

<p align="center">Health & Adults Scrutiny Sub-Committee</p> <p align="center">Tuesday 8th June 2021</p>	
<p>Report of Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director Place, London Borough of Tower Hamlets</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Operation Oak - Departmental and voluntary agency support for asylum seekers</p>	

<p>Originating Officer(s)</p>	<p>Tracey St. Hill RP Partnerships and Development Officer, LBTH</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>Bethnal Green; St Peters and Mile End</p>

Summary

In early December 2020 the Home Office placed in excess of 400 asylum seekers in 3 hotels in the borough as part of an initiative called Operation Oak - a programme designed to disperse asylum seekers around the country between December 2020 and June 2021. The arrival of this group was unexpected, and therefore unplanned and required intensive input from Council Departments and voluntary agencies to provide appropriate support in order to meet the borough’s statutory obligations.

A briefing note will be provided that details the context and background to Operation Oak, information on how the Council is responding to the arrival of the asylum seekers, where funding gaps exist, and the structures in place for communication and reporting to ensure efforts are properly co-ordinated

Recommendations:

The Health & Adults Scrutiny Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the contents of the briefing note

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 To enable the Council to meet its statutory obligations to support asylum seekers and ensure they are safe secure and well care cared for whilst they remain in the borough.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 N/A

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 In December 2020 over 400 Asylum seekers were placed in 3 hotels in the borough under an initiative called Operation Oak which is a dispersal programme to relocate asylum seekers around the Country. The Council has been providing a number of services to the occupants with support from voluntary agencies to ensure their basic welfare needs are met and the Council's statutory obligations are fulfilled.

- 3.1.1 A briefing paper will follow that provides an overview of Operation Oak, the services in place and any funding gaps identified that highlight where additional support could be provided to the asylum seekers until they are relocated.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The services provided enable the Council to meet its statutory obligation to support asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds. The voluntary organisations involved assist in bridging the gaps in Home Office funding in order to meet service user's additional welfare needs so they can lead reasonable lives whilst their cases for asylum are being considered.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- NONE

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

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