**Destitution Steering Group**

**Terms of Reference for Membership**

**Background**

The Destitution Steering Group (DSG) is a long-established meeting within the voluntary sector that has grown over a ten year period and now has a wide membership from organisations across the West Midlands. Meetings take place roughly once a month hosted by the Red Cross, who also provide administrative support.

Recent changes across the sector, including new senior managers within Birmingham City Council and the creation of two funded regional posts to provide coordination (Migration Policy and Practice) and communications (IMIX) support, have presented an opportunity to review the role of the group. This to ensure that it is responsive and representative of sector needs as well as able to link closely with any new structures in order to advocate and effect change.

**Mission Statement for the DSG**

*To provide a forum in which voluntary sector organisations providing crisis support to migrants can discuss current activity, share best practice and highlight issues of concern around capacity and service delivery in order to influence local, regional and national policy.*

**Ethos and Approach**

* Group members will work collaboratively and look to achieve consensus in supporting the aims of the DSG
* Members to work together to agree a shared position on key issues in order to represent the collective view of the regional voluntary sector
* Act in the best interests of achieving the aims of the group
* Share information and enable open and constructive dialogue with the aim of bringing in viewpoints and expertise of various members.
* Champion the DSG and its strategic aims to others.

**Period of Review**

The Terms of Reference for the Group are effective as of *1st January 2020* and will be reviewed every six months.

**Membership**

Membership should remain limited to voluntary sector groups. Representatives from outside the sector can be invited to attend in relation to relevant agenda items but do not have a standing invitation.

Attendance is not limited to groups operating within Birmingham, those in surrounding areas should still be encouraged to attend the meetings as this will enable a more comprehensive assessment of activity in the region to be developed, providing a larger evidence base with which to support recommendations and conclusions.

**Membership Online Discussion Forum**

Members will be given access to an online Google Group (LINK HERE) to support the meeting and wider sector in the following areas:

* Facilitate discussions around sector issues
* Identify training needs
* Raise agenda items for meetings
* Update on actions
* Information on organisation activity

All voluntary sector groups can request access to the Group, and regular attendance at meetings is not a pre-requisite for membership. Statutory bodies and other groups who are invited to attend meetings will not be granted access, ensuring that discussions remain confidential to the sector.

**Frequency**

Meetings will be held on a six weekly cycle in order to provide meaningful inputs and more time for any assigned actions to be resolved.

**DSG Meetings**

Planning

* Meetings dates will be agreed as far in advance as practicable and circulated to all members.
* Members wishing to raise items for discussion to do so using the Google Group forum two weeks in advance of meeting (a specific discussion thread will be added to facilitate this).
* Updates on actions arising from the meeting to be provided one week in advance of meeting
* An agenda and updates on actions to be circulated to the membership one week before the meeting

Agenda Items

* Discussion around activity should be grouped around six areas:
* SUPPORT (e.g. Move On, Financial)
* HEALTH
* EDUCATION
* LEGAL (Encompassing all areas of Immigration Law)
* HOUSING (e.g. Initial Accommodation, Housing Availability, Process Issues)
* FUNDING
* CAMPAIGNS
* TRAINING NEEDS
* Reporting should be by exception (i.e. only if a specific issue is raised for discussion, otherwise section classed as ‘no update’)
* Updates from other relevant strategic meetings and processes should be given. Sector partners such as Migrant Help and WMSMP to be invited as ‘associate’ members and provide updates as to their work on a regular basis. Updates should be given on a rotating basis. A suggested cycle of groups includes:
* Migration Policy and Practice
* Migrant Help
* West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership
* Birmingham City Council or other local authority

Sector Activity Assessment

All members will complete a short online form in advance of the meeting. This will allow an assessment of capacity and activity in the sector over the past period to be carried out and included in a document provided to all DSG members. It will also assist in discussions with partners and statutory bodies, providing an evidence base from which to highlight trends and risks and recommendations for action.

The Migration Policy and Practice Initiative will use this data to produce the assessment and any recommendations based on their analysis. This will be included in each document and disseminated to relevant partners.

[A link to the proposed form can be found here](https://forms.gle/CVt2T7hjsf1RR7AM9)

Minutes

* Minutes to be completed and circulated to membership within two weeks of the meeting.
* Minutes will only cover discussions of agenda items and actions raised. All other updates (strategic and organisational) to be uploaded to Google Groups.
* Responsibility for minute taking will be rotated between members on an agreed rota. No member will be required to undertake minute taking duties at consecutive meetings except by prior agreement.

**Organisational Updates**

These are vital elements and promote the inclusive nature of the meeting however due to the large attendance can take significant time. Members will be encouraged to use the Google Groups Forum in order to provide a detailed update on their activities, with shorter inputs provided in relevant sections of the meeting where required.

**Training**

Although members suggested that the DSG meeting should contain a training element, it is thought that the amount of time required would not be feasible within the time allotted. Instead it is suggested that training needs form a standing agenda item and where identified given as actions to a member of arrange. Training inputs can then be held either before or after the main meeting.