

## **Consultation on Supported Housing**

### **Introduction**

NACCOM is the UK-wide No Accommodation Network, a registered charity and membership network comprised of 41 Full Members providing accommodation and support to migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), and ~10 Associate Members (individuals and organisations) who are sympathetic to the aims of the network and/or provide other forms of support to migrants with NRPF.

As a network, we resource and support Members to provide support and accommodation to those facing destitution. Our 2016 Accommodation Survey showed the estimated number of Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants accommodated by NACCOM Members in the last year was 1,707; of these 499 were refugees, 808 were destitute refused asylum seekers and 400 were other migrants with NRPF.

Of the 36 projects that participated in the survey, 12 operated housing schemes for refugees. These are listed below:

#### Yorkshire and Humber (2)

- Abigail Housing
- Open Doors Hull

#### Midlands (5)

- Sanctus
- Nottingham Arimathea Trust
- One Roof
- Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre
- Upbeat Communities

#### North West (2)

- Boaz Trust
- Asylum Link Merseyside

#### North East (2)

- Open Door North East
- Action Foundation

#### South East (1)

- Brighton Voices in Exile

Of these, at least 3 worked in partnership with local housing associations and 2 had partnerships with Green Pastures Housing (one of our Associate Members).

Within the network, all our members operate differently and when it comes to refugee accommodation this is no exception. For example:

- Action Foundation (Newcastle) accesses high level of payments for all new refugee tenants.
- Abigail Housing maintain a standard number of bed spaces with Exempt status.
- Open Door North East has not yet applied for Exempt status for any refugee housing but may consider this in the future.

As NACCOM Members primarily accommodate those without recourse to public funds (NRPF), we have responded to the following questions with a focus on newly recognised refugees. Please contact us for more information on the details at the bottom of the document.

**Q1. The local top-up will be devolved to local authorities. Who should hold the funding; and, in two tier areas, should the upper tier authority hold the funding?**

We believe that local knowledge is key to a smooth and effective delivery of services. Therefore it is felt that commissioners who have a good overview of supported housing in the area should hold the funding.

In two tier areas we think the lower tier should hold the funding as again this will enable those with the most knowledge and experience to best identify and support the needs of the sector.

**Q2. How should the funding model be designed to maximise the opportunities for local agencies to collaborate, encourage planning and commissioning across service boundaries, and ensure that different local commissioning bodies can have fair access to funding?**

As a network we are committed to working together to encourage effectiveness and reduce duplication. We believe within this sector, organisations should be encouraged to form partnerships so that work is not duplicated. As a network we seek to develop strong working partnerships across different sectors and have seen the benefits of partnership work on a national and local level. For instance we sit on the panel for the Strategic Alliance on Migrant Destitution, which is hosted by Homeless Link. Examples of the benefits such collaboration has brought are engagement between the refugee and homelessness sectors, regional meetings resulting in closer working with Housing providers and Local Authorities, and new partnerships with local housing associations within our membership network (Boaz Trust, Hope Projects, Open Door North East).

We also think that smaller charities should be encouraged and supported to bid for funding alongside larger providers. There is a significant amount of expertise across the network and beyond, and we believe that the skills and experience of these local small projects provides a great opportunity for learning and development within the sector.

**Q3. How can we ensure that local allocation of funding by local authorities matches local need for supported housing across all client groups?**

We would recommend that local commissioners and others that have a good knowledge of who is doing what work in which areas are engaged.

**Q4. Do you think other funding protections for vulnerable groups, beyond the ring-fence, are needed to provide fair access to funding for all client groups, including those without existing statutory duties (including for example the case for any new statutory duties or any other sort of statutory provision)?**

We think that the funding must match the local need. If there is a local knowledge of reasons for homelessness then these should be included in the decision making process.

We believe that locally provided face-to-face 'Move on' support within the 28 notice period for newly recognised refugees is essential. Newly recognised refugees leaving interim accommodation face a wide range of needs for instance, around accessing entitlements, employment, training and

education, which are all compounded by language and cultural barriers and health issues related to their asylum claim, and/or experiences of destitution and detention whilst in the UK.

As such, the risks of homelessness and destitution are high. We know this from our own case studies and the Refugee Council report in 2016 'England's Forgotten Refugees'. We would recommend that local authorities protect and where possible provide funding for projects providing 'move on' support for new refugees in this vulnerable position.

One example of effective support with 'move on' has been demonstrated by Open Door North East, who run both a Move On project and Employment Support Project. New refugees are given a leaflet with their 28 notice letter by their Housing provider (this leaflet, produced by Open Door, is in 8 key languages and directs clients to a single point of contact). They are then given a one to one appointment and assisted in applying for relevant benefits as well as being given advice on housing options. Having benefits in place before the end of the 28 day notice period is essential in avoiding homelessness by giving immediate access to both Housing association and private rented options. Once benefits have been applied for, the Open Doors Employment Support project provides service users with ongoing support via a dedicated refugee work club staffed by a team of trained volunteers who amongst other things help refugee clients fulfil the requirements of Job Centre Plus so as to avoid being sanctioned. As refugees come from nations where there is typically no benefits system, their comprehension of the process is often very limited and compounded by language barriers and barriers in accessing digital and telephone services. In this instance, having a dedicated service that allows refugees to find help with any benefit, housing or debt situation has been very positive.

In addition to having a positive impact amongst local refugees, the Open Doors Move On project has proved excellent value for money, with 110 new clients being supported in 2016 (they believe this to be 100% of all positive decisions granted in Middlesbrough). The Move-on project was initially funded with a £9,500 grant from Middlesbrough Councils Financial Inclusion Team and delivered in partnership with the local CAB who, worked on the more complex individual cases while Open Door delivered the core service. During the course of the trial it was noted that because benefits were in place before the end of the 28 day notice period no single refugee or refugee family in Middlesbrough had to be placed in council funded emergency accommodation saving the authority thousands and with the likely additional soft outcome of a reduction in stress and anxiety and need for corresponding third party interventions such as referrals to mental health services.

**Q5. What expectations should there be for local roles and responsibilities? What planning, commissioning and partnership and monitoring arrangements might be necessary, both nationally and locally?**

A model of commissioning for a set period time with set outcomes and an evaluation of each part of the funding is needed.

**Q6. For local authority respondents, what administrative impact and specific tasks might this new role involve for your local authority?**

N/a

**Q7. We welcome your views on what features the new model should include to provide greater oversight and assurance to tax payers that supported housing services are providing value for money, are of good quality and are delivering outcomes for individual tenants?**

There is a clear need for good evaluation of each pot of money.

**Q8. We are interested in your views on how to strike a balance between local flexibility and provider/developer certainty and simplicity. What features should the funding model have to provide greater certainty to providers and in particular, developers of new supply?**

No comment

**Q9. Should there be a national statement of expectations or national commissioning framework within which local areas tailor their funding? How should this work with existing commissioning arrangements, for example across health and social care, and how would we ensure it was followed?**

No comment

**Q10. The Government wants a smooth transition to the new funding arrangement on 1 April 2019. What transitional arrangements might be helpful in supporting the transition to the new regime?**

Clear communication would be essential to enable any changes to be delivered in a person-centred way.

**Q11. Do you have any other views about how the local top-up model can be designed to ensure it works for tenants, commissioners, providers and developers?**

No comment

**Q12. We welcome your views on how emergency and short term accommodation should be defined and how funding should be provided outside Universal Credit. How should funding be provided for tenants in these situations?**

No comment

## **Contact details**

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