlement team is well established, with migration expertise and considerable experience in community engagement with new and settled communities in Leeds as well as meeting cultural and diverse needs. During the past 12 months, the team have supported services within the statutory and voluntary sector at a time when services continue to face financial challenges.

## Migration Data

National Insurance number registration data highlights that in 2021 there were 2,070 new arrivals to Leeds from a total of **70 countries** with a slightly **higher percentage of female** than male. The areas in Leeds where most newcomers are settling are in Lincoln Green and St James, Woodhouse and Little London, and University and Little Woodhouse. 35% of all arrivals were from the EU. The top 3 nationalities were Indian, Romanian, and Nigerian.

Arrivals to Leeds decreased in 2021 as 48% fewer people arrived compared to 2020. Across the UK, immigration decreased by 45%.

## Work

The overall number of new **migrant workers arriving in Leeds decreased** by over 1,900 to 2,070 in 2021. The greatest change in individual nationalities compared to 2020 has been an increase of 447 arrivals from India. The level of workers from non-EU countries arriving each year remains higher than the EU group with 1,345 arriving in 2021, a decrease of around 1,466 on the previous year. This group is dominated by arrivals from India and Nigeria. The number of new migrant workers from EU countries fell to 718 arrivals in 2021, 456 fewer arrivals than in 2020. This group is predominantly composed of Romanian arrivals.

## Study

There were 13,180 international students registered at a Higher Education institution in Leeds in the 2020-2021 academic year, an **increase of 400 overseas students** compared with the previous year. 84% came from outside the EU.

## Protection

Some asylum seekers are housed and supported in Leeds through the Home Office dispersal system. Published Home Office figures show that at the end of June 2022, 1,297 people were being supported in Leeds while awaiting a decision on their claim (known as Section 95 support), 95 people were being accommodated, and there were 66 people receiving subsistence-only support i.e. no accommodation. There were also around 49 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children being looked after by the local authority at the end of March 2021. These are children who are in the UK without family and have claimed asylum in their own right. They are separate to the dispersal system for asylum seekers described above. Those granted protection by the Home Office may then stay in the area as refugees. Other groups of refugees are resettled directly from another country through other schemes.

The publication of NINO (National Insurance Number) data has been suspended since June 2021, so the figures in the text above (Migration and Work headings) are essentially based on half a year. Given the disruption to these statistics in 2020 (Covid 19), the last reliable statistics were published in 2019, which the last Newcomers report was based on.

This data has been provided by Migration Yorkshire and uses information from the Department for Work and Pensions [DWP] about non-British nationals who successfully applied for a NINO in 2021. We have used this as a proxy for newcomers, because new arrivals usually need to apply for a NINO in order to work or claim benefits. The Stat-Xplore states that *The National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK National Statistics publication is currently suspended due to an underlying data issue. Progress is being made to investigate and resolve the issue but the scheduled May release is now being cancelled. Once a solution is in place we will reinstate the statistical series as soon as possible in line with the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Statistics.*

## Governance

### Leeds Strategic Migration Board

The Leeds Strategic Migration board is the council's **governance arrangement** for managing migration in the city. The membership includes stakeholders from across the city; local authority partners from Housing; Adults and Health; Children's Services; Safer, Stronger Communities, and Migration Yorkshire. Other statutory services represented on the board include the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, the Police and the Department of Work and Pensions. The migrant third sector are present through representatives of the Leeds Migration

Partnership. The Home Office accommodation providers for Yorkshire and Humber – Mears; and Migrant Help commissioned by the Home Office to provide support to people seeking asylum are also members of this board.

During the past year the board has focused on **reviewing its membership, priorities, and the migration strategy**. This involved one to one consultation with all members and quality discussions to understand how this board has helped partners to shape their service or assisted to influence or deliver key objectives and priorities; it allowed partner services and organisations to share highlights or achievements for their service linked to the work of the board; and gave partners an opportunity to share any key areas for improvement.

There were a number of key themes:

- **Migrant voice** highlighted need for migrants to be seen as part of our community; support migrants and ensure they have a voice; value breadth of representation; voice and experiences of migrants to be heard and represented; contributions to the city to be fully recognised and celebrated
- **Networking** stake in key decisions; helping to drive and influence local delivery, link up and share views on key issues; better engagement with third sector partners; link with strategic partners and key stakeholders; two-way communication process
- **Partnership** the board enables planning and development for local arrangements in partnership; joint work to apply for further funding and to provide joint services
- **Learning resource** helpful national and local updates, themed updates e.g. on UASC; improved knowledge of city work-streams to support migration; consult on and share information; raise staff awareness
- **Identifying and responding to need** understanding of different community needs and scale of issues and trends; adapting services, planning and developing bespoke services, developing practical solutions; improving the way service is delivered and targeted; identifying areas of concern and prioritising own work; improving referral mechanisms, targeting information and resources; improving community links
- **Accountability** helped to create better working relationships and a collective voice to improve systems and procedures, strategic policy and practice.

In conclusion, the board enables services and partners to:

- provide an **opportunity to highlight issues and challenges** for migrants helping to influence how services plan and develop a strategy to respond to identified needs
- provide an **update** on particular work areas, i.e. the Syrian Resettlement Programme and LAASLO (Local Authority Asylum Seeking Liaison Officer)
- provide **opportunities to improve partnership working** with statutory services and the third sector as well as local teams connecting and working together
- **engage with local communities** through projects. Services engage and consult with new and settled communities giving people a voice and influence
- **respond** to urgent and emerging needs
- **coordinate an approach to influence** service delivery plans to address needs.

The board is currently developing next steps to build on the above.

### **The Leeds Migrant Health Board**

The Leeds Migrant Health Board chaired by Public Health colleagues has developed 3 new priorities. It continues to report into the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board and Strategic Migration Board. This Board is accountable to the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board and aligns closely to the Leeds Strategic Migration Board. It focuses on reducing health inequalities for our migrant population. It is now chaired by the Chief Officer, and Consultant in Public

Health with a strong contribution from the migrant voluntary and community sector and other valued partners.

Over the past year, the board has reviewed its terms of reference and membership to reflect the current health issues faced by migrants and causes for concern, including health inequity amongst different migrant populations. The Board have agreed a set of principles to work by to ensure:

- Excellent experience for all migrants
- Equitable access
- Trauma informed approaches
- Working collaboratively across the health, care, and VCS system

The board and wider partners convened a hybrid workshop in April 2022 to review priorities. From this workshop, new priorities were developed, and underpin a citywide action plan. The three new priorities agreed are:

- **Access for all** - learn from lived experience and work to shape services and strategies
- **Communication** (in its broadest sense interpretation, translations, accessible information, and involvement in ESOL and learning English agenda in Leeds)
- **Work and Austerity** (including a workforce equipped to respond to new and emerging communities / strong link to the austerity and poverty agenda)

These priorities are broad in range with a clear commitment to develop and shape the action plan whilst demonstrating being able to deliver positive change with clear actions and review. The Board are determined to be able to evidence how partners are making significant differences to the health outcomes of our citizens who identify as migrants. Below are some examples of planned work linked to the three priorities.

### **Access for All**

There is a strong commitment to improving access to primary care in the city for migrants. The board will share examples of effective work and support a peer led model of change. There are areas of good practice across Leeds, and we are looking to support the wider primary care offer and align with Doctors of the World guidelines and Safe Surgeries Toolkit. This toolkit lays out seven steps for practices to help ensure that everyone in their community can access the healthcare they're entitled to. It also helps with practical steps to provide a welcoming environment for everyone in their community and an equitable service for all their patients. It has been developed by Doctors of the World (in the UK), with the aim of addressing the specific barriers to primary care faced by migrants in vulnerable circumstances, including refugees and survivors of trafficking.

All the advice given complies with NHS England guidance. Taking the steps suggested also helps ensure that practices uphold their patients' human right to health, protected by international law and reflected in the Care Quality Commission (CQC)'s FREDAs principles for Fair, Respectful, Equal, Dignified and Autonomous care.

Using this tool kit can be an effective way to evidence and articulate improved access and increase awareness of health inequity.

The board are supporting better evaluation of health service data. This will include Target GP /Primary Care training and the "Want to Know More" sessions delivered through the Public Health Resource Centre (PHRC). This training raises awareness of migrant health issues amongst the health and social care workforce and their role in supporting equitable provision.

## **Communication**

Board members will support and develop proposals focusing on migrant health specific work with primary care networks and Local Care Partnerships to improving health inequalities linked to ESOL provision.

Promoting ESOL workstreams will improve health outcomes and a key mechanism to increasing health advocacy. The Board recognises the importance of work on ESOL and will demonstrate progress from proposal outcomes linked to enhancing the ESOL Strategy's 5 key priorities whilst sharing the learning across health and care services.

## **Work and austerity**

Work (employment, study, volunteering) and austerity are issues of concern and inextricably linked to health outcomes for all migrant populations in the city. Poverty has a negative impact on migrant communities and is expected to worsen with the cost-of-living crisis.

The board is committed to ensuring all financial inclusion discussions are seen through the experiences of some of our most vulnerable migrants and the issues they face. Key areas of work will include advocacy, promoting employment, skills and training which increase protective factors and good mental wellbeing. In turn, this approach helps to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities.

The board are hopeful it will demonstrate specific steps considered and taken in supporting migrant communities' barriers regarding work and austerity and learn from other areas and organisations.

The board intend to share numbers of meaningful volunteering experiences and stronger links to VCS where leadership and expertise can be harnessed.

Working alongside the Leeds Anchor organisations on the migrant health agenda will enable employers to understand both their role and duty in supporting communities into the workplace alongside volunteering opportunities that can lead to study or employment.

Further investment and work aligned to Migrant Health Board priorities agenda (Public Health) Gypsy Traveller and Roma work. Leeds GATE continue to be funded to deliver health related work with Gypsy and Traveller communities in Leeds, proactively engaging with those most at risk of poor health.

Leeds GATE have disseminated appropriate guidance to key communities and individuals, ensuring vaccination programmes are appropriate for all the community and individuals, whilst providing help with access issues.

Leeds GATE are also increasing capacity within communities and partners to provide effective preventative approaches. They will compile and present information on how Covid19 has impacted Traveller communities and share their intelligence into citywide planning around health, education, accommodation, and financial inclusion.

For Roma specific interventions, Public Health and Commissioning colleagues worked alongside the Gypsy Traveller and Roma (GTR) team in Children's Services, LCC to ensure targeted Roma Public Health prevention work is effective.

At present, funding has been allocated to create an ABCD pathfinder role working specifically with the Roma community in partnership with the council's GTR team, based with Give a Gift, a Leeds 3rd sector organisation. Children's Services have recently been approached by the

CO-OP who may have some funding to support the Roma community in Leeds and hope to develop an “enhanced support health service” for Roma communities.

Public Health (Health Protection team) are developing a training programme with Connecting Roma to create additional capacity in the community in healthcare. This work will focus on health protection in the first instance. Staff at Connecting Roma are trained vaccinators by Bevan Healthcare. As part of relationship building with the Roma community, they are developing a health protection offer with individuals whilst supporting the community to take charge of their own health, reducing the impact of communicable disease and poor health outcomes.

A piece of work was carried out in the hotels to promote health and wellbeing and self-care. This work was commissioned by Public Health and undertaken by the council’s Migration team. This work has now been completed and an evaluation report is being prepared that will feed into the Migrant Health board on the health needs of asylum seekers living in hotels.

The report findings will support any future business cases targeting these vulnerable men and help evidence the resources needed to reduce health inequity, enabling appropriate and sensitive outreach of commissioned services to work with this community.

Public Health are continuing to fund Women’s Health Matters to deliver focused health promotion that requires a specialist and female only approach to health awareness and literacy whilst supporting two identified vulnerable groups; women seeking asylum and women with learning disabilities.

The group provides a platform for service user led learning such as English Language, hate crime, child exploitation and general crime reporting, abuse, neglect, and domestic violence awareness and how to recognise both.

### Leeds Migration Partnership

Leeds Migration Partnership (LMP) is led by the **migrant third sector** and supported by Leeds City Council. It brings together individuals, groups and organisations to meet, think and share information and ensure that the **voices of migrants are heard and influence decision makers**. Ordinarily, the partnership raises concerns and issues to influence change through three distinct areas. These are LMP information, which takes the form of a blog; LMP Operational Group – for people to share notable practice; and LMP Strategy Group that ensures the partnership has clear priorities and goals based on what is important to migrant groups.

At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Leeds Migration Partnership moved to meeting online. Meetings took place regularly throughout 2020 and 2021 (sometimes weekly) but had a less strategic focus than previous LMP meetings; there became a less obvious distinction between LMP Operations groups and LMP strategy groups and the meetings had a stronger focus on wellbeing and peer support.

At the end of 2021 the LMP had a short reset break, reconvening in March 2022. As the LMP is guided by the membership, the partnership reviewed and reset the LMP agenda to identify the current priorities. It was agreed the existing priorities of health, housing, learning and employment and safety and inclusion, were still relevant, but a couple of other big priorities were raised – access to legal advice and the Nationality and Borders Bill (NBB) which was in the process of passing through parliament at that time, and the implications of the bill, which was subsequently passed into law, for the sector.

The LMP Blog is the main way information is shared with LMP members. During the 12 months from April 2021 to March 2022:

- The number of people subscribe to weekly LMP mailings increased by more than 10% from 579 to 635
- Unique users of the LMP Blog have grown by 5% to 19,900 a year
- Any partner can post directly to the blog, an average of 25 posts occurs per month
- The most popular posts during this year were on [aspen card blackout arrangements](#) (2,100 hits), where to find [free ESOL classes](#) (1,600 hits) and [jobs](#) (1,100 hits)

## **Covid-19**

### **The Community Champions Programme**

Funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities sustained the Community Champions programme to March 2023, with Voluntary Action Leeds and Forum Central as the delivery partners. Covid-19 and vaccinations uptake remain a key focus, however the remit was broadened to health and wellbeing more widely, to respond to local need and feedback. 174 community champions are engaged of which 80 registered in 2022, delivering over 71 activities and events in priority neighbourhoods and with priority groups. In addition, funding continues to be made available for organisations and groups with reach into the target communities and neighbourhoods, which is enabling hyper local engagement whilst addressing community barriers on this agenda.

### **Communities of Interest Network (COIN)**

The Communities of Interest (COIN) Network was developed to respond to COVID-19 health inequalities, led by Forum Central in partnership with Leeds City Council, Healthwatch Leeds, Voluntary Action Leeds with a network of community-based organisations. The Migration Team contributed toward understanding the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and provided a flow of information relating to Covid-19 with migrant third sector through Leeds Migration Partnership.

An [evaluation report](#) was completed in September 2021 to explore the role of the COIN Network, the related benefits and learning from the perspective of COI Network members and wider system stakeholders, and the future role of the COI Network. This has led the Network to explore future working arrangements with Integrated Care Systems structures and consider methods of strengthening engagement with Leeds Migration Partnership and the migrant third sector.

### **The Cultural Food Hub**

The Cultural Food Hub transitioned toward a sustainable delivery model as part of the existing food infrastructure in Leeds and the emerging Community Care Hub models. Delivered by Hamara and Give a Gift a recent allocation of funding from the latest round of Household Support (now part of the [Food Aid Network group](#)) has aided with ongoing support and delivery to address need.

### **City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network Membership**

Leeds City of Sanctuary is part of a national movement to build a culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary in the UK. In Leeds, we are proud to extend the welcome of our city to people who come here seeking safety.

To realise this vision, City of Sanctuary UK support a network of groups which includes villages, towns, cities, and regions across the UK, through the local authority network. In addition to the local authority network, [Streams of Sanctuary](#) (i.e. Universities of Sanctuary, Theatre of Sanctuary, College of Sanctuary and Schools of Sanctuary) provide individual organisations the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to welcoming sanctuary

seekers through an award process.

Leeds is currently in the process of applying for the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network award. Leeds is in a good position to apply for this award as it prides itself on being a compassionate city that welcomes refugees and asylum seekers and there are a growing number of organisations that have already obtained stream of sanctuary awards. The network provides opportunities:

1. To share best practice.
2. Learn from other local authorities on how to manage the competing demands on resources.
3. To help strengthen partnership work with statutory and third sector organisations (including Leeds City of Sanctuary group led by the migrant third sector).
4. To ensure sanctuary seekers voice is heard at a strategic level.

To apply for the [local authority network](#) award, the council will provide evidence of key areas including learning (understand what sanctuary is), embedding policies (procedures, welcome practices) and sharing (best practice, engagement with communities and to those with lived experience). The [8 steps](#) process takes approximately 1 year and the council are at the beginning stage in applying for the award. This is a long-term commitment and will be renewed every three years.

As part of this process the council has pledged that: - *Leeds City Council support the ‘City of Sanctuary’ national movement and are committed to actively adopting a culture of welcome and sanctuary to asylum seekers and refugees fleeing persecution, conflict, violence, and disaster. People seeking sanctuary are valuable contributors to the city’s economy, culture and diversity and Leeds aspires to ensure people are welcomed and supported. Leeds ambition is to be a welcoming and compassionate city with a long-held commitment to support asylum seekers and refugees and is dedicated to being a city of sanctuary.*

Leeds City Council pledge to work closely with the Leeds City of Sanctuary group to ensure a culture of welcome is led by action. Discussions are taking place on milestone actions as part of the award process.

In June 2022 during Refuge Week an event took place at the Civic Hall for Schools of Sanctuary where the audience consisted of children from primary and high schools. The Executive Board Member for Communities attended this event to welcome the pupils and shared the council’s commitment to the work in becoming an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary’s Local Authority Network.

### **Migrant Access Programme (MAP)**

The Leeds City Council’s Migrant Access Programme is now in its twelfth year that facilitates training to people from new and settled communities. In line with the [Strategic, Coordinated and Inclusive Approach to Migration](#), the programme aims to help new and settled communities strengthen their resilience, by increasing their awareness and understanding of how to access support services and facilitate opportunities for new and settled communities to have a voice, to be able to influence change within services. The team achieve the project aims through a weekly MAP drop-in, to train community members to become Migrant Community Networks (MCNs). In addition to the weekly MAP drop-in, the team partner with services to facilitate training about specific issues facing communities.

## Weekly MAP Drop-In

MCNs were given an opportunity to provide feedback, to help identify key needs for new and settled communities. The team used this feedback to plan themed sessions on; **community safety** (held a hate crime awareness webinar/anti-social behaviour training), **culture** (arranged visits to museums and the Leeds United Football Stadium), **health and wellbeing** (cancer screening prevention, domestic violence, maternity inequalities, gambling awareness), **advocacy and advice** (improving digital access, welfare rights for EU citizens post Brexit, advocacy training), and **community development** (Voluntary Action Leeds delivered training on how to set up a grass roots charity).

During the last 12 months, 44 service partners (including Police, Prevent, Public Health, National Health Service, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds United Foundation, Voluntary Action Leeds, Shantona, Leeds Refugee Forum, LS14 Trust, Leeds City of Culture 2023, Smart Works, Gamcare, Stronger Families, Financial Inclusion and Thackray Museum colleagues) delivered training to 159 MCNs over 24 weekly drop-in sessions, 16 of the 159 attendees are newly trained MCNs and many of the new cohort were from Hong Kong or asylum seekers.

As part of the MAP drop-ins, MCNs are invited to share information about their key areas of work and expertise, through the **MCN Voices** sessions. Service partners and colleagues from across the council and are invited to attend the sessions, providing staff the opportunity to learn from MCNs. Within the last 12 months, a session about preventing youth crime was delivered, which led to the police and Safer Stronger Communities officers working with the MCN to increase their project outcomes by helping them access funding.

**Key challenges** to the project over the last 12 months, include the **Covid-19 pandemic** and the **Ukraine** crisis. The team continued to hold most of the weekly MAP drop-in sessions via Zoom due to the pandemic. To ensure updates were effectively shared with MCNs, the team continued to create and distribute a quarterly newsletter. The newsletter was used to share good news stories about work being done within communities with the aid of the project, and to provide updates on migration policy, Covid-19 reminders, funding opportunities, local activities, and resources.

## MAP Modern Slavery Project

MAP team partnered with colleagues working on the modern slavery agenda to facilitate a training project, to raise awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking. This project included 4 training sessions, a funding round where 4 organisations were supported to deliver training in the community and concluded with an evaluation session. The project had a budget underspend and colleagues agreed to use remaining funds to develop a citywide video resource, specific to Leeds, about what modern slavery is and how to report it.

With support from MCNs, police, Hope for Justice, and council officers working on the modern slavery agenda, the MAP team created a short film to raise awareness of modern slavery. The film is available in [English](#), but since Albanian and Vietnamese people are particularly vulnerable to modern slavery and human trafficking, the video has also been translated into [Albanian](#) and [Vietnamese](#). This video will be launched on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October, world anti-slavery day, when Leeds City Council officially launch their modern slavery pledge.

## Leeds ESOL Strategy

The strategy puts forward the need for a cross sector multi-disciplinary collaboration underpinned by strong partnership working approaches. The complex nature of the ESOL landscape, and the opportunities presented through local control of the Adult Education Budget, it is felt the strategy needs to be jointly led by Leeds Strategic Migration Board and an overseeing specialised partnership body immersed in English for Speakers of Other

Languages (ESOL). Positive conversations have taken place with Employment and Skills to explore connecting the ESOL strategy and ESOL sector with the wider skills agenda in the city, and with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority as they begin to deliver the Adult Education Budget.

## **Communication and Engagement**

### **Refugee Week**

Leeds Refugee Forum has hosted Leeds Refugee Week since 2006 during a full week in June on an annual basis. This annual event brings together people from across the city to celebrate the contribution of refugees. During the pandemic, Leeds Refugee Forum brought together people online and this year were able to enjoy the atmosphere through sports, cooking, crafts and much more [Leeds Refugee Week 2022 - Leeds Refugee Forum](#) Events included a Leeds Refugee Week World Cup, where twenty, 7-a-side teams, played head-to-head on Saturday 18th June. All the teams played incredibly, and congratulations went to the Eritrean first team for winning the tournament! These events are a great way of **bringing together refugee Community Organisations, local communities, and agencies together** in a fun footballing environment. The council's commitment to support this event included a small grant from Safer, Stronger Communities team.

**Little Amal** is a 3.5 metre puppet of a 10-year-old Syrian refugee girl. Since July 2021 she has travelled over 9,000km across 12 countries representing all children fleeing war, violence and persecution. She has become an international symbol of compassion and of human rights. She carries a message of hope and solidarity for displaced people everywhere, especially children who have been separated from their families.

### **The Walk with Amal**

In June 2022, one year on from leaving Syria, Little Amal took part in World Refugee Week by visiting 13 towns and cities across England. The Migration Team in partnership with Culture Team and Leeds Playhouse organised an evening walk through Leeds city centre from Briggate to Millennium Square on 20th June. The walk was highlighted by a series of musical contributions in celebration of migration and cultural diversity which brought the city centre streets to life. With 'Little Amal' leading the way, the event was a representation of welcome, respect, hospitality, kindness, hope and compassion, showcasing refugees and people seeking asylum are welcome in Leeds.

**Windrush** is celebrated annually on Windrush Day celebrates British Caribbean communities and acknowledge the sacrifices and contributions the Windrush generation and their descendants have made to British society. The 22nd of June 2023 will mark the 75th anniversary, with Leeds planning celebrations to mark this momentous occasion.

## **Cross Council Working**

### **Local Authority Asylum Support Liaison Officer (LAASLO)**

This initiative led by Leeds Housing Services provides support to asylum seekers who receive a positive decision from the Home Office to settle in the city. Leeds Housing Options work closely with Mears to help meet future accommodation needs of positive asylum cases. The LAASLO role continues to be a busy area of work for Leeds Housing Options, and also focuses on supporting family reunion homelessness cases.

Since January 2021, Leeds Housing Options have directly assessed **163 Homeless Reduction Act cases** where people have been granted refugee status, and who have been given 28 days' notice to leave Home Office accommodation. We have seen an increase in these approaches during 2022.

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. Leeds Housing Options provide advice and assistance to service users as well as services and have supported **1201 approaches from service users (mixture of families and single people)** who had some form of humanitarian protection. This will include various schemes such as refugees once they have received a positive decision, resettlement, and asylum. We have seen an increase in these approaches during 2022.

When single people receive a positive decision, this can create a challenge for those who then apply for family reunion visas, as appropriate accommodation has to be sourced. Our focus continues to be assessing customers, sourcing accommodation, and providing tenancy support for our network of landlords who provide housing for our refugee service users. These service users generally have language barriers and are new to the country, so the support we provide them in securing private tenancies is quite intensive. We are adjusting to the added administration responsibilities as a result of the Refugee Integration Service funding, we are weaving these reporting requirements into the Homeless Reduction Act assessments, so all our work is captured and reported on appropriately for the city. In terms of accommodation our pressures remain a lack of two bed private rented accommodation in the city, there remains a real challenge for appropriately sized properties for larger families also.

The emerging increase in customers needing support is due to several factors, the Home Office accommodation provider Mears is having to increase its asylum estate, the standing up of hotels due to the pandemic and the use of bridging hotels in Leeds which has continued into 2022. 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.

### **Leeds Asylum Support Partnership**

This partnership with statutory services aims to develop a coordinated and joined-up approach to responding to asylum, and the challenges and complex issues involved to ensure appropriate and effective process, systems and support are in place for people going through the journey of seeking asylum whilst resident in Leeds.

This statutory partnership is strengthening the understanding of statutory services' response to asylum needs and the current asylum context and is in discussion on how internal boards are better informed.

### **Destitution**

The impact of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 means that asylum seekers who have arrived outside of resettlement schemes will be granted a status of temporary protection for 30 months with a no recourse to public fund condition and no right to free health care. Homelessness and housing remain the single largest issue in the city for those who have no recourse to public funds. We have also seen through the pandemic that those in work can also easily spiral into destitution if they lose their income. Furthermore, asylum seekers and refugees often face difficulties in having their qualifications and experience recognised meaning they end up in low-skilled and precarious jobs.

The best current indication of destitution numbers 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.

In the year September 2021 to September 2022 British Red Cross have supported 208 service users with 128 dependents. In the same period PAFRAS offered destitution casework to 527 people seeking asylum, either to prevent destitution, or to find safe and sustainable routes out of destitution. 82 people of this figure supported, had at least 1 child. We know that there are many more destitute we do not reach that are supported by in the community.

There is extreme concern in the sector about the wellbeing of those asylum seekers currently being housed in hotels by the Home Office and Mears and due to capacity issues within the voluntary sector makes it very difficult to assess the need in these hotels. With the asylum system recording unprecedented numbers of new arrivals, it is difficult to see how hotel use can be reduced significantly in the short term.

The Home Office announced that cessations after Covid-19 would re-start in July 2021. This raised serious concerns as this coincided with Migrant Help no longer supporting refused asylum seekers with help to submit asylum support appeals. However, these cessations have yet to happen in significant numbers, perhaps due to a lack of decision makers at the Home Office. It is understood that there has been a significant recruitment drive within UKVI recently to recruit decision making caseworkers and it is anticipated that numbers of cessations will increase in the near future.

The migrant third sector provide support to access hardship fund through donations. This fund is essential to ease the financial burden of people experiencing homelessness or destitution.

Migrant Third Sector services working on destitution have been working together with NACCOM - the No Accommodation Network who are a national network of organisations and charities working together to end destitution amongst people seeking asylum, refugees and other migrants who are unable to access public funds because of their immigration status. Partners have been working together to develop a memorandum of understanding for organisations working to end destitution, exploring key principals and outcomes Leeds.

### **No Recourse to Public Funds**

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'. This condition applies to people with leave to enter as a visitor, leave to remain as a spouse, leave to remain as a student, leave to remain granted under family or private life rules and indefinite leave to remain as the adult dependent relative of a person with settled status (where a five-year prohibition on claiming public funds applies). This means they have no entitlement to the majority of welfare benefits, including income support, housing benefit and a range of allowances and tax credits. People with NRPF are at high risk of homelessness and destitution as they cannot access social housing, welfare benefits or legal employment.

A no recourse to public funds panel is led by Children's Services and consists of council wide services to respond to families who fall into no recourse to public funds. Whilst the number of families that Children's Services support considerably increased during the pandemic and as a result of Brexit, throughout 2022 the number of families supported has in fact now decreased. At this moment in time, we are unclear why this may be the case and further work will need to be undertaken to understand this fully and of course it may well be due to the families not coming to the attention of Children Services rather than the numbers falling. 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 recommended by the central government to these families.

Leeds City Council's Community Connectors project was externally funded and although came to an end in 2021 the legacy remains as the team continue to resolve NRPF cases through early intervention and prevention strategies. Households who are working on a minimum wage or below often struggle to pay the visa fee for their leave to remain application making themselves vulnerable to destitution, eviction and immigration control. In some cases, depending on individual household circumstances a fee waiver can be granted by the Home Office.

As part of the work of the Leeds Strategic Migration board, a sub group came together and is currently working on developing an overview of no recourse to public funds in the city to ensure that people who are subject to the no recourse to public funds condition can approach services in Leeds and to ensure that services understand the rights and provide services through signposting and links to the community sector and wider communities for support. Leeds has developed the NRPF checklist which could be used to determine a person's status.

## **Domestic Violence and Abuse**

### **Support in Safe Accommodation**

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 DVA and their children. Over the last year, Leeds has been giving effect to this duty by allocating £1.8 million in 21/22 and a further £1.8 million in 22/23 New Burdens Funding to a range of projects to support victims and children across the city. This has included additional provision in refuge (including children's support workers) and enhanced support to those in dispersed accommodation and other supported housing across the city. A new Sanctuary Support Team has been established to provide support to those who remain in their homes. This scheme draws on the expertise of community-based organisations (Asha, Shantona, and PAFRAS) who have a deeper understanding of the needs of migrant communities.

### **Locality working to address DVA**

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. These local arrangements bring together partners who understand the needs of their communities including migrant communities and can develop activity to better address those needs. There are plans ongoing or in development in Seacroft, HATCH, York Road, Cross Gates and Manston, Beeston Cottingley and Middleton LCP and Inner West Community Committee.

### **Workforce Development and Service Improvement**

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. There is now a standard multi-agency training offer that is delivered by the Safeguarding and Domestic Violence Team with support from a pool of trainers. One of the training options available is the Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage briefing, alongside an Introductory module, Assessing and Responding to risk and Learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs). The draft Workforce Development Framework recognises the need for learning in relation to supporting people from migrant communities. The Leeds Quality Mark (QM) has been refreshed and the model simplified, so agencies continue to develop their practice to the QM standards, but with a focus on continual improvement rather than evidencing current activity. The aim of the QM is to ensure a consistent and high level of support for people experiencing domestic violence and abuse in Leeds.

## Modern Slavery

Home Office National Referral Mechanism (NRM) data for 2021 shows that after UK nationals, Albanian and Vietnamese are the most common nationalities of potential victims referred to the NRM. Albanian nationals now account for 20% of all NRM referrals, compared with 15% in 2020, and Vietnamese nationals for 8%, compared with 6% in the previous year. There has also been a notable increase in the number of Eritrean nationals identified as potential victims, now accounting for 6% of NRM referrals, compared with 3% in 2020. Labour exploitation continues to be the most commonly reported exploitation type amongst potential adult victims.

The Leeds Modern Slavery Board continues to deliver on the Leeds Modern Slavery Strategy 2020-23 which is aligned to the national '4 Ps' strategy: Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare. A key area of work for the Board this year has been preparing to launch the Leeds Pledge to Tackle Modern Slavery on Anti-Slavery Day in October 2022. A 'Pledge Supporters Guide' has been developed and contains awareness-raising resources and information on where to get help in a wide range of languages.

Safer Stronger Communities and the Community Hubs have also collaborated with West Yorkshire Police and Hope for Justice to develop a new video resource which aims to raise awareness of modern slavery in migrant communities. This is an extension of the earlier work with Migrant Community Networkers to build capacity to have conversations about modern slavery in communities. The video will be officially launched alongside the pledge and is available in English, Albanian and Vietnamese languages, reflecting the most common nationalities of NRM referrals. In addition to raising awareness of modern slavery, the video intends to counter the fear and mistrust of authorities that exploiters often instil into victims to prevent them from seeking help.

In response to the increased risk of exploitation of people fleeing Ukraine, a range of translated resources have been widely circulated amongst key professionals and have been included in the welcome packs for people arriving in Leeds from Ukraine. Migration and Housing colleagues working on the Homes for Ukraine scheme are equipped with the knowledge to identify and address modern slavery risks and indicators.

## Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) Outreach and Inclusion

The council's GRT Team make an active contribution in supporting Roma families in partnership through weekly drop-in and home visits. The team has strong relationships with schools, children centres, and school clusters in order to bridge the gaps to universal services.

During the past year the GRT team have funded an ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) worker to support grassroots development within the community.

The GRT team have also begun delivering briefings to social care teams and schools to raise cultural awareness and promote the service. This has been received positively.

The team is also working with the Green Doctor to offer support to our families for the winter crisis including free heat packs, support to access government funding and advice on how to read meters. The team adopt a 'Think Family, Work Family' approach and support all children and adults within a family. A typical family will consist of at least 8 individuals with children ranging from 0-18 years. The GRT team are a city-wide service and provide drop-in services for families in East and South Leeds.

The team have learnt the importance of providing 'high support high challenge' to families. By adopting this approach, the team can support families to find their own solutions, so they do not become reliant on services. Examples of this would be the promotion of ESOL classes,

setting up computer classes to upskill families, and promoting Further Education. This is particularly important when we understand that many families are living in poverty. Learning from Serious Case Reviews teaches us that too often only the immediate needs of poverty will be responded to such as providing a food parcel – whereas families need to be supported to address the causes of poverty which is what the team now provide with their high support, high challenge approach.

The team have developed strong links with area social work teams, Duty and Advice, third sector organisations, schools and other departments of Leeds City Council such as selective licencing, the Library service and the Community One Stop Centres where the GRT team offer support to all children, young people, and families in order to provide wrap around holistic family support.

Roma children are statistically more likely to be removed from the care of their parents- a national report from 2017-2019 showed a 733% increase, in comparison to a 6% population increase. In the past 12 months the team have shifted their focus to support these families and have several Roma families with children of school age on CP plans that they are currently supporting alongside the social worker. With their expertise of the community, they can help professionals to understand Roma culture, support parents to understand the legal systems, help parents to understand what is expected of them and support families to engage with social care whilst providing family support.

Pupils who identify as Gypsy Roma Traveller have the highest free school meals eligibility and are most likely to not meet expected standards in education. We encounter Children not being School ready and nationally on average just 14% of Roma children succeed in reaching expected GCSE levels. The work of the Inclusion workers is crucial to supporting improvement, as is their relationship with School support staff. The inclusion workers are currently involved in a piece of work with Leeds City College to raise the aspirations of school children and Parents to attend College and University to find skilled employment. As recently highlighted in the 'Intercultural cities report' work is needed to ensure that the Roma community is represented through the education system.

We know that health inequalities are disproportionately experienced by vulnerable groups such as Gypsy Roma Traveller, and as such these groups are more likely to be experiencing poverty. We see a high number of families who are no recourse to public funds and living in poverty. Within the Roma community we see; overcrowded & poor housing, limited access to green spaces, regular use of food and clothing banks, higher rates of A&E attendance and low uptake of Immunisations and vaccinations. GRT communities also see a significantly lower life expectancy (25 years). The team ensure that every family are delivered high support, high challenge to improve their outcomes, and were recently commended for the support they offer during a government visit.

During the past year the GRT team have funded an ABCD worker to support grassroots development within the Community. This post is funded for 2 years and will support the development of volunteer programmes through the Roma community, as well as supporting the community to tackle health inequalities. The GRT team have also begun delivering briefings to social care teams and schools to raise cultural awareness and promote the service.

The team continue to support St Vincent's immigration service for late EUSS applicants and approximately 20 families come to the drop in for support. The team also support home office inquiries where families have been unable to provide photographic evidence. The team took on this role in February 2022, and during the past 6 months we have supported 247 families

with their applications, as well as being able to identify further support needs for the families such as access to health services, benefits and school places.

In response to the winter crisis, the team are working with the Green Doctor to offer support to our families for the winter crisis including free heat packs, support to access government funding and advice on how to read meters.

### **Locality Working**

Leeds continues to celebrate cultural diversity and the many benefits that migrant communities bring to the city. This can be seen in the city's enthusiasm for the August Bank Holiday weekend activity in Chapeltown with both the **annual West Indian Carnival and the Black Music Festival** returning after a 2-year hiatus caused by Covid-19. Both events are hugely popular and celebrate the rich culture on offer from migrant communities, not only from Chapeltown but the whole city. Whilst both events are rooted in black Caribbean culture, today they have even broader appeal and bring different communities together in celebration of the diverse cultural offer in Leeds.

The main events in Potternewton Park remain free to access and can draw large crowds, particularly in good weather. With an estimated 150,000 people visiting what is essentially a residential area over the course of the two events, a considerable amount of planning and partnership work takes place to ensure the event is safe and enjoyable for all. Whilst the main events in the park end at 8pm, associated activity and celebration in the Chapeltown area continues into the early hours, particularly on the Sunday and Monday, and partner agencies work closely with key community representatives on measures to reduce the impact on the local community, with the Localities Team taking a lead role in much of this work.

This year's events have demonstrated just how popular and important the weekend is with a big turnout across both days. The celebration shows how missed these two events have been during a difficult couple of years dealing with the pandemic, and it was a much-needed reminder of how diverse, colourful and vibrant the cultural offer is in Leeds. The Safer, Stronger Communities Team will continue to support these and other key cultural events by coordinating partnership work and maintaining positive community relationships.

Another piece of work, related to the **Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme** and one of the hotels housing asylum seekers, was to provide advice and guidance for third sector partners in Seacroft. The aim was to support them in tackling the negative narrative around migration, and better understand where we can work collaboratively to tackle far right extremism. The Localities Team identified the local need and arranged for training to be delivered locally by the Prevent and Migration teams. This was held within the locality, and engaged a range of third sector organisations, volunteers, and services working within the Seacroft area. This was followed up by further work with Communities Inc. who delivered three Stand by Me training sessions to 35 people including local organisations, volunteers, the local community, and a range of services. This training covered details of hate crime, and encouraged attendees to be upstanders rather than bystanders, if witnessing hate crime, by safely supporting the victims of hate. A hate crime coordinator from West Yorkshire Police also joined the training, and shared details on how the police can support victims of hate, and challenge hate crime and discrimination.

The **Igbo Family Fun Day** was another project which aimed to promote diversity, encourage community cohesion, and address social exclusions within the African community. It also addressed both physical and mental health issues that affect residents in Leeds following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The event, organised by 13 members of Igbo Union Yorkshire, took place at Cross Flatts Park, in August 2021. Igbo Union Yorkshire summer fun

day is an annual event that showcases the diversity of African music, dance, culture and games to bring people together from diverse cultures and backgrounds. The fun day attracted 350 people from all over the city, and activities included a 100m race for different age groups, sack race, egg race, tug of war, football, table tennis and board games as well as music and dance entertainment. Food and refreshments were also provided. The event provided an opportunity for people to connect and promoted community cohesion.

The **council's community centre portfolio** provides another example of partnership working, as facilities and meeting spaces are provided for a wide range of community groups and support organisations. An example is at the Ebor Gardens Community Centre where the organisation Damasq provides targeted activities to support new migrant communities including a community café, creche facilities, youth events, education and support activities. As this type of provision is seen as a priority activity in this area, lettings for Damasq are supported by LCC through the application of the fully discounted hire rate which allows bookings to be made at the lowest rate that is available in Leeds.

In the city's continued push to combat Covid-19, **multi-lingual Covid advice** has been updated and made available by Leeds Refugee Forum. YouTube videos are available online in a variety of different languages.

### Migration training

The Migration Team have facilitated a range of training and learning events with elected members, services and partners to improve knowledge and understanding of migrant communities, need, service provision, barriers and the Strategic, Coordinated and Inclusive Approach to Migration in Leeds. There are many more requests from services which are being developed.

### New Plan for Immigration

The government's New Plan for Immigration 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 plan as set out in the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Act 2020, includes introduction of work routes such as skilled workers, as well as supporting people from Hong Kong through the British National (Overseas) visa route. The government states that it has delivered the following routes:

- **Skilled Worker Route** – allows employers to recruit people with a job offer in an eligible skilled occupation from a Home Office approved sponsor, to work in the UK in a specific job
- **Student Route** – provides simpler and more streamlined pathways for students and ensures the UK remains competitive in a changing global education market
- **Graduate Route** – provides students with the opportunity to stay in the UK to work or look for work after they graduate
- **Innovator Route** – allows those seeking to establish a business in the UK based on an innovative, viable and scalable business idea (which they have generated or significantly contributed to)
- **Global Talent Route** – allows those aged 18 or over in the field of science, engineering, humanities, medicine, digital technology or arts and culture who can demonstrate exceptional talent or exceptional promise
- **Health and Care Visa** – allows clinical professionals to work in an eligible job with a health or social care employer

- **Global Business Mobility Routes** – provides a consolidated, simplified and expanded offer for overseas businesses who need to temporarily send employees to the UK for a specific purpose
- **High Potential Individual Route** – provides a short-term work visa for graduates or postgraduates from the top 50 non-UK academic institutions. This route is for international graduates who have been awarded an eligible qualification at an overseas university that appears on the [Global Universities List](#) in the 5 years immediately before their application

Whilst the government did respond to the public consultation on the proposals (6 week consultation period that ended 6 May 2021), some organisations made their views publicly available feeding back that the proposals were unworkable and that this would create further trauma to individuals as well as adding to already complex systems.

### **Nationality and Borders Act 2022** [Nationality and borders ACT 2022 | Migration Yorkshire](#)

In July 2021 the government published the Nationality and Borders Bill with an accompanying policy statement. The Bill sought to implement the proposals from the New Plan for Immigration seeking to pass them through the necessary parliamentary process to become primary legislation.

The Bill completed its passage through parliament, receiving Royal Assent on 27 April 2022. A statement of changes to the Immigration Rules was made in May 2022 and subsequently secondary regulations published with some of the provisions coming into force from 28 June 2022. Others will come into practice during 2022.

The Nationality and Borders Act puts some of the proposals under the New Plan for Immigration into new legislation. The Act aims to implement three key priorities for the government as mentioned above. Summarised below are some of the key provisions divided according to the relevant Parts of the Act.

**Part 1 Nationality** - The opening section of the Act contains clauses on British nationality. Many of the reforms aim to facilitate the registration of British citizenship for some groups, with the intention of removing discrimination. Of significance is Clause 9 which allows the government to remove a person's British citizenship without notifying them certain circumstances such as where the person is uncontactable. Under previous rules, the government could already remove citizenship in cases where it is 'conducive to public good' and the person was believed to be eligible for citizenship in another country. The major change here is the removal of the requirement to notify the person of the decision.

**Stateless Children** - There are also changes impacting stateless children and their ability to register as British citizens. For a child to qualify for leave as a stateless minor they must now satisfy the Home Secretary that they are unable to obtain any other nationality. In practice, this will mean providing evidence of the efforts to obtain another nationality. The government's rationale is that by tightening these requirements, they will prevent abuse of the system by parents who wilfully deprive their children of citizenship elsewhere in a bid to qualify for leave as a stateless person the UK.

**Part 2** of the Act enables the **creation of a system** of differential treatment for refugees based on how they came to the UK, labelling them '**Group 1**' refugees (those who arrive directly from a country where their life or freedom was under threat, and present themselves to the UK authorities immediately) and '**Group 2**' refugees (those who do not fulfil these two requirements). A temporary protection status will now be awarded to those Group 2 refugees who do qualify for protection but have arrived without permission, have passed through

another 'safe country' before coming to the UK or have a connection to another safe country where they could claim asylum e.g. family members living there. Note that one in six asylum seekers in 2019 had already made an asylum claim in another European country, according to the original Bill's explanatory notes. This will provide status for only 30 months at a time, no access to public funds or family reunion rights. This is in contrast to Group 1 refugees who arrive 'legally' who should qualify for five years' leave to remain as a refugee and with a defined route to settlement. All types of refugees will be permitted to work and access healthcare and education in the same way.

Part 2 also expands **existing powers to use accommodation reception centres** as asylum accommodation through creating the power to use specific types of accommodation for people at different stages of a protection claim. Reception centres are now being presented as an accommodation type for people deemed 'inadmissible' to the UK asylum system. The original Bill's explanatory notes make it clear that this accommodation will be 'basic' and 'simple'. The Act also allows the previous usual maximum time for someone to be accommodated in a reception centre (six months) to be increased indefinitely.

The Act also legislates the use of **offshore processing** for asylum claims. This involves relocating asylum claimants to a third country who will take responsibility for processing their asylum claim. The government agreed its first Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda, who will be responsible for processing some asylum claims. The Home Office inadmissibility policy has also been updated to reflect the new partnership arrangement, outlining the process in which some asylum seekers might face removal to Rwanda.

Part 2 also contains reforms raising the threshold in relation to the standard of proof required to accept there is a risk of persecution and grant an asylum claim.

The Act also **abolishes appeal rights in certain cases** and creates a one-stop system ensuring that new evidence has to be presented at the start of the process. This is designed to address the issues of repeated claims and legal challenges of which the government has been highly critical. There is also a new accelerated appeals process for detained asylum seekers despite that a similar system, the Detained Fast Track route, was previously suspended after being ruled unlawful in 2016.

Part 3 – **Immigration control** - the Act introduces reforms around immigration control, notably making it a criminal offence for asylum seekers to arrive in the UK illegally. Anyone who arrives in the UK through irregular means or without permission to enter will be impacted by the proposal, regardless of whether they go on to claim asylum. According to the original Bill's explanatory notes, around 62% of asylum applicants entered the UK illegally for the year ending September 2019, so this will affect a large proportion of claimants. The Act also increases the maximum possible sentence for illegal entry from six months to four years' imprisonment.

Part 4 – **Age assessments** -the Act includes some significant reforms to the process for age assessments for unaccompanied children seeking leave to remain in the UK – primarily impacting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. It allows for the government to develop regulations regarding the test immigration officers use to determine whether someone may be a child. This involves reducing the age threshold so that immigration officers must treat someone as a potential minor where they look under 18 years old rather than under 25, as was previously.

Other significant reforms for age-assessments include the development of a National Age Assessment Board to oversee age assessments and a right of appeal against age assessment decision (previously assessments could only be challenged via judicial review). The Act also enables the implementation of scientific methods for age assessing. These methods are yet to be determined but the government recently announced the establishment of a Scientific Advisory Committee to do this.

Part 5 – **Modern slavery** - reforms for victims of trafficking and modern slavery include raising the threshold for reasonable grounds decisions which are required for a potential victim to qualify for access to support under the National Referral Mechanism. The Act also creates powers to deny access to support for those who have a criminal conviction and legislates the reduction in the recovery period for victims of trafficking from 45 days to 30 days, limiting the period of support for potential victims. Finally, the idea of a one-stop system will also apply to modern slavery with the Act introducing limited timeframes for potential victims to disclose evidence of their experiences for the purpose of immigration control.

The government has received criticism for failing to implement any measures to deal with the current asylum backlog. A recent report from the Refugee Council highlighted that in 2020 over 33,000 people had been waiting from more than 12 months for an initial decision from the Home Office and that this figure is nearly 10 times higher than in 2010.

Critics have raised concerns that providing differential treatment to refugees based on how they enter the country undermines the 1951 UN Refugee Convention to which the UK is a signatory, and that the UK may be breaching international obligations.

Technically, the Act makes it very difficult for anyone to come to the UK as an asylum seeker and it arguably criminalises the act of seeking asylum. On the other hand, critics say the government has arguably not revealed enough alternatives for people to come to the UK and obtain protection despite claiming it is committed to enhancing 'safe and legal routes'.

### **EUSS (EU Settlement Scheme)**

As part of the above agreement, EU nationals and their non-EU family members had to secure a new immigration status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and successful applicants were issued a digital immigration status (non-EU family members could request a biometric card against a fee). EU nationals, who had been residing in the UK before January 2021, were provided with an additional 6 months 'Grace Period' and this meant they had to apply to the scheme before 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

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. EU nationals who did not make an application to the EUSS by the deadline of 30 June 2021, ceased to have their rights protected in UK law. This included rights to live, work, study and access benefits and services in the UK.

At a national level, 6,699,190 applications were made to the EUSS from 28 August to 30 June 2022. Of this figure, 6,473,830 applications concluded from the EU, EEA and Swiss Citizens and non-EEA nationals. 647,150 applications were received after the 30 June 2021 deadline and 384,470 have switched from pre-settled to settled status.

The top three nationalities (by applications received) by top three local authorities were Romanian (in Newham, Harrow and Brent); Polish (received in Ealing, Edinburgh and Southampton); and Italian (received in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Manchester).

The [latest statistics at local authority level](#) (up to the end of March 2022) show over 360,000 applications to the scheme in Yorkshire and the Humber.

**73,320 EUSS applications have been made in Leeds** since August 2018 which is the highest in the Yorkshire and Huber region. The top 3 nationalities were Romania, Poland and Italy. A breakdown of age for the total number of applications is below:

Under the age of 18	17,020
Between the ages 18-64	55,060
Over the age of 65 years	1,240

**A total of 70,220 EUSS cases were concluded for Leeds up until June 2022** with a breakdown below.

Settled status	33,620
Pre settled status	28,960
Refused	4,110
Withdrawn	1,590
Invalid	1,940

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, the Home Office has been accepting late EUSS applications (for those who were residing in the UK by the 31 December 2020) or alternatively, EU nationals can secure a valid visa under the points-based immigration system.

Where the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) customers were identified as having not applied to the EUSS, DWP has made substantial efforts over the last year to engage with customers using a range of channels to signpost them to make a late application. These channels included letters, SMS text messages, telephone calls, Universal Credit journal messages, face-to-face meetings in jobcentres and home visits to support vulnerable and elderly customers. DWP has worked alongside Leeds City Council to reach Housing Benefit claimants.

DWP secured time-limited agreement from HM Treasury to continue paying existing claimants on an extra statutory basis after the EUSS application deadline while engagement continued with claimants who were yet to apply. This agreement to use extra statutory payments has now come to an end.

The Migration Yorkshire [European Union Settlement Scheme \[EUSS\] \(arcgis.com\)](#) dashboard suggests that there were 3,100 outstanding EUSS cases in Leeds by June 2022. These include applications that are pending, awaiting to hear from the Home Office to conclude. Key organisations within the statutory and third sector are working with many families and individuals to progress through the application process.

During the past two years, Leeds City Council has carried out a range of activities, in partnership, to engage with communities that required an application to the scheme. This has been through information sessions, door knocking, meetings with consulates, honorary consuls, bespoke drop-ins, language support, identified gaps such as the need for ID to register and supporting external visits for example Romanian consulate visit to Leeds. The council continues to work in partnership to respond accordingly.

## **Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (HKBNO)**

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.

[Hong Kong hub | Migration Yorkshire](#) is an online platform for Hong Kong BNOs settling into the region and provides a range of support and information. Migration Yorkshire are leading on the programme in Yorkshire and Humber and work with volunteers from Hong Kong who have arrived in the region via the British National Overseas BNO visa route to be part of the Advisory Panel.

Migration Yorkshire is leading on the Hong Kong Welcome Programme in our region and Leeds City Council continue to work closely with Migration Yorkshire to better understand the impact. Statistics are available from the Home Office on the numbers of people who have applied for visas, but they are unable to provide information as to where they are settling in the UK as Hong Kongers are free to decide where they wish to live.

We are aware that Hong Kong BNOs have settled in some areas of Leeds and local ward members have attended events at the local churches. The events have been well attended and any enquiries have been passed to the council's Migration team to respond and support.

Internal discussions continue to take place to understand the impact in Leeds and engaging with community groups to share information and gain anecdotal knowledge of how people are settling in. Funding is only available for ESOL and those who may fall into destitution, and request that the no recourse to public funds condition is lifted. This has to be claimed retrospectively on a case-by-case basis. No claims have yet been made by Leeds.

## **UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)**

The UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), which started in March 2021, is an ongoing humanitarian resettlement scheme whose purpose is to resettle vulnerable refugees in need of protection from a range of regions of conflict and instability across the globe. Working closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the global refugee agency, to identify those living in formal refugee camps, informal settlements and host communities who would benefit most from resettlement to the UK. The resettlement schemes are not selective on the basis of employability or integration potential. The number of refugees resettled every year through the UKRS depends on a variety of factors including future government funding commitments and local authorities' capacity for supporting refugees.

Prior to 2021 Leeds has been involved with many resettlement schemes (Afghan/Vulnerable Children's and Vulnerable Persons) coordinating and managing the numbers pledged into the city.

In July 2021 Leeds pledged to take Afghan Refugees which was to be in a coordinated manner, unfortunately the situation in Afghanistan quickly worsened so the decision was made that it was no longer a viable option for people to stay in Kabul. Families were brought into the UK on scheduled charter flights for their protection, regardless of whether they had been matched and accepted into a local authority.

Following the mass evacuation in Afghanistan in August 2021 and the scale of the crisis, the number of people who were evacuated to the UK increased and the Government sought support from local authorities to provide additional pledges of accommodation.

The Home Office asked local authorities to find accommodation at considerable speed and decided on a new plan to accommodate people on the scheme on a temporary basis. Bradford had the first 'holding hotel' for arrivals on the Afghan Relocation scheme. As people were arriving quicker than people could be accommodated and due to the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan the Home Office had to find ways to accommodate people at speed.

MHCLG were also working with the Home Office to investigate alternative sources of accommodation that had not previously been explored or identified, particularly for larger families. They were, and still are, working centrally with faith and integration departments and housing associations to identify properties.

In early September 2021 the Home Office secured the use of a hotel in Leeds and had a met with the council to discuss wrap around support for people in the hotel. It was agreed the Leeds Resettlement team would deliver this service as it was only to be until December 2021.

On 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021, 33 Afghan families (230) people arrived from a quarantine hotel in Manchester where they had spent their first 10 days in the UK. All the families are part of the Afghanistan Assistance and Relocation Policy (ARAP) who have been working alongside The British Forces in Afghanistan and are classed as Locally Engaged Staff (LES) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

The hotel provided, and continues to provide full board for the guests. No time limit was given for how long people would remain in the hotel due to family sizes and lack of larger properties available nationally.

### **Holding Hotel Support**

The government provides funding to local authorities to enable them to provide wrap around support to residents in the hotel.

The Resettlement Team along with two members of Housing deliver support to families in the hotel including - providing meet and greet services; identifying essential and longer-term needs of families; carrying out initial needs assessment; ensure services are provided within the hotel to meet the needs of the families on the scheme; health; DWP; education; mental health support by Solace; children and families wellbeing project; employment and skills to deliver ESOL; and the police.

Other key areas include arranging bank appointments to open bank accounts; dental and optician appointments; GP NHS registrations; and completion of HC1 forms and midwife appointments.

Partnership work includes acting as liaison point between local and central government to escalate issues. Supporting families with local transport and providing advice on the local area as well as the city. Engaging with the voluntary sector to support activities and ensuring the specific needs of women and girls are factored into the design and delivery to ensure participation/engagement/access as well as considering the needs of other disadvantaged/marginalised groups are met. An important aspect also includes providing local integration support to make connections with local groups.

Large amounts of donations have been received by the people of Leeds and these are managed with offers of support from the local community and to ensure fair and equitable distribution of goods.

Supporting beneficiaries to access local transport provisions e.g. understanding options for local transport and providing advice and guidance around the region. Support is given around paperwork when documents are issued and ensuring clear translated information to families.

The staff ensure safeguarding policies are adhered to, and discussions with families take place around safeguarding and life in the UK. When families have been resident in the hotel for a number of months, a support/move on plan is completed.

Provision of interpreters during Monday to Friday support casework including support in liaising with School Admissions to find school places; providing assistance in organising children's school bus passes; and providing assistance in organising bus passes for parents to get their children to school.

Much more support is provided but the Resettlement Team staff endeavour to make sure people in the hotel are looked after as best they can and keep them occupied on a daily basis, reassuring them that they will soon receive an offer of accommodation.

Prior to the hotel opening, donations began arriving, the response to the crisis was wonderful and a large amount of donations were received. Volunteers supported the management of this and enabled the opening of a clothes store in the hotel as the first arrivals came with virtually nothing. They had fled their homes to Kabul, boarded a plane and arrived here in the UK. The clothes store was well used, and the donations kept arriving, staff collected on a daily basis. Staff liaised with churches who also began collecting donations. A considerable amount of time has gone into sorting and sharing donations. A total of 10 tonnes was taken away. In July 2022, the clothes store closed due to people no longer needing items. Councillors provided a kind financial donation which enabled the purchase of pushchair/ prams/ breast pumps and toiletries for families that have had new babies whilst in the hotel.

The hotel currently being used has been identified as a 'Green hotel' - the Home Office use a traffic light system to rate bridging hotels with Green being a hotel with very few problems, Amber being a hotel which needs attention, and Red being a hotel which will close. Leeds has been informed it is within the top 10 hotels in the country with regards to service delivery which includes the smooth running of the hotel. There are currently over 70 bridging hotels in the UK.

Leeds is currently supporting 45 families which equates to 233 people in the hotel and includes 140 children aged between 0-19yrs.

Leeds have pledged to accommodate 142 people for 2022/23. The pledge will be split between the ARAP/ACRS and UKRS schemes. 80% of the pledge will be to rehouse people on the ARAP scheme (114 people) and 20% to rehouse people on the UKRS scheme (28 people).

The Resettlement Team works in the hotel as well as working with families on UKRS/ARAP and ACRS out in the community, whilst working closely with local stakeholders and other voluntary sector agencies.

A huge amount of time has been spent delivering services in the hotel, working in partnership with council services and others such as the council's migration team's contribution to the weekly rota to ensure cover at the hotel. Much effort is made to improve the lives of people in the hotel as many of them could be resident there for months. Mental Health services are present in the hotel twice a week which are well utilised. Other services include Breeze, West Leeds Activity Centre, Yorkshire Cricket Foundation, Active Leeds, Children's Services, Families First, Stronger Families, Employment and Skills, PATH Yorkshire, Health, Home Office, Story Bus, and Oak Church to name a few.

The Home Office provide a shuttle bus to a mosque every Friday for prayers. In October 2021, Leeds United tickets were donated and gratefully received and many of the residents in the hotel enjoyed the experience of football here in the UK.

On 30 November 2021 Britain's **Prince William visited** the hotel in Leeds to meet **Afghan refugees** who are starting their new lives in the UK. The Prince met Afghans who had risked their lives to work for the British government and their families. Prince William was greeted by applause during his visit, he chatted with the residents as well as talking to staff in the hotel who have been supporting the families since arrival in September.

Trips and parties planned over Christmas holidays were unfortunately cancelled in December due to Covid19.

Over the months people have moved out, mostly to Leeds but a few families have moved out to Wakefield, Sheffield, North Yorkshire and Huddersfield. The team has also welcomed new arrivals, including arrivals from third countries as well as transfers from bridging hotels that have closed down in Coventry, Rotherham and more recently the Yorkshire Gateway.

Residents have experienced ongoing challenges around school places due to the surrounding schools no longer having places, however, places for the children who arrived in September 2021 were secured. When residents move on the children leave and go to schools nearer to where they are living but the amount of places required exceeds the places available. As of September 2022, all the children have a school place.

Recently, the Home Office have introduced a new process 'Find your own Pathway' which is to encourage families to find their own property. For Afghan families who now reside in the community, Leeds City Council fund Refugee Council to support them.

### **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASCs)**

A task group led by colleagues in Children's Services continues to bring together agencies from across the city to ensure UASCs needs are met. Although the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) was halted with agreement across all local authorities, it is back in place, mandatory and Leeds is a fully participative member of that scheme. As ever, Leeds continues to be acknowledged as a lead in good practice with all that relates to UASCs and has taken a far higher share in numbers of UASCs across the region. The current National Transfer Scheme is in place to reduce the burden of UASCs currently housed on the south coast of the UK, primarily (but not exclusively) in and around the Kent region.

In the years 2020/21/22, the number of sporadic UASC arrivals reduced, primarily due to the impact of the pandemic. However, in 2022 we have seen a steady rise in those numbers. Further to this the number of UASC's that have arrived via the local hotels has steadily increased. The increase in hotel referrals is a worrying development that has intensified over more recently. This may be that UASC's identified to have been dispersed to Leeds from Kent have been wrongly identified as adults via the Home Office and Kent Local Authority. Although

these issues were reported in last year's report the numbers have increased over the last few months and our concerns remain heightened.

The fees to support UASCs remain at £114 for sporadic and hotel referrals. As reported last year the Home Office has raised the amount UASC's transferred to their local authority via the National Transfer Scheme, that amount is stand at £143 per night per UASC.

Leeds Children's Social Work Service, but specifically the Children Looked After Service have supported and ran an active local football team for refugees, asylum seekers and specifically Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UASC's) and UASC Care Leaver's. The football team is running primarily by our Fostering Service Manager (now retired) and our social work colleagues based in the looked after social work teams. The team also (due to their success) now receives support from two other volunteers from the local community. The football team has and is successful and currently runs three sessions every week due to its popularity. Those sessions are on a Monday, Thursday, and Sunday with the 'first 11' successfully competing in a local football amateur league on a Saturday morning. In total there are now in or around 50-70 young people and young adults participating in the sessions. That cohort also includes a squad of 16-18 playing regularly in an amateur football league, the actual league is called the 'Yorkshire Christian League' and it is registered with the West Riding County Football Association. Last year the team successfully completed in one of the League's cup competitions and were losing finalists! The young people come from a range of nationalities including (but not limited to): Eritrean, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Chad, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, El Salvador and Vietnamese.

Further to the above, our UASC children and young people and staff in the Children Looked After Teams with support from the Child Friendly Leeds Team and sponsored by the British Library have participated in the writing and launch of a recipe book. The launch of that book will take place on the 20 September and has already been picked up by the Times and the Yorkshire Post.

On a positive note, Children's Services have had a full Statutory Ofsted Inspection and the Children Looked After Service, responsible for our UASC's, have been rated as Outstanding. This is a significant development and very specifically and unusually the Ofsted Inspectors spent individual time with a number of our UASC's and based their Outstanding judgements in part because of the work we do alongside this cohort of children and young people.

### **Asylum Dispersal Contract**

Mears Group is the accommodation provider for the Home Office contract to provide accommodation. This contract splits the provision of accommodation from application support. Migrant Help are the contract holders for the Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Assistance services (AIRE). This is a single integrated and national service for asylum seekers. All calls, no matter what the issue, will go to one single number to be assessed, where interpretation can be accessed. As well as providing support with the application process, Migrant Help will pick up any problems with asylum accommodation, liaise with the accommodation provider (Mears) and address maintenance issues within agreed timeframes.

There has been an **increase in numbers of people arriving to the UK to seek asylum**, this is largely **related to the significant drop in arrivals due to the Covid 19** pandemic in 2020 - 2021: the number of people seeking asylum in the year to June 2022 was 99% higher than in the year to June 2021. Numbers are 50-60% higher per quarter than 2019 figures, pre-Covid 19 (Source: Asy\_D01 - [Asylum applications raised, Home Office](#)). There are significantly more asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their case. On 30 June 2021, there were around 117,945 people awaiting an initial decision on their asylum claim nationally (including main

applicants and dependents) and a further 5,770 'awaiting further review' (i.e. where they have had an initial decision but where the case is not yet concluded by the Home Office). To put the figure in context, the number of asylum seekers awaiting an initial decision on their case is 66% higher than a year ago to June 2021 and almost 12.5 times higher than on 30 June 2010 when the figure was 9,441 (Source: Asy\_D03 – [Asylum applications awaiting a decision, Home Office](#)). Due to the pressure imposed on the system and the impact at the local and regional levels, Migration Yorkshire are carrying out some further analysis of contingency accommodation and trends.

Over the past three years, Leeds has seen people who are seeking asylum being placed in hotels across the city. The decisions to procure hotels are taken by the Home Office with little or no consultation with the local authority, and at short notice. The council has, and continues to work closely with Mears, local ward members, statutory services and the voluntary sector to provide local support and engagement.

At the beginning of 2022, there were five asylum contingency hotels in Leeds, in June these were reduced to four. Mears contractual obligations centers around the provision of accommodation in catered facilities with onsite Resident Welfare Managers, however concerns were raised around the wellbeing of asylum seekers living in contingency hotels. Public Health asked the Migration Team to deliver a project in asylum hotels from December 2021 to March 2022, to improve understanding of residents' wellbeing needs and to increase access to support. The intervention resulted in 615 'contacts' with residents and confirmation of wellbeing needs around: connection and navigation of city and services; being active; ESOL; volunteering and mental wellbeing. Through various activities and interventions, the Migration Team increased understanding amongst services of the existence of asylum hotels and the needs of residents, resulting in improved access to support services, the development of toolkits to facilitate independence post intervention and increased peer support. For example, at one hotel site a networking event was delivered with 12 services in attendance engaging directly with 70 residents to facilitate awareness and access to services.

Alongside the Migration Team intervention, Bevan Healthcare established dedicated provision for asylum and Afghan hotels to complete health assessments, improve access to health and peer support interventions.

Leeds continues to represent at regional meetings led and facilitated by Migration Yorkshire and have worked closely with colleagues to raise concerns, share challenges and good practice.

The current procurement process is under review by the Home Office and being discussed by local authorities in the region. The aim is to reduce number of hotels which means the likely impact will be a number in Leeds who may need support and conversations continue.

## **Ukraine**

In March 2022 in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the UK government launched new immigration routes for Ukrainians fleeing the conflict to come to the UK and concessions for those already in the UK to extend their stay. These new routes are collectively known as the Ukraine Scheme and are described below.

**The Homes for Ukraine scheme** - launched by the government on 14 March 2022. This scheme allows the British public and private hosts to volunteer accommodation and provide a route to safety for Ukrainians and their immediate family members. There is no limit of numbers but need a matched host.

**The Ukraine Family Scheme** – this visa route enables Ukrainians and their immediate family members to apply for a visa to join family in the UK. The UK family members can be an immediate or extended family member of any nationality as long as they have one of the qualifying statuses such as British citizenship, indefinite leave to remain, settled status or even refugee status.

**The Ukraine Extension Scheme** – opened for applications on 3 May 2022 and formalises a system for those already in the UK to regularise their stay long-term beyond the initial visa concessions announced to support Ukrainian nationals, e.g. students, etc.

The Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) are only responsible for supporting the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and have asked Local Authorities to deliver this.

In response to the above, Leeds City Council has established an approach that supports all Ukrainians under the three schemes with access to mainstream services. However, the council only receives data for hosts that are matched with Ukrainian refugees under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. No data or information is available to councils at a local level for the other two schemes.

### **DLUHC data system (Foundry)**

The Foundry system is provided to councils with data to allow delivery of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This system must be kept accurate at all times to ensure data flow and adhering to funding criteria.

### **Welcome Point**

Leeds City Council was asked to stand up a Welcome Point at Leeds Bradford Airport (LBA) which was progressed with West Yorkshire partners through the Local Resilience Forum. Government funding was secured and determined using available transit data and current understanding of the relative volumes of Ukrainians arriving via particular entry routes.

The funding was being used to cover the costs of initial welcome for arrivals and sign posting to further support venues; rest point for families and individuals; translation service; basic health needs assessment and support for onward travel to other areas of the region/country. The process was reviewed in partnership by the Homes for Ukraine team, Emergency Planning and Reginald Centre welcome hub.

Since the 28 March 2022, a total of 1172 arrivals into LBA have been noted as Ukrainian nationality with a total of 19 requiring assistance including hotel accommodation as a result of Border Force interception or host failures based in other cities.

On 17 August 2022, Lord Harrington, the previous Minister for Refugees, wrote to the council following a review of welcome points and the decision to revise down the number of ports being supported to run Welcome Points. This resulted in Leeds Bradford Airport no longer included in the new list of Tier 1 and Tier 2 ports and therefore no additional grant funding at this time. As a result of this decision, discussions are taking place regarding an alternative process.

### **Funding criteria**

The Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities set criteria for local authorities which included several checks. These are shared in the guidance for councils and includes: on receipt of notification that a visa has been applied for, ascertain that the **sponsoring address exists** and can be used as residential accommodation; at the earliest opportunity, **visit that**

**address** and assess its suitability to accommodate the proposed guests; as soon as alerted that a visa application has been made, initiate basic **DBS checks** on all over-16s in the host household, and enhanced DBS checks on all over-16s if the guests will include children under 18 or vulnerable adults; confirm that the **guests have arrived** at the accommodation; and complete **safeguarding checks and visit the guests in their accommodation** and confirm there are no serious concerns. On completion of all checks, hosts will receive a thank you payment of £350 per month until their guests remain with them.

The council receives a **£10,500 tariff per Ukrainian refugee** who has arrived in Leeds pending the outcome of successful checks laid out by DLUHC. In addition, all those arriving under the scheme receive a one-off payment of £200 each (including children). The aim of this is to support the guests during the period of applying for and receiving universal credit. These funds are included within the £10,500 tariff. Funding for £350 thank you payments to hosts is received separately.

In response to the above requirements, Leeds City Council established the Leeds Ukraine Strategic group, chaired by the Chief Officer for Safer Stronger Communities and with representation of senior officers across the statutory sector. The first meeting took place on 21 March 2022, shortly after the launch of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and initially met on a weekly basis.

The Strategic Ukraine Group developed key thematic subgroups to develop, deliver and implement the scheme. The **Welcome Hub sub-group** established an offer of support such as one-off free bus passes, food parcels, baby products, welfare rights support, housing options support, access to sim cards and much more. The **Operational sub-group** has represented at daily stand-up meetings and is responsible for policy updates, setting up the infrastructure and processes to deliver DLUHC reporting requirements. The **Safeguarding sub-group** –works closely with adults, children and the police to review and guide on safeguarding concerns. It is also responsible for in person and desk top welfare visits. The **Accommodation sub-group** initiated daily stand-up meetings in partnership with members of Migration team to understand the need for accommodation provision and responding to circumstances of relationship breakdown and presentations of homelessness. The **Health sub-group** represented by public health and CCG work together to understand current health needs of Ukrainians and ensuring support and raising awareness of access to mainstream healthcare. The **Fundraising and Grants sub-group** are key in continuing fundraising efforts as well as working closely with Leeds Community Foundation to develop a grants process that allows the voluntary sector an opportunity to offer their expertise. The sub-group leads are responsible in local decision making on ongoing matters and to ensure that progress, good practice and ongoing challenges are fed through to the Ukraine Strategic group.

On 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 ,Leeds City Council announced details of a major fundraising appeal to help those facing upheaval and heartbreak following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The council kickstarted the fundraising with a donation of £50,000. The current amount is approximately £150,000 and is being administered by Leeds Community Foundation [Leeds Together for Ukraine Fund | Leeds Community Foundation \(leedscommunityfoundation.org.uk\)](https://leedscommunityfoundation.org.uk). The money raised is being used to provide activities in partnership with a range of refugee charities and other third sector organisations to Ukrainian refugees as they build new lives in Leeds. It will also be used to further develop local support systems to ensure Leeds remains a welcoming and compassionate city for all migrants in the long term.

The Leeds branch of the Ukrainian Association of Great Britain is situated in Chapeltown and close to the Reginald Centre welcome hub for Ukrainian refugees in Leeds. This Leeds branch was founded by the community, a large building built on donated funds by people who arrived

in Leeds after the second world war when many Ukrainians fled the returning Soviet forces.

The Homes for Ukraine team at Leeds City Council are working closely with the Leeds branch of the Association of Ukrainians of Great Britain to establish local pathways of support for employment, housing, education, welfare support, translation and interpretation and much more. A weekly visit to the centre supports signposting to the many services across the city and linking the association with wider council and voluntary sector services to address ongoing challenges presented by people fleeing the war.

### Welcome Hub

Ukrainian refugees are welcomed at the **Reginald Centre** welcome hub where they are supported with a range of services and interventions to help them sustain their current housing arrangements. They can also access food parcels, bus tickets, leisure passes and collect their £200 one off payment. The council has a partnership with Leeds Credit Union to facilitate the payments.

### Post 6 months accommodation arrangements

The government has now shared guidance on [Your living arrangements 4 to 6 months after moving to the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/your-living-arrangements-4-to-6-months-after-moving-to-the-uk) As per this guidance, Leeds City Council has written a letter with advice and information for hosts and guests living in Leeds so that both host and guests can make informed decisions on options available. Both of these documents have been translated into Ukrainian and Russian and circulated.

Many hosts have responded positively and have very kindly informed the council that they are happy to continue their hosting arrangement. However, in some cases there may be a need to rematch guests with a new host. The Homes for Ukraine team have established a process and successfully rematched many guests to new hosts as per government guidance.

### Rematching

The process of rematching involves finding a suitable alternative arrangement and key factors on decision making involve schools, accommodation type, size and the locality. These are often a challenge as the majority of hosts live in the outer areas of the city. Many families have established links in that local area and their children are settled in school.

All new hosts who have expressed an interest to accommodate Ukrainian refugees into their home must undergo checks as highlighted above. These checks from beginning to end may take up to 3 weeks. This also involves communication with hosts and negotiation to support a planned move for the individual or family.

Guests with ongoing challenges in their current accommodation have been offered housing assessments and advice on alternative options such as private rented.

The rematching process also involves transferring Ukrainian refugees to and from other local authorities in England.

As immigration is not devolved in the UK, only the Home Office is able to issue visas. This means that guests who are sponsored by the Welsh Government are still on the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

### Support for hosts

Leeds Asylum Seeker Support Network (LASSN) is a third sector organisation with a wealth of knowledge and experience in supporting people hosting refugees. They have been commissioned by Leeds City Council to deliver a support package to those hosting Ukrainian

refugees. A timeline of support is being shared and the project is resourced from October 2022 – September 2023.

**Leeds Refugee Forum** are delivering ESOL classes to Ukrainian refugees learning English at differing levels. Ukrainian refugees have developed trust with Leeds Refugee Forum who have built positive relationships, as a result are working with partners to provide support and guidance on a range of issues.

### **Unaccompanied Minor (UAM)**

As of 15 July 2022, the Homes for Ukraine Scheme began processing applications from eligible children under the age of 18 who have already applied through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme to come to the UK without a parent or guardian in carefully defined circumstances. This policy initially applied to 1,000 applications that were on hold but opened to new applicants in August.

DLUHC notified the council that there are currently 6 UAMs. The Kinship Care Team in Children Services are leading this area of work and working closely with the Homes for Ukraine team to develop local guidance and processes.

The Homes for Ukraine team continue to work at a rapid pace as the scheme continues to evolve and supported by many partnerships across the city including West Yorkshire Police, (council departments – IDS, Leeds Housing Options, Private Sector Housing, Adults and Health, Children Services, Early Help, Employment and Skills, Customer Access, Information Governance, internal Audit, etc). A considerable amount of work has taken place and supported by Shared Services and Business Support.

At the launch of the Homes for Ukraine scheme in March, Leeds had 173 active hosts who were matched to 343 Ukrainian refugees. These figures have steadily increased and in September 2022 there were 368 active hosts matched to 870 Ukrainian refugees, however, not all have yet arrived.

Wales and Scotland to England - DLUHC have agreed that they carry out these assignments as an exception to enable checks to be carried out and recorded on Foundry. DLUHC will conduct a reconciliation process at the end of the financial year to ensure that councils receive their correct entitlement for both the £10,500 tariff and £350 'thank you' payments. Future guidance will cover outstanding detail on this process, including the process by which DLUHC will account for movements of guests across councils.

### **International Relations**

#### **Intercultural Cities Network (ICC)**

The ICC Working Group continued to meet regularly throughout the year. Additional colleagues joined the working group from International Relations, Housing and the Safer Stronger Communities Teams. A range of activities took place are included below:

The first ICC steering group meeting was organised and took place in November 2021, chaired by the Executive Board Member for Communities. The Steering Group features senior managers from across Council directorates and wider and will lead the work of the working group. Discussions at the meeting focused on the background of Leeds' membership of the ICC network, the ICC Index Report and plans for the Council of Europe Visit to Leeds. The working group established an ICC presentation which was used to spread awareness of the programme to relevant colleagues such as the wider Migration team, Leeds Migration Partnership, Member Champions, Hate Crime Operational Group and the ICC Steering Group.

The group also supported an ICC initiative along with the third sector organisation, Belong, to explore the contribution business can make to social cohesion, intercultural relations and inclusion. The group also worked with Belong to identify businesses and set-up a round table to discuss what Yorkshire and NW England ICC members businesses with a presence in these areas are doing in this space.

A [video](#) was also produced to celebrate Leeds' cultural diversity for ICC campaign on World Refugee Day in June 2022.

From January 2022 onwards the working group focused on the planning and organisation of the Council of Europe visit to Leeds.

### **Council of Europe Visit**

The visit of the Council of Europe to Leeds had previously been delayed and postponed several times due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the two day visit finally took place on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2022. The visit was an opportunity for the Council of Europe delegates to meet a wide range of senior and operational council staff, politicians and partners; to present their analysis of the Leeds submission against the Intercultural Index to officers, politicians and partners and citizens and; for the council to showcase some of its work on the cohesion agenda and its work with partners.

The ICC Working Group produced an agenda of events and visits which was in line with the expectations of the Council of Europe expert delegates, but which also reflected the role of local government in the UK and our local approaches to addressing cohesion and equality issues. To start the visit, an Intercultural Cities Network: Leeds Opening Event was organised in the Banquet Suite at Civic Hall on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> June. At the event, attendees heard from elected members and senior council officers working on the intercultural agenda.

Visiting experts from the Council of Europe presented the Leeds Index Report. There were also facilitated roundtable discussions where attendees had the opportunity to share what is working well as well as identify gaps and put forward suggestions for improvements in Leeds' intercultural approach.

Over 90 people attended the event from a variety of community, faith and voluntary sector organisations as well as partners from statutory organisations such as West Yorkshire Police, the NHS and colleagues from across Leeds City Council. Organisations demonstrating best practice in ICC work such as Voluntary Action Leeds, Stop Hate UK and Leeds Development Education Centre also had an opportunity at the event to showcase their work by having information stands.

Following the event at Civic Hall, the Council of Europe delegation were taken to a share a range of examples from across the city; Harehills Primary School to learn about the how diversity is celebrated and interculturalism embedded throughout the school. Finally, to complete the agenda for day 1 the delegation were taken to youth organisation CATCH (Community Action to Create Hope) where they heard about the opportunities that CATCH provides young people including Roma between the ages of 7 and 19 with opportunities to immerse themselves into the wider community. There was also a presentation from the Lord Mayor of Leeds to some of the young people at CATCH.

The second day started with a visit to Leeds City Museum where the delegation was shown the work the Museum and the wider Museums and Galleries service undertakes to tell the stories of the diverse citizens of Leeds, its history and culture.

A walk through Lower Briggate, allowed the delegates to see the Rainbow Bridge and LGBT+ bar quarter, and heard about the history and development of Leeds Pride as well as the work of the councils LGBT+ Hub and LGBT+ Inclusive City approach.

This followed a visit to the Kirkgate Market where the delegates were introduced to our historic market as a space that services the needs of diverse communities as well as the work of Employment and Skills team to focusing on those communities.

John Charles Centre for Sport included a tour and where the delegates heard about their inclusive delivery including comprehensive community sport, physical activity, and health programmes for key demographics in priority communities in Leeds.

A final stop at Roundhay Park allowed the delegates to see the most special space in Leeds, where Leeds citizens enjoy the outdoor activities together despite their ethnicity background, physical ability, or age.

Regarding next steps, the Council of Europe are producing a report called an 'intercultural profile' following their expert visit and which the council expects to receive in the autumn of 2022. This report will assist in the development of an action plan for Leeds.

## **EUROCITIES**

Leeds continues to support its migration work through international links, notably through the city's membership of the **Intercultural Cities network** and **EUROCITIES network**. These networks allow Leeds to share best practice on urban policy linked to migration with international partners across Europe and the rest of the world. Leeds is a key partner at the Roma Inclusion Working Group and actively links in with partners. Playing an active role in EUROCITIES and the Intercultural Cities Network initiatives, helps us contribute to raising our profile as a city that is firmly on the map as being a successful UK city.