



Trust for
Developing
Communities

Integrated Migrant Pathways Consultation Report

28th February 2025

1. Introduction

The **Integrated Migrant Pathways project** (IMP) has been a 12-month (April 2024 - March 2025) initiative aimed at supporting and empowering migrants, helping them overcome the barriers they face when integrating into new communities and accessing essential services. The project has focussed on enhancing pathways for migrants to improve their health and wellbeing, social inclusion, and access to support, services and opportunities.

The **Trust for Developing Communities (TDC)** has led on the Brighton and Hove based project, as part of the UOK partnership, along with two other key partners: **Brighton Exiled/Refugee Trauma Service (BERTS)** and the **Robin Hood Health Foundation (RHHF)**.

Summary

This report shares the results of consultations held with:

1. **Experts by experience - Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers**
2. **The Refugee and Migrant (RAM) Mental Health Forum.**

Experts by experience - Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers: coordinated by TDC (Oct – Dec 2024), and included a blend of group consultations and individual surveys. People with migration experience gave feedback about their experience of finding support, gaps in support and the impact of available/unavailable support. The consultations were carried out at peer support groups facilitated by TDC, RHHF, LGBT Switchboard and Conversations Over Borders, with an additional survey conducted at the Inclusive Employers Job Fair, which focused on barriers to employment for migrants. Approximately 50 individuals took part in the consultation, which was our target number of participants.

The Refugee and Migrant (RAM) Mental Health Forum: workshop, facilitated by TDC on 29th October 2024 for RAM. Results also include a subsequent survey completed by partners not in attendance. Representatives from the following organisations contributed to the workshop: Voices in Exile, SPFT, East ATS, Together Co, B&H Food Partnership, Primary Care Fellowship, SJOG – NRM Support, NHS Talking Therapies, NHS Sussex, NHS UK, BHCC, NHS Sussex, Brighton LGBT Switchboard, Robin Hood Health Foundation.

The workshop's focus was a group mapping exercise about support being offered to migrants by the organisations in attendance, which included improvements to and gaps in existing support.

Method

The following questions were presented to participants:

Consultation – individuals with migration experience:

- After arriving in the UK, what information and support did you need?
- How did you find information or support?
- What improvements would you make to existing support?
- What support isn't available that should be?
- If this support was available, what difference would it make to you?

RAM - Workshop

- What information and support do you offer migrants?
- What improvements would you make to existing support?
- What support isn't available that should be?
- What support do you need to support migrants?
- How do migrants find out about your support?

The responses were analysed, and then summarised by TDC

Summary of findings and conclusion

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*“Just to know what to expect or what I am entitled to or where to find help
would take away some of my pain, some of the fear”*

1. Finding Support

Migrants who took part in the consultation shared that they found information, connection, and support through a variety of channels. Social media, word of mouth, and community-based groups were the most common sources of support, each offering distinct ways for migrants to navigate their new environment.

1. **Online Resources:** Many migrants relied on social media, online platforms, and Google searches to find information and support.
2. **Word of Mouth:** A significant number of migrants found information through word of mouth, with friends, family, community members and peer support groups being crucial sources of guidance.
3. **Community Groups and Organisations:** Many migrants turned to local community organisations for support and guidance, where they reported a sense of trust, safety and belonging. In addition, migrants shared that the help received had been invaluable, life-changing and for some lifesaving, especially where the offer of connection and support was facilitated by workers with a shared language, culture, or lived experiences,
4. **Faith-Based Groups:** Migrants also turned to local faith-based groups for support, guidance and practical assistance. For some migrants these spaces were considered welcoming and safe and where they found comfort, compassion, and solidarity.
5. **Health Services and Helplines:** Some migrants accessed support through health services and helplines, where they received information about general health and mental health care, wellbeing support and community connection.
6. **Specialist Services:** LGBTQ+ migrants highlight the challenges of accessing immigration and migrant support opportunities that are not inclusive or sensitive to their needs. As a result, many turn to specialised LGBTQ+ services for tailored support and guidance, where they can receive help in a safe, more supportive and understanding environment.

Conclusion: Migrants surveyed have relied on various support channels, including community and faith-based groups, which play a crucial role in helping them overcome challenges such as language barriers and cultural differences. These networks offer practical assistance and a sense of belonging, empowering migrants to adapt and thrive in their new environments. However,

to ensure all migrants, particularly those from marginalised groups, can access inclusive and supportive services, continued investment in these resources is essential for their successful integration.

2. Legal Information and Support

Many migrants expressed a need for clear guidance on their legal rights, the asylum process, and managing their immigration status and visa applications. The confusion around the asylum process, particularly regarding the timing of applications, was highlighted. Service providers highlighted that some legal support is available but is often limited, unreliable and not accessible, and the support is mostly limited to signposting. There is confusion in navigating the asylum process, and many migrants found that they lacked detailed legal advice or support.

Conclusion: There is a significant gap in the availability of comprehensive legal support for migrants, particularly in navigating the asylum process. Migrants require clearer, more accessible legal guidance, especially around immigration status and asylum applications.

“This is a terrible situation because there is no help, I can’t find legal help and I get told different things by everyone, it’s killing me”

3. Health Services/Healthcare Access

Information about, and access to healthcare (registering with doctors, dentistry, sexual health, mental health) were referenced by individuals surveyed. Understanding medical rights/eligibility were ALSO key concerns for migrants. Some health care information, navigation, care and support are offered by Brighton and Hove services, but many migrants reported a lack of clarity about accessing these services, particularly concerning eligibility. It is an incredibly complex area and particularly worrying for migrants who could incur huge bills for health care if they don’t understand the eligibility criteria, this can put people off seeking help and potentially make their health conditions worse.

Conclusion: While healthcare services are available, migrants face barriers in understanding how to access these services. There is a need for clearer information and support to ensure equitable access to healthcare for all migrants, including those with complex needs.

4. Mental Health Support

Migrants highlighted the urgent need for more accessible and culturally sensitive mental health services. Concerns were raised about the lack of support tailored specifically for LGBTQ+ individuals and those dealing with complex trauma. The need for specialised mental health services, including suicide prevention, was emphasised, as many migrants face significant psychological distress due to their experiences. In addition, there was recognition of the strain on staff providing services to individuals who have experienced extreme trauma, with the need for greater support for these professionals being identified. Clients and service providers alike also highlighted the need for psychosocial support interventions, such as peer support, befriending, and community navigation, which are crucial in helping migrants overcome isolation and better navigate their new environments. While some mental health support exists within the city, it remains limited and does not fully address the diverse needs of the migrant community. There are gaps around provision of trained community interpreters and in culturally sensitive and LGBTQ+-inclusive mental health services, which are crucial in ensuring that all migrants receive the care they need in an accessible, safe and supportive environment.

Conclusion: Mental health support for migrants is currently inadequate, with significant gaps in culturally appropriate, trauma specific and LGBTQ+-inclusive services. There is an urgent need for improved access to trauma-informed, specialist mental health services, including therapeutic support and suicide prevention programmes for migrants. Additionally, psychosocial support interventions such as peer support, befriending, and community navigation needs to be integrated into the system to address social isolation and provide practical assistance. There is also a need for specific and specialist support for staff who experience vicarious trauma as they work with individuals who have faced extreme hardship. Addressing these gaps will be crucial in providing holistic and effective support to migrants, ensuring that their mental health and wellbeing are adequately cared for.

“Before I found this group I struggled to find a reason to live, I have nothing, I have no one, I am very depressed. The group is a safe place”

5. Safe Accommodation

Migrants reported significant challenges when trying to secure safe and stable accommodation. Many reported difficulties in understanding their rights and navigating the often-complex housing system. Many reported that the lack of accessible and clear information about housing options, tenancy rights, and where to go for assistance had left many feeling distressed and unsafe. In some cases, migrants reported being placed in temporary, unsuitable or inadequate accommodation, with little information about how long they would be there and with no information about their rights or how to address concerns or issues. Some of the services surveyed reported that some migrants, after being granted refugee status, are issued notices to leave their Home Office accommodation. They then apply for homelessness support from Brighton & Hove City Council but are often deemed not to have a priority need and are therefore unsuccessful. What should be a moment of relief and celebration—the approval of their asylum claim—is quickly overshadowed by the harsh reality of having nowhere safe to stay shortly thereafter.

Conclusion: There is a clear need for specific housing support and advocacy services that cater to the unique needs of migrants, offering guidance and protection throughout the housing process. Accessible and culturally appropriate information, as well as translated materials, should be available to ensure that migrants can make informed decisions about their housing options. Supportive housing services, including those that can help migrants navigate the system and advocate on their behalf, are essential in preventing homelessness and housing related crisis. Addressing these issues is vital to ensuring that migrants can secure safe, stable accommodation, which is a critical foundation for successful integration into their new community.

6. Domestic Abuse Support

Service providers highlighted a significant gap in support for victims of domestic abuse within the migrant, refugee, and asylum seeker communities. While there are general services available in the city, none are specifically designed to meet the unique needs of these groups. Many victims express a fear of judgment or misunderstanding when seeking help due to language barriers, cultural differences, or a lack of awareness of how their experiences may be perceived within the broader society. Cultural sensitivities also play a crucial role, with many individuals feeling that existing services are not

equipped to fully support their needs or understand their backgrounds. This leaves vulnerable individuals without the specialised care they require.

Conclusion: There is an urgent need for a specialist, culturally sensitive domestic abuse service that is both accessible and tailored to the unique challenges faced by migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Such services would address the barriers these individuals face when seeking help, offering a safe, understanding, and supportive environment. By developing culturally competent services, we can ensure that victims of domestic abuse from migrant backgrounds receive the support they need to escape violence and rebuild their lives.

7. Orientation and Integration

Migrants expressed the need for clearer guidance on how to settle in the UK, including understanding their rights and adjusting to British culture. Many also requested an introduction to getting around the city, navigating, and using public transport, which is crucial for day-to-day life. While general community integration support is available, including information on local services, the specific needs of vulnerable groups, such as LGBTQ+ migrants, are not being fully addressed. Clearer, more tailored support is essential to ensure all migrants feel included and informed about their rights, opportunities, and how to navigate their new environment.

Conclusion: While general integration support is available, more tailored services are needed for vulnerable groups, particularly LGBTQ+ migrants. Effective integration requires clearer guidance, culturally appropriate services, and translated information to ensure accessibility for all. Additionally, the inclusion of peer navigation programs, access to support workshops, and practical guidance on getting around the city and using public transport would help migrants settle more confidently. These measures are key to fostering successful integration and reducing barriers to support.

“If I had someone to explain things to me and take me to places then i would have felt less alone, depressed, or desperate, and would experience a stronger sense of connection to my community and people who share similar experiences.”

8. Employment and Volunteering

Migrants requested improved and accessible information on employment opportunities, particularly for those whose immigration status restricts employment. They also requested guidance on volunteering opportunities. Some access to employment and volunteering support exists within the city, but it is limited. In addition, there is limited information on work rights and employment, and what is available isn't always accessible.

Conclusion: There is a clear need for improved support around employment, especially for migrants with restricted immigration status, as well as increased opportunities for volunteering, greater investment in local services to provide accessible employment-related guidance is necessary.

9. Cultural and Dietary Needs

Migrants identified difficulties in accessing culturally appropriate food, especially in temporary accommodation. There is a particular concern about the availability of halal food. Some services provide culturally appropriate food, but this is not consistently available in temporary accommodation settings.

Conclusion: Cultural and dietary needs are not adequately met in temporary accommodation, with specific gaps in food provision for migrant communities. More attention is needed to ensure that cultural dietary requirements are included in all migrant support services.

"I did not know where to find appropriate food to feed my family. I don't care about me, but I must feed my children. My worker (social prescriber) helped me to find food"

10. English Language Support

Access to English language support is crucial for many of the migrants surveyed, with shared experiences highlighting how language barriers hindered both integration and access to essential services. Interpreting and translation support is available in Brighton and Hove, and signposting to language support is available within the city. The provision of high-quality free English language courses, both accredited and informal conversation clubs, is especially important. Migrants reported that formal classes and informal practice opportunities has helped to build confidence and improve language skills and

reduce isolation. However, some reported poor-quality provision, which has led to disengagement from some students, highlighting the need for improvements in the quality of courses on offer. This opinion was shared by some service providers.

Conclusion: There is an evident need for more English language courses. This includes better access to classes, improved promotion and distribution of information, and support with travel costs and childcare. Additionally, the provision of both accredited and informal conversation clubs would offer valuable opportunities for practice and confidence-building. Addressing these issues would help reduce isolation and promote greater integration within the wider community.

11. Information and Practical Support

Migrants requested a more central point of information to understand available services and navigate life in the UK. Clear guidance about public transport, childcare for appointments, and more access to professional development courses like ILETs was also requested by those surveyed. Information and signposting is available within the city, but there is limited availability of centralised information and clear, translated resources to help services support migrants fully. The need for financial support for travel was raised at the RAM workshop, as well as the cover of transport costs for staff supporting migrants.

Conclusion: A centralised, easily accessible point of information is vital to improve navigation of services. There is also a need for more accessible and translated materials to help migrants, especially newcomers, understand the practicalities of living in the UK. There is a clear need for practical support in areas like transport, childcare, and professional development. Service providers need to address these gaps to help migrants integrate more effectively.

12. Community Safety

Migrants reported experiences of hate crime and many reported feeling unsafe in their local community, where they have had experiences of racism and are in fear of further incidents. This issue was heightened for migrants with intersectional, LGBTQ+ identities. Many felt unable to report these incidents due to unclear and inaccessible reporting processes and a lack of confidence and trust in local authorities and the police, who were often seen as

institutions that do not adequately support or protect migrant communities. Without trust in the police, migrants are unlikely to report hate crimes, and the cycle of marginalisation continues. Service providers share these concerns, noting that migrants often felt misunderstood and unsupported, and struggle to access help and get the support they need.

Although some support exists to manage and report incidents of hate, both migrants and services surveyed emphasised the need for improved, accessible guidance and the need for support agencies that are specifically provided by and for migrants to help with trust and confidence. However, some services shared that staff who were migrants themselves also experienced racism whilst in role and supporting clients, who reported being patronised, dismissed or ignored in professional settings.

Conclusion: There is a pressing need for a more supportive and inclusive approach to community safety and hate crime reporting. Trust in local authorities, particularly the police, must be rebuilt, with clearer, more accessible reporting processes and culturally competent support systems. Strengthening services specifically designed for migrants, including those with intersectional and LGBTQ+ identities, is crucial to ensuring they feel safe and heard. Furthermore, migrant staff working within these services need robust support and recognition to ensure they are treated as professionals and can provide the necessary support without facing discrimination themselves. By focusing on improving these areas will help to create a safer, more inclusive environment for migrant communities

“I do not get the bus or go out if there are school children anymore because I have had disgusting things shouted at me and I am scared”

13. LGBTQ+ Specific

LGBTQ+ Individuals identified a lack of inclusive services and expressed a need for safer, more culturally appropriate spaces that acknowledge and respect their identities as well as providing essential support. The intersection of migration status for many of the LGBTQ+ individuals who contributed to the survey identified an additional layer of vulnerability, as many have experienced discrimination and exclusion from wider migrant populations and from broader society and have safety concerns about seeking support from services that

aren't LGBTQ+ specific. While some support exists for LGBTQ+ migrants within the city, the overall provision remains fragmented. There are still significant gaps in ensuring that spaces are not only inclusive but also safe and culturally aware.

Conclusion: LGBTQ+ migrants, as a vulnerable group, face heightened challenges due to the intersectionality of their migration status, sexuality or gender identity. The lack of inclusive and culturally sensitive services exacerbates their vulnerabilities, making it more difficult for them to access the support they need. There is a clear need for increased awareness, more targeted training for service providers, and additional resources to create safer, culturally competent spaces. It is crucial that support services acknowledge the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ migrants and implement structural changes to ensure they are met with inclusive, sensitive, and protective environments. The workshop acknowledged the need for general accessibility for vulnerable groups, but specific attention must be given to the safety and well-being of LGBTQ+ migrants.

“There is hate for me, from all sides because I am gay and because I am Muslim. I fear for my life sometimes. LGBT help has helped me to keep going”

14. Funding

The lack of funding for services supporting migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers is a growing concern among service providers, who are struggling to offer consistent and appropriate support. Many organisations reported that they are facing increasing pressure, as demand continues to outstrip their capacity. Staff employed to deliver these services are often on time-limited contracts with not enough hours allocated to effectively manage this demand. This limited staffing creates additional strain on service providers, further impacting the quality and availability of support. Some organisations shared fears about the current financial instability that threatens the sustainability of their services, with some expressing concerns about their ability to provide long-term assistance. Migrants using services indicated that some support had ended abruptly, without warning, leaving them in a state of uncertainty. This erratic provision creates additional stress for individuals who are already vulnerable, highlighting the urgent need for secure, reliable funding to ensure continued support for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Conclusion: The lack of adequate and sustained funding for services supporting migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers not only jeopardises the quality and continuity of care but also undermines the stability of these individuals during an already challenging period. The pressure on staff, who are often on short-term contracts with insufficient hours, further limits the ability to provide consistent support. Both service providers and users are experiencing the negative impact of this funding shortfall, with abrupt disruptions in support leading to further hardship. To ensure that refugees and asylum seekers receive the assistance they desperately need, it is essential that long-term funding solutions are prioritised to secure reliable, ongoing support and stability for these vulnerable populations.

“I have received lots of support, I am getting happy and enjoying my life with stability. But this took a long time as I could not find support for a very long time.”

Impact of Addressing Gaps in Support and Services

During the consultation process, migrants shared how addressing the gaps in support and services would have had a profound impact on their lives. They expressed that having access to the right support would have significantly alleviated anxiety, confusion, and feelings of being lost, making their journey in the UK far less stressful. Improved support would have had a direct effect on both their physical and mental health, enabling them to feel healthier, more resilient, and better equipped to manage their mental wellbeing. Moreover, migrants stated that having improved access to information, support and services would have facilitated a quicker and smoother integration into British society, helping them feel more at home in Brighton and Hove and significantly reducing the isolation many experienced. This isolation often stems from not having a support network, language barriers, or cultural differences, and addressing these gaps would have made a tangible difference in reducing those feelings of loneliness and separation. Participants also noted that better support would have given them greater confidence in advocating for themselves, especially when navigating the complexities of the asylum system, securing housing, or accessing healthcare. They would have had clearer expectations and a better understanding of the systems they are engaging with, allowing them to better navigate their new environment.

Historical Context and Comparisons

There is an opportunity to build on this work by comparing current findings with those from the 2017–18 *International Migrants in Brighton & Hove* needs assessment. That assessment offered a strong evidence base to support services and organisations aiming to improve outcomes for migrant communities. Revisiting it now could highlight where meaningful progress has been made, as well as where ongoing barriers remain, helping to inform future planning and targeted support.

Overall Conclusion

While there is a broad range of support services available to migrants in Brighton and Hove, significant gaps remain in addressing their specific needs. Crucial areas such as legal support, mental health services, cultural orientation, and practical assistance, such as transport and childcare, require further development to ensure a holistic support system. The needs of particularly vulnerable groups, such as LGBTQ+ migrants, demand special attention, as tailored services for these individuals are currently lacking. To improve their integration and overall wellbeing, it is essential that services be more culturally sensitive, offering clearer guidance and expanding access to practical resources. By addressing these gaps, the support system can become more inclusive, responsive, and effective, ensuring that all migrants, regardless of their background or identity, are able to access the support they need to thrive in their new environment.

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