



*Helping the South East Monitor Trends, Address Challenges,
Maximise Opportunities and Inform National Policy*

Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper – Consultation response from the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration and South East England Councils, June 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- E.1 [The South East Strategic Partnership for Migration](#) (SESPM) and [South East England Councils \(SEEC\)](#) have collaborated to produce this response to MHCLG's Integrated Communities Green Paper consultation. We very much welcome this initiative, which we recognise as important both economically and socially for our communities across the large and diverse region that is the South East. Together we cover 7,400 sq. miles and 74 local authorities.
- E.2 To inform this submission, SESPM facilitated a multi-agency consultation event attended by politicians, local authority lead officers, Home Office/MHCLG, academics and third sector colleagues. Keynote presentations and facilitated discussion tables enabled us to capture the key points and perspectives, which are collated and reflected in this submission.
- E.3 Our response is focused on the three chapters below, which we identified as most relevant to the work of SESPM and SEEC.
- a) Supporting New Migrants & Resident Communities
 - b) Education & young people
 - c) Boosting English Language Skills.
- E.4 However, this response does also provide comments on all chapters as many issues are cross cutting.
- E.5 We have chosen to submit a response outside the online option as it is clear from our consultation with partners that responses need to be nuanced and include further explanation. Key messages of our submission include the following:
- E.6 **Work with local authorities but ensure they are adequately resourced:** Local authorities are very well placed to help deliver and coordinate integration through local leadership in their areas. However authorities would need greater resources and funding to be able to do this effectively and to build on some of the good practice that is highlighted in our full consultation response. Key examples of how local resources affect local authorities' contribution include:
- a) Adequately funded programmes such as the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme illustrate how local authorities can positively respond and, indeed, embrace the Government's commitment to integrate people into our local communities.

- b) Shortfalls in funding for upper tier local authorities are a key factor inhibiting some councils from participating in the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) thereby placing an undue burden on those who have stepped forward to accept these vulnerable children. Full cost recovery for UASC placements will be important in achieving a more widespread uptake on the NTS and supporting the active integration of the children placed through the scheme.
- c) Resource constraints are driving many authorities to close libraries and children's centres which are often hubs for integration activities such as learning English and digital inclusion.

It has been recently reported that local authorities may be given responsibilities under the PREVENT strategy; as with integration local authorities have significant potential to contribute in this area as long as they are adequately resourced to do so.

- E.7 **Draw on and build the economic and social benefits of migration:** There is a view that more can be done to highlight the positive economic and social benefits of integrating migrants. For example more could be done to emphasise the value attracting migrant workers into hard to fill vacancies, including in the South East's NHS and agricultural sectors. Government has a role in setting the tone and tenor of communications in this respect but given the right resources local authorities can play an important role in helping to change attitudes locally.
- E.8 **Greater clarity of vision:** We welcome the long term ambitions of the green paper but many of our partners feel it needs to be clearer on the desired outcomes and how central government can join up its departments to achieve this. Joining up of departments is essential to create a consistent policy approach to integration across Government. Without this there is a risk that the green paper may not deliver the anticipated step change.
- E.9 **Improving English language skills is vital for effective integration:** This is the most populated response of all the chapters in this submission and reflects how critically important English language skills are in supporting integration across the region. This submission highlights the need to review existing provision, identifying and drawing on what works best to inform a long term adequately funded strategy that can be delivered through a range of methods at the local level.

About the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) and South East England Councils (SEEC)

[The South East Strategic Partnership for Migration](#) (SESPM) is one of 12 Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs) that are grant funded by the Home Office to provide a leadership, co-ordination and advisory function for migration. SESPM covers South East England, where our role also encompasses delivering programme coordination functions for the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Schemes (VPRS) for refugees, the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), supporting the planning and delivery of ESOL provision and supporting local authorities to engage in the Asylum Dispersal programme.

SESPM is hosted by [South East England Councils](#), which supports SESPM in providing a single point of contact into this large and diverse region; the South East encompasses 74 local

authorities in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Surrey, Sussex and Kent covering an area of 7,400 sq miles. SEEC is a voluntary membership organisation representing all tiers of local authorities in the South East and their 9.1 million residents. SESPM provides an effective and high quality means for engagement between the Home Office and local partners to identify, understand and address migration issues of national and local importance.

INTRODUCTION

- a) We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper consultation. The South East hosts around 12% of the UK's migrant population and is a transit hub for many en-route to moving elsewhere in the country. Integration is an important issue both socially and economically in the South East.
- b) To inform this submission, SESPM facilitated a multi-agency consultation event in London on 14th May 2018. This was attended by politicians, local authority lead officers, Home Office/MHCLG, academics and third sector colleagues. Keynote presentations and facilitated discussion tables enabled us to capture key points and perspectives which are collated and reflected in this submission.
- c) Our response is focused on the three chapters below which we identified as most relevant to the work of this migration partnership.
 - Supporting New Migrants & Resident Communities
 - Education & young people
 - Boosting English Language Skills
- d) However, this response does provide comments on all chapters as many issues are cross cutting.
- e) We have chosen to submit a response outside the online option as it is clear from our consultation with partners that responses need to be nuanced and include further explanation.
- f) At our event on 14th May 2018, some invitations were made to MHCLG leads to visit local authority areas in the South East to see how integration is happening at the local level; SESPM is taking this forward and we anticipate these visits will go ahead over the summer.

Comments on specific chapters

CHAPTER 1: STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP

The Green Paper proposes that we need to build the capacity of our leaders to promote and achieve integration outcomes. Do you agree?

1.1 Partners supported additions to the green paper to strengthen leadership at all levels, including central government and local government. They highlighted a number of areas where Government actions could help strengthen local leadership.

Key points included:

- I. **Empowering and Resourcing Local Authorities to Lead Integration:** Local authorities have a proven track record of stepping up to deliver effective migration programmes locally. Any new central integration policy needs to resource local authorities to deliver at the local level without a cost burden to them. Both schemes currently rely on voluntary participation from local authorities. Local political leadership has been an important factor in areas that have embraced migration programmes such as the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) for refugees but the ability for councils to claim adequate funding has been a key factor in this. While the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children has also been delivered by local authorities, insufficient funding for councils has resulted in piecemeal participation and made it difficult for some council leaders to justify participation. Shortfalls in funding for councils who take on UASC deter some councils from accepting placements and this places an undue burden on those who have stepped forward to help these vulnerable children. Full cost recovery for UASC placements will be important in achieving more widespread take up of NTS and active integration of the children placed through the scheme.
- II. It is important to capture and share learning from the successes and challenges in engaging and supporting leaders to participate in future integration programmes. Consideration should be given to how existing structures such as Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs), Local Government Association (LGA), and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) might be engaged to inform new programme design.
- III. **Establishing a Cross Government Department Integration Policy Review:** There is a need to promote a long term vision and connection across government departments and policies. For example, welfare reform such as the benefit cap can present challenges to council leaders wishing to participate in migration programmes such as VPRS by limiting the funding available for refugee and asylum seeker housing and living costs; many refugees newly arriving on the VPRS will not have sufficient English language skills to have an immediate genuine prospect of work and partners recommended that the time frame for the application of the benefit cap is reviewed and measures to support refugees into the labour market considered. Another example of the value of such a review would be the opportunity to align time frames aimed at alleviating homelessness by increasing to 56 days the time period in which people are expected to move out of asylum accommodation when they receive a decision

on their case. This would bring asylum policy into line with the recent Homelessness Reduction Act. Reviewing all policies against the central integration aims of government should help to address tensions between policies such as the examples above and encourage local leaders to participate in and positively embrace migration programmes.

- IV. **Central Government should set the Tone and Resource adequate Officer Capacity:** The aim should be local integration that encourages a whole-council asset-based approach to migration and integration. For example, ensuring councils have adequate resources to develop comprehensive local integration strategies, embed and review them within mainstream policies and programmes. This is likely to require additional specialist officer capacity at the local level to ensure sufficient dedicated officers who can lead delivery of programmes such as VPRS and ensure it coordinates with other migration-related issues such as asylum, UASCs, integration, safeguarding (e.g Modern Slavery) and the council's wider work.
- V. **Invest in Capacity Building of Local Community Leadership:** Many of our partners support measures that will strengthen leadership amongst migrant communities and third sector agencies. Statutory bodies need to have effective formal and informal routes to engage with migrant communities. Recent national examples relating to Windrush illustrate the consequences when trust breaks down. This will also be important for maintaining and building relationships with EU migrants through Brexit. For example, links with effective community leaders could help address some of the practicalities of reaching vulnerable EU communities to register for Settled Status and avoid community misunderstandings and possible tensions.

CHAPTER 2: SUPPORTING NEW MIGRANTS AND RESIDENT COMMUNITIES

The Green Paper proposes measures to support recent migrants so that they have the information they need to integrate into society and understand British values and their rights and responsibilities. Do you agree with this approach?

- 2.1 Partners indicated further steps that the green paper should include to be more effective. Key points included:
 - I. **Take an Asset Based Approach to Migration:** It is important to recognise that there can be benefits from migration both economically and culturally and that integration is a two way process i.e. integration not assimilation. The South East is a net contributor to the UK economy – from 2000-2015 the South East contributed £154bn more to the Treasury in taxes than the area received in public spending. Integration of migrants into the South East labour market supports the local economy, the national economy and enables migrants from a refugee background to become financially self sufficient, living in this high cost area. Migrants play a significant part in the South East economy and there is a view that more could be done at national level to ensure that the South East and other areas are seen to remain 'open for business'. Attracting workers into hard to fill vacancies in the South East economy will be vital to ensure the economy continues to grow. Actions should include ensuring that skills EU-nationals (for example those working in the NHS)

continue to be made welcome. There are also more steps that could be taken to help other migrants to move into work quickly.

- II. **British Values Should Take into Account Local Community Values:** Norms and values can be very local in nature and whilst a broad brush approach is welcome to set the tone, implementation needs to reflect the local picture. It is important to establish a dialogue through local authorities, public services and third sector organisations to determine the best local approach.
- III. **Join Up Information Channels:** The provision of accurate information for migrants is important and there are many examples in the South East where local authorities and voluntary sector organisations provide briefing and information packs, for example for refugees coming on the VPRS. There will, though, always be limitations on what information is provided to people before they arrive in the UK and pre-arrival information only really applies to resettlement schemes. Pre-arrival briefings can complement but not replace access to good advice and information on arrival and post arrival. For refugees arriving on the VPRS, consideration should be given to aligning the content of pre-departure information with the locally-provided integration and support materials from local authorities and community sponsors. To support continuity of information provided at all stages it would be helpful to establish a template for information provision that local authorities and others could adapt for the local context. Information needs to be appropriate, accessible and tailored. For example there are varying degrees of literacy levels for refugees.
- IV. **Learn from Experience and Capture Best Practice to Apply Across Programmes:** Delivering VPRS provides learning that can be applied to other refugees. Good practice includes adequate funding for councils and local examples such as dedicated support in enabling people to become work-ready and economically independent.
- V. **Central Government Position on Granting Limited Leave to Remain for Refugees Should be Reviewed:** It was suggested that replacing five year Refugee Leave with Indefinite Leave to Remain for people arriving on refugee programmes should be considered. Uncertainty a person has about their future can militate against integration. It also impairs the local authority ability to create and support cohesive communities in their medium and long term planning.
- VI. **Promote Cross Cultural Connections and Contact:** Providing platforms for aiding dialogue between different migrant communities and resident communities and considering examples from other countries such as Canada. Promoting local initiatives such as multi-cultural festivals and friendship projects can pay dividends. Encouraging these could be beneficial but would be resource-intensive for local authorities, so funding may need to be provided. Enabling contact and secondary contact between communities is well evidenced to promote integration. (References to academic research on this topic include Allport, 1954; Amir, 1976; Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Dovidio et al, 2011).
- VII. **Mainstreaming and Embedding Integration;** Government should consider including integration in all levels of policy and decision making. This could include monitoring through, for example, an independent policy review board and the nomination of a local integration lead officer. Achieving successful integration is essential to avoid some of the problems highlighted in Dame Louise Casey's 2016 report on integration.

- VIII. **Resource Local Authorities to Understand the Scale and Profile of their Migrant Communities to Inform Plans:** An example of good practice is provided by Brighton and Hove City Council's migrant communities research (initiated through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment), which identified a comprehensive range of recommendations to support better integration and community participation. This supports the Home Office in delivery of programmes as the 'place based approach' is embedded through the Resettlement Asylum Safeguarding and Integration Directorate. However, many local authorities lack resources to carry out similar work.
- IX. **Life in the UK test:** It was agreed that this needs reviewing. Some partners stated that whilst it is possible to test knowledge of facts and information through the current test it is not possible to test values and principles. Assessing values and principles is more suited to a school environment (where young people are involved) and an adult education context for newly arrived adult migrants.

The Controlling Migration Fund was constructed to deal with the short-term migration pressures and associated costs that local authorities can encounter. Do you think it adequately achieves this objective?

- 2.2 There were mixed views on whether the CMF has adequately achieved this objective. Key points for improving CMF included:
- I. **A Long Term Strategy is Needed:** The introduction of the CMF is a welcome recognition of some of the pressures experienced locally. However, some partners felt the name of the fund and its short term nature did not make it the right vehicle to implement a long-term coherent integration approach
 - II. **Evaluation is Critical:** Although the CMF has helped address some of the costs associated locally with migration, partners feel it is too early to judge how successful overall it has been. Evaluation of individual projects and of the overall fund is needed.
 - III. **Clarity of Purpose Could be Improved:** Additional resources from this fund for UASC projects and allocations to local authorities are welcome; however, there appears to be some confusion over where this fits into the UASC funding review. It is welcomed that UASC projects will be evaluated and best practice identified and shared; partners would like to see an implementation plan for emerging best practice.

CHAPTER 3: EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Green Paper proposes measures to ensure that all children and young people are prepared for life in modern Britain and have the opportunity for meaningful social mixing with those from different backgrounds. Do you agree with this approach?

- 3.1 There was support for measures to ensure that all children and young people are prepared for life in the UK but Government could do more than the green paper proposes. Key points to help meet this aim included:

- I. **Capture and Share the Academic and Social Benefits of Migrant Children in Mainstream Schooling:** The South East has considerable experience of working with young migrants, particularly Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). Many of our schools have coped well in supporting UASC and have sought to find them placements as soon as possible after they arrive or become known to the authorities. There is evidence to suggest that migrant children in school for two years continuously perform extremely well (out-performing resident children in some cases). Some partners recommend that access to education is provided in a timely way as this improves integration outcomes in the long term. It is important for migrant children to fully access mainstream education provision. The presence of some children with a migrant background in schools has raised the general attainment level amongst all of the children (migrant and non-migrant).
- II. **Ensure Access to Early ESOL Support:** English language is critical to young people's participation in education as the lack of opportunity to learn English can delay a young migrant's entry to higher education. Migrant children should be able to access English language skills as soon as possible. Many children become 'ambassadors' for their families through language and literacy achievements, however, it is important that families do not solely rely on children as de facto interpreters.
- III. **Improve Support for 16-19 year olds:** Access to ESOL for 16 to 19-year olds can be problematic but is particularly important to help them get into full time education as quickly as possible. One of the barriers to UASC gaining skills, particularly those aged 16 to 18, is their undetermined immigration status. As asylum seekers they do not have permission to work and this closes many doors to them that would aid integration. It also leaves some of them vulnerable to exploitation and modern slavery.
- IV. **Consider Funding Specialist Training for Schools:** Refugee children may exhibit disruptive behaviour as a result of trauma, dislocation from family and other well documented reasons. Not all schools have the funding to provide behaviour therapy, meaning that some young people fall out of education. If local authorities received the funding for behaviour therapy they could direct it to known problems, reducing the bureaucracy for schools and improving the outcomes for individual young people.
- V. **Clarify Entitlements to Student Finance:** Some partners stated there is a level of confusion regarding entitlement for some young migrants and refugees to access student finance and the fees that apply. For example, ensuring that they are not liable for higher overseas student fees.

CHAPTER 4: BOOSTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

The Green Paper proposes a number of measures to improve the offer for people to learn English. Do you agree with this approach?

- 4.1 Partners suggested additional measures to improve the English language offer. Key points included:
 - I. **ESOL Access Should be Reviewed:** A major aspect of integration that presents a challenge is the lack of access for migrants to ESOL, quite often the result of specific policy. For example, in England, asylum seekers and newly-arrived adult spouses who arrive under family reunion are not eligible for a concessionary rate when enrolling on

an English language course. A recent survey suggested that 770,000 people in the UK felt that they did not speak English well. Addressing this challenge is crucial as there is evidence that lack of English language skills presents barriers to education, employment and social interaction with the resident community. We also know that good English language skills boost the confidence of migrants. Refugees who have had their refugee status for less than three years cannot access some community based ESOL provision. Some SESPM partners recommended that the eligibility rules on this need to be reviewed and that Government should consider universal access to ESOL provision for non-English speakers, available shortly after a person arrives. This should apply to arrivals under a range of routes such as resettlement, family reunion and asylum and should be adequately funded, taking into account all ages, genders and levels of literacy.

- II. **Long Term Strategy and Funding Needs to Be Considered:** Funding for future ESOL provision needs to be addressed and a long-term commitment made to support many of the ESOL (and other) proposals in the green paper. As we approach Brexit, the government needs to address how they will replace current EU funding for ESOL via the European Social Fund. Government departments should consider a joined-up approach to ESOL, for example closures of children's centres in many parts of the South East are undermining the ability to help children learn better English. Innovations such as contributions from the business sector and examples of home tutoring in other countries should be included.
- III. **ESOL Information Needs Improving:** There is a lack of knowledge often about what is available in ESOL, for example which college is providing which type of course, for how many hours and the eligibility criteria. There is also a challenge in understanding or identifying where the ESOL need is and matching that to provision. SESPM currently undertakes and maintains ESOL mapping as part of the VPRS programmes and it is recommended that consideration is given to widening this activity across programmes and to include the identification and sharing of models of good practice in ESOL provision. This though is not a one-off task but an ongoing process that needs to be resourced by central government.
- IV. **Build ESOL Networks and Learn from Current Good Practice:** ESOL provision would benefit from strong networks of providers, effective partnerships and coordination. For example, there is a model used in Hackney that involves the local authority (Education department), the Learning and Work Institute and providers. Continuing to map ESOL need and provision beyond that needed for the VPRS is likely to have a wider benefit to already-resident communities and be of strategic importance in assessing and planning delivery within and across local areas and even regions for some kinds of learning. There would be significant benefits by co-designing training with former ESOL learners to help tailor the provision to specific groups

Do you have any other suggestions on how we can improve the offer for people to learn English?

4.2 Partners provided a range of suggestions. A national strategy for ESOL would be welcome and we would recommend that it incorporates the following:

- I. **Greater engagement with Community Based ESOL:** While formal ESOL teaching is vital it can, and should, be complemented by community-based sessions. Government

should support a variety of methods of ESOL provision, including classroom-based, community-based, informal, using volunteers, using local libraries and home tutoring. ESOL teaching should include the language around 'soft' skills to encourage social interaction, for example, how to ask questions when something is unclear. Improving English language skills takes little account of disconnected indigenous (resident) population with poor literacy skills and this should be addressed. In doing so, it would be good to promote opportunities for migrant and non-migrant communities to learn English together. It is important to support an infrastructure of community learning and community-based conversation hubs. For community-based ESOL provision to work properly adequate funding is needed and some partners suggested that changes in the immigration rules that facilitate access from a range of migrants with different status should be considered.

- II. **Recognise the Importance of Informal and Everyday Experiences:** ESOL teaching should not be too 'academic', people need to be able to talk to their neighbours, not recite from a textbook. Informal ESOL provision is very important and can be provided at little cost, although there is a need for some resources associated with such provision (venue hire, organising volunteers, etc.).
- III. **ESOL for Work and Training Needs to be Developed from Current Good Practice:** There should be opportunities to embed ESOL in vocational training. For example, the Concept Training project in Ashford includes vocational language and communication in the workplace. It would be effective for some migrants to combine ESOL with training in gaining employment. Examples of this could include practical training for skills, such as building site certification, how to apply for jobs, how to write a CV, understanding technical terms associated with specific areas of employment and working towards qualification recognition. ESOL teaching should cover the language needed to learn to drive and pass the theory driving test as this is very important for many migrants and refugees who may be living in more remote areas.
- IV. **Tailoring Provision for Women and Early Years for Children:** In some circumstances there needs to be specific ESOL provision for women, particularly those with childcare responsibilities. Experience from the SVPRS suggests the ability to provide childcare facilities when providing ESOL is a key aspect of enabling women to access ESOL. It is important to provide ESOL early with migrant children to avoid a cohort of non-English speaking young people. The challenge is that much Early Years' provision and functional skills learning has been cut.
- V. **Look at Provision in Other Countries:** Examine examples of language provision from overseas. For example in Australia, new migrants receive 500 hours of language training, 100 of these in the workplace and in the Netherlands, new migrants start work within the first couple of weeks and learn the language at work.

CHAPTER 5: PLACES AND COMMUNITY

The Green Paper proposes measures to ensure that people, particularly those living in residentially segregated communities, have opportunities to come together with people from different backgrounds and play a part in civic life. Do you agree with this approach?

5.1 Partners felt that direct contact and secondary contact has proven positive benefits for integration.¹ Key points raised included:

- I. **Make Better use of Existing Places and Good Practice Examples:** Many partners highlighted the positive use of libraries as a resource and for cross-community engagement for everyone, including migrants. Examples of community hubs including migrants were provided including the 'Table Tennis Club' in Brighton and Hove which brings together migrants and the resident population. Here they have trained young people to be coaches and have combined English language teaching with an activity (Ping pong English, known as Penglish!). Mentoring is provided, and the club is a key resource, particularly for young migrants.
- II. **Resourcing Local Authorities to Plan Better Spaces:** Creating a conducive, communal safe space for people to associate and meet is an important element of integration. This can be challenging in terms of resources and whilst it might be possible to create a physical space for interactions, councils or local groups will often still require financial support for activities and events. This is an area where local authorities and their voluntary sector partners can play a key role; some resource is likely to be required but also the framework for embedding/mainstreaming integration should be considered.

CHAPTER 6: INCREASING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

The Green Paper proposes measures to provide tailored support to people, especially those who may not currently be active in the labour market, to build their confidence and skills to take up employment. Do you agree with this approach?

6.1 The importance of economic activity was recognised and suggestions to improve this included:

- I. **Resource a Regional and Local Based Multi-Agency Approach:** Enabling people to become economically active is critically important and especially so in the South East, where there are job opportunities but housing and the cost of living is high. Employment not only promotes independence and increases self esteem but also reduces the risk of people becoming vulnerable to exploitation and modern slavery. Government should consider the promotion and expansion of work placement initiatives such as Concept Training in Ashford, which prepares refugees for work in the UK (the Concept programme includes ESOL, work experience, training and qualifications for the work place). Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) in England, DWP and other Government departments should be encouraged to work together to make the best use of the resident workforce, including migrants.
- II. **Build on Good Practice in Developing Locally Appropriate Strategies:** Statistics show that many refugees struggle to gain employment compared to other migrant groups and the resident population. Research by the Centre on Migration Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford illustrates that on average employment

¹ Hewstone, M, Rutter, J & Carter, R. (2018). *Integration: Getting it right locally*. British Futures. Accessed 27th May 2018 from <http://www.britishfuture.org/articles/integration-getting-it-right-locally/>

rates are significantly lower compared to people who came to the UK for other reasons such as to join family, study or work, furthermore they earn significantly less. In the South East our support to the refugees who arrived on the VPRS has shown the effectiveness of being able to provide a targeted package of support in areas such as ESOL and access to employment. This has been made possible by the specific funding available for this cohort of refugees and has resulted in this group recording three times the national average in obtaining employment. Partners suggested that similar employment advice should be made available to all people granted refugee status.

- III. **Review Entitlement to Work for Asylum Seekers:** Asylum seekers not having permission to work is cited by a local authority Chief Executive in the region as an enormous barrier to integration and that authority's participation in the asylum dispersal programme. Simplifying entitlements to work and assistance to access employment across the asylum and resettlement programmes and resourcing local authorities to deliver this would support more cohesive communities and reduce vulnerabilities, especially for those going through the asylum process.
- IV. **Review how the Benefit Cap Applies to those arriving in the UK under the VPRS:** Accessing work also lifts people out of the Benefit Cap, however, for many resettled refugees under the VPRS they face additional barriers in learning English and becoming work-ready. An accelerated process to become work-ready would reduce the impact on these vulnerable refugees and support the local economy as well as providing clear social and wellbeing benefits.

CHAPTER 7: RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

The Green Paper proposes measures to encourage integration and resist divisive views or actions. Do you agree with this approach?

The Green Paper proposes measures to address practices which can impact on the rights of women. Do you agree with this approach?

- 7.1 Partners did not directly discuss the above questions however there was some relevant cross-cutting dialogue. Key Points included:
 - I. **Access and Support into Work:** People's rights and freedoms are linked with their ability and opportunity to participate in society economically.
 - II. **Embedding/mainstreaming integration policy:** Support, promote and protect the rights and freedoms of people whilst raising awareness of anti-oppressive behaviours and practices which can be identified and addressed.

CHAPTER 8: MEASURING SUCCESS

The Green Paper proposes core integration measures for national and local government to focus on. Do you agree these are the right measures?

- 8.1 There was no conclusive position on the success measures, however a number of factors were raised, including:

- I. **Evaluation should be Adequately Resourced:** There was support for adopting integration measures but concern that undertaking measurements and evaluations carries resource implications, particularly for local authorities and other providers who have to collect the data and submit data.
- II. **Clarify the Government Vision for Outcome Measures:** Some partners stated that the green paper is not clear on desired outcomes for integration and would suggest that the next version of the green paper spell out what success looks like.

OTHER COMMENTS

9.1 Health

- I. Health plays a vital role in integration and the perception of some migrants.
- II. Promotion of good health for migrants, entitlements to healthcare and appropriate use of services should be considered for specific inclusion in the strategy.
- III. Information and guidance for health practitioners across all fields is important so that entitled migrants are not mistakenly denied services or reluctant to present for healthcare.
- IV. The experience of refugees, including those coming on the VPRS, indicates that some struggle with accessing appropriate mental health support, especially after they have been in the UK for some years. The consequence of being a refugee and having been persecuted can take its toll on a person's well-being. There are many examples of initiatives that could be used to seek to address this, for example holding peer support groups, counselling in the refugee's mother-tongue or organising sporting activities that also provide an opportunity for participants to talk about their experiences. Sometimes these initiatives are run by specialised voluntary sector organisations with financial support from the local authorities and CCGs – this is a model that should be incorporated into any integration and supported by adequate funding.

9.2. Brexit

- I. Concerns were raised that integration may be affected by Brexit; there are some indications that the uncertainties surrounding Brexit are having a detrimental impact on the integration process and the strategy should take this into account.
- II. There are also concerns from some local authority leaders in the South East that an exodus of EU workers could leave gaps in the economy – particularly in sectors such as the NHS and agriculture. Government should do more to encourage existing skilled EU workers to continue to live and work here. Local authorities are well placed to offer local leadership that supports a Government-wide message that skilled migrants are welcome. We urge Ministers to work with local authorities to provide clear and consistent messages to local communities on this.

9.3. Migrants as individuals

- I. Some partners stressed the importance of getting the language right when referring to newly arrived individuals as discussions around migration can quickly become charged. For example, it would aid integration if there was more mention of how migrants are an asset to the South East. Contrastingly, negative language such as that often associated

with enforcement can be counterproductive and feed into erroneous negative stereotypes of migrants and refugees.

- II. Some suggested it is unhelpful to refer to migrants and refugees as a whole. Instead, it is important to remember that these groups are not necessarily homogenous. Integration actions need to be flexible enough to be able to cater to individual circumstances as well as group needs.

9.4. Good practice

- I. The green paper includes many mentions of good practice in relation to integration; however, there is nothing explicit about how such good practice should be encouraged, championed or incentivised. Mechanisms to do so would promote the delivery of integration.

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/integrated-communities-strategy-green-paper>

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Appendix 1 – the programme for the consultation event on 14 May 2018

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| 10:30 | Registration and refreshments |
| 11:00 | Welcome and introduction to the meeting Roy Millard Head of Partnership, SESPM Heather Bolton Director SEEC |
| 11:10 | Overview of Integrated Communities green paper How are the MHCLG looking to engage with stakeholders on the consultation? What other activities are taking place? <i>Joanna Penrose Buckley, Head of Integration Strategy and Projects, Refugee Resettlement, MHCLG</i> |
| 11:20 | The scale and scope of migration in the South East What do the statistics tell us about the relationships between migrants and resident communities in the South East? How are things changing Scale and Scope of Migration in the South East Dr Carlos Vargas-Silva, Associate Professor and Senior Researcher, COMPAS, Oxford University |
| 11.40 | Q & A |
| 11:50 | Supporting new migrants and resident communities, education and young people Main contents of the green paper on new migrants and resident communities. How the migration angle may inform partners' wider consultation responses? Ray Morgan, CEO Woking Borough Council & Jeremy Beake, Corporate Equalities and Diversity Officer, Milton Keynes Council |
| 12.10 | Q & A |
| 12.20 | Table discussion |
| 12.50 | Round up – Morning Session |
| 13:00 | Lunch |
| 13.45 | Boosting English language skills Main contents of the green paper on boosting English language skills. How do the government's recommendations reflect the aspirations and recommendations of the sector? <i>Alex Stephenson, Head of English, maths & ESOL, Learning & Work Institute</i> |
| 13:55 | Q & A |
| 14:00 | High level Summary of the Green Paper Rehan Haidar, Integration Strategy Team MHCLG |
| 14:10 | Q & A |
| 14.20 | Table discussion |
| 14:50 | Closing remarks including summary of the day and final comments Roy Millard Head of Partnership, SESPM Heather Bolton Director, SEEC |
| 15:00 | End of the meeting |

The PowerPoint presentations made at the consultation meeting of 14 May 2018 by the MHCLG, COMPAS, Milton Keynes Council and the Learning & Work Institute are available from SESPM.

Appendix 2 – the partners who attended the consultation event on 14 May 2018

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| Ashford Borough Council |
| Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council |
| Beyond the page |
| Brighton & Hove City Council |
| Buckinghamshire County Council |
| Diocese of Canterbury |
| Canterbury City Council |
| Cherwell District Council |
| COMPAS, Oxford University |
| Concept Training |
| Epsom & Ewell Borough Council |
| Local Government Association |
| Hampshire County Council |
| Hastings Borough Council |
| Home Office |
| Kent County Council |
| Kent Refugee Action Network (KRAN) |
| Learning and Work Institute |
| Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) |
| Milton Keynes Council |
| Oxford City Council |
| Oxfordshire County Council |
| Reading Borough Council |
| Reigate & Banstead Borough Council |
| Home Office, MHCLG, DfID Resettlement Team |
| Rushmoor Borough Council |
| Samphire, Kent |
| South East England Councils (SEEC) |
| SESPM |
| Waverley Borough Council |
| West Sussex County Council |
| Woking Borough Council |