**New Arrivals Alliance Interim Operational Update for Partners**

So, month 2.5 and I think it’s about time for an overview of our key progress and successes for all our partners.

Firstly, and most importantly, can I thank everyone who has helped me on my journey so far, I genuinely could not have got to this position without your help, support, and guidance. It has been absolutely fantastic, and you have all been incredible. Collaborating with the client group, and yourselves, has been an extremely positive and humbling experience. I cannot thank you enough.

I genuinely believe we have already moved the agenda forward in terms of supporting all stakeholders in Derby to work together to provide timely access to support for asylum seekers and refugees, enhancing orientation and integration. This has involved the coalescing of all the inspirational work and building a supportive network to protect vulnerable members of our community, enhancing existing positives, and building on this platform.

Since the 22nd of April there have been many highlights, and hopefully some key progress in line with the initial feasibility and scoping document. The below is far from definitive, but are some examples of some of our achievements to date, and work in progress: -

* We now have a NAA Steering Group that has taken over from the interim steering group, this will continue to be enhanced as the project develops. Any views or perspective on this then just let me know. I would also personally like to thank those who managed to initiate and progress the agenda in the “pre” steering group, prior to my appointment.
* I continue to circulate potential bidding opportunities to relevant groups supporting those seeking asylum and offer any help possible to support the initiative. Also, to identify and support funding and bidding opportunities, ensuring they are widely circulated and support applications in my role as NAA manager. Ensuring equitable allocation of funding and resources.
* To endeavour to improve the process of funding and allocation of SIM cards and phones and further explore the allocation of Wi-Fi at Laverstoke Court, and other dispersed accommodation.
* We now have a website as part of single point of contact which is evolving and being populated with all relevant information by my colleagues at Community Action Derby. Anything in addition or that you feel needs adding or amending then let me know. It is an evolving work. (Thanks to Guy for much of the key info).
* I have become a central hub for queries and support in the field and I will endeavour to assist with any issues that cannot be overcome unilaterally, thereby building on, and enhancing existing trust and collaboration. This should hopefully complement the existing amazing work and ensure we have a central point for brokerage, support, and guidance.
* I aim to support existing work, share learning, avoiding duplication and provide a strong voice of advocacy to instigate positive change.
* I am currently pursuing the potential for those seeking asylum or refugees to be given free access and passes to use leisure facilities owned and managed by Derby City Council to improve their physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being – a work in progress. This is especially critical to those awaiting a decision and who cannot access appropriate benefits.
* In conjunction with DRS (Derby Refugee Solidarity) we have overcome and successfully challenged a number of fixed penalty notices for members of the cohort accused of dropping cigarette ends - excessive and somewhat unfair due to language barriers. Cultural awareness training with new arrivals to be implemented to cover such matters and prevent recurrence.
* I delivered a presentation at Derby University to highlight the threat, risk and challenges we are facing in the field of refugees/asylum at this current time, and how we ameliorate these challenges and become ***stronger together.*** More work in collaboration with the University is in the pipeline.
* A Terms of Reference has been written and is included in the attached documentation.
* We have improved working relationships between ourselves and Statutory Services at City Council/Derby Homes - specifically homelessness advisors and outreach teams. There is now a NASS specific worker who can attend relevant meetings and be a single point of contact with a consistent message which should improve the existing situation. They will conduct drop-in sessions and give appropriate and realistic advice. In addition, I am now a member of the Housing Liaison Forum (HLF) which will ensure that an influential advocate is present at this key meeting and others to do with housing and homelessness which disproportionately effects new communities and those seeking asylum.
* We have negotiated with Derby Homes and secured access to 22 meeting rooms/public spaces which can be utilised by community groups and those working in the field across the city. This should be at nil charge and enable us to access core groups within the heart their own communities – therefore geographically relevant and fantastic partnership engagement to be able to offer them the use of such facilities. A big win - thanks to our colleagues at Derby Homes.
* Street Pride and Refuse Services (DCC) have created leaflets, which can be translated, highlighting correct methods of disposal of waste in the UK, recycling opportunities, and the correct procedures for wheelie bins. This simplistic guide to services will be included on the New Arrivals website in several key languages. It is an area that always raises its head when new communities with different cultural practices arrive, and often cannot understand the concept. This then leads to poor relationships with neighbours and additional work for Street Pride and public services. Hopefully, these actions will rectify the situation.
* I am engaging with the University of Derby Team to make maximum use from a revitalised, pro-active, and focused direction and management of the University of Derby student Legal Aid Dept. They should (and is in their remit) assist asylum seekers and refugees with any, on consideration of all the facts, free legal advice they might require. This would include immigration matters and endeavouring to reunite families who have been torn away from each other by war and conflict. There will also be consideration of making Derby University. “A University of Sanctuary” which would be an outstanding achievement. They can also assist in relation to Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) training. I believe this relationship and utilising this student aid facility will be a really positive way forward to guide and help the most disenfranchised in society to get quality legal advice – particularly if no recourse to public funds.
* Since I took up the NAA post I have had a phenomenal amount of interaction with groups and individuals working with New Arrivals and kindred work streams. I tried to count up institutions and individuals I have interacted with and empirically measure them in numbers/the granular. However, the process became unfeasible to do with any level of accuracy or which would stand scrutiny. So, I’m just going to say “a lot”… 😊

This is all in addition to my introduction and briefing on the wider remit of Community Action and all the fantastic, resolute, and diverse work delivered daily. Ultimately, I have found the role to be exceptionally fulfilling and I am passionate about ensuring we work closely together to achieve optimal output. Please advise if you establish any concerns or anomalies, and I will always endeavour to assist.

Final thank you to all those with whom I have engaged and have supported me so fantastically in the early stages, so heartfelt apologies if I have missed any individual or specific events – it has been a busy few weeks!!!! As the New Arrivals Alliance Manager, I will continue to facilitate increased interactions and lead on the agenda of refugees, migrants and those seeking asylum. I believe the Stage 1 recommendations have been completed, barring minor enhancements. I will now implement stage two of the proposed plan of action, much of which is already in motion.

N.B. I would also appreciate any observations or recommendations, particularly around the lived experience group, but also on the core membership of the relevant groups. And any other views on the groups make up.

***Last updated 17/07/24***