**West Midlands Migration Network Rights Thematic Meeting**

**17th August (10:00-10:45)**

Minutes

**Chair: Andy Hoole**

**Actions from previous meeting:**

* None

1. **Birmingham Social Housing Partnership Presentation – CB**

Currently, placing people in social housing is a struggle, so it’s key to sustain tenancies once people are in. Homeless street counts typically range from between 7-30 people, with an increasing number of people with NRPF. CB says it’s important that people with NRPF know where they can go for help. As the Local Authority is tied up by government and Home Office regulation, this is where Housing Associations and the Chairty Sector could link better to step up and advertise these services more.

Currently around 4,000 households in temporary accommodation, with around 600 in Bed and Breakfast. People either on the Choice-Based Letting Scheme waiting list or in temporary accommodation, can bid on housing. The Local Authority then bands people, with 17,000 currently on the register, 1,400 on the top banding, and a few thousand on the waiting list. CB shares the difficulties of placing households, as demand outstrips resource and regulation adds difficulty.

Lots of work is done within their partnership with Housing Associations, Local Authorities and the third sector to make sure everyone has access to the right information. It is a complex situation to house people and it is difficult to know who to speak to when you need help. CB reiterates the importance of attendees speaking and learning from each other about these issues, and encourages people to get in touch.

CB agrees to share statistics with PP for his monthly newsletter to 600+ tenants.

DP queries [Guardian article](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/15/thousands-of-refugees-could-face-homelessness-after-home-office-policy-change) on the 7 day limit. Nobody can give any clarity.

1. **Project with Aston University – AH and Amanda Beattie**

Centre for Migration and Forced Displacement at Aston University had a five-figure bid accepted for a piece of work that incorporates three broad projects:

1. Refugee housing
2. Border violence and missing people along the Balkan route
3. Maternity provisions for female refugees and asylum seekers in the UK and Italy

Potential to put on some co-productions, workshops, multimedia etc. as there is money available for each project. It’s currently an open book and AH invites attendees to get involved if they wish. AH to send out a poll and more information. AH will arrange a meeting with Amanda Beattie and those who are interested at the start of September.

1. **Focus group update – TG**

TG gives an initial synopsis on the work and findings. TG spoke with migrants with different migration statuses across the region about their experiences settling, giving them a platform to discuss what has gone well for them and where they have struggled. TG and AH still going through findings and more will come out in the Annual Sector Assessment, but so far:

* Rights: issues of accessing support once granted settled status/indefinite leave to remain. DP responds, explaining that the RMC do not support people once they are naturalised as British citizens. They give support with the Citizenship Application and with their first passport, and further support regarding immigration-related issues, but the RMC won’t support with welfare benefits, housing etc. This is because they try to support newly arrived communities who have fewer places to go to for support. Once people are naturalised, they have usually reached a certain level of integration. TG agrees that trying to empower people to become independent in day-to-day activities is important.
* Housing: many migrants struggling to get housing, especially in Wolverhampton, with landlords selling off housing. Gazumping often required. CB refers to recent research from Crisis on the lack of affordable options in the private rental sector, which showed <3% was accessible to people on benefits or low incomes.
* Opportunities: many migrants are underemployed, having skills and experiences which are undervalued and not always recognised. They struggle to prove/convert their qualifications and employers are often not open to understanding.

1. **Closing statements**

DP and AH encourage attendees to get in touch to arrange a date to present if they wish to.

1. **Date of next meetings and agendas**

28th September.

Agenda:

1. Sarah Taal from Baobab, and others from the University of Birmingham to present some research they have completed on migration and issues affecting women.

9th November.

Agenda:

1. Amanda Beattie to share refugee housing research

Meeting Closed