



New Arrivals Alliance - Derby

A consultation, evaluation,
and feasibility study

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1. Executive Summary

In the last year Derby has seen an increase of 60% in asylum seekers supported by the Home Office housed in the city, rising to over 1,300 individuals accommodated mainly in three hotels¹ and one ex-student campus. Despite hotels being designated as temporary 'Initial Accommodation' many people have lived there for many months and sometimes over a year. Financial assistance for asylum seekers living in hotels while awaiting a decision on their claim for asylum is very limited (£9.58 per person per week) making them very dependent on charities, faith, and other community organisations to meet a wide range of support needs. There are a significant number and a wide range of voluntary sector organisations, ranging from local volunteer led groups to national charities, who are active in supporting asylum seekers and refugees in Derby.

The New Arrivals Alliance (NAA), hosted by Community Action Derby, aims to strengthen the voluntary and community sector (VCS) response to ensure every new arrival in the city receives timely support from appropriate organisations to meet their needs where this is possible. The term "new arrivals" includes asylum seekers, refugees, and those arriving through resettlement schemes.

The NAA commissioned a consultant to *"undertake an appraisal of the current support provided and produce a report with recommendations for a collective Voluntary Sector approach to supporting new arrivals in Derby"*. This report is based on the findings of interviews with 48 representatives from 37 different organizations supporting asylum seekers and refugees in Derby. Additionally, focus groups were held with 21 service users from Upbeat Communities who had recently arrived in Derby seeking asylum or as refugees.

Strengths of the refugee sector

There is a large number and wide variety of organisations that are engaged in supporting new arrivals. For the specialist refugee support organisations (mainly public sector and larger VCS organisations) there is a good level of communication between each other through a combination of networks, forums, or meetings. This was complemented by a comprehensive list of organisations that provide services to new arrivals that is circulated to a distribution list of approximately 500 people that is then cascaded through other networks. Despite obvious challenges, most people were working extremely hard to ensure that they were providing the best service they could within the financial or other constraints they were operating.

Weaknesses of the refugee sector

New arrivals often didn't know who could provide essential support within the first few weeks and sometimes months of their being dispersed to Derby. The orientation support and signposting to other organisations provided was felt to be inadequate and so most new arrivals found out about vital information to assist their integration (or organisations who could help them) from their peers. Collaboration between commissioned services and some VCS organisations was variable with some working well but others describing a more adversarial relationship. Different (and sometimes counterproductive) approaches have led to frustration from all involved, not least the new arrivals which often affected their confidence and mental health negatively, sometimes escalating into unreasonable or abusive behaviour. Information about available services for new arrivals was not always widely known particularly amongst the smaller VCS organisations that did not specialise in supporting new arrivals. This can lead to a lack of referrals between agencies and some unhelpful duplication. A lack of representation from people with lived experience of claiming asylum and minority communities, particularly the Muslim community, was also identified as a weakness.

The following gaps in services were identified;

- Orientation training and support to access VCS services – as described above
- Support to access health services – particularly GP's, mental health, and dentists
- Access to quality legal advice – one immigration solicitors practice in Derby who are over-subscribed
- Language support – interpreters and ESOL classes (particularly before being in the UK for 6 months)
- Move-on housing – particularly for new refugees

¹ The Hotel at Long Eaton has not been included for the purpose of this study as we have focussed on people living in Derby City only

Recommendations

These challenges highlight the need for a more coordinated and collaborative approach by all stakeholders, emphasising accessible information dissemination, structured orientation programs, improved partnerships between services, streamlined referrals, equitable resource distribution, and diverse representation for support to new arrivals. Some of the gaps identified require regional / national policy, or political change and so NAA should also collect and escalate information about the impact of these gaps through the local authority, Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) and VCS campaigning or advocacy organisations.

To bring about the above changes **it is recommended that the NAA will need to employ a full-time ‘NAA Co-ordinator’** who is experienced in senior voluntary sector roles, leadership, chairing stakeholder meetings, problem-solving, working with local Government, fundraising, and volunteer management.

Key actions / outcomes for a NAA Co-ordinator to deliver within the first three years:

- Support the steering group to establish a Terms of Reference, including; vision, values and governance.
- Commission a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) service to work in partnership with Serco to receive referrals taken during the induction meeting with new arrivals and Housing Officers in their first few days of arriving in Derby. The SPOC would triage non-statutory needs (ideally face to face in the Hotels) and signpost to the relevant services identifying where there may be vulnerabilities that may need additional support and liaising with relevant organisations to provide more proactive support where possible. This service should also be assessable via a dedicated telephone number.
- Establish an online resource, website, or app, with information about organisations that can support new arrivals in Derby and widely publicise this resource to enable new arrivals and service providers to access this information directly. The NAA Co-ordinator would be responsible for keeping this information up-to-date, relevant and would monitor its use/impact.
- Coordinate (or commission) ‘orientation courses’ in multiple languages for new arrivals to access within weeks of arrival.
- Start (or commission) a ‘peer mentoring service’ to assist orientation and access to essential services. This would require the recruitment, training and management of volunteers who have previously claimed (or who are currently claiming) asylum, but who have been living in Derby for at least 6 months.
- Focus on relationship building among all stakeholders to foster better understanding, collaboration and problem solving. This would include convening regular face to face NAA forum meetings to improve relationships and information sharing to build trust and collaborative working.
- Liaise with other networks such as the Refugee and Asylum Seekers Coordination (RASC) group, City of Sanctuary, ESOL forum and other Alliances to avoid duplication and enhance VCS sector collaboration and effectiveness.
- Secure funding to sustain the NAA long term. Identify and, where appropriate, coordinate opportunities to strengthen services through a partnership approach to fundraising to increase capacity and plug gaps.
- Provide strategic support to smaller charities, providing guidance regarding sustainability and focus.
- Collate evidence of the negative impact of poor policy / practice and advocate with partners for change.
- Work with an external evaluator to set up systems to monitor impact and evaluate the effectiveness of the NAA against an agreed set of metrics.
- Regularly report to the NAA Steering Group so that they have sufficient information to assess and oversee progress made against the above outcomes.

These recommendations propose a comprehensive plan for the NAA Coordinator to establish (or commission) essential services where there are gaps, coordinate stakeholder relationships, facilitate training, advocate for improved services, and ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of support for new arrivals within Derby.

Budget – To deliver the proposed outcomes a significant budget will be required over a period of 3 years.

To have clarity on the purpose of the NAA the following statement should be considered.

“The New Arrivals Alliance will support all stakeholders in Derby to work together as appropriate to provide early access to support for asylum seekers and resettled refugees to assist their orientation and integration”.

2. Context and background

Derby is one of the three main cities in the East Midlands that receives asylum seekers dispersed by the Home Office while their claim for asylum is being processed. Over the last year the numbers being housed / supported in Derby have risen from an average of 800 people to over 1,300² with Nottingham taking over 1,500 and Leicester taking the most in the region with over 1,700 people as of 30/09/23. The overall population of Derby was 261,400 in 2021 which is 5.1% higher than it was 10 years ago.

Serco are contracted by the Home Office to provide initial accommodation (IA) for people in Derby at three hotels in the City Centre and longer-term self-catering dispersal accommodation (DA) at Laverstoke Court, (an ex-student halls of residence in the City Centre). There is also another hotel that is providing accommodation situated at Long Eaton (between Derby and Nottingham), although this is not in scope for this study which is focussed on people living in Derby City only. Hotels accommodating asylum seekers with less than 200 beds (which all are in Derby) are required to have at least 2 Housing Officers providing support to Service Users (SU's) 24 hours a day. Serco Housing Officers work 12-hour shifts on a 4 day on and 4 day off rolling rota. There is also a Housing Supervisor that oversees this support. SU's are provided with 3 meals a day that they can eat in a communal area of the hotels.

The Midland and Station Hotel accommodate single adult males and Aston Court Hotel houses families. Approximately five months ago the Home Office introduced a policy of 'optimisation' of Hotel capacity which required all single adults to share a bedroom unless there were exceptional circumstances due to a SU's vulnerability.

Financial support is provided for people whilst awaiting a decision on their asylum claim if they have no means of supporting themselves. They are not allowed to work. £47.39 per week is provided for each asylum seeker living in dispersed accommodation or where meals are not provided (i.e. at Laverstoke Court). However, people living in a Hotel where their meals are provided receive only £9.58 per week.

Migrant Help have a national contract (from the Home Office) to provide advice and guidance to asylum seekers as well as dealing with complaints about their accommodation and/or support. This is primarily done through a national telephone helpline although there is a local team of five advisors based at Laverstoke Court that provide outreach support that can be face to face for people who are particularly vulnerable.

It is difficult to be precise about the number of voluntary sector organisations who support asylum seekers and refugees in Derby given the varied nature and size of groups ranging from large national organisations e.g. British Red Cross (BRC) or the Refugee Council, to small volunteer led local organisations such as Derby Refugee Solidarity or local churches that support asylum seekers and refugees alongside other groups. The large number of organisations listed in the single page directories collated by Guy Freeman (BRC) and the good number that engaged with this consultation and the previous survey (summer 2022) would indicate a strong and varied voluntary sector response to the support needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Some organisations specialise in supporting asylum seekers and refugees only and some have a broad range of services open to a wider range of people. Some have been established for many years whilst others are newer responses to emerging issues e.g. the war in Ukraine.

The Refugee and Asylum Seekers Coordination (RASC) group is a quarterly online meeting Chaired by Purjinder (Pop) Gill from Derby Council to coordinate the statutory services to asylum seekers and refugees in the City. It is well attended with 20 – 30 people representing public, private and voluntary sector

² Figures based on Home Office data at 30/09/23 – see page 28 (Annex C)

organisations. City of Sanctuary also runs quarterly meetings for individuals or smaller VCS organisations that want to create a culture of welcome across Derby, most notably through the organising of the annual Refugee Week activities in June. There are also smaller service specific networks such as an ESOL forum. Whilst some people attend multiple groups there is a helpful distinction as to the core audiences for these meetings that bring a level of coordination and information sharing and some joint action.

Community Action is a registered charity providing support and guidance for voluntary and community groups in Derby. It offers a range of services as an infrastructure organisation including the hosting or convening of several 'alliances' i.e. Food, Advice and Youth Alliances. There is also a Faith Alliance hosted by the Multi-faith Centre. Each alliance is operating slightly differently with varying resources and is at different stages of their journey in terms of having clearly stated aims / purpose and their delivery. However, learning gained from these groups so far has indicated that bringing organisations together to explore how to work more collaboratively and strategically has been beneficial, stimulating greater partnership working and understanding between people about how to tackle shared challenges. It is in this context that the idea for a 'New Arrivals' alliance has been conceived with the hope that similar value will be gained from a more joined up approach for organisations and people working in the refugee³ sector in Derby.

3. The brief

The New Arrivals Alliance (NAA) is currently hosted by Community Action and intends to bring together a range of voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations in Derby to ensure that every new arrival* to the city receives support at the point of need from the most appropriate organisation(s). The New Arrivals Alliance will create a model enabling a pro-active managed approach, ensuring that arrivals have a clear and timely referral pathway to other organisations and services, depending on the needs/goals of the individual.

The (pre) Steering Group for the New Arrivals Alliance (NAA) commissioned Julian Prior (PRIORity advice) to *"undertake an appraisal and produce a report with recommendations for a collective Voluntary Sector approach to supporting new arrivals in Derby"*. It is required to *"provide an in-depth examination of survey data and mapping of current services supporting new arrivals in Derby building on the findings of a voluntary sector survey conducted in 2022 with key providers of services."*

The work should analyse the needs, services, and gaps in provision recommending how current work can be improved as well as gaps and challenges be addressed identifying what data and indicators are available [or needed] to track future improvements [impact]. Finally, the consultant will recommend where [and how] NAA can bring additional value to local provision.

**New arrivals are defined for this purpose as asylum seekers (with or without Home Office support), refugees and those arriving through resettlement schemes who may not have refugee status but have been granted leave to remain and have similar support needs.*

4. The consultant

Following a competitive tendering process Julian Prior (PRIORity advice) was appointed in September 2023 to undertake the above brief. Julian has over 18 years of experience of working with charities, churches, local and national Government in a range of capacities to provide support for people seeking asylum, refugees, and new migrant communities.

³ Refugee sector – shorthand referring to organisations supporting all asylum seekers and refugees

Julian founded and led the charity, Action Foundation, for 16 years that became the largest refugee charity in the North-East of England. He was also the first Chair of the Board of Trustees for the national ‘no-accommodation network’ called NACCOM where he worked closely with the founder to develop its strategy, capacity, governance and resources. It became the leading network in the UK supporting over 130 charities that address the destitution of asylum seekers and refugees.

Julian is now a successful consultant advising organisations and policy makers on how to tackle a range of social issues and evaluate their impact. He set up a ‘Single Point of Contact’ service in Gateshead (as part of the New Arrivals Pathway project) to coordinate voluntary sector support to families claiming asylum living in a hotel there. He also works for Good Faith Partnership (a national social consultancy) where he leads on their work on migration where they are currently piloting ‘Welcome Hub networks’ in four cities and is about to evaluate the ‘New Arrival Pathway Project’ on behalf of the North East Migration Partnership.

Julian is based in the North-East of England and so was able to bring a fresh perspective to this work not knowing the infrastructure or key stakeholders in Derby in advance, although had previously conducted a strategic review on behalf of Upbeat Communities in Derby.

5. Methodology

A total of 69 people were consulted as part of this work between September and December 2023. Julian conducted interviews with 47 people representing a broad range of 37 different organisations supporting people seeking asylum and refugees to map the refugee sector in Derby and surrounding area.

The following describes the different groups interviewed.

- 13 x Relevant statutory service (or Home Office contracted) providers of support to new arrivals,
- 18 x Voluntary, faith and community sector providers of support to new arrivals,
- 16 x Representatives from mainstream organisations or networks who do not primarily support new arrivals but have some engagement,

Interviews were offered in person or online to make engagement as accessible as possible. All interviewees were provided with an explanation of the purpose of the interview, who was doing the interview, how their information will be used, stored and who will have access to it. Interviews were semi-structured to enable tailored or more in-depth questions where relevant.

In addition, Julian held 3 x focus groups with service users from Upbeat Communities who had recently arrived in Derby whilst seeking asylum or as a refugee. 21 people attended the focus groups. When interviewing people who have arrived in Derby as an asylum seeker or refugee, particular care was taken to safeguard their welfare so that their interview did not result in being retraumatised if speaking about difficult experiences.

Whilst a significant number of people were interviewed, it should be borne in mind that this was not an exhaustive consultation as not every organisation supporting refugees was interviewed.

Background research and analysis was also conducted of other relevant papers including the results of a previous survey in summer 2022 that mapped the support provided by organisations in Derby. The results of this survey and previous analysis can be found on pages 7 – 9.

6. Mapping of the refugee sector in Derby

In the Summer of 2022, a survey of service providers was carried out in response to the recent new arrivals (as previously defined) to Derby from Ukraine and Afghanistan, along with the continued dispersal of asylum seekers to Derby (including those in initial accommodation and contingency hotels).

Organisations working solely with new arrivals and those who work with different service users including new arrivals were invited to complete the survey. This survey was undertaken by Upbeat Communities on behalf of the RASC (Refugee and Asylum Seeker Coordination Group) and Derby City of Sanctuary Network.

The purpose of this online survey (<https://upbeatcommunities.typeform.com/to/ax0bZ2DY>) was to begin to identify the needs of new arrivals, current provision and any gaps in service to highlight areas for cooperation and collaboration, to make effective use of resources and allow organisations to consider future funding opportunities.

The survey outlined the suggested needs of new arrivals into Derby (see lists below) that contributors were invited to add to. The timeframes for the specific needs listed are provided as a guide as it is recognised that everyone will experience things differently based on their own needs and how and when they engage with statutory and voluntary sector services. Every need highlighted in each section may also not be relevant to each individual or family. The route by which a person arrived to the UK/Derby (e.g. asylum claim versus resettlement scheme) may determine entitlements and therefore needs.

Immediate – From Day 1 onwards

- Food
- Accommodation
- Clothes
- Toiletries/Sanitary Products
- Emergency Health - physical & mental
- Personal Safety (e.g. modern day slavery, human trafficking, domestic violence)

Short Term – From Month 1 onwards

- Benefits
- Children in Education
- Primary Health Care (GP & Dentists & Opticians)
- Secondary Health Care
- ESOL/English Language
- Legal Advice
- Orientation
- Bank Account
- NI Number
- BRP/ARC Identity cards
- Access to Faith Communities
- Friendship Group/Personal Connections
- Mobile Phone
- Internet Access
- Furniture
- Household Items
- Personal Dignity (e.g. appearance, make up, hair, etc)
- Getting Around/Transport

Medium Term – From 3-6 months onward

- Employment Advice
- Work
- Adult Education & Training
- Wellbeing
- Social Activities
- Sports, Interests & Hobbies
- Therapeutic Support
- Volunteering Opportunities
- Increased Social Networks
- Cultural Knowledge & Behaviours
- Rights & Responsibilities
- Creative Outlet
- Maternity Care Long Term - Ultimate Ambitions
- Permanent Accommodation
- Permanent Job (appropriate to skills)
- Accessing Higher Education
- Financial Stability
- Feeling part of where you live
- Family Stability
- Cultural Networks
- Permanent Leave to Remain

Long Term – Ultimate ambitions

- Permanent accommodation
- Permanent job (appropriate to skills)
- Accessing higher education
- Financial stability
- Feeling part of where you live
- Family stability
- Cultural networks
- Permanent leave to remain

34 people / organisations responded to the survey and below are the services that each organisation said they provided in the Summer of 2022 in relation to the immediate, short term, medium term and long term needs as defined on page 7 and additional support services that organisations said they delivered.

Immediate terms - from day 1 onwards					
Food	Accommodation	Clothes	Toiletries/Sanitary Products	Emergency Health - physical & mental	Personal Safety (e.g. modern day slavery, human trafficking, domestic violence)
DF4TA	DF4TA	DF4TA	DF4TA		
British Red Cross	British Red Cross	British Red Cross	British Red Cross	British Red Cross	British Red Cross
Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain Derby Branch	Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain Derby Branch	Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain Derby Branch	Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain Derby Branch	Rebuild East Midlands	Central Education and Training/ Community Training Portal
Derby Homes	Derby Homes	Derbyshire refugee solidarity	Derbyshire refugee solidarity	Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Derby College
Food & Education Enterprise CIC	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Food & Education Enterprise CIC	Food & Education Enterprise CIC	Derby College	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group
Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Derby Refugee Advice Centre	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Derby Refugee Advice Centre
DRAC		Derby Refugee Advice Centre	DRAC	Derby Refugee Advice Centre	
Derby Refugee Advice Centre		Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity	Derby Refugee Advice Centre	Derbyshire Community Health Service - Sexual Health	
		Healthwatch Derby	Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity	Healthwatch Derby	
		Toss Clothing Bank	Healthwatch Derby		

[illegible]

Medium Term – From 3-6 months onward											
Work	Adult Education & Training	Wellbeing	Social Activities	Sports, Interests & Hobbies	Therapeutic Support	Volunteering Opportunities	Increased Social Networks	Cultural Knowledge & Behaviours	Rights & Responsibilities	Creative Outlet	Maternity Care
Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain Derby Branch	Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain Derby Branch	British Red Cross	Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain Derby Branch	Upbeat Communities	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	British Red Cross	Rebuild East Midlands	Upbeat Communities	British Red Cross	Derbyshire refugee solidarity	Derby Refugee Advice Centre
Rebuild East Midlands	Rebuild East Midlands	Derbyshire refugee solidarity	Central Education and Training/ Community Training Portal	Derbyshire refugee solidarity		Derbyshire refugee solidarity	Upbeat Communities	Derby Museums Trust	Rebuild East Midlands	Derby Museums Trust	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group
Derby City Council - EGS	Derby City Council - EGS	Derby College	Derbyshire refugee solidarity	Refugee Council		Derby College	Derby College	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	
DWP	DWP	Refugee Council	Derby College	Derby Museums Trust		Derby Museums Trust	Refugee Council	Jobsearch-Employment-Mentoring (JEM)	DRAC	Derby Refugee Advice Centre	
Central Education and Training/ Community Training Portal	Central Education and Training/ Community Training Portal	Derby Museums Trust	Food & Education Enterprise CIC	Food & Education Enterprise CIC		Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group		Jobsearch-Employment-Mentoring (JEM)		
Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Derby College Group	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Derby Museums Trust	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group		DRAC	DRAC				
	Derby College	Derby Refugee Advice Centre	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	DRAC		Healthwatch Derby	Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity				
	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Derbyshire Community Health Service - Sexual Health	DRAC	Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity							
	Jobsearch-Employment-Mentoring (JEM)		Derby Refugee Advice Centre								
			Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity								

Long Term - Ultimate Ambitions							
Permanent Accommodation	Permanent Job (appropriate to skills)	Accessing Higher Education	Financial Stability	Feeling part of where you live	Family Stability	Cultural Networks	Permanent Leave to Remain
Rebuild East Midlands	Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain Derby Branch	Derby College Group	Rebuild East Midlands	Derbyshire refugee solidarity	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Central Education and Training/ Community Training Portal	British Red Cross
Host Derby and Belper Refugee Welcome	Rebuild East Midlands	Derby College	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Derby College	Derby Refugee Advice Centre	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group
Derby Homes	Derby City Council - EGS	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group		Refugee Council		Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity	Derby Refugee Advice Centre
Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group	DWP			Derby Museums Trust			
Derby Refugee Advice Centre	Derby College			Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group			
	Belper Ukrainian Refugee Group			Derby Refugee Advice Centre			
				Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity			

Whilst this is a helpful over-view of services it does not quantify the level, quality or extent of the services being offered as this was a simple tick box to establish what was being delivered by each organisation rather than an assessment of the level of service provided. Therefore, further analysis was conducted as part of this consultation (Sept – Nov 2023) to establish key strengths and weaknesses (or gaps) in services that can be found on pages 10 – 13 (Chapter 7 - SWOT analysis).

7. SWOT analysis

The following reflections provide a general over-view of the refugee sector in Derby based on the information provided during the consultation. However, as with any over-view, there are always exceptions where individual organisations / people may feel the service they offer differs to the generalised narrative provided below. It should also be noted that many of the 'weaknesses' (or challenges) referred to can also be considered as 'opportunities' to fill gaps in provision, improve working practices enhancing collaborative working both within the refugee sector as well as more widely with other mainstream sectors/services that could improve integration.

Strengths (positives)

- **A large number of organisations are engaged in supporting new arrivals**
It was encouraging to see how many people / organisations are involved in supporting asylum seekers and refugees in Derby. There is a high number of organisations that support new arrivals listed in the information sheets circulated by the Red Cross to over 500 people. There was also a good take up for interviews for this consultation indicating a strong appetite for welcoming newcomers and a desire to work collectively.
- **A wide variety of organisations engaged in supporting new arrivals**
As already indicated a varied mix of different organisations are available to new arrivals from public sector / contracted agencies to local community groups running general services who want to make them available to asylum seekers and refugees. This eco-system of support is also encouraging. By working in a collaborative manner, the sector should be able to provide the holistic support required.
- **Professional, dedicated, and compassionate sector**
Despite obvious challenges, most people were working extremely hard to ensure that they were providing the best service they could within the financial or other constraints they were operating. Clearly there were varying degrees of professionalism that was appropriate for the kind of service being offered. There was a desire demonstrated to learn from the good practice of others and reflect on their own learning to improve their respective areas of service.
- **Good communication / engagement between 'professionals'**
For the specialist refugee support organisations that employed staff there is a good level of communication between each other. For example, the RASC (Refugee and Asylum Seeker Coordination) meeting held every quarter was well attended with 30 people joining the 'teams' call in October. Derby City of Sanctuary also meets quarterly and whilst some people attend both meetings, this is a forum for more informal and often volunteer led or non-statutory support to get together to share important information and collective actions. This communication is complemented by a very comprehensive list of organisations (and their contact details) that provide services on a range of issues available to new arrivals. These lists are updated on a regular basis and circulated to a distribution list of approximately 500 people that will then be cascaded through other networks and sector bodies.

Weaknesses (challenges)

- **Poor signposting to support organisations upon arrival**
One consistent theme that came through in the focus groups with new arrivals was the lack of accessible information and support they received in the first few days and weeks after moving to Derby to direct them to who could support them to settle and become more orientated to living in the city / UK. Most new arrivals interviewed said they found out about services that could support them informally through friends of other residents rather than through any more formal or proactive process. This left some who were less confident or poor at communicating in English very isolated for months

before seeking help. One lady said she did not go out of the hotel in five months as she did not know who to ask for help or where to go for support. Reference was made to a 'Welcome Pack' that was supposed to be given to all new arrivals that listed how to get in touch with various organisations that could provide support. However, of the 21 people interviewed who had recently arrived in Derby no-one recalled being given one or even seeing such a pack. There was however reference to posters on notice boards within the Hotel that people felt contained relevant information, but this was not considered to be the main way people found out about other support services in Derby. One interviewee from a statutory service said "*they [new arrivals] are being set up to fail*" when referring to the lack of information and/or orientation training new arrivals are given.

- **Limited capacity / provision / gaps in services**

Most voluntary sector support organisations did not have sufficient capacity to meet the demand for their services and in some cases felt overwhelmed. This was particularly in relation to the following;

- **Translation** – The language barrier was consistently felt to be one of the biggest challenges upon arrival. Few statutory services provided translation and the quality of the translation service provided was felt to be inconsistent.
- **English classes** – For people who had been in the UK for less than 6 months accessing ESOL provision is challenging given that the mainstream funded ESOL classes are not accessible until you have been in the UK for over 6 months. Whilst there are several VCS organisations providing English classes or informal conversation classes / opportunities language improvement was often slow and provision was limited and uncoordinated. Derby College and Derby Council (Adult Learning) both provide a good number of places to asylum seekers (approx. 150 at the College). Whilst access to funding to increase their provision was possible, fluctuations in demand, sourcing appropriate premises/classrooms and trained teachers were the key barriers to expanding their capacity for eligible students.
- **Legal advice** – There is only one solicitors practice in Derby that provides Immigration Advice (Burton and Burton) however, they have stopped taking new cases due to their lack of capacity. The East Midlands is amongst the poorest served in terms of qualified legal advice with no OISC Level 3 and only 2 x OISC level 2 advisors registered in the area (only Northern Ireland and the South West have fewer). The number of new cases opened (matters starts) in the region has reduced from 1,182 in 2018/19 to 812 in 2020/21. For more details see page 28 at Annex E.
- **Access to healthcare** – Whilst understanding how to navigate the complex healthcare system in the UK was felt to be challenging it was the lack of availability to mental health support that was consistently referenced as a gap in services. Research⁴ suggests that asylum seekers are five times more likely to have mental health needs than the general population, and more than 61% will experience severe mental distress.
- **Move on housing** – The lack of affordable accommodation in Derby was felt to be a major problem increasing the number of people presenting as homeless following a positive decision on an asylum claim. This situation has been exacerbated in recent months by the streamlined asylum process to clear the backlog of asylum seekers awaiting their decision that has increased the number of people being granted refugee status and therefore demand for an already limited supply of move on housing in Derby. The reduction in time (from 28 days to 7 days) for a new refugee to move out of their Home Office funded accommodation has also added to this challenge creating what many VCS organisations have described as a "perfect storm" of factors increasing the number of new refugees becoming homeless and overwhelming VCS organisations trying to support them.

- **Silo working – particularly for some smaller organisations**

Many interviewees described a lack of capacity to be able to work strategically or at least have the time to understand more about the other organisations working in Derby who were also supporting asylum seekers and refugees. This was particularly the case for smaller organisations where the majority of services were delivered by volunteers who do not have the time (and sometimes the appetite) to

⁴ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/statistics/refugees-asylum-seekers-statistics>

understand the wider context they are working in, not only within the refugee sector but also other mainstream services that their clients could benefit from accessing. One organisation described how they did not refer clients to some organisations due to concerns about the quality of the support being provided.

- **Duplication of services**

Whilst most services were addressing real and evidenced need there was occasional reference to a duplication of services that could lead to unequal allocation of limited resources. For example, at least three and possibly four organisations gave asylum seekers SIM cards to enable them to be able to contact people and access the internet for important information. However, there was no data sharing regarding the allocations of these SIM cards between these organisations and so it is very likely that some people were requesting them from more than one provider with one interviewee raising concerns that this would mean not everyone would get a SIM card who needed one due to their limited supply.

- **Conflicts of approach / managing expectations**

Given the wide variety of different providers involved in supporting new arrivals it is not surprising that some differences in approach were noted. For example, managing people's expectations of their right to remain in the UK despite several negative decisions was cited by one person. When they gently explored their clients' options to return home, they were strongly criticised by another organisation. Another person interviewed said *"some organisations promise people the earth and raise expectations which is unhelpful"*.

- **Some VCS organisations are vulnerable / unsustainable**

The lack of capacity, increased demand and lack of focus has made some organisations vulnerable and at risk of not being able to continue their services. This was particularly evident in some of the smaller organisations that are mainly, or entirely delivered by volunteers. One organisation described how they are currently seeing 20-30 new people every week with another citing a concern about their sustainability with everything resting on a very small number of key volunteers that were feeling overwhelmed.

Opportunities (possibilities)

- **Building on existing Alliance model**

VCS organisations in Derby and particularly Community Action, have experience of delivering Alliances in other sectors such as Faith, Youth, Food and Advice. This presents a great opportunity for shared learning and developing cross sector partnerships / working given that most of these Alliances have cross cutting issues that they are addressing that affects each other.

- **Good practice / similar initiatives nationally**

There are several similar initiatives in different parts of the country that could be helpful to engage with to share learning and good practice. For example, Refugee Action's Step Change Consortium, running in Greater Manchester, North East Migration Partnership's New Arrival Pathway Project, and Good Faith Partnership's Welcome Hub network are just three that are discussed in more detail on page 19.

- **Appetite to work more strategically**

There was a strong desire expressed to explore more joined up and collaborative working in principle. This provides a good opportunity to test different approaches or ways of working given that there didn't appear to be any immediate resistance to working differently.

- **Resources available to fund a more coordinated approach**

Whilst detailed conversations have not been held about funding for a NAA it is understood that some significant resources could be made available to support recommendations for the development of such

an Alliance as to make any substantial progress additional (new) capacity / funding will inevitably be required for the sector.

- **Mental health**

Whilst the challenges of supporting the mental health of new arrivals has already been referred to it was evident that the support provided by many VCS organisations enabled many people to cope or even significantly improve their health and wellbeing through holistic, practical and relational support. Having someone to talk to or who they trust outside of providing a ‘professional’ service cannot be underestimated and could be developed or even funded through health funding such as social prescribing / link workers.

- **Greater representation**

Whilst some organisations have good representation of asylum seekers or refugees (or people from marginalised communities) in the leadership of their organisation or the delivery of their services the NAA provides an opportunity for greater representation from people seeking asylum, refugees and/or marginalised communities to provide strategic thinking and direction to the sector.

Threats (dangers)

- **The sector is stretched, and in some cases overwhelmed**

It has already been referred to how challenging many organisations are finding working in the refugee sector at the moment. Therefore, there is a risk that unless they can see some tangible benefits to being involved in an alliance there will be a lack of engagement from some organisations. No-one needs more meetings to attend unless they can see the benefits to their work and ultimately improving the support to people seeking asylum and new refugees.

- **New structures could create duplication and/or competition if purpose is not clear**

Without clarity on the purpose of the NAA and how this differs from other networks, forums or initiatives there is a risk that duplication or competition for resources or time can occur which could be detrimental to the sector. For example, understanding the purpose and gaps between the RASC network, City of Sanctuary and other Alliances will be critical to this.

- **Allocation of new resources can be divisive**

Given all that has already been noted about scarcity of resources it will be vital that any new / additional funding for the NAA can demonstrate impact and a transparent and fair process that can command broad support from the sector. Clear communication and opportunity for feedback and input can help envision people to the need for and benefit of the NAA.

- **External political environment**

The external context is a constantly changing one with a new bill to go through parliament in 2024 that is likely to further restrict the opportunity for people to claim asylum in the UK if they have not come here through legal routes. This is likely to have an impact on funding and the general hostile environment not just for new arrivals but for those working hard to support them. There is only so much that can be done to improve collaborative working locally without national political / policy change to improve the support that can be provided for people seeking asylum.

8. Key issues identified that the NAA could address

The following issues were consistently raised as significant challenges for new arrivals. Many of these issues have already been referred to in the 'weaknesses/challenges' section of the SWOT of the sector, however, a more detailed analysis of the issues from the perspective of the new arrival is found in this section with potential solutions that a New Arrivals Alliance could consider to address the issues described (highlighted in grey).

a) Information about support upon arrival was not accessible / understandable

Serco Housing Officers conduct induction meetings with SU's when they first arrive in Derby. This is mainly focussed on their Occupancy Agreement outlining the rules and expectations for how they should behave in their accommodation. Translators are used for this meeting as required which will last on average 10 – 15 minutes. Whilst a range of information is available in a central place in the Hotel about VCS organisations and services that residents may want to access, most of this information is in English and is left to the SU's initiative to find the details they require. Feedback from those with experience of seeking asylum in Derby report that the induction received from the Housing Officers was often not sufficient for them to know where or more importantly how to get vital support. Information was overwhelming or inaccessible due to not being in their own language. Many new arrivals are more used to receiving information verbally or needing help to understand how to physically get to different organisations or call them with an interpreter. One interviewee who leads a VCS support organisation said, *"Welcome is missing. People don't feel any sense of welcome until they get here"*.

A simpler way of accessing information about the support available should be considered. For example, a referral to a single organisation could be made to triage non-statutory needs, ideally in person or if not, over the phone, so that they could signpost the new arrival to the most relevant organisation(s). If this were someone that was more embedded in the VCS sector in Derby and who had the capacity to understand what support was available this could be a more proactive, simpler, and therefore more effective way of helping new arrivals access the most relevant support required within the first few days/weeks of arrival. Such a system has been in existence in the North East through the New Arrivals Pathway Project (NAPP). A referral is made as part of the induction process by the Housing Officer if the service user agrees to sharing their contact details.

The biggest challenge reported by Serco Housing Officers was the frustration caused by SU's expectations not being met about how to access healthcare. Despite registering SU's with a local GP practice and appointments being booked there was often a breakdown in this referral / booking process when SU's did not understand how to respond to a text message (presumably in English) sent to their mobile to ask some simple questions about their health by way of a triage.

A neutral person (working for the NAA) could problem solve issues like this by brokering discussions between different parties to find pragmatic solutions to a smoother way of accessing services that is more accessible for new arrivals. They could also monitor how well systems and processes for referrals were working to escalate common issues to the relevant person in authority so that organisations were more accountable for delivering on their contracted duties.

SU's interviewed said they found out about most organisations that could support them by word of mouth from peers rather than proactive signposting and support to access other services. This resulted in the first few weeks (and in some cases several months) after arriving in Derby being very stressful and isolating, particularly for people with limited English, poor health and/or low confidence. This had a significant impact on people's health and wellbeing and poor mental health was reported to be one of the main issues identified for new arrivals. Their feeling of isolation and lack of understanding about processes and support

exacerbated existing trauma and mental distress already experienced in their home country and / on during their journey to the UK.

An alternative or additional method of referral could be for a central telephone number to be widely publicised for friendly advice on who can provide assistance in case the new arrival preferred to make contact themselves rather than passing on their contact details to be referred as described above.

b) Orientation training is very limited, is informal and not consistently delivered

On arrival Housing Officers make reference to a Home Office booklet called '[Rights and Expectations for Living in the UK](#)' that is translated into multiple languages that SU's can read. This 44-page guide contains important information about; UK culture, values and law, health / welfare services, staying safe and getting support. This information gives important generic guidance for new arrivals but no-one I spoke to, other than the Serco staff, referred to it which suggests that it is not an accessible way to communicate important information about living in the UK. Whilst some of this information may be relayed to new arrivals in an informal way through various interactions over a period of time, particularly after experiencing problems or challenges, there appears to be no systematic or proactive orientation training to equip new arrivals.

The North East Regional Refugee Forum and North of England Migration Partnership have developed such a course called '[Welcome to the UK](#)' which is available to use online or in person and has been translated into the 10 most common languages. The course is based on three sessions covering;

- Health – Looking after yourself and accessing healthcare services
- Parenting and education – Expectations for looking after children and accessing schools
- Life and laws – Rights and responsibilities and engaging with the police

The course is designed to convey important information in an accessible way by making it an interactive conversation facilitated by someone from the same country or who speaks the same language and who understands the culture. A local professional representing health, education and the police services is also recommended to attend the relevant session to answer questions and break down barriers or misconceptions about statutory services. This has been proven to be a much more effective way of helping new arrivals orientate to living in the UK and could be run on a regular basis in Derby. For more information on how this could be developed see the 'Recommendations' section 11 on page 23.

c) Partnership working between commissioned services and VCS organisations

One example where there was good collaboration was in access to ESOL provision. Derby College and Derby Adult Education department (Derby Council) who are the main providers of English classes in Derby have worked hard to share information between providers (via an ESOL networking forum) so that there is a more streamlined approach to registering for English classes. This is particularly necessary when ESOL is funded centrally (Adult Education budgets and Home Office grants) as learners are not allowed to register with multiple providers funded through these streams to increase their learning time. However, it can also help to direct learners to where there are spaces so that they don't have to enrol multiple times and/or are not waiting for a space any longer than necessary. There has been some attempt to try and extend this streamlined referral process to the VCS sector and work in partnership where complementary support was available as this really improved the speed at which someone's English could improve, given that statutory provision is only 5 or 6 hours a week depending on which provider you are with. However, one interviewee said that working in partnership with the VCS has been challenging as after 2 or 3 meetings the VCS providers didn't attend. One person said *"I am not sure how well coordinated voluntary sector providers are. They seem to all pull in their own direction"*

It was also clear that there is a tendency, particularly for smaller VCS organisations, to work in a silo due to a lack of capacity to foster relationships with others to work together, particularly where their organisational culture may be very different. This was especially apparent when talking to some statutory services (e.g. health and housing providers) who referred to a rather adversarial relationship with some VCS agencies that increased the expectations of what new arrivals could get/receive that was not realistic or helpful. One interviewee said “*no-one speaks to each other*” when referring to the relationships between these different organisations in Derby. This has led to some instances where there has been a breakdown of trust and a sense that some organisations are working against each other rather than trying to negotiate some pragmatic solutions to challenging issues. The effect on new arrivals is often frustration, disappointment, and a sense of despair when their (sometimes unrealistic) expectations are not met. Occasionally this frustration can boil over into anger, particularly when health and wellbeing is already poor and Housing Officers spoke of SU’s sometimes acting abusively towards them which had further polarised relationships.

Building trust and mutually beneficial relationships between different agencies takes time and is unlikely to be achieved universally. However, specific issues where common ground can be identified to address challenges can start to broker more understanding and a way of finding solutions to difficult issues as has already been described in relation to registering with GP services. A neutral convener can be a helpful way of bringing different organisations together to try and understand each other’s perspectives and explore where working together can bring mutual benefit. Face to face meetings can help with building this more collaborative environment creating a ‘safe space’ to explore issues together with a neutral convener. Therefore, it is recommended that the NAA facilitates / hosts face to face sector meetings where the focus will be on building understanding and trust around some key issues rather than simply exchanging important information as is more the case at the RASC group meetings. This will also differ from City of Sanctuary meetings as its focus will be on improving collaboration and understanding between commissioned services and VCS organisations.

d) Referrals between agencies (particularly between sectors)

Information about services across a range of issues relevant to asylum seekers and refugees is collated and published by Guy Freeman at British Red Cross. This covers services addressing issues such as; homelessness, welfare and benefits advice, support available at the Hotels, access to free clothing, mental health services, sports activities, social gatherings, English language providers and access to computers in public spaces. A single page summary is also produced with information about ‘what’s on for asylum seekers and refugees in Derby’. This is a very helpful list of services that is circulated widely. However, it relies on providers sending updates as information about their services changes. Having up-to-date information about who is doing what, when and how to get in touch is vital to encourage referrals between organisations to prevent them duplicating services or trying to address issues themselves which may be outside of their area of expertise.

Smaller VCS organisations who do not specialise in supporting asylum seekers and refugees only but who provide valuable services or points of connection for new arrivals (e.g. parent and toddler groups, food banks etc) may not receive this information. Consequently, if they are not very proactive in trying to find out about who is most relevant to address a particular need they may try and resolve it themselves which may provide a poor quality of advice or support if it is outside of their area of expertise.

The information about what different organisations do and how to get in touch with them could be more accessible if provided online on either a dedicated website, app or on another website that already has good awareness and information about a range of more mainstream services e.g. on the Community Action Website. If this became known as the main source of information about support organisations for new arrivals it could be more accessible for a wider range of organisations as well as for new arrivals themselves. Providing this information online can also be a simpler way of people being able to access it in their own language through simple online translation features. However, as already mentioned, having the capacity to ensure this information is up-to-date will be vital to ensure that it becomes a valuable resource for a wider

range of organisations. Publicising this website address widely is also vital to ensure that people know how to access this information.

e) A strategic approach to addressing duplication / equitable distribution of resources

There was not much unhelpful duplication of services identified as the demand for support usually outweighed the supply and so multiple providers of the same support was usually welcomed, provided it was well coordinated. However, one example was given where this was less helpful and potentially led to an unequal distribution of SIM cards given that there were three or four places in Derby that asylum seekers can get free SIM cards but as far as I could ascertain there was not information shared between providers as to who was given a card. This led to the concern being raised by one person interviewed that some people may be getting multiple cards and others were getting none given there was a finite supply.

The suggestion was made that it may be helpful for issues like this for only one provider to distribute certain items as it was easier to check on a more equitable distribution of resources this way. Alternatively different organisations should explore sharing information about who has received what, although this is probably more challenging to manage and the risk may not outweigh the effort to share data effectively.

f) Representation from people with lived experience and minority backgrounds

There was good representation from people with lived experience of seeking asylum as well as from other minority communities representing their organisations during the consultation. This was highlighted as an important consideration for the NAA as communication in a culturally sensitive and appropriate way is key to being able to engage a wide range of people and organisations in supporting new arrivals. Engaging the Muslim community in the design and delivery of services was cited by one person as being important as other alliances have not managed to do this as successfully as some would have liked. Engaging faith and community leaders from a range of diverse backgrounds and communities at an early stage can unlock very helpful resources and collaboration that will give the NAA greater credibility and engagement.

The NAA could convene a forum for people with lived experience of seeking asylum in Derby to share their experiences and views of how things are, or are not, working from their perspective. However, it will also be important for there to be good representation of people with lived experience to also be represented on a steering group or in positions of authority / direct influence to input their experience at a strategic level where possible / appropriate provided this was not tokenistic. The work of Derby Health inequalities Board was cited as an example where significant improvements have been made in this regard.

9. Systemic challenges / causes

The following are a few systemic issues or causes that directly impact on the lives of new arrivals negatively. This is clearly not an exhaustive list but were considered to be the main challenges. Some of them are specific to asylum seekers and refugees and some are more general social challenges felt by many in the community that indirectly impact asylum seekers and refugees disproportionately. Given that these issues are influenced more by national policy making it is unlikely that the NAA can make a significant difference to them alone. However, evidence of the effect that these issues have on asylum seekers and refugees in Derby could be escalated through Local Government and VCS advocacy and campaigning channels and so the NAA could have an advocacy role at a national as well as a local level.

a) Lack of legal advice

Over the last 20 years the availability of good quality legal advice for asylum seekers has reduced significantly, largely due to the cuts in legal aid that funds most of the immigration legal sector. Consequently, many solicitors are unable to continue to practice as it has not been viable for them to do so making the capacity with the sector way below the demand for that advice. See Appendix B on page 26 for more details.

b) Shortage of housing

Since the Covid 19 pandemic there has been a significant increase in the use of hotels to accommodate new arrivals. This Initial Accommodation is intended to be for a short, temporary period only however, the use of hotels is now the main method of accommodation for people who are waiting for their asylum claim to be resolved which can take between one and three years on average. Whilst living in a hotel may be helpful for the first few weeks (as it may be easier to access support quickly) the challenges of living in such a confined space (particularly for families) without your independence to cook for yourself or have the funds to support yourself are well documented. However, the shortage of accessible accommodation is particularly challenging when it comes to receiving your asylum decision and having to find alternative accommodation both with a negative and a positive decision. For those with a negative decision people often rely on charities or friends or are forced to work illegally which leaves people very vulnerable to exploitation as they have no access to public funds. However, even with a positive decision the shortage of housing and time to find alternative accommodation (now around 7 days) is extremely challenging with a significant rise in people presenting as homeless because of the increase in positive decisions as the government attempts to reduce the backlog of asylum cases awaiting a decision.

c) Inequality of funding or opportunity for resettled refugees v's asylum seekers

Successive acts of Parliament and a hardening of rhetoric that differentiates the support given to people according to the way they arrived in the UK is making it harder for asylum seekers who did not come through a 'safe and legal' route to access support. This creates an increasingly hostile environment for people awaiting their asylum claim with limited access to support especially the opportunity to work which deskills, demotivates and dehumanises skilled and experienced people.

d) Access to health care

Getting an appointment with a GP or a dentist has become increasingly difficult for everyone over the last 5 years. The added complexity of language and cultural barriers makes it extremely challenging for new arrivals to be able to get the support they need to remain healthy. This is especially the case for mental health support. However, given that asylum seekers and refugees are five times more likely to suffer from some form of mental health challenge (as has already been highlighted) this is a serious systemic problem that will impact new arrivals significantly.

10. Other similar initiatives / good practice

This chapter highlights three examples of other comparable initiatives to the NAA that I have spoken to in order to understand how they are addressing similar issues highlighted by this research. There is the potential to join a community of practice initiated by Refugee Action called the Eco-systems Coordinators group so that ongoing learning between these initiatives can be shared.

a) Step Change Consortium – Refugee Action

[The Step Change consortium](#) is a 3.5 year programme supported by the Lottery Community Fund which brings together eleven asylum and refugee support organisations and an [Experts by Experience \(EBE\) group](#) working in Greater Manchester (GM). Through a programme of place-based and specialist service provision, sector development and advocacy, their joint purpose is to develop a joined-up and sustainable ecosystem of support for refugees and people seeking asylum in Greater Manchester.

Their report (called ‘I was here for a year’) on the mapping exercise that was conducted as part of this work discusses three key issues, highlighting critical gaps, challenges, and recommendations of how to address them:

- 1) poor quality information about services;
- 2) insufficient availability of services in relation to demand;
- 3) barriers accessing services including referral pathways.

It made the following recommendations;

Funding

- *Increase local funding where there is increased dispersal:* In cases where there is an increase of dispersal population to GM boroughs, Home Office/LA to fund voluntary and community sector service provision in these boroughs to provide necessary services.
- *Increase legal aid and immigration legal advice funding:* Ministry of Justice to properly invest into legal aid at a national level. GMCA and LAs to support immigration legal advice at a regional level.
- *Ensure funding to Voluntary and Community service provision that is localised:* funders to ensure sustainability of place-based service provision by funding localised service providers.

Information sharing, advice, and coordination

- *Secure sharing of data on service user populations:* Home Office/ Serco/GMCA/RSMP to securely share more granular data on service user locations to ensure VCS can prepare for better service responses.
- *Provide up-to-date and accurate advice:* Serco to provide up-to date, accurate and comprehensive information about available services (including asylum support, legal advice, community and wellbeing services and individuals’ rights) to people seeking asylum and refugees, especially on their induction.
- *Improve coordination across the sector:* GMCA/RSMP and LAs to ensure functional coordination mechanisms between statutory providers, voluntary sector, and people with lived experience of the system to share information, ensure collaborative working and address any key concerns.
- *Voluntary sector to consolidate a broad and regular voluntary sector forum* to share challenges, and address areas of concern involving frontline staff as well as at the strategic level.
- *Voluntary sector to work on strengthened connectedness of services*, especially on referrals across GM.
- *Voluntary sector to continue to work on local and regional initiatives that strengthen collaborative working in relation to immigration legal advice provision.*

Service provision, gaps and barriers

- *Improve efficiency of support:* Migrant Help (MH) to reduce long waiting times for support and general user experience.
- *Address critical service gaps:* All relevant stakeholders to address gaps in ESOL, immigration legal advice, housing (for people after a negative or positive asylum decision) and counselling services.
- *Voluntary sector to continue to develop place-based service provision:* ensure that localised services have strong referral relationships with cross-GM service provision.
- *Address barriers to online services:* All GM service providers to address barriers to accessing online services due to lack of digital skills and data affordability. Also, to improve online visibility of services, for example improving search optimisation and functionality of online services for service users by service providers to ensure service users can find them.
- *Address barriers to travel:* To address the issue of the unaffordability of travel causing barriers to accessing services, Home Office to increase asylum support rate to reflect cost of living³, GMCA/LAs to consider ways to reduce travel costs (e.g., pilot facilitating free bus travel as undertaken in Glasgow) and funders to include service user travel support costs in voluntary sector funding.
- *Address barriers to employability:* Increased ESOL provision with a focus on employability; increased awareness of employability services; as well as addressing issues of childcare needs and health issues as barriers to peoples' employability.

To address the clear need for people seeking asylum and refugees to know what services are available or how to find out about them, the Step Change initiative is developing a set of digital tools that will help with signposting, connectedness, and clarity of services across GM. Detailed mapping from this research of previous platforms and responses will inform the design of these tools to ensure they are accessible, sustainable, and safe. The development of these tools is being explored through a co-design group that includes strategic leads, frontline practitioners and EBE members.

The consortium are currently looking for other area's to test the digital platform and so there could be an opportunity to pilot this tool in Derby.

b) New Arrival Pathway Project – North East Migration Partnership (NEMP)

In 2020 the North East Migration Partnership (NEMP) undertook work to develop Local Information Packs for Mears Housing Managers (the Home Office contracted housing provider for asylum seekers) and Resident Welfare Managers (RWM) to provide to new arrivals to help them orientate their local area. An example of the Local Information Pack can be found in the attachment accompanying this report. This work highlighted that a consistent 'arrivals pathway' was required to better link new arrivals with local services, which could help them navigate their new surroundings and access essential services as early as possible. It has been a long-standing partnership request from NEMP voluntary and community services (VCS) partners to have early proactive contact where possible, and contact details provided to facilitate this and aid successful settlement. Many are funded to help facilitate this service or have offered to do so voluntarily to support Mears. This was seen as even more crucial, at a time when due to Covid restrictions, drop-in centres were closed and new arrivals were finding it harder to make local connections and access early support.

NEMP worked with Mears and in particular the Quality Manager to develop a new process for the Resident Welfare Managers (RWM) to follow to help new arrivals to orientate to their local area, which involved the RWM seeking informed consent from new arrivals to pass on their details to a lead support organisation. Upon receiving the referral, the lead support organisation (Service Provider) would contact the Service User (SU) with information on the support they (or other providers) could offer, such as help with food vouchers, school uniforms and other essentials which are not the responsibility of Mears. They would help the SU navigate into the local area and access essential items and services as early as possible.

The Partnership set up a joint consultation between the VCS and local authorities to scope out lead organisations that will be part of a New Arrivals Pathway and be lead contacts. In some areas there were natural lead organisations, which have historically provided drop-ins or orientation, in areas where it was not so obvious discussions were held to identify a lead single point of contact. It was agreed that the New Arrivals Pathway would run as a 6-month pilot project to test the new approach and look at viability for it to be formally adopted and rolled out to other areas. The pilot commenced on 1st April 2021 with Service Providers in three local authority areas, British Red Cross (Stockton), FODI (Sunderland) and STARCH (South Tyneside). These Service Providers were selected as they have different models of service provision and capacity and the areas are geographically spread in the North and South of the region. An evaluation was done during the pilot and found it to be an overarching success. In the 6-month period of the pilot, over 200 new arrivals were referred into local lead Service Providers and offered immediate practical support and links to other services. As a result, the project has been adopted in all but one of the 12 local authority area's in the North East.

Julian Prior will be doing a full evaluation of this work between January and March 2024.

c) Welcome Hub Networks – Good Faith Partnership

Welcome Hubs is a simple idea with big potential to unlock neighbourhood-level capacity in refugee welcome. A Welcome Hub is hosted by a faith or community group, and involves a small team of volunteers running regular social activities in the same physical location. Volunteers are trained to be able to provide high-quality integration support as well as to signpost people to professional help. Welcome Hubs are supported by Mobilisers, who support Hubs in setting up and in connecting with each other and sharing learning and best practice. Mobilisers also liaise closely with Local Government, ensuring strong connections and feedback between a Welcome Hub Network and Local Authority, as well as complementarity with existing VCSE provision. Welcome Hubs will often receive some funding from Local Government, as well as referral pathways for new arrivals to help them to find their nearest Hub.

In Bristol, the Good Faith Partnership has mobilised a Network of 15 Welcome Hubs over the last 18 months, with over 200 volunteers supporting more than 400 refugees and asylum seekers. The Network was established in response to the War in Ukraine and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, and so most of those supported by Welcome Hubs in Bristol have been Ukrainian, but some Hubs have widened their offer to other groups and work is in progress to embed and advance this expanded welcome. 97% of those who have used Welcome Hubs have rated them as 'good' or 'very good'. Some of the positive impacts of the Welcome Hubs in Bristol have included:

- Supporting new arrivals to access public services, learn English, find work and recover from trauma
- Creating a platform for Ukrainians to meet each other and to build their agency in a new context
- Supporting hosts, minimising placement breakdowns and the need for move-on accommodation
- Enhancing the ability of the Local Authority to liaise effectively with new arrivals and to plan and deliver support either directly or through commissioning

Having been started through philanthropic funding for the first 6 months, Bristol City Council decided to fund the co-ordination of the Hubs for the following 9 months, with plans to continue the Hub Network as a long-term part of the city's welcoming infrastructure.

Working in partnership with Social Finance and Reset, the Good Faith Partnership has also been testing the Welcome Hubs framework in 3 other Local Authority areas – Sheffield, South Gloucestershire and Gateshead. This will enable them to learn how the Welcome Hubs concept works in more rural settings, and in contexts where they are established with an explicit focus on all refugees and asylum seekers. Having started this process in Autumn 2022, they have successfully secured Local Authority buy-in in these areas.

Social Finance have evaluated the impact of the Welcome Hub work in Bristol, South Gloucestershire and Sheffield. There were some good outcomes and learning identified. They found that Welcome Hubs;

- Strengthen community welcome locally
- Enhance collaboration in the local refugee and asylum support local system
- Connect and empower refugees and asylum seekers
- Leverage community assets

They think that the development of this work could be pitched to Government for a national roll out / pilot instead of to Local Authorities once a coalition of VCS refugee sector organisations are on board. Good Faith Partnership are also exploring the possibility of convening a conference in 2024 to bring together a range of organisations involved in supporting new arrivals to share learning and explore a more national partnership approach to providing a welcome infrastructure locally.

11. Recommendations

- **Employ a full time NAA Coordinator** to lead the work of the NAA. Unless there is additional capacity and senior leadership, limited progress will be made and so a full-time role will be required to deliver the recommended work plan outlined below. The NAA Coordinator will preferably have experience of;
 - Working in a senior position within the voluntary sector
 - Chairing / convening meetings with a range of stakeholders
 - Brokering solutions to challenging issues with people who share different perspectives
 - Working with or alongside local authorities and/or statutory services
 - Fundraising and business development
 - Strategic thinking and problem solving
 - Volunteer recruitment, training and management

The above is not an exhaustive list but indicates that the post requires someone with significant experience.

The following objectives are recommended to be delivered by the NAA Coordinator;

- **Commission and oversee a ‘Single Point of Contact’ (SPOC) service** to take referrals from Serco Housing Officers for new arrivals to triage their non-statutory needs and provide a signposting service to VCS organisations in Derby as appropriate. It will be important to have clarity between what Serco are contracted to deliver e.g. GP referrals etc and what can be referred to the SPOC in order to manage expectations with the SU’s and ensure that the SPOC was not doing the work that Serco are paid to deliver. Serco’s Partnership Manager has agreed to such a service in principle subject to more detailed discussions. Housing Officers will be required to explain the benefits of being referred to the SPOC as part of the induction meeting with the new arrivals. If they agree to be referred / share their contact details with the SPOC, the Housing Officer would make a formal referral (with a password protected email) within 24 hours of the induction meeting.
- **It is recommended that this service is delivered by a well-respected and trusted VCS organisation commissioned by the NAA.** This is so that it gives confidence to the SU’s when they discuss being referred during the induction meeting. It is recommended that this service is delivered face to face where possible by having a caseworker located in each Hotel (IA) at least one day a week. However, it is also recommended that an alternative method of contact is also offered by publicising a phone number for any new arrival to call that will get through to the same service. It will be important to also distinguish this service from the role of Migrant Help so that there is no duplication of service, although it would be very likely that new arrivals contacting the SPOC would be referred on to Migrant Help if this were appropriate for advice about their asylum claim and/or to make a complaint about the accommodation provider.
- **Investigate the most appropriate online presence for contact details and information for services available to asylum seekers and refugees in Derby.** If nothing appropriate already exists commission and manage a new website or app to contain these details. This information is currently collated and distributed by Guy Freeman at British Red Cross and so it will need to be established if he has sufficient capacity to keep these details up-to-date by proactively checking the information and updating on a regular basis. If not someone the NAA Coordinator or the SPOC needs to take responsibility for this task.

- **Establishing and lead (or commission) a ‘Peer Mentoring’ service**, recruiting, training and managing volunteers with lived experience of the asylum system to support new arrivals. One of the most effective ways of communicating and building trust with new arrivals is through peers who have been through the same experience. Ideally they will be from the same country or at least speak the same language, understand their culture or faith. This would also support people who may still be waiting for their asylum decision with valuable experience that can help them improve their English, improve their employability as well as providing meaningful activities to improve their health and wellbeing. This service could be offered by the SPOC for new arrivals to help them settle into life in the UK, by finding their way around the city and assist them with accessing health services, ESOL classes, faith communities, culturally appropriate and cheap foods etc. Peer mentors could provide ‘orientation walks’ for new arrivals to key services in Derby.
- **Coordinate ‘Welcome to the UK’ (or similar) orientation training courses** that can be offered to every new arrival within their first 6 weeks of arriving in Derby. This would involve; organising venues (if not run in the Hotels) and publicity, booking hosts (who could be drawn from the peer mentors), translators and representatives from the Health, Education or Police services, and recruiting new arrivals to attend.
- **Relationship building to increase trust, understanding and knowledge with all stakeholders.** This will involve a variety of tasks from 1-2-1 meetings with people to understand their perspectives, introducing services to each other where there was no previous connection, encouraging stakeholders to collaborate or consult with each other where appropriate and being a neutral convener to problem solve specific issues.
- **Chair an Alliance forum meeting.** One of the core ways of increasing trust, understanding and knowledge with VCS providers would be to chair Alliance meetings in person to bring together VCS organisations to get to know each other to develop relationships as well as sharing information and exploring opportunities to work more closely in partnership. One interviewee commented *“a forum to build trust would be helpful 100% - creating a nonthreatening environment”*.
- **Regularly meeting with the leaders of other networks** such as RASC, CoS, the other Alliances to ensure that the NAA was not duplicating these other networks and that information was shared between these networks to explore how the VCS sector works most effectively together.
- **Fundraising to ensure the sustainability of the service and to increase the capacity in the sector to plug gaps.** Whilst it is envisaged that the service will initially be funded by the council it will be important to secure a portfolio of funders to develop the service and ensure its sustainability. It will also be important to broker potential partnerships that could bid for larger funding sources to address gaps in service provision, such a legal advice, that would not be possible without a coordinated approach.
- **Advocacy with key decision makers of contracted services on behalf of the voluntary sector** to ensure problems are escalated appropriately so that where local system change is possible, they can adapt to improve service provision. This may include holding contracted services, such as Serco or Migrant Help, to account to ensure they are doing what they are contracted to deliver. This may also include advocating for funding to improve local provision where there are gaps, such as in legal advice locally.
- **Leadership / strategic development to work with smaller charities who are particularly vulnerable** – depending on the experience and capacity of the person in post they could also offer some strategic support (if it is not available elsewhere) to smaller organisations that need some external help to become more sustainable through fundraising advice or providing guidance on what to focus on.

12. Appendix A - Focus Group interview questions

Three focus groups were conducted with a total of 21 service users from Upbeat Communities. They were conducted in person and consisted of groups of 6 – 8 people that lasted for 90 minutes each. The majority of people interviewed were currently seeking asylum, although one person had come through the Ukranian resettlement programme. One focus group was for women only and the other two included only men. Four people required an interpreter. Julian Prior facilitated all focus groups.

The focus groups were structured around the following questions to ensure consistency although follow up questions were used where appropriate to understand points made in more detail.

1. Introductions and context
 - a. Julian to outline the purpose of the focus group and some guidance to ensure confidentiality and openness as well as respect and giving each other the chance to speak
 - b. Everyone to introduce themselves, where they are from, the system their come to Derby (to claim asylum or resettled refugee etc) and how long they have lived in Derby
2. Briefly tell me about your first few days and weeks when you arrived in Derby. What was helpful and what was not?
3. Please tell me about HOW you found out about different support services you needed?
4. Which organisations have you been supported by since arriving in Derby?
5. Are there any gaps in services?
6. What are the main challenges you faced when you first arrived and what are they now?
7. What would help you overcome these challenge

13. Appendix B – Legal advice

Table 1 shows, for each region/nation of the UK, the number of provider offices with legal aid contracts (and the number which were initially awarded contracts in the last tender round, in 2018), the number of matter starts allocated to those providers and the number of matter starts opened in each year. The contracts began in September 2018, therefore the contract year runs from 1 September to 31 August. The number of matter starts allocated is as of 2019-20, the middle of the three years in the table, since this has changed as providers have withdrawn.

Table 1: Legal aid provision by region.

REGION/NATION	NO OF OFFICES 2020-21 (2018-19)	MATTER STARTS ALLOCATED	MATTER STARTS OPENED (2018-19)	MATTER STARTS OPENED (2019-20)	MATTER STARTS OPENED (2020-21)
Scotland*	35	NA	NA	NA	NA
Northern Ireland*	10-15	NA	NA	NA	NA
Wales	12 (15)	3,252	1,528	1,465	1,148
North West	34 (38)	9,018	4,621	4,528	3,552
North East #	13	3,770	2,329	1,346	1,705
Yorks & Humber #	29 (31)	6,950	3,137	2,291	2,260
East Midlands	11 (13)	2,700	1,182	944	812
West Midlands	33 (39)	7,866	4,347	3,600	3,936
East of England	12 (13)	2,850	847	753	769
South East	15	3,123	1,401	1,251	1,425
South West	11	1,924	626	550	465
London	112 (136)	28,244	10,412	10,139	11,245

The Legal Aid Agency procurement area is North East, Yorkshire and the Humber. The figures for this procurement area are separated into the access points which most closely reflect the separate regions.

* Data not directly comparable because the administration of legal aid is different. See the regional sections for this information.



Table 2: Number of OISC providers by region and accreditation level.

REGION/NATION	OISC L3	OISC L2 (EXCL MIGRANT HELP*)	OISC L1 (EXCL CAB)
Scotland	1	7	106 (11)
N. Ireland	2	2	51
Wales	1	0	27 (7)
North West	5	4	52 (20)
North East	1	0	24 (13)
Yorkshire & Humber	12	16	32 (18)
East Midlands	0	3	30 (8)
West Midlands	10	4	39 (15)
East of England	2	7	54 (17)
South East	6	9	81 (15)
South West	5	2	42 (15)
London	53#	26	99 (76)

* Migrant Help has offices throughout the UK which are accredited at L2, but it holds the Home Office contract for information provision and does not offer casework or representation to individuals on their immigration cases.

This includes a number of organisations which have a head office in London and maintains accreditation but does not in practice offer Level 3 advice and representation from its London office.

14. Appendix C – Asylum Seekers in receipt of support by Local Authority

Asylum seekers in receipt of support by Local Authority, 2014 Q1 to 2023 Q3

Sum of People	Column Labels	30 Sep 2020	31 Dec 2020	31 Mar 2021	30 Jun 2021	30 Sep 2021	31 Dec 2021	31 Mar 2022	30 Jun 2022	30 Sep 2022	31 Dec 2022	31 Mar 2023	30 Jun 2023	30 Sep 2023
Row Labels		2020	2020	2021	2021	2021	2021	2022	2022	2022	2022	2023	2023	2023
East Midlands		2,997	2,900	2,801	2,700	2,635	3,316	3,071	3,323	3,181	6,315	6,900	7,090	7,464
Amber Valley		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	3
Ashfield		3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	13	29
Bassetlaw		1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	1
Blaby		0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Bolsover		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	4	16
Boston		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	97	93	91	101
Broxtowe		51	51	51	49	47	59	56	52	56	55	55	48	55
Charnwood		12	12	12	13	10	15	16	19	30	214	235	211	217
Chesterfield		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	14	100	98	89	101
Derby		876	859	805	765	736	794	802	833	770	1,236	1,349	1,289	1,376
East Lindsey		0	0	0	0	0	8	8	14	13	239	201	181	187
Erewash		0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	2	439	413	443	427
Gedling		5	9	8	6	8	9	9	11	14	14	14	13	17
Harborough		0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3
High Peak		2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	1
Hinckley and Bosworth		0	0	0	0	3	3	3	5	5	39	6	5	0
Leicester		957	938	914	916	895	906	879	935	947	1,380	1,397	1,596	1,704
Lincoln		4	4	3	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	2
Mansfield		0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	41	39	43	61
Melton		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	104	144	140	146
Newark and Sherwood		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
North Kesteven		0	0	0	0	3	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
North Northamptonshire		21	24	24	22	22	25	25	25	24	63	89	115	71
North West Leicestershire		0	0	0	0	0	128	33	26	42	170	318	352	372
Nottingham		990	924	908	852	826	1,159	1,133	1,186	1,143	1,392	1,532	1,577	1,562
Oadby and Wigston		59	56	53	47	50	50	52	48	45	44	42	58	55
Rushcliffe		0	0	0	0	1	60	15	114	12	77	74	61	81
Rutland		1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Derbyshire		0	0	0	0	0	63	5	20	22	93	101	82	116
South Holland		0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
South Kesteven		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	112	254	250	257
West Lindsey		0	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
West Northamptonshire		8	8	7	13	13	11	12	14	23	393	433	423	497
East of England		1,080	1,159	1,206	1,287	1,444	1,832	1,834	2,016	2,058	6,259	6,858	7,750	8,490
London		7,991	7,938	7,995	9,322	9,382	11,241	10,129	12,394	11,310	25,863	26,098	25,160	24,383
North East		4,897	4,990	4,953	5,121	5,047	5,269	5,381	5,662	5,699	6,285	6,200	7,165	7,438
North West		11,119	10,764	10,246	10,192	10,111	11,544	11,576	12,250	12,733	18,045	18,176	20,462	22,379
Northern Ireland		961	940	912	885	1,021	1,437	1,404	1,569	1,710	3,103	3,030	3,348	3,220
Scotland		4,871	4,815	4,736	4,367	4,418	4,584	4,667	4,786	4,719	5,210	5,086	5,323	6,090
South East		1,033	1,037	1,178	1,320	1,446	2,259	1,846	2,025	2,137	7,995	8,237	8,810	9,372
South West		1,181	1,155	1,182	1,192	1,172	1,437	1,370	1,565	1,508	4,252	4,603	4,827	5,349
Unknown		161	130	140	105	106	592	259	472	376	341	365	165	84
Wales		3,254	3,132	3,014	2,677	2,539	2,609	2,603	2,912	2,851	3,142	2,966	3,358	3,275
West Midlands		6,550	6,576	6,503	6,509	6,482	7,382	7,005	7,362	7,533	12,406	12,928	13,380	14,724
Yorkshire and The Humber		6,499	6,270	6,081	6,512	6,150	6,780	7,003	7,423	7,590	10,955	10,847	10,612	11,490
Grand Total		52,594	51,806	50,947	52,189	51,953	60,282	58,148	63,759	63,405	110,171	112,294	117,450	123,758