

Cross-Party Group on Migration

Thurs 16th Dec 2021, 6pm

Minutes:

Present:

- **MSPs**
- Paul Sweeney MSP
- Bob Doris MSP
- Dovydas on behalf of Emma Roddick MSP,
- Guy on behalf of Maggie Chapman MSP,
- Blair on behalf of Ross Greer MSP,
- Mercedes Villalba MSP,
- Katy Clark MSP,
- Lorna on behalf of Mark Ruskell MSP

Organisations/ Groups

- Voices Network - Sharlu, Vongayi, Alvina and Serge
- Erin Slaven
- Safe in Scotland- Annika Joy
- British Red Cross - Kenneth Watt
- Maryhill Integration Network- Pinar Aksu, Tandy Nicole, Juliet, Silda, Ahamed, Mohammed Altayyeb, Rose Filippi, Salma, Mary, Nabeela, Ndey, Mohammed, Zeynep, Anwar
- Alison Phipps - UNESCO Rila
- Scottish Detainee Visitors, Kate Alexander
- JustRight Scotland- Jen and Sabrina
- Positive Action in Housing- Adam Paterson and Tim
- Migration Policy Scotland- Sarah Kyambi

Apologies:

- Dylan Fatoohi, Refugees for Justice
- Traci Kirkland, Govan Community Project

Welcome and Introductions

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

Agenda item 3

- **Election of Office Bearers**
 - **Convener - Paul Sweeney MSP**
 - Paul was nominated by Bob Doris MSP and seconded by Alison Phipps.
 - **Vice-Convener**
 - Bob Doris put himself forward for VC and was seconded by Katy Clark MSP.
 - **Secretariat**

- Maryhill Integration Network (MIN) was nominated by Paul Sweeney MSP and seconded by Bob Doris MSP.

Agenda item 4

- **Discussion on CPG Aims and Actions**

The following was agreed by attendees for the aims and actions of the CPG on Migration:

- to provide the Parliament with an information source on migration, refugees and asylum seekers based on lived experience
- to provide a platform for policy makers, stakeholders and people with lived experience to discuss current issues and inform decision-making
- to explore steps that can be taken within the devolved powers of the Scottish Parliament to improve the lives of migrant, asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland

Paul Sweeney MSP opened the discussion highlighting the importance of the CPG on Migration and thanking everyone for joining the call

Pinar Aksu (MIN) welcomed everyone and talked about the significance of the CPG on Migration, what it means to people, especially for people with lived experience. Pinar mentioned the current issues especially regarding right to work, access to education, issues around hotel accommodation and other concerns.

Besilda from MIN Voices - thanked everyone for the opportunity and highlighted concerns regarding access to education and issues faced accessing healthcare especially with NHS.

Blair on behalf of Ross Greer MSP, Greens education spokesperson and would be very happy to take forward any specific related to education.

Issues/concerns which could be explored:

Alison Phipps: good connections with some countries internationally and through UNESCO connections where we might be able to hear from states who have cracked some of these issues - New Zealand in particular but also Ghana, Germany, Canada and the fine grained data from the Global South, e.g. where people are granted the right to work. Or the free driving lessons in New Zealand!

Findings of New Scots Core Group - Rural, Remote, Children and UAMs and digital exclusion are all areas which have been highlighted by the New Scots Core Group in addition to the issues raised by everyone so far.

CPG should be involved in every step of the way to raise all issues affecting people seeking asylum especially issues related to destitution, access to higher education, free bus travel, asylum housing and also the refreshing of the New Scots strategies. We are keen to understand how the voices of people with lived experience are being listened to while forming/refreshing the new strategies.

The acute presenting issues with people in detention, experiencing destitution and under threat of destitution will also need us to look at structural issues and devolved competencies.

It will be good to have this space to think about solutions to the structural injustices and what can be changed for those who have migrated to Scotland, but with an awareness that these will be very different for - for instance - those from EU, compared to new arrivals claiming asylum and in the direct provision of former hotels.

The role which migration plays in rural/remote areas may be another area of focus.

Asylum Matters report shared on hotel detention faced by people seeking refugee protection (not Scotland focused but still relevant) <https://asylummatters.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2021/12/In-a-place-like-prison.pdf>

How to bypass NRPF restrictions in the next Scottish budget to allow for transport support for instance? Is it something the Scottish Parliament can devise and vote on?

Annika Joy: Accommodation - there is currently a lack of accountability for upholding dignity for people living in destitution. There is a need for bringing people's voices forward, can this be done through CPG in migration. Reluctance in current strategies.

MSP Bob Doris: Objectives and goal-focused on Asylum Seekers and Refugees. CPG should acknowledge the struggles this community faces. MSP Bob Doris acknowledged MIN Voices for putting this CPG together. The CPG should consider changing the name "Migration" to a direct focused name for the appropriate community. Before exiting, MSP Bob Doris commended that the session was informative, insightful and helpful. The suggestion was agreed for all.

Adam Paterson: Housing and Accommodation. highlighted issues and grievances surrounding current housing provider, Mears. Conditions of buildings, and resources not being accessible for new tenants. Organisation Mears should be held accountable and responsible.

MSP Katy Clark: Suggestions
CPG can be used as a platform in parliament. Acknowledged the creation of CPG and grateful for the informative session.

Kenneth Watt: Highlighted the importance of voices from people with lived experience. Suggests that the CPG focuses on the DASS Report: Preventing Destitution within the Asylum System to be used as point of reference. Suggested for Tandy to elaborate further on this research work.

Tandy Nicole: DASS Report; Preventing Destitution within the Asylum System
Requested for the DASS Research report; How Will I Survive? to be used as one of the objectives and goals for CPG. The Report contains Recommendations, some which have been iterated and echoed by other members. Focus on harm reduction by reviewing the current systems which are not working. Spoke about people with lived experience at the heart of the CPG and allowing them to be part of the decision making process. In comprehensive summary requested for the Report to be used as part of the Scottish Government Framework and Strategies.

Tandy Nicole (MIN): Suggested for a landing page for CPG group to share information and progress with the public. MSP Paul Sweeney commented this was a good suggestion and will be discussed further.

Paul Sweeney MSP acknowledged the importance of the CPG on Migration and thanked everyone for joining the first ever meeting.

Any Other Business and Close

- Maryhill Integration Network to create a twitter handle, CPG on Migration
- Identify the sole purpose of the CPG Migration