Centre for
Homelessness Impact

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Homelessness, refugees and resettlement

by Philip Brown, Santokh Gill, Jamie P. Halsall, Tom Simcock and Akosiwa Agbokou

About the Centre for Homelessness Impact

The Centre for Homelessness Impact champions the creation and use of better evidence for a world without homelessness. Our mission is to improve the lives of those experiencing homelessness by ensuring that policy, practice and funding decisions are underpinned by reliable evidence.

Person-first language

This report uses person-first language, putting a person before their circumstances. This is to avoid defining an individual by homelessness, which should be a temporary experience.

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Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber
Part of Migration Yorkshire

This project is co-funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Making management of migration flows more efficient across the European Union.

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About the report

This paper was developed in partnership with the Centre for Homelessness Impact and draws on research that has been produced as part of Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber.[1] The project was mobilised in January 2021 and will conclude in December 2023. It has sought to understand the housing pathways and experiences of refugees who had settled in the UK over a 30-year period. It has involved extensive scoping reviews of the literature and in-depth research with over 80 refugees and over 100 policy actors and practitioners.[2]

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1 Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber (RIYH) is led by Migration Yorkshire and is delivered across the region through a wide partnership of organisations. Its ambition is to roll-out a whole-society approach to integration across Yorkshire and Humber and to support new refugees, communities and public services to work with and benefit from each other. This work is co-funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). More information is available at https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/refugee-integration-yorkshire-and-humber/about-refugee-integration-yorkshire-and-humber.

2 The project has produced a number of relevant outputs and these can be found at http://healthy-housing.uk/portfolio/homeward-bound-the-housing-transitions-of-refugees/

Summary

The quality and conditions of housing, its affordability, the security it offers, how it is accessed and, indeed, the housing system as a whole all combine to influence the lives of everyone in society. Poverty and wider factors such as employment, education and health inequalities amplify the significance housing plays in mitigating or exacerbating the challenges associated with their housing, or their homelessness pathways. These issues are not experienced equally by all members of society and those living on the fringes of society routinely experience the worst housing outcomes as well as ongoing negative experiences. Refugees are one such group. The term refugee is used in this paper to refer to those people who have been given refugee status as well as other forms of protection such as Humanitarian Protection and Discretionary Leave.

Whilst the experiences of refugees have much in common with those of other higher risk groups, refugees are typically multiply disadvantaged. There is a lack of systematically collected data on housing outcomes disaggregated by immigration status, this is also an evolving policy area. As such, this paper draws on published evidence, available and relevant data and insights from recent research undertaken by the authors.

The paper starts by detailing the different routes refugees have available to them to enter the UK and describes how these routes relate to their housing circumstances and the resettlement support in which they do, and do not, receive. This includes a historical context of refugee resettlement, its relationship to the asylum process as well as a more detailed description of the current safe and legal routes available to enter the UK. The paper then identifies the known relationship between homelessness and refugee status and the way in which homelessness is often mitigated by their route to refugee status; either via a resettlement programme or the asylum system. Available data and insights suggest that homelessness is a particular risk for refugees who have achieved status through the asylum system. Recent data suggests that this risk has grown significantly in the second half of 2023 as the number of people sleeping rough having left asylum housing has increased by 223% over a three month period (Jun–Sept 2023). In contrast to asylum-pathway refugees, research has suggested that the instances of homelessness have typically appeared far fewer for refugees who have been part of an organised resettlement scheme.

The paper then looks at the homelessness risk factors that affect refugees in the UK. Key factors include the move-on period after a decision has been reached on an asylum application, welfare reforms, the right-to-rent policy, and family reunification. Once again the evidence overwhelmingly points to greater housing instability and precarity for those who achieve refugee status through an asylum-pathway. The housing options available for those refugees after the 28-day move-on period are often very limited. This illustrates the unique combination of factors refugees are required to navigate in order to acquire secure housing. It also looks at the impact that could occur upon local housing supply and homelessness services from attempts to speed up the asylum determination process.

The paper then goes on to review the known and emerging outcomes from refugee resettlement programmes. Whilst there is little evidence available about the long-term outcomes our research has indicated several key points. These include: that a lack of availability of suitable affordable housing (e.g. social tenancies) tends to sustain housing precarity over a long period of time, and that access to social housing, together with key worker support, often leads to long-term and stable housing, as is the case with many of those who have been supported via the majority of refugee resettlement

programmes. However, in the case of Afghan resettlement previous research on other refugee groups tells us that long-term use of communal accommodation can have demonstrable detrimental impacts on individual health and wellbeing.

In terms of the recent large-scale resettlement programmes, whilst Afghan refugees have largely faced sustained periods of time in so-called 'bridging accommodation' (usually hotels), they were supported into longer-term independent accommodation, albeit at a slow pace due to a lack of appropriate and affordable accommodation. In stark contrast to the vast majority of resettlement programmes that have been implemented in the UK over the years the risk of homelessness appears to be elevated for those on the Homes for Ukraine schemes. The reasons are multiple but the lack of support as to how and when people leave their hosts appear to play a major role.

The paper also identifies several key factors which appear to lead to positive outcomes for refugees. Notably these are provision of and access to opportunities to learn English, the need to recognise existing skills and qualifications for refugees to enter the labour market quickly, access to social housing, and dedicated, but tapered, keyworker support.

The paper also describes the critical role being played by charities and the wider voluntary and community sector as well as the importance of refugees' own social networks. Taking this into account the paper proposes some recommendations:

- Produce national and local refugee resettlement strategies.
- Ensure impacts of policy changes are appropriately assessed under the Equality Act 2010.
- Ensure funding of refugee resettlement programmes is adequate and consistent across programmes.
- Extend the move on period after an asylum decision from 28 to at least 56 days.
- Reform the Right to Rent policy.
- Promote the role social housing providers can play in the support and accommodation of refugees, including fully discharging their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Ensure access to rights-based advice.
- Increase the volume of face-to-face support for new refugees.
- Build capacity within refugee communities.

The paper also calls for further research into several key areas in order to fill evidence gaps.



Routes to refugee status in the UK

The immigration system in the UK is complex and the refugee segment of the system is even more so. This is an evolving policy area and will likely continue to be so for some considerable time. There have been, and continue to be, different routes of entry to the UK which impact on the rights people have, and their experiences, during settlement. The term refugee is used to describe an individual granted leave to remain in the UK because they have a 'well-founded fear of persecution', as defined in the 1951 Refugee Convention.[3] Usually, refugees in the UK are given five years' leave to remain, after which they can apply for indefinite leave to remain and British citizenship. However, there are people who for various reasons do not meet the definition of a refugee, and in such cases an alternative status is awarded which offers differing levels of rights.[4] These different statuses do not tend to impact an individual's right to welfare, work or study.

For the purposes of this paper, we use the term refugee to refer to those people who have been given refugee status as well as other forms of protection such as Humanitarian Protection and Discretionary Leave. The main routes to acquire refugee status in the UK are either through the asylum system or via a government organised resettlement programme. This paper does not examine the experiences of people who are seeking asylum or those who have had their application for asylum refused. However, we do include details of the asylum system in the note for contextual purposes. Additionally, it is worth stating that

3 UNHCR (Undated) The 1951 Refugee Convention. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention

4 Free Movement (Undated) What is the difference between refugee status and humanitarian protection. Available at: https://freemovement.org.uk/what-is-the-difference-between-refugee-status-and-humanitarian-protection/

the housing precarity and destitution experienced by those who have their application for asylum refused, is acute.[5]

The asylum system

The Asylum and Immigration Act 1999 created a blueprint for the asylum system currently deployed in the UK and is widely seen as a watershed moment for immigration policy. Amongst its many impacts was the removal of the right to work, of mainstream housing and welfare rights from 'asylum seekers'. The new system subjected people to compulsory dispersal across the UK placing them in accommodation procured from a mix of social and private landlords and providing people with a reduced welfare allowance.[6] The system was delivered in partnership with regional consortia which was a collaboration with the public and private sectors managed by the Home Office.

The system has evolved over three decades and is now managed by the Home Office via a handful of private companies. In the past, local authorities were invited by the Home Office to form consortia to provide housing and other support to asylum seekers. This is now undertaken by the private sector. Local authorities do, however, retain the statutory responsibilities to provide services such as social care and ensuring children have access to education.[7] Under the current system asylum applicants should be provided with furnished accommodation with utility and other bills covered by the respective asylum support service. However, due to shortages of accommodation it has been increasingly common for people seeking asylum to be placed in contingency accommodation (usually hotels) for varying periods of time. A report from the Refugee Council indicated that this can be for as little as a few weeks to between one and two years.[8] There have been several high-

5 No Accommodation Network (2023) Refused? Experiences following a negative asylum decision. Available at: https://naccom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/EMBARGOED-17.7.23-NACCOM-Refused-Experiences-following-a-negative-asylum-decision-FINAL.pdf

6 Robinson, V., Andersson, R. & Musterd, S. (2003). Spreading the 'burden': A review of policies to disperse asylum seekers and refugees. Bristol: The Policy Press.

7 Darling, J. (2022). Systems of Suffering: Dispersal and the Denial of Asylum. London: Pluto Press.

8 Refugee Council (2022) Lives on Hold: Experiences of people living in hotel asylum accommodation. A follow-up report. Available at: https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Lives-on-hold-research-report.-July-2022.pdf

profile changes and announcements by the UK Government who have sought solutions to increasing the supply of asylum housing such as: fast-tracking asylum applications, the use of large-scale sites (such as former military bases), easing accommodation licensing requirements, encouraging more local authorities to become dispersal sites, using off-shore vessels and hotel room optimisation (where people seeking asylum are required to share hotel rooms). In terms of financial support, as of July 2023, a weekly allowance of £45 loaded onto a debit card to cover essential living needs (e.g. food, clothing and toiletries) and free access to healthcare and schooling became available.[9]



For those in contingency accommodation a smaller weekly allowance of £9.10 is made available to cover essential living items such as clothes, non-prescription medication and travel. However, all this is dependent upon an asylum application being considered and can be removed unless an appeal is lodged.

Once an asylum claim is approved the individual applicant has 28 days to vacate their asylum housing. Since 2019 the Home Office has been working with Migrant Help, a charity operating nationwide which supports people seeking asylum and refugees, to provide a helpline and support service — Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE). This contract is valued at £235 million.[10] Migrant Help are expected to contact the recipient within one working day of being notified of their status to provide rudimentary and arms-length guidance to refugees with regards to housing, the welfare system and employment. This service also acts as a connector between asylum support and mainstream services as well as a way to demonstrate assurance that all refugees have been informed of their new rights and responsibilities. Migrant Help also contacts the other actors such as the relevant accommodation providers, to ensure they are aware of the individual's status, and develop and maintain relationships and communication with the local authorities.[11]



9 UK Government (Undated) Asylum support: What you'll get. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get

10 Neal, D. (2022) An inspection of contingency asylum accommodation May 2021–November 2021. Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63f365308fa8f5612c4f5341/An_inspection_of_contingency_asylum_accommodation.pdf

11 Asylum Matters (undated) The Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Contract (AIRE): A Guide. Available at: https://asylummatters.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2019/11/The-Advice-Issue-Reporting-and-Eligibility-Contract-A-Guide.pdf

Recent months have seen some controversy around the 28-day period. Whilst the Home Office indicated that there has been no change in procedure, some commentators have suggested that due to the timing of receiving Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs), following an asylum determination, there has in effect been a reduction in the 28 day period in some circumstances.[12] Charities repeatedly reported that refugees were given as little as a weeks' notice to leave their asylum accommodation. Stakeholders also suggested that advisors were approaching Migrant Help to request a pause on cessations due to issues with the BRPs being received. The No Accommodation Network reported that their members have seen a rise in incidences of homelessness and destitution which they have attributed to apparent changes in procedures.[13][14]

In late December 2023, the Home Office announced that it would revert to the previous practice to allow 28 days' notice between receiving a BRP and having to leave asylum accommodation.[15]



12 Free Movement (30th August 2023) Home Office change in practice increases risk of homelessness for recognised refugees — Free Movement

13 No Accommodation Network (2023) Statement and joint letter | Changes to procedure for ending asylum support causing increased homelessness. Available at: https://naccom.org.uk/statement-and-open-letter-changes-to-procedure-for-ending-asylum-support-causing-increased-homelessness/

14 Riding, J. (2023) Home Office asylum change is making 'significant number' of refugees homeless, charities warn. Available at: https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/home-office-asylum-change-is-making-significant-number-of-refugees-homeless-charities-warn-82951

15 The Guardian (2023) Home Office reverses policy on UK hostel evictions after surge in refugee homelessness. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/dec/21/home-office-reverses-policy-on-uk-hostel-evictions-after-surge-in-refugee-homelessness

The Illegal Migration Act became law in July 2023 and whilst the impact of the Act will be mainly upon how those seeking asylum enter the country, its presence is worthy of note.[16] The stated aim of the Act is to prevent 'unlawful' migration by those using unsafe routes. The intention is to remove anyone arriving 'irregularly' to the UK to their home country or to a safe third country, such as Rwanda, where asylum applications will be processed. For unaccompanied children they would be removed upon turning 18 years old. The impacts of the Act on the asylum system will be far-reaching and the biggest shift in asylum and refugee policy since 1999. As part of the Act the Government are also required to set a limit on the number of refugees who are able to come to the UK via one of the safe and legal routes each year. See below for the current safe and legal routes to the UK. The Illegal Migration Act has been extensively criticised by a number of key organisations in the human rights field including the Refugee Council,[17] the Children's Commissioner,[18] Freedom from Torture[19] and many others. The No Accommodation Network asserts that the Act will result in people experiencing prolonged periods of destitution and homelessness as a result of people disengaging from the asylum system as a result of the Acts new restrictions.[20]

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16 Home Office (2023) Illegal Migration Bill: overarching factsheet. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/illegal-migration-bill-factsheets/illegal-migration-bill-overarching-factsheet

17 Refugee Council (2023) What is the Illegal Migration Act. Available at: https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/what-is-the-illegal-migration-act/

18 Children's Commissioner (2023) Update on the Illegal Migration Act. Available at: https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/blog/update-on-the-illegal-migration-act/

19 Freedom from Torture (2023) 'Illegal Migration' Act: Everything you need to know. Available at: https://www.freedomfromtorture.org/news/illegal-migration-act-everything-you-need-to-know?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAjrarBhAWEiwA2qWdCG9ihWSwsgG8zAbdn-CehxNuJ2uAEObUL3byt1F4MEHvaUi8AukLNxoCUAUQAvD_BwE

20 No Accommodation Network (2023) Joint Briefing - Risks of homelessness and destitution posed by the Illegal Migration Bill. Available at: https://naccom.org.uk/joint-briefing-risks-of-homelessness-and-destitution-posed-by-the-illegal-migration-bill/#:~:text=However%2C%20the%20voluntary%20sector%20supporting,periods%20of%20destitution%20and%20homelessness.

Refugee resettlement programmes (and other legal routes)

Over the years, there have been numerous programmes that have been implemented with a view to resettling specific groups of people who have fled their home countries due to persecution of some kind. The European Volunteer Worker (EVW) programme was an early example of resettling those displaced as a result of the Second World War. Similarly, the Ugandan Asian Programme in 1972 had elements of an organised resettlement programme, particularly its use of dispersal around the UK. Following this was the support provided to Chilean refugees between 1974 and 1979 and to Vietnamese quota refugees in 1979. However, it was the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, first Bosnia followed by Kosovo, which led the UK Government to decide to take a more organised approach to refugee resettlement. In between these conflicts, the UK Government established the Mandate Refugee Scheme (MRS) in 1995. The MRS resettles refugees from different countries who have close family ties in the UK who can accommodate them. The scheme is the longest running refugee resettlement programme to date.



Subsequent to these programmes, the Gateway Protection Programme (GPP) was introduced in the early 2000s, and the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) in the 2010s.The VPRS was introduced in January 2014 in response to the civil war in Syria and focused on providing support for refugees specifically on the basis of their vulnerability. The scheme had a target of resettling 20,000 people, a number which in 2021 was confirmed as having been met. The VCRS launched in 2016 and aimed to resettle up to 3,000 at-risk children and their families from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey by 2020. The Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS) also commenced in 2016 with the UK Resettlement Scheme starting in 2021. More recently, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) were established in 2021. The Homes for Ukraine Scheme (HUS) and the Ukraine Family Scheme (UFS) launched in response to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in early 2022.

At the time of writing the UK Government acknowledges that there are eight safe and legal organised routes to the United Kingdom:

1. UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)

This scheme is focused on the most vulnerable refugees. Refugees who are referred by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to this scheme are assessed on their vulnerability. The refugees who come through this scheme move to the UK only when suitable accommodation is found for them. Since this scheme launched in 2021, the UK Government has accepted refugees from countries including: Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalis, Sudan, Syria, South Sudan and Yemen. As of December 2022, according to the Home Office 2,023 refugees have been resettled into this scheme.[21] Refugees who are resettled through the UKRS are provided with initial accommodation arrangements and casework. The caseworker maintains close contact for the first 12 months to support people with their wellbeing and integration including access to public funds, housing and other mainstream services.

2. Community Sponsorship

The Community Sponsorship Scheme which began in 2016, allows civil society, such as the third sector, faith groups, friends and neighbours (known as a Community Sponsorship Group) to support refugees to resettle across the UK. The local authority in which the Community Sponsorship Group is based, alongside other agencies including the police, take an active role in the scheme ensuring the area is safe, that identified housing is appropriate and appropriate safeguarding is in place.[22] According to the latest Home Office figures (for the year ending December 2022) 942 individuals have come through this scheme.[23] Refugees arriving through the Community Sponsorship Scheme are provided with housing by the sponsorship group for 24 months. The sponsorship group is also responsible for providing integration support for 12 months, similar to the support provided through the UKRS. And where a Community Sponsorship breakdown occurs, the local authority will become responsible for supporting the refugee family.

According to the latest Home Office figures (for the year ending December 2022) 942 individuals have come through this scheme.

21 Home Office. (2023) Safe and Legal Routes, Policy Paper https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/illegal-migration-bill-factsheets/safe-and-legal-routes

22 Reset (Undated) https://resetuk.org/toolkits/for-local-authorities

23 Home Office. (2023) Safe and Legal Routes, Policy Paper https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/illegal-migration-bill-factsheets/safe-and-legal-routes

3. Mandate Resettlement Scheme

This global programme, introduced in 1995, aims to resettle refugees who have a close relative in the UK who is willing to accommodate them. The recording of data associated with this scheme started in December 2008, and since then 441 people have relocated to the UK. There is no integration package or support work under the MRS as the UK-residing relatives are expected to provide initial accommodation and cultural orientation for their family members. MRS refugees are entitled to mainstream welfare benefits under the same conditions as UK citizens.

The recording of data associated with this scheme started in December 2008, and since then 441 people have relocated to the UK.

4. Family Reunion

The Family Reunion scheme enables a safe and legal route for families to be reunited following the establishment of refugee status. The Home Office has estimated that 44,600 family reunion visas have been approved since 2015 and over half of these have been issued to children. Family joiners have the same conditions on work, study and access to public funds as their sponsors. The new Family Reunion Integration Service (FRIS) supports families through core casework to ensure they can access basic rights, including gaining access to the welfare system and accommodation.

5. Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)

This scheme began on 1 April 2021 and supported the resettlement of Afghan people, and their families, who have worked for the UK Government in Afghanistan.[24] Since the scheme opened, as of September 2023, around 11,500 people had been resettled.[25] Recipient local authorities provide furnished accommodation, either temporary or permanent, for ARAP resettled refugees on arrival. A dedicated source of advice in the form of case work is provided to support with integration, access to mainstream benefits and other services. While this is being processed an initial cash allowance of £200 is made

Since the scheme opened, as of September 2023, around 11,500 people had been resettled.

24 Home Office. (2022b). Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: Further information on eligibility criteria, offer details and how to apply. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance

25 Home Office (2023) Afghan Resettlement Programme: operational data. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-resettlement-programme-operational-data/afghan-resettlement-programme-operational-data

available to ensure the families have enough to live on. The casework is often tailored around individual needs within each household, and practice varies according to area, with funding provided for a maximum period of 36 months (until 2024).

6. Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)

This scheme launched on 6 January 2022 and contains three separate referral pathways for people to be considered for resettlement through the scheme. Pathway 1 is for vulnerable and at-risk individuals who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme. This also includes "eligible people who were notified by the UK Government that they had been called forward with assurance of evacuation, but were not able to board flights, and do not hold leave in a country considered safe by the UK are also eligible under Pathway 1".[26] Pathway 2 relates to referrals made by the UNHCR to the UK. Pathway 3 "…was designed to offer a route to resettlement for those at risk who supported the UK and international community effort in Afghanistan, as well as those who are particularly vulnerable, such as women and girls at risk and members of minority groups."[27] Approximately 10,000 people have been resettled under ARCS.[28] The support offered to those arriving on the ACRS programme is the same as that provided via the ARAP. However, according to the Refugee Council, the ACRS pathway 2 and 3, have only settled a total of 54 people, with evidence suggesting that '…Afghans fleeing the Taliban make up the largest number of people crossing the channel in small boats'.[29]

…according to the Refugee Council, the ACRS pathway 2 and 3, have only settled a total of 54 people, with evidence suggesting that '… Afghans fleeing the Taliban make up the largest number of people crossing the channel in small boats'.

26 Home Office (2023) Afghan citizens resettlement scheme. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme

27 Ibid

28 Home Office (2023) Afghan Resettlement Programme: operational data. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-resettlement-programme-operational-data/afghan-resettlement-programme-operational-data

29 Refugee Council (2023) Afghan Refugees: What happened to the warm welcome? Available at What-happened-to-the-warm-welcome-Refugee-Council.pdf (refugeecouncil.org.uk)

7. Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) Welcome Programme

The Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) visa route was launched on 31 January 2021 in reaction to China's National Security Law. This route is perceived as a new arrival route to provide safety to people from Hong Kong. As of June 2023, 176,407 visas have been approved.[30] Whilst the Hongkongers who arrive on this programme are not technically refugees, they are included here because of their reasons for departure from Hong Kong and as they have a 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF) condition attached to their visa and so may experience challenges with regards to the UK social welfare system. However, provision in the immigration rules enables people to apply to have the NRPF condition removed if they are at risk of imminent destitution.



30 Home Office. (2023) Immigration system statistics, year ending June 2023. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-june-2023/summary-of-latest-statistics

8. Ukraine schemes

In response to Russia's war in the Ukraine, the UK Government introduced three pathways whereby Ukrainian refugees can acquire protection, which are:

- The Ukraine Family Scheme
- The Homes for Ukraine Scheme
- The Ukraine Extension Scheme.

As of June 2023, according to the Home Office, 233,771 Ukrainians have arrived in the UK through the above visa schemes.[31] Collectively these schemes allow individuals in the UK to sponsor Ukrainians providing they have suitable accommodation to offer for a period of six months or more. The response has also enabled Ukrainians families fleeing conflict to be reunited with relatives who were already living in the UK. Since then, although Ukrainian refugees have access to the welfare system, additional local authority housing funds and homelessness prevention grants have been made available to support people into their own homes in cases where relationships with hosts breakdown or sponsorship agreements come to an end. A detailed review of Ukrainian migration to the UK has been produced by The Migration Observatory.[32]



31 Ibid

32 The Migration Observatory (2023) Ukrainian migration to the UK. Available at: https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/ukrainian-migration-to-the-uk/

The known relationship between homelessness and those with refugee status

The evidence that exists indicates that the routes into refugee status in the UK profoundly impact on the experience refugees have of accessing housing. The routes into the UK also impact on the experiences people have in exercising their rights and accessing advice, health and social welfare services. Data is recorded on the basis of the accommodation occupied at the time of application for statutory homelessness support for those owed a prevention and a relief duty, see Table x. However, recent strains on homelessness services appear to be evident from data showing that of the 769 people who were rough sleeping in the month of September 2023, having left an institution, 222 people had left asylum housing in the last 85 days, this is a 283% increase since June 2023.

However, this presents a limited picture of the extent of homelessness amongst refugee populations as the immigration status of individuals is typically not recorded, this is a major gap in evidence.[33]

Table x: Number of households owed a duty of prevention and relief by residence in National Asylum Support Services[34]

Year	Prevention duty	Relief duty
2018/19	1,660	1,650
2019/20	2,380	2,700
2020/21	1,270	1,210
2021/22	1,530	2,190

33 Mitton, L. (2021). The Newly-Recognised Refugees Most at Risk of Homelessness in England. Journal of Social Policy, 50(1), pp. 59–78.

34 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023). Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness

The No Accommodation Network (NACCOM) is a national network of over 135 frontline organisations and charities across the UK that work together to end destitution amongst people seeking asylum, refugees and other migrants. The most recent survey of their members showed that of the 3,388 people who approached organisations for support NACCOM members were able to support 2,281 people with accommodation. A total of 652 (29%) of these were adults with refugee status.[35] Whilst the coverage only relates to the Greater London area the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database recorded 213 refugees out of 4516 people (4.7%) over the 2022/23 recording cycle which constituted 11% of the proportion of people from outside the European Economic Area (EEA).[36]

Asylum-pathway refugees

Recent evidence has suggested that asylum pathway refugees who have achieved refugee status in the last 15 years have tended to experience long periods of housing insecurity and have not been able to access permanent secure housing to the same degree as their counterparts who arrived in the 2000s or who arrived on resettlement programmes.[37]

People seeking asylum who are subsequently granted refugee status are given 28 days to transition to life as a UK resident — which is known as the 'move-on period'. During this time, this group of new refugees are required to move out of the accommodation provided by the Home Office, find new accommodation and enter the labour market or apply for mainstream benefits. The 28-day move on period has contributed to immediate housing stress and longer-term precarity. As mentioned in previously this has been made more acute by a change in practice by the Home Office in the summer of 2023.

35 NACCOM (2022) NACCOM Briefing: Annual Survey Data 2022 https://naccom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/NACCOM-Briefing-Annual-Survey-Data-UK-Version-.pdf

36 Greater London Authority (2022) CHAIN Annual Report, Greater London, April 2022-March 2023 https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports

37 Brown, P., Gill, S. and Halsall, J. (forthcoming 2024) Homeward Bound [submitted for publication]. Palgrave: London.

Many local authorities, voluntary and charitable organisations attempt to help refugees during move-on but they often face hurdles because of the short time period imposed.[38] It was common for services to find post-asylum refugees presenting as homeless after their removal from Home Office accommodation. As this housing worker recounts:

> I would say that the vast majority, maybe 90%, maybe more, 95% of people who came to us had sofa surfed between Home Office accommodation and coming to us. The kind of normal route was Home Office accommodation, 28 days to leave, try desperately to find somewhere, it's not possible, find a friend to stay with, possibly sofa surf with a friend who's still in Home Office accommodation — that seemed to happen quite a lot.



Whilst some people had been able to arrange to move into permanent accommodation before the conclusion of the 28 days, others had to present as homeless and move into temporary accommodation, as this asylum-pathway refugee who arrived in the 2010s recalls:

> I had to go to the local authority to present myself at the housing [department] that I've just got my status so that was the process in those days, I don't know what the process is now.

The challenges of the 28-day period have been documented in a growing number of research studies. The accounts of those subject to this period reflect a range of different experiences of temporary housing; from living in hostels or hotels, 'grace hosting' in spare rooms or sofa surfing, to having to endure poor quality and insecure housing. Changes arising from Covid-19 provided some time-limited flexibility to families with them being allowed to stay in asylum accommodation

38 British Red Cross. (2014). The Move-on Period: An Ordeal for New Refugees. Retrieved from: https://www.redcross.org.uk/-/media/documents/about-us/research-publications/refugee-support/move-on-period-an-ordeal-for-refugees.pdf; Refugee Council. (2014). 28 days later: Experiences of new refugees in the UK. Retrieved from: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/1769/28_days_later.pdf

longer. However, on the most part, the temporary housing was inappropriate for families or those with disabilities. Participants described a range of conditions, ranging from living in overcrowded hotel rooms, sharing spaces with residents with substance misuse issues, or in areas with high levels of anti-social behaviour leading to harassment. Despite the security of receiving status, for many, this was a period of further uncertainty, as one participant described this as being when 'the nightmare started'. Bibi also states that "The 28 days is hard on refugees…all of a sudden in a country you don't know and then it stops and you don't know what you are going to do. It was such a surprise when I ended up without a bed to sleep in."[39] The Red Cross (2018) highlight how the Universal Credit system has compounded this ordeal.[40]

There is a significant backlog of asylum claims waiting an initial decision. In May 2023 the Refugee Council drew on Home Office data and reported that 137,583 claims were outstanding, which represented an estimated 177,899 individuals.[41] To tackle the backlog a Streamlined Asylum Process (SAP) was implemented in order to reduce numbers. Although initial data appeared to show that claims were being processed more quickly any impact appears to have plateaued. However, recent discussions with stakeholders point to a recent increase in the speed of decisions being returned which is leaving some local authorities struggling to assist newly granted refugees with appropriate move-on accommodation in a timely manner. Whilst a swift, and robust, approach to decision making is welcome this can have important consequences for post-asylum housing and homelessness services. An increase in people requiring mainstream housing or requiring support from homelessness services will add an increased strain to a system that is already struggling.

There is a significant backlog of asylum claims waiting an initial decision. In May 2023 the Refugee Council drew on Home Office data and reported that 137,583 claims were outstanding, which represented an estimated 177,899 individuals.

39 Refugee Council (2014) Refugee Council 28 days later: experiences of new refugees in the UK. Available at: https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/28_days_later.pdf

40 Red Cross (2018) Still an ordeal: The move-on period for new refugees. Available at: https://www.redcross.org.uk/-/media/documents/about-us/research-publications/refugee-support/still-an-ordeal-move-on-period-report.pdf

41 Refugee Council (2023) The asylum backlog and asylum accommodation. Available at: https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/The-asylum-backlog-and-asylum-accommodation-June-2023.pdf

After the move-on period, support available to refugees, for example to learn English or access employment, varies by location.[42] The inappropriate provision of housing at this time made accessing education, employment and other regularising activities increasingly difficult which further exacerbated inequalities and hindered social integration.[43] A number of studies have linked this period with increased risk of long and short-term homelessness and destitution for recognised refugees.[44]

The receipt of a positive determination on their asylum application is no guarantee of stable long-term accommodation. Instead, what is clear from a comprehensive review of the support provided as part of the asylum system is that the process people go through, and the exit from it, sets the tone for how people who have been through the asylum process experience other aspects of their lives, including housing, post-decision.[45] The departure from Home Office accommodation, together with the delay in receiving Universal Credit, places many people in a position where they are unable to meet their most basic needs for several weeks or more. This introduces severe precarity to refugee populations which compounds the struggle people have to achieve housing security.

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42 Refugee Action. (2016). Let refugees learn: Challenges and opportunities to improve language provision to refugees in England. Refugee Employment Network. (2018). Refugee employment support in the UK: insights into services, barriers, and best practice to support refugees into employment across the UK. Retrieved from: https://transitions-london.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Refugee-Employment-Support-2018.pdf

43 Rowley, L., Morant, N. & Katona, C. (2020). Refugees who have experienced extreme Cruelty: A qualitative study of mental health and wellbeing after being granted leave to remain in the UK, Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, 18, pp. 357–374.

44 Allsopp, J., Sigona, N. & Phillimore, J. (2014) Poverty among refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, IRIS Working Paper Series, pp. 1–46. Available at http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/iris/2014/working-paper-series/IRiS-WP-1-2014.pdf; Dudhia, P. (2020) Will I ever be safe? Asylum-seeking women made destitute in the UK. Available at https://www.refugeewomen.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/WRW-Will-I-ever-be-safe-web.pdf; Mitton, L. (2021) The newly-recognised refugees most at risk of homelessness in England, Journal of Social Policy, 50, pp. 59–78.

45 Darling, J. (2022) Systems of suffering: dispersal and the denial of asylum. London: Pluto Press.

Resettled refugees

In contrast to asylum-pathway refugees, research has suggested that the instances of homelessness appear far fewer for refugees who have been part of a resettlement scheme.[46] Most of the programmes that have operated in the UK have been housing-led in some way and have provided secure long-term housing as part of an overall package of support. Resettled refugees also benefit from a package of structured and personalised support work. This support work tends to be delivered via a key worker who is allocated to an individual household and is provided with a degree of intensity within the immediate period of arrival, depending on needs, and more tapered as refugees settle and live independently.

However, even in the context of resettlement programmes the limitations on existing housing stock can cause challenges. This is particularly difficult for those households who require larger or adapted properties.

Whilst there are exceptions, notably the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), over time it has become less common for refugees to be placed in social housing upon receipt of status or upon arrival in the UK. Accommodating refugees in social housing has become increasingly politically controversial. The challenges in securing social housing have meant that it has become increasingly likely for the Home Office and local authorities to rely on private sector landlords for accommodation.

The scarcity of appropriate housing has been seen to have stark consequences for those people who arrived through the recent Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). The use of 'temporary bridging accommodation', which was initially intended as a form of reception accommodation, has seen households accommodated for prolonged periods, as much as 18 months in some instances. This has been particularly challenging for those with families. In early 2023 the UK Government started to accelerate the rehousing of families.[47] From the end of March 2023 to 31 August 2023, 85% of those in bridging hotels had been relocated into 'homes or pre-matched

46 Brown, P., Gill, S. and Halsall, J. (forthcoming 2024) Homeward Bound [submitted for publication]. Palgrave: London.

47 UK Government (29/03/2023) New support for Afghans in UK hotels to find settled housing https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-support-for-afghans-in-uk-hotels-to-find-settled-housing

settled accommodation'.[48] However, according to Johnny Mercer (the Minister for Veteran Affairs), 'time-limited interim accommodation [is] available to a minority of families. That is available only to those for whom a move would disrupt ongoing medical treatment at a specific hospital and those who have been pre-matched to a property that will be available before the end of December'. Those provided with interim accommodation on medical grounds continue to receive full board accommodation and onsite wrap around support. However, for those who have been pre-matched, this provision is room-only. According to Johnny Mercer, since the closure of accommodation via bridging hotels, less than 5% of the 24,600 people relocated have had to be moved into temporary accommodation and rely on homelessness provision.[49] An announcement by the UK Government in September 2023 reported that all hotels that were still being used as bridging accommodation had been returned to their original use.[50] However, this it was also clear that this accommodation was often reclassified as 'interim accommodation' and not all households where relocated to their own independent accommodation.[51]

According to Johnny Mercer, since the closure of accommodation via bridging hotels, less than 5% of the 24,600 people relocated have had to be moved into temporary accommodation and rely on homelessness provision.

There has been an entirely different design for resettlement developed for those displaced due to the Ukrainian conflict (and eligible for one of the Ukraine schemes). Refugees have been supported to join independent sponsors or families in the UK and have three years' right to remain in the UK. Whilst there remains key worker support for households arriving on these schemes, this varies across local authority areas and is only available for people who have arrived via the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Other agencies, such as the British Red Cross, do provide some support for people arriving on the Ukraine Family Scheme but this varies between areas. In comparison to other resettlement schemes the risk of homelessness appears to be elevated, largely due to the lack of support as to how and when people leave their hosts and the lack of available affordable accommodation. In January 2023 the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness held a meeting to discuss concerns related to the

48 Resettlement of Afghans. Volume 737: debated on Tuesday 19 September 2023. Available at Resettlement of Afghans — Hansard — UK Parliament

49 Ibid.

50 UK Government (19/09/2023) 15,000 Afghans housed or matched to a property https://www.gov.uk/government/news/15000-afghans-housed-or-matched-to-a-property

51 House of Commons Library (2023) Accommodation and integration support for resettled Afghans https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9804/

rising prevalence of homelessness amongst Ukrainian refugees.[52] At this point it was noted that more than 4,000 Ukrainian households had received homelessness support from their local authority in the last year, and over the six-months prior the number of Ukrainian households receiving homelessness assistance from their local authority had increased six-fold. The end of the initial six-month funding, breakdown of convivial relations between hosts and an inability to secure alternative suitable accommodation were seen as major components in the prevalence of homelessness.[53] It should, though, be noted that 'thank you' payments to hosts have continued into its third year as announced at the 2023 Autumn Statement. In addition, the government also confirmed funding of £120m for devolved administrations and local authorities in England to invest in homelessness prevention, which would include those Ukrainian households who are unable to remain in sponsorship.[54]



52 All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness (2023) Meeting on Homelessness amongst Ukrainian refugees living in Britain. Available at: https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/248979/2302-minutes-from-meeting-on-homelessness-amongst-ukrainian-refugees-living-in-britain.pdf

53 House of Commons Library (2023) Homes for Ukraine: What happens after six months. https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9709/

54 HM Treasury (2023) Autumn Statement 2023. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6568909c5936bb00133167cc/E02982473_Autumn_Statement_Nov_23_Accessible_Final.pdf

Homelessness risk factors affecting all refugees

The evidence overwhelmingly points to greater housing instability and precarity for those who achieve refugee status through an asylum-pathway. The housing options available for those refugees after the 28-day move-on period are often very limited, and often insecure or of poorer quality, which also increases the risk of homelessness, and in the very least, results in multiple moves and tenancies. This is particularly true in cases where asylum applications are rejected, and at this point, the risk of homelessness is very high. However, regardless of the route, there are a range of issues which impact on refugees.

For all refugees, regardless of pathway to status, the risk of homelessness is exacerbated by a lack of affordable homes, the cost-of-living crisis, and limited English language skills which restrict employment opportunities. Whilst refugees adapt to life in the UK they often draw on the welfare system and this itself can play a significant role in the homelessness risk in the UK. Since 2009 there have been a series of welfare reforms from the broader system to reforms that affect how much a claimant can receive; these include the roll-out of Universal Credit, the introduction of the Shared Accommodation Rate for under 35's, and the freeze and capping of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates[55]. Welfare reforms have been linked to increasing rates of homelessness across England.[56]

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55 O'Leary, C., & Simcock, T. (2022). Policy failure or f***up: homelessness and welfare reform in England. Housing Studies, 37(8), 1379-1395. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2020.1849573

56 Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wood, J., Watts, B., Stephens, M. & Blenkinsopp, J. (2019) The homelessness monitor: England 2019 (London, UK: Crisis). Available at https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/240419/the_homelessness_monitor_england_2019.pdf; NAO (2017). Homelessness (London, UK: National Audit Office); O'Leary, C., O'Shea, S. & Albertson, K. (2018) Homelessness and the Private Rented Sector (Manchester, UK: Manchester Metropolitan University).



These reforms are particularly relevant due to the increasing reliance on the private rented sector for housing.[57] The Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) was introduced in 1998 and limited the amount of housing benefit for single people under 25, and this age was increased in 2012 to single people under 35. In principle, the SAR means that single people will either have to find shared housing such as within a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) or top up the benefits with additional income to cover a 1-bed rent. Previous research has demonstrated the difficulties the SAR has introduced for single people under 35 to find affordable housing.[58] Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates determine the level of housing benefit available to claimants based on their local housing market. The capping and freezing of LHA over the last decade has meant that LHA rates have not kept up with increasing rents, leading to a gap between rents and what benefits will cover.[59] Whilst the UK Government has recently announced that LHA rates will be returned to the 30th percentile of local market rates from April 2024, it is intended that LHA will then be frozen in cash terms for future years once again, eroding the impact of the measure as rents rise. As housing costs have risen out of pace with benefits local authorities may choose to subsidise housing costs for refugees who need particular, high-cost, accommodation. This is a dilemma continually being grappled with by stakeholders involved in the housing of refugees as once the local authority removes their subsidy, as central government funding is withdrawn, this can cause precarity as the household income cannot cover the housing costs and can lead to housing debt and ultimately eviction.

A further reform has been the introduction of Universal Credit. This reform has seen a complete overhaul of the social security system,

57 Cole, I., Powell, R., and Sanderson, E. (2016) Putting the Squeeze on 'Generation Rent': housing benefit claimants in the private rented sector — transitions, marginality and stigmatisation, Sociological Research Online 21(2): 23-36; McKee, K., Soaita, A., and Hoolachan, J. (2020) "'Generation Rent' and the Emotions of Private Renting: self- worth, status and insecurity amongst low-income renters", Housing Studies 35(8): 1468–1487.

58 Green, S., & McCarthy, L. (2015) Is sharing the solution?: Exploring the opportunities and challenges of privately rented shared accommodation for single people in housing need, People, Place and Policy Online, 9, pp. 159–178. doi:10.3351/ppp.0009.0003.0001

59 Simcock, T. & Kaehne, A. (2019) State of the PRS (Q1 2019): A Survey of Private Landlords and the Impact of Welfare Reforms (Ormskirk, UK: Edge Hill University).



where income-related benefits are now administered centrally by the DWP. This new system had changed the ease by which landlords could receive direct payment of the rent, with direct payments now only allowed under certain circumstances and the requirement to submit an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) request. Private landlords have reported problems with the Universal Credit system and were less likely to let to benefit claimants due to the perceptions of issues with the system.[60] There is anecdotal evidence that private landlords are now requiring deposits, guarantors, and up-front rental payments for benefit claimants to secure housing.[61]

Against this backdrop family reunification, separation, expansion or the moving out of family members are all factors that can increase the risk of homelessness as it impacts on the housing costs and eligible benefits. An increase in family size due to reunification can lead to being placed in temporary accommodation. The impact of family members moving out can also impact on those who remain in the family home due to restrictions surrounding Universal Credit and under-occupancy rules. As in the case with this person who arrived on the Gateway Protection Programme:

> Yes, she got married and left the house. We were living in a three-bedroom house so when she left, we had an unoccupied room in the house. The job centre had obviously stop paying for her and the extra room had to be paid by us if we continue to live in that house. This because the Jobcentre cannot pay for my girl as she is not living with us anymore. … Right now, I am living in my eldest daughter's house. Very soon I will have a one-bedroom house which I will share with my wife. So that is briefly how my situation is.

60 Pattison, B. & Reeve, K. (2017) Access to Homes for Under-35's: The impact of Welfare Reform on Private Renting. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Hallam University; Simcock, T. & Kaehne, A. (2019) State of the PRS (Q1 2019): A Survey of Private Landlords and the Impact of Welfare Reforms (Ormskirk, UK: Edge Hill University).

61 Miskin, S. (2021). 'No DSS': Renters on benefits still turned down for housing. BBC. Retrieved from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-58873526

Within the wider context of declining availability of social housing stock and indications from recent research that there has been a tendency for refugees to secure social housing at the rate they may have previously, local authorities have increasingly sourced properties from the private sector.[62] With this, come negotiations with landlords, and requirements and barriers around benefit status and deposits. This has been made more challenging for refugees because of the impacts of the 'right to rent' policy which has impact on the way in which many refugees, minority ethnic communities and new arrivals engage with the housing system. The 'right-to-rent' policy was a cornerstone of the wider set of hostile environment measures introduced as part of the Immigration Act 2014. This particular policy requires private landlords and letting agents undertake ID checks to ensure that all prospective tenants have legal status to live in the UK. Failure to conduct these checks or renting to someone without a legal Right to Rent, can result in criminal prosecution which includes large fines and potential custodial sentences of up to five years. It also further jeopardises security of tenure for the tenant as they can be evicted without the need to follow due legal process. It has been pointed out that possible tenants who are refugees or asylum seekers could face three potential problems namely:

1. Discrimination or additional hurdles to go through in order to find accommodation meaning they find it very difficult or impossible to find somewhere to live;

2. Reliance on more expensive or insecure accommodation resulting in them becoming destitute more quickly;

3. Difficulties in persuading friends and family to house them or provide the relevant evidence to show destitution.[63]

Further to this the Government has recently announced fines will more than triple for landlords found to be accommodating migrants without the correct status:

62 Brown, P., Gill, S. and Halsall, J. (forthcoming 2024) Homeward Bound [submitted for publication]. Palgrave: London.

63 Asylum Support Appeals Project (2017) Briefing note: The right to rent scheme and asylum support. Retrieved from: https://www.asaproject.org/uploads/June_2017_-_Briefing_note_-_The_right_to_rent.pdf

For landlords the fines will increase from £80 per lodger and £1,000 per occupier for a first breach to up to £5,000 per lodger and £10,000 per occupier. Repeat breaches will be up to £10,000 per lodger and £20,000 per occupier, up from £500 and £3,000 respectively. The higher penalties will come in at the start of 2024.[64]

Due to the existing level of fines a direct consequence of this legislation has been a reluctance by landlords to let out properties to those without a British passport; in 2017, 42% of landlords reported that they were less likely to let to someone without a British passport[65], which increased to 44% in 2018[66]. These findings are consistent with those of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), who found through mystery shopper exercises that British Black Minority Ethnic (BME) citizens without a passport were more likely to receive negative responses from landlords than those who could provide a passport.[67] A high court case[68] ruled that the Right-to-Rent scheme breached human rights and led to discrimination and blocked the roll-out of the scheme to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The Government subsequently successfully appealed the judgement, and while it was found to be discriminatory, the degree of discrimination was said to be reasonably justified in the context of deterring illegal immigration. Current research suggests that many refugees are still finding it difficult to acquire a tenancy in the private-rented sector with respondents having to pay bonds and up to 12 months of rent upfront as well as offering to pay more rent than was advertised.

in 2017, 42% of landlords reported that they were less likely to let to someone without a British passport, which increased to 44% in 2018

64 Home Office (2023) Tripling of fines for those supporting illegal migrants. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tripling-of-fines-for-those-supporting-illegal-migrants#:~:text=For%20landlords%20the%20fines%20will,500%20and%20%C2%A33%2C000%20respectively.

65 Simcock, T. (2017). State Intervention into Renting: Making sense of the impact of policy changes. Manchester, UK: Residential Landlords Association.

66 Mykkanen, N., & Simcock, T. (2018). The Right to Rent Scheme and the Impact on the Private Rented Sector. Manchester, UK: Residential Landlords Association.

67 JCWI (2017). Passport Please: The impact of the Right to Rent checks on migrants and ethnic minorities in England. Joint Councils for the Welfare of Immigrants.

68 See: https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2019/452.pdf

This makes sourcing properties more difficult and there can also be a reluctance by landlords to adapt and maintain properties to meet the needs of tenants. These circumstances inevitably impact on the housing security of more recent refugees and is the norm for asylum-pathway refugees who rely heavily on properties in the private rented sector.



Known and emerging outcomes from refugee resettlement programmes

There is a lack of evidence about the long-term outcomes of refugees in the UK. Indeed, this is a major information gap on an international level with some studies that are notable exceptions which have taken a longitudinal approach.[69] Recent research has attempted to chart the lives of refugees who arrived in the UK from the 1990s to the present day.[70]

Most of the participants spoken to for this research who arrived through the Bosnian and Kosovan schemes were now owner-occupiers. The broader structural conditions during the 1990s and early 2000s played an important role in the ability for arrivals during this period to achieve housing stability, with families from both schemes presented with more favourable housing options when they arrived in the UK. Whilst initially housed in reception centres, families soon moved into long-term accommodation. Support workers were important in supporting this process and in relation to admission for children into local schools. At this time (up until 2000) local authorities were able to provide households (families, couples and singles) with council or social housing, and importantly, households were given choice as to where they lived. Many chose to remain in those properties, indicating that the programmes were successful in providing refugees with long-term secure housing.

The Gateway Protection Programme was one of the longest running schemes, which based on participants' responses for this research has also been successful in providing housing security over the long-

69 Cheung, S.Y. & Phillimore, J. (2014) Refugees, social capital, and labour market integration in the UK, Sociology, 48, pp. 518–536; Ahmad, F., Othman, N., Hynie, M., Bayoumi, A. M., Oda, A., & McKenzie, K. (2020). Depression-level symptoms among Syrian refugees: findings from a Canadian longitudinal study, Journal of Mental Health, 30(2), pp. 246–254.; Hiebert, D. (2009) Newcomers in the Canadian housing market: A longitudinal study, 2001–2005, Canadian Geographer, 53, pp. 265–384.

70 Brown, P., Gill, S., Halsall, J., Agbokou, A., Garcia, J., James, K., Mahmood, S., & Yemane, T. (2022). Housing and Refugees: Policy Briefing.

term. Once settled in independent community-based housing, most families (depending on their personal circumstances) have remained in their initial accommodation. The majority of housing was sourced by local authorities or through social housing providers, such as housing associations. The Programme was designed around a number of Key Performance Indicators which provided a focus upon identifying affordable, decent and sustainable housing as well as supporting households into employment and education. These factors may well have assisted in enhancing their positive housing experiences. From our research with this group, many are now in employment, although we are unable to ascertain how easy it was for this group of refugees to become owner-occupiers.

The VPRS focused on specifically resettling vulnerable refugees with a range of differing support needs. As mentioned, the package of support provided in the first year of arrival played an important role. However, when there is a complexity of needs, suitable accommodation can be difficult to source. Whilst some participants were initially housed in temporary accommodation, most received long-term secure housing on arrival, sourced by local authorities or housing associations. The majority have remained in these properties, again suggesting a positive housing outcome. Of the ten participants, three are working, one volunteering, with the remainder engaged in further education. This suggests that access to long-term secure, affordable and sustainable accommodation results in more positive personal and social outcomes for VPRS refugees too. However, it is important to note that with both schemes, families were not given choice on the property or the location of housing.

In terms of more recent programmes, the Ukrainian schemes initially appear to have been broadly successful, with public support, positive media messages and a general shift in the way in which refugees can be housed in great numbers by utilising mass community sponsorship. The schemes are varied in terms of the ongoing financial support that they provide, with Homes for Ukraine (Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme), being the most supported. The Homes for Ukraine scheme required hosts to commit to housing families for at least six months and the areas in which Ukrainian families are hosted have often been affluent, rural areas with access to good schools. Most of those who participated in our research were positive about the hosting families and the general reception they have received. Families have been able to access English lessons and children have found school and college places. However, the location of properties can mean that

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transportation to school and employment can be difficult. Concerns were raised over the removal of funding for households, pointing to increasing numbers of homelessness figures with Ukraine families.[71] The Red Cross highlighted the increased pressures, upon both hosts and guests, arising from the cost-of-living crisis, forcing the use of foodbanks and increasing the risk of homelessness. Widespread and ongoing pressure has led to the Government increasing the monthly payments to the host (from £350 to £500) and extending the financial support in the form of 'thank you payments' into its third year. Government has also provided more support to local authorities to support families into the private rented sector, for example through rent deposit schemes.[72]

There is also concern relating to the disparity of financial support provided for the differing schemes, as under the Ukraine Family Scheme[73], neither hosts nor local authorities receive financial assistance to support families, as is the case in the Homes for Ukraine Scheme[74]. Evidence from the APPG also points to concerns that those on the Ukraine Family Scheme are more likely to risk eviction and more likely to be living in overcrowded accommodation.[75]

Whilst the overall quality of housing has been good and families have benefited from support in resettlement, the APPG report illustrates there are some concerns being raised in relation to the next step, with moving on from the hosts' accommodation being the most pressing concern. There have also been cases where the relationship with the host family can break down or they may no longer want to, or be able to, support their guests.

71 House of Commons Library (2023) Homes for Ukraine: What happens after six months. https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9709/

72 Red Cross (2023) Fearing, fleeing, facing the future: how people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine are finding safety in the UK; https://www.redcross.org.uk/-/media/documents/miscellaneous/fearing-fleeing-facing-the-future--how-people-displaced-by-the-conflict-in-ukraine-are-finding-safet.pdf?sc_lang=en&hash=014AE8C01766F9E1E1FFC44E6AD34EF7

73 This is a concern as according to Red Cross (2023), a third of new arrivals (data collected up to 7th February 2023) are on the Ukrainian Family Schemes.

74 See Red Cross (2023) and APPG (2023) Ending Homelessness

75 All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness (2023) Meeting on Homelessness amongst Ukrainian refugees living in Britain. Available at: https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/248979/2302-minutes-from-meeting-on-homelessness-amongst-ukrainian-refugees-living-in-britain.pdf

By the end of August 2023, local authorities had reported to DLUHC that 4,890 households in England on Homes for Ukraine visas had been homeless or come within 56 days of being homeless, 8% of the 65,117 households in England using the visas. Since the start of 2023, at any one time, roughly 600 to 800 Ukrainian households have been living in temporary accommodation in England but DLUHC does not know how many of these households are on the Homes for Ukraine scheme. As more sponsorship arrangements come to an end the risk of homelessness is likely to increase (National Audit Office, 2023)[76]



The lack of available social housing[77] means that Ukrainian families must navigate the private rental market after they leave, which may also mean removing children from their new schools and social networks. In response local authorities have been provided funds to support families move into privately rented accommodation to act as guarantors and secure tenancies.

In terms of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) due to the shortage in the availability of appropriate housing, many households have spent an extended amount of time in bridging hotels or hostels.

76 National Audit Office (2023) Investigation into the Homes for Ukraine scheme.London. (p.15) https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/investigation-into-the-homes-for-ukraine-scheme.pdf

77 See also Red Cross (2023), as 81% of hosts mentioned barriers in supporting guests find accommodation in private rented sector. These barriers included affordability, lack of guarantors, deposits, lack of references or financial documents, as well as suitability of accommodation.



There is no publicly available data detailing the average length of stay Afghans have experiencing in bridging accommodation. Reports cite that in Scotland the average wait has been 331 days, or 41 weeks.[78] With Government reports citing occupancy ranging between 12–18 months.[79]

A large component of the difficulty in securing accommodation has been seen as the average size of the Afghan households (reported as 5.4 persons)[80] and the difficulty this poses in providing suitable accommodation that is affordable within the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates.[81] The outcomes for households are not clear. Due to Covid-19 restrictions at the time of arrival, many who arrived through these schemes faced a period of time in quarantine, further impacting on refugees' mental health and ability to establish social networks. There was Government funding for local authorities to support moves into long-term accommodation but refugees were given no choice in their accommodation options. Some found employment, whilst others focused on developing English through education. From the end of March 2023, the government announced its intention to withdraw the use of bridging accommodation and increased the financial support to local authorities to support households into accommodation. [82] This was reported as achieved by August 2023. In doing so households received one housing offer only, or were directed to the Find Your Own Accommodation Scheme. Those unable to find housing would have to present as homeless to the relevant local authority. This has been seen

78 Harrison, J. (2023) Afghan refugee waiting 82 weeks for a home' in Scottish bridging hotel, The Hearld. https://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/23566914.afghan-refugee-waiting-82-weeks-home-scottish-bridging-hotel/

79 Home Office (2023) Afghan bridging hotel exit operational data https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-resettlement-programme-operational-data/afghan-bridging-hotel-exit-operational-data#statistics-as-of-31-august-2023, House of Commons Library (2023) Accommodation and integration support for resettled Afghans https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9804/CBP-9804.pdf

80 UK Government (29/03/2023) New support for Afghans in UK hotels to find settled housing https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-support-for-afghans-in-uk-hotels-to-find-settled-housing

81 Kocan, H. (2021) Refugees and the need to reform the Local Housing Allowance https://www.bevanfoundation.org/views/refugees-local-housing-allowance/

82 UK Government (29/03/2023) New support for Afghans in UK hotels to find settled housing https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-support-for-afghans-in-uk-hotels-to-find-settled-housing

to equate to eviction by some commentators.[83] However, a briefing by the House of Commons Library in early November 2023 reported that whilst there were no Afghan households classified as living in bridging accommodation by the end of August 2023, 341 families (1,826 people) were being accommodated in "interim" hotel accommodation pending a move to longer-term accommodation. Most interim accommodation sites had previously been used as bridging accommodation.[84]

However, in contrast to those receiving status via the asylum-pathway the risk of homelessness, at least initially, appears limited due to the dedicated support that has been on hand within bridging accommodation and by the local authority. Although it should be noted that recent research has reported that Afghans have reported having a lack of information about their housing options.[85]

Despite their differences, relative to the outcomes of asylum pathway refugees, those people arriving through resettlement schemes seem to experience more housing stability and security. Drawing on recent research by the authors, many asylum pathway refugees had experienced a high frequency of housing moves and housing instability. Historically, asylum-pathway refugees had been able to access social housing which provided some security (in the case of refugees in our research who achieved status before the end of 2009). However, more recent migrants from the asylum route were less likely to secure social housing and are pushed into the private-rented sector. At the same time, the mere provision of housing does not seem to alleviate instability and precarity, as asylum-pathway refugees who had lived here over a longer period of time were also likely to have experienced instability at different points along their housing journey, either through homelessness or stays in temporary accommodation. Of those that migrated between 2000–09, about half had experienced homelessness. One participant had lived in a total of seven forms of temporary accommodation (prior and post decision) before gaining their first long term accommodation.

…the House of Commons Library in early November 2023 reported that whilst there were no Afghan households classified as living in bridging accommodation by the end of August 2023, 341 families (1,826 people) were being accommodated in "interim" hotel accommodation pending a move to longer-term accommodation

83 The Guardian (11/06/2023) Thousands of Afghan refugees in UK set to be made homeless https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/11/thousands-afghan-refugees-uk-homeless-crisis-operation-warm-welcome; BBC (18/07/23) Afghan refugees to move out of UK hotels over the summer https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-66238034

84 House of Commons Library (2023) Accommodation and integration support for resettled Afghans https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9804/

85 More in Common/USPUK (2023) Welcoming Afghans: In their own words. https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/media/d02pax5m/welcoming-afghans-in-their-own-words.pdf

What factors lead to positive outcomes for refugees?

There is very little evidence available that details the specifics of interventions in practice and policy that lead to positive housing outcomes for refugees. Nonetheless drawing on ongoing work by the authors it is possible to identify several areas which appear to contribute towards positive outcomes and experiences.

As detailed earlier in this paper, there are differences in terms of the amount of support, provision and resources that resettlement schemes provide. However, on the whole, organised resettlement schemes help provide a positive start for new migrants. The opportunity to plan before arrival allows relevant agencies to source appropriate and suitable accommodation as this housing worker describes:

'…they come to airports… We'll pick them up, take them directly to the accommodation and then work starts with integration, orientation, induction.'

Partners can work together to coordinate support plans, rather than having to draw on emergency resources and support workers can help organise any health and support needs, support children enter schools, and establish bank accounts which all support integration. Not all resettlement schemes are able to pre-plan thoroughly for arrivals, especially when people may be in crisis as seen with ARAP, ARCS and Ukraine, and support is time limited but this approach on the whole tends to lead to more positive outcomes for settlement than the asylum route. The description of this support from a Gateway Protection refugee is reflective of the experience of many others we spoke to:

‘The reception was great — support workers helped us when we came. Initially we had come from Egypt. In Bradford, they gave us furnished accommodation, linked us with a support worker, provided us with language assistance and they organised everything for us. They provided us with support for the whole yea… The support worker used to help us book hospital appointments and because we did not know the location, she also used to take us there. She also supported us with applying for school for myself and my kids. We received plenty of support. In my opinion, we have received great support including for the other refugees. Plus, support workers were easily available when we had complaints or questions regarding to various issues like water, finding council tax, telephone etc. They used to assist us with all translation related issues as well.’

The ability to communicate using spoken English is of critical importance throughout the resettlement process. Those with English skills prior to migration to the UK can more successfully access services and engage in everyday interactions on arrival. As this asylum-pathway refugee who arrived in the 2000s highlights:

‘Yes, I was a bit lucky [being able to speak English] compared to somebody like, somebody from like Congo, that is French… So some people will come to me like and try to, you know, in broken English or something like that, try to …. It’s hard for them in terms of like language barrier’

This was especially useful for navigating the complex housing system and enabled access to knowledge about rights and entitlements at those early key stages. Refugees with English language skills were also able to provide support to those without this skill within their networks and communities. For these reasons, access to English language

programmes such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is important for those who arrive without English language skills to enable their navigation through their housing pathways and into employment routes. This was true for both those who arrived via resettlement schemes as well as the asylum-pathway.

English language skills enabled refugees to engage with housing providers and landlords, develop digital skills, access sector wide support and develop new social networks. This was especially pertinent if they are without the help of a support worker. By the same token, refugees with limited English language skills were at an increased risk of homelessness and faced more barriers to accessing targeted service provision, employment and opportunities to build networks within their new communities. Combined, this exacerbated what was for many already fragile wellbeing, resulting in increased isolation and precarity. English language acquisition and access to this is then fundamentally important for positive housing outcomes for refugees.

Recent policy has placed a clear emphasis on the need for migrants to acquire English language skills for similar reasons. Within some political discourses, those without English language skills have been framed as intentionally choosing to avoid integration and maintain a closed network. However, it is apparent that refugees are eager to reap the benefits that come from speaking English in their resettlement journeys, and they also see it as necessary to improve their situation.

As this resettled Afghan refugee argues:

'…We put pressure on ourselves to learn, especially me. I'm studying at night. All the time I'm studying. I need to study because when I live here we need to know the language, we need to know the system, everything.'

…refugees with limited English language skills were at an increased risk of homelessness and faced more barriers to accessing targeted service provision, employment and opportunities to build networks within their new communities

However, accessing classes can become difficult once migrants start employment, suggesting the importance of ongoing opportunities to develop English skills in a more flexible way than is currently the case.

English language skills were also seen as necessary to improve income, as they were seen to directly lead to enhanced employment opportunities. The search for employment was a significant feature in our participants' narratives, and as an important factor for enabling positive outcomes. Employment was seen as useful for supporting

integration as well as fostering the development of social networks and involvement in community life. Employment was also important for refugees to achieve self-sufficiency and economic stability for themselves and their families and be less reliant on the state. Combined these factors encourage more positive wellbeing and housing options, yet, in order to access employment housing stability is important. However, as others have recognised a quick entry into any role can have a detrimental effect for those who possess higher-level skills:



> While work is a route to integration and a positive economic outcome, lower end jobs are detrimental to refugees' language learning and risks being counter-productive for improved longer-term outcomes (Morrice, Tip, Collyer, & Brown, 2019)[86]

There was a sense of frustration that qualifications gained in their country of origin were not always recognised in the UK. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees reported that this spanned professionals from engineering to medical and health related professions.[87] This meant that refugees would essentially need to start again, reskill, or seek education or training to access more desirable employment. Those people who had previously held highly-skilled roles often had specific language needs and require a high score in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to register with their relevant professional body. Locating such provision to support their language development can be difficult and then also unaffordable for some.

For those on various resettlement schemes, there was more orientation and support into employment and training opportunities. However, those who received status via the asylum route have to wait much longer as they are unable to work until they have gained status, which places them 'in limbo':

86 Willott, J. (2022) Professional bodies and suporting highly-skilled refugees into employment. Leeds Beckett University. https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/research-entry/professional-bodies-and-supporting-highly-skilled-refugees-employment

87 All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees. (2017). Refugees Welcome? The experience of new refugees in the UK. Retrieved from https://appgrefugees.wordpress.com/publications/



‘Jobcentre didn’t tell me something to find a job, because I am going to college to improve my language, but didn’t tell me, but I myself need to find a part time job, because you know that the money which we monthly get, it’s not enough. I have to find a job. Any kind of job I can do. I apply to warehouse job, company, to restaurant, to takeaway, any kind of job that’s available right now I can do…. any kind of job, it’s good.’

Social housing was the preferred housing choice for many of the participants in our research. There was an awareness amongst many of the people we spoke to that social housing was more likely to be of a decent quality, and with more affordable rents compared with housing in the private sector.

Our research concurs with other work that has repeatedly highlighted the importance of having a key person or support worker that helps support refugees achieve positive outcomes. This support can be formal or informal.[88] Irrespective of the route into status in the UK, there was mention of key individuals that supported resettlement. For refugees on resettlement schemes, support workers were identified as playing an important role in providing targeted support or intervention. Those more recently arrived through the Ukrainian scheme, mentioned the significance of their host in this respect. However, in both these examples, the support provided was time limited. Whereas support from mentors and volunteers, educators or health practitioners differed in this respect and could be prolonged over a period of time. Nevertheless, both highlight the importance of having ‘somebody there’ for positive outcomes and successful integration.

Charities and the wider voluntary and community sector play a central role in supporting refugees at various points in their resettlement and are a key contributory factor in creating and maintaining positive experiences and outcomes. This is not to diminish the support provided by public sector organisations in supporting refugees, as they are also hugely important, but in the context of funding cuts, public sector service provision is thinly spread across vulnerable groups. This means that refugees are forced to rely on voluntary and community

88 Brown, P., Gill, S., & Halsall, J., P. (2022) The impact of housing on refugees: an evidence synthesis, Housing Studies, DOI: 10.1080/02673037.2022.2045007

organisations to essentially fill the gaps from a retreating welfare state. The support they provide focuses on addressing refugees' wellbeing, and social and cultural needs, rather than addressing financial inequalities, and also to enable a space for refugees to participate as volunteers. This was valued and refugees described the opportunities as beneficial for developing skills and confidence, raising awareness, extending their social networks as well as 'giving back'.

Research has highlighted the importance of social networks in enhancing positive outcomes. Consistently refugees described how they drew on their social networks for personal needs, advice and information, orientation as well as in relation to seeking employment opportunities. Social networks are especially important when refugees lack English language skills and need support. Conversely those who had a better grasp of English also used this to support their social networks, which provided an important space of belonging and community for newly arrived migrants. For this reason, many cited it as important for them to be housed close to their social networks and sought ways to facilitate this. Refugees turn to these social networks for shelter and support when experiencing homelessness or when problems with housing arise.



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Recommendations

Many of the issues such as accessing high-quality, secure and affordable housing identified in this paper are faced by many members of excluded groups and communities, and refugees are one of these. However, it remains the case that refugees are particularly disadvantaged in relation to housing due to their socio-legal status, pre-migratory experiences and their positioning in society which affords them additional vulnerabilities and exacerbates the housing stress they face. Out of all migrant groups it is consistently suggested that refugees experience the poorest housing outcomes.

The current system of resettling refugees needs revising as it is unbalanced, as refugees receiving status through asylum are majorly disadvantaged compared to those who go through a resettlement scheme. The solution is not to close spontaneous routes to seek refuge but to provide support for those that do. There needs to be a holistic approach across the refugee and asylum system on what wrap around support is provided, when and for how long. Irrespective of the routes into acquiring refugee status, a lack of appropriate and affordable housing, poor housing conditions, a lack of funding, insecure housing and a fragile housing-support system all play a significant and instrumental role in maintaining precariousness and prolonging vulnerability.

This paper has explored the historical context of refugee resettlement in the UK and the current policy context. It has examined the existing and evolving knowledge base and considered the opportunities to improve the housing outcomes for refugees in the UK. The following recommendations have been developed to focus on the many ways refugees can be better facilitated in their housing pathways.

The production of national and local refugee resettlement strategies. The responsibility for the resettlement and housing of refugees is dispersed across Government departments, local authorities and civil society. This causes unnecessary duplication, gaps and inefficiencies in the system, which in turn causes negative outcomes for refugees. A new UK refugee and asylum charter should be introduced that provides a framework for how new refugees should be supported to enhance their integration experiences and guide the work of institutions. **At the national level** a strategy should articulate a clear vision for:

- rights and responsibilities of refugees;
- how resettlement and integration should be achieved; and
- appropriate targets.

At a **local level** strategies should, at the minimum:

- Set a consistent approach to how policy should be implemented,
- the responsibilities of key actors, and
- establish principles for collaborative working between key organisations across sectors.

Ensure impacts of policy changes are appropriately assessed under the Equality Act 2010. Refugees and other migrants are not explicitly mentioned in the Equality Act 2010 which means that the specific impacts of policy changes, at national and local levels, are often not taken into account. Bringing refugees within a conceptual and policy landscape of equality brings refugees into the mainstream alongside other members who have protected characteristics. By drawing on the Act refugees needs would be no longer considered to require unique support which reinforces the idea that refugees are a 'burden' on society and serves to other them. In order to do this there would need to be a more systematic approach to data collection based on immigration status.

Ensure funding of refugee resettlement programmes is adequate and consistent across

programmes. Differing refugee resettlement programmes have commanded different funding allocations which impact on the ability for stakeholders to provide adequate and comparable support to all refugees. These differences risk creating variable outcomes for refugees. A more consistent approach across programmes would ensure all refugees and the organisations that provide support are provided with the resources required to ensure parity.

Extend the move on period after an asylum decision. Extending the 28-day move on period to at least 56 days should be an immediate priority, together with added support, will address unnecessary and expensive use of temporary accommodation and lead to better housing outcomes over the long-term.

Reform the Right to Rent policy. The presence of large fines is leading to risk aversion on behalf of landlords. Removing the fines will improve housing availability for refugees.

Promote the role social housing providers can play. Social housing providers are ideally placed to take a more engaged and proactive role in developing housing options, advice, and guidance for refugees. Organisations that represent social housing associations can do a lot to share good practice, ways of working and case studies of the ways in which social housing providers are contributing to improving the housing outcomes of refugees.

Ensure access to rights-based advice. There is a necessity to ensure that organisations who provide rights-based advice to refugees are adequately resourced to ensure that refugees themselves have the confidence to exercise their rights.

Increase the volume of face-to-face support for new refugees. Refugees who receive early support through a caseworker who can help navigate UK systems appear to experience better outcomes. They are able to access English classes, engage with the labour market, and acquire confidence in immersing themselves in social life. There should be more adequately resourced formal and meaningful face-to-face support for refugees, regardless of their route to refugee status, provided at the earliest possible point in their resettlement. This support should embrace the principles of personalisation, be trauma informed and tapered depending on individual needs. A dedicated refugee caseworker to household ratio of 1 to 10 is recommended.

Build capacity within refugee communities. Evidence suggests that refugees themselves are a huge source of knowledge who often want to reach out and advocate for other refugees. Evidence also suggests that refugees tend to seek advice from friends and family before consulting with more formal organisations, this presents an opportunity to ensure refugees get the best advice possible. Funders in this space could consider developing a programme of capacity building within the refugee communities to enable them to become community champions, who would provide added readiness within local areas to support refugees into housing. Leadership programmes run by Survivor Alliance,[89] the Leeds Migrant Access Project[90] and the New Scots Leadership Programme[91] are of particular note here.

In addition to the recommendations for policy and practice there is a clear and urgent need for further research in this area, this paper has identified the following knowledge gaps:

- **Explore the long-term housing trajectories of refugees**. Studies which employ longitudinal tracking methods are sorely needed in order to explore housing outcomes over long periods of time. There is very little evidence which

89 https://www.survivoralliance.org/leadership-academy
90 https://migrationpartnership.org.uk/the-leeds-migrant-access-project-re-launched-on-9th-may-2023/
91 https://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/apply-now-for-new-scots-leadership-programme-2324/



explores the longer-term housing experiences of refugees specifically and the ways in which the housing experiences of refugees interact with other aspects of socio-economic life. This is the case for refugees regardless of their routes into the UK. Key areas of concern include: the long-term trajectories of those receiving status through the asylum system, the longer-term trajectories of resettled refugees once case worker support is removed, the potential welfare experiences of those people who arrived on the BNO visa scheme who may find themselves in need of support, and the long-term post-hosting experience of people who arrived on the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

- **Explore the diversity of the refugee experience**. The term refugee is homogenising, but the refugee population is diverse and their needs and experiences can vary greatly. This clearly demonstrates a large gap in the evidence base and there is a pressing need for research to look at the housing experiences of specific groups of refugees. Such groups include: LGBTQ+, those with disabilities, and those who have had previous experience of bonded labour.
- **The impact of reception centres on mental health and wellbeing**. There is growing evidence that points to the negative impact of reception centres and other forms of communal living can have on refugees. However, the use of reception centres, hotels and similar accommodation has been growing. Little is known about how these accommodation options impact on the mental health and wellbeing of refugees.
- **Assess the impact and outcomes of existing models of support**. There are a range of ways in which refugees have been supported in their settlement in the UK from immediate transitioning to mainstream support, more intensive paid keyworker support over a long period of time to, support provided by a hybrid of hosts and paid keyworker support. The impacts and outcomes resulting from these different models are far from clear.
- **An evaluation of the impact of the Migrant Help Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service**. It is unclear the impact that the service is having and whether the service could be improved to support new refugees more effectively.
- **Homelessness and refugee status**. There is a major gap in evidence surrounding the extent and experience of homelessness for those with refugee status. In turn it is essential to establish what works for homelessness prevention with refugees.

Annex A: List of Key Organisations

British Red Cross	https://www.redcross.org.uk/
Choose Love	https://chooselove.org/
City of Sanctuary UK	https://cityofsanctuary.org/
Commonweal Housing	https://www.commonwealhousing.org.uk/
COSLA Strategic Migration Partnership	https://migrationscotland.org.uk/
East of England Strategic Migration Partnership	https://smp.eelga.gov.uk/
East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership	https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/Migration-Hub
Free from Torture	https://www.freedomfromtorture.org/
Home Office	https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/asylum
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants	https://www.jcwi.org.uk/
London Strategic Migration Partnership	https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/communities-and-social-justice/migrants-and-refugees/london-strategic-migration-partnership-lsmp
NACCOM Network	https://naccom.org.uk/
North East Migration Partnership	https://www.nemp.org.uk/
North West Regional Strategic Migration Partnership	https://northwestrsmp.org.uk/
Mears Group PLC.	https://www.mearsgroup.co.uk/
Migrant Help UK	https://www.migranthelpuk.org/
Migrants Rights Network	https://migrantsrights.org.uk/
Migration Yorkshire	https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/
Positive Action in Housing	https://www.paih.org/

Refugee Action	https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/
Refugee Council	https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/
Refugees at Home	https://www.refugeesathome.org/
Reset Communities and Refugees	https://resetuk.org/
Save the Children	https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/
Safe Passage	https://www.safepassage.org.uk/
Scottish Refugee Council	https://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/
Shelter	https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/housing_for_refugees
South East Strategic Partnership for Migration	https://southeastspm.org.uk/
South West Strategic Migration Partnership	https://swcouncils.gov.uk/policy-strategy/policy-swsmp/
Unicef	https://www.unicef.org/
UN Refugee Agency	https://www.unhcr.org/
Wales Strategic Migration Partnership	https://www.wsmp.wales/home
West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership	https://www.wmsmp.org.uk/
Women for Refugee Women	https://www.refugeewomen.co.uk/

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