

Young People, Learning and Employment Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting:	5 th March 2024
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Migrant Families Living in Westminster
Report of:	Sarah Newman, Executive Director of Children's Services Sarah Warman, Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Councillor Aicha Less - Cabinet Member for Communities, Children and Public Protection Councillor Liza Begum - Cabinet Member for Housing Services
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Fairer Communities
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report is intended to summarise the arrangements, challenges, and local response in relation to families seeking asylum who are placed in contingency hotels within Westminster by the Home Office whilst they await the outcome of their immigration application. The report will additionally summarise the current arrangements and response in relation to Ukrainian and Afghani families and those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

- 1.2. The length of time families are accommodated within hotel settings varies based on each individual asylum application with some families living under this arrangement for several years. Approximately more than 70% of asylum seekers will receive a positive immigration determination nationally and remain in the UK. However, awaiting this outcome can be an enormously stressful and unsettling time. Many report feelings of inertia and lack of agency, particularly since legally they cannot seek employment, and that their lives are on hold until they receive their immigration decision. There are instances of families having to move accommodation with very little notice, which can be very disrupting – particularly if there are no vacancies within other local hotels.
- 1.3. The living conditions are very challenging with a number of families and professionals voicing concerns and escalating these to the Home Office and Clearsprings, the company commissioned by the Home Office to manage the contingency hotels.
- 1.4. Westminster has developed a wide range of services that are intended to support families when they first arrive, with settling into new and unfamiliar settings and whilst they await their immigration determination. Services have been introduced with the aim of mitigating some of the daily challenges associated with living in hotel accommodation. Strong partnership arrangements have developed between the local services supporting families. Good reporting and escalation routes ensure that issues of concern are quickly raised with the Home Office and Clearsprings, although there are concerns that this has not resulted in sufficient or sustained improvements.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to consider:
 1. whether the Council's delivery of services for migrant families is effective, having a positive impact and reaching families in need of support and assistance.
 2. any service gaps.
 3. future delivery arrangements given fixed term funding.
 4. whether mechanisms and approaches to escalating and addressing concerns with the Home Office and Clearsprings are sufficient.
 5. whether the Council is preparing for and equipped to meet anticipated future housing demand.

3. Background, including policy context

- 3.1. There are currently 8 contingency hotels across Westminster with placements arranged by the Home Office. Of these 1 accommodates adults only and the remainder accommodate both single adults and families with children. The Home Office subcontracts the management of the hotels to an organisation called Clearsprings Ready Homes. The number of residents

fluctuates depending on when adults and families receive their immigration decision, but with the majority living in hotels over a protracted period.

- 3.2. Over the last 3 years the Home Office has increased the volume of hotels and asylum seekers placed in Westminster. However, more recently the Home Office has begun work on closing hotels nationally. This is linked to asylum application rates, people moving out of hotels when their asylum claim is determined and the Home Office making alternative accommodation arrangements. In October 2023, the Home Office announced that they would close 50 hotels nationally by January 2024; none of which were within Westminster. In January 2024, the Home Office notified Westminster that 1 hotel will close by the end of February. This is the smallest contingency hotel within Westminster and currently accommodates 11 children. We have sought confirmation that families and Council officers will be given adequate notice to support families with transitions and that where there are vacancies within other local hotels that families are moved to those to prevent disruption to their social and professional network and disruption to children’s education. The table below shows the current asylum-seeking population placed in contingency hotels compared with January 2023:

Contingency Hotel Overview	January 2023	January 2024
Number of Contingency Hotels	8	8
Number of Adults	608	660
Number of Children	209	254
Total Number	817	914

Challenges faced by those seeking asylum

- 3.3. People living in hotels, particularly over a prolonged period and with the uncertainty regarding their immigration application, face significant emotional distress which can deepen the trauma and dislocation many have already experienced. Parents are raising children in cramped conditions, with families living in one room, which impacts upon relationships, sleep and wellbeing. This is alongside receiving a restricted income of £8 per person per week and so experiencing considerable financial strain.
- 3.4. Asylum seekers, Council officers, charities and health professionals have all raised a number of concerns about the quality of accommodation and food available for those living in hotels and the significant psychological and physical impact of this.
- 3.5. Concerns in relation to the quality and availability of food has been repeatedly voiced by families. This includes reports from parents that food is too spicy or unsuitable for young children, weaned babies not having access to a wide range of nutritional foods and formula that health professionals do not recommend due to high sugar content, the availability

of fresh fruit, medical and allergy requirements not being catered for and meats being served that are culturally inappropriate. The Home Office and Clearsprings repeatedly state that a wide range of foods are available, and that people are given a limited choice from a menu each day, however families have disputed this. The majority of food is pre-packed ready meals which are microwaved. Parents tell us that not having agency over what they eat and not having opportunities to prepare meals for their children on a long-term basis is detrimental to their wellbeing. Children's Services have completed unannounced visits to hotels during mealtimes to check what food is available including that children have access to fresh fruit. On these occasions officers found that a range of food was available but that one communal dining room was in a very messy state such as overflowing bin and tables not cleared since breakfast.

- 3.6. There have been several reports of bedbug infestation within the hotels, including a two-year-old being taken to her GP with a number of bites in September 2023. Westminster's Environmental Health and Public Health officers have completed inspections as a result and outlined what remedial action is required. Public Health have delivered training to hotels in relation to infectious diseases to ensure clear steps are in place to control and respond to any outbreak risk. Environmental Health have completed inspections within all the hotels to assess compliance with space standards, a report of which is pending.
- 3.7. Women have repeatedly reported that they do not have consistent and ready access to period products or the specific type of product that they require and are forced to ask male hotel staff for products. They find this embarrassing and culturally shameful. This has been escalated to Clearsprings by officers on several occasions with an agreed solution reached. Women are currently reporting that this has improved, and officers will continue to monitor.

Escalation of issues to the Home Office and Clearsprings

- 3.8. These concerns have been repeatedly escalated to the Home Office and Clearsprings. This includes both formally writing to express concerns and escalating specific incidents and safeguarding concerns impacting individual families. Monthly meetings are held with Children's Services and Public Health attended by Unfold who are a local charity commissioned to work directly with families, the Home Office and Clearsprings where concerns are also escalated. In October 2023 the Executive Director of Children's Service and Director of Family Services Special Projects met directly with Clearsprings' senior directors and their safeguarding lead to discuss specific concerns and seek reassurance this would result in improvements. There are individual hotels which have repeatedly been raised as hotels of concern. Despite concerns being escalated there has been a repeated cycle of the Home Office and Clearsprings agreeing to address concerns raised, both organisations reporting that matters have been resolved, only for those seeking asylum to again raise the same issues. Other Councils across London are reporting similar issues which they have individually escalated to the Home Office. In December 2023

representatives from the Clearsprings management team met directly with families to listen to their experiences of living in the hotels. This meeting was well attended by families who spoken in detail about their experiences. Hearing directly from families has unfortunately not resulted in improvements in food quality and availability or in evidence that agreed actions have progressed. Much more is required by senior leaders within the Home Office and Clearsprings for a proactive solution so that improvements are made and sustained.

- 3.9. Some asylum seekers have voiced that they are apprehensive about raising complaints directly with hotel staff and fear this will jeopardise their immigration application. Whilst we do not have specific evidence this has happened, they are concerned that if they complain about the hotel conditions, hotel staff will inform the Home Office that their behaviour has been problematic since living in the UK and that this will negatively impact their immigration outcome. Some have reported being reprimanded by hotel staff for raising concerns and told that they should not have done this. There is therefore a concern that some asylum seekers will be silenced and feel unable to speak out.
- 3.10. Children's Services have commissioned organisations and developed specific roles within Early Help to form relationships with, and support asylum seeking families. Staff are regularly based within the hotels and seek to work together in identifying any families who are particularly struggling or where there are any safeguarding issues. Children's Services have received very few referrals from the Home Office or Clearsprings where they have worries about specific families. Given the volume of people living within the hotels under very difficult circumstance, and given many may have unresolved and lasting trauma, we would expect to have received referrals from both organisations. This has been raised with them and has been raised London wide as an area of concern. In response, Children's Services offered to deliver bespoke safeguarding training to hotel staff which has recently commenced. Clearsprings also has a safeguarding lead, to whom issues of concern are escalated to.

Wider London response and escalation

- 3.11. Across London, there are approximately 16,000 asylum seekers living in hotel accommodation and approximately 6,000 asylum seekers living in dispersal accommodation (typically flats, HMOS, or other self-contained accommodation). Local Authorities have raised and collectively discussed their concerns regarding safeguarding issues, the poor standard of some accommodation and the overall standard of living, through London Councils' Asylum Borough Working Group and the London Asylum Oversight Group.
- 3.12. Local authorities, including Westminster, have conducted inspections at the contingency hotels to determine whether they would meet the test for, and qualify as a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). This determination would enable councils to better regulate housing standards within hotels and improve the standard of living for asylum seekers by ensuring there is increased accountability and therefore scope for local authorities to take

action, if needed. This is currently subject to litigation and whether this mechanism will be available to local authorities is a matter for the Property Chamber.

- 3.13. In Summer 2023, London Councils surveyed all London boroughs on safeguarding practices in asylum accommodation. Surveyed boroughs reported that 88% infrequently or never receive safeguarding referrals from the Home Office and 84% infrequently or never receive safeguarding referrals from Clearsprings directly. Clearsprings has shared aggregate level data on safeguarding concerns with the London Asylum Oversight group and, the number of safeguarding concerns flagged in this aggregate data (which included domestic abuse, suicide risks and mental health needs) is significantly higher than the levels of safeguarding referrals received by local authorities. There are therefore concerns that Clearsprings are not making necessary safeguarding referrals to local authorities. The London Councils Chief Executive leads for asylum and joint chairs of the London Asylum Oversight Group have written to the Director and Deputy Director of Asylum Support at the Home Office to raise these concerns. London Councils have also set up a series of meetings with several Directors of Children's Services from across London to agree approaches to collectively engaging and escalating concerns to the Home Office.
- 3.14. In December 2023, the London Borough of Hounslow published a comprehensive findings report following a deep dive review into the experiences of asylum seekers living in hotels. "On Hold: The lived experiences of asylum seekers in Hounslow's contingency hotels" highlights the significant challenges those living in hotels face and the impact of this upon their health and wellbeing. The report makes 15 recommendations, including for the Home Office to work more collaboratively with local authorities, sufficient central government funding to enable local authorities to meet the long-term needs of the asylum seeking population, and to take immediate action to effectively hold to account organisations that are commissioned to manage the hotel estate, such as Clearsprings to ensure they deliver services that are culturally sensitive, empathetic and trauma informed. The report recommends that local authorities and NHS partners are enabled with sufficient central government funding, particularly given services are already stretched, to develop specialist mental health support for asylum seekers to prevent crises and long-term mental health needs. The report also calls for improved multi-agency partnership, and co-ordinated outreach services which includes primary care, mental health and social prescribing services, in order to address unmet health and wellbeing needs and identify health protection risks at the earliest opportunity.

Local response to supporting families

- 3.15. In recognition of the significant challenges that asylum seekers face whilst living in hotels, Westminster has funded and implemented a number of services and commissioned local charities to deliver services. Services developed aim to mitigate the daily challenges of living in hotels and provide opportunities for growth, belonging and connection. These have been funded via the Home Office's Asylum Dispersal Grant.

- 3.16. Children's Services have appointed family navigators based within the Family Hubs to work specifically with families living in contingency hotels. They welcome families as they arrive in Westminster and support them to access a range of services and resources including GP registration, immunisations, child development checks and school places. They support families to access clothes and baby items via charities that they require following displacement. They conduct family assessments, create support plans and complete regular family reviews. They support families to access support services within the community and hubs, including stay and play, leisure activities, ESOL, college places for adults and child-based activities within the libraries. They refer families to local services outside Westminster when they move from the hotels, as appropriate. A welcome pack and leaflets have been developed which are designed to assist families with navigating their new lives within the borough and provide them with information about local support services (see Appendix B – Welcome Pack for Asylum Seeking Families).
- 3.17. Children's Services has commissioned Unfold, a well-established local charity, to deliver support to families since 2022. This includes individual mentoring for children, twice weekly Women's Support Groups for women which includes cooking together, individual mentoring for women and outreach delivered within the hotels. As of January 2024, Unfold have begun running twice weekly youth support groups at Feathers and St Andrews. Children's Services and Unfold are working very closely together in both supporting families and escalating issues up to the Home Office and Clearsprings. It is increasingly recognised that young adults aged 18-25, particularly those coming to the UK without family, can be isolated and impacted psychologically. Adult Service's Commissioning Team are currently exploring options to support this cohort of young adults.
- 3.18. A number of activities have been introduced within Bayswater Children's Centre to address the stress of living in cramped conditions as a family and to provide opportunities to engage in activities outside the hotels. This includes providing stay and play three times a week, ESOL, music and cooking sessions.
- 3.19. Families face significant emotional challenges, both because of the trauma they experienced which resulted in them seeking asylum and because of the enormous stress of living in cramped conditions with children in hotels. In recognition that this impacts family relationships and emotional wellbeing, Children's Services have commissioned Dream Arts to deliver group-based family therapy within Bayswater Children's Centre. This aims to provide early support to prevent escalation to statutory services, including social care and CAMHS. The first group was well attended throughout the programme with several children also receiving their own 1:1 therapy when it was identified that they could benefit from this. Families overwhelmingly raised food as an issue impacting them emotionally, both in terms of not having agency to cook food from their own cultures but also that cooking for their children is a means of nurturing and conveying love as a parent. Dream Arts therefore incorporated cooking within the sessions. A second group is scheduled to run from March 2024.

- 3.20. Westminster libraries are providing a range of opportunities to those living in the hotels. This includes providing children with book packs, homework clubs and running sessions at Paddington Children's Library.
- 3.21. During the school holidays, Children's Services supported children from hotels to access a range of HAF activities. Westbourne Park Family Centre was funded to deliver bespoke sessions for refugee children. During the summer holiday in 2023, over 200 refugee children attended the holiday provision, which included those who have recently received their immigration status. Again, food is incorporated into these sessions to ensure children have access to a freshly cooked meal each day.
- 3.22. Adults and families are supported to access the food pantries, baby banks and cooking sessions across a number of locations across the borough. Public Health are exploring options for reviewing the food that is available within the hotels to assess their nutritional value, especially as these are primarily pre-packed ready meals. Alongside needing to determine that food available is nutritionally complete we need to continue to maximise opportunities to address the psychological factors impacting this and provide opportunities for people to cook and access foods from their own cultures.
- 3.23. A monthly co-ordination meeting is held with a wide range of local charities, Early Help, NHS, GPs, Library Services and is chaired by Unfold. Typically, 10-12 organisations attend each month. The purpose of these meetings is to identify gaps, avoid duplication, coordinate to ensure smooth coverage of services, raise concerns and emerging issues and to share best practice. Alongside this, a quarterly partnership meeting is held and chaired by the Director of Family Services Special Projects to oversee the work being delivered or commissioned by the Council.

Families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

- 3.24. The Home Office is legally required to assist and prevent destitution for those seeking asylum until their application is processed and determined. There are a number of instances where the Home Office is not legally required to provide accommodation or subsistence to families who are either awaiting their long-term non-asylum immigration outcome or who are living in the UK under an arrangement that does not provide access to housing or benefits. Examples are wide-ranging and include victims of domestic abuse living in the UK on spousal visas, those seeking leave to remain having entered the UK on an alternative visa but where they are not seeking asylum, those appealing a non-asylum Home Office decision and EU Nationals with pre-settled status but without access to benefits. The Children Act 1989 (section 17) is the legal mechanism through which Local Authorities need to provide accommodation and subsistence to children and their parents who would otherwise be destitute. In these instances, Children's Services complete assessments to understand the individual family's circumstances, the legal basis for them living in the UK, links to any other local authorities, whether they have alternative sources of income and the right to work, whether they have friends/relatives they could live with and

the overall needs of the family. Given the financial commitment, it is essential that any assessment carefully considers whether families have no other means of supporting themselves and their legal circumstances. This is kept under review.

3.25. Where families require accommodation and subsistence, this can be a long-term financial commitment for Local Authorities which is funded through Children’s Service’s “Section 17” budget. Timeframes are compounded by Home Office backlogs. There are currently 5 families that have been accommodated and financially supported by Westminster for over 2 years whilst they await their Home Office decision. Westminster has commissioning arrangements with organisations that provide accommodation to families that are NRPF. These arrangements provide better value for money than private rental arrangements and enable the local authority to cease funding without long contractual notice periods when families move out. Work is currently underway to benchmark our approach and spend with other London local authorities and to explore whether there is any additional better value options Westminster can commission or develop. This exercise has confirmed that the main organisation where Westminster accommodates families provides good value for money especially given huge demands across London and supply challenges. Children’s Services provide a named allocated practitioner who provides support to families based on individual need and supports them to access local services. The practitioner maintains regular communication with the family’s solicitor and the Home Office to ensure all necessary steps are being taken to enable their immigration to be determined.

3.26. The table below shows the volume of families and financial impact between 2021-2024:

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Total Number of Families at January	25	27	23
Total Number of Families For Full Year	106	63	84 at January 2024
Average Monthly Accom	£36,413.79	£26,018.13	£35,445.13 Projected

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Average Monthly Subsist ence Spend	£10,510.27	£7,129.83	£7,870.32 Projected
Total Annual Spend	£563,088.91	£397,775.17	£519,785.50 Projected

Afghan and Ukrainian Response

Afghan Response

- 3.27. Following the withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan and the subsequent emergency developing in the country, the UK Government established Operation Warm Welcome to support those arriving in the UK from Afghanistan. As part of this, the government established temporary bridging accommodation for evacuees whilst they were awaiting permanent accommodation.
- 3.28. Westminster and partners, on behalf of the Home Office, provided wraparound support for Afghan evacuees at the Hilton Metropole Bridging Hotel. This support included:
- Securing school and college places for all children and young people
 - Co-ordinating health provision, GP registration and mental health support
 - Activities for children and young people (including visits to Lord cricket ground and training sessions at Chelsea and QPR)
 - Holistic support needs such as additional clothing and essential items
 - Supporting evacuees to navigate living in a new and unfamiliar city
- 3.29. The Home Office recognised the support that Westminster provided as the 'gold standard'.
- 3.30. Approximately 740 people were accommodated at the Metropole between September 2021 and May 2022, and over that time 233 people had moved into permanent accommodation. In February and March 2022, the majority of residents were moved to other bridging accommodation across the UK as the Metropole was stood down. A few families remained at the Metropole as permanent accommodation was imminent. By May 2022, all evacuees had left the Metropole.

- 3.31. London Councils has agreed a 'fair shares' proposal for two Afghan resettlement schemes (Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme). Based on London Council's calculations, Westminster's fair share was 11 households. To date, Westminster has accommodated 8 households, and officers are seeking further homes.

Ukrainian Response

- 3.32. The Ukraine Family Scheme allows family members of British nationals, UK settled persons and certain others to come to or stay in the UK. Those coming as part of this scheme will be able to live, work and study in the UK and access public funds.
- 3.33. The 'Homes for Ukraine' local sponsorship scheme allow individuals to sponsor those forced to flee Ukraine to the UK. Organisations such as charities and churches will also be able to sponsor refugees, though there is no start date for this yet. Sponsors will receive a £350 monthly 'thank you' payment for hosting.
- 3.34. Since the war began in February 2022 there have been 952 Ukrainian nationals, including 169 children, that have arrived into Westminster through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. There is not a mechanism for tracking Ukrainian nationals who live in Westminster via the Ukraine Family Scheme. Westminster continues to have a specialist Ukraine Response Team that provides Ukrainian nationals with holistic support when they arrive in the UK. This is intended to support them to settle and access universal and specialist support, school and college provision and local support services.

Longer-Term Housing Impact

- 3.35. Across London one of the main challenges with regards to supporting migrant people is the reported rise in homelessness applications. This is caused by a number of factors including:
- Those arriving on Ukrainian schemes finding that their placements with friends and family or sponsors are not sustainable.
 - People placed in Home Office supported accommodation receiving their asylum decision and being given notice.
- 3.36. In Westminster we have seen a rise in the number of homelessness applications from these cohorts. To date since the contingency hotels opened and Ukrainian war began there have been:
- 31 Sudanese single adults/families have presented to the Housing Solutions Service (HSS) as homeless (24 families; 7 single applicants). 21 of the households have been placed into temporary accommodation.
 - 10 Afghan single adults/families; 3 of whom are currently in temporary accommodation.

- 131 Ukrainian single adults/families. 43 were from the Ukraine Family Scheme, 65 from Homes for Ukraine and 23 were via other means of entry. 65 households are currently in temporary accommodation.
- 3.37. Across London, including within Westminster, there are increasing private rental and hotels costs associated with increased demand and pressures within the housing sector. The volume and demand for contingency hotels and private rental dispersal accommodation contributes to this.
- 3.38. The fourth main reason for homelessness applications is now households, principally single adults, who have been given notice to leave Home Office hotels following a positive asylum application decision. The challenge of accessing affordable private rental accommodation for single adults not in priority need is increasing volumes of rough sleeping across London.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. The Asylum Dispersal Grant has been utilised to fund the range of services developed to support migrant families within hotels. Local Authorities are free to determine how best to utilise this funding to support the aims of the Asylum Dispersal Policy.
- 4.2. There remain sufficient funds to meet the cost of services that are supporting asylum seeking families living within hotels. However, all plans are time-limited given the grant is not indefinite. A total of £310,000 grant funding for 23/24 financial year remains unallocated in Westminster and this will rollover into the next financial year if not used. As yet, the Home Office has not announced funding levels for 2024-25. It is anticipated that future funding will reduce in line with the Home Office reducing their 'asylum estate'. Funding is approved to fund Unfold until January 2025, with a 3-month break clause given anticipated changes to the future hotel population and possible hotel closures. Funding is secured to deliver Family Navigator, Dream Arts, HAF and ESOL provision until June 2024. It is proposed that the Asylum Dispersal Grant continues to be utilised to deliver a range of services to support families living in contingency hotels, although provision can evolve based in assessed need and the volume of families living within hotels.
- 4.3. As outlined above Westminster is projected to spend £519,785.50 from Children's Services budget for families awaiting immigration decisions outside the asylum pathway. There will continue to be a legal requirement for local authorities to support families who would otherwise be destitute where they have a legal basis to remain in the UK.

5. Legal and Governance Implications

- 5.1. The Home Office can provide housing and financial support to a person who has claimed asylum if they do not have accommodation and/ or cannot afford to meet their essential living needs. This support is provided under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and will continue until

the person's asylum claim is finally determined by the Home Office or appeal courts.

- 5.2. Section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, defines all those people who are 'subject to immigration control' and will have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). This means they have no access to public funds i.e., Local Authority housing, Local Authority homelessness assistance and most welfare benefits (although the list of benefits does change from time to time).
- 5.3. A person with NRPF can be provided with support from Children Services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. The local authority can provide accommodation and financial support to a family where a child is assessed to be in need in their area (s17(6) CA 1989). A child will be in need if they are homeless, or their parents do not have sufficient resources to be able to provide for their housing and/or basic living needs. Accommodation and financial support can be provided to the whole family (s17(3) of the Children Act 1989).
- 5.4. The local authority must establish the parents' immigration status and if they fall into an excluded group, the family can only be provided with the support or assistance that is necessary to prevent a breach of their human rights or European Union (EU) treaty rights (Schedule 3 of the Nationality Immigration Asylum Act 2002).
- 5.5. When exercising this power, the local authority has the power to provide a wide range of services in order to meet assessed s17 needs. The local authority is not under a duty to meet all formally assessed needs; section 17 is a target duty and may take into account its resources in determining which needs are to be met, but such a decision must be reached rationally, and the local authority must act reasonably.
- 5.6. Under section 2B of the National Health Service Act 2006, the local authority has a target duty to take steps to improve the health of the people in its area. This can include providing: Services or facilities for the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of illness and Assistance (including financial assistance) to help individuals to minimise any risks to health arising from their accommodation or environment.

6. Carbon Impact

- 6.1. There are no material climate implications resulting from the delivery of work outlined in this report.

7. Equalities Impact

- 7.1. The services outlined in this report are intended to promote equality of opportunity for migrant families and support them with settling in a new and unfamiliar country. The services that have been introduced are intended to mitigate very challenging living arrangements including providing opportunities to support families socially, emotionally and educationally.

8. Consultation and Engagement

- 8.1. Families have been consulted on services that have been developed or commissioned to support them. This has resulted in services being re-shaped to meet current or evolving needs.
- 8.2. Council and Unfold staff have facilitated meetings with families and management from Clearsprings to give families the opportunity to speak directly about their experience of living in the hotels and the issues that need to improve.
- 8.3. Monthly partnership meetings are held with the Home Office and Clearsprings to escalate concerns raised by families. In addition, urgent issues of concern are also escalated outside these meetings as these arise. We have requested to both organisations that an asylum-seeking parent living within a hotel joins this group as an expert by experience. Whilst these escalation routes have helped resolve some issues, there continues to be concerns about hotel living arrangements and the challenges families are facing.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - Overview of Services Working with Migrant Families within Westminster

Appendix 2 - Welcome Pack for Asylum Seeking Families

Appendix 3 - Summary of Accommodation Provision for Migrant Families & Single Adults

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Report Author,
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