



**Migrant
Integration through
Locally designed
Experiences**

The inclusion of migrants in policy making

A report on Birmingham United Kingdom

January 2023



Co-funded by
the European Union

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was co-authored by Eva Kašperová, Monder Ram and Heila Sha on behalf of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME), Aston University, supported by Gurdeep Chima. The research team is grateful to Dawn X Murray and Julie-Anne Wright from Birmingham City Council, and Richard Thickpenney and David Jepson from ACH, for their contributions informing the report. Special thanks to Vanessa Cotterell (UNITEE) for her guidance and to all MILE project partners for helpful suggestions in developing the report.



The MILE project is supported by the EU's AMIF Action Grant (AMIF-2020-AG-CALL-03)

The information, documentation and figures in this document are written by the MILE project consortium under the EU's AMIF Action Grant (AMIF-2020-AG-CALL-03) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission. The European Commission is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.

Further Information and contact: vcotterell@unitee.eu

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1 THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION	7
2 THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND MIGRATION AND DIVERSITY POLICY	13
3 THE EVOLUTION OF INCLUSIVITY OF MIGRANTS IN POLICY MAKING	23
4 ENGAGEMENT OF MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN POLICY MAKING.....	44
REFERENCES	62
APPENDIX – List of primary data sources	63

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides research evidence on the inclusion of international migrants in local policy making in the municipality of Birmingham, United Kingdom (UK), with a specific focus on the existing equality, diversity, integration and civic participation policy and practice in the city as well as capturing progress over time.

Birmingham is the second largest city in the UK and an important economic and cultural centre; the city is home to five universities and hosts a number of key national and international companies that reflect both its manufacturing past and the growing professional, business and financial services sectors.

Despite having relatively young working age population, compared with the rest of the country, the proportion of Birmingham residents who are economically active, in employment or self-employment is lower than the country average.

Birmingham is one of the most diverse cities in the UK, with an overall population of 1,144,900 (2021) of which 305,688 (27%) are international migrants or residents born outside the UK. The net international migration to Birmingham over the past decade (2010-2020) has been positive, with an average of 6,600 arrivals per year.

In the year to June 2021, the top three countries of origin for foreign workers in Birmingham were India, Pakistan and Romania, while the most frequent ethnicity in the city, after White British, are Asian Pakistani, Asian Indian, Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi.

Birmingham is home to a strong network of civil society organisations and there is an established body of migrant-led organisations providing various support services to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, such as help with resettlement and integration, assistance with employment, education and citizenship preparation, or legal support and representation. A few organisations actively promote political participation of migrants in Birmingham and across the country.

Civil society has been vital in representing migrants and enabling them to participate in public and political life in some form, especially among refugees and asylum seekers who have limited voting rights in the UK. The civil society sector, however, has been under significant financial pressure recently due to cuts in public grants squeezing some of the smallest organisations that tackle disadvantage.

The Birmingham City Council is the local authority in the municipality and the largest metropolitan local authority in England. The Council has powers to deliver various services at the local level, including commissioning of integration support targeting migrants, while the immigration policy is decided by the UK Government.

Described as a city with the 'localist model of integration governance', Birmingham has officially been declared 'City of Sanctuary' in 2015 with an explicitly written commitment to being a place of safety for people fleeing violence and persecution. The Council

extended this commitment in 2019, in response to Brexit, to include *all* migrants visiting, residing or working in the city. This commitment has led to several initiatives to deliver support and services to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

As a public sector organisation, Birmingham City Council has a number of equality-related duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Council has an explicitly written action plan with a set of equality objectives for 2019-2023 to help drive equality and inclusion across all areas of its work.

Participation of local residents in policy making is embedded within the existing governance structure of the Council. The 'Overview and Scrutiny Committees' exist to ensure that the voice of local citizens is heard while the 'Ward Forums' were created to provide a platform for public participation and representation at a local level. Despite this, an independent review carried out in 2014 identified a need for more powerful community engagement to shape how local services are delivered.

Birmingham does not have an explicitly written strategy to promote participation by residents in public decision making across policy spheres. However, a commitment to promote civic participation, irrespective of background, is articulated in several documents. The Equality Strategy and Action Plan for 2021-2023, for instance, highlights the importance of hearing diverse voices, including those of migrants.

The Council communicates its commitment to promoting engagement and listening to diverse voices on its 'Be Heard' consultation webpage where citizens are invited to take part in formal consultations on a range of issues. Citizens can also engage through Council's various social media platforms, petitions, local councillor surgeries and by signing up to the consultation alert mailing list. Nonetheless, the Council does not produce information about its consultations in different languages and no specific coordination mechanism exists to ensure that participation of all residents is actively promoted and communicated effectively.

Tailored structures to engage migrants specifically have been initiated through partnerships with organisations from across sectors, including the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership, Birmingham Migration Forum, City of Sanctuary Partnership Board, and others. However, these structures tend to involve migrant representatives from civil society organisations. Opportunities and support for migrants to engage in more direct democratic encounters with the Council are rather limited.

The responsiveness of the Council to the voices of migrants, and their incorporation in decision making, is partly realised through the existing structures involving migrant representatives, like the Birmingham Migration Forum. Yet, the focus tends to be on awareness raising and information sharing about support services rather than offering opportunities to shape local policy. There is no formal provision in place to ensure that the voices of migrants, or migrant-led organisations, systematically feed into the mainstream policy.

Immigrants and ethnic minorities are under-represented in the UK's democratic system; they are less likely than the wider population to register to vote and turn up for elections. This is particularly evident among EU migrants and Black African minorities. In Birmingham, the representation of ethnic minorities as local councillors appears to have improved over the past two decades, although not entirely reflective of the 'superdiversity' of migrant communities living in Birmingham.

Overall, there has been progress in creating policies and structures that facilitate civic participation and inclusion of migrants in local policy making, partly due to global events such as the Syrian refugee crisis and the Black Lives Matter movement. These events coincided with various influences at the national and local level, such as the public sector equality duty and the establishment of Birmingham as a City of Sanctuary. Nevertheless, challenges remain in promoting more direct involvement of migrants and creating sustainable structures and coordination mechanisms that support meaningful engagement of migrants in local decision-making.

1 THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

1.1 The municipality context

With the population size of 1,144,900 (Census 2021), Birmingham is often referred to as the 'second city', after the capital London. Nearly 2% of the Great Britain's 65,185,700 residents live in Birmingham, located in the centre of the West Midlands region.¹ Birmingham City Council (BCC) is the local authority, comprising of 101 councillors or elected representatives of local communities. Following the results of local elections in 2022, the Labour Party – that is the largest centre-left social democratic party in the UK – maintained the majority (65 councillors) and runs the City Council.²

Given its nationally central location, and good railway and motorway links with other parts of the country, Birmingham is an important economic and cultural centre. The city is home to five universities, with a diverse mix of research and industry specialisms, and is well connected globally thanks to its close proximity to the Birmingham International Airport. Birmingham hosts a number of key national and international companies that reflect both its manufacturing past and the growing professional, business and financial services sectors.³

Birmingham has a relatively young population; 64% of its residents are of working age (16-64 years old). This is higher than in the West Midlands region or Great Britain as a whole (62%). Yet, the proportion of those who are economically active is lower in Birmingham (71%) compared with the region and the country (78%). Only 64% of Birmingham's working age population is in employment compared with the region (74%) and the country overall (75%). The level of self-employment is also lower in Birmingham (6%) than the wider region (8%) and the country (9%), while unemployment is higher in the city (8%) and lower in the region and the country (5% and 4% respectively). On most of the above indicators, women appear to be worse off than men; women in Birmingham are less economically active than men (67% and 75% respectively) and are also less likely than men to be employed or self-employed.⁴

Ethnic minority and migrant communities make an important contribution to the UK economy and society; they are consistently more entrepreneurial or more likely to start a business than the general population, and ethnic minority businesses contribute £25 billion per annum in gross value added (GVA) to the UK economy. Large urban areas such as London and Birmingham are the hubs of ethnic minority business activity, ranging

¹ NOMIS (2021) 'Labour Market Profile – Birmingham', Official Labour Market Statistics, Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157186/printable.aspx> [Accessed on 08/06/2022]

² Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Political composition of the council', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50068/how_the_council_works/882/political_composition_of_the_council [Accessed on 07/06/2022]

³ Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce (2021) 'Birmingham Economic Review 2021: Summary', Available at: <https://www.greaterbirminghamchambers.com/research-campaigning/birmingham-economic-review/> [Accessed on 08/06/2022]

⁴ NOMIS (2021) 'Labour Market Profile – Birmingham', Official Labour Market Statistics, Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157186/printable.aspx> [Accessed on 08/06/2022]

from cafes, restaurants and convenience stores to creative industry, IT and construction firms.⁵ Yet, ethnic minorities' entrepreneurial efforts are more likely to result in closures compared with their White British counterparts, and minority firms face particular challenges in growing their ventures into more mature firms, especially difficulties in accessing finance, quality business support and wider mainstream markets. Addressing these barriers and helping to advance the UK's ethnic minority businesses could result in a four-fold increase in their economic contribution from £25 billion to £100 billion GVA a year.⁶

In addition to the higher-than-average unemployment rate, there are significant skills gaps in Birmingham. This has impact on the local economy and restricts business growth. In the third quarter of 2021, for example, while 57% of firms in the Greater Birmingham area attempted to recruit, 62% of them reported difficulties in doing so. Birmingham also scores lower on productivity than the UK average.⁷ Several areas within the city are some of the most deprived in the country, and the low skill levels among adults also mean that there is more child poverty than anywhere else in England.⁸

1.2 Migrant population and migration history

1.2.1 Migrant population and migration trends

According to BCC, the net 'international' migration – that is, moves across national boundaries – to Birmingham over the past decade (2010-2020) has been positive. While the level of international migration 'in' and 'out' of Birmingham varied each year, the net international migration to the city averaged +6,600 per year. In contrast, there has been a negative net migration to Birmingham when looking at the rate of 'internal' migration – that is, moves within a country – during the same period with an average loss of -7,100 people migrating to other parts of the UK.⁹

Records of National Insurance (NI) number registrations from the Department for Work and Pensions help shed light on the largest working age migrant groups living in Birmingham. In the year to June 2021, the NI number registrations for foreign workers

⁵ Roberts, R., Ram, M., Jones, T., Idris, B., Hart, M., Ri, A., and Prashar, N. (2020) 'Unlocking Opportunity: The Value of Ethnic Minority Firms in UK Economic Activity and Enterprise', The Federation of Small Businesses. London, U.K.

⁶ Kašperová, E., Roberts, R. and Ram, M. (2022) 'Time to change: A blueprint for advancing the UK's ethnic minority businesses', Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME), Aston Business School.

⁷ Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce (2021) 'Birmingham Economic Review 2021: Summary', Available at: <https://www.greaterbirminghamchambers.com/research-campaigning/birmingham-economic-review/> [Accessed on 08/06/2022]

⁸ Kerslake, B. (2014) 'The way forward: an independent review of the governance and organisational capabilities of Birmingham City Council', Available at: http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2014-1590/The_way_forward_-_an_independent_review_of_Birmingham_City_Council.pdf [Accessed on 10/06/2022]

⁹ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Birmingham Demographic Brief 2021/03', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/11280/2019_to_2020_international_migration_birmingham.pdf [22/11/2022]

show that the top three countries of origin were India, Pakistan and Romania, followed by Bangladesh, Italy and Spain. In terms of age, the largest group of foreign workers registering for NI included people in their mid-20s to early 30s. Additionally, more registrations were recorded for males than females each year, although the gap has nearly closed by 2020/21.¹⁰

Looking at ethnicity, the latest data (Census 2011) shows that 'White' is the largest ethnic group in Birmingham (57.9%), followed by Asian (26.6%) and Black (9.0%) communities. Table 1 offers a more detailed breakdown, illustrating that after 'White British' (53.1%), Asian Pakistani (13.5%), Asian Indian (6.0%), Black Caribbean (4.4%) and Bangladeshi (3.0%) are the largest ethnic sub-groups. Examining the country of birth, 22.2% of Birmingham residents are from overseas and the most frequently spoken languages in the city after English (84.7%) are Urdu (2.9%), Punjabi (2.1%), Bengali (with Sylheti and Chatgaya) (1.4%) and Pakistani Pahari (with Mirpuri and Potwari) (1.1%).¹¹

Table 1 Ethnicity in Birmingham (drawing on the Census 2011 data)

Ethnicity	Category	% of population
White	White: British	53.1%
White	White: Irish	2.1%
White	White: Gypsy or Traveller	0.0%
White	White: Other	2.7%
White	Combined total	57.9%
Asian	Asian: Indian	6.0%
Asian	Asian: Pakistani	13.5%
Asian	Asian: Bangladeshi	3.0%
Asian	Asian: Chinese	1.2%
Asian	Asian: Other	2.9%
Asian	Combined total	26.6%
Black	Black: African	2.8%
Black	Black Caribbean	4.4%
Black	Black: Other	1.7%
Black	Combined total	9.0%
Other	Other: Arab	1.0%
Other	Other: Any other ethnic group	1.0%
Other	Combined total	2.0%

Source: Birmingham City Council, Population overview: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50265/supporting_healthier_communities/2438/ethnic_communities/2

¹⁰ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Birmingham Demographic Brief 2021/03', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/11280/2019_to_2020_international_migration_birmingham.pdf [22/11/2022]

¹¹ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Population overview', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50265/supporting_healthier_communities/2438/ethnic_communities/2 [Accessed on 22/11/2022]

Further analysis by the Migration Observatory shows that with 22.2% (238,313) of foreign-born residents as measured in 2011, Birmingham has the highest number of non-UK born residents in the West Midlands region. Metropolitan areas, including Birmingham, are the home of nearly three quarters (72.1%) of the non-UK born population in the region. Looking more widely at the West Midlands region, just over 11% (629,973) of its 5.6 million residents were born overseas. In both 2001 and 2011, the region was in the 3rd position in terms of its share of non-UK born residents (after London and the South East) when comparing ten regions of England and Wales.¹² More recent data from 2020 shows that nearly half of Birmingham residents (48.5%) are from an ethnic minority background while 1 in 4 people are non-UK born.¹³

There has been an increase in the non-UK born population in each county, district and unitary authority within West Midlands region between 2001 and 2011. The largest numerical increase was recorded in Birmingham with the number of foreign-born residents rising by 77,063 during this period. However, the 47.8% increase in foreign-born population in the city is below the regional rate of growth when compared with other parts of the region in terms of percentage increase.¹⁴ Between the period of 2010 and 2020, there was a further increase in the number of foreign-born residents in Birmingham by 66,300.¹⁵ The latest Census 2021 data shows a 4.5% increase in Birmingham's population born overseas, from 22.2% (238,313) in 2011 to 26.7% (305,688) in 2021.¹⁶

These figures reflect the wider national trends of immigration when comparing the Census data over the 2001 and 2011 period. The population of England and Wales stood at 56.1 million in 2011, an increase by 7.8% (4 million) from 2001. In the same period, the non-UK born population increased by 62% (2.9 million) from 4.6 million in 2001 to 7.5 million in 2011. Hence, most of the overall population growth during this decade (71%) is accounted for by foreign-born residents, with the three largest groups represented by

¹² Krausova, A. and Vargas-Silva, C. (2013) 'Briefing – West Midlands: Census Profile', The Migration Observatory, University of Oxford, Available at: <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/west-midlands-census-profile/> [Accessed on 16/05/2022]

¹³ Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce (2021) 'Birmingham Economic Review 2021: Summary', Available at: <https://www.greaterbirminghamchambers.com/research-campaigning/birmingham-economic-review/> [Accessed on 08/06/2022]

¹⁴ Krausova, A. and Vargas-Silva, C. (2013) 'Briefing – West Midlands: Census Profile', The Migration Observatory, University of Oxford, Available at: <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/west-midlands-census-profile/> [Accessed on 16/05/2022]

¹⁵ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Mid-2019 to 2020 International Migration in Birmingham: Birmingham Demographic Brief 2021/03', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11280/2018_to_2019_international_migration_birmingham [Accessed on 28/07/2022]

¹⁶ Office for National Statistics (2022) 'International Migration, England and Wales: Census 2021', Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/internationalmigrationenglandandwales/census2021> [Accessed on 07/11/2022]

those born in Indian, Poland and Pakistan.¹⁷ Between 2011 and 2021, the population grew by 3.5 million (6.3% increase) from 56.1 million to 59.5 million. Of this, the natural increase of population was around 1.5 million of residents (42.5% of overall population increase) while an increase because of positive international net migration was 2 million (57.5% of total increase).¹⁸

Historically, the UK levels of immigration and emigration were in balance for much of the 20th century but there has been a significant increase in both over the past 25 years. Since 1998, the immigration levels have exceeded emigration by more than 100,000 annually.¹⁹ Despite these long-term positive net migration trends at the national level, there has been a significant decrease in the net migration to the UK in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK's exit from the European Union. Total immigration was significantly lower in 2020 (268,000) than in 2019 (592,000). While the decrease in net migration was observed among all groups of migrants, EU net migration was negative in 2020.²⁰

1.2.2 Civil society and migrant-led organisations in the municipality

The UK has a long-standing tradition of civil society organisations and groups supporting communities at the local level as well as taking a lead nationally to campaign on issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. Throughout the 20th and 21st century, civil society has mobilised to assist in the times of a crisis; for instance, welcoming and supporting displaced people and refugees fleeing war.²¹ Birmingham is home to a strong civil society network. The Citizens UK Birmingham, for example, is an alliance of member institutions – ranging from faith groups, trade unions, schools and universities to

¹⁷ White, E. (2012) 'International Migrants in England and Wales 2011', Office for National Statistics, 11 December 2012, Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/internationalmigrantsinenglandandwales/2012-12-11#:~:text=In%202011%20the%20population%20of,from%204.6%20million%20in%202001.>

[Accessed on 16/05/2022]

¹⁸ Office for National Statistics (2022) 'International Migration, England and Wales: Census 2021, Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/internationalmigrationenglandandwales/census2021> [Accessed on 07/11/2022]

¹⁹ Sturge, G. (2021) 'Research Briefing: Migration Statistics', House of Commons Library, 27 April 2021, Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06077/> [Accessed on 16/05/2022]

²⁰ Webber, D. (2021) 'Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2020', Office for National Statistics, 25 November 2021, Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/longterminternationalmigrationprovisional/yearendingdecember2020#:~:text=4.%,Immigration%20to%20the%20UK%20in%202020,and%20538%2C000%20people%20in%202018.>

[Accessed on 16/05/2022]

²¹ Civil Society Futures (2018) 'Civil Society in England: Its current state and future opportunity', The independent inquiry, November 2018, Available at: https://civilsocietyfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2018/11/Civil-Society-Futures_Civil-Society-in-England_small-1.pdf

[Accessed on 17/05/2022]

community groups and social enterprises – campaigning on issues such as affordable housing and support for resettlement and sponsorship of refugees.²²

There is an established body of migrant-led organisations in Birmingham, including those offering support to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. For example, ACH is a leading provider of resettlement and integration services in the West Midlands.²³ The Refugee and Migrant Centre provide assistance with employment and education, asylum support and citizenship preparation.²⁴ The Asylum Support and Immigration Resource Team focus on legal support and representation to asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.²⁵ The Birmingham Community Hosting runs a hosting network for vulnerable asylum seekers and other activities, such as family befriending support.²⁶ Additionally, there are organisations focused on the integration of migrants from specific nationalities, such as the Centrala Space arts centre that supports integration of ‘new migrants’ from Central and Eastern Europe.²⁷

A number of civil society organisations actively promote political participation of migrants in Birmingham and across the country. The Migrant Voice, for example, is a UK-wide organisation with a regional hub in the West Midlands which campaigns for positive change in public attitudes and policy by seeking to challenge anti-migrant narratives and tackle injustices.²⁸ Civil society has been vital in enabling migrants to participate in public and political life in some form, especially among refugees and asylum seekers who have limited voting rights in the UK.²⁹ The civil society sector, however, has been under significant financial pressure due to austerity measures introduced by central government in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis. Drastic cuts in public grants have impacted particularly on some of the smallest organisations that support local communities or tackle disadvantage.³⁰

²² Citizens UK Birmingham (2021) ‘Civil Society Priorities for West Midlands Regional Elections 2021’, Available at:

https://citizensuk.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Briefing_on_our_WMElects2021_priorities.pdf

[Accessed on 17/05/2022]

²³ [Refugee and migrant support services UK | ACH](#)

²⁴ [Home - Refugee and Migrant Centre \(rmcentre.org.uk\)](#)

²⁵ [ASIRT – Immigration & Asylum Support – Asylum Support and Immigration Resource Team](#)

²⁶ [BIRCH | Birmingham Community Housing \(birchnetwork.org\)](#)

²⁷ [Centrala Space \(centrala-space.org.uk\)](#)

²⁸ [Migrant Voice | Speaking For...](#)

²⁹ Bekaj, A. et al. (2018) ‘Political Participation of Refugees: Bridging the Gaps’, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

³⁰ Harris, M. (2018) ‘UK Civil Society: Changes and Challenges in the Age of New Public Governance and the Marketized Welfare State’, *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, 8(4): 351–368.

2 THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND MIGRATION AND DIVERSITY POLICY

2.1 Governance structure and local decision-making powers

The Birmingham City Council (BCC) is the largest metropolitan local authority in England. It has an agreed upon constitution that governs its operations and decision making. Some of its powers and responsibilities are governed by the law while others are decided locally. The Council is made up of 101 'Councillors' who have a duty to serve their 'constituents'. One of the Councillors is elected as 'Leader' for a four-year term of office. The Council meets to decide on policy and to set budget each year, and its Leader appoints the 'Cabinet' whose main role is to develop and implement policy on behalf of the Council.³¹

The Cabinet is the executive or decision-making part of the Council. It comprises 10 Councillors, including the Leader, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members with remit in the following areas: (1) Children's Wellbeing; (2) Education, Skills and Culture; (3) Finance and Resources; (4) Health and Social Care; (5) Homes and Neighbourhoods; (6) Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities; (7) Street Scene and Parks; and (8) Transport and Environment.³² Additionally, various 'overview and scrutiny committees' exist within this governance framework to support strategic policy development, to hold decision makers accountable, and to ensure that the voice of citizens is heard. The 'Ward Forums' were created to provide a platform for public participation and representation in decision making at a local level.³³

An independent review into the governance of BCC carried out in 2014 identified several challenges, including issues with the size of the council and its capacities to deliver services effectively within the existing resource constraints. It found that the council "urgently needs a new model of devolution that enables services to be delivered within the resources available and provides more powerful community engagement" (page 15).³⁴ The review states that the council is moving towards a 'triple devolution' model of service delivery and representation, summarised as follows: (A) City region – partnership working with neighbouring councils, using pooled funding streams from central government, to invest in transport infrastructure, skills and economic development and to make strategic plans for housing and land uses; (B) The City – working more closely with health and social care providers, schools and other agencies to integrate services and create a "Budget for Birmingham" which combines all of the funding for local public services and

³¹ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Birmingham City Council Constitution', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/13653/part_a_constitution [Accessed on 18/05/2022]

³² Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Birmingham City Council Constitution', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/13653/part_a_constitution [Accessed on 07/06/2022]

³³ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Birmingham City Council Constitution', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/13653/part_a_constitution [Accessed on 07/06/2022]

³⁴ Kerslake, B. (2014) 'The way forward: an independent review of the governance and organisational capabilities of Birmingham City Council', Available at: http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2014-1590/The_way_forward_-_an_independent_review_of_Birmingham_City_Council.pdf [Accessed on 10/06/2022]

allows them to work together to plan provision; and (C) The Neighbourhood – bringing together neighbourhood services and creating service hubs through development of new providers from voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises to deliver key service areas such as environmental services, housing, neighbourhood advice, libraries, sport and physical activity provision.

Although BCC delivers certain services locally and has its own identity as a local authority, the Council has, since 2016, a joint arrangement with several other local authorities and key bodies in the West Midlands region which together constitute the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The WMCA has an elected Mayor and comprises 18 local authorities that work together and have resources to make big decisions regionally. The Authority was formed to move powers from Central Government to the West Midlands region.³⁵ The key powers and responsibilities of the WMCA focus on economic functions, including transport, adult skills, infrastructure, housing and business support. For instance, the Authority controls a 30-year investment fund of £1 billion to invest in projects that increase regional productivity and growth.³⁶

2.2. Migration and integration policy

The immigration policy in the UK, including whether an asylum seeker is accepted as a refugee, is decided by the UK Government. The Home Office and the UK Visas and Immigration Department make decisions on who can legally reside in the country, and the Home Office is also responsible for managing dispersal, accommodation and support provision for asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their claim. This support is facilitated through regional contracts with private companies, such as Serco which manages two official initial accommodation hostels for people who have applied and need support in Birmingham. Additionally, there are several contingency hostels in the city, however, BCC is not responsible for accommodating asylum seekers. Instead, the council liaises with private contractors, statutory bodies and voluntary agencies to try and ensure that people seeking asylum are effectively supported in response to changing circumstances.³⁷

It has been noted that while immigration policy is typically determined by national governments, the lack of national-level integration policies has prompted many local authorities in ‘superdiverse’ cities like London, Berlin and Birmingham to develop local integration policies in a ‘bottom-up’ manner. Birmingham, in this respect, has been

³⁵ Birmingham City Council (2021) ‘Birmingham City Council Constitution’, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/13653/part_a_constitution [Accessed on 07/06/2022]

³⁶ Institute for Government (2021) ‘Devolution to the West Midlands’, Available at: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/devolution-west-midlands> [Accessed on 08/06/2022]

³⁷ Birmingham City Council (2022) ‘What we do to support asylum seekers, refugees and migrants’, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50227/city_of_sanctuary/2509/what_we_do_to_support_asylum_seekers_refugees_and_migrants [Accessed on 22/11/2022]

described as a city with the 'localist model of integration governance'.³⁸ Birmingham has officially been declared a 'City of Sanctuary' in 2015, with explicit commitment to being a place of safety for all and offering sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution. Grassroots pressure from civil society organisations played a key role in this development.³⁹ BCC had renewed and extended this commitment in 2019, in response to Brexit, to include all migrants visiting, residing or working in the city. This latest commitment goes beyond offering a welcoming place of safety to asylum seekers and refugees with a pledge to create a city where all migrant communities can successfully resettle and integrate.⁴⁰

As a City of Sanctuary, BCC is part of a UK-wide network comprising local councils, community groups, libraries, universities and other organisations promoting their local areas as places of welcome.⁴¹ This commitment has led to several initiatives to deliver support and services to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Most recently, the 'Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)' is promoted on the BCC website to help Ukrainian nationals arriving in the city to access the available support. The website also provides relevant information to potential sponsors and guests.⁴² An earlier humanitarian crisis due to the war in Syria coincided with the official recognition of Birmingham as a City of Sanctuary. BCC's involvement with the UK Government's resettlement scheme resulted in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (which closed in 2021), having supported over 500 people to build their lives in Birmingham. This followed public pressure and lobbying of the UK and local governments by civil society groups to accept Syrian refugees. In Birmingham, the magnitude of the programme resulted in the employment of dedicated staff to procure and manage the commissioned services. BCC also continues to participate in the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme.⁴³

There is a dedicated 'Prevention, Communities & Migration Team' at BCC which sits within its Adult Social Care and Health department. The team runs several support and integration projects and services for migrants; for example, the Birmingham Asylum Refugee and Migrant Support (BARMS) online directory of organisations, services and groups committed to welcoming, supporting and resettling migrant communities. BARMS is a one-stop shop to access relevant information and services. The directory has been fully translated and can be viewed in multiple languages. Within this structure, the 'Refugees and Migration Team' work in partnership with the 'Birmingham Migration

³⁸ Garcés-Mascreñas, B. and R. Penninx (2016) *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe: Contexts, Levels and Actors*, London: Springer Open.

³⁹ [Birmingham Welcomes \(cityofsanctuary.org\)](https://www.cityofsanctuary.org/)

⁴⁰ [Introduction | City of Sanctuary | Birmingham City Council](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50276/city_of_sanctuary/2509/what_we_do_to_support_asylum_seekers_refugees_and_migrants/2)

⁴¹ [About \(cityofsanctuary.org\)](https://www.cityofsanctuary.org/)

⁴² Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50276/ukraine_sponsorship_scheme_homes_for_ukraine [Accessed on 20/06/2022]

⁴³ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Resettlement', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50227/city_of_sanctuary/2509/what_we_do_to_support_asylum_seekers_refugees_and_migrants/2 [Accessed on 28/06/2022]

Forum' and 'Community Unity' to ensure that the information on BARMS platform is always up to date.⁴⁴ The BARMS website was created as a direct result of consultation with the sector requesting a directory of migrant support services. This team also provides a range of services around resettlement, training, education and volunteering, with the objective of supporting people to unlock their employment and skills potential and to become more active citizens in the city.⁴⁵ Additionally, a dedicated role was created within the Prevention, Communities and Migration Team to raise awareness both internally (within the council and its various departments) and working with external stakeholders about the BCC's commitments under the City of Sanctuary policy; for example, by raising awareness about refugees' rights or encouraging council staff to get involved in the Refugee Week or International Migrants Day initiative.⁴⁶

Other notable initiatives under the City of Sanctuary remit include several EU funded projects. Among others, the 'Foundation for Integration Project' was developed in partnership with civil society organisations, including ASIRT, the Refugee and Migrant Centre and the Central England Law Centre, to facilitate migrant integration through specialist advice to Third Country Nationals.⁴⁷ As part of this project, BCC developed the online Migrant Advice Portal to help migrant communities find relevant support and to better connect support providers across Birmingham.⁴⁸ The 'MiFriendly Cities' project sought to understand what it takes to make cities migrant friendly. It involved activities around employability, English language support, health champions, active citizenship and social enterprise.⁴⁹

While there is no UK-wide policy framework on integration, as integration is a devolved matter, the UK Government provides funding for some local authorities in England to manage the impact of migration and to develop local integration strategies through the Controlling Migration Fund introduced in 2016. BCC received nearly £1million from the Fund in 2018 to boost integration and tackle issues such as migrant exploitation by rogue landlords in the private rented sector and modern-day slavery. This included development of support, advice and information services to facilitate the integration of

⁴⁴ BARMS (2022) 'Birmingham Asylum Refugee and Migrant Support', Available at: <https://barms.org.uk/> [Accessed on 27/06/2022]

⁴⁵ Birmingham City Council (2020) 'Birmingham celebrates Refugee Week with virtual festival', 15 June 2020, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/news/article/641/birmingham_celebrates_refugee_week_with_virtual_festival [Accessed on 12/08/2022]

⁴⁶ Source: Interview with the representatives of Birmingham City Council [in person], 11/08/2022.

⁴⁷ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Foundation for Integration Project', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50227/city_of_sanctuary/2509/what_we_do_to_support_asylum_seekers_refugees_and_migrants/3#:~:text=Funded%20by%20the%20EU%20Asylum,and%20destitution%20and%20facilitating%20integration. [Accessed on 27/06/2022]

⁴⁸ <https://migrantadvice.org/>

⁴⁹ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'What we do to support asylum seekers, refugees and migrants', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50227/city_of_sanctuary/2509/what_we_do_to_support_asylum_seekers_refugees_and_migrants [Accessed on 28/06/2022]

migrants and to help them sustain their tenancies.⁵⁰ Further £1.2million from the same fund was received in 2019 to reduce pressure on local services and carry out research to better understand and respond to future needs.⁵¹

In 2019, the UK Government published the Integrated Communities Action Plan to support the integration of diverse communities in England. The plan emphasises a placed-based approach involving partnerships between government and local organisations across sectors to collaborate in identifying and addressing local priorities for integration together.⁵²

The current integration policy and practice in Birmingham needs to be set within the wider national context and approach to immigration. In a recent assessment, Griffiths and Yeo (2021) examine the evolution of the ‘hostile environment’ policy approach in the UK. They show that while the increasingly ‘uncomfortable’ approach towards illegal immigration can be traced back to the Labour 1997-2010 Government – for example, by putting more pressure on employers to check immigration status – the strategy has intensified since 2012 under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition. A shift towards more ‘hostile’ policies has been characterised by a dramatic increase in immigration policing and restricted access to benefits and public services for irregular or undocumented migrants. The Immigration Act 2014 and 2016 further extended immigration status checks to a wider range of organisations, including banks and landlords.⁵³

According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index which uses quantitative analyses to measure different policy areas, the UK has ‘halfway favourable’ policies on the integration of immigrants, scoring 56 out of a 100-point scale. This means that immigrants in the UK ‘enjoy more opportunities than obstacles in their integration’. The UK score is above the average EU country, and in line with other Western European countries like Germany, but is lower than that of countries such as Canada, the United States of America or Sweden with stronger integration policies.⁵⁴

Different areas of integration policy measured by the Index are underlined by three key dimensions – (1) Basic rights; (2) Equal opportunities; and (3) Secure future. The score on

⁵⁰ Birmingham City Council (2018) ‘Birmingham secures nearly £1m funding to boost integration’, 8 June 2018, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/news/article/281/birmingham_secures_nearly_1m_funding_to_boost_integration [Accessed on 28/06/2022]

⁵¹ Birmingham City Council (2019) ‘Council awarded £1.2m of government migration funding’, 18 July 2019, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/news/article/452/council_awarded_12m_of_government_migration_funding [Accessed on 28/06/2022]

⁵² HM Government (2019) ‘Integrated Communities Action Plan’, February 2019, Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/778045/Integrated_Communities_Strategy_Govt_Action_Plan.pdf [Accessed on 06/01/2023]

⁵³ Griffiths, M. and Yeo, C. (2021) ‘The UK’s hostile environment: Deputising immigration control’, *Critical Social Policy* 41(4): 521–544.

⁵⁴ MIPEX (2020) ‘Policy Indicators: Key findings’, Available at: <https://www.mipex.eu/key-findings> [Accessed on 13/06/2022]

each of these dimensions offers an indication of an approach to integration adopted in any particular country. Four distinctive approaches have been identified, including: (1) Comprehensive integration; (2) Equality on paper; (3) Temporary integration; and (4) Immigration without integration. The UK's approach to integration has been classified as 'temporary integration'. Additionally, looking at changes over time, from 2014 to 2019, there has been little progress regarding integration policy for immigrants in the UK, resulting in a -1 point decrease in its score (due to limited change in the provision of language support in education). This contrasts with the average country increase by +2 points over the same period.⁵⁵

2.3 Diversity and equality policy

As a public sector organisation, BCC has a number of equality-related duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not. Following a review carried out in 2019 to ensure that the council meets its equality and inclusion legal obligations, several policy areas where BCC needs to do more work to advance equality were identified. These findings provided a basis for the council to develop its Equality Objectives for 2019-2023, set out in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, to help drive equality and inclusion across all areas of its work.⁵⁶

2.3.1 Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

BCC is committed to tackling social and economic inequality in Birmingham and making it an equal and inclusive city. In its report to Cabinet in 2020, Birmingham is described as a place that is proud to be a City of Sanctuary and welcoming to newcomers from across the world. To achieve this, BCC has partnered with 12 other cities since 2019 to form a part of the 'Inclusive Cities Programme' (run by the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford) which aims to facilitate peer learning between cities so that they can share what works in supporting both newcomers and more settled communities.⁵⁷

In its Community Cohesion Strategy, the Council highlights Birmingham as a welcoming city that participates in the 'Places of Welcome' network – a scheme run by local community groups with an aim to create a place in local neighbourhoods where anyone

⁵⁵ MIPEX (2020) 'Policy Indicators: Key findings', Available at: <https://www.mipex.eu/key-findings> [Accessed on 13/06/2022]

⁵⁶ Birmingham City Council (2020) 'Birmingham City Council: Report to Cabinet', 8 September 2020, Available at: https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/economy/tackling-inequalities-everyones-battle/supporting_documents/Everyones%20Battle%20Everyones%20Business%20%20tackling%20inequality%20Cabinet%20Report%20final%20PDF.pdf [Accessed on 16/06/2022]

⁵⁷ Birmingham City Council (2020) 'Birmingham City Council: Report to Cabinet', 8 September 2020, Available at: https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/economy/tackling-inequalities-everyones-battle/supporting_documents/Everyones%20Battle%20Everyones%20Business%20%20tackling%20inequality%20Cabinet%20Report%20final%20PDF.pdf [Accessed on 16/06/2022]

is welcome to meet, participate and have a conversation over a cup of tea. There are over 50 of such Places of Welcome in Birmingham.⁵⁸

BCC's commitment to diversity and inclusion is further strengthened through its governance structure. One of the 10 Cabinet members / Councillors within the Council has specific accountability for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities in the city for all its citizens. This includes, among others, responsibilities to develop and promote shared values and mutual respect across diverse communities; for example, by ensuring that community events promote social cohesion and inclusion.⁵⁹

2.3.2 Strategy for promoting diversity and equal opportunities

There is an explicit strategy for promoting diversity and equal opportunities in Birmingham across all policy areas, although migrants are not singled out as a target group. The Council has set out its commitment to drive equality and inclusion across *all* areas of its work under five specific equality objectives for 2019 – 2023, as outlined below:

- Objective 1: Understand our diverse communities and embed that understanding in how we shape policy and practice across the Council.
- Objective 2: Demonstrate inclusive leadership, partnership and a clear organisational commitment to be a leader in equality, diversity and inclusion in the City.
- Objective 3: Involve and enable our diverse communities to play an active role in civic society and put the citizens' voice at the heart of decision making.
- Objective 4: Deliver responsive services and customer care that is accessible and inclusive to individual's needs and respects faith, beliefs and cultural differences.
- Objective 5: Encourage and enable a skilled and diverse workforce to build a culture of equality and inclusion in everything we do.

These objectives are elaborated further in the Equality Strategy and Action Plan for 2021-2023 which was developed in response to Covid-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement.⁶⁰ The Plan makes explicit reference to migrant populations and highlights the importance of involving diverse voices in decision making. It builds on the Community Cohesion Strategy introduced in 2018 to make Birmingham a fair and inclusive city. This strategy makes explicit reference to Birmingham as a City of Sanctuary with commitments to create a culture of hospitality for people seeking refuge and asylum. The strategy

⁵⁸ Birmingham City Council (2018) 'Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham Green Paper: Forward together to build a fair and inclusive city for everyone', Available at: [Birmingham Community Cohesion Strategy Green Paper Summary FINAL.pdf \(birminghambeheard.org.uk\)](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50067/the_executive_leader_and_cabinet/1014/cabinet_member_for_social_inclusion_community_safety_and_equalities) [Accessed on 16/06/2022]

⁵⁹ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Cabinet member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50067/the_executive_leader_and_cabinet/1014/cabinet_member_for_social_inclusion_community_safety_and_equalities [Accessed on 20/06/2022]

⁶⁰ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business – together we will tackle inequalities' – Appendix 3: Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2021 – 2023, May 2021, Available at: [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50067/the_executive_leader_and_cabinet/1014/cabinet_member_for_social_inclusion_community_safety_and_equalities) [Accessed on 10/06/2022]

recognises the social and economic contributions of migrants from over 200 countries who have made Birmingham their home.⁶¹

Several other strategies to promote equality, diversity and inclusion in particular policy areas have also been introduced in recent years. For example, the East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy, targeting some of the most deprived city areas, highlights the need to include local residents in decision making, with a particular reference to ethnic minority communities and those who were born overseas. It commits to empowering local communities by supporting people to get involved in decision making on local issues such as transport, housing, jobs and clean energy.⁶² BCC has a Digital Inclusion Strategy, recognising that many residents lack access to digital technologies or have limited capacities to use them. The strategy makes reference to diverse groups, including asylum seekers and refugees, and commits to working with partners to understand the barriers they face and their specific needs.⁶³

The Public Health strategies and objectives to enable everyone in the city to live well focus on issues such as adult social care, domestic abuse, homelessness and disability. There is a specific reference to migrant population and research evidence on the profile of migrants and the assessment of their health needs. The evidence shows that while health and wellbeing in Birmingham is generally worse compared to the rest of England, the Wards with higher ethnic minority and migrant populations have poorer health outcomes than the city as a whole.⁶⁴

The BCC-organised focus group with migrants conducted as part of the MILE project revealed that difficulties in accessing health care and dental services is of particular concern. The Council has initiated several projects to address health disparities in the city, including a pilot research study to understand health inequalities within Black African and

⁶¹ Birmingham City Council (2018) 'Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham Green Paper: Forward together to build a fair and inclusive city for everyone', Available at: [Birmingham Community Cohesion Strategy Green Paper Summary FINAL.pdf \(birminghambeheard.org.uk\)](https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/files/2018/06/Birmingham-Community-Cohesion-Strategy-Green-Paper-Summary-FINAL.pdf) [Accessed on 16/06/2022]

⁶² Birmingham City Council (2020) 'East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy', February 2020, Available at: https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/economy/ebigs/supporting_documents/East%20Birmingham%20Inclusive%20Growth%20Strategy%202020.pdf [Accessed on 22/06/2022]

⁶³ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITIES - ENABLING A DIGITAL BIRMINGHAM: a Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan for the citizens of Birmingham', November 2021, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/21162/digital_inclusion_strategy [Accessed on 22/06/2022]

⁶⁴ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Living well – working age adults', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50268/joint_strategic_needs_assessment_jsna/1337/jsna_theme_s/3 [Accessed on 22/06/2022]

Caribbean communities⁶⁵ and a specialist support to manage weight targeted at specific groups, including people of South Asian and Eastern European origin.⁶⁶

2.3.3 Consideration of intersectionality

There are various services promoted by BCC to tackle different axes of inequality across policy areas, delivered by dedicated teams within the Council or through partnerships and / or referrals to various community support organisations in the city. For example, BCC has a dedicated 'Independent Living Team' to support disabled people with physical conditions in adapting their homes and making them accessible. There is also a dedicated team to address inequalities experienced by migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the city – the 'Prevention, Communities & Migration Team' – which sits within the Adult Social Care and Health department. The team works with various organisations to deliver services more sensitive to intersectionality; for example, commissioning women's groups to provide specialist services for women refugees or working with groups that support LGBTQ refugees or those with mental health conditions. Nonetheless, much of this work is done in silos and the council must do more to address multiple disadvantages faced by people of migrant backgrounds.⁶⁷

BCC explicitly commits to adopting an intersectional approach; for example, in its Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023, it acknowledges the need to understand how people experience inequality at the intersection of social class, age, gender, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation, and recognises that its policies and services must reflect the needs of diverse communities and must be designed and delivered with intersectionality in mind. It also recognises the importance of collecting timely demographic data broken down by these multiple identities to better understand cross-cutting experiences of inequality, while highlighting a particular lack of data on LGBT+ people, Gypsy Roma Traveller communities, refugees and asylum seekers.⁶⁸ There is a dedicated 'Equalities Cohesion Team' within the council to ensure that the commitment to intersectionality is implemented. The team tackles cases of different forms of discrimination in the city and works with relevant organisations to address the specific barriers faced by people at the intersection of identities.

The Equalities Cohesion Team collaborates with both internal and external organisations, including the Prevention, Communities and Migration Team and other relevant groups

⁶⁵ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50266/other_public_health_projects/2309/birmingham_and_lewisham_african_and_caribbean_health_inequalities_review_blachir [Accessed on 22/06/2022]

⁶⁶ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Support to manage weight (Tier 2 Adult Weight Management service)', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50263/supporting_healthier_lives/2480/support_to_manage_weight_tier_2_adult_weight_management_service [Accessed on 22/06/2022]

⁶⁷ Source: Interview with the representatives of Birmingham City Council [in person], 11/08/2022.

⁶⁸ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business – together we will tackle inequalities' – Appendix 3: Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2021 – 2023, Available at: [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](Document.ashx (cmis.uk.com)) [Accessed on 10/06/2022]

supporting people with protected characteristics to ensure that intersectionality is considered and addressed in relation to transport, health, well-being and other policy areas. For example, the already mentioned BARMS directory signposts users to specific support groups, such as the 'Journey Asylum Seekers Group' for LGBT asylum seekers.

There is a dedicated team to tackle inequalities arising from migrant status. The already mentioned Prevention, Communities and Migration Team aims to raise awareness of migration, promote positive messages about migrants in the city and to deliver a range of support services. As a City of Sanctuary, the Council runs various activities, projects and initiatives to work with and support migrant communities across policy areas, including education, housing, community safety and cohesion, employment and skills, procurement, libraries and advice. Much of this involves collaboration with private, public and third sector organisations to ensure that the support for migrant communities is integrated within mainstream policies, strategies and services.⁶⁹

The BCC-organised focus group conducted with migrants as part of this project showed that besides particular concerns with access to health care, participants face difficulties in accessing language courses and the wider education system in addition to not having their qualifications and prior work experience recognised which can be a barrier to employment. There are concerns about the lack of translation services, unequal treatment between migrant groups (e.g. driving licence requirements for EU Citizens and Third Country Nationals, access to public funds), and racism linked to Brexit.

While recognising that the level of positive net migration in Birmingham has been increasing over the past decade and has created pressures on public services, including education and health, migrants are portrayed largely positively within the key policy documents of the Council. In its recent policy statement on the City of Sanctuary status, the Council highlights migrants' varied contributions to the city; for instance, as entrepreneurs and job creators in key economic sectors.⁷⁰ In several other policy documents, Birmingham is described as a city that is proud of its diversity.

⁶⁹ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement 2018 to 2022', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/14339/birmingham_city_of_sanctuary_policy_statement_2018_to_2022 [Accessed on 27/06/2022]

⁷⁰ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement 2018 to 2022', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/14339/birmingham_city_of_sanctuary_policy_statement_2018_to_2022 [Accessed on 27/06/2022]

3 THE EVOLUTION OF INCLUSIVITY OF MIGRANTS IN POLICY MAKING

3.1 Migrant inclusion in local policy making

There are several ways migrants who live and work in Birmingham can participate or be included in local policy making, directly or indirectly. Firstly, eligible migrants can vote in local elections or stand as candidates for the City Council. A recent study found that migrants and ethnic minorities are under-represented in the UK's democratic system; they are less likely than the wider population to register to vote and turn up for elections. This is particularly evident among EU migrants and Black African minorities.⁷¹ However, no comprehensive data on voting of migrants at the local level is available.

There is some evidence that the representation of ethnic minorities as councillors has improved over the years. While in the mid-1980s, there were only six councillors from minority backgrounds, the number had risen to about 25 councillors by 2009, although this was still unrepresentative of Birmingham's minority population.⁷² In 2022, a larger number of councillors are from ethnic minority backgrounds, yet this may not be entirely reflective of the diversity of migrant communities living in Birmingham.⁷³

Secondly, a core way of including migrant communities in local decision making appears to be, indirectly, through BCC's engagement and partnership activities with a network of local organisations working in the area of migration and integration, including migrant-led groups, universities, voluntary and community sector, using platforms such as the Birmingham Migration Forum. The Forum brings together representatives from migrant-led groups and others who provide support services for migrant communities to exchange knowledge, develop support and improve the representation of migrants in the design of public services and policies.

Thirdly, migrants can engage in formal consultations through online channels or in-person meetings. These platforms invite opinions of local residents on a range of issues and policies. Yet, there is no data collected to capture the extent to which migrants take part directly in consultations through 'Be Heard', Ward Forum meetings or other participation platforms. Further insights from the representative of a migrant-led organisation suggest that labour mobility is one of the key challenges of engaging migrants in local policy making. Economic migrants in particular often change jobs, and

⁷¹ Sobolewska, M. and Barclay, A. (2021) 'The Democratic Participation of Ethnic Minority and Immigrant Voters in the UK', A report funded by the UK Democracy Fund, Available at: https://www.jrrt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/The_Democratic_Participation_of_Ethnic_Minority_and_Immigrant_Voters_in_the_UK.pdf [Accessed on 22/11/2022]

⁷² Scuzzarello, S. (2010) 'Caring Multiculturalism: Local Immigrant Policies and Narratives of Integration in Malmö, Birmingham and Bologna', Lund University.

⁷³ [Councillors by Name | Birmingham City Council](#)

their place of residence, within a host country which potentially prevents them from becoming more locally embedded and engaged in local policy making.⁷⁴

There has been a progress over the past decade to include migrants in local policy making, partly due to external global events such as the Syrian refugee crisis, the Black Lives Matter movement, the Covid 19 pandemic and, most recently, the Afghan and the Ukraine refugee crises. These events coincided with various internal influences at the national and local levels; for example, the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010, the establishment of Birmingham as a City of Sanctuary, and the formation of Fairness Commissions across the UK in response to growing inequalities in society following public spending cuts since 2010.⁷⁵

The key local, national and global events over the past few decades, including relevant policies and their impact on the inclusion of migrants in local decision making are summarised in Table 2.

⁷⁴ Source: Information provided by the representative of a migrant-led organisation in Birmingham, 26/10/2022.

⁷⁵ Sillett, J. and O'Donnell, C. (2013) 'Policy Briefing: Fairness Commissions', The Local Democracy Think Tank, 13 August 2013, Available at: <https://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Fairness-Commissions.pdf> [Accessed on 30/06/2022]

Table 2 Migrant inclusion in policy making: timeline of progress in the municipality of Birmingham

When	Global event	National event	Local event	Impact
1999		Introducing the Immigration and Asylum Act. The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 sets out a dispersal policy to redistribute asylum seekers in receipt of state support around the UK. The objective is to prevent concentration in one area, the south-east of England, and to encourage local authorities across the country to house asylum seekers in their area. ⁷⁶	Establishing a strategic migration partnership. The West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership is one of twelve such partnerships across the UK, established following the introduction of the regional dispersal policy in 1999 for people seeking asylum. These local authority-led partnerships provide forums of engagement for local and national government representatives, private and third sector organisations to effectively deal with migration locally and at the regional and national level. ⁷⁷	Understanding migrants' needs and rights. Since 2007, the activities of strategic migration partnerships cover the wider impact of migration on local areas. Partnerships with third sector organisations supporting migrants enable a more direct understanding of migrants' needs. The West Midlands partnership, for example, initiated a training course for health and social care staff to understand migrants' rights and entitlements and thus improve migrants' access to services. ⁷⁸
2008	The onset of the global financial crisis. Following the global financial crisis in 2008, the UK economy plunged into	Austerity and public funding cuts. After the general election in 2010, the consecutive Coalition and		Reducing the capacity to support migrants. Spending on services by local authorities across England fell by 13 per

⁷⁶ Hirst, C. and Atto, N. (2018) 'The UK's Ailing Asylum Seeker Dispersal Policy: Where To From Here?', RESPOND, Available at: <https://respondmigration.com/blog-1/2018/10/24/the-uks-ailing-asylum-seeker-dispersal-policy-where-to-from-here> [Accessed on 18/11/2022]

⁷⁷ [About us \(wmsmp.org.uk\)](http://About us (wmsmp.org.uk))

⁷⁸ Social Care Institute for Excellence (2015) 'Good practice in social care for refugees and asylum seekers', Available at: <https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide37-good-practice-in-social-care-with-refugees-and-asylum-seekers/practiceexamples.asp> [Accessed on 18/11/2022]

	the deepest recession since WW2, with record high levels of government deficit and public debt. The economic growth has been persistently slow in the years after, compared with the pre-crisis levels. ⁷⁹	Conservative UK governments introduce extensive austerity measures during the period of 2010-2019, including cuts to local authority funding, with an aim to reduce public debt. ⁸⁰		cent between 2009/10 and 2018/19. ⁸¹ Birmingham City Council made cuts totalling £730 million to many vital services, including those supporting most vulnerable groups. ⁸² These funding cuts have had direct impact on the Council's capacity to successfully welcome, resettle and integrate migrants. ⁸³
2010		Introducing the Equality Act. The Equality Act 2010 replaces previous anti-discrimination laws and introduces more accountability of public organisations, including local authorities, under the public sector Equality Duty. ⁸⁴		Devising equality objectives. Public sector bodies like Birmingham City Council are required to devise equality objectives every four years and to publish information every year to show how they eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance

⁷⁹ Cribb, J. and Johnson, P. (2018) '10 years on - have we recovered from the financial crisis?', The Institute for Fiscal Studies, 12 September 2018, Available at: <https://ifs.org.uk/articles/10-years-have-we-recovered-financial-crisis> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

⁸⁰ Johns, M. (2020) '10 YEARS OF AUSTERITY Eroding resilience in the North', Institute for Public Policy Research, June 2020, Available at: <https://www.ippr.org/files/2020-06/10-years-of-austerity.pdf> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

⁸¹ Johns, M. (2020) '10 YEARS OF AUSTERITY Eroding resilience in the North', Institute for Public Policy Research, June 2020, Available at: <https://www.ippr.org/files/2020-06/10-years-of-austerity.pdf> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

⁸² Hanyes, J. (2020) 'The impact of 10 years of austerity in Birmingham – the poorest women die younger and children suffer', Birmingham Mail, 2 March 2020, Available at: <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/impact-10-years-austerity-birmingham-17844054> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

⁸³ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement 2018 to 2022', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/14339/birmingham_city_of_sanctuary_policy_statement_2018_to_2022 [Accessed on 27/06/2022]

⁸⁴ Government Equalities Office (2011) 'EQUALITY ACT 2010: The public sector Equality Duty: reducing bureaucracy', Policy review paper, March 2011, Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85059/policy-review.pdf [Accessed on 05/08/2022]

				equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and others. The Council first published its equality objectives in 2012. ⁸⁵
2011	The onset of the Syrian civil war. The civil war in Syria is an ongoing conflict, started in 2011 as an uprising against President Bashar al-Assad, with large numbers of casualties and refugees fleeing the country. ⁸⁶			Responding to the refugee crisis. The Syrian Refugee Crisis is the largest refugee crisis in history. More than 6.8 million Syrians have been forced to flee Syria between 2011-2022. ⁸⁷ The UK Government's initial response was to provide humanitarian aid rather than accepting Syrians fleeing war. In 2014, the Government establishes the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme facilitating the arrival of some Syrians to the UK. ⁸⁸
2012		'Hostile environment' immigration policies. The UK		Restricting migrants' access to services. The 'hostile

⁸⁵ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Public Sector Equality Duties', Available at:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20218/equality_and_diversity/505/equality_legislation/2 [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

⁸⁶ Loft, P., Sturge, G. and Kirk-Wade, E. (2022) 'The Syrian civil war: Timeline and statistics', Research Briefing, House of Commons Library, UK Parliament, 6 September 2022, Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9381/> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

⁸⁷ UNHCR (2022) 'Syria Refugee Crisis Explained', The UN Refugee Agency, 8 July 2022, Available at: <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

⁸⁸ UK Parliament (2017) 'The UK response to the Syrian refugee crisis', House of Commons Library, Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06805/> [Accessed on 08/11/2022]

		Government introduces what became known as 'hostile environment' immigration policies, tasking organisations and institutions across sectors to conduct checks of immigration status. ⁸⁹		environment' policies have restricted access to basic services, such as healthcare, for undocumented migrants. This has been described as a wave of attacks on human rights ⁹⁰ and is believed to have resulted in high costs, including impact on public purse, health, safety and security. ⁹¹
2012			Making Birmingham an inclusive city. Birmingham City Council had set up a social inclusion consultation process entitled 'Giving Hope Changing Lives' which coincided with the formation of 'Fairness Commissions' in several UK cities in response to local authority funding cuts and the impact of austerity on local communities. This consultation led to the publication of 'Making Birmingham an	Birmingham commits to inclusivity and empowerment. The 'Making Birmingham an Inclusive City' policy paper sets out several commitments to social inclusion, among them, to tackle poverty, embrace 'superdiversity', protect the most vulnerable, connect people and places, and empower people to shape their neighbourhood. ⁹³

⁸⁹ Griffiths, M. and Yeo, C. (2021) 'The UK's hostile environment: Deputising immigration control', *Critical Social Policy* 41(4): 521–544.

⁹⁰ Liberty (2022) 'Hostile Environment', Liberty, Available at: <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/fundamental/hostile-environment/#:~:text=Under%20the%20hostile%20environment%2C%20employers,housing%2C%20healthcare%20or%20other%20support>. [Accessed on 28/10/2022]

⁹¹ Griffiths, M. and Yeo, C. (2021) 'The UK's hostile environment: Deputising immigration control', *Critical Social Policy* 41(4): 521–544.

⁹³ Birmingham City Council (2013) 'Making Birmingham an inclusive city', White Paper, March 2013, Available at: <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/12300433/making-birmingham-an-inclusive-city> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

			Inclusive City' policy paper with several commitments and recommendations for key agencies. ⁹²	
2014		Launching the UK's refugee resettlement scheme. The UK Government launches the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in 2014 to help people in greatest need. ⁹⁴		Expanding commitment to refugee resettlement. The UK's Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme was expanded in 2015 with a commitment to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees in need of protection by 2020, making it the largest resettlement scheme in Europe. ⁹⁵
2015		Civil society pressure to resettle refugees. Public support and grassroots pressure from civil society organisations to resettle Syrian refugees in the UK played a key role in securing support from local authorities. ⁹⁶ Local		Local pledges to accommodate refugees. Local authorities around the UK have pledged to accommodate 22,000 Syrian refugees. Many local authorities increased their pledges following campaigns

⁹² Sillett, J. and O'Donnell, C. (2013) 'Policy Briefing: Fairness Commissions', The Local Democracy Think Tank, 13 August 2013, Available at: <https://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Fairness-Commissions.pdf> [Accessed on 30/06/2022]

⁹⁴ UK Visas and Immigration (2021) 'Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Schemes Factsheet', March 2021, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-resettlement-schemes-factsheet-march-2021/vulnerable-persons-and-vulnerable-childrens-resettlement-schemes-factsheet-march-2021> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

⁹⁵ UK Visas and Immigration (2021) 'Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Schemes Factsheet', March 2021, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-resettlement-schemes-factsheet-march-2021/vulnerable-persons-and-vulnerable-childrens-resettlement-schemes-factsheet-march-2021> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

⁹⁶ Lyons, K. (2017) 'We want more Syrian refugees: council offers exceed official UK pledge of 20,000', The Guardian, 9 March, 2017, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/09/we-want-more-syrian-refugees-offers-exceed-official-uk-pledge-of-20000?page=with:img-3> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

		authority participation in the resettlement scheme is voluntary.		from local charities and citizens' groups. ⁹⁷
2015			Birmingham declared 'City of Sanctuary' . Birmingham becomes a 'City of Sanctuary' – a part of a UK wide network of community groups, education institutions, local councils, libraries and theatres committed to being inclusive and welcoming people who seek sanctuary. The event coincided with the grassroots movement and pressure from public and civil society organisations on central and local governments to support resettlement of Syrian refugees. ⁹⁸	Welcoming and integrating migrants. Birmingham City Council commits to welcoming 550 Syrian refugees into the city as part of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. ⁹⁹ Between 2015 and 2020, Birmingham welcomed 516 refugees and new pledges were made in 2020 and 2021. ¹⁰⁰ The Council creates the Birmingham Migration Forum in 2017 to strengthen its collaboration with relevant organisations on migration and integration issues. In 2019, the Council joins 'Inclusive Cities Programme' which facilitates

⁹⁷ Lyons, K. (2017) 'We want more Syrian refugees: council offers exceed official UK pledge of 20,000', The Guardian, 9 March, 2017, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/09/we-want-more-syrian-refugees-offers-exceed-official-uk-pledge-of-20000?page=with:img-3> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

⁹⁸ Birmingham City of Sanctuary (2022) 'Birmingham Welcomes', Available at: <https://birmingham.cityofsanctuary.org/birmingham-welcomes#:~:text=In%202015%2C%20Birmingham%20declared%20itself,people%20fleeing%20violence%20and%20persecution.> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

⁹⁹ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and UK Resettlement Scheme', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50227/city_of_sanctuary/2513/resettlement_in_birmingham/2 [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

¹⁰⁰ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement 2018-22 – Update on Progress', 10 September 2021, Available at: [Microsoft Word - Progress update Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement v0.8 \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50227/city_of_sanctuary/2513/resettlement_in_birmingham/2) [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

				peer learning on the integration of newcomers. ¹⁰¹
2016		<p>European Union membership referendum. The referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union took place on 23 June 2016 to decide if the country should remain a member or leave. The majority of the UK's population (52%) voted to leave the EU, what became known as 'Brexit'.¹⁰²</p>		<p>Considering migrants' rights after 'Brexit'. A few years after the Brexit vote, Birmingham City Council decides to extend its City of Sanctuary commitments in 2019 to include all migrants, recognising the potential impact of Brexit on the status of migrants living and working in Birmingham.¹⁰³</p>
2017			<p>Birmingham introduces inclusive growth strategy. The City Council introduces 'East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy' to pioneer a new partnership working approach that would bring together public sector organisations, businesses and the local community to deliver inclusive growth and reduce</p>	<p>Including migrants in decision-making on growth. The East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy recognises ethnic diversity of local communities, with many people speaking different languages other than English. The Council wants to support and empower these communities to get involved in</p>

¹⁰¹ Birmingham City Council (2020) 'Birmingham City Council: Report to Cabinet', 8 September 2020, Available at: https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/economy/tackling-inequalities-everyones-battle/supporting_documents/Everyones%20Battle%20Everyones%20Business%20%20tackling%20Inequality%20Cabinet%20Report%20final%20PDF.pdf [Accessed on 16/06/2022]

¹⁰² The Electoral Commission (2016) 'The 2016 EU referendum: Report on the 23 June 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union', September 2016, Available at: https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_file/2016-EU-referendum-report.pdf [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

¹⁰³ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Introduction: City of Sanctuary', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50227/city_of_sanctuary/2011/city_of_sanctuary [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

			inequalities in some of the most deprived city areas. ¹⁰⁴	decision-making and work together as equal partners, using tools such as Local Economic Development Plans and enhanced Ward Plans.
2017			<p>Creating a forum on migrant integration. The Birmingham Migration Forum was created in 2017, bringing together relevant organisations from across sectors, to collaborate on issues concerning integration and well-being of migrants. The key aim of the Forum, chaired by Birmingham City Council, is to share information about services and to ensure that migration-related issues are considered in the development of citywide policies and strategies.¹⁰⁵</p>	<p>Facilitating migrant inclusion in decision-making. The Birmingham Migration Forum facilitates the inclusion of migrant communities in decision-making by providing a platform for migrant-led organisations to share information and to influence policy development during quarterly meetings. The coordinator sends out regular emails to inform organisations about policies, services and opportunities to participate in the city. An online directory of migrant support organisations and groups, BARMS, was created as a result of a consultation with organisations that attend the Forum.¹⁰⁶</p>

¹⁰⁴ Birmingham City Council (2020) 'East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy', February 2020, Available at: https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/economy/ebigs/supporting_documents/East%20Birmingham%20Inclusive%20Growth%20Strategy%202020.pdf [Accessed on 22/06/2022]

¹⁰⁵ Birmingham City Council (2017) 'Birmingham Migration Forum: Terms of Reference', December 2017, Available at: [Microsoft Word - 2a17f887-6a71-4346-9a8a-4e554f1bd6d4.docx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/economy/ebigs/supporting_documents/Microsoft%20Word%20-%202a17f887-6a71-4346-9a8a-4e554f1bd6d4.docx) [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

¹⁰⁶ BARMS (2022) 'Birmingham Asylum Refugee and Migrant Support', Available at: <https://barms.org.uk/> [Accessed on 27/06/2022]

2018			<p>Birmingham introduces community cohesion strategy. Birmingham City Council publishes 'Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham' with an aim to make Birmingham a fair and inclusive city. The strategy makes explicit reference to Birmingham as a City of Sanctuary with commitments to welcoming people who seek refuge and asylum.¹⁰⁷</p>	<p>Creating places of welcome for migrants. The Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham recognises the social and economic contributions of migrants. Birmingham is highlighted as a welcoming city that participates in the 'Places of Welcome' network – a scheme run by local community groups to create a place in local neighbourhoods where anyone is welcome to meet and participate. There are over 50 such places in the city.</p>
2019			<p>Birmingham commits to welcoming migrants. Birmingham City Council publishes 'Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement 2018 to 2022'.¹⁰⁸ The previous City of Sanctuary commitments referred to asylum seekers and refugees only. Since 2019, in response to Brexit, the Council</p>	<p>Including migrants in decision making. Birmingham City Council commits to working with key stakeholders to ensure that migrants have a voice and are able to shape local policy. The council continues to host Birmingham Migration Forum which provides a channel for a two-way communication between</p>

¹⁰⁷ Birmingham City Council (2018) 'Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham Green Paper: Forward together to build a fair and inclusive city for everyone', Available at: [Birmingham Community Cohesion Strategy Green Paper Summary FINAL.pdf \(birminghambeheard.org.uk\)](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50227/community_cohesion_strategy/2018/community_cohesion_strategy_green_paper_summary_final) [Accessed on 16/06/2022]

¹⁰⁸ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Introduction: City of Sanctuary', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50227/city_of_sanctuary/2011/city_of_sanctuary [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

			extends this commitment to include all migrants.	representatives of migrant organisations and the council. The forum enables migrants to shape local policy. For example, a new BARMS website was created in 2020 to provide an online directory of organisations supporting migrants in the city. The Council also continued to participate in various projects aligned to the City of Sanctuary. ¹⁰⁹
2019			Birmingham values diverse voices. Birmingham City Council publishes 'Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods' policy paper. This policy recognises the value of different types of neighbourhood organisations representing diverse communities, including migrants, and the need to increase their voice and influence in decision-making through collaborative working to address local concerns. ¹¹⁰	Enabling residents to set agendas. The policy introduces 'Ward Forums' to increase decision making powers of local residents who often lead the meetings and can suggest agenda items and set priorities. To be more inclusive, meetings are being held in new venues and at different times to allow more people to attend.

¹⁰⁹ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement 2018-22 – Update on Progress', 10 September 2021, Available at: [Microsoft Word - Progress update Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement_v0.8 \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11839/working_together_in_birminghams_neighbourhoods_white_paper) [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

¹¹⁰ Birmingham City Council (2019) 'Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods: Policy Statement (White Paper)', January 2019, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11839/working_together_in_birminghams_neighbourhoods_white_paper [Accessed on 20/06/2022]

2019			<p>Birmingham outlines new equality objectives. Birmingham City Council sets out five Equality Objectives for 2019-2023, under the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty, to tackle inequalities in the city. Understanding and engaging diverse communities in local decision-making is one of the key objectives.¹¹¹</p>	<p>Strengthening participation of diverse communities. There is some evidence that the equality objectives of the Birmingham City Council are adhered to regarding the involvement of diverse communities in decision making. For example, the Equality Impact Assessment of 'East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy' shows that the Council used outreach activities, such as meetings with migrant-led organisations, to increase the representation of migrant and ethnic minority groups in its consultation.¹¹²</p>
2019	<p>Global outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is a global outbreak of coronavirus – an infectious disease. First detected in China in late 2019, the virus spread quickly across the world. The World Health Organisation</p>			<p>COVID-19 disproportionately affecting ethnic minorities. In the UK, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on ethnic minority communities who experienced higher COVID-19 incidence, morbidity</p>

¹¹¹ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Equality Objectives 2019 – 2013: Public Sector Equality Duty', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20218/equality_and_diversity/646/equality_objectives [Accessed on 18/11/2022]

¹¹² Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Equality Impact Assessment - EQUA619 - East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy', 6 January 2022, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/19115/equality_impact_assessment_-_equa619_-_east_birmingham_inclusive_growth_strategy [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

	declared it a public health emergency in 2020. ¹¹³			and mortality, raising concerns about structural racism. ¹¹⁴
2020	Global Black Lives Matter protests. Motivated by the killing of George Floyd by police in the United States, people around the world took part in Black Lives Matter protests in solidarity with demonstrators in the States. ¹¹⁵			Thousands join Birmingham protests. Thousands of people take part in protests in Birmingham in response to the death of George Floyd in the United States. Birmingham City Council supports the demonstration. ¹¹⁶
2021			Birmingham publishes equality strategy. Birmingham City Council publishes 'Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business' equality strategy in response to inequalities exposed through Black Lives Matter movement and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy builds on the Council's equality	Citizens' voice central to decision-making. The equality strategy highlights commitment to tackling poverty and inequality while putting citizens' voice at the heart of decision-making, especially those who have traditionally struggled to be heard. This would be achieved by establishing a Citizens Assembly or similar body. As an employer, BCC commits to

¹¹³ World Health Organisation (2022) 'Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic: Overview', Available at: <https://www.who.int/europe/emergencies/situations/covid-19> [Accessed on 22/11/2022]

¹¹⁴ Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (2020) 'Research and analysis: Drivers of the higher COVID-19 incidence, morbidity and mortality among minority ethnic groups', UK Government, 23 September 2020, Available at: [Drivers of the higher COVID-19 incidence, morbidity and mortality among minority ethnic groups, 23 September 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/532082/20200923_sage_research_and_analysis_drivers_of_the_higher_covid-19_incidence_morbidity_and_mortality_among_minority_ethnic_groups.pdf) [Accessed on 08/11/2022]

¹¹⁵ McCurry, J. (2022) 'George Floyd: protests take place in cities around the world', The Guardian, 1 June 2020, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/01/george-floyd-protests-take-place-in-cities-around-the-world> [Accessed on 22/11/2022]

¹¹⁶ BBC (2020) 'George Floyd death: Thousands join Birmingham protest', 4 June 2020, Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-52920826> [Accessed on 22/11/2022]

			objectives and the community cohesion strategy. ¹¹⁷	taking positive action to advance ethnic minority representation at senior level to drive the best outcomes for local communities.
2021			Birmingham publishes digital inclusion strategy. Birmingham City Council publishes its digital inclusion strategy and action plan to tackle barriers to digital inclusion in the city. While progress has been made in recent years, digital exclusion still remains a challenge. ¹¹⁸	Understanding and supporting digitally excluded. BCC is committed to working with partners to understand those most at risk of digital exclusion and the barriers they face in being digitally included, with specific reference to asylum seekers, refugees and people with disabilities. The council has undertaken work around improving internet connectivity and developing digital skills and access to digital devices and support.
2022		Introducing the Nationality and Borders Act. The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 introduces changes to the UK's asylum system. It is believed to have created two		Criticising the new plan for immigration. The Nationality and Borders Bill was widely opposed by organisations from across sectors, including Birmingham City Council and

¹¹⁷ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business – together we will tackle inequalities' – Appendix 3: Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2021 – 2023, Available at: [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/21162/digital_inclusion_strategy) [Accessed on 10/06/2022]

¹¹⁸ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITIES - ENABLING A DIGITAL BIRMINGHAM: a Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan for the citizens of Birmingham', November 2021, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/21162/digital_inclusion_strategy [Accessed on 22/06/2022]

		<p>tiers of asylum seekers and to criminalise those who arrive through irregular means. The Act makes provisions under the UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership for deportation of asylum seekers whose claims are inadmissible.¹¹⁹</p>		<p>refugee support groups, before it became an Act of Parliament. The Bill was described as 'anti-refugee' and criticised by numerous organisations in the West Midlands region.¹²⁰</p>
--	--	--	--	--

¹¹⁹ The Law Society (2022) 'Nationality and Borders Act and Rwanda asylum partnership', 26 August 2022, Available at:

<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/immigration/nationality-and-borders-act-and-rwanda-asylum-partnership> [Accessed on 22/11/2022]

¹²⁰ Central England Law Centre (2022) 'Central England Law Centre joins organisations across the West Midlands in opposing Nationality & Borders Bill', 15 February 2022, Available at: <https://www.centralenglandlc.org.uk/news/central-england-law-centre-joins-organisations-across-the-west-midlands-in-opposing-nationality-borders-bill> [Accessed on 22/11/2022]

3.2 Best practice of migrant inclusion in policy making

This section presents three examples of best practice initiatives undertaken in the municipality of Birmingham to engage with migrant communities and to include them in local policy making. The three selected cases presented in boxes 1-3 introduce innovative ways to facilitate engagement and civic participation of migrants.

First, the Business Leaders Project (BLP) (Box 1) is an example of an inclusive business support initiative, developed from the ground up and in partnership with organisations from across sectors, to support marginalised groups of migrant entrepreneurs in the city while, at the same time, building their leadership capacity to actively engage in local decision making on enterprise policy and business support.

Second, the Birmingham Migration Forum (Box 2) is an example of a local authority led initiative to bring together relevant organisations from across sectors that provide support services to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, including many migrant-led organisations, with the aim to raise awareness, share knowledge and enable migrant organisation representatives to shape local policies.

The final example is the recently created role of the Refugees and Migration Engagement Officer (Box 3) within the Birmingham City Council to raise awareness internally and externally about migrants and migration-related issues and to work with relevant stakeholders to promote support and services to migrant communities.

Box 1 Business Leaders Project, Birmingham

Target group

Entrepreneurs and business owners from ethnic minority and migrant backgrounds.

Objectives

Business Leaders Project (BLP) started in 2016 with an aim to make business support in Birmingham more inclusive and appropriate to entrepreneurs and business owners from ethnic minority and migrant backgrounds, many of whom operate in some of the most deprived areas of the city. Besides delivering a tailored programme of business support, a key objective of the BLP was to empower business owners to become more active citizens and 'business leaders' who can voice their concerns and negotiate with power holders on the issues that affect them. The lack of appropriate business support was a key concern among participants who have largely been excluded from the mainstream business support provision in the city.

Key features

The key innovative feature of BLP is the use of 'community organising' methods to: (1) better engage business owners with mainstream support providers; and (2) build business owners' leadership capacity so that they can influence local decision makers on the kind of business support they would like to see in their communities. The project started as a partnership of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship at Aston University, NatWest Bank, Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership¹²¹, and Citizens UK (CUK) – a civil society organisation that teaches community organising. Community organising practice differs from traditional ways of public engagement in policy making which often takes the form of asking the public to respond to a government consultation document or to attend public events. In the case of BLP, a dedicated community organiser was employed to reach out to and establish rapport and long-term trust-based relationships with business owners, using tools such as listening campaigns, one-to-one meetings and neighbourhood walks, as a basis for further and continuous engagement.

Results achieved

The business owners who took part in the BLP benefited from a tailored programme of business support as well as receiving community organising training to develop their leadership skills. This has enabled them to campaign in direct encounters with local policy makers for better business support, with the help of CUK Birmingham which has made this agenda one of their key priorities. CUK organise regular 'Assemblies' to present their priorities to local policy makers and political candidates. 'Community leaders' chair these assembly events. Over a 4-year period (2016-19), BLP reached out to over 219 migrant micro-enterprises across Birmingham, 95 percent of which had no previous experience of mainstream business support. This capacity building also safeguarded over 200 jobs. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, CUK Birmingham

¹²¹ BCC is a key partner within this local enterprise partnership, involving business, public sector and education leaders collaborating to develop the local economy.

continued to provide support to enterprises using community organising despite various challenges posed by the pandemic. It was able to bring business owners in contact with local decision makers to receive bespoke support and information on government funding.¹²²

Box 2 Birmingham Migration Forum

Target group

Asylum seekers, refugees and migrant communities in Birmingham.

Objectives

Birmingham Migration Forum (BMF)¹²³ was set up in 2017 to provide a platform for key stakeholders from across sectors to discuss and collaborate on shared concerns and opportunities in relation to the integration and well-being of economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Birmingham. The Forum brings together organisations from public, private and voluntary and community sectors to ensure that: (1) agencies have access to information about existing services, projects and support available for migrant communities; (2) migration-related issues are given consideration in developing local policies and strategies; (3) there is a coherent and joined up multi-agency approach in supporting migrant communities; and (4) stakeholders develop a shared view and consensus on new policies and initiatives.

Key features

BMF meets quarterly and is usually chaired by representatives from Birmingham City Council. The meetings provide an opportunity for stakeholders to learn about any upcoming or emerging issues, opportunities, services or projects. Some of the key themes discussed within the Forum are: (1) Basic rights and needs – for example, legal representation, financial inclusion, housing and access to social security; (2) Safety and security – including crime and community safety, employment, health and well-being; (3) Involvement and inclusion – for instance, community cohesion, communication, networks, integration, engagement and coproduction; (4) Esteem and recognition – covering areas such as education, job skills and qualifications, arts and culture, sport; (5) Aspiration and ambition – including professional and personal development; and (6) System – that is, data, information and intelligence. The participant organisations are invited to share their expertise and insight to influence emerging policies,

¹²² Mascarenhas-Keyes, S. and Arriaga-Garcia, J. G. (2021) 'Community Organising for Inclusive Industrial Policy: A case study of Citizens UK Birmingham and migrant micro-enterprises', June 2021, A report from Nesta's Everyone Makes Innovation Policy programme, Available at: https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Birmingham_Evaluation_Report.pdf [Accessed on 05/08/2022]

¹²³ Birmingham City Council (2017) 'Birmingham Migration Forum: Terms of Reference', December 2017, Available at: [Microsoft Word - 2a17f887-6a71-4346-9a8a-4e554f1bd6d4.docx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://www.cmis.uk.com/MS-Word-2a17f887-6a71-4346-9a8a-4e554f1bd6d4.docx) [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

strategies and initiatives, and to agree on partnership action needed on particular issues or opportunities. The Forum is open to all stakeholders who work with migrant communities in the city or have interest in migration-related issues. In 2022, there were nearly 300 named contacts on the BMF forum, however a core 30-40 people representing different organisations, including migrant-led groups, usually attend the meetings.

Results achieved

Regular fortnightly mailings introduced during the lockdown of 2020 ensured that all migrant organisations were kept in the loop and fully informed about strategies, policies, and services relevant to the pandemic. One being the formation of community health champions where BCC's public health service trained volunteers to work in their communities to raise awareness about the disease, symptoms, treatments and vaccinations. A more specific example of how BMF facilitates the inclusion of migrants in local decision making is the creation of the BARMS, an online directory of migrant support organisations and groups.¹²⁴ This resource was created by BCC in collaboration with Common Unity as a direct result of consultation with the sector and in response to the needs of BMF partner organisations requesting a directory of migrant support services.

Box 3 Refugees and Migration Engagement Officer, Birmingham

Target group

Asylum seekers, refugees and migrant communities in Birmingham.

Objectives

The role of the 'Refugees and Migration Engagement Officer' based at Birmingham City Council was created in 2020 with a key objective to promote opportunities in Birmingham to migrant communities and to increase their participation and access to services. Another important function of the role is to work closely with the City of Sanctuary group and promote the ethos and aims of the grass roots movement both within the council and externally.

Key features

The Officer sits within the 'Prevention, Communities & Migration Team' which forms a part of the Adult Social Care and Health department. The engagement / outreach work involves, for example, sending out regular mailouts to relevant stakeholders, including migrant-led organisations that work with the Council and participate in the

¹²⁴ BARMS (2022) 'Birmingham Asylum Refugee and Migrant Support', Available at: <https://barms.org.uk/> [Accessed on 27/06/2022]

Birmingham Migration Forum, about opportunities for migrant communities. The organisations can share this information with migrants who are their members or are part of their network. The Officer fulfils an important coordination function, both internally within the Council and externally; for example, by raising awareness of migration issues and events such as Refugee Week and Migrant Festival among staff and promoting and supporting participation of migrants across different policy areas and departments of the Council. The Officer liaises with migrant-led organisations, council staff and service providers, and other relevant organisations and agencies in the city, including universities, museums and parks.

Results achieved

Communications and engagement: BCC regularly celebrates important international days in migration sector such as International Migration Day and World Hijab Day, using BCC corporate communications and social media platforms. Intranet and Yammer are regularly used to raise awareness about migration, refugee, and asylum issues, movements, and campaigns within BCC. Building on the successes of Refugee Week 2020 and 2021, and the developed network with community groups, resulted in awarding a community organisation a grant to deliver Refugee Week 2022, involving a series of community-based events bringing together disparate groups and a large celebration showcasing Birmingham's diversity and unity through music, dance and song. The Officer importantly managed to involve wider council in celebrating Refugee Week. She also supported Central and Eastern European community groups to communicate and celebrate culture through establishing links with relevant BCC departments, revised the content for the City of Sanctuary BCC web pages informing about the work of the Refugee and Migration Team, and supported the production of the information on BCC website for the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme.

City of Sanctuary movement support: The Officer supported the expansion of the City of Sanctuary streams, especially university stream. She is a member of the refugee hub at the University of Birmingham and supported its application for sanctuary accreditation as well as engaging in meetings with Aston University and Birmingham City University about sanctuary status. The Officer developed a relationship with Repertory theatre to become accredited. She also developed a relationship with the Library of Birmingham and supported them to carry out activities – for example, lighting up the library on various relevant dates such as 70th anniversary of the Refugee Convention. Additionally, the Officer maintained position on the Local Authority City of Sanctuary steering group and wrote the application for Local Authority City of Sanctuary award.

Embedding and learning of City of Sanctuary vision: The Officer worked with the BCC culture team in the commissioning process of the cultural arts visit to Birmingham by Little Amal, supported the choice of location for the visit of little Amal, and ensured the participation of the relevant migrant community groups as well as taking part in consultation meetings with the commissioned Arts organisation. She produced an awareness raising training module about refugees, asylum seekers and City of Sanctuary for the iLearn (BCC training website which is available to all staff) and negotiated the inclusion of City of Sanctuary in the mandatory 'Introduction to BCC'

training module for new staff. Moreover, the Officer supported the participation and inclusion of migrant groups in the Commonwealth games celebrations. Finally, she also liaised with the Be Active management to ensure that BCC leisure centres and their staff are aware and supportive of asylum seekers and newly arrived refugees' entitlement to the scheme.¹²⁵

4 ENGAGEMENT OF MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN POLICY MAKING

4.1 City strategy for local participation

4.1.1 Does the city have an explicitly written strategy to promote participation by residents in public decision making irrespective of their nationality / background?

Ensuring participation of local residents in decision making is embedded within the existing governance structure of BCC. The 'Overview and Scrutiny Committees' exist to ensure that the voice of local citizens is heard while the 'Ward Forums' were created to provide a platform for public participation and representation at a local level.¹²⁶ Despite this, an independent review into the governance of BCC carried out in 2014 identified a need for more powerful community engagement to shape how local services are delivered.¹²⁷

The city does not have an explicitly written strategy to promote participation by residents in public decision making across policy spheres. However, an explicit commitment to promote participation by residents in policy making, irrespective of nationality or background, is articulated in several policy documents. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010, BCC has set out five specific Equality Objectives for 2019 – 2023 to ensure that equality is embedded across its policies and services. One of these objectives is to ensure that diverse communities are involved, enabled to play an active role in civic society, and that their voice is at the heart of decision making. To achieve this, BCC has committed to promote and regularly review civic participation in its decision-making processes.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Source: Information provided by the Birmingham City Council representative, December 2022.

¹²⁶ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Birmingham City Council Constitution', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/13653/part_a_constitution [Accessed on 07/06/2022]

¹²⁷ Kerlake, B. (2014) 'The way forward: an independent review of the governance and organisational capabilities of Birmingham City Council', Available at: http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2014-1590/The_way_forward_-_an_independent_review_of_Birmingham_City_Council.pdf [Accessed on 10/06/2022]

¹²⁸ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Equality Objectives 2019 – 2023', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20218/equality_and_diversity/646/equality_objectives#:~:text=Eli%20discrimination%2C%20harassment%2C%20victimisation%20and,who%20do%20not%20share%20it. [Accessed on 20/06/2022]

The Equality Strategy and Action Plan for 2021-2023 highlights the importance of involving diverse voices, including those of migrants, in decision making to tackle inequalities in Birmingham. This is underpinned by two specific principles: (1) Actively listening to the voices of lived experience; and (2) Understanding the diverse range of views and perspectives of citizens and ensuring solutions are based on the widest available evidence.¹²⁹ Moreover, a commitment to enable migrants to participate in local neighbourhoods as active citizens is articulated in the City of Sanctuary Policy Statement for 2018-22.¹³⁰

Additionally, the council's vision for 'localism' in Birmingham recognises the need to transfer power and decision making to local neighbourhoods because of the diversity and the varied needs of local communities. In its 'Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods' policy statement, BCC sets out a vision for this bottom-up approach and a commitment to listen and involve local communities in policy making and service delivery. The paper sets out three key principles underpinning this vision: (1) We recognise the value of all the different types of neighbourhood organisation, which all have different strengths. The diversity of such groups is a great asset to the city; (2) Local residents need to be able to develop their own ways of getting involved in their local area; and (3) The democracy of the city needs strong participation as well as elected representation.¹³¹ Although the policy does not make an explicit reference to migrant communities, it does recognise the diversity of local neighbourhoods.

The commitment to include *all* residents in decision making can also be seen in more specific policy areas, such as environmental / sustainability concerns. For example, as part of the Future Parks Accelerator Programme which aims to enhance and secure the future of the UK's green spaces, BCC intends to create a platform to enable local residents to have their voices heard on this agenda and to increase environmental justice. It is recognised that people living in some of the most deprived areas of Birmingham, many of whom are from migrant communities, have less access to green spaces and poorer health, wellbeing and educational outcomes.¹³²

Considering citizen participation in local decision making, the BCC-organised focus group with migrants conducted as part of this project revealed a number of challenges in

¹²⁹ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business – together we will tackle inequalities' – Appendix 3: Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2021 – 2023, May 2021, Available at: [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#) [Accessed on 10/06/2022]

¹³⁰ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement 2018 to 2022', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/14339/birmingham_city_of_sanctuary_policy_statement_2018_to_2022 [Accessed on 27/06/2022]

¹³¹ Birmingham City Council (2019) 'Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods: Policy Statement (White Paper)', January 2019, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11839/working_together_in_birmingham_neighbourhoods_white_paper [Accessed on 20/06/2022]

¹³² Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Future Parks Accelerator', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50266/other_public_health_projects/2408/future_parks_accelerator [Accessed on 20/06/2022]

meeting the commitments set out above. There was a lack of awareness among participants regarding responsibilities of central and local governments, and about their voting rights. The participants stated that there was a lack of information about the powers of their local authority and, more generally, a lack of knowledge, trust and interest amongst communities in anything political. There were also concerns about the unequal treatment of people arriving in the UK by the Government and Home Office. Some participants would like the Council to provide advocacy in expressing these concerns to the Government.

4.1.2 Does the strategy commit to (1) making this a two-way process of communication; (2) responding to the voice of residents; and (3) giving voice to informal participatory action as well as formal processes such as consultations.

The Equality Strategy and Action Plan emphasises the importance of listening to diverse voices of local residents as well as responding to them by ensuring that solutions are based on the widest available evidence. In developing this Action Plan, the Council held extensive public consultations with residents, despite two national lockdowns. Over 4,000 people shared their views during the consultation period through a range of formal and less formal channels, including virtual engagement sessions, an online survey, community radio phone-ins, a social media campaign, listening sessions with staff, and written feedback. Additionally, the Plan is described as ‘living document’, recognising the need for the Council to be responsive to the ever-changing circumstances.¹³³

4.1.3 Does the strategy adopt an intersectional approach seeking to tackle multiple axes of inequality simultaneously to promote local participation? Are some axes of inequality considered as principal?

The Equality Strategy and Action Plan adopts an intersectional approach to tackling multiple axes of inequality simultaneously in order to promote local participation. This is articulated in the plan as follows: “We will take an intersectional approach to understand how people experience inequality according to their social class, age, gender, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation. This means looking at the multiple disadvantages faced by different groups of people and using the latest data and research to underpin policy development and service design.” (page 7).¹³⁴

However, insights from the representative of a migrant-led organisation in Birmingham suggest that the equalities policy in the UK has not yet caught up with the ‘superdiversity’

¹³³ Birmingham City Council (2021) ‘Everyone’s Battle Everyone’s Business – together we will tackle inequalities’ – Appendix 3: Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2021 – 2023, May 2021, Available at: [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com/Document.ashx) [Accessed on 10/06/2022]

¹³⁴ Birmingham City Council (2021) ‘Everyone’s Battle Everyone’s Business – together we will tackle inequalities’ – Appendix 3: Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2021 – 2023, May 2021, Available at: [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com/Document.ashx) [Accessed on 10/06/2022]

of migrant communities nor has it given enough consideration to the intersectional nature of their experiences and needs.¹³⁵

4.1.4 *Is the intersectional approach to local participation adopted across different policy spheres?*

The commitment to internationality set out in the Equality Strategy and Action Plan makes reference to different 'teams' of the Council: "...sharing data between council teams and other public sector organisations will build an in-depth understanding of the cross-cutting experiences of inequalities" (page 22). This suggests that an intersectional approach across different policy spheres is encouraged. The Community Cohesion strategy highlights the multiple challenges in creating a more cohesive community, linked to gender inequality, mental health issues, economic deprivation, lack of employment opportunities and communication barriers.¹³⁶ However, a more robust understanding of practices across different policy spheres and departments at BCC would require a more in-depth analysis.

4.1.5 *Does the city have any existing structures for political / civic participation of the local migrant population?*

The city has several existing structures for political / civic participation of local citizens generally. For instance, the Council meetings are normally open to the public and the 'Ward Forums' representing all parts of the City have been created to give local citizens a greater voice in Council affairs.¹³⁷ Under the BCC Constitution, local citizens have a number of rights that facilitate their political and civic participation including, for example, the right to vote at local elections if they are registered, to contact their local Councillor about any matters of concern to them, to attend meetings of the Council, the Cabinet and Committees, and to complain about service delivery.¹³⁸

The Council communicates its commitment to promoting engagement and listening to the views of everyone who lives in Birmingham on its consultation pages where citizens are invited to take part in formal consultations on a range of current issues and policy areas through the 'Be Heard' website. There are other ways citizens can engage and have their voice heard; for instance, by joining Council's social media platforms, organising a

¹³⁵ Source: Interview with the representative of a migrant-led organisation in Birmingham [online], 26/08/2022.

¹³⁶ Birmingham City Council (2018) 'Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham: Forward together to build a fair and inclusive city for everyone', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/12487/community_cohesion_strategy_pdf_version.pdf [Accessed on 29/06/2022]

¹³⁷ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Birmingham City Council Constitution', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/13653/part_a_constitution [Accessed on 07/06/2022]

¹³⁸ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Birmingham City Council Constitution', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/13653/part_a_constitution [Accessed on 07/06/2022]

petition, meeting their local councillor at regular surgeries, or by signing up to the consultation alert mailing list.¹³⁹

More tailored activities and structures to engage with migrant communities specifically have also been initiated; for example, various forums and partnerships with third sector organisations concerned with migration or those providing specific migrant services. BCC collaborates with public, private and third sector organisations to deliver various projects that have enabled the Council to understand better the challenges faced by migrants and their specific needs. These partnerships include the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership, Birmingham Migration Forum, City of Sanctuary Partnership Board, City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network and Libraries of Sanctuary, and the West Midlands Migration Network. The City of Sanctuary Partnership Board, for instance, comprises key stakeholders in Birmingham working with migrants as well as migrant representatives who meet on a regular basis to review and discuss the vision, outcomes and commitments in BCC's City of Sanctuary policy statement.¹⁴⁰

The already mentioned 'MiFriendly Cities' was a 3-year project which extended the capacity of the Refugees and Migration Team to fund small-scale, grassroots organisations – many of whom already serving established ethnic minority communities – to extend their services to newly arrived migrants. Active citizenship is one of the key features of this project. It takes a bottom-up approach to involve migrants in the project development and adopts a two-way integration process which encourages participation of citizens from across the community to collaborate with the local authority, businesses and voluntary organisations to achieve MiFriendly City status.¹⁴¹

Another example of an existing structure to hear the voice of migrant communities is the Birmingham Poverty Truth Commission which seeks to build relations between the Council and local residents and to learn from and incorporate the lived experiences of poverty in policy making. The Commission involves people who have experienced poverty and includes asylum seekers and migrants who can come into contact with power holders in the city, including senior management in the Council and business leaders.¹⁴²

Most recently, the EU-funded 'Migrant Integration through Locally Designed Experiences' (MILE) project which started in 2022 seeks to develop tools that would help local authorities to empower and include migrant communities in local decision making. The project involves a partnership of BCC, a local migrant-led support organisation and a university research centre. One of its key goals is to create a consultative body that brings

¹³⁹ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Consultation and Engagement', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20146/consultation_and_engagement [Accessed on 27/06/2022]

¹⁴⁰ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Partnerships', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50227/city_of_sanctuary/2510/partnerships_and_policies [Accessed on 27/06/2022]

¹⁴¹ [Home - MiFriendly Cities](#)

¹⁴² Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Birmingham Poverty Truth Commission', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50266/other_public_health_projects/2410/birmingham_poverty_truth_commission [Accessed on 28/06/2022]

the Council in direct contact with local migrant communities and enables migrants to shape local policy, supported by a capacity building training.¹⁴³

4.2 Leadership, communication and coordination of participation

4.2.1 Do decision makers actively promote participation of residents irrespective of their nationality?

Participation of all local residents irrespective of their nationality is promoted in key policy documents, including the already mentioned Equality Strategy and Action Plan and the Community Cohesion Strategy. One of the key remits of the Engagement Officer within the 'Prevention, Communities & Migration Team' at BCC is to promote various opportunities in Birmingham to migrant communities to increase their participation. This is done through regular mailouts to migrant-led organisations.

4.2.2 Does the city use migrant-specific communication channels to make the case for participation among (and to reach) migrant communities? What communication channels are used to make the case for participation? How are residents informed about the possibility to participate? Does the city use diverse communication methods to inform residents about the possibility to participate?

BCC uses migrant-specific communication channels to reach out to migrant communities and make the case for their participation in local policy making. Partnership working with community organisations, including migrant groups, is the key outreach method to engage with migrants in the city. For instance, during the consultation on its Community Cohesion Strategy green paper, the Council adopted more tailored methods of engagement to connect with citizens who are usually excluded from such consultation exercises, as explained below.

"As well as conducting an online consultation, we are carrying out bespoke engagement activities, mitigating the risk of only hearing from the 'usual suspects' and ensuring we hear from those who are often ignored. We currently have over 400 named stakeholders, from grassroots organisations and leaders in the faith community to local businesses in the private sector. This existing network will be harnessed to create a ripple effect, allowing our contacts to disperse the strategy among their networks."¹⁴⁴

More generally, the Council employs a diverse range of methods and channels to inform and / or consult residents, including its website, printed leaflets, local newspapers, and various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tik Tok, Instagram

¹⁴³ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Migrant Integration through Locally Designed Experiences, MILE project', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50227/city_of_sanctuary/2509/what_we_do_to_support_asylum_seekers_refugees_and_migrants/5 [Accessed on 28/06/2022]

¹⁴⁴ Chatfield, T. (2018) 'Birmingham's council is letting the city drive community cohesion', Local Government Chronicle, 24 July 2018, Available at: <https://www.lgcplus.com/services/community-cohesion/birminghams-council-is-letting-the-city-drive-community-cohesion-24-07-2018/> [Accessed on 30/06/2022]

and YouTube. The Council has numerous social media accounts on each platform, used to post latest news on various policies or events and to invite residents to participate in consultations.¹⁴⁵

Despite these outreach and engagement activities, the BCC-organised focus group with migrants conducted as part of this project revealed a general lack of awareness among participants about public consultations, petitions, or complaints procedures, and how to participate. None of the participants were aware of the 'Be Heard' platform which informs the public about consultations of BCC's proposals. Some participants were aware of individual councillors being in contact with the general public through council meetings, telephone calls or surgeries.

4.2.3 Is intersectionality considered in communication?

This again would require a more in-depth analysis of approaches and practices within particular policy areas and departments of the council. However, the commitment to intersectionality as outlined in the Equality Strategy suggests that communication teams are expected to consider multiple disadvantages that can be experienced by people with protected characteristics. Additionally, an interview with the BCC representatives revealed that staff are aware of the concept of intersectionality and take it into account in their communication with residents.¹⁴⁶ For example, in organising a recent focus group with migrants, they sought to ensure that the group was diverse in terms of gender and other characteristics as well as their migrant status.

4.2.4 Does the city communicate the results of consultations to residents? How are the results of a consultation process and its responses communicated to residents?

Yes, BCC publishes the results from its consultations with residents through the 'Be Heard' website which is also used by the Council as a key platform to engage residents in policy making and to access their views on various policy issues.¹⁴⁷

4.2.5 Does the city produce information about consultations in different languages? Who produces the information and in which languages is it provided?

No, the city does not produce information about its consultations in different languages. Both the invitations to consult residents and the results of consultations on the 'Be Heard' website are published in English only.

4.2.6 Is there a coordination mechanism in place to ensure that participation of all residents is actively promoted and communicated effectively?

¹⁴⁵ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Council Twitter Accounts', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20179/news_and_media/537/social_media/2 [Accessed on 29/06/2022]

¹⁴⁶ Source: Interview with the representatives of Birmingham City Council [in person], 11/08/2022.

¹⁴⁷ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Be Heard: We asked, You Said, We Did', Available at: https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/we_asked_you_said/ [Accessed on 28/06/2022]

No specific coordination mechanism was identified within the Council to ensure that participation of all residents is actively promoted and communicated effectively. A review of the Council's communications conducted by the Local Government Association in 2016 showed that while some improvements have been made in adopting a more proactive approach to external communications, the corporate communications service within the Council was viewed at the time as fragmented, uncoordinated, and lacking in leadership and strategic purpose.¹⁴⁸

A survey of local residents' views about the Council's methods of communicating with local people was carried out as part of the review. This revealed that while more than half of Birmingham's respondents (55 per cent) thought the Council keeps residents 'very well informed' or 'fairly well informed', this is lower than the national average (63 per cent). No significant differences in feeling informed/uninformed on the basis of gender, age or ethnicity were found. It is worth noting that the surveyed residents' preferred methods of receiving information from the Council was printed information such as leaflets and notices, followed by local TV, newspapers and radio, and the Council website.¹⁴⁹

However, the new role of Engagement Officer within BCC's 'Prevention, Communities & Migration Team', created in 2020, fulfils this coordination function for migrant communities by promoting and supporting participation of migrants across different policy areas. The Officer liaises with migrant-led organisations, council staff and service providers, and other organisations and agencies in the city, including universities, museums, parks and others.

4.3 Equal access

4.3.1 *Does the city use diverse platforms to enable participation? Do all residents have an equal chance to make their voices heard?*

BCC uses diverse platforms to enable participation of all its citizens. This includes formal consultations (online and in person), such as the 'Be Heard' website, which is the Council's consultation hub inviting citizens to have their voices heard on various areas of policy and 'Ward Forums' which are in-person meetings open to all local residents and groups. Additionally, there are a range of 'Forums' focusing on particular policy areas – for example, the 'People for Public Services Forum' or 'Birmingham Migration Forum' – which bring together local residents and the Council.

Although the Council has duty under Equality Act 2010 to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, citizen participation in policy making appears to vary across different

¹⁴⁸ Local Government Association (2016) 'Communications Review: Birmingham City Council', Report, February 2016, Available at:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/12272/february_2016_%E2%80%93_lga_communications_review.pdf [Accessed on 29/06/2022]

¹⁴⁹ Local Government Association (2016) 'Communications Review: Birmingham City Council', Report, February 2016, Available at:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/12272/february_2016_%E2%80%93_lga_communications_review.pdf [Accessed on 29/06/2022]

policy areas and departments adopting disparate approaches to engagement and participation. For instance, the 'Planning and Development' department has in 2020 adopted a new 'Statement of Community Involvement' which sets out in detail the Council's commitment to include all residents in policy making and how this will be ensured through an inclusive consultation process involving diverse platforms. This is informed by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 which requires consultations with various groups also known as 'consultation bodies'. The Council uses a database of such bodies to notify diverse stakeholders of any upcoming consultations. Similar statements of community involvement are not readily available across policy spheres.¹⁵⁰

It is worth noting that a report on the Council's engagement practice published in 2014 identified several shortcomings in how BCC engages with local residents, such as overreliance on formal structures and the use of unfamiliar language. It was also recognised that the Council's capacity to invest in creating structures that enable participation, or to build quality relationships within the existing structures, was impacted over the past decade due to severe cuts in public spending. It was also noted that while the Council is increasingly communicating through less formal channels, such as various social media platforms which positively diversify its methods of engagement, considerations must also be given to the issue of digital divide whereby people with limited access to internet or digital technologies may be excluded from online consultations.¹⁵¹

4.3.2 Can migrants, refugees and asylum seekers access these platforms taking into account their specific circumstances?

The existing platforms for citizen participation in policy making are generally accessible to diverse groups, although most of the existing formal platforms, such as the 'Be Heard' website, use English as the main language without offering a translation functionality. This potentially excludes the engagement of recent migrants with limited English language skills and limits access to information to understand how to engage in local decision making. Further insights from the mentioned focus group with migrants suggest that language barriers and access to interpretation services is a major issue, in addition to digital exclusion of some migrant communities constraining access to platforms such as 'Be Heard'.

These issues may be alleviated, at least partly, through migrants' involvement with local grassroots organisations and migrant-led groups that represent their interests in the

¹⁵⁰ Birmingham City Council (2020) 'Birmingham Plan 2031: Statement of Community Involvement, Adopted in 2020, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/228/statement_of_community_involvement [Accessed on 29/06/2022]

¹⁵¹ Birmingham City Council (2014) 'Citizen Engagement: A report from Overview & Scrutiny, February 2014, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/436/citizen_engagement_february_2014.pdf [Accessed on 29/06/2022]

Birmingham Migration Forum. One of the key objectives of this Forum is to ensure that migration related issues are considered in the development of local policies.¹⁵² Moreover, some of the focus group participants suggested creation of ‘community groups’ offering physical spaces to run specific community information sessions. Others liked the idea of a consultative body proposed as part of the MILE project.

4.3.3 Are these diverse platforms of participation proactively communicated to diverse groups of residents? Is it visible and known to all communities how they can participate? Are their specific concerns considered?

The existing participation platforms are proactively communicated through the Council website and social media and there is explicit commitment to engage local communities in decision making to make policies more responsive to their needs; for example, in the Working Together policy paper.¹⁵³ The Engagement Officer within BCC’s Refugees and Migration Team sends out regular emails to members of the Birmingham Migration Forums with information about events and opportunities in the city. The member organisations will cascade that information to their service users, including refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. They also use the new BARMS directory to send out information to migrant organisations as well as using social media, such as Twitter, to re-share information. BARMS was created in response to consultation with organisations involved in the Birmingham Migration Forum, suggesting that the concerns of residents are being considered.

4.4 Institutional links and responsiveness

4.4.1 Is there a fully established mechanism in place to ensure that public institutions respond and incorporate the migrant voice in their decision-making processes?

The Birmingham Migration Forum can be considered an established mechanism to ensure that public institutions respond and incorporate the voices of migrant communities in decision making. The Forum is facilitated and chaired by BCC and in 2017 its membership comprised over 30 organisations from public and third sector, including migrant associations, refugee support organisations, faith and community groups, civil society, housing associations, and police and NHS representatives. The key objectives of this Forum are to: (1) Ensure that agencies are appropriately briefed and/or have access to information about the services, projects and other support available for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; (2) Ensure that migration related issues are considered in the development of citywide policies and strategies; (3) Develop a coherent and joined up

¹⁵² Birmingham City Council (2017) ‘Birmingham Migration Forum: Terms of Reference’, December 2017, Available at: [Microsoft Word - 2a17f887-6a71-4346-9a8a-4e554f1bd6d4.docx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#) [Accessed on 29/06/2022]

¹⁵³ Birmingham City Council (2019) ‘Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhoods: Policy Statement (White Paper)’, January 2019, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11839/working_together_in_birminghams_neighbourhoods_white_paper [Accessed on 20/06/2022]

multi-agency approach to support migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the city; and where possible (4) Develop a shared view and consensus in the development of new policies, strategies and initiatives.¹⁵⁴

Additional insights from the representative of a migrant-led organisation regularly participating in the Forum suggest that the focus tends to be on awareness raising and information sharing about support services. The agendas are generally proposed by the Council and the opportunities to influence strategic policymaking are rather limited. There does not appear to be any formal provision or process in place to ensure that the voices of migrants, or migrant-led organisations, systematically feed into the mainstream policy.¹⁵⁵

4.4.2 Are migrants consulted on key policy spheres such as housing, education, health and employment? On which issues are migrants consulted?

Organisations and groups that represent and support migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Birmingham are consulted on various policies and initiatives across different policy spheres as part of the regular quarterly meetings of the Birmingham Migration Forum chaired by the BCC.¹⁵⁶ An example of initiative that sought to consult migrants on specific policy spheres is the Business Leaders Project (Box 1) where a number of 'listening campaigns' were organised to bring together migrant entrepreneurs and business support providers in the city, facilitating mutual understanding and empowerment of migrants to shape enterprise policy.

4.4.3 To what degree are migrants represented in the city's consultative bodies, committees and issue-based groups? Are migrants involved in consultative bodies for key policy spheres?

Migrants are represented in consultative bodies, like the Birmingham Migration Forum, through member organisations that represent or support various migrant communities. The Forum seeks to ensure that the concerns of migrants are considered across different policy areas, such as housing and health. However, the current arrangements where member organisations represent migrants potentially limit more 'direct' involvement whereby individual migrants can meet decision makers personally to voice their concerns and to share their lived experiences of the challenges they face.

4.4.4 Can migrants set their own agenda or are the issues pre-selected by the local authority?

The 'Ward Forums' mentioned earlier encourage more active participation of local residents in decision making; for example, residents can propose agenda items and set

¹⁵⁴ Birmingham City Council (2017) 'Birmingham Migration Forum: Terms of Reference', December 2017, Available at: [Microsoft Word - 2a17f887-6a71-4346-9a8a-4e554f1bd6d4.docx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#) [Accessed on 29/06/2022]

¹⁵⁵ Source: Information provided by the representative of a migrant-led organisation participating in the Birmingham Migration Forum, December 2022.

¹⁵⁶ Birmingham City Council (2017) 'Birmingham Migration Forum: Terms of Reference', December 2017, Available at: [Microsoft Word - 2a17f887-6a71-4346-9a8a-4e554f1bd6d4.docx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#) [Accessed on 29/06/2022]

priorities.¹⁵⁷ Yet, to our knowledge, migrants' engagement in Ward Forums is undocumented. Moreover, concerns have been raised about the lack of migrants' agency in shaping local integration and other policies that impact on their lives.¹⁵⁸ Although migrants' representation and influence is enabled, indirectly, through various civil society organisations, the lack of more 'direct' involvement may be disempowering. There is a danger that the dominant narrative around migrants requiring support, reinforced by support organisations' interests in securing funding to provide support services, potentially undermines migrants' true ambitions and capacities to contribute to society as active citizens.

4.4.5 Are provisions in place to ensure that participation structures, such as consultative bodies, can feed into the mainstream policy process of relevant public authorities and get a considered and timely response?

The existing consultative bodies, like the Birmingham Migration Forum, enable migrant-led organisations to come together and influence mainstream policy makers. An interview with the BCC representatives suggests that these organisations often actively challenge statutory agencies participating in the Forum on issues that affect migrant communities. For example, the Forum has played an important role during COVID-19 pandemic in facilitating collaboration between migrant organisations and BCC to help reduce homelessness among migrants with no recourse to public funds.¹⁵⁹ There is no information however on whether there is any formal provision or process in place to ensure that the voices of these organisations systematically feed into the mainstream policy, or whether they get timely response.

4.5 Support for community self-organisation

4.5.1 Does the city administration work with migrant associations?

BCC works in partnership with a range of migrant associations and support groups to facilitate the integration of migrants and to empower them to participate in local decision making. For instance, the already mentioned Birmingham Migration Forum, chaired by the Council, meets on a regular basis to share knowledge and develop partnerships across a network of more than 200 people representing organisations and groups from across sectors.¹⁶⁰ Some of the migrant support organisations are commissioned by the Council to deliver specialist services for migrant communities.

¹⁵⁷ Birmingham City Council (2019) 'Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods: Policy Statement (White Paper)', January 2019, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11839/working_together_in_birminghams_neighbourhoods_white_paper [Accessed on 20/06/2022]

¹⁵⁸ Source: Interview with the representative of a migrant-led organisation [online], 26/08/2022.

¹⁵⁹ Source: Interview with a representatives of Birmingham City Council [in person], 11/08/2022.

¹⁶⁰ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Partnerships', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50227/city_of_sanctuary/2510/partnerships_and_policies [Accessed on 27/06/2022]

4.5.2 Does the city administration support the self-organisation of migrant communities?

The Council is supportive of self-organisation of people and communities of all backgrounds to solve local problems. For instance, in the 2018 Community Cohesion Strategy, the Councillor for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities notes the challenges of resource scarcity in the city. The strategy sets out a collaborative approach in which organisations across sectors are encouraged to work together to make more creative use of existing assets and skills in the neighbourhoods to improve community cohesion.¹⁶¹

4.5.3 Are there funds or other support for organisational capacity building targeting migrants? Where does the funding come from and how sustainable are these funds in longer term?

In the 2019 'Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods' policy statement, it is noted that while local residents are generally supportive of encouraging communities to collaborate to improve their neighbourhoods, several concerns were raised during the consultation process. This included, for instance, a call for greater equality and representation of the whole community within neighbourhood organisations.

Furthermore, residents raised concerns about insufficient resources and short-termism in funding that is available to support local organisations. "There is a need for adequate training and coaching and stronger neighbourhood infrastructure. The withdrawal of resources from neighbourhood working in recent years has undermined community engagement and networks". (page 8).¹⁶² Working within these limits, the Council proposes to tackle the resource scarcity issue through partnership working of organisations across sectors to pool the existing assets.

Despite these resource constraints, one example of support for such organisational capacity building, targeting migrants specifically, includes financing of voluntary agencies trained to provide advice and support to migrants as part of the funding BCC received in 2018 from the UK Government's Controlling Migration Fund.¹⁶³

4.5.4 Does the city administration support intercultural dialogue and exchange between communities?

BCC supports intercultural dialogue and exchange between diverse communities. One of the guiding principles of its 2018 Community Cohesion Strategy is to 'unite people and

¹⁶¹ Birmingham City Council (2018) 'Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham: Forward together to build a fair and inclusive city for everyone', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/12487/community_cohesion_strategy_pdf_version.pdf [Accessed on 29/06/2022]

¹⁶² Birmingham City Council (2019) 'Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods: Policy Statement (White Paper)', January 2019, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11839/working_together_in_birminghams_neighbourhoods_white_paper [Accessed on 20/06/2022]

¹⁶³ Birmingham City Council (2018) 'Controlling Migration Fund – Birmingham City Council: Cabinet Report Appendix 2', Available at: [Microsoft Word - 493b5a59-189d-4e93-b230-8eca2c3d46b3.doc](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11839/microsoft_word_-_493b5a59-189d-4e93-b230-8eca2c3d46b3.doc) (cmis.uk.com) [Accessed on 28/06/2022]

communities through art, culture and sports'. It is recognised that these activities help promote social integration and cohesion between people of different ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds and abilities.¹⁶⁴ This builds on BCC's earlier initiatives to strengthen community cohesion, such as various pilot projects under the 'Connecting communities through culture' programme of activities co-funded and co-delivered with organisations such as the Arts Council England.¹⁶⁵

Additionally, a number of third sector organisations in the city organise various cultural events to promote positive representation of migrants. For example, the Celebrating Sanctuary Birmingham is an organisation that works with artists from migrant communities to raise awareness of migrant contributions to Birmingham. It organises cultural events, like the annual Birmingham Refugee Week, to build relationships between diverse communities in the city.¹⁶⁶ Some of these events are organised by the Council. The Migrant Festival is another annual event involving visual art, music, film and performance, to celebrate the contribution of refugees and migrants.¹⁶⁷

4.6 Monitoring quality of participation schemes

4.6.1 Does the city work with residents to improve activities promoted by its participation strategy at all levels, and to make it more effective?

The Council works in partnership with organisations across sectors, including groups that represent refugee, asylum seeker and migrant communities, to improve participation of diverse groups in local decision making in line with its equality objectives and other policy commitments. For example, recognising over-representation of White British residents in its consultation on the 'East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy', BCC reached out to migrant-led organisations in order to increase the voice of migrant and ethnic minority groups in this particular consultation.¹⁶⁸

4.6.2 Is there regular monitoring and evaluation of these participation activities?

The monitoring of policies and activities by the Council seems to vary across departments and policy spheres. The commitment to promote participation of citizens is ingrained within a number of policies, including: (1) City of Sanctuary policy statement 2018 to 2022; (2) The Equality Objectives 2019 – 2023; (3) The Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2021 –

¹⁶⁴ Birmingham City Council (2018) 'Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham Green Paper: Forward together to build a fair and inclusive city for everyone', Available at: [Birmingham Community Cohesion Strategy Green Paper Summary FINAL.pdf \(birminghambeheard.org.uk\)](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1785/connecting_communities_through_culture) [Accessed on 16/06/2022]

¹⁶⁵ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Connecting communities through culture', Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/1785/connecting_communities_through_culture [Accessed on 28/06/2022]

¹⁶⁶ Celebrating Sanctuary Birmingham: <https://www.celebrating-sanctuary.org.uk/>

¹⁶⁷ The Migrant Festival: <https://www.ikon-gallery.org/event/the-migrant-festival-4>

¹⁶⁸ Birmingham City Council (2022) 'Equality Impact Assessment - EQUA619 - East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy', 6 January 2022, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/19115/equality_impact_assessment_-_equa619_-_east_birmingham_inclusive_growth_strategy [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

2023; and (4) Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhoods 2019. One of the key commitments under the City of Sanctuary policy is to conduct annual progress reviews. This includes asking ‘service leads’ within different departments, such as Adult Education or Community Centres, to report on whether and how the needs of people from migrant backgrounds are reflected within mainstream policies and strategies¹⁶⁹ Under the Equality Objectives, the Council has committed to review civic participation in its decision-making processes.¹⁷⁰ However, monitoring and evaluation of these policies appears sporadic, and the assessments of their impact, or their outcomes, are not always readily available to public.

4.6.3 Are the results of monitoring and evaluation publicised, and do they feed back into the process?

The results of some of the evaluations are publicised and feed back into the policy making process. For example, the progress update report on the City of Sanctuary policy statement is publicly available to inform future developments in this area.¹⁷¹

4.6.4 What mechanism is in place to check the procedures and impact of participation schemes on a regular basis?

There are explicit commitments under the Equality Objectives and the City of Sanctuary policy to conduct regular evaluations of progress.

4.6.5 How are changes to the participation schemes being decided?

No information was found regarding who decides on any changes to civic participation structures or schemes.

4.7 Resources for participation

4.7.1 Is the value of participation in public decision making by all communities recognised by the city?

The value of participation in public decision making by all is recognised by the Council. For example, the ‘Working Together in Birmingham’s Neighbourhoods’ policy paper

¹⁶⁹ Birmingham City Council (2021) ‘Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement 2018-22 – Update on Progress’, 10 September 2021, Available at: [Microsoft Word - Progress update_Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement_v0.8 \(cmis.uk.com\)](#) [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

¹⁷⁰ Birmingham City Council (2022) ‘Equality Objectives 2019 – 2023’, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20218/equality_and_diversity/646/equality_objectives#:~:text=Eli%20discrimination%2C%20harassment%2C%20victimisation%20and,who%20do%20not%20share%20it. [Accessed on 20/06/2022]

¹⁷¹ Birmingham City Council (2021) ‘Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement 2018-22 – Update on Progress’, 10 September 2021, Available at: [Microsoft Word - Progress update_Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement_v0.8 \(cmis.uk.com\)](#) [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

highlights how greater engagement of local residents can make policies and strategies more responsive and effective.¹⁷²

4.7.2 Is there adequate budgeting for staff time and training to support and facilitate residents' participation?

In the period 2020-21, BCC has increased its efforts to raise awareness and provide training on issues related to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to its frontline staff and service providers as well as externally under its City of Sanctuary commitments. This included sessions with staff at Birmingham Children's Trust, Adult Social Care, Housing & Neighbourhoods, and Schools Admissions teams, increasing the ability of staff to respond more appropriately to different circumstances or to signpost to specialist support. Nevertheless, it is also noted that more work could be done in this area; for example, by running a designated e-learning for Council staff.¹⁷³ The Working Together policy paper recognises the lack of resources as a key barrier in supporting local participation and organisational capacity building.¹⁷⁴

4.7.3 Are grant programmes used to support residents in creating stable, inclusive activities and structures that can strengthen civic and political participation for the long term?

BCC has been involved in several EU-funded programmes and projects to strengthen migrant support services and civic participation of migrant communities, including the already mentioned 'MiFriendly Cities', the 'Foundation for Integration Project' and the 'MILE' project. Additionally, BCC supports a range of third sector organisations, including migrant-led groups, to deliver services and support to migrants through its commissioning work.

4.7.4 Which resources does the city invest in provisions for participation?

BCC has invested resources on activities that support participation of residents, including migrants. In 2020, a new Engagement Officer role was created at the Council with a key objective to promote opportunities for people with the lived experience of migration to influence council's work. Yet, it was also recognised that more work is needed, demanding a holistic approach in adopting the City of Sanctuary commitments to "...ensure that the needs, skills and assets of people who are asylum seekers, refugees and migrants are reflected and included in mainstream council policies and strategies" (page 12). "In its

¹⁷² Birmingham City Council (2019) 'Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods: Policy Statement (White Paper)', January 2019, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11839/working_together_in_birminghams_neighbourhoods_white_paper [Accessed on 20/06/2022]

¹⁷³ Birmingham City Council (2021) 'Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement 2018-22 – Update on Progress', 10 September 2021, Available at: [Microsoft Word - Progress update Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement v0.8 \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11839/working_together_in_birminghams_neighbourhoods_white_paper) [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

¹⁷⁴ Birmingham City Council (2019) 'Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods: Policy Statement (White Paper)', January 2019, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/11839/working_together_in_birminghams_neighbourhoods_white_paper [Accessed on 20/06/2022]

current form, the Statement [City of Sanctuary] is clear about the importance of ensuring our stakeholders have a voice and are able to influence design and delivery of services. These commitments could be improved by being explicit about the need to include experts by experience in this” (page 13).¹⁷⁵

4.7.5 Are training opportunities for participants in place?

There are opportunities in place to build the capacity of migrants to participate in local decision making. The Community Cohesion strategy for Birmingham pledges to increase the provision and uptake of English language training to support participation of migrants in local democracy: “We will increase take up and provision of ESOL (English as a Second Language) training to support non-English speakers to understand and exercise their rights, engage with democratic processes, access services and take advantage of the city’s economy opportunities.” (page 24)¹⁷⁶ Within its Adult Education services, BCC has committed to embed citizenship and knowledge of city services within all English language courses to help migrant learners understand their rights and responsibilities.¹⁷⁷ The MiFriendly Cities project delivered civic participation training for migrants. The MILE project will provide capacity building training for both migrants and council staff to help facilitate the creation of a consultative body that enables migrants to voice their concerns directly to policy makers on a regular basis.¹⁷⁸

4.7.6 Is there a secretariat or a similar support structure to support participants?

To the best of our knowledge, there is no secretariat or a similar structure at the Council to support civic participation of all residents, but the Refugee and Migration Engagement Officer (Box 3) partly fulfils this support function for migrants by promoting opportunities for engagement across policy spheres to migrant organisations and communities.

4.8 Commitment to full political rights for all residents

4.8.1 Does the city actively lobby for granting / extending full local voting rights to their migrant population? What channels does the city use to make the case for extended political rights?

BCC does not actively lobby for granting or extending full voting rights to migrant population. However, the Council does campaign on migration related issues, particularly

¹⁷⁵ Birmingham City Council (2021) ‘Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement 2018-22 – Update on Progress’, 10 September 2021, Available at: [Microsoft Word - Progress update Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement v0.8 \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com/updates/Birmingham%20City%20of%20Sanctuary%20Policy%20Statement%20v0.8) [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

¹⁷⁶ Birmingham City Council (2018) ‘Community Cohesion Strategy for Birmingham: Forward together to build a fair and inclusive city for everyone’, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/12487/community_cohesion_strategy_pdf_version.pdf [Accessed on 29/06/2022]

¹⁷⁷ Birmingham City Council (2021) ‘Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement 2018-22 – Update on Progress’, 10 September 2021, Available at: [Microsoft Word - Progress update Birmingham City of Sanctuary Policy Statement v0.8 \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com/updates/Birmingham%20City%20of%20Sanctuary%20Policy%20Statement%20v0.8) [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

¹⁷⁸ [Mile \(mile-project.eu\)](http://mile-project.eu)

concerning refugees and asylum seekers. In 2021, Councillor John Cotton, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities, wrote a letter to the Home Secretary expressing strong disagreement with the Government's New Plan for Immigration. It is believed that this policy will have negative impact on the already failing asylum system in the UK. It will extend the Government's efforts to create a hostile environment towards migrants, demonise people who seek asylum, and undermine global refugee cooperation.¹⁷⁹ The Councillor has also expressed support for the 'Lift the Ban' campaign which calls for people in the asylum process to be given the right to work.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Cotton, J. (2021) 'Letter to the Home Secretary on the Government's New Plan for Immigration', Birmingham City Council, 18 October 2021, Available at: <https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/blog/birmingham-blog/post/976/letter-to-the-home-secretary-on-the-governments-new-plan-for-immigration> [Accessed on 28/06/2022]

¹⁸⁰ Birmingham City Council (2020) 'Birmingham celebrates Refugee Week with virtual festival', 15 June 2020, Available at: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/news/article/641/birmingham_celebrates_refugee_week_with_virtual_festival [Accessed on 28/06/2022]

REFERENCES¹⁸¹

Eurocities / Migration Work (2014) *Integrating Cities Toolkit: Engagement of migrant communities in local policy making processes and political participation.*

Eurocities / Migration Work (2014) *Integrating Cities Toolkit: Managing diversity and promoting equality in cities administration and service provision.*

Garcés-Mascreñas, B. and R. Penninx (2016) *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe: Contexts, Levels and Actors*, Springer Open (eBook)

Igualtats Connect (2019) *Toolkit to incorporate intersectionality into local policies.*

¹⁸¹ The research conducted as part of this project was informed by these sources, providing a framework for evaluating existing integration, equality, diversity and civic participation policy and practice.

APPENDIX – List of primary data sources

1. Interview with the representatives of Birmingham City Council [in person], 11/08/2022.
2. Interview with the representative of a migrant-led organisation in Birmingham [online], 26/08/2022.
3. Information provided by the representative of a migrant-led organisation in Birmingham, 26/10/2022.
4. Information provided by the representative of Birmingham City Council, December 2022
5. Information provided by the representative of a migrant-led organisation participating in the Birmingham Migration Forum, December 2022.