



COSLA Strategic Migration Partnership Update to Board Meeting

23 February 2011

Key strands of COSLA Strategic Migration Partnership's work has been covered in separate items on the agenda. They are:

1. Planning and developing a programme of work to support local authorities to use the Migration Policy Toolkit and piloting the approach with Shetland Island Council.
2. Monitoring the impact of the interim immigration cap on local authorities and working with Scottish Government to encourage the UK Government to consider Scottish flexibilities.
3. Exploring the potential for shared services around Translating and Interpreting Services
4. We have also been working to support our partner organisations to respond to the news that UK Border Agency is ending Glasgow City Council's contract to accommodate asylum seekers.

Information on our other activities follows below:

Data Improvement work with General Register Office for Scotland (GROS)

In November CSMP spoke at the annual ScotStat conference in Edinburgh. ScotStat is a network for users and providers of Scottish Official Statistics. It aims to improve communication amongst those interested in particular statistics and facilitate the setting up of working groups on specific statistical issues. We spoke about the development of the Migration Policy Toolkit and about how statistics provided by GROS had been useful in helping us to understand the demographic issues faced by local authorities across Scotland. We stressed the importance of statistics providers consulting with the users of their data to ensure that it is useful and relevant. The annual local migration reports produced by GROS are a good example of how this can be achieved.

At the beginning of February 2011 CSMP submitted a response on behalf of COSLA as a whole to the Consultation on the GROS Demography Statistical Work Programme. The Consultation was launched to consider how best GROS can meet the challenge of operating on a reducing budget by reviewing their current working practices, statistical outputs and services. We were provided with an opportunity to comment on the outputs required by UK and international law as well as areas not required by statute, which GROS has a greater degree of control over. CSMP regularly utilise a variety of the statistics produced by GROS and we welcomed the opportunity to respond with our views and we look forward to findings of the Consultation being released.

Enforcing the law

We have had a number of meetings with UK Border Agency in Scotland recently to discuss how UK Border Agency can share intelligence with local authorities and other regulatory bodies. This could include alerting the appropriate authority about health and safety infringements evident in a premises that UK Border Agency has visited for immigration enforcement purposes. We are currently helping UK Border Agency to identify relevant functions within local authorities and other agencies which they should seek to build relationships with to this end. UK Border Agency also attended a COSLA Community Safety Executive Group in October to speak about this work.

We have also worked with Gangmasters Licensing Agency to promote the Memorandum of Understanding which they are hoping to establish with local authorities, which is covered in a separate agenda item.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

We participate in the steering group of Scottish Refugee Council and Aberlour Trust's Guardianship Project. We have also been involved in Scottish Refugee Council's recent work on age assessment. We contacted all thirty two local authorities to find out about their policy on age assessment of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and provided that information to Scottish Refugee Council to inform their work. We are keen that good practice developed by Glasgow City Council and City of Edinburgh Council are taken into account as Scottish Refugee Council progress this work.