

# MIGRATION POLICY & PRACTICE

## ONGOING BARRIERS: MIGRANT EXPERIENCES OF THE BARRIERS TO SETTLEMENT IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

**MIGRATION POLICY AND PRACTICE** ANNUAL ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2025



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Authors would like to thank our funders – The Barrow Cadbury Trust and The National Lottery Community Fund for their support. We would also like to acknowledge the support of colleagues across the West Midlands Migration Network.

Thank you also to our Board of Trustees for their guidance and support as well as Asma Malik for her invaluable work supporting our outreach and coordination work with asylum seekers that significantly contributed to this report.

We would also like to thank the additional organisations who helped us in hosting the focus groups – ACH, European's Welfare Association, Refugee and Migrant Centre, Restore and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

Most importantly, we would like to acknowledge and thank all those who attended our events and shared their experiences with us.

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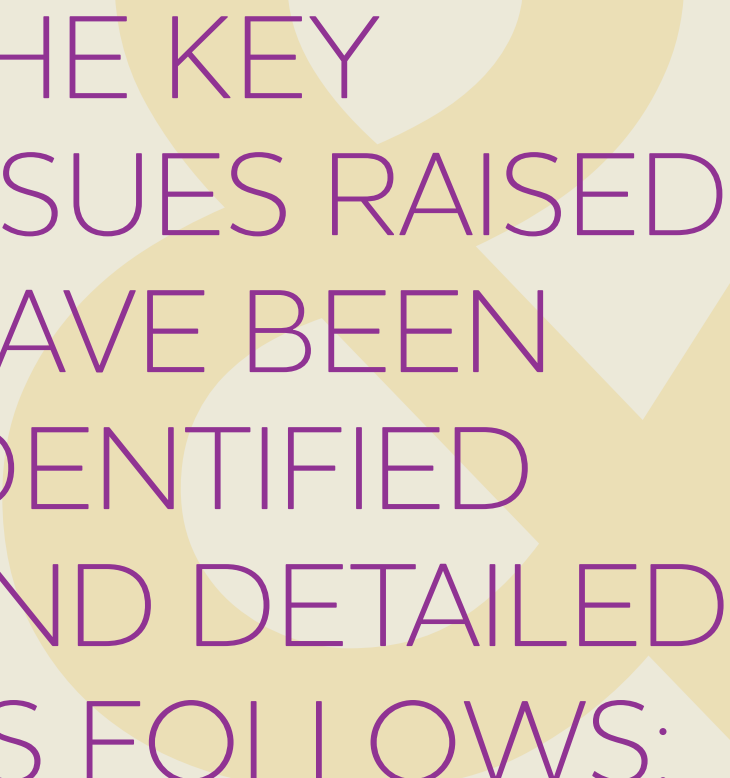


## ABOUT OUR ASSESSMENT

This report was informed by a series of focus groups and interviews held with the support of partner organisations across the region at the start of 2025. In total we spoke with almost 60 individuals, all at different stages of their migration journey.

All discussions were open-ended but grouped around the four broad themes of our work, allowing participants to talk freely about the issues and barriers they have encountered during their time in the region, and the wider UK.

The key issues raised across the four themes are expanded over the following pages:



THE KEY  
ISSUES RAISED  
HAVE BEEN  
IDENTIFIED  
AND DETAILED  
AS FOLLOWS:

**MIGRATION**  
**POLICY & PRACTICE**

## RIGHTS KEY FINDINGS

- Migrants continue to experience difficulty in accessing the specialist advice services needed to support their settlement.
- The use of hotels for those seeking asylum remains unsuitable and causes significant difficulties.
- There are ongoing barriers to accessing housing and issues with the conditions of many properties.
- Long-term residence in hotels and temporary accommodation is disruptive to employment, education, support systems and wellbeing.
- Ongoing delays and systemic barriers in the immigration system continue to impact the wellbeing and opportunities of all migrants.

## HEALTH KEY FINDINGS

- Access to appropriate Mental Health support remains one of the key barriers faced by migrants.
- Support requires greater co-design and engagement with communities to be effective.
- Language barriers remain a significant barrier to accessing appropriate healthcare.
- Some negative experiences have been reported in relation to accessing maternity support.
- Engagement with community-based activities was effective for many migrants.

## OPPORTUNITIES KEY FINDINGS

- Proficiency in English remains a key barrier to accessing employment.
- There is difficulty progressing in further education and training due to costs, immigration status and lack of flexible study options to fit around work or childcare commitments.
- There is a lack of awareness of how to get foreign qualifications recognised with the process often costly and out of reach for those on low incomes.
- More flexibility in accreditation of proficiency is needed.
- Greater access to volunteering will support migrants in building work history.
- Lifting employment restrictions on work would support settlement and provide economic benefits.

## COMMUNITY KEY FINDINGS

- Many migrants experience loneliness due to a lack of close friendships or people to rely on for support, with many citing having no family in the UK.
- Building links into local communities can take many years, with those who have been resident for long periods still experiencing isolation.
- Limited English skills prevent participation in community activities and friendship with locals.
- There is a lack of awareness of groups, activities, and spaces to meet people. Although there is great interest in involvement with community activities
- Community organizations and cultural groups provided vital support and connection. Many participants relied heavily on these informal networks.
- Limited transport options restricted the ability of many to engage with social activity.
- There appears to be a lack of tailored support and opportunities to connect migrants and local people to foster understanding.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Encourage and support links between generalist and specialist support organisations to develop joint working and knowledge sharing.

Engagement with wider voluntary sector campaigns around housing provision and support to increase awareness of rights.

Investment in all specialist advice services to increase sector capacity.

Ending use of hotels for housing those seeking asylum seekers

Increased access to both clinical and community based Mental Health support.

Enhanced access to maternity and perinatal support.

Greater involvement of those with lived experience in the planning of healthcare service provision.

Widen access to ESOL provision through learning in the community.

Support for conversion of overseas qualifications and increased investment in IELTS courses.

Development of training and support pathway for education and training in the region.

Work with employers to develop a network supporting volunteering opportunities in the region.

Lift the ban on employment for those in the asylum system.

Encourage further links between host and migrant communities through social activities.

Develop better access to travel for migrants to enable engagement with work, training and social activities.

Support efforts to develop those with lived experience into leadership positions in the sector as well as building their own groups and networks.



Read our full report on our website  
[www.migrationpolicy.org.uk](http://www.migrationpolicy.org.uk)

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