



working with refugees to build new lives

LONDON MIGRANT HOMELESSNESS CONFERENCE



Summary Report produced 18th November 2013.

The full report can be found on Refugee Action's website
www.refugee-action.org.uk

Introduction

This conference report and summary was produced by Heather Petch on behalf of Refugee Action following a meeting of London Funders which discussed the outcomes of the conference and committed to sharing more widely the agenda developed by the participants.

A more detailed conference report is available on Refugee Action's website www.refugee-action.org.uk

Actions were proposed during the conference and are presented in full together with an update of progress prepared by Refugee Action who led on organisation of the conference.

Only with a concerted and coordinated approach will we ensure that the growing number of homeless migrants has equality of access to services and that their human rights are protected. For this reason part of the summary pulls together proposals made during the conference to provide a framework for service modelling and influencing at a strategic level.

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Summary

Conference aims

Refugee Action partnered with Homeless Link to:

- To bring together organisations from the housing, homelessness, refugee and migrant sectors and local authorities to focus on identifying the key issues in migrant homelessness.
- To share knowledge, best practise and strengthen the understanding of how these issues are experienced and tackled by migrants and the different sectors working with them.
- To answer the number of key questions under each discussion area and identify areas for joint working. To identify potential for cross sector working groups to carry out follow-up work.

Focus

- How agencies working in the homelessness and migrant sectors can appropriately identify, advise and refer different migrants.
- Developing accommodation options for people with No Recourse to Public Funds.
- Preventing Homelessness amongst refugees with the right to remain – plugging the integration gap

Conclusions

- This conference was long overdue given the rising numbers of homeless people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).
- The needs of destitute migrants have been neglected and a concerted and coordinated action is needed to ensure an inclusive approach.
- The breach of Human Rights needs to be publicly addressed if no support is offered to this group with due attention to destitute families with children under 18 years and vulnerable individuals whose rights under the Children's Act 1989 and Community Care Act 1993 have not been adhered to in many situations.
- Homelessness agencies have done their best to respond, but there remains a need to join up with the migrant and refugee sectors that have a longer history of responding to the needs of migrants – a 'cross pollination' of approaches and information that will help all sectors to respond more effectively to tackle and prevent destitution.
- Combining expertise and joint work is vital against the backdrop of localism, government cuts to public services and legal aid.
- Access to good legal advice to determine and regularise immigration status is a vital ingredient in finding solutions and for those who do not achieve leave to remain support for voluntary return is an option.
- Without more accommodation accessible to those with no resources to public funds solutions will not be found.
- Working with community groups is also important because most destitute migrants are supported by friends and family.
- A number of areas for policy change which would benefit from joint campaigning to prevent homelessness were highlighted throughout the conference:
 - Immigration and asylum decision making
 - Better support for refugees when they get status
 - Equality of access to services including benefits, homelessness and support services, legal advice, housing

Different groups of destitute migrants

- Rough sleeping on London streets by non-EU migrants is a small but growing phenomenon. Over 50% of rough sleepers in London are not UK nationals and of this group 40% are not from the European Union. This group is growing.¹
- Relatively new to the streets, there is little research or information about their situation.
- The group is not homogenous; their needs, rights and entitlements can differ enormously. Many have 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF) which makes solutions more complex and some have claimed asylum and been unable to access support.
- Of those with NRPF, for some the Home Office have refused their claim for protection yet they do not feel it safe to return; others may have overstayed a visa, been trafficked or never reported to the authorities and have since become trapped in destitution without a clear route out.
- Homeless people are also vulnerable to traffickers.
- There are also recognised refugees who find themselves destitute and street homeless after their initial grant of leave to remain in the UK, because they are unable to access work and mainstream benefits by the end of the tight 28 day window.

Collaboration in working with rough sleepers

- Better identification of immigration status and effective signposting is needed in street outreach work if solutions are to be found to their rough sleeping.
- Joint working rooted in an approach which is transparent and able to inspire trust in people who are fearful and often very vulnerable is important.
- Access to accommodation for people with NRPF is vital to progress cases.
- Street Legal West is the first joint project bringing together immigration advice and legal support with street outreach and homelessness services. Funded by the Homeless Transition Fund and operating in West London it is a joint partnership between Thamesreach, St Mungos and Refugee Action which co-locates the different expertise of migrant support and homelessness agencies.
- Street Legal West is developing an appropriate and successful response to migrant rough sleeping by co-locating and achieving a consensus for joint work between homelessness agencies with an assertive outreach approach and a migrant support agency with a non-directive advice role including access to voluntary returns support.

Accommodation for people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

- Accommodation options available to homeless migrants with no recourse to public funds are very limited, mostly provided by faith based groups and includes nightshelters,

¹Broadway 'Street to Home' CHAIN Bi-Monthly reports: 2010/11 - 440; 2011/12 - 736; 2012/13 – 946; and see also London's Poverty Profile 2013 (p.46) Trust for London

hosting schemes or use of houses owned by faith groups, charities or housing associations and donated and/or leased at a pepper corn rent.

- Many of the 32 accommodation projects within the national, informal NACCOM (No Accommodation) network were established following the immigration changes in 2004 which led to a steep increase in asylum destitution.
- Demand outstrips supply; the estimated number of beds in London for NRPF homeless people is around 150. Most of those are night shelter beds, which are only appropriate as an emergency measure given the length of time destitute migrants need in accommodation to re-access mainstream support services.
- Praxis have identified three levels of need which determine the length of time needed in accommodation.
 1. Straight forward cases may only require 4-6 weeks accommodation before being resettled, often in UKBA Asylum Support.
 2. More work to prepare case but is usually workable in 3 months. This might be extended for complex cases but should not require more than 6 months.
 3. People who already have an application in, such as Article 8, but are not entitled to support services. Many young people find themselves in this situation, despite having been in the country for many years. This level requires up to 2 years free accommodation.
- Some projects providing accommodation do so only where there is potential for legal remedy/regularisation of the immigration position except where respite is needed. Some faith based groups will help anyone on the basis of need.
- Hosting schemes involve an individual or family offering a spare room in their house and the host decides on the parameters. Support is available to both host and guest. There is a London Hosting network coordinated by Praxis and involving many Housing Justice members which seeks to develop more provision in the capital.
- Many NACCOM members also run houses but this model is less common in London where donated properties are inevitably more difficult to secure due to extreme housing shortages.
- Boaz run 12 houses mostly donated free of charge (by churches, individuals and Green Pastures a Christian social investment agency). 40% of people helped by Boaz have been given leave to remain , some have gone into section 4 support, some have found family and friends to stay with but a few have gone back to the streets.
- Praxis has one house and one in the pipeline donated by Metropolitan Housing.
- Fresh Start is run by Refugee Action and has six bedspaces for women in a house donated by the Church of England.
- Faith groups and religious orders run houses, for example, the London Catholic Worker House (in fact two houses) in East London run by volunteers. Most people stay until they get leave to remain and the local authority sometimes refers people.
- Many faith group run nightshelters for homeless people are accommodating people with NRPF and Housing Justice is researching this.

- Some agencies are providing bedspaces for people with NRPF within their existing provision, for example, St Mungos and Emmaus.

Preventing homelessness amongst refugees with right to remain

- The British Red Cross estimate that 25% of those accessing its destitution services are refugees with status who have had extreme difficulties in accessing mainstream services, in particular benefits but also housing and in London the proportion is higher.
- With the demise of the Home Office funded Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) there is no one port of call for refugees when they get a positive decision. Help is scattered across different services.
- Local authorities, asylum accommodation and support providers, housing providers and Job Centre Plus all have a role to play.
- The private rented sector is the main source of housing available but is difficult to access, especially following changes in housing benefit and the experience of conference participant was that private landlords are not interested in under 25s and/or may charge more because of added 'risk'.
- There are high levels of secondary migration to London and problems of scarcity and poor access are exacerbated by the misconception that a social housing tenancy can be obtained if you wait long enough.
- There are continuing delays in issuing of relevant documentation by the Home Office. The British Red Cross is campaigning on this issue and pointed out that recent case law means the Home Office should support people until status documents have been issued.
- Job Centre Plus' guidance in this field is no longer operational and practice is poor and sometimes discriminatory e.g. limited use of interpreters.
- Abolition of the Social Fund means access to one-off payments to help with a crisis or costs of securing and moving into a new home are more limited.
- Local connection rules are complex for refugees entitled to priority homeless status.
- Refugee Council have developed a guide around refugee move-on housing
- Hope Worldwide run an access to the PRS scheme and 30% of the people houses are refugees.
- Sharing documentation and templates between agencies makes sense and some offer correspondence addresses.
- RAMFEL works in partnership with Single Homeless Project in running one of two HACT Accommodate projects in London but housing benefit changes and caps make this approach more difficult.

Agreed actions

Plenary session actions

- The prospect of sourcing funding for more professionals working in the homelessness sector to be trained on OISC (Office of the Immigration Service Commission). This would help to fill the gaps left after cuts to Legal Aid. HL/RA to take this recommendation to London Funders.
- Create stronger links with the Home Office to support clients who face difficulties in accessing their documents, which is crucial to access support. RA to consult law centres on the specific document issues and utilise UKBA contacts to raise the issue at a policy level.
- Urgent need for cross-sector cooperation and involvement of Local Authorities. Specific objectives to be worked through then HL/RA to look at approach to developing better LA links. RAMFEL have already developed some good links through delivering training. Suggestion for all participants to engage with NRPF network.
- Organising ongoing networking events to share information and best practice. HL/RA to consider funding opportunities for this. Agreed that the London Migrant Homelessness Conference is to be an annual event, next conference scheduled: Monday 26th May 2014.
- Train outreach workers on immigration and entitlement issues so people who are street homeless with recourse to some public funds are identified. RA, Praxis and Islington Law Centre to scope the needs and expertise in London law centres with a view to facilitating training. Potentially part of Homeless Link's training programme.
- Projects providing immigration advice to street homeless clients to develop working relationships to share the evidence base from which trends can be identified and taken forward by policy or advocacy. Action for all of these projects: RA/ St Mungo's, Islington Law Centre, engage with Lambeth and Southwark Law Centre projects.

Workshop one actions

Pooling resources to address the needs of this client group:

- Agencies to explore cross sector NRPF accommodation projects using the learning from the workshop discussion; and identify opportunities for funding these projects. Homeless Link/Refugee Action to feed back the learning from this workshop to London funders in September.
- Coordinate shelters group to look at mainstreaming and supporting shelters and developing more sustainable accommodation options. Homeless Link to look at taking this forward, ensuring no duplication.
- Scoping of NRPF opportunities in East Midlands. Refugee Action to take a proposal forward with a homelessness sector partner and Metropolitan Migration Foundation.

- Homelessness and migrant agencies to provide support to grass roots and faith based projects already trying to fill the gap. Don't just refer, look at capacity building. Action for all participants.
- Refugee and migrant organisations do not have the expertise or connections regarding homelessness and housing, and vice versa, so need help from each sector. 'Twinning' between organisations suggested. Any housing or homelessness agency wanting a refugee/migrant sector partner should contact Homeless Link; and Refugee/migrant charities vice versa to contact Refugee Action to facilitate this.
- Engagement with No Recourse to Public Funds networks: Action for all

Workshop two actions

- Cross sector working group to pool resources mapping local social fund alternatives for rent deposits, encourage greater transparency and disseminate the relevant information across two sectors. Refugee Action to facilitate/chair. Agreed participant agencies: Hope Worldwide, Refugee Council, RAMFEL, British Red Cross, Broadway Day Centre, Passage Day Centre. Bring in any existing research (Kings Fund, Crisis, Children's Society). Contact EleanorF@refugee-action.org.uk for further information.
- Cross sector working group on developing a joined up approach to work with DWP and policy priorities around the benefits gap for refugees and the wider group of migrants recently granted status. Refugee Action and Homeless Link to host. Interested organisations: Islington Law Centre, Hope Worldwide, Refugee Council, RAMFEL Learn from RA experience with East London Strategic Partnership in East Midlands; ensure a complementary agenda to the Home Office Integration Sub Group and NASAF.
- Consider consultative partnerships between Refugee/Migrant organisations and HAs/Cooperatives around assessments to ensure equal opportunities for refugees.
- A number of participants felt that it would be useful for there to be coordinated information sharing, especially around the impact of the changes to welfare benefits in the future. The above working groups to look at information already available that can be circulated to conference attendees.
- Templates to challenge unlawful benefits decisions: Islington Law Centre, Hope Worldwide, Praxis and Refugee Action to look at taking this forward at HIG.
- Develop better links with Home Office regarding securing clients documents – Refugee Action to consult law centres and take this action forward.

Update on actions (as of 17th November 2013)

Progress on recommendations from the conference

1. Identifying, advising, signposting

RA and Homeless Link organised NRPF training for 15 front line homelessness professionals on 'Working with Homeless Migrants'. The training was provided by Islington Law Centre and Praxis.

The course was well received, giving front line staff an opportunity to ask questions to legal and migrant professionals, and in turn discuss some of the challenges they face working directly with homeless migrants on the streets and in day centres.

This basic course will be repeated in the new year, and we are exploring options for funding a rolling course that will form part of the induction programme for all new front line staff in the homeless sector.

A follow up course 'Working with Homeless Migrants and Mental Health, a legal perspective' is being held on 25th November at Refugee Action's offices with additional coordination by Homeless Link. It is being provided by Southwark Law Centre and Refugee Action.

Other developments:

Street Legal West – a protocol for working with UKBA has been developed for outreach teams working with homeless migrants. We are looking at rolling this out to other teams within St Mungos and more widely across the homelessness sector.

St Mungos and Praxis have received a Homeless Transition Fund grant to work with law centres and others to provide services to destitute migrants in boroughs in the East/ South East of London.

2. Developing accommodation options for people with NRPF

St Mungos have been developing 'Street Legal Beds' across London for people with NRPF.

Housing Justice is undertaking a piece of work for the GLA to identify the accommodation provided by faith based groups for destitute migrants.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation is exploring how to develop more accommodation for destitute migrants through collaborative approaches involving other agencies and funders.

3. Preventing Homelessness for refugees with the right to remain

The Social Fund Reform Group (SFRG) has met 3 times since the conference, coordinated and chaired by Refugee Action. Outputs include:

Information sharing about the various schemes being operated by different local authorities, disseminated across contacts

Engagement with individual local authorities and London Councils

Influencing - Submissions including recommendations on the impact of localisation of the social fund on refugees and wider homeless population to London Councils (and follow up meetings with several LAs to push forward recommendations), London Funders and 'Inside Housing' magazine highlighting areas of good practice across LAs how these can be replicated; plus attendance at DWP stakeholder group by members of SFRG to highlight the issue of benefits gap for refugees.

Potential service framework

A framework emerged for a service model to reach out effectively to the growing numbers of non EU migrant homeless people with a specific emphasis on those rough sleeping or at risk of doing so.

1. **Street outreach work** – developing an appropriate model of engagement and identification.
 - Need to raise awareness amongst front line workers of fear of ‘return’ for those who have been persecuted or have been in the UK a long time which challenges the assertive outreach model.
 - To support people to move on from destitution requires trust and impartial, no directive advice on immigration rather than relying solely on the Home Office
 - Many people move in and out of community and kinship networks so working with community groups to encourage community responsibility, dispel myths and manage expectations is vital
2. **Recognising and signposting** – awareness training on immigration and cultural issues
 - To ensure equality of access to homelessness services front line workers need sufficient knowledge to recognise broad issues around immigration status and sign post effectively (both in outreach and advice/day centre etc. contexts)
3. **Access to accommodation** – with different time periods needed to achieve stabilisation of basic health and well-being needs and facilitate access to potential legal remedies, otherwise people will be back on the streets over and over again.
 - Urgent need for more emergency accommodation for people with no recourse to public funds many of whom have complex needs, including their immigration position, none of which can be addressed without respite
 - Faith based groups and community organisations play a major role in accommodation provision and need to be included in strategies to tackle homelessness
 - Homelessness agencies to provide more provision within existing schemes
 - Accommodation is needed for differing time periods; 4-6 weeks of respite during which time the potential solutions can be identified; between 3 to 9 months where more substantial support and/or time for immigration claims and/or return options to be explored and progressed; very occasionally in very complex cases 1 to 2 years.
4. **Casework management** – combining expertise of homelessness and migrant support agencies
 - A case management approach tailored and responsive to individual situations is needed including with those who may have no prospect of regularising their status so as to explore the options of living below the radar with is risk of

destitution or 'voluntary return'. Forced return is expensive and not effective in engaging people.

- Cross-sector partnerships with clarity about roles and meshing of different approaches is needed to deliver effective case management and provide continuity which is essential for successful well-being and immigration outcomes
5. **Access to quality legal advice** - Good legal advice has to be a core element of any no recourse or move-on project if successful outcomes are to be achieved. Many people will have had very poor advice in the past and Home Office decisions are fallible. The increased strain of legal advice cuts is already being felt and it is not always possible to get urgent legal advice even in the most vulnerable cases.
- Specialist workers needed to maintain expertise in this area and utilise the few but important legal entitlements as well as provide training
 - Access to experienced solicitors with immigration expertise
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation** – to develop effective service models and influence policy
- Monitor and evaluate outcomes of different approaches
 - Potential use of 'Street Link' to identify rough sleepers (suggested by DCLG)
 - Potential for confidential information database
7. **Joint working and networking** – to provide training, cross fertilisation of expertise and ideas, information sharing
- Training of front-line staff most effectively provided through cross- sectoral partnerships
 - Joint case management approach
 - Development of leadership on this issue is needed
 - Share legal expertise
 - Networking events to share information and practice are effective and embed joint working

Potential roles for relevant agencies

1. **The homelessness sector** is in a position to play a more proactive, leadership role and to support joint working and cross-fertilisation between faith based, migrant support and immigration agencies.
2. **Local authorities** could develop strategies for addressing the needs of people with no recourse to public funds (Nottingham has done this) and ground work in the local areas and communities affected, coordinate resources of different agencies and community groups, as well as ensure equality of access to their relevant services e.g. housing advice and homelessness services, local discretionary funds that have replaced the social fund.
3. **Central Government** could coordinate action across departments to ensure that policies, practice and guidance prevent homelessness including:

- Home Office – ease of access to documentation to support routes out of homelessness, administration of 28 day and NASS 35 processes
 - DCLG – homelessness prevention and tackling rough sleeping
 - DWP/JCP – training and guidance for front line staff and/or special case officers
4. **London wide bodies**, including GLA and London Councils, could review homelessness and relevant strategies and funding expectations to ensure they are effective in achieving positive outcomes for migrants.
 5. **Sub-regional groups** - conference participants referred to the effectiveness of sub-regional approaches to tackling homelessness and thought this level of activity might be particularly appropriate in coordinating initiatives to address migrant destitution.
 6. **Migrant support and community groups** are the main providers of support to destitute community members and can play a critical role within their communities in raising awareness about housing access and referrals to better legal advice.
 7. **Law centres and legal profession** can coordinate their inputs to this area of dwindling provision and support frontline workers to signpost effectively.
 8. **Faith based groups** are the main providers of housing to both those who may still have a legal claim open to them and those who have exhausted any possibility of getting leave to stay. They must ensure that residents have access to good legal advice and other services and coordinate their work with others where it is likely to improve outcomes.
 9. **Social housing providers** can support homelessness and migrant support and community groups operating within their areas of operation and ensure equity of access to their housing services.
 10. **Independent funders** could fund gaps in provision, practical charitable interventions and pilots which could lead to better practice across relevant sectors.

Perspective of conference organisers

About Refugee Action

Refugee Action is an independent, national charity working to enable refugees and asylum seekers to build new lives. They provide practical emergency support for newly arrived asylum seekers and long term commitment to their settlement. As one of the country's leading agencies in this field Refugee Action has more than 30 years' experience in pioneering innovative work in partnership with refugees.

Dave Garratt, Chief Executive

Preventable homelessness and destitution are major issues for asylum seekers as well as irregular migrants, and occur at all stages of the asylum system.

While rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness in the capital, we know the problem is much more widespread, with the majority of migrants turning to their communities or faith groups for help, putting considerable strain on already fragile community resources and individuals and meaning there are many more people at risk. Working with this 'community sector' needs to be an important part of any solution.

London in particular is a hub for secondary migration. The challenges faced by migrants who find themselves without work or support in the UK are brought into sharper focus in the capital, which has the largest number of undocumented migrants in the country.

Frustratingly, for those who are granted status in the UK and full entitlement to public funds, this vulnerable state can continue as they try and fail to navigate the complexities of the welfare state and housing systems that hold the key to beginning the path to integration. These barriers not only increase the risk of people falling into preventable destitution, but also put an increased strain on front line homelessness and destitution services for want of a joined up approach.

Two years ago, Refugee Action took over the Voluntary Returns contract with UKBA. We have always worked on supporting people to make their own decisions around return because our roots are in supporting the settlement of specific exiled communities-Vietnamese, Chilean and Kosovan – many of whom at some stage expressed a desire to return to their countries of origin once it was safe to do so.

With Refugee Action's Choices service, we are now operating at a larger scale and are working with non-asylum seeking groups. This was a key driver in establishing the Street Legal partnership with St Mungo's and Thamesreach, funded by the Homeless Transition Fund. We are also utilising our charity's expertise around right and entitlements from delivering One Stop Service advice in other parts of the country. In setting up this partnership, Refugee Action has been confronted with the realities of the different expertise and approaches, and the long term problems of some migrants who are entrenched in rough sleeping. There is the simple need for getting right and timely advice and signposting support for others, for example those who have recently been granted status.

Today we are focusing on non-EU migrants, partly because of Refugee Action's own remit and because we are aware there has already been a significant service development for homeless EU migrants.

Refugee Action is committed to working with Homeless Link and other homelessness sector partners to address these issues, combine expertise and formulate joint strategies.

About Homeless Link

Homeless Link is the only national charity supporting people and organisations working directly with homeless people in England. They represent homelessness organisations among local, regional and national government. As the national collaborative hub for information and debate on homelessness, they seek to improve services for homeless people and to advocate policy change. Through this work, they aim to end homelessness in England.

The Homeless Transition Fund has funded several migrant homelessness projects and is leading on several migrant homelessness issues within Homeless Link (including involvement in this conference). It is an independent fund administered by Homeless Link with funds from the Department of Communities and Local Government that aims to protect essential services for homeless people, encourage innovation and support communities to tackle rough sleeping.

Rick Henderson, Chief Executive

Rough sleeping in London by non-EU migrants is a small but growing phenomenon and this group of people are relatively new to the streets. Thus so far there is relatively little research or information available.

The submission from Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Housing Migration Network to the current Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into the asylum system and destitution reported that's citizens' groups in a number of cities have investigated the situation of destitute people who have come through the asylum system:

- The Nottingham Citizens' Commission into Homelessness and Hope found one in five failed asylum seekers sleeping rough.²
- In London, where the most detailed records are kept, street count data suggest more than half those sleeping rough are from outside the UK.³
- Evidence suggests that a proportion are refugees with status who have not received proper documentation and/or effective support during the '28 day transition period' and failed asylum seekers and/or those awaiting decisions.

Homelessness agencies are still grappling with appropriate solutions to the needs of EU rough sleepers and have done their best to respond to the rise in this group whilst the needs of non-EU rough sleepers are often even more complex. There remains a need to join up with the migrant and refugee sectors that have a longer history of responding to the needs of migrants - a 'cross pollination' of approaches and information that will help all sectors to respond more effectively.

² Citizens for Sanctuary Nottingham (2012) *Report of the Homelessness and Hope Commission*.

³ See Footnote 1 above

This need for cross-sector working was picked up by the first meeting of the Homelessness Transition Fund Panel who rejected the first batch of applications for funding to address these issues because of the clear lack of expertise in the immigration and migration field.

We are also aware that there is a campaigning need in relation to failures in the system. For those seeking asylum, who are granted status in the UK and full entitlement to public funds, a vulnerable state can continue as they try but too often fail to navigate the complexities of the welfare and housing systems that hold the key to beginning the path to integration.

These barriers (not helped by the fact you only have a maximum of 28 days to sort out claims) not only increase the risk of people falling into preventable destitution, but also put an increased strain on front line homelessness and destitution services for want of a joined up approach. Homeless Link is committed to working with Refugee Action and others who believe this is an area in which they can have some traction with Government.

Homeless Link are keen to support homeless agencies proving effective solutions to all clients, not just those with recourse to public funds, based on individual needs and entitlements. We are also committed to looking at ways that the expertise of our members in providing homelessness advice and managing supported housing can be shared with migrant and destitution charities that are increasingly called on to provide housing and homelessness services.

Destitute migrants – status and forms of support

Asylum seekers and certain categories of refused asylum seekers are entitled to asylum support provided by the Home Office and consisting of accommodation and a small cash allowance. Determining entitlement can be complex.

Destitute asylum seekers are entitled to Section 95 Support (Immigration and Asylum Act 1999) until their asylum claim is fully determined and for families this can continue further. Refused asylum seekers and those who have overstayed visas are unable to access most forms of support, although Home Office Section 4 support is available in restricted circumstances to refused asylum seekers (most commonly secured by submitting a fresh claim). It may also be available to those with a medical impediment to travel, who are taking all reasonable steps to put themselves in a position to leave the UK, or have a pending judicial review. The cash support is less than Section 95 support.

All vulnerable individuals and families with children may be entitled to local authority support under the Community Care Act 1990 or Children's Act 1989. Most clients who approach the local authority for support under either of these instruments are turned away and committed advocates are needed to support vulnerable clients to access the support they are entitled to.

Human trafficking is the process of bringing an individual into a situation of exploitation through the use of various means of coercion and violence. The crime of trafficking is defined in the Palermo Protocol and the Council of Europe Trafficking Convention.

The indicators of forced labour include:

- Violence or threat of violence
- Non-payment of wages/excessive deductions
- Restriction of movement
- Withdrawal of ID documents
- Threat of denunciation to authorities

Street outreach workers are increasingly encountering people who have been trafficked. Some may be escaped victims of trafficking but rough sleepers are also vulnerable to recruitment by traffickers who often provide accommodation.

It is important to remember that conditions are the determining factor, rather than the type of work/activity. Forced labour can be found in areas outside of usual industries (e.g. forced criminal activities, forced begging). The UK policy on trafficking involves:

- Home Office Trafficking Strategy 2011
- National Referral Mechanism (NRM) - formal system for identification and basic assistance
- Operated by the UK Human Trafficking Centre and UKBA
- Ministry of Justice administers contract with NGOs providing services to victims

Street outreach approaches

Collaboration in street outreach work

Street Legal West is the first joint project bringing together immigration advice and legal support with street outreach and homelessness services. Funded by the Homeless Transition Fund and operating in West London it is a joint partnership between Thamesreach, St Mungos and Refugee Action. Street Legal was set because:

- Immigration advice for this client group was patchy, lacked quality control
- No time or expertise for in depth case analysis within the homelessness sector
- Concern that vulnerable homeless people were being routinely rounded up and detained without access to legal advice or support and released to destitution
- Concern that victims of trafficking were being overlooked
- Experience of client group through Refugee Action's Choices work - some understanding of push/pull factors and barriers to return

Success indicators

- 76 people encountered and 52 on immigration advice caseload
- Dealing with all needs -housing, health, immigration, relationships and with health, social service and housing providers
- Speedier resolutions (outcome data will be available shortly)
- Co-location and consensus between two agencies with different approaches

Challenges

- Where to house people while they wait? Need both low and high support options
- A hidden problem with most people in insecure accommodation so when clients hit the streets, things are extremely complex
- Contact with embassies not always straightforward
- Different approaches - assertive outreach approach of no-second night out v. non-directive advice of migrant support agencies
- Trust - clients will not work with us if we simply refer cases to UKBA
- Transparency - must be honest about potential outcomes if people refuse to engage

Potential future developments

- Volunteer programme to expand and add value, including people with lived experiences
- Replicate in other areas of London
- Develop community work and community education i.e. raising awareness within communities about options and access to advice to prevent destitution

Housing approaches

The very limited accommodation options available to homeless migrants with no recourse to public funds were explored and different approaches presented. Most projects are faith based and many are part of the informal NACCOM (No Accommodation) network of 32 projects which is currently convened by the Boaz Trust in Manchester, one of the largest projects housing destitute asylum seekers. Many NACCOM projects accommodate only destitute asylum seekers.

Demand outstrips supply; the estimated number of beds in London for NRPF homeless people is around 150. Most of those are nightshelter beds, which are only appropriate as an emergency measure given the length of time destitute migrants need in accommodation to re-access mainstream support services.

Praxis have identified three levels of need which determine the length of time needed in accommodation.

4. Straight forward cases may only require 4-6 weeks accommodation before being resettled, often in UKBA Asylum Support.
5. More work to prepare case but is usually workable in 3 months. This might be extended for complex cases but should not require more than 6 months.
6. People who already have an application in, such as Article 8, but are not entitled to support services. Many young people find themselves in this situation, despite having been in the country for many years. This level requires up to 2 years free accommodation.

Some projects providing accommodation do so only where there is potential for legal remedy/regularisation of the immigration position except where respite is needed. Some faith based groups will help anyone on the basis of need.

Hosting

Hosting Scheme – involves an individual or family offering a spare room in their house and the host decides on the parameters. Support is available to both host and guest. Benefits of hosting include:

- cost effectiveness; clusters of hosts offer a sustainable solution
- guests usually have a positive experience (although they may not suit everyone)

Examples

- **Boaz Trust (Manchester)** - around 40 hosts involved in the scheme with 12-15 guests at any given time (only asylum seekers).
- **London Hosting Network** – is coordinated by Praxis and involves Housing Justice and other faith based groupings. It is looking to develop and believes that despite the challenge of people having spare rooms in the capital, there is potential to be tapped with greater publicity, support and coordination.

Houses

Boaz Trust Housing Scheme provides accommodation for single asylum seekers in 12 houses loaned mostly free of charge (by Green Pastures a Christian social investment scheme or churches/Christians with a spare house). Boaz has insured these buildings and is responsible for basic maintenance, upkeep and bills. Each house costs around £5,700 in annual running costs.

The Boaz Trust service model is called 'Catch – Hold – Release'

- Catch - This phase catches those who have fallen through the statutory net. Within the first month caseworkers do assessments and provide practical help and orientation.
- Hold - During this phase there are quarterly progress reviews. Clients are engaged in the *Boaz Life* programme, and helped to find ways forward, including legal help and gathering fresh evidence.
- Release - Hopefully to refugee status within a year

40% of people help by the Boaz Trust have been given leave to remain, some have gone onto Section 4 support, some have found family and friends to stay with and one or two have gone back to the streets. Few have taken up return options.

Praxis has developed a no recourse accommodation model:

- drawing on the Hope Housing model in Birmingham⁴ which uses housing association (HA) properties provided at a peppercorn rent with the HAs taking responsibility for major repairs and the destitution project dealing with day-to-day management.
- Metropolitan Housing Trust has donated 2 houses to Praxis for this purpose.
- considerations when setting up no recourse accommodation include standards and safety, planning issues and support needs for especially vulnerable homeless clients
- believe that given the surpluses many HAs are making in London they could make a contribution but are finding it difficult to do so and have realised this needs to happen through the right connections.

Refugee Action's Fresh Start project

- offers six bedspaces for asylum seeking women in one large house in Leicester
- house donated by the Church of England.
- six months stay and focus on women for whom a legal remedy is possible
- links with 'City of Sanctuary' work important

Religious orders and faith-based community houses

London Catholic Worker House is two houses in East London:

- run by volunteers, started very quickly and demand always outstrips supply
- housing department visited the property at the outset but did not get involved
- the council now make referrals and have included it on their list of available housing
- most guests stay until they have leave to remain in the UK.

⁴ <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/housing-destitution-pack.pdf>

Shelters for destitute migrants

Many night shelters, winter shelters and crash pads, particularly those provided by faith based groups provide for all homeless people, including those with no recourse to public funds. They may not be well networked in terms of access to quality legal advice.

Bedspaces in existing homelessness provision

Some homelessness and supported housing projects commit to making a certain number of bedspaces available to destitute people with no recourse to public funds. St Mungos, for example, have adopted this model and each Emmaus community has committed to do this.

Preventing homelessness amongst refugees

The British Red Cross estimated that 25% of those accessing its destitution services are refugees with status⁵ who have had extreme difficulties in accessing mainstream services, in particular benefits but also housing (in London the proportion is higher). Local authorities, asylum accommodation and support providers, housing providers and Job Centre Plus all have a role to play. With the demise of the Home Office funded Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) there is no one port of call for refugees when they get a positive decision. Help is scattered across different services.

The private rented sector is the main source of housing available but is difficult to access, especially following changes in housing benefit and the experience of conference participant was that private landlords are not interested in under 25s and/or may charge more because of added 'risk'. Better joint working to tackle these issues is needed, particularly given the high levels of secondary migration to London. Problems of scarcity and poor access are exacerbated by the misconception that a social housing tenancy can be obtained if you wait long enough.

Barriers for refugees in accessing mainstream benefits when they are granted status

- Delays in the issuing of status documents mean those recently granted Leave to Remain are unable to prove their entitlements; it is estimated that over a half of cases experience delays in the NASS 35 being issued and that almost half of those who should have automatically been issued with a NINO upon being granted status did not
- Only 28 days is provided to move from Home Office to mainstream support. This is inadequate and although recent case law confirms that NASS continue to have a duty to support applicants until status documents have been issued this rarely happens.
- Poor practice in Job Centre Plus includes lack of adequate procedures for complex cases and reluctance of Job Centre Plus to use interpreters (yet both the race relations act and human rights act places a duty on public services to operate in a non-discriminatory way)
- Abolition of the Social Fund means access to one-off payments e.g. crisis loans, and payments to help find and move into a new home are more difficult e.g. rent in advance
- Cuts in legal aid have had a particular impact on migrants needing help with issues that cut across immigration and other service areas.

Housing barriers

- Since 1st October 2011 there is no integration programme for newly granted refugees
Refugees are not accessing services e.g. benefits and housing advice
- The housing sector do little proactively to ensure that refugees have equal access to housing
- Knowledge of options is inevitably poor if people have not been in the UK for long
- Local connection rules administered by local authorities can be complex for refugees
- Poor ability to self-advocate and be tenancy ready
- Cost of deposit and rent in advance
- Lack of guarantor and housing reference
- Discrimination against benefit claimants

Hope Worldwide

- Two Step houses single non-priority homeless people rather than just refugees but 30% of 130 single people housed in 2013 were refugees.
- Stop over scheme is a hosting scheme that tries to combat the transition between being housed and becoming street homeless which some people see as a risk but Hope have helped people this way for a total of 10,000 nights since 1993 and only once has social services been called.
- PRS is still an option for homeless people; there is still some private rented accommodation left and landlords want trouble free, long term tenants how pay the rent on time
- Landlords are worried about Universal Credit as they won't get paid directly as they do with housing benefit
- Benefit changes (see Chloe's presentation above) will have a detrimental impact - Hope Worldwide can help by providing a correspondence address given, a volunteer mentoring programme, checking DWP letters and stopping a drama from becoming a crisis
- The migrant and Housing sectors can help by working together to prevent miscommunication about housing, coordinated casework approach, communicating and sharing resources such as template letters

RAMFEL, Refugee & Migrant Forum of East London (RAMFEL)

- RAMFEL work within five London boroughs and Essex; they provide casework, build capacity of other groups
- Work well with the East London housing partnership and believe sub-regional working is important
- Accommodate PRS is a HACT project funded by European Refugee Fund, Crisis and the Oak Foundation piloting access to the PRS projects for refugees in 3 locations (London, Sandwell and Bolton).
- RAMFEL are working in partnership with Single Homelessness Project who source the properties and funding while RAMFEL source the refugees and provide the casework
- Alternate each day between 2 different crisis centres/the emergency night shelter
- 38 individuals have been housed in the PRS over the past two years and many have been referred to Refugee Action to partake in the *Choices* programme.
- Challenges include: clients' expectations of accessing social housing, moving people on as it is only a stop-gap, welfare reform, local housing allowance, landlords' prejudice
- RAMFEL also worked with Operation Reach, a police led operation in Redbridge to reduce street homelessness prior to the Olympics; many of target group were Indian and RAMFEL agreed to access to their immigration adviser provided the police didn't contact the UKBA before RAMFEL has spoken to clients
- Similar approach in 'beds in sheds' pilot operations and awareness of people moving between streets and various forms of insecure housing

Useful contact details and information about services shared at conference

- If you are in any doubt as to whether your client may be entitled for support from the Home Office, please call the ASAP advice line on 020 7729 3042 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 2-4pm. Otherwise, please consult their factsheets which are available on: <http://www.asaproject.org/research-publications/factsheets/>
- For advice and information on human trafficking contact:
 - UK Human Trafficking Centre on 0844 778 2406
 - Salvation Army 24hr referral line on 0300 303 8151
 - Metropolitan Police – anti trafficking line on 0800 731 8147
- Contact Sophia at RAMFEL for information on the Accommodate PRS project
Sofia.Rafique@ramfel.org.uk
- Broadway Day Centre in Shepherds Bush can provide a ‘care of’ address if this is a barrier to benefits, please contact them if you need this. Note that they have no capacity to call clients when post is received so clients will have to proactively collect post.
- Mental health forum: the Refugee Therapy Practitioners Forum is very helpful for relevant organisations, the next meeting is in September and this will be hosted by the Tavistock Centre. If you would like to join, please contact Pippa Brown for the current host:
Pippa.Brown@broadwaylondon.org
- Secondary migration and homelessness: Alone in London, NHYC, the Eritrean Community Centre and the Red Cross worked on a document that has been distributed to advice agencies outside London detailing the reality and practicalities of finding accommodation in London so people can do a planned move becoming homeless. Contact Jan at Alone in London for the document on moving to London.
- Refugee Action highlighted that the Refugee Customer Journey document by the DWP is no longer in use. This used to be a good tool to use when advocating to JCP and trying to revitalise this would be a good policy objective.
- The Move On pack on Refugee Council website has recently been updated and is in different languages – all encouraged to make use to this.
- New Horizons Youth Centre have an access to private rented project complemented by life skills and tenancy/budgeting training for young people.
- Homeless Link’s Homeless UK Database: www.homeless.org.uk/homeless-uk
- Migrant Voice: www.migrantvoice.org
- Making Every Adult Matter Report: www.meam.org.uk/publications

Conference agenda

10:15 – 10:45 Introductions and Aims of the Day

Dave Garratt, Chief executive, Refugee Action
Rick Henderson, Chief executive, Homeless Link

Plenary Session: Recognising, advising and signposting

- Exploring how front line professionals can identify and advise homeless people from outside the EU, depending on their immigration status and entitlements
- Developing awareness about the challenges to homelessness advisers (especially outreach workers) of the complexity of immigration cases and experiences of individual migrants

Presenters

Mario Marin Cotrini, Immigration Casework Supervisor, Migrants Resource Centre

Marie-Anne Fishwick, Legal Advisor and Researcher, Asylum Support Appeals Project

Klara Skrivankova, Trafficking Programme Coordinator, Anti-Slavery International

Eleanor Fethney, London Area Manager, Refugee Action

Adam Rees, Group Manager, Street and Community Outreach Impact Director, St Mungos

10:45 – 11:45 Plenary Presentations

11:45 – 12:00 Coffee break

12:00 – 12:30 Discussion Groups (3)

- Grounding knowledge from morning presentations and addressing any misconceptions
- Applying the learning to the services we are currently delivering

Facilitators

1. *Samantha Rennie, Director Homeless Transition Fund, Homeless Link and Rita Chadha, Chief Executive, RAMFEL*
2. *Rick Henderson and Dave Garratt (see above)*
3. *Louise Calvey, Deputy Director of Operations, Refugee Action and Heather Petch, Consultant, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Refugee Action*

Questions to address:

- What are the different situations of migrants and what do we need to consider when helping them explore available options?
- What are the legal options for people who have had their asylum claims refused and how can we ensure homeless asylum seekers are linked to quality advice provision to address destitution from a legal angle?
- What happens after people have exhausted all their legal options?
- How do we apply this learning to the services we deliver?

12:30 – 13:15 Lunch

13:15 – 15.30 Workshops

Workshop 1: Developing accommodation options for people with No Recourse to Public Funds

Facilitators

Juan Camillo, Migrant Rights Network and Heather Petch, Independent consultant and adviser to JRF and Refugee Action

Presenters

Dave Smith, Founder of Boaz Trust, Manchester & Convenor of NACCOM

Jean Demars, Housing project lead, Praxis

Conor Creagan, London Catholic Worker House Coordinator

Keith Grayson, East Midlands Area Manager, Refugee Action

- Exploring the extent of NRPF homelessness and the very limited accommodation options that are available to homeless migrants with no recourse to public funds.
- Hearing from the agencies that are providing accommodation and support through small funded projects and informal networks.
- Learning from established projects so as to identify opportunities for joint working to enhance, build on, or replicate such models in London.

Question to address:

- What lessons can be learned from cross-sector initiatives in Manchester, Leicester and now London?
- How can we pool resources to address the accommodation needs of this group?

Workshop 2: Preventing Homelessness amongst refugees with the right to remain – plugging the integration gap

Facilitators

Rick Jones, Director of Operations, Refugee Action and Shelagh O'Connor, Director, New Horizons

Presenters

Emma Renshaw, London Refugee Services Manager, British Red Cross BRC)

Chloe Morgan, Housing Resettlement Officer, Refugee Council

Tommy Cloherty, Head of Homelessness Services, Hope Worldwide

Rita Chadha, Chief Executive, RAMFEL (Refugee and Migrant Forum East London)

Questions to address:

- What are the challenges faced by refugees in accessing the private rented sector and how can the private and charitable sectors work better together to tackle the issues, particularly given the high levels of secondary migration to London.
- Is there enough being done to prevent homelessness amongst this group, particularly around sustainable tenancies, and to what extent are the good practice models used by housing associations reaching refugees and appropriate to their needs?
- In the context of the localism agenda how can we ensure refugee voices are heard and refugees are empowered to participate in brokering their own access to the housing market and decision making processes on resource allocation?

15:30 – 15:45 Coffee and Networking “Talking Walls” to record actions to take forward

15:45 – 16:00 Closing statements Rick Henderson and Dave Garratt

Conference participants

Refugee Action
Hackney Winter Night Shelter
Saint John of God Hospitaller Services
Centre Point
Hackney Migrant Centre
Metropolitan Housing
Crisis
CARIS Islington Winter Shelter
Broadway London
Migrants' Rights Network
RAMFEL
London Catholic Worker
Greater London Authority
Hope Worldwide
Praxis
London Borough of Hounslow
Taproot Consultancy
DCLG
Southwark Law Centre
Asylum Support Appeals Project
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
EAVES
London Borough of Camden
Ealing Rise (CRI)
Street Legal West
Lewisham Refugee & Migrant Network
NACCOM
Homeless Link
British Red Cross
Integration Refugee Council
Red Cross Refugee Services
New Horizons Youth Centre
Thamesreach
Islington Law Centre
The Children's Society
Church Army Marylebone Project
Migrants Resource Centre
West London Mission
Single Homeless Project
Refugee Council
Housing Justice
Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers
RAMP
Jesuit Refugee Service UK
Joseph Rowntree Foundation
St Mungos
Homeless Transition Fund
Klevis Kola Foundation
Evelyn Oldfield Unit
Innisfree Housing Association
Anti-Slavery International
Causeway Irish Housing Association
Community Trust Network
Lambeth Law Centre