



**Partnership Policy Framework
for the Dispersal and Integration
of Asylum Seekers in Wigan
Borough**

Updated August 2011

Housing Strategy Team
Places Directorate
Wigan Council
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Wigan
WN1 3DS
Tel: 01942 489204

Introduction

Wigan Council believes that by working closely with the UK Border Agency (UKBA) formerly NASS, support services, accommodation providers and local communities, asylum seekers can be welcomed into the Wigan Borough community whilst protecting the needs and rights of all and promoting community cohesion.

Wigan Council is committed to fulfilling its duty to:

- the wider Wigan Borough community, and
- asylum seekers who temporarily, and potentially permanently, live in the Borough.

Commitment to the Borough's Community

Wigan Council aims to ensure local services are not overburdened by the introduction of asylum seekers into the Borough. This will be achieved by:

- not accepting any more asylum seekers than set out in Government quotas
- securing the co-operation of housing providers and UKBA in ensuring the distribution of asylum seekers is managed and that no one community is overly burdened, particularly communities with high levels of deprivation
- wherever possible, and with the help of partner agencies, consulting local communities on any sizeable distribution into any ward, (i.e. accommodation requiring planning permission or involving ten or more asylum seekers), and
- supporting the police in responding to any criminal, fraudulent or anti-social behaviour.

Commitment to Asylum Seekers

Wigan Council aims to ensure asylum seekers are supported with settling into the Wigan Borough community and receive equal access to local services. This will be achieved by:

- creating and maintaining a framework of locally co-ordinated services to support effective dispersal to a home that meets local housing standards
- supporting the police to respond to race hate crime or anti-social behaviour and with measures to promote social cohesion.
- providing guidelines and signposting for accommodation providers to encourage provision of support for those who receive a positive decision with finding move-on accommodation.

Co-ordination and service delivery frameworks

To deliver these commitments a number of mechanisms need to be established and maintained. These include:

Leadership and accountability

- The Cabinet member for Community Protection takes the lead executive role for asylum seekers, with support from the Corporate Director - Places
- Annual reports will be submitted to the Building Stronger Communities Partnership, the Places Directorate SMT and Councils DMT

Leads:
Cllr Kevin Anderson (Cabinet Member, Portfolio Holder Neighbourhood Services)

Gillian Bishop
Service Director – Places Directorate: Economy, Waste and Infrastructure

Co-ordination

- The Asylum Seeker Private Provider Forum will be the main co-ordinating mechanism. Its agenda will include:
 - Monitoring of dispersal (see below)
 - Accessibility of key services
 - Race-hate crime patterns
 - Criminal activity
 - Fraud
 - Anti-social behaviour
 - Performance / issue reports from lead partners including UKBA, housing providers and statutory agencies
- The Refugee & Migrants Forum will be the co-ordinating mechanism for housing and support providers within Wigan Borough. Its agenda will focus on sharing information, best practice, problems / issues and disseminating changes in legislation. It will also look at promotion, awareness raising and other initiatives when relevant. As such as it has written its own strategy called WARM (Wigan Welcomes Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants)
- Links between Wigan Council and GMP will be strengthened with Council officers attending monthly Wigan Partnership Tactical Assessment meetings.
- Wigan Council's Housing Strategy Section have established and will maintain an internet website containing key documents related to asylum seekers in Wigan, including the policy framework and A-Z of key services. Also included will be lead contacts from various agencies.

Leads:
Steve Sargent
(Housing Strategy Team Manager)

Lead:
Sian Jay
(Policy Manager Equality, Diversity and Cohesion)

Leads:
Monthly meets -
Sandra Green (Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator)

Lead:
Steve Sargent
(Housing Strategy Team Manager)

www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/Housing/HousingStrategyPolicy/AsylumSeekersRefugeesMigrants.htm

Accommodation dispersal and standards

- Dispersal within the Borough will involve close liaison between UKBA, sub contractors to UKBA, Wigan Council, GMP, housing providers and other local statutory agencies. The Asylum Seekers Private Provider Forum will receive reports on existing and proposed dispersals and the Housing Strategy Team will make recommendations to UKBA and housing providers on further dispersals. Issues taken into account will include:
 - Levels of deprivation
 - Community cohesion
 - Number of private lettings in the immediate area
 - Dispersal ratio levels
 - Recent procurement trends
 - Pressure on local statutory services, including GP and school places
 - Other potential indicators of housing market decline/collapse.

This approach will be beneficial to all parties in terms of managing access to local services, to assist providers in the management of service user accommodation and support and promote community cohesion.

Dispersal limit recommendations encompass all asylum seekers, including:

- Those receiving accommodation and subsistence from UKBA
- Those receiving subsistence only from UKBA
- Destitute asylum seekers supported by local authorities (Interim cases)
- 'Section 4' (destitute) asylum seekers supported by UKBA
- Induction Service occupants
- Asylum Seekers supported in Emergency accommodation
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)

These recommendations will be forwarded to all housing providers and relevant agencies identifying the wards where no further dispersal should take place and wards where prior consultation is specifically requested for any scheme. Housing providers will also be requested to consult with Housing Strategy prior to acquiring any property in the Borough. Dispersals across all tenures will be monitored by the Council's Housing Strategy Team. Wigan Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal will submit observations on any planning applications that are known to be intended for asylum seekers. The Housing Strategy team have published a guidance on the process it

Leads:
Steve Sargent
(Housing Strategy
Team Manager)

**Greater
Manchester Police**

- expects providers to abide to when procuring asylum accommodation in Wigan Borough (appendix A)

Standards of accommodation will be monitored and enforced by UKBA as part of contract agreements between UKBA, their sub contractors and housing providers. In addition the Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Team will work with UKBA to monitor and enforce standards in line with Local Government powers.

UKBA
Private Sector
Housing

On refugee status and move-on accommodation

- Where an asylum seeker is given leave to remain (i.e. refugee status) they are no longer eligible for UKBA support and will be asked to leave UKBA supported accommodation. They will, however, become eligible to be assessed for mainstream benefits and social housing. In order to assist in this transition period all housing providers should inform Wigan and Leigh Housing's 'Housing Options Housing Advice Centre' (HOAC) if an asylum seeker / refugee has housing need or is at risk of becoming homeless, ensuring access to housing advice. Appendix B gives accommodation providers details for referring service users to HOAC if they have been given leave to remain.

Leads:
Housing Options
Teams, Wigan and
Leigh Housing

On access to statutory services

- All asylum seekers are eligible for health services and will be given access to a GP. All housing providers should inform the LaSCA (NHS) of new arrivals, who will then allocate asylum seekers a GP.
Contact:
LaSCA (NHS)
3 Caxton Road
Fulwood
Preston
PR2 9ZZ
Tel: 01722 221444
E-mail: lasca.customerservices@nhs.net
- The Council has extended its services to ensure the children of asylum seekers are assimilated into local schools. To assist with this process all housing providers should inform Wigan Council's Children's Services of all children under the age of 16 who arrive in the Borough. Contact:
English as an Additional Language Team, 1st Floor - Leigh Town Hall, Leigh.
Tel: 01942 404589

Lead:
LaSCA (NHS)

Lead:
English as an
Additional Language
Team

On promotion, awareness raising and social cohesion

- The Community Cohesion Forum, alongside the Asylum Seeker Provider Forum will support measures to promote social cohesion including promotion and awareness raising. The Community Safety Partnership and voluntary sector will promote social cohesion measures and assist in integration.

- Wigan Council, working with partners, will co-ordinate the briefing of communities on any proposals involving known sizeable distributions of asylum seekers into any particular neighbourhood or ward.

Lead:
Sian Jay
(Policy Manager
Equality, Diversity
and Cohesion)

Measuring performance

- Progress on implementing the policy framework will be reported annually to the Community Protection committee and Cabinet. The report will include progress on managing dispersal, incidence of race-hate crime and the performance of any agency funded by Wigan Council.

- Performance targets will include:
 - No ward to exceed a 1:200 dispersal ratio.
 - 95% of all asylum seeker accommodation to comply with the housing standards enforced by Wigan Council

Steve Sargent
(Housing Strategy
Team Manager)

Appendix A
Wigan Council – Housing Strategy Team
Procurement of Asylum Properties in Wigan Borough
Guidance Note
August 2011

1) Introduction

Since April 2000, Wigan Borough has been an area for the dispersal of asylum seekers in the UK. In this time Wigan Council's Housing Strategy team has worked in partnership with other departments in the Council, UKBA, other public services such as health and the Police along with those providing accommodation and housing support to manage this process. The close working between partners has aimed to ensure that asylum seekers are welcomed into the Wigan community whilst protecting the needs and rights of all and promoting community cohesion. In Wigan, we feel that the partnership approach that has been adopted along with the commitment of partners has ensured that the dispersal of asylum seekers to the borough has been managed effectively. UKBA identified the "Partnership Policy Framework for the Dispersal and Integration of Asylum Seekers in Wigan Borough" as best practice.

Fundamental to achieving the integration of asylum seekers into the Wigan community and promoting community cohesion has been the management of the dispersal of asylum seekers in Wigan borough. This has been through close liaison between the Council, other public services and the private providers on the procurement of asylum accommodation. This document aims to set out the principles and processes used for the procurement of properties in Wigan borough for the dispersal of asylum seekers.

2) Principles

When considering properties to be used for the dispersal of asylum seekers factors taken into account are:

- Levels of deprivation.
- Community cohesion
- Number of private lettings in the immediate area
- Dispersal ratio levels
- Pressure on local statutory services, including GP and school places
- Other potential indicators of housing market decline / collapse
- Encourage integration rather than segregation

When providers are looking to procure properties for dispersal we advise them to also consider the following –

- Not to procure whole blocks of flats / apartments (HMO's are acceptable subject to checks)
- Recent procurement activity – i.e. not focussing on the same areas consistently for procurement.

- Concentration of asylum properties in the immediate vicinity

3) Dispersal directive

The Housing Strategy Team will as necessary issue a dispersal directive to private providers detailing area(s) in which procurement is embargoed. The principles underlying the directive are in section 2 of this document. Areas will be identified by post code sector and by broad area.

4) Portfolios

The Housing Strategy team will from time to time request providers to submit a stocklist of their portfolio in Wigan Borough. This normally will be annually, but also at other times as required by the Housing Strategy team.

5) Standards of accommodation

Standards of accommodation will be monitored and enforced through the UKBA contract between contractors and sub contractors. The Council's Private Sector Housing Team will work with UKBA and its relevant sub contractor to monitor and enforce standards in line with Local Government powers.

6) Process

When considering properties for procurement private providers need to make reference to the latest dispersal directive.

- 1) Provider submits post code check pro forma (attached) to the Housing Strategy Team via e-mail. Current contact is Stuart Ratcliffe S.Ratcliffe@wigan.gov.uk
- 2) Providers need to advise if the property is a replacement property,
- 3) Housing Strategy will consider the request against the dispersal directive and other principles outlined in section 2.
- 4) Housing Strategy Team will aim to provide a decision on whether the property is suitable within 48 hours of the receipt of the request.
- 5) Housing Strategy will complete and return the pro forma to the provider to advise if property is suitable for procurement, with any other conditions relevant stated.
- 6) Once Housing Strategy have made a decision and informed the provider, they can proceed as necessary.

7) Contacts

Housing Strategy Team

Places Directorate – Economy, Waste and Infrastructure

Wigan Council

PO Box 100

Wigan

WN1 3DS

Telephone: 01942 489204

e-mail: hst@wigan.gov.uk

Appendix B

Refugee Status and move-on accommodation

If an asylum seeker is given leave to remain (refugee status), they will be no longer be eligible for UKBA support and will be required to leave UKBA supported accommodation. In order to assist those given leave to remain in the UK within the short time scales they have to leave their accommodation in regards to their housing situation, accommodation providers are asked to refer service users to the Housing Options Advice Centre (HOAC).

Contact details for referrals are:

Wigan and Leigh Housing
Housing Options Advice Centre (HOAC)
Templeton Road
Platt Bridge
Wigan
WN2 5PD

Telephone 01942 487717
Fax 01942 776592

E-mail HomelessnessPreventionTeam@walh.co.uk

Opening hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 9.00 am – 4.30 pm
Tuesday 11.00 am - 4.30 pm