**Migration Policy and Practice**

**Project Update – December 2019**

**Steering Group**

The last Steering Group meeting was held on the 12th November and the minutes will be disseminated shortly (as well as being placed on the project website). There were very useful discussions around a number of issues relevant to the sector, primarily around the ongoing issue of EU Settled Status applications. We are looking to progress support and advocacy in this area, particularly with regard to EU national children currently in local authority care.

Since the meeting we have submitted a number of Freedom of Information requests to all regional local authorities in order to try and ascertain the number of affected individuals and what provisions have been put in place. I have also spoken to groups involved in advocacy for the issue at a national level, ensuring that the West Midlands situation is included in new guidance being issued in the New Year.

I will also be meeting with the Greater Manchester Immigration Advice Unit in the next few weeks. They have undertaken some work already and we will be looking to share best practice. My thanks to Niall Mann from IMIX for his help in working on this key issue.

Other areas discussed at the meeting included ongoing issues around housing and the reporting of hate crime, particularly that experienced by Eastern European communities. I will continue to progress support for resolving these issues in my meetings with partners and statutory bodies.

**Online Discussion Forum**

We are finally in a position to launch a collaborative online discussion forum hosted on Google Groups. This has been created in response to feedback that those working in the sector would benefit from a secure platform to communicate outside of existing meeting structures. The group will not be open to the public and will contain a number of forums that will enable information to be shared. Invitation to join the forum is open to anyone working within the voluntary sector supporting migrants. If you feel you would benefit from this service then please contact me and I will send an access link. All those who are members of the Destitution Steering Group email list will receive an invite shortly.

**Online Project Presence**

The project website – [www.migrationpolicy.org.uk](http://www.migrationpolicy.org.uk) is now live and will be developing over the next few weeks with a number of additional links and details of areas where we are providing ongoing support. If there are any areas or links you would like me to include, please let me know. There is also a Project twitter account - @migrationpandp that can be used to engage with us.

**Support to Destitution Steering Group**

Following discussions with a working group, we have agreed a Terms of Reference for supporting the Destitution Steering Group meeting starting in the New Year and these will be sent to the wider membership shortly. The meeting itself will be restructured, taking place of a six-weekly basis and informed by a set agenda and regular inputs that members can contribute to using the online discussion forums.

The project will support the meeting through production of the agenda in advance of the meeting, a regular sector activity assessment that will be included in every document. This will assist in discussions with partners and statutory bodies, providing an evidence base from which to highlight trends and risks and recommendations for action.

**Work with Birmingham City Council**

I am continuing to work with the Council’s Refugee and Migration Team to progress areas of collaboration, particularly in light of the change of management following the departure of Austin Rodriguez. Currently a number of areas are being supported:

City of Sanctuary and Strategic Assessment

I continue to sit on the BCC City of Sanctuary Partnership Board and will also be part of the working group producing a Strategic Assessment looking at the city as a welcoming and inclusive environment for migrants. Staff have been seconded into the council team from Public Health England to work on this piece with an outline draft anticipated by April 2020. This will link into our own planned assessment of the sector which will highlight risks and opportunities that can then be raised with the council and other statutory bodies.

Health Provision

The council team have a new member of staff who will be progressing work around healthcare provision and access for migrants. Part of this will involve the establishment of a working group looking at an assessment of needs and building pathways for access. I have been invited to sit on this group which will meet early in the New Year.

English Language Learning Pathway

The Council are currently developing a pathway for the effective signposting of all ESOL provision within the city, ensuring that individuals are directed to the appropriate service based on location, proficiency and availability. I have been sitting as part of the assessment panel that will be awarding the tender contract for this process, ensuring that the wider voluntary sector is included in the planning so that all ESOL providers in the city are taken into account. As the project develops, I will hopefully be sitting on a six-monthly steering group over providing oversight to the Project.

**Future Activity**

Over the next few months will be engaged in a number of areas including organising a series of events with activity sessions for migrants in order to hear their experiences and better understand what they see as the barriers towards integration. These events will be based around the five thematic areas set out in our delivery plan.

We will also be seeking to better understand issues and engage with groups in the wider Midlands region. As part of the new Belong Network, a network of groups across the UK focused upon integration and cohesion, we will be coordinating with other organisations and have already met with Black Country Innovate in Walsall to develop links and understanding of their activities.