



MIGRANT CHAMPIONS NETWORK - INFO PAPER FOR OFFICERS

The Migrant Champions Network is a newly-established network of local councillors who have been appointed Migrant Champions within their local councils. The Migrant Champions Network is run by its members, and supported by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI). JCWI is a legal charity based in London and operating nationally since 1967, which provides high-quality legal advice to people going through the immigration system and campaigns for a fairer immigration system.

BACKGROUND

Local authorities have a mandate to make decisions and provide services affecting the lives of migrant constituents. Much of central government policy relating to migrants' lives, and to migration in general, is implemented on a local level by councils, in the context of budget cuts and financial difficulties. As such, local councils and local councillors have a great deal of decision-making power, and a role to play in the lives of migrant constituents.

Councils across the country are dealing with unprecedented challenges due to shortcomings in national policy-making on migration, with huge numbers of people seeking asylum accommodated in hotels, and issues with the Ukraine and Afghan resettlement schemes very often being dealt with by local authorities. In this context, cooperation, collaboration and sharing of best practice across councils are key to ensuring joined-up support for migrant constituents and their communities.

In many local councils, responsibility for issues relating to migrants' lives is shared between councillors with different areas of focus (for example, diversity and inclusion, housing, communities). Migrant Champions act as a single point of contact for migrant constituents, to encourage often marginalised communities to come forward and engage with their local representatives.

Councils only have a statutory duty to appoint a Veterans Champion. However, many local councils have appointed councillors to fulfil various Champion roles, according to their priorities as an administration. Establishing Champion roles allows councils to raise the profile of and demonstrate commitment to an issue. Champions can also promote effective communication and positive working relationships both within the Council and amongst partners, stakeholders and community groups. Establishing a Migrant Champion is a real statement of commitment to building community cohesion and resident involvement, and encouraging all our communities to flourish.

WHAT CAN MIGRANT CHAMPIONS DO?

As above, Migrant Champions act as a single point of contact for migrant constituents, to signpost them for support with issues that arise, and to enhance communications between migrant communities and their local representatives. Migrant Champions also serve as a point of contact for organisations in the local area providing frontline support, to improve relationships between councils and such organisations.

Within councils, Migrant Champions help to ensure that councils are complying with their responsibilities under the law, and benefit from examples of best practice in how local councils support migrant constituents. Migrant Champions act as a voice within the council and externally to offer support to migrant constituents and improve councils' relationships with local communities.

WHAT SUPPORT IS THERE?

The Migrants Champion Network, made up of Migrant Champions from different councils across the UK and supported by JCWI, connects Migrant Champions and provides them with a forum to share examples of best practice. It also provides Migrant Champions with extensive resources to support their local councils to better signpost, support and establish relationships with migrant constituents. Additionally, the Migrant Champions Network works to increase the visibility of Migrant Champions and their positive work in the community.

The Migrant Champions Network also provides Migrant Champions with support to respond to press enquiries where appropriate, and information about responding to new developments in immigration and other areas of law. Any other resources required by Migrant Champions will be provided by the Network, and local councils are not projected to be asked for resources in respect of the Migrant Champion.

If you would like any further information please visit www.migrantchampionsnetwork.co.uk or email info@migrantchampionsnetwork.co.uk