

NACCOM Briefing: Annual Survey Data 2022

This briefing was published on 7th December 2022 to present findings from the 2022 NACCOM Annual Survey.

Key Messages:

- Data collected by the NACCOM network provides an insight into the scale of destitution and homelessness amongst refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants with restricted eligibility or no recourse to public funds (NRPF).
- This year, the number of people facing homelessness upon leaving Home Office asylum accommodation increased, as did the number of refugees in need of support.
- The NRPF condition continues to be a key driver of homelessness and destitution. People who have been refused asylum, and have NRPF, were the group most frequently referred to members for support.
- This year our members were able to support more people who have been refused asylum to gain some form to leave to remain - evidence of the legal routes out of homelessness and destitution that exist for this group.
- Efforts to prevent and end homelessness and destitution will be ineffective if the broad range of policies that drive homelessness amongst people in the asylum and wider immigration system are not addressed.

Key Statistics:

- At least 3,388 people experiencing destitution approached the NACCOM network for support between April 2021 to March 2022.
- 1,433 people were rough sleeping, or in informal or insecure accommodation, directly before approaching charities for support.
- 706 people approached members for support directly from Home Office accommodation.
- 2,281 people experiencing destitution were accommodated by the NACCOM network during the reporting period, with at least 333,845 nights of accommodation provided.
- 948 of those accommodated were people with NRPF (normally unable to access state-funded support such as housing and welfare payments due to their immigration status), including people who had been refused asylum.
- 1,993 people received destitution payments from accommodation providers in the network.

Who is this briefing for?

This briefing is based on data collected from NACCOM members in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and includes recommendations on asylum and immigration policy aimed at the UK Government.

What is NACCOM?

NACCOM is the No Accommodation Network, a network of over 135 member organisations across the UK dedicated to ending destitution amongst refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

People in the asylum and wider immigration system are more vulnerable to homelessness than people born in the UK, with those with facing restricted or undetermined eligibility for public funds even more so.¹ With accessing the necessary support to prevent or end homelessness being a challenge for many migrants, our members provide diverse support services to those in need.

¹ https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/Unlocking_the_door_-_Roadmap_Report_2022_final.pdf

Approximately half of the organisations in the NACCOM network deliver accommodation provision, including hosting schemes, housing and property schemes, and shelters and other forms emergency accommodation, whilst an increasing number of members provide advice and casework to help individuals and their families find legal routes out of destitution.

NACCOM itself exists to ensure that the causes of, impacts of, and solutions to, homelessness and destitution are understood; that more policies and practice exist to support an end to destitution; and that more and better services exist to support people out of immediate destitution and provide long-term pathways out of destitution. Our vision is for the UK to have a fair, just and humane asylum and immigration system, which enables people seeking asylum, refugees and other migrants to be free from destitution and to live with dignity and agency.

What is the Annual Survey?

Each year we survey our frontline members to map the scale of homelessness and destitution across the network. This year we received 85 responses to our survey, including from 55 of our members who delivered accommodation across a reporting period of April 2021 to March 2022.

A combination of factors, which includes the lack of robust reporting mechanisms from the Government on the number of people with NRPF, a hesitancy to engage with services, and the pervasiveness of informal and insecure accommodation (e.g., sofa surfing) within the migrant homeless population, makes calculating the number of people in the asylum and wider immigration system who are forced to endure destitution because of their immigration status extremely challenging. Whilst we acknowledge that the data collected in our Annual Survey represents just the tip of the iceberg, each year it provides a unique insight into the trends in migrant homelessness, as reported by the frontline organisations who provided vital support services to this group. This year it provides fresh evidence of the ways that policies developed by Government serve as direct and indirect drivers of homelessness for people seeking asylum and other migrants – and a concerning insight into the significant number of people whose needs could not be met.

Who approached NACCOM members for accommodation this year?

Across the 2021-2022 period, our members received accommodation referrals for 3,388 people with refugee status, people seeking asylum, and other migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). All these people were either experiencing, or at immediate risk of, destitution and homeless when they approached our members for support.

Where an individual's accommodation situation before being referred was known, 1,061 people (45%) came from informal or insecure accommodation (e.g., sofa surfing); 706 people (30%) from Home Office accommodation; 372 (16%) from positions of rough sleeping or street homelessness; and 108 (5%) from temporary accommodation provided by a Local Authority. Smaller numbers of people approached our members for support from the private rental sector (2%), detention centres (1%), the National Referral Mechanism (1%), and social housing (1%).

The number of people approaching our network for support directly from Home Office accommodation this year (706 people) is a stark increase on last year (232 people). This reiterates the urgent need for more robust support and accommodation for people leaving asylum accommodation and hotels. Meanwhile, that 372 people were referred to our network from positions of rough sleeping or street homelessness is a reminder of the progress that is needed if the Government plans to meet its commitment to end rough sleeping by 2024.

The true scale of need is likely much higher than reported by our members' referral data, as referral partners will often not refer to organisations providing accommodation if they know that they are already operating at full capacity.

Who did NACCOM members accommodate this year?

Across the 2021-2022 period, NACCOM members were able to accommodate 2,281 people, providing a minimum of 333,845 nights of accommodation. A breakdown of the people accommodated by the network can be seen below.

Adults with Refugee status – 652 (29%)

The network accommodated 652 refugees this year, an increase compared to last year (562 people). The ongoing cost of living and housing crises have compounded the risk of homelessness and destitution for refugees.

As we detailed in our 2018² and 2019³ ‘Mind the Gap’ reports, newly granted refugees face the additional challenge of having their asylum support, including Home Office accommodation and asylum subsistence payments, stopped just 28 days after a positive decision. In the absence of robust support prior to and upon leaving asylum accommodation, for many, this 28-day grace period is insufficient to find alternative accommodation and arrange receipt of mainstream benefits, particularly given that there is usually a five-week delay before people receive their first Universal Credit payment. This leaves many unable to meet their most basic needs for several weeks or more. Data from this year’s survey indicates that this is a continued issue, with at least 67 of the refugees accommodated by the network being newly granted and not yet in receipt of benefits or support.

Box 1. How can Government end homelessness and destitution amongst people with refugee status?

- Extend the move-on period following an asylum decision before cessations of support from 28 days to 56 days.
- Improve the support that people can access both during the grace period and prior to leaving accommodation to help people understand and explore their options.
- Give people seeking asylum and their adult dependants the right to work from six months after their initial asylum claim or further submission.
- Learn from the successes of existing pilot schemes to develop and scale up a model for refugee integration across the UK.
- Review the impact of the current asylum support system, including the new full dispersal model, on homelessness.

People with No Recourse to Public Funds – 948 (42%)

The network accommodated at least 948 people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). A person will have NRPF when they are ‘subject to immigration control’, as defined by section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.⁴ People with NRPF are barred from accessing most benefits, homelessness assistance, and social housing.⁵ For some people, NRPF is a formal condition of their leave to enter or remain, meanwhile a person who is undocumented may also be said to have NRPF.

There was a slight decline in the number of people with NRPF accommodated by the network for the second consecutive year. This is likely explained by Covid-19-related emergency provision from the Government and local authorities during ‘Everyone In’ and equivalent directives in the devolved nations, which provided accommodation support to some people with restricted or no access to public funds. However, whilst some local authorities committed to continue supporting people with NRPF across the whole of this year’s survey reporting period, others did not. The statutory homelessness support available for people with NRPF remains very inconsistent across the UK, meaning that many depend on accommodation projects in the charity and voluntary sector for shelter, stability, and support out of homelessness.

As highlighted in our research with Homeless Link⁶, people within the diverse NRPF cohort may have varied support needs and depending on their situation and status require distinct, tailored approaches to resolving their homelessness.

² https://naccom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/NACCOM-Homelessness-Report_2018-05-20_EMAIL.pdf

³ <https://naccom.org.uk/mind-the-gap-one-year-on-report-provides-fresh-evidence-of-refugees-vulnerability-to-homelessness-during-move-on-period/>

⁴ [https://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/information-and-resources/rights-and-entitlements/immigration-status-and-entitlements/who-has-no-recourse-to-public-funds#:~:text=and%20family%20members-,Who%20has%20no%20recourse%20to%20public%20funds%20\(NRPF\)%3F,Immigration%20and%20Asylum%20Act%201999.](https://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/information-and-resources/rights-and-entitlements/immigration-status-and-entitlements/who-has-no-recourse-to-public-funds#:~:text=and%20family%20members-,Who%20has%20no%20recourse%20to%20public%20funds%20(NRPF)%3F,Immigration%20and%20Asylum%20Act%201999.)

⁵ [https://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/information-and-resources/rights-and-entitlements/immigration-status-and-entitlements/who-has-no-recourse-to-public-funds#:~:text=and%20family%20members-,Who%20has%20no%20recourse%20to%20public%20funds%20\(NRPF\)%3F,Immigration%20and%20Asylum%20Act%201999.](https://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/information-and-resources/rights-and-entitlements/immigration-status-and-entitlements/who-has-no-recourse-to-public-funds#:~:text=and%20family%20members-,Who%20has%20no%20recourse%20to%20public%20funds%20(NRPF)%3F,Immigration%20and%20Asylum%20Act%201999.)

⁶ <https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/unlocking-the-door-a-roadmap-for-supporting-non-uk-nationals-facing-homelessness-in-england/>

- ***People who have been refused asylum – 748***

The network accommodated 748 people who had been refused asylum and are considered ‘appeal rights exhausted’ (ARE) by the Home Office.⁷ People seeking asylum who leave Home Office accommodation as ARE are at high risk of destitution and homelessness due to having no access to public funds.

Despite the various legal routes to settling their status that exist for people who have been refused asylum and are considered ARE⁸, which include further appeals on their asylum case or the submission of a fresh claim⁹, accessing the necessary legal and immigration advice is extremely challenging from a position of homelessness and destitution.

See Box 2. to learn more about how our network helped people who had been refused asylum to move out of homelessness by exploring their available legal options to settle their status.

Whilst the current asylum backlog has wide-ranging implications for people at every stage of their asylum claim, NACCOM members, who primarily support those refused asylum, have reported significant delays relating to decisions on applications for asylum support (e.g.: Section 4). This can keep people trapped in positions of homelessness and destitution whilst they await being granted Home Office accommodation.

There are also concerns within our network that the Nationality and Borders Act, and specifically the Rwanda plans, have increased hesitancy by some people with NRPF to engage with services, due to fear of immigration enforcement – increasing the risk of prolonged homelessness and destitution amongst this cohort.

Box 2. Successful outcomes for people with NRPF who had been refused asylum

We ask our members to report how many people moved-on from their accommodation projects in the 12-month period. This year 25 NACCOM members offer both accommodation and legal routes out of destitution, either by offering immigration advice themselves or via a referral relationship with local providers.

This year 329 people who had been refused asylum were known to move-on from member services. Of this cohort, 109 were granted some form of leave to remain (LTR). This is an increase on last year’s figure (69) and demonstrates how people with NRPF, when supported with appropriate immigration advice, are able to settle their status through the available legal routes. A further 142 people moved-on from member services into Section 4 asylum support, many with an outstanding fresh claim for asylum, appeal on their claim, or other application for leave to remain being considered by the Home Office.

- ***Other people with NRPF – 200***

The network accommodated 200 people with NRPF who had not claimed asylum, of which 138 were from within the European Economic Area (EEA), and 62 were from outside of the EEA. As we explored in our report with Homeless Link, for many people who have NRPF and are experiencing homelessness, having a stable accommodation base is often the first step in an individual’s journey to settling their status via the appropriate route to regularisation.¹⁰ This may be the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) for those from within the EEA¹¹, or one of the several other legal options that exist, including the asylum system.¹²

7 <https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/asylum-are/#appealrightsexhausted>

8 <https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/asylum-are/#appealrightsexhausted>

9 <https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/freshclaim/>

10 <https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/unlocking-the-door-a-roadmap-for-supporting-non-uk-nationals-facing-homelessness-in-england/>

11 <https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/unlocking-the-door-a-roadmap-for-supporting-non-uk-nationals-facing-homelessness-in-england/>

12 <https://www.jcwi.org.uk/we-are-here-routes-to-regularisation-for-the-uks-undocumented-population>

Box 3. How can Government end homelessness and destitution amongst people with NRPF?

- Review and monitor all immigration-based restrictions on public funds to mitigate their role in driving homelessness.
- Adopt a cross-departmental, ‘exhaust all options’ approach that helps people with NRPF to find long-term routes out of homelessness.
- Introduce a discrete fund to local authorities to ensure a minimum level of accommodation provision, regardless of immigration status.
- Clarify the legal powers and expectations on local authorities to accommodate and support people who are subject to immigration-based restrictions on public funds.
- Invest in good quality independent immigration and welfare advice, particularly in homelessness settings, to help people with NRPF to fully explore options to settle their status.

And for people who have been refused asylum:

- Allow 56 days following an asylum decision before cessations of support.
- Invest in training, staff capacity and escalation pathways to accelerate compassionate and quality Home Office decision-making and prevent delays (e.g.: support applications) which may trap people in positions of homelessness and destitution.
- Review the impact of the current asylum support system, including the new full dispersal model, on homelessness as pledged in ‘Ending Rough Sleeping for Good’.

People hosted through Homes for Ukraine – 138 (6%)

The network accommodated at least 138 people via the Homes for Ukraine scheme, established in March 2022 for individuals or households fleeing the war in Ukraine. Whilst it is too early to monitor the impact of the scheme on long-term accommodation solutions for Ukrainians in this reporting period, there are concerns within the network that the absence of suitable move-on plans for those leaving host arrangements may increase the risk of homelessness amongst this cohort, meaning that this figure may rise in future editions of the survey.

Other people accommodated by the network – 517 (23%)

The network accommodated an additional 517 other people (including any dependent children or unaccompanied minors and those who may have NRPF) who were not identified as fitting into any of the above categories.

Who couldn’t NACCOM members support this year?

This year, the network reported being unable to accommodate 1,107 people who were experiencing, or at immediate risk of, destitution and homelessness, when they were referred for support. These same NACCOM members reported offering a financial lifeline in the form of destitution payments to 1,993 people, two-thirds of which were not being accommodated by the organisation at the time.

Nonetheless, the true scale of need, both met and unmet, is certainly far greater than that reported by our network. With referral data alone providing a limited insight into the actual demand for services at the local and regional level, we will be exploring ways to capture evidence of migrant homelessness and destitution beyond the NACCOM Annual Survey in the near future.