

New Arrivals Voice

6 Month Update



“ Being part of this group has made me feel welcomed and supported. It has given me confidence to share my ideas and feel included. ”

Group participant

Since September 2025, on behalf of Community Action, Rebuild East Midlands have been facilitating the Lived Experience Group of the New Arrivals Alliance. This report will cover the first 6 months of the group, with a further update to follow as the group progresses.

Creating the Group

Refugee organisations in Derby were asked to suggest individuals who might be interested in joining the group; the individuals were then asked to submit an expression of interest. An open event was held in August 2025 by members of the New Arrivals Alliance, where people could come along and discuss what would be involved in joining the group. Individuals who attended were asked about potential barriers, so that these could be minimised and attendance maximised.

Following this meeting, a time, location and date was agreed for the first meeting. Everyone who submitted an expression of interest was invited to the first meeting.

The group agreed that there would be three priorities:

- Discussing what needs to change for New Arrivals in Derby and feeding this back to the New Arrivals Alliance, playing an active role in decision making within the Alliance.
- Increasing awareness and knowledge in the community of what New Arrivals need to know
- Amplifying the community's views and experiences to decision makers and policy makers.



The Group

Eighteen different individuals have attended the meetings of the group. Four members of the group were recruited following the first meeting, with two recruited by the group. Eight members have attended the majority of the first six meetings. Three members have moved out of Derby since the meetings began, three we have lost contact with and one has started full time work.

Currently there is a core group of eleven individuals who are attending meetings regularly. Of these, there are four women and seven men. They are a mixture of refugees and asylum seekers. All have lived in Derby as an asylum seeker, in Home Office accommodation, including the hotels, hostel and dispersed accommodation.

The group includes people who volunteer, or have previously volunteered, at the British Red Cross, Derby Food for Thought Alliance, Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity, Susanna Wesley House, Upbeat Communities, as well as other organisations in Derby and beyond.

Participants receive expenses for attending the meetings.

Participants are from ten different countries:

- Afghanistan
- Cameroon
- Ethiopia
- Eritrea
- Iraq (Kurdistan)
- Iran
- Libya
- Sri Lanka
- South Sudan
- Sudan



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Thank you for the meeting. it was such a wonderful gathering. Thank you all for making us feel home away from home

Group participant

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The Group Agreement

In the first meeting, the group created the following group agreement:

1. What is shared with the group will be confidential- no names, nationalities or identifying details of who said what will be shared.
2. Respect and listen to one another
3. Kindness when asking questions
4. If we don't understand, it's okay to ask for someone to clarify
5. Be friendly to one another
6. Give everyone the opportunity to share and speak if they want to
7. Only share what you want to share- you don't have to share about your previous experiences in getting to Derby.
8. Respect the start times of the group
9. We are all equal. No outside observers, only active participants.

Developing the Group

The group decided on what they would like to be called, choosing New Arrivals Voice, with the tagline "Derby Stronger Together". A member of the group also designed the logo, with the group choosing the colour scheme. The blue was chosen to link to the New Arrivals Alliance logo. The logo was designed to represent community, equality, togetherness and hope.



To encourage participation, we have tried to be as inclusive as possible. There is no minimum language requirements to participate in the group, and the group are encouraged to ask if they do not understand anything.

The group time was changed, to work around Home Office reporting and school pick up and we have been joined in most meetings by the young child of one of the participants. The group are extremely dedicated, arranging work, volunteering responsibilities and education around the meetings.



Our group of 8- 12 members meets regularly to discuss how we can support new arrivals in Derby, especially asylum seekers and refugees. We talk about what practical help is available, how to access local services, and where to find important places and support. During the meetings, everyone shares new information and ideas, and we learn a lot from each other's experiences. We are given the freedom to speak openly and share our thoughts without fear. The atmosphere is always respectful, and everyone behaves in a kind and supportive way.

Group participant

Key areas of focus:

- What was important when they first arrived in Derby? What is important now?
- The Refugee Sector in Derby
- Clothing provision
- Education and ESOL providers
- Access to good employment and vocational training for asylum seekers and refugees
- Homelessness
- Interactions with public services
- Access to legal support and what good legal support looks like.

“ We are already victims of the system, we face so many barriers. Everything impacts our mental health

Group participant

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Key outcomes:

- The group offered input into what good clothing supply looks like in Derby, which was fed back to the New Arrivals Alliance and informed decision making for funding for clothing provision.
- The group discussed what information is needed for new arrivals in Derby and how. These ideas were shared with the Single Point of Contact and will form the basis of the Welcome Pack.



- The group met with Derby's Social Cohesion Coordinator and shared their views on what support they would need to feel comfortable reporting hate crime, as well as what barriers are currently in place. The group emphasised that accessible information is needed for the community, if the onus is on victims to identify hate crimes. The group also made the point that hate crime is a symptom of a lack of social cohesion and they wanted to know what is being done to build social cohesion.
- The group submitted evidence for the UK Government's Inquiry on Routes into Settlement, [which is published here](#).
- The group responded to the UK Government's Earned Settlement Consultation. The group unanimously agreed that it was too complicated, the suggestions are too long (30 years until settlement for a refugee who arrived here by irregular means). The group strongly agreed that there should be safe routes for asylum seekers, rather than being punished for how they arrived.
- The group are exceptionally keen on sharing their views and taking action to improve life for new arrivals. With careful facilitation, the quieter members are now comfortable sharing their views, as well as respectfully disagreeing with each other.
- Members of the group were invited to meet the MPs for Derby North and Derby South, Catherine Atkinson and Baggy Shanker. The group asked questions based on their experiences, and the MPs wrote to the Home Office to raise the groups' concerns.
- One member has been reunited with their children, through the Refugee Family Reunification Scheme.
- Two members have received refugee status and have since started working

“Our final ask is to please think about what it must be like to leave your homes, your families and your entire life. What it must be like to travel across the world seeking sanctuary, only to arrive here and face barrier after barrier. We just want to be safe, and to live our lives”

*Excerpt from New Arrivals Voice
published evidence*



Facilitator Reflections

For the first six months of the group, we have been focusing on creating a safe space, building individual confidence and forming the group dynamics. The group are now very comfortable with each other, and with the guests who have attended the meetings. The group collectively are exceptionally passionate about making life better for New Arrivals in Derby and are eager to continue in the work we have been doing together.

The next phase of the group will focus on increasing the group's confidence as representatives outside of our meetings, increasing knowledge of the group in the community of the gaps we have identified, raising awareness of the group and continuing to amplify their voices to promote real change.

“
We have talked a
lot, now we want
to start doing
something

Group participant

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The group have big ambitions; they want to continue speaking to people in power, reminding them that we are all just people. Many of the group have lived in different cities, but they have stayed in Derby, or returned to Derby because Derby is their home away from home. They want to take tangible actions to improve integration in the community, and make life better for refugees and asylum seekers in Derby.

“We love Derby because of the community and the people.”

Excerpt from New Arrivals Voice published evidence

We would like to thank Community Action Derby and the New Arrivals Alliance for their collaboration and for funding this valuable work.



For more information about this work, please contact our Advocacy and Development Lead Katie at katie@rebuildeastmidlands.org