



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

Updated September 2009

Housing Strategy Section
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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 Director of Environmental Services.

Leads:
Cllr Keith Cunliffe
(Cabinet Member,
Neighbourhood
Champion)

- Annual performance reports will be submitted to Cabinet.

Martin Kimber
Director of
Environmental
Services

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, and
 - 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. Go to www.wiganhomelessnessforum.org.uk/AdviceServices/aspf

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)

Accommodation dispersal and standards

- Dispersal within the Borough will involve close liaison between 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

Leads:
Steve Sargent
(Housing Strategy
Team Manager)
Gail Spruce
Inspector Greater
Manchester Police

- Pressure on local statutory services, including GP and school places
- Other potential indicators of housing market decline/collapse.

- 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.

- Standards of accommodation will be monitored and enforced by UKBA as part of contract agreements between UKBA 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.

On refugee status and move-on accommodation

- Where an asylum seeker is given indefinite 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 Aid' section if an asylum seeker / refugee has housing need or is at risk of becoming homeless, ensuring access to housing advice.

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 PCT of new arrivals, who will then allocate asylum seekers a GP. Contact:

Lead:
Ashton Wigan and
Leigh Primary care
Trust

Susan Coventry, Patient Data Manager, Bryan House, 61 Standishgate, Wigan.
Tel: 01942 772732

- 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:
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)