

Wigan

Welcomes

Asylum Seekers

Refugees

Migrants

A Strategy for supporting Asylum
Seekers, Refugees and Migrant
Workers in Wigan

September 2009

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1. Executive Summary

Wigan's population is changing. It has a relatively small ethnic population, however this is changing as larger numbers of black and ethnic minority communities are choosing Wigan as a place to settle.

Wigan has a tradition of being a welcoming place and this strategy aims to build on the many excellent services that are already on offer to new international migrants. However we recognise that there are gaps in service provision and things that we could improve to help the people that choose Wigan as a place to live to integrate more quickly into their new communities.

This Strategy shows the breadth of current provision but also identifies areas for improvement . These could be strengthened using a partnership approach to help new arrivals integrate quicker enabling them to contribute to their new communities.

Next Steps

The different elements contained within the action plan will be achieved by ensuring different strategies and plans take into account the needs of the Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Economic Migrants as identified in this strategy.

Smaller project groups will take the lead on specific projects, but overall most objectives should be achieved by raising the awareness of the needs of Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Economic Migrants within different organisations and by ensuring their different needs receive appropriate priority within mainstream provision or by specialist support where appropriate.

2. Introduction

The Refugee & Migrants Forum (RMF) is a group of statutory, non-statutory and voluntary agencies working with Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants in the Wigan Borough. The group was born out of the Asylum Seekers Providers Forum which was originally set up in 2000 to facilitate the smooth dispersal of Asylum Seekers to Wigan.

The group have produced this draft strategy for endorsement to showcase the important work that is going on in the Borough but also, and more importantly, to identify gaps in provision so that steps can be taken to achieve the group's vision:

All migrants are welcome to Wigan and we assume that most people will become long-term residents in the borough. Strong partnership working will enable support and services to be coordinated and delivered to meet people's diverse needs, ensuring a smooth re-settlement process. Once integrated migrants should then be able to contribute to Wigan life.

The strategy is aimed at any person/organisation who through the course of their business comes into contact with Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrant Workers.

Asylum seekers

- May have experienced trauma in their country of origin and believe that their lives are in danger should they return to their country of origin.
- Are awaiting the outcome of a decision on their claim for asylum in the UK which means they are in need of specialist and timely legal immigration advice and support. This process also contributes to a sense of insecurity and uncertainty about the future.
- Accommodation is provided by UK Borders Agency via contracted providers on a no choice basis. This may lead to a lack of social networks and support.
- A quick decision leaves little time to become orientated with their new environment
- Receive benefit payment lower than income support, and are stopped from entering into paid employment and in some cases volunteering opportunities.
- Accommodation provided by UK Boarders Agency includes all utility services free of charge

Refugees

- Having received a 'positive' decision on their claim for asylum, NASS support (and housing) is withdrawn after 28 days. Without planning and support, this transition period can cause homelessness and destitution.
- Are now able to work, however are likely to have little understanding of benefits and services also available to them. The Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) provided by Refugee Action can help with these issues thus helping refugees avoid homelessness and destitution.

- May have weak ties to Wigan and strong pull factors towards established communities or family and friends in other cities, for example Liverpool, Bolton or Manchester.
- May want to apply for family reunification
- Face many problems that stop them gaining employment in the UK e.g. language skills, qualifications that do not have equivalent positions in the UK etc

Asylum Seekers refused leave to remain

- Usually have a right of appeal (some do not automatically have a right to an appeal inside the UK) and so need to be properly informed of their legal position and receive timely support.
- Unable to resource legal advice other than that provided by the voluntary sector.
- Usually have support and accommodation withdrawn unless agree to voluntarily return. Without access to benefits and unable to work, quickly become destitute.
- Reluctant to return due to original fears that caused the initial claim for asylum or persecution experienced when returning via UK government agencies (accused of being spies for the British government).

Migrant Workers

- Have to register with Workers Registration Scheme and job insecurity can affect income and eligibility for benefits
- Tendency towards lower priced private rented accommodation and possible issues of overcrowding or poor housing conditions
- Freedom of movement may be limited by gang masters
- May have little understanding of employment rights – thus particularly vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace

Factors common to all new migrants to Wigan

- Access to English language learning opportunities – both before and after 6 months as each requires a different type of support / teaching.
- The need to feel welcome and receive information and orientation to life in the UK and Wigan
- Access to advice and practical support
- Support and information regarding access to services
- Opportunities to integrate with the host population
- The need to understand their responsibilities
- The need for social support from people from their own culture/language background.

The various agencies that make up the RMF (Appendix D) are all carrying out pieces of work that support asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers. However, in order to develop a strategic approach to dealing with the issues asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers face, they recognise that a partnership approach is

required. This strategy attempts to recognise the issues and via a SMART action plan (Appendix C) attempts to address them.

3. Where are we now: Current Needs & Priorities

The main needs and priorities in relation to Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrant Workers have been drawn from the key issues for settlement and integration (Appendix B). These have been completed by the individual agencies concerned and provide an honest reflection of the issues facing asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers within their own specialist areas.

Advice, Welfare & Benefits

- To educate staff in agencies who come into contact with Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants about their backgrounds, needs and entitlements.
- To ensure co-operation between agencies (statutory, non-statutory and voluntary sector) to ensure that an effective referral system is in place so that Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants access the appropriate level of advice at the earliest opportunity.
- To ensure that information is shared between agencies so that effective signposting can ensure pathways into services are clear and accessible.
- To ensure that Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants have an understanding of the level of advice and information they can expect to receive from a variety of services.

Community Cohesion

- Ensure this strategy has a direct link with Wigan Borough Partnership's Community Cohesion strategy "Embracing Change"

Community & Voluntary Support

- Try to address the issue of funding – adding certainty to the lifespan of projects.
- Look to increase capacity across the sector with more agencies working together.
- Offer further routes into volunteering and employment for refugees

Crime & Safety

- Encourage people to record Hate Crimes – no matter how small or trivial they appear to be. Only then can the Police begin to address the issues and restore the faith in their service.
- Improve the information and advice to new arrivals so that offences committed in ignorance or through naivety can be prevented.

Education, Training & Employment

- To ensure ESOL courses are accessible and provide relevant and quality information to equip the individual to integrate quickly.

- To reduce barriers to employment by working with employers to myth-bust, adopt flexible recruitment and selection policies as well as support individuals.
- To equip Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Economic Migrants with the skills to compete with the settled population in the workplace arena and provide support to ensure that the employment status is retained.
- To ensure Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants are not exploited as part of their employment.
- To ensure there is a firm link between this Strategy and the Wigan Borough Worklessness Strategy.

Health & Social Care

- Raise awareness of how healthcare services work
- Training for staff in dealing with cross-cultural issues
- Advice for staff dealing with complex immigration and asylum regulations
- Develop partnerships to address health inequalities
- Outreach work with vulnerable communities

Housing

- The procurement of Asylum Seeker accommodation needs to continue to be evenly spread throughout the Borough with consultation with stakeholders and mindful of issues such as hate crime, pressure on public services as well existing dispersal.
- Options for move-on accommodation are maximised for the whole community (those that are homeless and living in temporary accommodation), not just refugees
- Support is given to refugees to ensure they are not excluded from accessing Housing
- Refugees are provided with the knowledge about their Housing rights and options to make informed choices.
- Any poor Housing conditions of Migrant Workers are addressed and any unscrupulous landlords dealt with accordingly.
- Enable the integration and engagement of the refugee and migrant worker community by supporting access to secure housing.

4. Where we want to be: Wigan's vision for the future

In September 2002, Wigan Borough Partnership adopted a statement of commitment to Cohesion:

"Wigan Borough is made up of a number of different communities. They differ in many ways – some are small neighbourhoods with a strong history – some are newer and include people of different race, religion and background.

Wigan Borough Partnership as the Local Strategic Partnership recognises that the strength of the Borough relies on local people – and we are therefore committed to making the most of what we have locally – encouraging people to feel part of where they live and to contribute to the everyday life– and well being of the area.

- We have a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities
- We recognise and value different backgrounds and circumstances
- We want to ensure that all members of our community – whatever their background – have similar life opportunities
- We want to assist the strong and positive relationships being developed between people of different backgrounds – in the workplace, in our schools and in our neighbourhoods
- We want to support community cohesion – we wish to develop a common attitude of zero tolerance of racism and discrimination
- We want to promote good relations between the wider community and young people in particular – recognising the importance of intergenerational understanding

Supporting asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers in achieving the same life opportunities as the host population, whether that be during a short stay or longer term integration is a critical part of this vision.

The RMF has developed its own vision:

All migrants are welcome to Wigan and we assume that most people will become long-term residents in the borough. Strong partnership working will enable support and services to be coordinated and delivered to meet people's diverse needs, ensuring a smooth re-settlement process. Once integrated migrants should then be able to contribute to Wigan life.

The RMF have developed this strategy with the following aim:

The overarching aim of this strategy is to reduce social exclusion and inequalities in life opportunities by identifying and addressing the obstacles and barriers faced by asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, particularly in relation to advice and support, housing, education, health and social care, training and employment services and development of community support networks. These aims contribute to the wider strategic objectives around integration, community cohesion and worklessness.

The objectives of the strategy are:

- To establish a more accurate picture of the refugee and migrant population of Wigan and their specific needs to facilitate more efficient service planning.
- To develop a strategic approach which ensures refugee and migrants are able to access principal services and support to which they are entitled.
- To identify key themes and non-legislated needs which partnership approaches can tackle in Wigan, e.g. Welcome Approach, Advice and Support, Destitution.
- To define and enhance links with work across other partnerships to ensure the Refugee and Migrants Forum can influence the main strategies and policies, and is aligned with key plans in the borough.
- To ensure that the needs of refugees and migrants are incorporated into mainstream planning
- To enhance links with Regional and National partnerships, and to engage in relevant debates and policy development

The strategy will inform the detail of the action plan. This will be delivered via a partnership approach, but by also raising the awareness of the issues that asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers face so that clear links with other strategies and plans can be made.

5. How and who will do it

Whilst this strategy showcases the good work that is going on in the Borough as well as identifying the key issues facing asylum seekers refugees and migrants the key to its delivery is the SMART Action Plan (Appendix C). The Action Plan includes timescales for delivery and also identifies key partners. The Action Plan is split into 3 terms:

Lead roles have been identified from within services to drive forward the action plan

Short Term Actions (6 – 12 months)

- Actions that can be delivered quickly at little or no cost
- Open dialogue with other partners/agencies to raise awareness of the issues
- Continuing with the existing good work that is going on in the borough

Medium Term Actions (1-3 years)

- Actions that require pieces of work being carried out before implementation
- Actions that may require funding which is not already in place
- Actions that may take time to show an effect is being made

Long Term Actions (3 years +)

- Large, complex projects
- Long term changing of attitudes
- Actions that may take a long time to show an effect is being made

The delivery of these actions will require all agencies that are part of the RMF as well as those that are not, to work in partnership together to achieve the aims of this strategy.

Appendices

A: Background to Migration in Wigan

B: Key Issues for Settlement and Integration

- Advice, Welfare and Benefits
- Community Cohesion
- Community & Voluntary Support
- Crime & Safety
- Education, Training & Employment
- Health & Social Care
- Housing

C: Action Plan

D: Membership of the Wigan Refugee & Migrants Forum

E: Glossary of terms

Appendix A: Background to Migration in Wigan

Wigan is an old town in the North West of England receiving a royal charter from Henry III in 1246. In 1801 the population was 41,413 in 1901 the population had grown to 239,399 due largely to the industrial revolution. In 2001 the population stood at 301,417.

In terms of in-migration there was very little until the 1950's when many Eastern Europeans, particularly Polish nationals, came to work in the manufacturing (cotton) industry within the Borough and small numbers of Ukrainian and Libyan students, who came to learn mining and other industrial techniques at the colleges. In-migration remained small until 2000 following the national dispersal of supported Asylum Seekers, and in 2004 following 8 states within the European Union acquiring accession to full status, thus allowing freedom of movement for populations, in particular workforce movement. However, in terms of numbers the figures are very small with a low level of BME community representation. Direct comparison with neighbouring Metropolitan authority Bolton shows how small the BME community in Wigan actually is. In Bolton the percentage of non white British people is 12.8%, in Wigan BME communities make up 2.4% of the population, approximately 7266 people (Census 2001). However the main source for these statistics is the 2001 Census and with the national dispersal of supported Asylum Seekers and the admission of the A8 accession states occurring after this date these are likely to be inaccurate as well as an under estimate.

The regional picture in terms of immigration is very different to that of Wigan. There was very little immigration until the 1950's, with only migration from Ireland and France occurring before this date. However when New Commonwealth immigration began in the 1950s the number of acceptances in the 1970's averaged at 72,000 per year which dropped to around 54,000 per year in the 1980's. From 1996 the overall settlement figure has risen from 61,000 per year to 179,000 in 2005. In the 2001 the ethnic minority population accounted for 4 million of the population of England and Wales.

The belief that Britain has a particularly high rate of immigration is false. About 7.5% of the UK population was born abroad (BBC Born Abroad database). In Germany, the figure is 12.5 per cent; in France, 10 per cent; and in the Netherlands, 10.1 per cent. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the UK was ranked 74 out of 162 in the table of states that accept asylum seekers per head of population. The country ranked number 1 was Pakistan.

The UK's population is getting older, meaning that more working age people are needed to prop up the world's fifth largest industrial economy. By 2026 pensioners will outnumber children by two million. Also as immigrants are on average younger than UK-born people, they are less likely to need to claim a pension i.e. will return to their country of origin before doing so, and will contribute to the economy for a longer period. Wigan's population is getting older too, with 19.7% of the population over the age of 60 (2001 Census).

In Wigan we adopt a partnership approach in assisting Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Economic Migrants to settle in Wigan – no matter how long that is.

Appendix B: Key Issues for Settlement & Integration

Advice, Welfare & Benefits

Introduction

Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrant Workers have information needs. The information ranges from day to day living needs such as accessing schools, shops, refuse disposal, TV licence, driving regulations etc to specialised information such as accessing Social Fund benefits for newly settled refugees, immigration advice and employment advice etc..

There are various agencies that provide advice for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrant Workers that live in the Wigan Borough. These agencies operate at a National, Regional or local level all with differing levels of expertise and capacity.

Immigration advice and rights and entitlements is complex and specialised and changes frequently. Lack of appropriate information and advice can limit access to appropriate services.

Without information and advice about services Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants will be unable to access employment, healthcare, housing, correct welfare benefits and support and will subsequently remain excluded from mainstream services as well as society in general. Providing information to Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants is a particularly challenging task as most will have lived in countries with different public service arrangements.

Ensuring advice agencies, particularly in the voluntary sector, know what advice each other's agencies provide, and also recognising the limitations of their own expertise is critical, in ensuring that Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrant Workers receive the correct advice in a timely manner.

Asylum Seekers

Supported Asylum Seekers require information about immigration and asylum law, NASS support, access to healthcare as well as advice about local customs and the laws of the land.

Asylum Seekers with negative decision require advice about section 4 support, voluntary return and deportation/removal processes, legal appeal processes.

Refugees

Refugees and Asylum Seekers given leave to remain require advice about immigration law, social and welfare rights, access to healthcare, employment rights, education, housing as well as advice about local customs and the laws of the land.

Migrants Workers

Migrants Workers fit into several categories EEA nationals: A8 nationals and A2 nationals. All require different advice but essentially it falls under the headings of immigration law, EC Treaty rights and Social and Welfare law. Migrant workers also require advice about local customs and the law of the land.

Link to Integration & Inclusion

Without effective advice Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants will not be able to compete equally with the settled population when attempting to access employment or education. More importantly they could face being socially excluded by not accessing services they have a basic right to access such as healthcare services, housing, social and welfare benefits.

Objectives

- To educate staff in agencies who come into contact with Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants about their backgrounds, needs and entitlements
- To ensure co-operation between agencies (statutory, non-statutory and voluntary sector) to ensure that an effective referral system is in place so that Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants access the appropriate level of advice at the earliest opportunity
- To ensure that information is shared between agencies so that effective signposting can ensure pathways into services are clear and accessible
- To ensure that Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants have an understanding of the level of advice and information they can expect to receive

Community Cohesion

Introduction

The term “community cohesion” has come into common usage to describe the work promoted by central government to advance community relations and religious tolerance in areas troubled by ethnic conflict and tension.

In the Wigan Borough the number of people from different ethnic backgrounds is relatively small but the cultural and language diversity within this small group is large i.e. approximately 49 languages in a 2.4% BME population is huge. However, this means that there is a lack of cultural awareness and there is evidence of racism and far right activity in the Borough. It is also clear that the number of people from minority ethnic communities who are choosing to live in Wigan is growing quite rapidly - and we want to be sure we build on our reputation of being a welcoming place that offers people a good quality of life.

According to Refugee Action who deliver RIES, Wigan is receiving 10% of all new arrivals of supported asylum seekers to the North West.

In September 2002, Wigan Borough Partnership adopted a statement of commitment to Cohesion:

“Wigan Borough is made up of a number of different communities. They differ in many ways – some are small neighbourhoods with a strong history – some are newer and include people of different race, religion and background.

Wigan Borough Partnership as the Local Strategic Partnership recognises that the strength of the Borough relies on local people – and we are therefore committed to making the most of what we have locally – encouraging people to feel part of where they live and to contribute to the everyday life– and well being of the area.

- We have a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities
- We recognise and value different backgrounds and circumstances
- We want to ensure that all members of our community – whatever their background – have similar life opportunities
- We want to assist the strong and positive relationships being developed between people of different backgrounds – in the workplace, in our schools and in our neighbourhoods
- We want to support community cohesion – we wish to develop a common attitude of zero tolerance of racism and discrimination
- We want to promote good relations between the wider community and young people in particular – recognising the importance of intergenerational understanding

For several years Wigan Borough Partnership has promoted a range of events and activities that promote community cohesion, celebrating and learning about our diversity and our shared values through festivals and other opportunities for cultural

exchange. The Borough Partnership has also supported networks and organisations that work to address the needs of people from BME backgrounds, make them welcome and integrate them into the life of the borough.

At the beginning of 2007 the Borough Partnership began a comprehensive review of our work around community cohesion. In September 2007 they launched “Embracing Change” the final report of the Community Cohesion Commission.

Links to Integration

New international immigrants are far more likely to choose Wigan as a place to live and to settle into their new communities if the communities are positive and welcoming. Positive Community Cohesion has previously been described as an outcome of integration at a local level.

Objectives

- This strategy should have a clear link with Embracing Change and in particular its action plan.
- All partners of this strategy and statutory services need to embed the aims of this strategy and Embracing Change action plan into their own day-to-day work.

Community & Voluntary Support

Introduction

There are several voluntary and community organisations in the Wigan Borough that offer services to Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants. Some provide services because they have a status such as a charity or not for profit organisation. Some provide services because they believe they should help people less fortunate than themselves. The voluntary sector provides essential support when working independently and in partnership with the statutory agencies.

Whatever services they provide from refugee integration support to providing food parcels for the destitute, it all costs money. Many voluntary services rely on donations or short term funding streams which provide no certainty for their longevity. As a result it can be difficult to recruit staff or volunteers to work in such an uncertain environment. Add this dilemma to the fluctuating numbers of people arriving in the Borough, and most organisations will have issues with capacity.

The voluntary sector have far more trust and respect within the RMF population due to a number of reasons.

- They are non-judgemental, many workers/volunteers have been asylum seekers, refugees themselves and understand first hand the issues a new international migrant may face when coming to Wigan
- It is the norm in the community and voluntary sector to fight against injustice, by the nature of the organisations and causes it works with e.g. groups working against domestic violence, poverty, discrimination etc.
- They tend not to have a political stance or strict policy line on subjects and can therefore be independent.
- Authoritarian figures such as the Police or the Council often represent persecution to Asylum Seekers or Refugees – many have fled their country of origin to escape such organisations – therefore there is a great deal of suspicion around such figures.

It is sometimes difficult, due to capacity, for voluntary organisations to expand or get involved in something additional to their usual business. The voluntary sector can often appear to be disjointed with little joined up working.

Links to Integration

The voluntary sector plays a key role in supporting groups of people in our communities. They very often offer the only chance for asylum seekers and refugees to gain experience in working (voluntarily) and supporting people who are in a similar position to that which they were in.

Objectives

- Try to address the issue of funding – adding certainty to the lifespan of projects/initiatives
- Look to increase capacity across the sector with more agencies working together on refugee, asylum seeker and migrant worker targeted services.
- Offer further routes into volunteering and employment for refugees and asylum seekers

Crime & Safety

Introduction

The obligation of the Police is to protect life and property and by doing so not discriminate in the way that they provide that service. Whilst the Police are aware that asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants may bring with them negative experiences of authorities as well as ignorance and naivety of local laws/customs they cannot condone the committing of criminal offences and need to overcome barriers of mistrust and suspicion to ensure people comply with the law.

Hate Crimes suffered by Asylum Seekers, Refugees & Migrants

Hate Crimes are recorded as part of a partnership between the Council and the Police. This is because the Police accept that people might not want Police involvement. Therefore the Council's Community Safety Team (CST) can record hate crimes through a wide range of services without Police involvement if that is the wish of the victim.

Hate Crimes are recorded and analysed to identify themes. This is so strategies can be developed to protect victims, raise the profile of such offences and educate offenders.

Hate Crime investigations receive particular scrutiny from a senior officer and therefore Police Officers are encouraged to overcome any barriers to the investigation such as language barriers in an effort to provide a thorough investigation.

The Police and CST also offer training and awareness raising to a variety of agencies about recording and reporting Hate Crimes.

Anecdotally, people do not report Hate Crimes because they have a lack of faith in the issue being solved. Often racist incidents (which are a form of Hate Crime) are not solved and indeed the victim is not willing to make further complaints for fear of further retribution. Another reason victims will not make further complaints is because there is a lack of feedback from the Police to the complainant as to what happened, they think nothing happened so do not report it again.

Crimes committed by Asylum Seekers, Refugees & Migrants

Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants that are new to the UK are exposed to laws and cultures they are unfamiliar with. A lack of understanding, ignorance and naivety can often lead to criminal offences being committed. Driving offences (driving documentation and driving under the influence of alcohol) are the most common. Other offences are committed which could be prevented if good quality information and advice were available at the earliest opportunity following their arrival.

Links to Integration

New arrivals to the UK need to feel safe and understand the Police in the UK are there to protect rather than persecute. The public should have faith in the Police to address **all** crimes (Hate crimes included) and present offenders before the courts.

New arrivals need to abide by the laws of the UK so that the communities to which they are integrating welcome them as law abiding citizens. They may require support in order to understand such laws and their awareness raised on the legal differences between the UK and their country of origin.

Objectives

- Encourage people to record Hate Crimes – no matter how small or trivial they appear to be. Only then can the Police begin to address the issues and restore the faith in their service
- Improve the information and advice to new arrivals so that offences committed in ignorance or through naivety can be prevented
- Raise awareness of the inherent mistrust of all authorities, particularly the Police, by the immigrant community, in order that patience and understanding may be employed to increase hate crime reporting.

Education, Training & Employment

The aims of this section are to look at the education provision for both children and adults as well as training and employment options/issues for those asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants legally entitled to work.

Education

Access to education is key and in particular English as a Second Language (ESOL) courses are integral to a new international arrivals settling into their new community. It enables children to interact with other children, it enables adults to develop an awareness of the UK job search culture as well as assist in ensuring adults are competing with the settled community on a level playing field.

Wigan Council's Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS) support the education of children and young people through a number of their specialist teams, who as a partner with schools provide educational opportunities for all children of statutory school age.

The English as an Additional Language (EAL) team support schools in meeting the educational needs of children. They help carry out assessments as well as develop strategies for learning. They also have the option of including a Specialist Welfare Officer from the Education Welfare Service should issues such as attendance or other welfare issues become apparent. All children should be supported and able to achieve their full potential in a safe, secure healthy environment.

ESOL courses for adults are available at Wigan & Leigh College and are designed to help the individual with speaking, listening, reading and writing. The content is based around areas of interest, citizenship, preparing for employment, health, safety and equality and diversity. Asylum Seekers can only access ESOL courses once they have been in receipt of UKBA support or Council support for 6 months leading to additional barriers for new arrivals.

The courses are available at various levels from complete beginner level to advanced. Courses are available in the mornings, afternoons and evenings at the campus' in Wigan & Leigh and for some groups home study is available. ESOL students have to pay fees and although these are low compared to courses of comparable length they still act as a barrier to these courses. If the student is in receipt of certain benefits or their income is only at a certain level then the course fees are remitted.

Wigan Council Youth services offer informal educational opportunities to young people (13-19 years old) from BME backgrounds (refugees, asylum seekers, black young people, European young people etc) through the Rafiki project. The young people can meet in a safe environment to share issues and experiences gain skills, confidence and accreditations.

Training & Employment

Many Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants arrive in the UK having had experiences of employment in their country of origin. However the employment culture in the UK is very different. It is very often difficult to compete with the settled

community for employment as there may be a need to upskill or reskill to ensure parity.

Employers that operate in the Wigan Borough may often be reluctant to employ a former asylum seeker, refugee or economic migrant or their recruitment and selection policies may offer the flexibility that for example someone qualifying under the Disability Discrimination Act may be afforded.

Reducing Worklessness is a government priority. This then subsequently becomes a priority at a local level. As such a Worklessness Strategy has been written by the Council's Economic Regeneration section, based within Environmental Services. It is important the issues raised within this strategy are linked to the Worklessness Strategy and its steering group, made up of local partners i.e. the PCT, Job Centre plus etc.

Once employment is accessed it can be difficult to retain due to lack of knowledge about workplace customs/behaviour therefore further support for both the individual and employer may retain the employment status of the individual.

Economic Migrants have generally come to the UK to work. Very often they are unaware of local customs, cultures and laws. The UK workplace is very different to that of their country of origin and as they have few legal rights to and knowledge of welfare assistance, social housing etc. they can often be exploited by unscrupulous landlords/employers.

Link to Integration & Inclusion

Education and Employment are key to integration. An Asylum Seeker, Refugee or Economic Migrant is very often only seen to be integrated when they have gained employment. To get to this level, some education and training may be necessary. Education, as well as serving the learning needs to help skill for employment also assists in learning about local cultures, customs and laws.

This need has been recognised by UKBA who have recently awarded a sub-regional 5 year contract to Refugee Action to deliver Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES). A recent race and faith mapping report carried out by the Council for Voluntary Services cited education and work as a need for refugees in the borough.

Objectives

- To ensure ESOL courses are accessible and provide relevant and quality information to equip the individual to integrate quickly
- To reduce barriers to employment by working with employers to myth-bust, adopt flexible recruitment and selection policies as well as support individuals
- To equip Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Economic Migrants with the skills to compete with the settled population in the workplace arena and provide support to ensure that the employment status is retained
- To ensure Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants are not exploited as part of their employment
- To ensure there is a firm link between this Strategy and Economic Regeneration

Health & Social Care

There are many factors that have an impact on health and well-being:

- Poor quality living conditions
- Housing
- Poverty
- Social Issues
- Domestic Violence and abuse
- Drugs and alcohol abuse
- Sexual Health and lifestyle
- Employment and Income
- Destitution
- Lack of social support
- Language & cultural barriers
- Lifestyle factors
- Education
- Community Safety
- Racism
- Access to advice and benefits
- Physical & Mental Health and well-being as well as personal knowledge
- Health issues related to past experiences of persecution that can cause physical and mental trauma.

Refugees and Migrants are not a homogenous group. There are some very specialised needs within these groups. Refugees may have experienced traumatic events such as situations of armed combat, organised violence, detention and torture. Some minority groups may have faced persecution in the country of their origin e.g. European Roma.

Migration can be a risk factor in terms of access to healthcare, as new migrants may not be familiar with health care services and systems, experience language and cultural barriers and different expectations of services. Some people may be fearful of engaging with official services. Health care professionals require support to understand and respond to the needs of refugees and migrants.

Access to health can be further complicated by immigration status due to lack of entitlement to care or unfamiliarity of staff dealing with overseas visitors regulations. In some situations people may be denied care when they are in fact entitled to care.

Health inequalities may exist where migrant communities experience greater levels of poverty, poorer housing and poor access to education and employment. Racism is a significant factor. The wider determinants of poor health need to be addressed in order to address health inequalities. A partnership approach is therefore needed to address health inequalities. The needs of refugees and migrants need to be mainstreamed into key strategic and working partnerships, policies, strategies and service developments.

Social Care – Adults

Social Care is a range of services that support an adult to maintain an independent life. Refugee and Migrants may well have suffered experiences that will not result in the need for health care services but require some support to enable them to maintain their independence.

There are many social care services operating in the Borough but it is essential that all Refugees and Migrants can access them equally with the indigenous population.

Social Care Services will very often link with Community Organisations, the voluntary sector, as well as other statutory agencies to access the client group. If Social Care services are to be successful though, this partnership approach needs to be expanded.

As there is no system for recording or recognising new migrants arriving in the borough, adults could exist within the various communities, requiring social care but not being aware of services on offer. It can often be another situation which brings the social care requirements to the attention of social care service providers.

Social Care – Children

Children Care Services are the responsibility of the local authority. The educational needs of children are talked about in the Education section.

When Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children arrive in the Borough the Local Authority will attempt to place them with a foster family that share similar cultures/ language. Because of the small BME community in the Wigan Borough, this can be difficult and very often children are placed “out of Borough”

Within the Borough there are very successful support networks for disadvantaged children and young people these include asylum seekers, refugee and migrants.

However, similarly to the social care needs for adults some of the population populations remain hidden, particularly those of economic migrants. Very often social care services for children can visit a property expecting to see 1 or 2 children and find more in residence.

Objectives

- The wider determinants of health are addressed
- Outreach services and alternative services to improve access to care developed
- Equality of access and quality of health care improved in mainstream services
- Specialised health care needs are met, such as those of survivors of torture
- Improved Public Health Intelligence
- Promotion of Health and Well- Being

Housing / Accommodation

The aims of this section are to ensure that supported Asylum Seekers are dispersed to appropriate accommodation throughout the Borough, that a wide range of move-on accommodation is available once “leave to remain” is received, that support is available to access this move-on accommodation and that the housing conditions of Migrant Workers are of good standard and unscrupulous landlords/employers do not exploit this group.

Introduction

Everyone needs somewhere to live. Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrant Workers are no different. Since 2002 a significant number of supported Asylum Seekers have been dispersed to the Wigan Borough as part of the national dispersal of asylum seekers. At its peak in June 2003 there were 921 supported Asylum Seekers dispersed to the Wigan Borough under the target contract. The numbers as at October 2008 are 539.

There are significant deficiencies in data for Refugees and an accurate picture of numbers cannot be formulated. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that small numbers of Refugees remain in Wigan once they have received leave to remain – many leave Wigan for larger cities where established communities exist and services are more developed to cater for their needs, or where people have family members and better social support.

An accurate picture of the numbers of Migrant Workers is difficult to obtain as well. The data available relies on Workers registering on the Workers Registration Scheme and acquiring a National Insurance number. The data is out of date as soon as it is published and so cannot be relied on. Again anecdotal evidence suggest approximately 2000 - 3000 Migrant Workers, largely Polish, living in the Wigan Borough.

UKBA Dispersal of Asylum Seekers

United Kingdom Borders Agency use 3 target contract providers for the dispersal of supported asylum seekers in the Wigan Borough. These are the private providers Happy Homes, Priority Properties North West Ltd and United Property Management. The Council were a former target provider but withdrew from the contract in 2006.

The current accommodation is exclusively in the private rented sector and is evenly distributed across the Borough with no particular ward having a concentrated number of properties. The current contract requires the private provider to consult with stakeholders such as the Council, the Police and the Health Authority before procuring additional properties for dispersal. This enables stakeholders to comment on the suitability of each property with regard to existing dispersal, hate crime, pressure on public services etc.

Housing Options for Refugees & Migrants

Since 2005 the Wigan Borough has seen a significant rise in house prices. To access housing in the bottom quartile (price) it requires 5.5 times your annual income (bottom quartile). As a result the demand for social housing has increased and less people

are moving therefore fewer vacancies are arising. Therefore there are a large number of people struggling to access housing of which refugees and migrant workers are a small number.

Against this backdrop of high demand, refugees try and access housing which can involve complying with complicated eligibility criteria for social housing. Eligibility for the allocation of social housing and is governed by strict national statutory rules where there is no local discretion.

Homelessness legislation is also governed by strict national statutory rules with no local discretion. And whilst allocation policies are determined locally they are constrained by national and statutory rules.

Add this to confusion and lack of understanding of the system, it is clear that many refugees struggle to access any housing. Single people in particular resorting to sleeping on peoples floors and sofas – or even sleeping rough. Early contact with RIES and local Housing providers by those supported asylum seekers receiving a positive decision can help to alleviate many of these issues.

Housing conditions for migrant workers are largely unknown. Whilst many migrant workers have moved for economic reasons, several have also moved to avoid persecution in their own country. Subsequently many migrant workers are fearful of public authorities such as the Police or the Council and will suffer in silence rather than ask for help.

Many migrant workers have little choice where they live. Accommodation can often be part of their employment with employment agencies arranging the employment and accommodation with cost for such deducted at source. For the migrant workers that do have a choice where they live, because they very often earn the minimum wage and can only access private rented accommodation, they choose the cheaper end of the market which in some cases can often be the poorest quality with a poor landlord service. Because migrant workers have fewer legal rights, some employers and landlords exploit this forcing migrant workers to work and live in unsuitable conditions.

Link to Integration and Inclusion

Very often a refugee who is trying to access housing or a migrant worker who is in poor quality housing will not integrate into the wider community until their perilous housing situation is solved. It is difficult to contemplate accessing training or employment or join in with community events whilst in housing and income crisis.

Objectives

- The procurement of supported Asylum Seeker accommodation needs to continue to be evenly spread throughout the Borough with consultation with stakeholders and mindful of issues such as hate crime, pressure on public services as well existing dispersal.
- Options for move-on accommodation (for those in temporary accommodation) are maximised for the whole community including refugees
- Support is given to refugees to ensure they are not excluded from accessing Housing

- Refugees are provided with the knowledge about their Housing rights and options to make informed choices
- Any poor Housing conditions of Migrant Workers are addressed and any unscrupulous landlords dealt with accordingly
- Enable the integration and engagement of the refugee and migrant worker community by removing the uncertainty of housing at the earliest opportunity.
- Myth Busting campaigns around the issues of refugees and migrants' access to accommodation – aimed at indigenous communities.

Appendix C: Refugee & Migrants Forum WARM Strategy Action Plan

Theme: Advice, Welfare & Benefits				
Objective	Actions	Lead	Timescale	Updates
To educate staff in agencies who come into contact with Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants about their backgrounds, needs and entitlements.	Raise awareness of the A-Z Directory across various agencies in the Borough. Develop a series of social identity awareness briefings for use by various HR departments of the larger employers in the Borough	Steve Martlew	Short Term Medium Term	Initial Cultural Awareness Session delivered in June 2009 – strategy required to roll this out further.
To ensure co-operation between agencies (statutory, non-statutory and voluntary sector) to ensure that an effective referral system is in place so that Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants access the appropriate level of advice at the earliest opportunity.	Develop a protocol between the 3 target private providers for referrals to come to a central point		Medium Term	Informal protocol developed between the 3 private providers and the Homeless & Vulnerable Persons Team to refer new arrivals for health screening
To ensure that information is shared between agencies so that effective signposting can ensure pathways into services are clear and accessible.	Maintain an accurate A-Z Directory and continue with RMF Briefings/meetings	Steve Martlew	Short Term	A-Z Directory updated on a regular basis and made available on Councils web pages
To ensure that Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants have an understanding of the level of advice and information they can expect to receive	Develop and implement a Welcome Pack	Steve Martlew	Short Term	Several scoping meetings held - Consultant commissioned to deliver the welcome pack

Theme: Community Cohesion				
Objective	Actions	Lead	Timescale	Updates
This strategy should have a clear link with Embracing Change and in particular its action plan	Establish clear links via the leadership fo the Council	Sian Jay	Medium term	Building Stronger Communities Partnership underway with this large piece of work
All partners of this strategy and statutory services need to embed the aims of this strategy and Embracing Change action plan into their own day-to-day work.	Embed aims into day to day work	All partners	Long Term	

Theme: Community & Voluntary Support				
Objective	Actions	Lead	Timescale	Updates
Try to address the issue of funding – adding certainty to the lifespan of projects and initiatives.	Establish a BME strategy across all sectors	Sian Jay and small working group?	Medium Term	Consultant to work with Voluntary sector to discover scope of their work and how the Council can work with the sector to further support them.
	Commission the likes of SWAP & LASARS to deliver elements of the BME strategy	Sub-group	Medium Term	
	Lobby for better resources at a local, sub regional, regional and national level	All members of the RMF	Medium Term	

Look to increase capacity across the sector with more agencies working together on refugee, asylum seeker and migrant worker targeted services.	Sub group above	Include WiW network	Medium Term	
Offer further routes into volunteering and employment for refugees and asylum seekers	Co-ordinated approach to volunteering	CVS, SWAP & LASARS Economic Regeneration	Medium Term	

Theme: Crime & Safety				
Objective	Actions	Lead	Timescale	Updates
Encourage people to record Hate Crimes – no matter how small or trivial they appear to be.	Review of Hate Crime reporting procedure	Hate Crime co-ordinator	Short Term	Hate Crime Review Group now reconvened
Only then can the Police begin to address the issues and restore the faith in their service	Zero Tolerance to racism implemented by GMP & Wigan Council employees	GMP 'L' Division Superintendent / LSP Board	Long Term	
Improve the information and advice to new arrivals so that offences committed in ignorance or through naivety can be prevented	Include local customs and common offences such as driving offences within the welcome pack	Steve Martlew	Short Term	Section in welcome pack – consultant commissioned to deliver
Raise awareness of the inherent mistrust of all authorities, particularly the Police, by the immigrant community, in order that patience and understanding may be employed to increase hate crime reporting	Awareness raising sessions/briefings	GMP 'L' Division Superintendent	Medium to Long term	Pilot in Hindley of Officers visiting Asylum Seekers with the Private Providers to introduce themselves

Theme: Education, Training & Employment				
Objective	Actions	Lead	Timescale	Updates
To ensure ESOL courses are accessible and provide relevant and quality information to equip the individual to integrate quickly	ESOL and other language class information in easy to read format to be included in the welcome pack		Short Term	ESOL Commission from Working Neighbourhoods Fund – interviews to take place on 7/8

To reduce barriers to employment by working with employers to myth-bust, adopt flexible recruitment and selection policies as well as support individuals	Awareness raising and myth busting Incentives for employers to recruit and retain refugees and migrant workers	Chief Executives Economic Partnership	Short Term Medium to Long term	Linked to Cultural awareness session roll out and positive media campaign
To equip Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Economic Migrants with the skills to compete with the settled population in the workplace arena and provide support to ensure that the employment status is retained	Partnership approach to RIES with Refugee Action, Job Centre Plus, CAB etc	Refugee Action and the Economic Partnership	Medium Term	RIES have seen 65 new Refugees in the Wigan Borough since April
To ensure Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants are not exploited as part of their employment				
To ensure there is a firm link between this Strategy and the Worklessness Strategy.	Establish link officer between RMF & Worklessness sub-group	Link Officer	Short to Medium Term	

Theme: Health & Social Care				
Objective	Actions	Lead	Timescale	Updates
The wider determinants of health and health inequalities are addressed	Contribution to and dissemination of Local, Regional and National Reports and information on Health and Migration to inform mainstream strategies, policies and service developments	Public health	Short Term, Medium Term, Long Term	

Outreach services and alternative services to improve access to care developed	Homeless and Vulnerable Persons Team expanded Health drop ins provided for BME communities	Margaret Fairhurst / Jackie Miller	Short Term	HVPT expanded and launched in July 2009
Access and quality of health care improved in mainstream services	Cultural awareness training and support for staff Dissemination of information PALS Improved access to interpreter services	RED Team ALWPCT	Medium term	
Services developed to meet specialist needs eg support for torture survivors	Specialist services commissioned Training to develop specialist knowledge of staff in mainstream services	Public Health ALWPCT	Medium term	
Improved Public Health Intelligence	Improved ethnicity monitoring Needs assessment and analysis to inform commissioning	RED Team, Public Health Intelligence, Homeless and Vulnerable Persons Team	Medium Term	

Theme: Housing & Accommodation				
Objective	Actions	Lead	Timescale	Updates
The procurement of Asylum Seeker accommodation needs to continue to be evenly spread throughout the Borough with consultation with stakeholders	Reintroduce operational private providers meetings. Include UKBA, GMP hate crime stats as well as include community representatives.	Steve Martlew	Short Term	Private Provider meetings re-introduced on a 1/4ly basis – Dispersal framework continues to be applied

and mindful of issues such as hate crime, pressure on public services as well existing dispersal				
Options for move-on accommodation are maximised for the whole community, not just refugees	Establish clear link between Housing and Homelessness Strategies and the needs of the Asylum Seeker, Refugee and Migrant Worker community	Steve Martlew	Short Term	Housing Options for all continue to be developed Wigan Housing Solutions, the Bond Scheme including a review of the Allocations Process all taken/taking place
Support is given to refugees to ensure they are not excluded from accessing Housing	Establish links to homefinder and Housing Support schemes with WALH. Ensure that RIES is delivered effectively locally.	WALH Refugee Action	Medium Term	
Refugees are provided with the knowledge about their Housing rights and options to make informed choices	As above	WALH Refugee Action	Medium Term	
Any poor Housing conditions of Migrant Workers are addressed and any unscrupulous landlords dealt with accordingly	Links with employers via Economic Partnership as well as effective enforcement action via Housing Strategy/Private Sector Housing Enforcement Team	Housing Strategy Team	Medium Term	
Enable the integration and engagement of the refugee and migrant worker community by removing the uncertainty of housing at the earliest opportunity	Establish clear link between the RMF & the Homelessness Forum – protocol for vulnerable clients?	Housing Strategy Team and the 2 forums	Medium Term	
Myth Busting campaigns around the issues of refugees access to accommodation – aimed at indigenous communities.	Part of a wider myth busting/awareness raising campaign	Sian Jay	Short term	Linked to positive media campaign, cultural awareness training

Appendix D: Membership of Wigan Refugee & Migrants Forum

Name	Organisation
Linda Adhana	Ashton, Leigh & Wigan Primary Care Trust
Mehmood Ahmed	Wigan Council Children and Young Peoples Services
Umar Ali	Wigan Mosque
Patrick Allan	United Property Management
Khaled Amini	Lancashire Kurdish Association
Marion Andrews	Wigan Soroptimists
Trevor Ashton	Wigan & Leigh College
Michael le Breton	Happy Homes
Elsbeth Brighton	Wigan & Leigh Housing
Jason Clarke	Priority Properties North West
Rob Clarke	Refugee Action RIES
Kay Considine	Ashton, Leigh & Wigan Primary Care Trust
Jan Davies	Priority Properties North West
Lydia Davis	International Organisation for Migration
Karen Dunn	Wigan Council Chief Executives
Margaret Fairhurst	Ashton, Leigh & Wigan Primary Care Trust
Richard Foster	Wigan Council Children and Young Peoples Services
Shelley Gould	UK Border Agency
Juliet Halstead	United Property Management
Lucy Hale	Wigan & Leigh College
Chris Harris	Citizens Advice Bureau
Dave Herschell	Wigan & Leigh Housing
Tim Hilton	Refugee Action
Steve Holdsworth	Wigan Council Adult Services
Phillipa Hurst	Wigan Council Neighbourhood Services
Tracey Hylton	Support for Wigan Arrivals Project
Sian Jay	Wigan Council Chief Executives
Sheena Jessop	Groundwork Trust
Jojim	Refugee Action RIES
Perveen Khan	Ashton, Leigh & Wigan Primary Care Trust
Sharon Leadbetter	Wigan Council Adult Services
Joseph Lienou	World in Wigan
Shelagh Linde	Support for Wigan Arrivals Project
Hugh Logan	UK Border Agency
Louise McDonald	Wigan Council Children and Young Peoples Services
Steve Martlew	Wigan Council Environmental Services
Lee Matthews	Wigan Council Adult Services
Chris Melling	Wigan Council Environmental Services
Jackie Miller	Ashton, Leigh & Wigan Primary Care Trust
Caroline Milson	Wigan Council Legal Services
Graham Moss	Wigan Council Children and Young Peoples Services
Sadia Nawaz	Ashton, Leigh & Wigan Primary Care Trust
Abida Niaz	Greater Manchester Police
Roy Pass	Wigan Council Children and Young Peoples Services

Councillor Chris Ready	Wigan Council
Raymond Renshaw	United Property Management
Jean Richardson	Leigh Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support
Julie Ridgway	Wigan Council Environmental Services
Wayne Roberts	Priority Properties North West
Steve Sargent	Wigan Council Environmental Services
Pat Shacklock	Wigan Council Environmental Services
Councillor Eunice Smethurst	Wigan Council
Graham Sutch	Wigan & Leigh Housing
Nasi Tabrizi	Wigan & Leigh Citizens Advice Bureau
Councillor Myra Whiteside	Wigan Council
Michelle Winnard	Wigan Council Children and Young Peoples Services

Appendix E: Glossary of Terms

A8 countries – 8 countries Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia that were admitted to the European Economic Active area in May 2004.

A2 countries - 2 countries Bulgaria and Romania that were admitted to the European Economic Active area in January 2007

ALWPCT – Ashton, Leigh & Wigan Primary Care Trust deliver healthcare services in Wigan

Asylum Seeker – An asylum seeker is someone for any age that has fled his or her home country to find a safe place elsewhere. The applicant must be able to demonstrate they are unable to obtain any protection or assistance from their own authorities. In the UK the Home Office deal with all asylum applicants.

Destitute – no income, no food, no clothing, no shelter

Economic Migrant – is someone who has moved to another country to find work.

Embracing Change – Report from Community Cohesion Commission (a small group of Wigan Borough Partnership members) on Community Cohesion

ESOL – English for speakers of other languages

Happy Homes – one of the private accommodation and support providers contracted by UKBA to deliver supported asylum services.

Hate Crime – a hate crime is a criminal offence committed against a person or property because of their race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origins, religious beliefs, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation or disability.

NASS – National Asylum Support Service

Priority Properties North West - one of the private accommodation and support providers contracted by UKBA to deliver supported asylum services.

Refugee – is someone whose asylum application has been successful and have been given permission to stay in this country

Refugee Action – is an independent charity that supports refugees and asylum seekers to build new lives in the UK

RIES – Refugee Integration and Employment Service

SMART – acronym stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-based

UK Borders Agency – is the Home Officer agency that deals with all asylum applications.

United Property Management - one of the private accommodation and support providers contracted by UKBA to deliver supported asylum services.

WALH – Wigan & Leigh Housing an arms length management organisation that manages the Councils housing stock on its behalf.

Welcome Pack – is a pack of useful information to help the new migrant settle into their new communities.

Wigan Borough Partnership – is made up of representatives from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors and is responsible for the delivery of the sustainable communities plan. Is sometimes referred to as the Local Strategic Partnership or LSP

Workers Registration Scheme – Workers from the A8 countries have to register on the scheme for the first 12 months of working in the UK. The scheme is administered by the UK Border Agency

Worklessness – A person who is not employed who has little or no prospects for employment