



Inclusive Cities

INTEGRATION POLICY AND PRACTICE DURING
COVID-19

Liverpool City Council briefing

April 2021



About this briefing

Liverpool is a participant in the Inclusive Cities programme – a city-led knowledge exchange programme, facilitated by the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity at the University of Oxford.

The programme aims to support local authorities to create a step change in their approach to the inclusion of newcomers at the local level. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, local authorities and their partners have had to adapt their inclusion programmes, often at speed, to support their newcomer and longer standing communities. These briefings capture the learning from these adaptations, as well as ongoing work to promote inclusion and integration undertaken between March 2020 and October 2020 (unless otherwise specified), against the five thematic areas set out in the Inclusive Cities Framework.

- Briefings from the other Inclusive Cities are available [here](#)
- The Inclusive Cities Framework is available [here](#)
- A series of policy and research briefings on COVID-19 and inclusion, arising from the programme is available [here](#).

1. Leading in the development of a shared local story of inclusion

Liverpool City Council launched the 'Our Liverpool' programme in 2018, as part of its participation in the Inclusive Cities programme, to guide its work with refugee and migrant communities. At the start of the pandemic, the Our Liverpool team was able to build on its existing work to increase engagement and share vital public health information and community organising information. A Facebook group was set up for the Our Liverpool campaign in March 2020. It was utilised as a platform for reaching out to migrant communities during the lockdown and for sharing COVID-19-related guidance in community languages (see case studies below.)

[Research by Belong and the University of Kent](#) demonstrates that those areas which invested in social cohesion programmes may fare better in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Liverpool's pre-existing work in developing the Our Liverpool team and strategy provides an example of this (see case studies below.)

2. Supporting and driving inclusive economic growth

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Liverpool City Region announced several pilot projects, including:

The Nia Black Business Hub Pilot

Kuumba Imani Millennium Centre will run a pilot to develop the concept and delivery plan for a project which aims to establish Liverpool City Region's first business incubation and support hub specifically for Black-led businesses.

Positive Action & Employment Support Programme:

This involves the design of a city region-wide infrastructure and employment support programme, to deliver significant benefits to individuals and improve business and economic performance across Liverpool City Region.

3. Connecting communities

The Our Liverpool Community Cohesion forum moved its activities online at the start of the pandemic, which has resulted in increased participation and engagement, with webinars and trainings better attended than when they were delivered in-person.

4. Mainstreaming and building inclusive public services

At the start of the pandemic, the Our Liverpool team provided interpreter call back support for the COVID-19 'good neighbour scheme' helpline. However, the team soon realised that beneficiaries would be better served if the helpline staff were able to provide this service, rather than relying on the Our Liverpool team. The Our Liverpool team is now training all helpline staff in using interpreters so support can be provided immediately.

The One Liverpool team has similarly worked with the equalities team and registry office to ensure language support is available to residents who need it when registering births and deaths.

The pandemic has also highlighted gaps in service provision, particularly healthcare, and differences in the outcomes and services experienced by some population groups. A 'health improvement group' has been established to identify these gaps and accordingly redesign healthcare provision for asylum seekers.

A new approach to supporting those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is being developed by the Council. It highlights the current gaps in provision and sets out new models for supporting those with NRPF. This includes making use of an adapted version of the housing model developed by Commonweal and Praxis in order to improve the provision of housing and reduce costs (for example, through reducing reliance on costly and often inappropriate hotel provision).

An immigration solicitor list and 'how to' guide has been widely disseminated to newcomers in the city by the VCS and Council.

Finally, whilst the project funding for the Our Liverpool programme is coming to an end, the Council is considering the continuation of the programme until at least 2023 and is working towards mainstreaming into regular service delivery its migrant-relevant programming – e.g., refugee employment support.

5. Encouraging civic participation and representation

As part of the City Council's Equality Objectives 2020–2024, the Council has committed to being a fair and inclusive employer. Some of the objectives relevant to this commitment are:

- Review HR policies and publish annual workforce equality monitoring reports.
- Publicise employment opportunities within communities that are underrepresented in the Council's workforce and encourage them to apply.
- Review training to ensure it is effective in increasing equality and diversity awareness for all employees across the organisation, including mandatory training on countering unconscious bias during recruitment/selection.
- Utilise the Apprenticeship Levy to support career development and progression for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees and employees with protected characteristics, as well as explore specialist routes to enable employees from all backgrounds to progress in their careers.
- Increase the number of qualified coaches within the organisation and utilise mentoring and reverse mentoring to build a wide pool of coaches from all backgrounds.

Liverpool has established a racial equality taskforce to recommend ways to reduce racial inequality in the city. The taskforce is expected to meet every six weeks until May 2021 and will investigate racial inequality in four key areas: education, health, employment and inequality. It will work with partners across the city, including the Mayor's Slavery Street Names Advisory Panel.

Additionally, the Liverpool City Region announced funding for three projects to tackle racial inequality in the city: the *Nia Black Business Hub Pilot* and the *Positive Action & Employment Support Programme* – both of which are discussed in more detail in the section on Supporting and Driving Inclusive Economic Growth – and the *International Slavery Museum*.

The *International Slavery Museum* is currently developing virtual classroom resources to make the existing transatlantic slavery programme more accessible and launch a new legacies programme. It is also working on a pop-up exhibition which explores future connections between the Museum itself and the Martin Luther King Jr Building (the former Dock Traffic Office).



Case Study 1: Festival 31 – Refugee Week in lockdown

Our Liverpool partnered with [SOLA Arts, Culture Liverpool](#) and [Everyman & Playhouse](#) to move [Festival 31](#), Liverpool's contribution to Refugee Week, onto a digital platform.

Festival 31 artists, arts organisations and supporters were asked to respond to the theme of *Creative Connections* and to explore what '31' could signify. E.g., 31 days, connections, hours, thoughts, people, countries, smiles, questions. Submissions ranged from virtual meals and recipes from the countries of origin of Liverpool's refugee communities to performances of poetry, spoken word, dance, comedy and music.

The [10 commissions showcased in the festival](#) included creations by refugees and asylum-seekers as well as collaborations between artists from different backgrounds and communities.

Case Study 2:

'Our Liverpool' COVID-19 response work in the Princes Park ward

In August 2020, a ward in Liverpool saw a rise in COVID-19 rates against local and national trends. In order to stop the spread of the virus and avoid a nationally imposed local lockdown, the local authority and community came together to deliver an intervention.

Princes Park has a diverse population, is home to many newcomers and hosts two Initial Accommodation Centres for people seeking asylum. The outbreak was announced the day before Eid, which meant many residents were being asked to change their holiday plans. The Council set up two walk-in testing sites in the ward, and made it clear that the tests were free, that people did not need to make appointments and that there would be no immigration checks. One of the sites was established in the grounds of a mosque, which appeared to increase its legitimacy in the eyes of many residents. The Council held several community meetings over Zoom to plan the community response, one of which was attended by the Director of Public Health, and worked with community partners to create [information videos in various languages](#). These videos were viewed nearly 18,000 times on the Council website, in addition to being widely shared on WhatsApp.

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The Council worked with migrant charities to share messages with newcomers and longer-standing residents in the area and did over a week's worth of street engagement to spread awareness, to reassure and to address myths. This included a visit to both Initial Accommodation Centres in the first few days of the outbreak.

The infection numbers returned to normal in just a few weeks.

This initiative was inclusive by design, with the needs of newcomers and longer-standing residents with limited proficiency in English being considered from the outset. Furthermore, local groups and individuals from a range of backgrounds were involved in the planning and delivery of the activities. There was a focus on creating trusted and accessible messaging and working with the community as much as possible. The intervention became a real community effort, with everyone taking responsibility for 'stopping the spread'.

INCLUSIVE CITIES

Inclusive Cities is a knowledge exchange initiative supporting UK cities and their local partners to achieve a step-change in their approach towards the inclusion of newcomers.

Drawing on innovative ideas and practices from Europe and the United States, Inclusive Cities aims to support the development of an approach to inclusion which is strategic across the city administration. This approach consistently uses positive messaging to develop an inclusive narrative for the city which informs and drives practice and is local authority led, working in close partnership with business, public and voluntary sector organisations to achieve shared goals.

Inclusive Cities is supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

www.compas.ox.ac.uk/project/inclusive-cities

THE GLOBAL EXCHANGE ON MIGRATION AND DIVERSITY

The Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity is an ambitious initiative at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) opening up opportunities for knowledge exchange and longer term collaboration between those working in the migration field.

www.compas.ox.ac.uk/global-exchange

ABOUT

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