

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee – 23 May 2023

Subject: A short update report on migration services in Manchester, including Afghanistan, Ukraine and Asylum

Report of: Director of Housing Services

Summary

The following report is an update report on Council support and services to Afghanistan and Ukraine migrants in Manchester. It will also update Members on asylum dispersal in the city. The report also updates Members on the emerging Sudanese situation, Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) and Chagossians.

Recommendations

Members are invited to consider and comment on the report in terms of Manchester City Council's Services to migrants in the city.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Good quality and affordable homes reduce carbon emissions.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

The housing disadvantages suffered by some individuals or groups were comprehensively evidenced in the Marmot Report 'Build Back Fairer in Greater Manchester: Health Equity and Dignified Lives'. It has since been acknowledged that housing inequality in Manchester is directly related to the disadvantages suffered by some individuals or groups because of their characteristics.

The work of the Homelessness and Migration Service in helping people find homes that are affordable to them meets our public sector equality duty and broader equality commitments.

Supporting Afghan and Ukraine Nationals in our city to help them find employment, become integrated into society and access affordable accommodation is adhering to the commitment we have made to those populations.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Having good quality accommodation will help people to thrive. Helping Afghans, Ukrainians and Hong Kong Nationals access employment and learning opportunities will contribute to Manchester becoming a thriving and sustainable city.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Supporting those who have come to the city through migration into employment, helping them to integrate through language skills and move into affordable housing will help grow talent in the city.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The support given to our migrant communities has unlocked community potential both through local communities coming together to support new arrivals, and through the people who have newly arrived in our city making a positive contribution.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	People have opened their homes to Ukrainian households. This has meant that spare rooms in properties have been fully utilised.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Housing infrastructure is central to Manchester's inclusive growth ambitions

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

Not applicable

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Manchester has always provided a warm welcome to people from overseas who have come to our city to escape persecution and to find a better and safer life for themselves. This friendly hospitality continues today with those who are currently fleeing oppression and ill-treatment in their home countries.
- 1.2 Currently, there are 3 main cohorts who are directly being provided with support in the city. These are:
- The Afghanistan Service, provided by the Council on behalf of the Home Office.
 - The Ukraine Support Service, provided by the Council on behalf of the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC)
 - The Asylum Service, consisting of both contingency hotel and dispersed property accommodation, provided by Serco on behalf of the Home Office.
- 1.3 The City Council is also strategically involved in supporting other cohorts of migrants. An update on the support provided is also included in this report.

2.0 Afghanistan Service

- 2.1 The City Council operates three Afghan Bridging hotels on behalf of the Home Office. These are for those on the Afghan Relocation & Assistance Programme (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). These have been in operation from August 2021. There are currently 710 individuals living across the three hotels.
- 2.2 Staff provide the following wrap around support:
- ESOL – Bespoke on-site classes, community classes, online class provision
 - Language support – On-site verbal and written interpretation for 3 main dialects
 - DWP – On-site support with mainstream benefits, employment and volunteering
 - Safeguarding & Early Years Assessment
 - Health Services – On-site GP services, community maternity & health visiting service, registering with local dentists, accessing eye-sight services
 - Education (including School Admission, Travel to School)
 - Laundry Services
 - Access to Charity organisations
 - Resettlement Information e.g. Local Area & Community group information
 - Advice on Budgeting & Affordability
 - Tenancy training – understanding what bills will need to be paid and what your responsibilities are as a tenant
 - Digital Inclusion (Free SIM cards)

- Financial Inclusion – assisting with applying for a UK bank account
- Housing – Affordability assessment to support with find your own accommodation and providing incentives to potential landlords.
- Advocacy, mediation and bespoke casework support
- Work & Skills – Events, Training (Security Guard Licences), Business Start-Ups etc.
- Creating a cultural and faith appropriate environment e.g food, prayer room
- Recreation and activities – Sewing, outdoor trips, community events etc.
- Sport activities

2.3 Officers provide a flexible and supportive approach to helping people find settled accommodation. Over 792 individuals have moved on from the Afghan Bridging Hotels into dispersed and settled accommodation across the north-west and north-east as well as other areas across the Country.

Case Study

Louise (not her real name) came to Manchester with her 4 siblings. Whilst living in the Afghan Bridging Hotel, she volunteered with the Council team who are supporting the households in the Afghan hotels. After moving out of the bridging hotel into a property Louise applied for a support worker role with the City Council. She has now been working for the Council for circa 12 months. Her siblings have also gained employment in the NHS, hospitality industry or are studying.

2.4 In 2021-22 the City Council made a pledge to offer 10 properties as move-on for Afghan families. The families who have moved into these properties have settled well and are in employment. In 2022-23 it was requested that an additional 10 properties were allocated. There are three properties identified so far which are waiting for repairs and relets to be completed.

2.5 Officers are supporting Afghan nationals to find their own private rented sector accommodation, but this is difficult due to the housing market and affordability. Many are large families and benefit capped. They also wish to live in areas that have high housing demand, such as London and Manchester. Officers are helping them understand what is affordable and the areas of the country where they can afford to live. Officers are also helping families into employment to eradicate the benefit cap barrier.

Case Study

Many Afghan Nationals do not know other areas of the Country and therefore are often unwilling to accept affordable accommodation offers there. Officers have provided day trips to other parts of the country such as Barnsley and Blackpool where housing affordability is more achievable within the benefit allowance that is available. During these trips visits have also been made to local facilities that support people to continue to practice their faith and cultural practices which is an important consideration of any move. Some households

have moved on to live in these areas after visiting and understanding what is on offer in other areas of the Country.

- 2.6 In February 2023, the Home Office announced their priority is 'accelerated move-on' from Bridging Hotels, through a programme of supply, considering local deals for some areas and taking steps to address issues such as refusal rates and affordability.
- 2.7 On 29 March 2023, the Home Office announced further details of ending temporary hotel accommodation for the 8000 Afghan nationals still living in bridging hotels across the country and the Rt Hon Johnny Mercer MP set out the funding and plans to step up support to help Afghans access settled accommodation. The Home Office has written to individuals and families accommodated in bridging hotels setting out the support available to them to help enter settled accommodation. The Afghan population in the three hotels in Manchester have been given notice that their support will cease at the end of August.
- 2.8 Officers are working tirelessly to provide intensive support to Afghan nationals in bridging hotels to ensure they find affordable and settled accommodation and there are no homeless presentations from this cohort. This includes changing staffing patterns to ensure those in employment have support in the evenings, additional Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) staff in the hotels, and sessions to explain what will happen if they present as homeless. It also involves identifying those households who are vulnerable, for example due to medical issues, and therefore will struggle to move into alternative accommodation. These households will be prioritised for Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) properties (see section 4 below) which are being brought online by Local Authorities across the Country.
- 2.9 The Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) are also providing additional funding to Local Authorities to help support Afghan households if they move into the private rented sector to ensure the accommodation is sustainable. This support will help them link in with their new local community, move children into local schools, move to a local GP, and gain employment. Manchester City Council will be accessing this funding for those families who move into Manchester to ensure that they are well supported and do not become homeless in the future.

3.0 Ukraine Service

- 3.1 There are two schemes through which Ukrainian nationals can enter the United Kingdom. The first is through a 'Friends and Family' scheme. The Home Office has not provided any information on how many people are living via the friends and family scheme in Manchester. The Council is not commissioned to provide any support to either the Ukrainian people or their family or friends on this

scheme. The scheme is entirely based upon the 'family reunion' approach and premise that the friends or family will support the guests living with them.

- 3.2 The second scheme is called the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme. This scheme is where 'hosts' in England offered to have a Ukrainian household live in their spare room/s in their home. The Council is commissioned by the Home Office to provide support to the Ukrainians who have entered via the 'Homes for Ukraine' route and their hosts. This is because many of the hosts were unknown to the Ukrainians entering the country through this route. In Manchester an estimated 447 hosts joined the scheme; circa 196 currently have a guest living with them. There are 400 guests, consisting of 130 families and 127 single households.
- 3.3 As the hosts and guests were unknown to each other, the initial main consideration was safeguarding and health and safety. All hosts and people living with them over the age of 16 have been DBS checked. All properties have had gas and electrical tests as well as a Housing Health and Safety Ratings System (HHSRS) inspection to ensure there are no Category 1 hazards at the property.

Lara (not her actual name) came to Manchester 9 May 2022, moving in with host along with her two teenage children. Lara did not speak English and struggled to negotiate a good relationship with her hosts. Unfortunately, the relationship broke down but having a support worker meant the family was successfully re-matched to a new host not too far away. The family are now thriving. Lara is learning English and volunteers weekly at Manchester Cathedral welcoming visitors. Her daughter found her own college course and her son is writing his own fantasy book (in English) in his free time.

- 3.4 All Ukrainian guests and hosts have a named support worker who visits them on a fortnightly basis. The support worker provides the following support:
- Bi-weekly Welfare Checks and bespoke casework support
 - HHSRS Property Checks
 - Gas and Electric Checks
 - Safeguarding Checks – Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on hosts and household
 - £200 Emergency Maintenance Support payment
 - School Admission applications
 - Education admissions for those over 16
 - Early Years Assessment
 - Biometrics Residence Permits (BRP) and other entry immigration issues
 - Welfare Benefit Applications – Universal Credit, Child Benefits etc.
 - Health Services – registering with G.P, Dentists etc.
 - Financial Inclusion – assisting with application for UK Bank account
 - Digital Inclusion (Free SIM cards/ discounted refurbished Laptops)
 - English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision
 - Work & Skills (including Volunteering and Self-employment)

- Qualification Conversion
- Weekly standardised Newsletter providing updates on useful events and points of interests
- Advocacy, Information, Advice and Guidance
- Signposting and making referrals to other mainstream services and VCSE organisations for various available support resources.
- Translation Service and attending appointments
- Housing Options with offer of Private Rented Sector incentives
- Local area and community information
- Mediating issues between the guest and their host.
- Rematching guests with another host, if their previous hosting agreement has ended or broken down.
- Acting as a point of contact for services

3.5 There have been 38 rematch requests, 31 of which have been rematched. There have been 19 presentations to the homelessness service, but the majority (14) of these have been from the friends and family scheme.

3.6 As the situation in Ukraine continues, many guests now wish to be independent, and hosts want their homes back. The Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) announcement of the £500million Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) will see a small number of Ukrainians benefit from an offer of settled accommodation (see Section 4.0 below). Officers are providing intensive support to help Ukrainian guests gain employment, so they are more able to find and afford their own accommodation and so prevent homelessness. Of the 159 working age guests who have been in the country for over 6 months, 76 of the guests are now in some form of employment. Officers are undertaking the following actions:

- Purchasing qualification conversions on bulk to help guests prove their qualifications to future employers to help gain employment.
- Circulating work & skills fliers
- 1-2-1 Sessions identifying potential jobs in the community
- Weekly Newsletter – with links to jobs within the Council, Greater Manchester jobs and NHS professionals
- JCP Plus Appointment support
- Referral to refurbished laptops scheme (£50 each)
- Advertising a suitable job of the week – E-mail to guests on a weekly basis
- Exploring volunteering opportunities within the Council and VCSE
- Liaising with VCSEs to get additional support into employment – The Growth Company, United for Ukraine.

3.7 Significant work has been undertaken with Manchester Adult Education Service for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision. A commissioning process to increase provision in the city resulted in 150 additional places. The

service has also transferred ESOL provision from day to twilight (4-7pm) and evening (6-8.15pm) classes to support those in employment.

Iryna (not her actual name) came to Manchester in June 2022. She "hit the ground running", initially finding part time work before becoming employed in her career job as content writer and graphic designer. To give back to her new Ukrainian community she assisted in designing the layout and produced graphics for the fortnightly newsletter the Ukraine support team send to both hosts and guests. In December 2022 she was able to move to live independently but still found time to provide staff training to the team to enable them to continue to produce the newsletter without her professional assistance.

- 3.8 There are concerns regarding the mental health and well-being support for Ukrainians. Some have struggled with counselling via an interpreter. There are services that guests are now being referred to - Mental Health of Ukrainians.org and there are two Ukrainian psychologists who are guests, who are looking to undertake wellbeing and counselling sessions.

4.0 Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)

- 4.1 In December 2022 the Home Office announced a £500 million Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) programme, across a selection of Local Authorities experiencing significant housing and homelessness pressures. The programme provides funding to purchase properties on the open market, or to renovate properties that are currently empty, to ensure additional properties are available to help accommodate Afghan and Ukraine households. The Council must match fund the LAHF funding from capital monies, but the properties are subsequently available for social / affordable housing in the future.

- 4.2 The Council has signed a Memorandum of Understanding and was allocated a grant of £3,266,898 to provide 30 housing units, at either a social rent, capped at LHA (if existing MCC property) or affordable rent if newly purchased. The target provision is 7 (4+ Beds) for large Afghan families living in Bridging Hotels and 23 (2+Beds) for either Afghan or Ukrainian nationals. The Council is expected to use its best endeavours to meet the delivery target of 30 November 2023, and officers are working across internal services and with the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) to progress this. Other Local Authorities across the country have also expressed interest and officers in the Afghan Bridging Hotels are collaborating with these Councils to accommodate Afghans from Manchester hotels to these areas.

- 4.3 Across England, the LAHF is going to be expanded in the future by £250m with the majority of the additional funding being used to house Afghan nationals currently in bridging accommodation, and the rest used to ease existing homeless pressures.

5.0 Welcome Desk for Ukraine Nationals

5.1 The UK Government humanitarian response to the Ukraine crisis introduced welcoming points at port of entry in the UK for Ukrainian nationals. Manchester and other relevant Councils who have primary ports of entry were asked to establish welcome point arrangements to provide an initial welcome to the UK and any immediate support required. On 23rd March 2022, Manchester Welcoming Point was stood up as a Tier 1 provision, based at Terminal 3 Arrival Lounge in Manchester Airport. This was staffed by Council officers, British Red Cross volunteers and Council staff who volunteered through their volunteering days.

5.2 The Welcoming Point core services included:

- Welcome/rest point, with toilet facilities, telephone, telephone charging facilities and translation capability
- Provision of any necessary immediate humanitarian assistance including food, drink, over the counter medical supplies and other sundries
- Link with local travel operators for general provision of advice on onward travel
- Triage point in case matching arrangements broke down, or where arrivals were not met by a host as expected.
- Provision of emergency overnight hotel accommodation where unexpected travel delays resulted in there being no feasible onward travel options until the next morning, or where hosting arrangements broke down
- Signposting to relevant online welcome guidance covering access to public services and advice; and
- Assuring any safeguarding concerns/cases were passed on to the appropriate Local Authority services and liaising with social services as required in the case of any safeguarding concerns flagged by the Border Force.

5.3 The welcoming point was very successful and helped significant numbers of people who used Manchester as their entry point into the Country before travelling on to the town or city where their hosts lived. Manchester Airport Group were generous providing free parking for hosts who were picking up their Ukrainian guests. For those who were moving on to live in Greater Manchester, Transport for Greater Manchester were instrumental in helping the process by providing free travel tickets for the Ukrainian national's initial journey to their host. The charity 'Manchester Homes for Ukraine' provided clothing for people who had left Ukraine with very little, the Rotary Club donated books for children to help with the onward journey, and the Chaplaincy at the Airport provided activity packs for women with children to help entertain them.

5.4 In Summer 2022, DLUHC made the decision to reduce funding, and subsequently decommission the service from 1st April 2023. Manchester reviewed its operation model accordingly to ensure that the welcoming point provision continued until the end of the fiscal year.

5.5 2556 individuals (adults and children) accessed support from the Manchester Welcoming Point from start of provision 23rd March 2022 – 31st March 2023. Of these, 1089 were given Free Vodafone SIM Cards and 423 Ukrainian arrivals registered and received £50 Cash Assistance from the British Red Cross (Cash Assistance value - £21,150).

6.0 Asylum Contingency Hotels

6.1 Due to the demand on the asylum dispersed accommodation portfolio, the Home Office are currently accommodating asylum seekers in contingency hotel accommodation across the country. There are currently 5 hotels in Manchester.

6.2 Serco is contracted by the Home Office to provide the accommodation for asylum seekers. The Local Authority is not paid for any provision or support at the hotels and does not have any direct control over who is placed there and how they are managed.

6.3 There is a peripatetic health provision onsite most days at the hotels. Currently, Go To Doc (GTD) is responsible for provision at 3 hotels, and Hawthorn Medical Centre is the interim provider for the other 2 hotels. These health providers manage any infectious diseases, as well as providing vaccines and other required health provision. Public Health visit the hotel sites regularly and have given briefings to staff on minimising health risks.

6.4 Officers continue to monitor demographic data provided by Serco, to ensure safeguarding protocols are invoked without delay where a person claims they are below 18 years old. If someone is claiming to be under 18, they are placed in separate rooms and referred to Children's Services. Children's services subsequently assess the young person, and if they are under 18 are taken into care. Children's Services are currently in discussions with the Home Office to agree referrals from Manchester into the National Transfer Scheme. This scheme is the process by which the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are distributed across the Country so that any one Local Authority does not have disproportionately more than others.

6.5 Key partners in the voluntary sector continue to respond to essential needs such as socks, shoes, trainers, male clothing and winter coats. Activities to support mental health are being explored with residents in the hotels. There is a contract currently in place with Caritas Shrewsbury to support Afghan refugees in the bridging hotels which is being expanded to help provide some support in the asylum hotels. GMP and neighbourhoods services are aware of the hotels and pay close attention to any community concerns. Staff have provided briefings for residents on hate crime, reporting hate crime and cultural awareness.

6.6 An officer from the Council chairs monthly multi agency meetings to discuss any issues or concerns and ensure on-going support offer. This includes, but is not exclusive to, the below:

- Safeguarding concerns
- ESOL (on-site and at Caritas St. Aidan's Centre)
- Toiletries
- Food + food vouchers for families
- Health Services
- Education (including School Admission)
- Recreation Activities (Knitting+Bollywood dancing)
- Laundry Services
- Access to Charity Organisation for Essential items (Clothes, Shoes)
- Local Area Information
- Referral to other mainstream services
- Advice & Guidance sessions
- Asylum guide orientation sessions for the new arrival
- Volunteering opportunities
- Digital Inclusion - SIM card and phones
- Cooking sessions at Caritas St. Aidans Center

6.7 On the 21st April 2023, the Home Office policy on serving positive or negative decisions on asylum applications in contingency hotels changed. It moved from households needing to be in dispersed accommodation prior to a decision being served, to decisions being able to be served in contingency hotels. From a Home Office and individuals perspective, this is a welcome change as decisions will be able to be made in a more timely manner. From a Local Authority perspective, this will place more pressure on the homeless service in areas which have a large number of hotels as the numbers presenting will increase. In Manchester there will be increased numbers of single males who present as homeless due to the population in the contingency hotels, but it is anticipated that the majority of these will not progress to the homeless main duty as they will not be in priority need.

7.0 Asylum Dispersed Accommodation

7.1 The latest published figures (Dec 2022) show that there are 96 households on section 4 support (destitution accommodation when an asylum seekers appeal rights are exhausted (ARE) but they still cannot return to their country) and 775 households on section 95 support (accommodation for someone who has claimed asylum whilst waiting for a decision to be made) in Manchester. This equates to 871 households in dispersed asylum accommodation.

7.2 Last year the Government introduced 'full dispersal' across the country. This means that those Local Authorities who had previously not had asylum seekers in their areas will now have Home Office providers procuring accommodation in their area. Although this was originally introduced to reduce the numbers in certain Local Authorities and redistribute numbers, the demand is so large that the Home Office needs to continue to procure accommodation across the northwest.

- 7.3 Local Authorities across the northwest, in conjunction with the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (RSMP), have put together a proposal to the Home Office on how this process should work, taking into account current numbers in both dispersed and contingency hotel accommodation, as well as levels of deprivation and homelessness. The Home Office have also produced a dispersal plan, based upon current numbers in dispersed asylum accommodation and cluster limits per population. The current agreement is that the Home Office will procure up to the numbers within the RSMP plan, and then local negotiations will take place on additional placements.
- 7.4 The Home Office is putting in place a new process for agreeing the procurement of dispersed accommodation. The previous process was that a request would come to the Local Authority when a property was offered to Serco, the Local Authority would check the property and area with Greater Manchester Police, Planning, the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and other internal departments as applicable and then agree or explain why the property could not go ahead. This process was complicated as often by the time the information had been collated and returned to Serco, the property had been offered to an alternative provider or put on the open market. The new process is based upon agreeing areas for procurement in advance. A spreadsheet has been completed to an agreed area level and any concerns for procurement in particular areas are identified in advance. This gives Serco a basis to work from and know areas to avoid. Officers are monitoring procurement requests on a regular basis to ensure procurement is not going over cluster limits in particular wards.
- 7.5 Requests for procurement have increased slightly in Manchester but not to the extent of elsewhere due to the buoyant market rent levels. Serco would like to procure in the current moratorium area (M8, M9 and M40) but a formal conversation between the Minister and the MP for Blackley and Broughton would need to occur before this could be lifted.
- 7.6 The Council has led on a national piece of work with the Home Office and Treasury Department to identify any additional costs that may be incurred through having asylum seekers in the city. This will inform any future New Burdens funding. As a result of this, the Government has given all Local Authorities an additional £750 per new bedspace for asylum seekers in the city as a one-off payment. Officers are requesting that this is an ongoing yearly payment to offset additional social care, education, health etc costs.
- 7.7 On Thursday 30 March 2023, the Government laid a statutory instrument (secondary legislation) that, subject to agreement of Parliament, will temporarily exempt asylum accommodation from House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing requirements. This will make changes to section 254 of the Housing Act 2004 subsection (5):

- “(5A) A building, or part of a building, in England which is within subsection (1) is not a house in multiple occupation for the purposes of Part 2 during the relevant period if—
 - (a) it is occupied solely or principally by asylum-seekers or members of their household; and
 - (b) the person managing or having control of it is—
 - (i) a relevant landlord, or
 - (ii) an AASC provider; and
 - (c) in the case of an AASC provider, the occupation as mentioned in paragraph (a) began in the period beginning with the date the Houses in Multiple Occupation (Asylum-Seeker Accommodation) (England) Regulations 2023 came into force and ending with 30th June 2024.

7.8 The Regional Strategic Migration Partnership and Greater Manchester Combined Authority are coordinating a response to Government on behalf of Local Authorities planning, compliance and enforcement, legal, housing and migration teams. This joint response will set out a number of questions that need clarifying as well as raising concerns about the proposed changes to legislation.

7.9 The Home Office announced a new streamlined asylum process on the 23rd February for five nationalities – Afghanistan, Syria, Eritrea, Yemen and Libya. People from these countries who arrived in the United Kingdom before 28th June 2022 have been sent a questionnaire and it is probable that they will receive a positive asylum decision if they complete and return it correctly. The Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit put in place a service to support people to complete the applications correctly. Unfortunately, the take-up has been very low. Officers are requesting that the Home Office provide information on numbers who have been sent / received their questionnaire, granted status in the UK and have been served discontinuation notice to leave their asylum support accommodation. This would help to plan support options for those that are moving onto mainstream services.

8.0 Sudanese Refugees

8.1 There are currently flights coming into the Country from Cyprus, where British Nationals from Sudan are being flown to safety for completing appropriate visas and paperwork before transitioning into the United Kingdom.

8.2 The City Council has been asked to put in place an emergency welcome desk if there are any flights into Manchester airport. Processes and staffing have been organised to be stood up at short notice if required. This includes advice, free onward travel to areas of the country where they have existing connections, basic necessities if required, potentially overnight accommodation if flights arrive very late, and any immediate health concerns.

8.3 Most arrivals will be able to move quickly to their onwards destination, whether that be family and friends or their own home. Nevertheless, in some cases, some

refugees will need to present as homeless. The Government is changing the Habitual Residency Test for those UK nationals arriving from Sudan to ensure they can access benefits and homelessness assistance as quickly as possible.

- 8.4 The Council is discussing potential homeless applications with Local Authorities across the northwest to agree a dispersal process if required. This would mean that Local Authorities all accept a small number of applications on a rota basis so that Manchester, as the port authority, does not take a disproportionate number.

9.0 Hong Kong British Nationals (overseas) (HKBN(O))

- 9.1 The Home Office opened an immigration route on 31 January 2021, providing British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) status holders from Hong Kong and their eligible dependents with the opportunity to come to the UK to live, study and work, on a pathway to citizenship. Their visa condition includes 'No recourse to public funds' which allows employment but not access to mainstream benefits e.g. Universal Credit.
- 9.2 On 24 February 2022, a change to the BN(O) visa route was announced to allow some adult children of BN(O) status holders to apply to the route independently from their BN(O) parent. From 30th November 2022 the United Kingdom government opened a new option route for BN(O) status holders' children aged over 18 born on or after 1st July 1997 to apply for the BN(O) visa independently. Young HKBN(O) are likely to suffer from psychological issues of different degrees due to lack of family support and post-traumatic stress since the 2019 Hong Kong social movement.
- 9.3 The Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) is leading on the delivery of a funded national 'Welcome Programme' to support those on the British National (Overseas) route and their families to help them to successfully settle in their new communities. As part of the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership, the Council is supporting the programme through the following:
- Providing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to support BN(O) status holders and their families with English language
 - Providing destitution support if required
 - Online Welcome Pack
 - Being part of a network of 12 Hubs across the UK to support those on the BN(O) route
 - Partake in the commissioning panels to distribute national and regional voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) funds to deliver 42 projects to provide mental health and employability support as well as broader social integration activities

- 9.4 DLUHC is also providing the funding to deliver a reporting and support service for those on the BN(O) route and all other East and Southeast Asian communities in the UK who experience racism or any forms of hate. The Regional Strategic Migration Partnership is progressing this work.
- 9.5 The Home Office is also providing grant funding to Local Authorities and VCSE organisations to provide ESOL, Interpretation/ Translation Services and Destitution support. According to the Census 2373 residents (all ages) stated Hong Kong as their country of birth.

10.0 Chagossians

- 10.1 There have been changes to the support and rights that Chagos/British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) can receive. From the 23rd November 2022 all descendants are entitled to be British Citizens. Whilst the community in Manchester is relatively small (it is challenging to know exact numbers) it is the second biggest in the UK, after Crawley.
- 10.2 There are c.3,000-5,000 people eligible to apply for citizenship under this route in Mauritius and the Seychelles, who may choose to join family in Manchester, and there are also potentially people living without status in the UK at present who are also eligible to apply for citizenship in-country. There has been no further update from the Home Office on this cohort to date.
- 10.3 At the moment, no one knows the impact this may or may not have but there is the potential that people could start presenting to services once they have citizenship. This will continue to be monitored.

11.0 Conclusion

- 11.1 We are committed to providing the best support we can to asylum seekers and refugees in our city and to ensure that Manchester remains a warm and welcoming place of safety.