

# LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR RESETTLEMENT, INTEGRATION AND COMMUNITY COHESION – 3<sup>RD</sup> JULY 2019

## **Summary of the aims and objectives from the event (and following events):**

1. Help a range of stakeholders to develop a better understanding of public sector, VCS and funders activities in the region.
2. Help a range of stakeholders develop a better understanding of voluntary and community sector investment and activity on addressing migration and integration issues.
3. Support the identification of ways in which the public sector, VCS and funders can focus on joint action to improve the experience of those who have migrated to and settled in the WM.

## **Summary of content from this event**

1. Headlines: Summary of priorities and recurring themes
2. Individual actions: Summary of opportunities and activity, which individual stakeholders can consider
3. Collective actions: Summary of items and issues, which require a more coordinated and collective effort to progress
4. What next? Summary of recommendations and opportunities created from the event
5. Appendix 1: Write-ups from workshop discussions

## **Headlines: Summary of priorities and recurring themes**

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**Perfect storm** – in many ways there is a perfect storm concerning the proportion of new communities living in deprived neighbourhoods, pressures on public services such as schools and health, pressures in the asylum and immigration system, with inevitable impacts on health, wellbeing, safety and community tensions.

**Consistency** – practice, knowledge, cross-sector relationships and funding approaches are not consistent across the region. There are pockets of good practice, different relationships with LAs and funders, as well as areas which are really struggling. More regional coordination, information sharing and collaboration is needed (and possible).

**OISC advice** – there is a chronic shortage of capacity to provide OISC Level 2 and Level 3 advice, which is critical to helping people regularise their status. This is due to cuts to funding over recent years (from cuts to Legal Aid), but also the amount of time and resource it takes for someone to be accredited at OISC Level 3 (at least three years). There is a need for a longer-term (e.g. 10-15 years) strategy to address this.

**No Recourse to Public Funds** – this is a growing but mostly hidden community of people, until crisis presents through health, homelessness, safety (e.g. domestic abuse). NRPF is avoidable where people have access to good OISC advice for original or fresh claims for a recognised legal status, as well as for appeals. This group consistently presents the biggest concerns for statutory and voluntary sectors.

## **Individual actions: Summary of opportunities and activity, which individual stakeholders can consider**

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In no particular order:

- Share the information, presentations, ideas and priorities from the event with your colleagues and networks
- Consider how and where funding might be provided to support the current and future provision of OISC advice in the region – particularly better use of existing funding and commissioning opportunities
- Connect and engage with LA and regional partnership networks, groups and structures concerning asylum seekers, refugees and migration
- Upskill staff and workforce about the issues discussed in the event to increase and expand the levels of general and specialist knowledge and awareness across sectors, including accessing some of the free support and resources (e.g. Refugee Action)
- Be curious and find out what others are doing in other parts of the region, as well as the experience of refugees and migrants in different parts of the region – LAs, funders and VCS, reach out and connect to others
- Raise your profile and better promote what you do, successes, achievements, funding opportunities, partnerships etc.
- Raise the profile of the refugee and migrant communities you're connected to, working with and supporting
- Consider how you can better integrate immigration and asylum advice with other relevant advice and support areas, covering welfare, housing, community safety, health, for instance
- Be a broker and bring your partners together with others where it can help to improve coordination, collaboration and integration
- Help create some momentum amongst your colleagues and networks to identify, respond to and progress ideas and actions from the issues and opportunities raised through the event.

## **Collective actions: Summary of items and issues, which require a more coordinated and collective effort to progress**

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In no particular order:

- Creating more opportunities for small and large parts of the voluntary and community sectors to increase their visibility, collaborate, bringing together engagement with communities with specialist skills and services.
- Review and refresh of the regional partnership networks and structures to provide sufficient opportunities for stake-holders from across sectors to share information, collaborate and develop shared strategies for the region.
- Promoting and increasing the visibility of key contacts across LAs/Public Sector, VCS and independent funders to help put people in touch with each other and local priorities.
- LA based and regional advice strategies, which incorporate immigration and asylum advice, as well as the various stakeholders investing and delivering advice and support for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.
- LA and regional based training programmes across front-line services and other important stakeholders to raise awareness of immigration and asylum issues.
- Vehicles or means to develop strategic policy collaboration in the region, supported by political input and involvement from across the region's LAs
- Creating specific funding opportunities and programmes between independent funders and LAs to increase the capacity of OISC advice provision in the region, particularly linking this agenda to preventing crisis, destitution and homelessness
- Develop more consistent knowledge, policies and approaches to identifying and supporting people with No Recourse To Public Funds (NRPF)

## **What next? A brief note from the working group**

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The working group which has delivered this event and is planning future events for stakeholders is made up of representatives from the following:

- Local Authorities – Birmingham City Council, Coventry City Council, Sandwell Council, Stoke On Trent City Council
- Voluntary Sector Organisations – ASIRT, Birmingham Settlement, Brushstrokes, Central England Law Centre, IMIX, Stoke Citizens Advice Bureau, Refugee & Migrant Centre,
- Barrow Cadbury Trust
- West Midlands Funders Network
- West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership

As a working group we will consider what we can do to move the “collective actions” forward:

- Sharing and circulating the contact details of event attendees so people can start making the connections and putting ideas into action
- Take the key messages and information to relevant forums and networks in the region such as the West Midlands Funders Forum, West Midlands Combined Authority, Legal Education Foundation and individual LAs.
- Proposing and progressing a review of regional partnership working, networks and structures in collaboration with West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership and West Midlands Combined Authority
- Role model the ideas and actions in each LA area and through existing regional partnerships and networks

If you'd like to join the working group – either in-person or virtually, then please get in touch with [austin.rodriquez@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:austin.rodriquez@birmingham.gov.uk) and Dipali Chandra [dipali@wmfn.org.uk](mailto:dipali@wmfn.org.uk). As well as considering how to put the ideas and issues from this event into practice we will also be planning the next event about “Taking early action to promote safety, health and wellbeing”. This will cover topics such as crime and community safety; physical health and well-being; mental health and well-being; safeguarding and support for vulnerable children, young people and families.

## Appendix 1: Write-ups from workshop discussions

### What opportunities are there to work in a more joined up way – both now and over the coming year?

#### Priorities:

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- **Smaller, community organisations and groups** (typically with income of less than £100,000 per year) and engaging them in the various meetings, forums and networks
  - There are organisations (such as WEA) working in neighbourhoods, which are connected to community networks. More acknowledgment and use of these contacts and networks.
  - Via strong or emerging VCS infrastructure organisations or initiatives (such as Neighbourhood Network Schemes in Birmingham)
  - Via more generalist and less specialist language so agenda is more accessible for a wider range of organisations and groups
  - Really good examples of communities organising themselves, e.g. Bosnian community. Opportunities to recognise, support and direct funding towards these established and emerging networks.
  - Support and encouragement for smaller organisations and groups to collaborate
  - There are still funding and commissioning opportunities available, but these could be better developed and informed by local groups, organisations, networks and knowledge.
  
- **Meetings and forums**
  - Lots of regional and LA area based forums and meetings but these could benefit from being reviewed to ensure they're still relevant and promoting networking opportunities. No more forums or meetings need setting up just a need and opportunity to make better use of what's already there. Particular focus on role of WMSMP and how that could change to promote and support multi-agency working – best placed to be the umbrella body for the region to coordinate this.
  - Technology and digital presenting virtual opportunities for collaboration and working together. This includes via Google groups and other digital ways of working together, particularly on specific issues, e.g. policy issues/changes/lobbying
  - Named voluntary sector champions in the various meetings/forums/structures to represent the sector, e.g. Homelessness Partnerships, WMCA. Questions about how possible this collaboration is in a competitive funding environment where charities have a focus on survival.
  - Shared strategy, aims and objectives which are bought into by everyone. Potentially a role for Local Authorities to coordinate and bring this together.
  
- **Information sharing and visibility**
  - Local Authority visibility and accessibility to promote engagement with public services across councils, police, health and DWP, though named and key contacts.
  - More information sharing to better understand who's working in the sector and which orgs/groups are being funded. 360 Giving Grant Nav (<https://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org/>) being one example of how people can do this.

- Better communication skills and more capability would increase the visibility of orgs and groups, promote collaboration opportunities etc.
- Platforms available to help organisations and groups better promote themselves on social media for instance

### **Also:**

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- Specific opportunities
  - Resettlement 2020 which will resettle refugees in the region after March 2020. This will provide important opportunities for LAs, refugee field, as well as to work together
  - Asylum dispersal with Serco during the life of the new 10 year contract – opportunities for stakeholders to work together
- Learning lessons and recognising issues
  - Partnership roles being unclear, or partnerships being unnatural or not being person centred
  - Funders dictating the creation of partnerships and/or competition
  - Availability of time to contribute to partnership working
  - Conflicts of agendas and interests
  - Competitive funding and tendering processes
  - Larger organisations withdrawn and not working collaboratively with others
  - Learning lessons from resettlement to share with wider community
  - From other regions

## **What do we need more of in the region because we believe it works?**

### **Priorities:**

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- **More collaboration and integration**, across a number of different areas, such as:
  - VCS organisations and independent funders working together to influence funding and policy at a regional and national level.
  - Sharing information to identify and respond to emerging gaps, best practice or opportunities – particularly having a more strategic and informed approach to funding.
  - VCS organisations and LAs working together to create more holistic and integrated support for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants which covers a number of advice areas and needs. This is bringing together different specialisms and different sized organisations across immigration, welfare and benefits, health and housing to ensure continuous wrap-around and advice and support for people.
  - Building on the existing partnerships and VCS Forum facilitated by West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership.
- **Greater capacity of and access to OISC advice, particularly:**
  - More consistency across the region so that there isn't a postcode lottery for refugees and migrants needing this type of help. Opportunities and scope for more regional VCS collaboration and consortia to provide access to specialist advice across the whole of the West Midlands. This might incorporate digital

- opportunities such as Skype to provide access to communities living in rural areas.
- More training and awareness raising about rights and responsibilities through the immigration and asylum system, employment, housing, welfare and health, for instance. This includes training across front-line services, particularly in the public sector to improve the navigation through advice and support provided by the VCS.
  - Investment in staff and upskilling people so that they and the organisations they work for have the necessary capacity and capability to advise people through immigration, asylum, employment, welfare, housing and health systems. Funders committing to investing in the development of capacity and capability to provide OISC advice, to grow capacity across a wider pool of organisations.
- **More visibility and communication, particularly of and from:**
    - People with lived experience from refugee and migrant communities to increase and strengthen their voice – both positive and negative stories about progress through the immigration system and resettlement. Also, to promote co-production and involvement of refugee and migrant communities through the development of projects, plans, strategies, outcomes and funding.
    - Good news to promote what works, successes and new investment to help create more capacity and capability in the region. Also, to promote what people are achieving – individually, through organisations and collectively to show what's possible.
  - **More relevant and connected policy and funding approaches:**
    - More political involvement and coordination across the region to be able to respond to problems created from national policy and/or to advice new policy ideas on a national platform.
    - More strategic litigation to challenge and improve the current processes and decision making in the immigration and asylum system.
    - Greater recognition amongst funders about the importance of providing more core funding, as well as more sustainable funding. This includes the importance of VCS organisations, independent funders and LAs working together to promote the legacy and sustainability of funding.

## **Which of the gaps raised in the presentations should be an immediate priority and what initial steps can we take?**

- **OISC Level 2 and Level 3 advice:**
  - Not enough immediate capacity in the region (or nationally) to provide this level of advice which is important for a number of different groups across NRPF, homelessness, looked after children, for instance.
  - Severely impacted by the changes and reductions to Legal Aid. However still opportunities which aren't being used concerning "exceptional case funding"
  - Alternative models and ways of doing things like Legal health checks and triage to ensure that people are being referred for the right level of OISC advice.
  - Commissioning of OISC advice through Local Authorities as part of strategies to prevent homelessness.
  - Collaborations between funders, both independent funders and LAs to identify and respond to strategic gaps – long-term view and approach.

- Collaboration with universities to expand training, as well as the consideration of training contracts with established OISC advice providers to grow wider pool of knowledge and capacity in the VCS.
  - Collaborations with law firms (such as Gowlings) which can provide pro bono support with partners such as the Community Law Centre
  - Investment in parallel psychological support to protect staff who are qualified to provide OISC advice, preventing burn-out.
- **Wider knowledge, training and awareness of immigration, asylum and social welfare:**
    - Front-line services across statutory and voluntary sectors, but particularly relating to children, young people and families.
    - Housing, homelessness and temporary accommodation sectors to promote better understanding of the issues affecting refugee and migrant communities, as well as to improve decision-making.
    - Including Trade Unions and other bodies interested in employment rights and responsibilities, to ensure that people are given the right to work and are not being unfairly excluded from work.
    - Including generalist advice organisations to improve and increase knowledge of and access to specialist OISC advice provision.
    - Raising visibility of these issues to promote policy change and awareness campaigns to change current approaches and attitudes. Windrush is a good high profile example. There needs to be a local, regional and national lobbying voice.
    - Through a more coordinated and coherent advice strategy in each LA which incorporates immigration and asylum advice – particularly in asylum dispersal areas where there will be a growing population of refused asylum seekers.
- **People with No Recourse To Public Funds:**
    - Including greater awareness and knowledge of this issue and “label”, as well as consequences of national policy on exclusion such as the EU Settlement Scheme/Settled Status.
    - Establishing links to other agendas such as Modern Slavery and impact of a lack of OISC advice and NRPF status has on people’s vulnerability to this
    - More evidence and intelligence needed in asylum dispersal areas about refused asylum seekers leaving government support and accommodation but not returning to their country of origin.
    - Changes to policy needed (see previous section about creating a local, regional and national lobbying voice) which creates a simpler, more accessible system for all stakeholders.