

23 May 2024

### Note for Action: the Future of Welcoming

This Note for Action outlines key points and proposed actions coming out of the event, *Infrastructure for integration in the UK. What is realistically attainable and how do we bring it about?*, which was hosted by Coventry City Council and Inclusive Cities on 18 January 2024.

**The rationale** of the event was there are better ways to do integration in the UK, which should build on existing practice and expertise. Aware of **the potential of upcoming national elections** to open fresh opportunities for policy development, stakeholders from government, NGOs and the research community across the UK assembled at St Mary's Guildhall in Coventry to begin defining an agenda and process to bring about the change we collectively want to see.

For a number of reasons, colleagues around the table agreed that **cities and other local actors are uniquely placed** to take a leadership role in integration strategy design as well as programme delivery:

- In a community context, the effects of immigration become questions of integration – how to live well together as individuals and groups;
- Mobility and newcomers are inseparable from urbanism and the make-up of the city itself – the long-term process of “doing inclusion” is just city governance by another name;
- Cities and local actors are typically marked by an optimistic and pragmatic approach to work with newcomers and other groups that stand to benefit from resources such as community hubs and English language classes;
- As a result of all this – due in part to the inherent localised nature of delivering inclusion services and the way integration responsibilities are structured across the UK – there is a wealth of expertise to draw on at the local level.

**Significant barriers** stand in the way of making the most of this potential.

Perhaps the greatest single problem faced in the integration space today is **funding**. Similar to other programme areas, local authorities' budgets for inclusion work have been hit hard over the last decade. However, because integration cuts across housing, health, employment and education departments (to name a few), it is often seen as “someone else's problem”. As such, this work has a tendency to slip through the cracks.

Another consequence of its crosscutting nature is **integration work requires coordination** between departments and organisations to be effective, which in turn gives rise to the need for a strategic vision and long-term resourcing. The UK's current funding model resists such an approach. Instead, it prioritises the immediate arrival needs of specific population groups (e.g. BNOs, Ukrainians) and expects local government and other stakeholders to compete on a recurring basis for small, short-term grants that come with stringent spending and reporting criteria.

The overall result of the funding landscape has been an integration sector pressed into reactive and disjointed work while immigration hits record highs, further increasing immediate and longer-term needs for communities across the UK. **Stakeholders feel that a strategic and joined up approach would bring greater benefit to UK residents at a cost savings.**

An abundance of overlapping and disparate work has created a vicious cycle, making it tricky for organisations to **put forward a credible case** for strategic integration work to a funder – governmental or philanthropic – that cuts through the noise.

Our assessment does not take away from the **excellent work** undertaken by different groups across the UK. Rather, it adds to the significance of their successes and points to **how much more could be done** were a sensible coordination and funding mechanism for integration put in place.

**What actions will we take to improve welcoming?** Just as there is no single way to do integration, there is no single way to fix the current system in the UK. The following **action points** distil views and propositions expressed under Chatham House Rule in Coventry, focussing on the many sites of agreement and complementarity found amongst stakeholders.

In view of the upcoming national elections, now is the time to start putting pen to paper. **We must ensure we are ready for the post-election period**, in which a fresh mandate for governance (regardless of the election outcome) means opportunities for new policy discussions, **a chance to reshape welcoming and integration in the UK** into a more strategic and joined-up effort. This note constitutes an initial step towards this goal, but far more ambitious work is needed.

To ensure we are ready for the post-election period we are, **1. Forming a Future of Welcoming Partnership**, composed of stakeholders from government, NGOs, CSOs, academia and the private sector representing the four UK nations, and **2. Embarking on a new partnership-based project, *Welcoming Futures***.

With support from the University of Oxford's ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (grant reference ES/X004511/1), the ***Welcoming Futures* project aims to do the following:**

- **Form a Partnership that is inclusive** and represents the welcoming and integration sector in the UK;
- **Work with partners to draft a briefing, the Future of Welcoming**, outlining the spend on inclusion work over the last decade and making a case for a more effective allocation of funds moving forward;
- Hold webinars with **a broad group of stakeholders to solicit feedback** on the briefing, plan its launch and dissemination, and **share practices** and updates on integration programming; write up learning notes to follow these events;
- Together with Brighton City Council, **convene selected stakeholders and the Inclusive Cities membership in Brighton in November 2024** to coordinate activities leading up to and following the general election and share exchange knowledge;
- **Run a communications campaign** throughout this period that will include, for example, the production of short videos highlighting integration initiatives across the UK;
- **Launch the Future of Welcoming at an event targeting key policymakers and practitioners in London in the wake of the general election.**

Colleagues representing a range of organisations have already offered their support to the project (see Annex 1: The Future of Welcoming Partnership).

**We invite individuals or organisations interested in working on this project to join the Future of Welcoming Partnership.** Please write to Nathan Grassi, COMPAS Administrator ([nathan.grassi@compas.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nathan.grassi@compas.ox.ac.uk)), with your details and an idea of how you would like to contribute.

Examples of contributions could include (but are not limited to):

- Assistance drafting or providing feedback on the Future of Welcoming briefing;
- Participating in webinars, meetings or the launch event;
- Promoting project outputs and activities through your organisations' communications channels;
- Feeding information about project activities and ideas into policy circles (e.g., briefing decision-makers or civil servants);
- (Co-)organising events or inviting members of the Partnership to speak at events.

We also welcome invitations to participate in related initiatives led by other organisations and **we are keen to use this platform to amplify endeavours undertaken by others within or outside of this programme of work.**

*This Note was prepared by Denis Kierans, Senior Researcher, COMPAS, University of Oxford*

### **Annex 1: The Future of Welcoming Partnership<sup>1</sup>**

**Brighton and Hove City Council** – Cllr. Leslie Pumm (Chair of the Equalities, Community Safety & Human Rights Committee) and Lucy Bryson (International Migration Manager) – and **Glasgow City Council** – Cllr. Susan Aitken (Leader of the Council) and Marie McLelland (Economic Development Officer) – on behalf of the Inclusive Cities programme

**Citizens UK** – James Asfa (Assistant Director)

**COMPAS, University of Oxford** – Jacqueline Broadhead (Co-director), Delphine Boagey (Communications Officer), Nathan Grassi (Administrator) and Denis Kierans (Senior Researcher and Welcoming Futures Lead)

**Good Faith Partnership** – David Barclay (Partner) and Julian Prior (Senior Director)

**Migration Exchange** – Sarah Cutler (Co-director)

**Neighbourly Lab** – Harry Hobson (Director) and Nick Lancaster (Research and Development Manager)

**RAMP** – Laura Taylor (Executive Director)

**Unbound Philanthropy** – Will Somerville (UK Director)

**Welcoming International** – Christina Pope (Senior Director)

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<sup>1</sup> As of 23 May 2024; in progress.

**Annex 2: Infrastructure for integration in the UK. What is realistically attainable and how do we bring it about? Panel participants<sup>2</sup>**

- **Cllr. Seyi Agboola**, Deputy Cabinet Member, Housing and Communities, Coventry CC
- **Peter Barnett**, Head of Service - Libraries and Migration, Coventry CC
- **Delphine Boagey**, Communications Officer, COMPAS
- **Hannah Boylan**, Head of Migration, GLA
- **Jacqui Broadhead**, Director, Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity; Co-Director of COMPAS, COMPAS
- **Dave Brown**, Head of Migration Yorkshire
- **Lucy Bryson**, International Migration Manager, Brighton & Hove
- **Emmy Chater**, Migration Policy Officer, Newport CC
- **Phil Clarke**, Refugee and Migration Officer, Liverpool CC
- **Andrew Dixon**, Head of Policy and Relationships, Belong Network
- **Thomas Dodsworth**, Migration Policy & Service Manager, Cardiff CC
- **Allison Duggal**, Public Health Director, Coventry CC
- **Rachel Duke**, Adviser, Cohesion, Counter-extremism and Prevention, LGA
- **Cllr. Maggie Filipova-Rivers**, Local Authorities Coordinator & Midlands and South East Regional Coordinator / Cabinet member for community wellbeing and deputy leader of the council, City of Sanctuary / South Oxfordshire District Council
- **Jane Harvey**, Connected Communities Manager, Newport CC
- **Caroline Higgins**, Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre
- **Harry Hobson**, Director, Neighbourly Lab
- **Suwinder Hundal**, Head of Equalities & Cohesion, Birmingham CC
- **Anne James**, Commissioning Refugees, Bristol CC
- **Navjoy Johal**, Programmes Manager, Coventry CC
- **Julie Kashirahamwe**, Refugee Programme Manager Liverpool CC
- **Inderjit Kaur**, Policy Development Manager Coventry CC
- **Denis Kierans**, Senior Researcher, Inclusive Cities, Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity and The Migration Observatory, COMPAS
- **Nick Lancaster**, Research Manager, Neighbourly Lab
- **Laura Lines**, Funding Manager Lead - A Fairer Future, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- **Fuad Mahamed**, Chief Executive Officer & Executive Director to the Board, Ashley Community & Housing Ltd
- **Lily Makurah**, Public Health Consultant, Coventry CC
- **Marie McLelland**, Development Officer, Economic Development, Chief Executive's Department, Glasgow CC
- **Sunairah Miraj**, Programme Delivery Manager – Migration, Coventry CC
- **Lucy Mort**, Senior Research Fellow, IPPR
- **Jusvinder Nar**, Equalities and Cohesion Team, Strategy, Equality and Partnerships Directorate, Equalities & Cohesion Division, Birmingham CC
- **Mohammed Osman**, Migration Inclusion Strategic Lead, Refugee Resettlement Team, Bristol CC
- **Emily Paffett**, Researcher, Coventry University
- **Julian Prior**, Senior Director, Good Faith Partnership
- **Cllr. Leslie Pumm**, Chair of the Equalities, Community Safety & Human Rights Committee, Brighton & Hove
- **Saba Rai**, Head of Service - commissioning, Adult Social Care Directorate, Birmingham CC
- **Cllr. David Welsh**, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Coventry CC

<sup>2</sup> Not definitive – please write to Nathan Grassi (email above) if there are errors.