What are the key areas of injustice at the intersection of the migration, asylum & trafficking system(s) and housing/homelessness – and how can housing solutions address these?

Report for Commonweal Housing

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Housing Solutions to Social Injustice

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About this report

This report was written to support Commonweal Housing in their development of a potential work programme in the field of migrant, asylum, and trafficking housing injustices. The report was written by Professor Philip Brown from the University of Huddersfield. Phil has worked, in a practice and research capacity, on migrant housing issues since 1999. He has supported the work of the European Parliament, Council of Europe, Fundamental Rights Agency, major funders and government departments. He was a Specialist Advisor to the Parliamentary Women & Equalities Committee on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller inequalities and has supported the APPGs Migration and Gypsy, Travellers and Roma in relation to monitoring the impacts of Brexit.

Special thanks go to all the professionals who contributed to various discussions that took place, to Claire Thompson for helping review the evidence and to Matthew Wale for advice and guidance.

Foreword

At Commonweal, our work is centred around understanding and testing ways in which housing can play a part in improving or solving a social injustice. Crucially, we are most interested in finding housing solutions to support marginalised groups at the sharpest edge of society. There are many areas of housing injustice around the migration, asylum and trafficking system.

That is why we commissioned Professor Phil Brown, a specialist in the migration and housing fields, to undertake research exploring the housing injustice faced by those in contact with the migration, asylum and trafficking systems.

We wanted to know those most at risk of housing insecurity, specific concerns facing the organisations in the sectors, gaps in current housing provision, and how new approaches can improve housing options.

The learnings from the report seek to help shape Commonweal's current, as well as future, work in this space. At the time of writing this, these findings have been instrumental in shaping our call to the sector to come to us with new ideas for housing solutions to tackle the injustices facing those in the migration, asylum and trafficking systems.

We thank Phil for this report and look forward to collaborating with stakeholders in the sector to develop and test new solutions to help ensure these groups can access suitable, safe housing.

Ashley Horsey, Chief Executive at Commonweal Housing

Glossary

A range of terms have been used in this report, the following offers an explanation of these and how they have been used.

Asylum seeker: An individual who has departed from their country of origin and is seeking protection from persecution and severe human rights violations in a different country. The term is used when a person applies for asylum in another country but a decision on their application has not yet been determined.

Community Navigator: This term was used by stakeholders to describe a worker, who might be paid or unpaid, based within a public sector organisation, a charity or could be a network of volunteers. Their role would be to support new arrivals to explore opportunities in their neighbourhoods to become more connected to services and involved with people, groups and activities. It extends the more familiar role of keyworker or caseworker by supporting people to link with civil society as well as statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations.

Human Trafficking: The transportation, harbouring or receipt of persons, via deception threats or coercion, for exploitation.

Modern Slavery: An umbrella term which encompasses human trafficking, slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM): Defined by the Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance as 'the UK's framework for identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery. It is one means of ensuring that adult victims receive the necessary support and assistance in the period immediately after their identification as a potential victim.' Child victims of modern slavery must be referred to the NRM, whereas adult victims of modern slavery must give informed consent to be referred. A referral can only be made by a First Responder Organisation. For adult victims, the NRM provides support through the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC). (Human Trafficking Foundation, 2023)

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF): A type of condition placed on visas which limits a person's ability to access benefits and other types of financial support.

People seeking sanctuary: Refers to refugees or asylum seekers from any background or immigration status.

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. 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. Included in this category for the purposes of this report are individuals granted similar forms of protection, including humanitarian protection or, in some cases, Discretionary Leave.

Refugee Community Organisation: A centre and/or group that welcomes and supports refugees who arrive in the UK. These are groups that are community led and work with different stakeholders to advocate for positive links between refugees and the host community.

Survivor of human trafficking: An individual who has survived an experience of human trafficking. Survivor is used in preference to 'victim' as a term of empowerment to note that an individual has overcome, or is in the process of overcoming, a trauma associated with their experiences. In this report we include by UK and non-UK nationals when we talk about survivors of human trafficking.

Vulnerable migrant: This term has been used broadly to describe people who have migrated to the UK, who falls outside the other definitions but who experiences multiple exclusions. People such as those from the Roma community, international students, international health and care workers on low incomes, family joiners and others may be included in this group within this report.

Introduction

At the time of writing areas of the United Kingdom, mainly England, are experiencing acts of violence, disorder and vandalism which are targeted at asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants. These acts are underpinned by racism which has manifested in a small number of shocking incidents, but which has been fostered by divisive politics and amplified by the media over many years. By using toxic and pejorative language towards people from migrant communities, many of whom we have a moral and legal duty to protect, they are routinely dehumanised. Over the years this has led to people from migrant communities, alongside other people who experience multiple exclusions, being scapegoated for causing housing inequalities, fractured communities and a strain on public services and welfare budgets. The reality is that this is a highly politicised austere structural context that has resulted in the marginalisation of and reduced capacity in local authorities, a fragile voluntary and community sector, and a lack of social housing. Whilst there is an urgent need to address these structural inequalities caused by successive policies, there remains a huge opportunity for funders to make a positive difference in addressing injustices by supporting innovation at critical junctures.

In the UK the housing of asylum seekers and refugees and other vulnerable groups has been under popular and political scrutiny for some time. This has typically been entangled within discourses which construct migrants as outsiders and, in many instances, as undeserving of support, with increasingly unconventional measures being offered up as a solution to the refugee and asylum 'problem'. These have included: 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 offshore vessels, hotel room optimisation and sub-contracting to third countries (i.e. Rwanda) to divest of accommodation and support responsibilities.

For those for whom their refugee status has been confirmed there is a growing evidence base which indicates the impact from stresses caused by navigating housing pathways in a context where social housing is scarce, exacerbated through policies such as Right to Buy (Dwyer & Brown, 2008; Shankley and Finney 2020). The lack of affordable housing forces those on low incomes, and increasingly refugees, to rely on low quality housing in the private rented sector which is often older and poorly maintained (The Smith Institute, 2018; Brown et al 2022), unaffordable and difficult to access (Mitton, 2021). As such, current government policy in the UK increases the vulnerability of migrants, particularly refugees who are exiting the asylum system. The 28-day move-on period has been shown to increase the risk of homelessness, and increase the use of temporary emergency accommodation, which is not appropriate, safe or secure (Brown et al, 2024). Successive governments have made housing and homelessness key targets. Yet annual government figures published in March 2024 show rough sleeping increasing by 27% (GOV, 2024). This is largely due to alarming increases in

homelessness amongst refugees, exacerbated by fast-tracking of asylum applications (Inside Housing, 2024) - any concerted efforts to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping must address the vulnerability of migrant communities as a core aim.

Whilst approaches to policy which fast-track asylum decisions are welcome in principle, given assurances as to the effectiveness of decisions, this leaves many people searching and competing for accommodation that is in short supply. Situate this within a wider 'hostile environment' whereby migrants are homogenised and scapegoated for the lack of community resources, and the journey to settlement is even more precarious for a diverse population whose vulnerabilities are evident. The tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, which disproportionately befell minority ethnic communities and migrants, and the tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak in 2020 from a respiratory infection due to mould in the family home, highlight the scathing reality of poor housing and an inequitable housing system on the most vulnerable (Shankley and Finney 2020), many of them people seeking sanctuary.

As the Human Trafficking Foundation (2023) have stated, housing and modern slavery are closely tied. Those who have survived human trafficking often find their experiences of slavery and their recovery inextricably linked to their housing circumstances. During their exploitation the space in which control occurs is where they are forced to live, it offers no privacy and no sanctuary. Escaping modern slavery often means increasing the risk of homelessness. This is the same for both UK and non-UK nationals. Recovery from this point requires having access to good quality secure accommodation alongside wrap-around support. Without this, as has been shown by agencies working with survivors of modern slavery, it is not only that the risk of homelessness increased, so too is the likelihood of re-traumatisation and re-exploitation. Throughout this report, following urging by some of the stakeholders we have engaged with, we include both UK and non-UK nationals when talking about the needs and experiences of survivors of human trafficking.

Aim of this report

This report draws together the available evidence and consultations with stakeholders to tackle the following questions:

1) What are the injustices faced by migrants, those in the asylum system and victims of trafficking with respect to housing and homelessness in the UK?

2) What housing solutions can be deployed to address these injustices?

Methodology

This section details the methodology adopted for this study.

Phase 1: Rapid Evidence Assessment

To develop a foundation for this study, a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) was undertaken. REAs are a useful and time-effective method for synthesising the current evidence base and identifying gaps in understanding. An REA protocol was produced which detailed the justification for the review, screening and study selection process and data extraction process. This was used to search through relevant social sciences databases, to access English language papers published over the last 10 years (since 2014). In addition, a targeted review of grey literature and project reports was undertaken. A briefing note was produced and circulated to stakeholders who were invited to provide their views on the collated evidence and share their individual views, reflections and experiences.

Phase 2: Engagement with stakeholders

Around 40 organisations were contacted and invited to engage with the work. These organisations represented a range of sectors, areas of interest and spanned the UK. Small group discussions and interviews were undertaken with representatives of organisations who responded to the call for participation, these were:

- Abigail Housing
- Bradford Council
- Glassdoor
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Hope at Home
- Hope for Justice
- Horton Housing
- Housing Justice
- Humankind
- Islington Council
- Justice and Care
- London Borough of Newham
- Migration Yorkshire
- No Accommodation Network
- Refugee Council
- Sheffield City of Sanctuary

Stakeholders were provided with a short briefing note in advance of each meeting and asked to consider the following broad areas:

- What, in their views, were the serious issues and specific injustices facing asylum seekers (including Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children), refugees and survivors of trafficking, both now and for the foreseeable future?
- What are the expected impacts from recent and forthcoming changes to legislation and policy?
- Where are the gaps in provision?
- Where could organisations have impact?
- Do cohorts face further injustices, for example (but not limited to), certain nationalities, people identifying as LGBTQ, people with complex needs?

Phase 3: Online form

For those stakeholders who were unable to commit to a discussion all stakeholders were invited to record their comments and thoughts on an open-ended form. The questions on the form corresponded to the issues asked in the discussions. We received an additional three responses from this approach from:

- Asylum Matters
- South Yorkshire Police
- West Yorkshire Police

Evidence review

There are many groups in society that experience challenges and difficulties in the housing system due to a range of pressures such as: an inadequate supply of good quality and secure affordable and social housing, low household incomes, poor physical and mental health, existing institutional care, domestic abuse, discrimination and so on. Due to their socio-legal status, pre-migratory experiences and their positioning in society migrants, people seeking sanctuary and survivors of trafficking experience additional vulnerabilities which, in turn, exacerbates the housing stress they face. Indeed, Powell and Robinson (2019) have identified that migrant populations are particularly at risk of housing precarity with 40% of recent migrants experiencing housing deprivation, compared with 10% of UK-born households.

A large section of the available evidence consistently highlights the overarching restrictive policy context that migrants, people seeking sanctuary and those who survive trafficking experience. In their evidence review Brown et al (2022) detail how the lack of affordable or social housing exposes many people to homelessness and housing precarity and, where access to housing is possible, to rely on low-quality housing in the private rented sector which is often older and poorly maintained, unaffordable and difficult to access. These failings of the housing system at large are repeated in much of the evidence reviewed here and will not be repeated. Instead, this review focuses on some of the particular injustices faced by the groups of interest to this study. The evidence is organised into the following thematic areas:

- Poverty, low-incomes and structural inequality
- Mental health issues and trauma
- Access to and experience of health services
- The role of support services and social integration
- Housing providers and housing interventions
- Provision of digital technology
- Mothers, young children and domestic abuse
- Issues relating to LGBTQ+ populations
- Unaccompanied minors

Each of these are explored in depth below.

Poverty, low-incomes and structural inequality

Vulnerable migrants, people seeking sanctuary and survivors of trafficking experience significant structural inequalities, poverty and low-incomes and these factors feature across many studies, both direct and indirectly in their coverage. Those who are most excluded from welfare and supports systems such as refused asylum seekers or those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) often end up being dependent on 'ethnic

enclave accommodations' (Bloch, 2014), accommodated in informal housing arrangements or vulnerable to exploitation (Liebling et al, 2014). All of which leaves people further isolated from broader society. A paper by Lukes et al (2019) articulated how migrants have experienced increasingly disadvantaged and vulnerable housing positions over time. As a result, Lukes et al, claim that these discriminatory processes have been normalised and embedded over a long period. This has been deepened by a fragmented housing sector and an over-arching anti-migrant policy framework. Lombard (2021) highlighted that high levels of housing precarity exist among migrant populations, with a significant proportion experiencing housing deprivation and difficulties in accessing safe, decent, and affordable accommodation, particularly in the private rented sector (PRS). They argue that there has been a normalisation of precarity by the widespread acceptance of precarious working and living conditions which particularly affects migrant workers who are often doubly disadvantaged due to their citizenship status and insecure employment.

Mitton's (2021) study into homelessness amongst newly recognised refugees highlighted, as many studies have, the heightened risk of homelessness posed by the 28-day move on period from asylum housing. They outline the increased risk of destitution over this period which is exacerbated by delays in processing welfare benefits and barriers to setting up bank accounts. Mitton also identifies the limited and restrictive nature of state support to cover emergency financial support for housing deposits and other essential costs. There are several recommendations arising from this study which are of interest and can be summarised as follows (p.73-74):

> 1. Greater flexibility in implementation, with refugees being able to stay on in Home Office provided housing for longer periods than the arbitrary 28 days, and landlords' costs covered by housing benefit.

> 2. Provision of support to refugees leaving Home Office housing, which recognises the different stages of refugee housing need, and includes access to housing advice, rapid access to housing benefit and a rent deposit loan scheme.

> 3. More Home Office resources to support the voluntary sector in their work with refugees in crisis and to prevent street homelessness.

> 4. Local Authorities should uphold their statutory homelessness prevention duty by creating dedicated pathways for new refugees to access temporary housing and progress promptly to settled housing without having to use emergency homeless services when their asylum support ends.

> 5. Local authorities should particularly invest in support for young single people, who are disproportionally affected by homelessness.

Mental health issues and trauma

A number of studies focused on the mental health impacts as they connect to the search for appropriate and secure housing. Citing guidance from the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) on the mental health care of migrants the study by Campbell et al (2018) argues that refugees and asylum seekers are the most vulnerable to mental health problems out of all migrant groups (p.72). The lack of preparation, attitudes of the new country, poor living conditions, poor or lack of employment and variable social support all add to this vulnerability. Campbell et al (2018) find that low levels of satisfaction about their accommodation are a key driver of mental health issues for refugees. Women, older refugees, and those from higher educational or socio-economic backgrounds in their countries of origin were more susceptible to poorer emotional well-being. In addition, a study by Allport et al (2019) looked at the mental health impact on Somali families living in the UK and Sah et al (2019) who looked at incidences of mental distress amongst older Nepalese women. For the latter, housing issues emerged as a significant driver of emotional distress among the older Nepalese women interviewed. Challenges included poor living conditions, overcrowding, and lack of affordable housing options. In particular, inadequate housing conditions exacerbated feelings of isolation and insecurity, contributing to overall mental health deterioration. Rowley et al (2020) argued that having stability, a factor which is closely tied to securing suitable housing, is crucial for mental health and successful integration. A study by Walker et al (2021) demonstrated that the mental health of newly recognised refugees fluctuates and tends to improve after being awarded status. However, this improvement is to some extent dependent on having practical support to navigate this transitional period. They argue that support is needed to navigate the many challenges associated with the housing system and welfare support. The study by Vitale and Ryde (2016) focuses specifically on the experience of male refugees who have been newly recognised. They argued that the significant housing instability they face, having to frequently move and experience periods of homelessness, often leads to mental health impacts. When they receive shelter, this is often in small, overcrowded rooms in hostels or shared accommodations, which further exacerbates stress. Additionally, a lack of privacy and personal space contributes to feelings of insecurity and a lack of identity.

Access to and experience of health services

A modest number of studies focussed on how vulnerable migrant communities' access and experience health services. Work by Namata and Hatzidimitriadou (2023) focused on attempting to explore strategies to improve access to primary care services for people who are homeless from migrant communities. The top priority that arose from the study was the need for healthcare providers to combat discrimination and demonstrate respect, build trust, and treat everyone equally, regardless of their immigration status or homelessness (p. 4). The third most important strategy (out of 25)

was ensuring the increase of secure accommodation where people can have safe and quality sleep (p.5). The impacts of inadequate healthcare service provision are highlighted by Tomkow et al (2023) who looked at the experiences of providing care for asylum applicants in contingency accommodation. They looked specifically at the challenge of working with people in the context of having limited English proficiency. They illustrated that everyday practices of 'tinkering' and improvising, to communicate with people, was contributing to poor care outcomes for asylum-seekers. They described this as 'language discrimination' which they argued needed to be addressed to counter health inequalities.

The role of support services and social integration

Many papers focussed on the role and delivery of support services in order to assist people in their settlement within housing and the local area. Wessendorf and Gembus (2024) described how variations in geography, and the accessibility of publicly accessible facilities, help determine the extent of social integration that people experience. The more resilient the social infrastructure the better the social integration. The importance of social connections within communities, to support reunited refugee families was also a finding from work by Kerlaff (2023). Parker and Cornell (2023) looked at a similar area of work and concentrated their analysis on the extent of social bridging in the communities of South Wales. They found that refugees and asylum seekers often find themselves isolated and confined within their homes. This was often because of wider policies relating to the placement of asylum seekers and refugees but which ultimately restricted opportunities for social interaction in order to draw on wider community support.

Community-led initiatives to address structural disadvantage in the context of housing, welfare and social integration were the focus of several papers such as Benwell et al (2023) and Paul (2023). Paul (2023) described the instrumental role community-led actors have in advocating for changes to housing policies and processes within a broader context of the City of Sanctuary movement in London. Similarly, Sorgen's analysis of 'conversation clubs' concludes that these spaces offer a vital social space for refugees/asylum seekers, providing both a physical place to go and a supportive environment that fosters social integration and community building.

Housing providers and housing interventions

A small number of studies looked at the role of housing providers in supporting diversity and migrant populations living in their areas. A study by Finney et al (2019) underlined the important role played by housing providers in supporting and creating communities and how they do and could respond to issues of cohesion and integration. These were seen as highly variable and localised. A study from Phillimore (2017) drew on findings from an evaluation of a programme where refugees were trained to be volunteers within

housing associations in the UK. Each volunteer was placed within a housing association on a placement, each lasting for around six months. The participants from within the housing associations talked about how they understood refugee issues better, were able to reach out to the refugee communities more effectively, developed useful social connections within the organisation, and reported enhanced employability for the refugees involved. The associations also spoke of the project enhancing new ways of working and thinking within the organisations.

A study by Doyle (2018) concentrated on the impact of migrant-occupied houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) in rural areas. The paper identifies three types of uncertainty: regulation uncertainty, uncertainty in intervention, and demographic uncertainty. They also assert that governance systems struggle to address the complexities of migration in new rural destinations, leading to challenges in managing housing effectively. Doyle argued that it was imperative to increase certainty in the delivery of HMOs through: deploying better management systems, developing better evidence, and improving occupants' knowledge of rights and responsibility (p.286).

Provision of digital technology

Only one study focused on the role of technology in addressing exclusion. A paper by Malpass et al (2024) focussed on the impact the provision of mobile technology had for supporting survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking. Their study identified that smart phones helped survivors develop essential skills that assisted them in their transition towards independent living. This included managing personal affairs, accessing online services, and navigating the housing system. Survivors were able to contact housing providers, schedule appointments, and follow up on housing applications more efficiently using their smartphones. They also helped reduce feelings of isolation among survivors by allowing them to stay connected with support networks, which was seen as crucial for maintaining stable housing situations.

Mothers, young children and domestic abuse

The review found several studies that focussed on the impacts on pregnant or new mothers who were asylum seeking, had been trafficked or had escaped violence. Work by Bosatta et al (2024) describes how living in hotels was detrimental to the health of mothers and children due to the lack of independent cooking facilities and how meals, described as leftovers, were being skipped. Work by Benchekroun et al (2024) looked more broadly at the way in which hostile policies affected and impacted families with insecure immigration status. They concluded that shifts in immigration rules and regulations routinely undermine the capacity of mothers to navigate the policy environment, including housing stresses. This consequently left them vulnerable to, what the authors describe as, state-driven hostility. This was occasionally manifested in being vulnerable to domestic abuse and controlling behaviour by partners for which

women had few options to escape. Those who had NRPF were especially vulnerable in these instances. Azizi et al (2024) in their study of Afghan women also demonstrated that women, where their partners sponsored them, were reluctant to report domestic abuse due to their dependence on their spouse. Similarly, a lack of available formal support means that where women did flee, they often ended up being supported by extended family members which can lead to perpetuation of abuse and repression.

Issues relating to LGBTQ+ populations

The review identified only one paper which attempted to develop our understanding about the housing situations among people who identified as LGBTQ+ and are of interest to this report. This study however, is situated against a growing number of other studies which are increasingly highlighting the issues facing LGBTQ+ households in the housing pathways because, '...conflict or victimisation at home around sexuality or gender identity is often a significant factor leading to homelessness among LGBTQ+ youth...' (Stella and Binnie, 2024, p.4). For those with insecure immigration status Stella and Binnie (2024) have highlighted the challenges faced by migrants who are navigating hostile environments, coping with trauma whilst trying to find safe spaces. They go on to underline the failure of policy and practice to recognise the complexities of the LGBTQ+ experience in the context of housing pathways.

Unaccompanied minors

A notable number of papers focussed on the issues faced by young people, under the age of 18, who were unaccompanied asylum seekers or refugees. A study by Scott et al (2024) focussed on the value of mutual support as a mechanism for coping with uncertainty and life in exile. Measures that can ensure there are safe places for young people to meet were specifically highlighted. A study by Sirriyeh et al (2018) highlights the complexity of settling in a new country for unaccompanied refugee minors. They cite the presence of pre-existing trauma, the challenge associated with adapting to life in a new country, the stigma faced as asylum seekers and the enduring uncertainty about the future. They go on to highlight the benefits that can arise from foster placements for these young people to support them in their settlement and in their transitions to adulthood. Wade (2017) also underlines the importance of highly supported environments, such as foster care or small group homes, in facilitating positive outcomes in the lives of unaccompanied young people.

Summary of section

- Poor housing, overcrowding and insecure conditions are repeatedly cited in the literature as being a fundamental challenge and exacerbating the vulnerability of

migrants, people seeking sanctuary and those who have been trafficked. People are often pushed towards these options due to affordability and poverty.

- For those people with status, family reunification often results in over-crowding in existing accommodation or a move to temporary accommodation, this can then lead to further insecurity and impact on wider integration.
- Constrained living circumstances and communal accommodation can exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions. This can be a particular issue for those both living within and exiting the asylum system and survivors of trafficking who live in overcrowded and unsuitable housing.
- Vulnerable migrants, who may be people seeking sanctuary or family joiners, who become victims of domestic abuse face difficult financial and social constraints which impact their ability to find stable secure housing.
- Insecure status results in a reduction in the likelihood of accessing services and can make people particularly isolated due to fears of being turned away, deported, or charged for applications. The evidence found that this was a particular concern for those people with families.
- Vulnerable migrants are particularly exposed to added insecurity if they are evicted from their accommodation, like many others this can lead to sofa surfing or staying with extended family. The evidence shows that if there is unequal status within these relationships, such as extended families, this can lead to controlling behaviour and abuse which is often unreported.
- For all those in housing need, community-led approaches to addressing structural disadvantages have been seen positively and appear to help people mediate between service areas and complex systems.
- Mothers with young children who are in the asylum system or who have been trafficked are made more vulnerable due to living in hotel rooms with a lack of kitchen facilities and poor support networks.
- Victims of abuse and survivors of trafficking find life in migrant accommodation retraumatising and lonely.
- Unaccompanied young people in the asylum system have a higher rate of traumatic stress reactions when compared to young people who are forced to migrate with their families. However, unaccompanied young people can be placed into shared accommodation instead of foster homes which can result in poor outcomes.

Consultations with stakeholders

This section summarises the conversations held with key stakeholders through group discussions and interviews. It explores the views of practitioners on what they see as the pressing issues facing vulnerable migrants, people seeking sanctuary and survivors of trafficking as well as their thoughts on what some of the tangible solutions or approaches might take. These have been organised into the following thematic areas:

- Accommodation interventions
- Financial approaches
- Training and awareness
- Rights-based approaches
- Service and system redesign
- Intersectional considerations
- Further research and evidence needs

Each will be discussed in more depth below.

Accommodation interventions

All of what follows in this section accepts the widely held position that there needs to be a radical and immediate increase in the supply of good quality, affordable accommodation in both the social and private sectors. Stakeholders also accepted the need to improve the quality of existing accommodation and enforce standards in all tenures. However, stakeholders were pragmatic in their outlook and accepted that there are a range of interim measures that can be taken in order to improve the housing outcomes for people.

The shortage of affordable housing was having both an immediate and delayed impact on a range of groups who needed housing. The **Afghan refugees**, for example, who arrived through one of the resettlement schemes tend to have larger families than other groups. This meant that they required more expensive, or more uncommon properties, which meant that it is likely that they would face financial pressures over the coming years as rental costs outstripped the amount of housing costs covered by welfare payments:

> 'We've got private landlords increasing the rent year on year. So even when someone does secure a property rent, rents are going up and it's becoming unaffordable. As large families, obviously there's a shortage of big, big, big houses anyway, but the benefit cap on large families is just extremely difficult for anyone to find anything that's affordable. Some local authorities are using some of their resettlement money to top up rents. But that's only for like a two-year period and we're seeing local authorities stopping those top ups. And now

> people are being forced into rent arrears because they can't keep up with the payments.' (Refugee Council)

Whilst many of those people who arrived through one of the **Afghan resettlement schemes** (ARAP and ARCS) are now housed, some remain living in a state of temporality. For instance, many are living within ex-military accommodation with time-limited leases. This means there are accommodation needs due to arise from a population that has been particularly challenging to match to existing accommodation due to typical large family types. As a representative of the Refugee Council said:

> 'There's a lot of anxious local authorities where they've got military bases wondering about where they're going to rehouse everybody. Often the location of these barracks, they're in more rural areas, areas that don't have a lot of social housing. Up in North Yorkshire, there's Catterick Garrison and we're working with a few hundred people up there and the numbers keep going up week on week and everybody's got to be moved at some point in the next two years. So that that's a sort of looming housing issue that we've got, and local authorities just don't have the stocks.'

Certain local authority areas, particularly major conurbations like London, struggle with supply issues and have to negotiate with other areas of the country for accommodation options. This was seen to be an issue for all populations who have no social connections in other areas of the UK but particularly harmful to **children who are nearing school exams** as well as other points of vulnerability. Stakeholders who worked in major conurbations said that having accommodation options within highly pressurised systems was seen as a necessity in such cases.

Waiting lists for social housing have increased and there are often **time limits on how long an individual can stay in exempt accommodation**, which is often less than the social housing waiting list. This presents a risk of homelessness for people, and it was thought that there is a need for interim affordable stop-gap form of accommodation or intervention at this transition period.

Many stakeholders thought that **increasing the number of good quality safe houses, for survivors of trafficking,** and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) is critical to accommodate the number of single people that require immediate accommodation. Whilst HMOs can be difficult to manage, having dedicated accommodation options for people who share certain characteristics would allow for valuable peer-to-peer based support:

> 'Causeway, who are NRM subcontractors, recently did a pilot of a safe house with just Vietnamese residents. And it was it was really successful...I mean obviously there's still going to be tensions and difficulties, but I think something like that.' (Glassdoor)

One of the most popular set of interventions that many stakeholders were investigating, to a greater or lesser extent, was the concepts of **hosting and lodging**. Whilst many stakeholders viewed the hosting element of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme in broadly positive terms, it was seen to have shortcomings. However, there was still potential to grow the hosting offer, particularly as it relates to those with NRPF but others as well:

> '...hosting is free accommodation, the accommodation is free and to be honest, we set it up for people with no recourse to public funds but very aware now that it's needed for people with recourse as well and the refugee lodgings scheme is really small. Deposits could even be £15.00 and then they work with the tenant and the landlord, but particularly with the tenant to help them learn about how to keep a tenancy, how to pay your rent on time. But you know all of that stuff and they have landlords who are really understanding and really invested in it.' (Hope at Home)

Lodging was viewed as the natural evolution of hosting and focussed on the existence of latent housing capacity whilst ensuring protections were in place for the property owner and lodger/tenant. A broad number of stakeholders were at the early stage of developing local lodging schemes and were prioritising this approach.

Survivors of trafficking, who are awaiting support through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), are currently experiencing a particular shortfall in appropriate safe places for them to reside. Stakeholders highlighted the Multi-Agency Partnership approach in Westminster as an area of good practice with respect to how they responded to accommodating and supporting those people who were identified as in housing crisis whilst they were awaiting a reasonable grounds decision. Hotels were noted as being a common form of accommodation used for pre-NRM survivors of trafficking but these were often not appropriate. Whilst the stay in pre-NRM accommodation is supposed to be a matter of days, decisions on support is taking much longer and survivors are remaining in accommodation for extended periods of time. Stakeholders were particularly concerned with younger survivors who are turning 18 years old as this was a particularly difficult transition phase.

> 'There's one example of someone who our team was working with [a]...very isolated, very vulnerable individual who was put in a Travelodge in a motorway services with no means of getting to and from the accommodation, no means of cooking for themselves. So it's not even just finding somewhere that is relatively safe. It's then the appropriateness of that...How are these people going to actually live and be able to feed themselves?' (Hope for Justice)

Stakeholders talked about the **heightened risk of re-exploitation at pre and post NRM** points when survivors of trafficking are open to employment vulnerabilities and the need for accommodation and support options to be available to prevent re-exploitation:

> 'One of the things there is a big prevention piece of work that can be done is that if they aren't getting the settlement and resettlement support that they need

when they are coming out of asylum accommodation or they're coming out of NRM accommodation, you are then opening people up to a really vulnerable point where it's a key point in their recovery as well. If we're two years down the line and they're ready to start their life again, look for jobs and move on from what they've been through. And then they are faced with homelessness, and then they've got to go to homelessness applications, Universal Credit appointments etc. it becomes a really confusing space for people. And that's where people then do look at alternate ways of working cash in hand. And then they are again open up to exploitation. And the more time someone's re-exploited them, the less likely they're going to come forward. Because then if they are found again. It's like, oh, well, this is the second time you've had an NRM done. You've already had a conclusive grounds decision. Oh, you actually can't access the support again, so it sort of is like this vicious cycle where people are falling through the gaps and then they are open to re exploitation. And that's really damaging for the recovery of people' (Justice and Care)

Stakeholders considered there to be a range of latent accommodation options in local areas made up of **empty homes, unused commercial buildings and student accommodation**. There was seen to be options for local authorities and housing organisations to respond to events such as the changing nature of town centres and changing markets within the University sector to rapidly increase housing supply, if only temporarily, in local areas.

Building in capacity to respond to urgent housing need amongst the groups of concern was a particular issue for some stakeholders. People talked about the benefit of having **guaranteed places for specific cohorts within supported housing schemes** where voids are underwritten by the local authority being a particularly useful approach. Where they existed these were being used short notice to assist with housing transitions of vulnerable people.

It was noted that there were a few **private landlords** within communities who would like to do more to support communities but who needed advice, guidance and assurance that their rent would be covered and that some mediation between tenants would be available:

‘We give that assurance to those prospective landlords. I say if there is a delay or with Universal Credit or housing benefit, we will step in and we have to fund that through the through the resettlement money' (London Borough of Islington)

Initiatives such as the **local authority housing buy-back programme** has been used in a select number of areas in order to increase local authority housing stock and rented at the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate. This has been seen as a useful mechanism to add to the local housing supply.

It was also apparent that it was **essential to consider the provision of accommodation together with the support people would require**. Supported

housing with low volume was favoured, particularly when working with complex cohorts that are characterised by trauma like survivors of human trafficking:

> '...other safe houses that we work with have a limit of eight people in one place and then four support workers. And I know that's like a dream world, but those programmes work the best in my experience because people get really detailed, really, trauma informed, really well-trained support workers access where they live. I think that's where we experience the least problems and people really do begin to recover and settle and they get access to all the support they can. Because they have people that know exactly about their sort of own individual circumstance, whereas in the volume housing you're all sort of grouped into one area' (Justice and Care)

It was thought that there was the potential for refugee community organisations (RCOs) to take a more active role in accommodating refugees, particularly through the UKs Community Sponsorship Scheme. It was felt like this kind of peer-to-peer support could unlock even more spaces to accommodate those in need of housing.

> 'I think there's mileage in trying to explore broadening sponsorship amongst refugee community organisations themselves. People can use their contacts to find housing. But also, they're well equipped to support people from their own community' (Refugee Council)

Financial approaches

Stakeholders broadly agreed on the need to provide **initial financial assistance for people entering the regular housing market**. It was widely thought that the provision of bond and rental deposit schemes, financial assistance for rent and a system for providing guarantors would be a significant benefit to help people access mainstream housing. As a stakeholder from Justice and Care said, when talking about survivors of trafficking with whom they worked:

> 'I work with people at the moment who are trying to leave their safe house and rent on their own and pay for it. They have a job, because they've now got status here, but they just need that little bit of support with first month's rent or just getting them started and on their feet. But there's no space or they're an EU national who just missed out on the availability of housing. And so they have recourse to public funds to work here in other areas, but with homelessness and housing support, they don't quite meet the criteria and so they want to start again and they want to build their life and not rely on safe housing. But unfortunately they're in that gap where they can't. And so some of them have been trying to leave for a good 6-7 months, but they still are struggling.'

The **financial impacts of exempt accommodation** was seen to be under more scrutiny due to an increase in need, an increase in providers and a scarcity of resources to fund the housing benefit required. In Leeds, Abigail Housing's refugee-project

accommodates 66 refugees in 18 properties leased from private landlords. Of these nine are shared houses providing shorter-term "supported living" for which the council pays the charity an exempt accommodation rate of 2.3 times more than the minimum shared accommodation local housing allowance rate per person because of the support provided (NACCOM, 2019). However, there has been an increase in the eligibility threshold of vulnerability for refugees, and other populations, which meant that many refugees were now ineligible unless they have some demonstrable additional vulnerability. For Abigail Housing in Leeds this was creating significant challenges financially which meant that both the exempt accommodation was experiencing voids and there was a lack of income to cover other related costs. This left available bed spaces empty and thus led to individuals, who have additional support needs, having to explore other accommodation in the private rented sector, much of which was unaffordable and had led to them being vulnerable to exploitation in order to afford rental costs.

> 'What you can get as a housing allowance in Universal Credit has just gone up. So in Leeds you can get £80 a week for a room in a shared house, which is all single people under the age of 35 are able to get. And the trouble is, in large areas of Leeds, a room in a shared house cost more than £80 a week. And then people have to come up with a deposit and rent in advance whilst the City Council might help you with the deposit but not with rent in advance.' (Abigail Housing)

Providing incentives to landlords, who were interested in supporting refugees, in the form of resources to improve the quality of their properties were also seen positively. Many homes in the private-rented sector were older properties that needed refurbishment to improve their quality and energy efficiency. The lack of funds to invest in the refurbishment was often a reason landlords gave to not being able to afford to let their homes at below market rate. Schemes that could provide resources on a lease and repair or similar basis was seen by stakeholders to potentially increase the housing stock available in the private rented sector.

Training and awareness

The public disturbances of summer 2024 highlighted the challenge that remains in many communities, particularly areas that are often already deprived, where asylum seekers are routinely placed due to the presence of cheaper accommodation. The riots also provided an opportunity to spotlight how much solidarity exists across the country to counter such demonstrations of hate and intolerance. There remains a high level of need for activities which focus on the following areas: the provision of safe accommodation for vulnerable populations, supporting RCOs, advocating for policy changes, combating racism and islamophobia, promoting integration, and linking migrants to systems and services. There is an urgent and ongoing need to challenge the

dominant public discourse which depicts the presence of migrants, and others on low incomes, in disproportionately negative terms. There is also a need to ensure those with the power to allocate resources do so in a way which embraces equality.

Several stakeholders talked about the **need for local authority officers to become aware of the issues faced by the groups of interest to this report**, in particular the mental health impacts their status and associated experiences had on them. It was thought that a lack of awareness was leading to the under-representation of these groups in priority housing need. However, other stakeholders acknowledged that due to supply side and resource constraints local authorities were being purposefully restrictive and this might nullify attempts at awareness raising or training. It was considered that an increase in the number of advocates who could act as intermediaries and provide support to those in housing need might play an instrumental role in helping people through the system:

> 'Many single people who are homeless could be a priority under the homeless legislation, but I think the advocacy has to come from outside the local authority. Because otherwise the pressure on the local authority to save money will outweigh their wanting to do a liberal interpretation of the legislation' (Abigail Housing)

Moreover, it was also considered that due to the range of inequities at play in how priority need was established by local authorities, they may well not be taking adequate measures to exercise their duties under the Equality Act.

Whilst the anti-slavery partnerships were noted for their contribution to addressing **modern slavery and human trafficking** there were also highlighted as being predominantly police focussed. This was seen to hamper approaches grounded in therapeutic safeguarding principles, a combination of therapeutic care and safeguarding measures to prevent harm and abuse, respond effectively to allegations, and work closely with other relevant agencies. The greater deployment of such approaches was seen as one way to move towards a more empathetic system. This applies to all survivors of trafficking whether they have been trafficked within the UK or trafficked to the UK from overseas.

A common theme running through several of the discussions with stakeholders was the need to **manage expectations of people who were accessing the housing system**. Whilst this risks blaming users of the system for structural failures, it does highlight an area that appears to be causing challenges for stakeholders who work as intermediaries. Stakeholders considered a lack of awareness about the realities of the fragile nature of the UKs housing system to work against households. This is a challenging area but one which stakeholders thought was crucial to address by raising awareness and educating people about the nature of housing stock available to them.

> '...keeping in mind that often property offers are you get one and that's it. How to make sure that expectations are managed and that things are explained thoroughly beforehand? We had a [n Afghan] family last week [who] arrived from

> Manchester. Everything was explained to them but they had an absolute breakdown and were fully in tears because they got to the property and it was a flat and not a house...They were absolutely terrified of that. We don't know where the communication broke down, but making sure that people know what the housing offer is, what housing in the UK looks like, knowing that not everyone is going to have a row house with a back garden, I think I think really helps to set the stage a bit better' (London Borough of Islington)

It was noted that the **trauma associated with seeking sanctuary and surviving modern slavery is notably different** to other people experiencing homelessness for other reasons. It was seen that there was an urgent need for those working in key services and agencies to become trauma informed. This was particularly seen as necessary for those in frontline homelessness services and also those engaging in hosting:

> 'We have experienced this kind of interesting phenomena at our services over this winter because of the demographic of our guests in the night shelters has been Eritrean, Ethiopian, Sudanese, our entire services have been basically like a frontline migrant sector...But what was really interesting in the conversation since with caseworkers. Relating to trauma is that we're all they're all trained on responding to trauma when it's around adverse childhood experiences. But then you've got this kind of particular type of trauma training that's very specific to homelessness relating to the care system, neglect etc. But what was interesting was responding to trauma that is of a very different kind. That's a post-traumatic stress disorder, rape trauma syndrome. Specific trauma that manifests as a result of displacement, family separation, isolation, the trauma of the immigration system, and how that manifests in people is very, very different' (Glassdoor)

This means that many frontline workers and their organisations are currently struggling to adequately work with the complexities and trauma associated with the experience of migration, the asylum system and modern slavery.

Rights-based approaches

A consistently held view across stakeholders was the importance of having capacity within services to **provide a wide range of legal and civil rights support to vulnerable migrants, people seeking sanctuary and survivors of trafficking.** This varied from intensive caseworker support that could help people navigate services and the resulting bureaucracy to gather evidence to prove continuity of residence, to rights-based work which helped people understand the system and its pitfalls. The support could be delivered by statutory services, but it was most commonly discussed in terms of service models operated by voluntary and community organisations. Whereas those exiting the asylum system were thought of as key beneficiaries, other migrants who are

vulnerable particularly those who are NRPF including health and social care workers, international students and others would also benefit from these approaches.

Similarly, many stakeholders pointed to a need to dramatically increase capacity within communities of all kinds and to establish people as **community navigators, comprised of members of longer standing communities, experts by experience, as well as other migrant groups,** who can assist those in need to adapt to and settle in local areas.

> 'I think we have a really great wealth of expertise and knowledge in the resettlement officers who are supporting the families, but often, you know, we have so many families and there's so many different needs that often they are just reactive and they are working through their to-do-list. They're not able to do that kind of like integration into the Community role as much. And we're trying to change our model a little bit to make sure that that work can happen. [A mentoring programme] can go a long way to make you start to feel like you actually belong. But that's something that local authorities...aren't always best placed to do. So if there's other charities that can come in and help support that would make a big difference for people's longer term and even short term integration.' (London Borough of Islington)

Housing interventions are occasionally linked to supporting people through the legal system as **to access housing many people need help to remove their NRPF conditions**. One of the key pinch points was the failure, upon application, to demonstrate that their case could meet the threshold of 50% or higher prospects to receive legal aid. It was here that stakeholders thought some assistance from advocates, such as McKenzie Friends, with compiling evidence required to support their case could be particularly useful. A McKenzie Friend is a member of the public, without formal legal training, who assists an appellant when they have no legal representative, at a time that is often bewildering and full of anxiety. A McKenzie Friend is a volunteer, independent of the court system and the Home Office (Beacon Bradford, undated).

> 'Systemically, it's a failed system, but in the in the meantime you there's lots of things you could do to patchwork that to prevent to prevent people experiencing homelessness, to support their mental health, to help them understand the system.' (Abigail Housing)

Service and system redesign

Whilst it was a starting assumption in the discussions with stakeholders that there were **several (housing, immigration, integration, social care) system failures at play**, discussions focussed on the ones where there might be an opportunity to make a positive impact within the scope of this study.

Emergency and temporary accommodation is expensive and, due to their often-deleterious impacts on health and wellbeing, can cause strains on health budgets. Approaches that examined how to address housing need through an integrated health-housing lens were particularly welcome. This was seen as necessary in several areas but principally making sure that housing officers were cognisant about the immediate and enduring mental health impacts that arose from the experience of the asylum system. It was noted that although the asylum system was widely regarded as (re)traumatising, its impacts on the mental health of those exiting the system was not enough to warrant considering them in priority need without additional evidence. As vulnerable migrants, such as former asylum seekers, are often not engaged with health services in an appropriate way it is likely that there will be many people with unmet priority housing need. Similarly, it was noted that health and wellbeing services were not engaging with people because of their precarious housing circumstances which led to physical and mental health issues leading to unnecessary acute care later on. Associated with this it was seen that how the workforce is constituted within organisations can make a large difference to how people are supported. One stakeholder talked about how they are aware of local authorities who are trialling matrix management approaches to develop better cross-team working which will hopefully lead to more effective responses.

> 'They've got a specialist working skills person, which is the first we've had in Greater Manchester doing refugee work and skills or migration work and skills work. They've got someone in early years and then there's a kind of a coordinator matrix managing them across teams.' (Greater Manchester Combined Authority)

Some local authorities were responding to the lack of affordable suitable housing in areas for those people arriving through resettlement schemes, particularly the Afghan schemes, by supplementing households rent through the resettlement budgets. However, it was seen by stakeholders that this was often making people more vulnerable in the long-term as when resettlement funding was inevitably removed households would struggle to pay and, without an increase in household income through work, **would create a financial cliff edge requiring them to move home in the next couple of years**.

Cohorts facing particular injustices

There were many cohorts within the groups of interest to this study where it was thought that additional attention would address particular injustices. Those who were mentioned are the following:

- The cohort mentioned most frequently was single males seeking sanctuary and survivors of trafficking and who do not have priority need.

> 'We can put people [survivors of trafficking] in safe houses, but that's predominantly women focused or people with children, and trying to get

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> some more support for men who have been victims of modern slavery is really difficult. They're just not catered for. I don't know if that's different in other areas of the UK, but that's a huge gap that we face.' (Justice and Care)

- Single women who are not pregnant or have other indicators of priority need.
- Those who are being discharged from hospital who have NRPF
- International students who are destitute
- Roma communities and other EU nationals
- Unaccompanied minors upon reaching 18 years of age.
- Refused asylum seekers who have care needs but who do not quality for care act support.
- Survivors of trafficking who have recourse to public funds, such as UK nationals and those with refugee status etc, but who don't meet priority need.
- Survivors of trafficking who don't meet the threshold of the NRM often due to the complexity involved in proving their modern slavery/trafficked status.
- Those with physical disabilities that have accessibility issues and/or require adaptations.
- Independent supported housing options for those who require supported care. This was mentioned by stakeholders in terms of both younger and older people.

Further research and evidence needs

Stakeholders did not typically focus on areas where there was more need for research, but this potentially reflects the roles most stakeholders had and their focus on service development. However, several evidence gaps were noted.

Chiefly amongst these were the **absence of studies that took longitudinal approaches, over a period of 3-5 years or longer, to study the long-term housing trajectories of refugees**. There is very little evidence which 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. 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 long-term impacts of hosting and lodging schemes.

It was also noted that there was an **absence of learning from the evaluation on some of the initiatives, such as the Refugee Transitions Outcome Fund, that have been introduced** that have sought to improve outcomes for refugees and could have vital lessons for service development.

Finally, understanding the short- and medium-term housing pathways and **outcomes for people who have NRPF** was seen as important in order to understand the impact of particular interventions.

Conclusions

It is widely understood that vulnerable migrants, people seeking sanctuary and survivors of human trafficking face significant levels of poverty, live in poorer quality housing, and have poorer financial situations than the majority population. Their experiences in the housing system reflect these challenges with many people, if not most, struggling to acquire stability and an exit from grinding precariousness. The integration of existing evidence with consultations with stakeholders have highlighted a wide range of injustices that are experienced by these groups. At the same time there are a range of areas where concerted efforts in the form of service developments, research and bricks and mortar projects could bring about transformative changes.

Transitions are key points which amplify housing stress

These are often periods of transition between (e.g. asylum housing to refugee status) and within systems (such as waiting for NRM). These transitions are key pinch points for vulnerability and can cause significant housing stress, poor health and wellbeing and lead to (re)exploitation. Interventions at these junctures can make a notable difference and provide people with much needed security.

Housing with support is needed

It was a clear message that the provision of shelter should be accompanied by appropriate support. Whether this is part of a formal supported housing option, as is the case for young people in transition and older people, or as part of ongoing community or peer-to-peer based support. Stakeholders viewed the need for community navigators as critical to helping those who are vulnerable to housing stress understand the systems they are living within better and learn their rights.

Providing limited financial support helps people start independent living

A range of accommodation-based financial approaches were seen to offer opportunities to provide stability, chiefly amongst these was the provision of bond and rental deposit schemes, financial assistance for rent and a system for providing guarantors.

The groups are heterogeneous and require diverse responses

Whilst members of all the groups this report has focussed upon are in need of additional support, due to system failures and resource constraints, there are cohorts that are considered in particular need of attention. Single males and those with NRPF cause particular concern as do a range of others who experience multiple exclusions or who are at vulnerable transition points in their lives.

Support is needed for both UK and non-UK survivors of human trafficking

Those working in organisations that worked with survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking stressed that both UK and non-UK nationals should be seen as in urgent need of housing interventions. UK nationals, who have survived human trafficking, have recourse to public funds. However, as the level of need is so great and the supply of appropriate safe accommodation is so low, there is an ongoing risk that many UK nationals are vulnerable to re-exploitation due to insecure, inappropriate housing and inadequate support. These risks are heightened for non-UK nationals due to the lack of options available to them as a result of their NRPF conditions or new arrival circumstance. Therefore, whilst the paths into trafficking are markedly distinct the routes into recovery share similarities in terms of the provision of housing with support.

Recommendations

Drawing together the stages of this work the recommendations for Commonweal Housing focus on three main areas: focussed interventions, specific cohorts and support and training.

Focussed housing interventions

Drawing on the evidence and views of stakeholders the range of accommodation interventions that could be supported are narrow but could focus on the following:

- Good quality safe houses for survivors of trafficking
- Supported accommodation units for younger and older people
- HMOs that focus on cohesion between residents
- Short-term, good quality and secure accommodation options to support people through transition periods within and between systems (e.g. asylum to refugee status, the NRM life-cycle, family re-unification)
- Interventions that are proposed by community-led organisations and RCOs
- Interventions that draw in housing associations to increase engagement in the wider housing sector.
- Initiatives that focus on latent housing capacity within places such as empty homes, redundant commercial properties and former/unused student accommodation.

Lodging and hosting approaches offer an opportunity to utilise latent housing capacity within the existing system and provide accommodation options at scale. Whilst lodging and hosting schemes maybe beyond the scope of work Commonweal Housing wish to engage with, these are approaches many of those working with the groups of interest to this study wish to pursue. It would be opportune to explore ways in which such approaches could be supported.

Specific cohorts

It would be worthwhile to focus resources on targeting specific cohorts that have been identified in this study these include:

- Accommodation options for large families. Whilst this affects all groups this is a particular issue for Afghan refugees.
- Single males and females, with a focus on those between 18-35 years of age, who are seeking sanctuary or are survivors of trafficking but who do not meet the threshold for priority need.
- Young people exiting supported housing as unaccompanied minors
- People who have a NRPF condition and within this a focus on those such as: being discharged from hospital, those who do not qualify for support under the Care Act, international students etc.
- People with physical disabilities with a variety of status'
- Survivors of trafficking who are pre-NRM.
- Survivors of trafficking including those with NRPF who have not been deemed eligible for NRM and who are not in priority need.
- People seeking sanctuary who are pregnant or with small children
- People who must leave exempt accommodation but for whom long-term secure accommodation is not available.

Support and training

There was also a clear and emphatic desire to see improvements to capacity within services, training and awareness raising initiatives. The following areas should be considered as priorities:

- Increasing the caseworker workforce in organisations to help people navigate services and mediate between systems.
- Supporting a programme to develop community navigators who can support people to engage with systems and services.
- Supporting people through legal systems to help remove their NRPF conditions.
- Approaches which improved the understanding of public sector workers and frontline workers of the needs of vulnerable migrants, people seeking sanctuary and survivors of trafficking with particular respect to the role of trauma.
- Capacity building and innovations to increase engagement with potential landlords to benefit the communities of interest to this report.
- Establishing bond and rental deposit schemes.

Concluding remarks

The housing need facing the groups of interest to this study is enormous. Not only is there a lack of accommodation generally, the housing that is available is often unsuitable, poor quality and/or unaffordable. Many vulnerable migrants, people seeking sanctuary and survivors of trafficking have additional accommodation needs which, if unmet, cause added complexities to their ability to recover and play a full and equal role in society at large and the communities in which they live.

Delivering against any of the recommendations highlighted above will deliver material benefits for the groups of interest to this study and contribute positively to the supply of accommodation options available. As a result of the significant systemic challenges those working at the intersection of these sectors face, they have demonstrated high levels of creativity and adaptability to create positive outcomes for people in need. Commonweal Housing should encourage organisations to exercise this creativity and call for approaches which the organisations believe would work best for their client groups within the local housing markets in which they work. As such it is difficult to prioritise where the need is greatest as the need remains vast across all groups of interest. However, it is likely that housing interventions that focus on the following would be particularly impactful:

- transitions between systems (e.g. asylum to refugee status, the NRM life-cycle, family re-unification)
- single person households who are seeking sanctuary
- survivors of trafficking who are pre-NRM
- adapted homes for people with disabilities across all status
- HMOs that focus on cohesion between residents.

However, it needs to be underlined that whilst a sole focus on new accommodation units would be a welcome addition to housing supply, its impact will be modest when set against the scale of housing stress faced by the groups of interest to this report. It would be most impactful to focus on approaches that can utilise latent capacity and/or can offer scalable models. It is also critical that regardless of the housing intervention that is supported that attention is paid to holistic ways of working which support people through systems and services as well as approaches which actively challenge and improve these systems and services.

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