

WORKING WITH HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS: A TOOLKIT

APPENDIX 4: CASE STUDIES



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Appendix 4: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Action Foundation – Tyneside & Wearside

[Action Foundation](#) was set up by NACCOM's founding Chair of Trustees, Julian Prior, in 2007 as a local church response to people seeking asylum left destitute with NRPF on Tyneside. Over the years, a number of services have been developed by the charity, including Action Housing, which provides accommodation and support for people seeking asylum, and Action Lettings, which provides supported accommodation for newly granted refugees in Newcastle and Gateshead.

Partnership working with local Housing Associations

Action Foundation (AF) were approached in 2021 by [Oasis Community Housing](#), (OCH) who have a similar Christian faith-based background coupled with shared values and ethos. Senior managers from both charities met and looked at the options for two 3-bed properties that Oasis were finding it difficult to let despite their excellent condition. The flats were leased to AF at below market rent with OCH retaining responsibility for all internal and external repairs and maintenance. OCH also agreed to bring the properties up to HMO standards, including the installation of smoke alarm systems and fire doors. AF furnished the properties and are responsible for PAT testing and any tenant damage. The properties were originally leased for a six-month trial period, then extended to 12 months, and are now being reviewed and renewed on an annual basis.

Both houses are being used for supported housing for newly granted refugees as part of Action Lettings' portfolio. AF are able to provide a number of beds for people seeking asylum with NRPF within Action Housing. Once accommodated, individuals are supported to regularise their immigration status.

Both AF and OCH have experience of delivering commissioned services, and because of the good working relationship and shared ethos of each organisation, are considering joint bids for commissioned services, such as for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Other work with housing associations

AF have had a longstanding informal relationship with [Your Homes Newcastle](#) for the provision of move-on accommodation for refugees leaving Action Lettings. AF are also working with the supported accommodation provider [Changing Lives](#) who are the main contractor for a Newcastle City Council Supported Accommodation and Supported People Contract.

To-do list

AF are keen to explore establishing a service level agreement with a Housing Association for the day-to-day management, repairs and maintenance of all their housing stock.

Key Observations and Insights

- Both AF's current Chief Executive and Head of Housing have been recruited from Housing Associations in the Northeast, which has brought in a wealth of knowledge, experience and confidence in housing-related matters.
- Having staff with Housing Association experience has helped AF to better understand the culture and business models of Housing Associations as well as aiding negotiations with Housing Associations.
- The organisation's reputation and public profile, including regional and national awards, have helped to open doors and build relationships with Housing Associations and led to direct approaches from Housing Associations.
- Established relationships built on trust, professional understanding and competency are likely to lead to more opportunities for joint-working and strategic partnerships.
- Housing Associations recognise the benefits and corporate good that comes from partnership working with an established voluntary sector player with an excellent reputation within the region.

Case Study 2: ASSIST Sheffield

ASSIST is a charity that was founded in 2003 that works to ensure that nobody who is seeking asylum has to sleep on the streets of Sheffield after their application has been rejected. ASSIST is the sole accommodation provider in Sheffield for people seeking sanctuary with NRPF. The charity runs an initial support house, a hosting scheme and nine shared houses, alongside housing management, welfare support, and other related services.

Working with a local Housing Association

Over the years, ASSIST has established a large volunteer base including people from a management background within the mainstream housing and homelessness sector.

A senior manager from [South Yorkshire Housing](#) (SYHA) had previously volunteered in ASSIST's pre-covid night shelter. This led to conversations with ASSIST's accommodation manager as to how SYHA might support ASSIST's work accommodating people seeking sanctuary left with NRPF. It was also agreed that a senior manager from SYHA would be invited to join ASSIST's Board of Trustees.

The board member from SYHA accompanied ASSIST's accommodation manager to the joint Crisis, Homes for Cathy and NACCOM conference on Ending Migrant Homelessness held in York in February 2020. SYHA are a [Homes for Cathy](#) member, so were keen to explore how they might work towards fulfilling Homes for Cathy's nine commitments to end homelessness, including commitment number 8 to contribute to ending migrant homelessness. In addition to directly supporting work to end migrant homelessness in Sheffield, SYHA also felt that supporting ASSIST fitted well with their policies, board strategy and [race action plan](#).

Feasibility Study

ASSIST and SYHA decided that they wanted to explore bringing one or more of SYHA's void properties into use to support ASSIST's work accommodating people seeking asylum left with NRPF. A key barrier for ASSIST was having the staff capacity to lead on the project feasibility, negotiation and implementation. In 2020, ASSIST applied to [Crisis for a "Homes for All"](#) grant. The 'Filling the Void' project included a feasibility study for the use of a vacant SYHA property and running and staff costs for a pilot phase. It created a space for the two organisations to get to know and understand each other's operational remit, strategic vision, culture and delivery model.

A freelance housing consultant with a supported housing and Housing Association background was appointed. The appointee had also previously volunteered for ASSIST, so understood the mission, vision and values of the charity and was therefore well placed to facilitate conversations between the two organisations.

The feasibility study was originally intended to have a wider reach in exploring how SYHA might support the work of ASSIST, however with the onset of Covid 19 in early 2020, the focus quickly became concentrated on finding an alternative to ASSIST's dormitory-based night shelter, which provided emergency accommodation and a gateway into ASSIST's longer-term accommodation provision. The general idea was to use void properties made available to ASSIST on short-term leases of initially three months.

The offer

The first property found had previously been used as a specialist supported living house for clients with substance misuse needs. The property had been left empty for some time as SYHA's contract with the service provider had ended. The property was already set up as an HMO, so needed little work to allow ASSIST to house unrelated single males who were new to its service. A short-term three-month lease arrangement was negotiated and later extended to eight months before SYHA took the property back when their internal development team found a new commercial use for it. ASSIST was then offered a second void property on similar terms, which had previously been used for supported accommodation of people with learning disabilities.

The future of using vacant properties for social impact and benefit to landlord

ASSIST is now using the knowledge and expertise gained through working with a housing association to look to build wider relationships both with housing associations and private landlords with vacant properties that might be made available on a short-term rent-free basis to provide accommodation for unrelated individuals with a clear move-on path to ASSIST's longer-term shared housing. In parallel, ASSIST is using lessons learned from the project in a further feasibility study for the long-term replacement of its pre-covid communal night-shelter, which is funded through the Night Shelter Transformation Fund via Homeless Link.

Key Insights and Observations

- Inviting Housing Association staff members to become volunteers with one joining the board was the start of ASSIST's journey to a HA property being made available to support their work.
- The ongoing relationship and technical support from NACCOM's Network Development Team was seen as invaluable in gaining deeper understanding and insight into how things have been - and could be - done.
- Attending the Crisis/Homes for Cathy Ending Migrant Destitution Conference helped shape the vision and build a relationship with the prospective Housing Association partner.
- ASSIST's commitment to effective partnership work with housing providers was key. SYHA and ASSIST had not worked together previously, so trust, goodwill and clear communication were important, backed by quick learning and formal agreements to mitigate any financial or reputational risk.

- The scheme fitted the Housing Association's charitable and community aspirations and provided a well-managed occupancy to prevent vandalism and reduce void property costs.
- ASSIST clients had no substance misuse or serious mental health issues, making them a seemingly low-risk group.

Testimonials

“ It was a successful use of an empty property, helped us fulfil our pledges under Homes for Cathy and offer a property for people seeking asylum that otherwise would have been empty for many months. ASSIST is a well organised responsive partner. ASSIST have been a pleasure to work with. We want to provide more properties when we can and would recommend ASSIST if you have suitable properties. ”

Phil Parkes, SYHA Head of Service

“ I'm a firm believer that no human – or organisation for that matter – survives alone....

We'll keep working with ASSIST on the Filling the Void project and our wider partnership to ensure that we walk the talk in helping to contribute to ending migrant homelessness. Together we are stronger and we cannot walk alone. ”

South Yorkshire Housing Association's Co-Director of Care, Health and Wellbeing, Charlotte Murray

<https://homesforcathy.org.uk/2021/07/05/a-place-to-call-home-for-asylum-seekers-in-south-yorkshire/>

Case Study 3: Boaz Trust - Greater Manchester and the surrounding areas

<https://www.boaztrust.org.uk/>

The Boaz Trust was founded in 2004 to address the needs of the growing numbers of people facing destitution in Greater Manchester whose asylum cases had been refused and who had nowhere to turn to for help. The charity provides shared accommodation with 1-to-1 support for people who have become homeless after claiming asylum or are at risk of homelessness after being granted refugee status. In addition, Boaz offers a Floating Support service for people who are facing homelessness in Greater Manchester but who have restricted eligibility to access mainstream homelessness services because of their insecure or unclear immigration status.

Boaz Trust housing is a cross-subsidy model housing 36 single adults seeking asylum with NRPF and 34 refugees in 19 houses all located in Manchester and Salford.

Boaz's property portfolio is made up of; rent-free and low-rent privately owned property sourced from individual benefactors; property owned and leased from the social investor [Green Pastures](#); and property owned by Arawak Walton, a Housing Association with homes across Manchester, Stockport and Trafford, specialising in homes for BME communities in these areas [Arawak Walton](#).

Background to Housing Association Support

Boaz had been running a cross-subsidy housing model for several years and wanted specialist support to improve standards within the houses they provide. In addition, rent income received from refugee lets was not at a level to provide sufficient cross-subsidised beds for people with NRPF. The charity began to consider a partnership with a provider with both expertise and capacity to support them in improving these two key areas of operation.

In July 2015, one of Boaz's board members introduced the charity to members of the senior management team at Arawak Walton, who had over 1000 properties and 30+ years' experience working in diverse communities in Manchester, Trafford and Stockport. Arawak Walton's Chief Executive also chairs BME National, a network of Housing Associations working in diverse communities (<https://bmenational.co.uk>).

Management Agreement

Initial discussions between Boaz and Arawak Walton were not about acquiring property but were about developing a management agreement and agreeing a fixed fee per property for property management. The agreement reached was that the Housing Association would cover routine inspections, repairs, maintenance, and emergency call out as well as rent collection from refugee tenants. The agreement was reached and signed within nine months and has freed Boaz staff up to do what they do best: non legal casework and holistic support for people seeking asylum with NRPF and 1:1 support for newly granted refugees. Boaz receives a monthly invoice which includes any additional works and repair costs not covered by the agreement.

As the relationship became established, Arawak Walton wanted to further support Boaz's work (to tackle homelessness amongst people with NRPF and newly granted refugees) and so the charity was able to negotiate the provision of two houses in October 2017 and July 2018.

What are the benefits for Boaz Trust in partnering with Arawak Walton?

- Overall Improvement in quality of accommodation through inspection, repairs and maintenance, and emergency call out service provided.
- Increased income through greater cash flow and reduction in debtors by having a third party leading on rent collection.
- A greater confidence in taking on new houses and therefore providing more homes for those in need because staff are not weighed down with housing management issues.
- Other added benefits of the close relationship with a Housing Association include: management mentoring support; access to a bank of knowledge and expertise; increase in donations; access to new volunteers; awareness of new opportunities; corporate credibility; and networks.

Benefits of the partnership for Arawak Walton

- Contributes to their objectives, core purpose, corporate good and values.
- Provides a way for the housing association to directly support people left with NRPF.
- Provides volunteering opportunities for staff.
- Positive impact: Arawak Walton received the government endorsed Compliance Plus Customer Service Excellence Award, which referenced their partnership work with Boaz.

“ Our longstanding partnership with Arawak Walton is a key relationship for us as a charity. Some of the benefits for us are that it ensures that the properties are maintained to a high standard, that rents are collected from our refugee clients, and that policies and procedures are in line with statutory and regulatory requirements... We draw on Arawak Walton’s expertise in areas such as repairs, maintenance and rent management. It’s a partnership based on shared values that plays to the strengths of each organisation. ”

Rob Clarke, Head of Operations at Boaz Trust

Summary of Provision

Arawak Walton has:

- a) Provided two houses for a lease fee which has enabled Boaz to then rent the same houses out as shared accommodation (to refugees who have leave to remain in the UK) for a higher yield.
- b) Entered into an agreement with Boaz to manage all housing maintenance and collection of refugee rents. This strategic management arrangement has freed up Boaz staff and volunteers to do what they do best in supporting their NRPF clients to achieve positive move on and their refugee tenants to integrate and take steps into employment, education and independent living with successful tenancies.

Boaz employ a part time housing manager (0.8FTE), a full-time Head of Support Services and four support workers (3.2 FTE) working with people who are living in Boaz accommodation. People who have become homeless at any stage of the asylum process can be referred to Boaz through an online referral system. In 2022, referrals were received from over 50 different organisation including local council housing teams, NHS and social services and local voluntary sector organisations. Once a referral has been received, the support team will liaise with the referrer, follow up any queries and arrange an initial assessment and introduction meeting with an interpreter as and when appropriate.

The aim of all Boaz accommodation and support is that the people they are supporting will be able to move on positively from Boaz into longer-term accommodation. For those who have had their asylum applications refused, accommodation and support is usually offered for a period of up to 12 months. This can be extended, for example where there are delays in accessing legal advice. Due to the challenge of finding affordable accommodation (private rented or social housing) and then being able to sustain a tenancy, people who have been granted refugee status may sometimes require a longer period of accommodation and support before they are able to move on.

Reality Check!

Boaz's intention was to identify a number of Housing Associations that they could partner with in the Greater Manchester area.

- Some funding was secured to scope out possibilities and take this forward
- Boaz arranged a lot of meetings, proactively networked, attended housing sector events, delivered presentations and mapped out a number of options and models, but...
- To date have only secured the partnership with Arawak Walton.

Case Study 4: Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre

<https://www.covrefugee.org>

Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (CRMC) welcomes and empowers asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants in Coventry to rebuild their lives and achieve their potential.

The charity has grown considerably over the past two decades and now assists over 4,000 people each year. This includes destitute families and single people, victims of trafficking and modern slavery, unaccompanied children and those escaping conflict zones from around the world.

The charity delivers a wide range of front-line and partner services to meet all the immediate support needs that clients may have. Services range from employment support and immigration advice to therapy services, English classes, social groups and much more.

Housing Association provision

Two Coventry-based Housing Associations have been able to make property available to CRMC because the work and ethos of the charity fits with their social values. A trustee link helped with the negotiations with one of the Housing Associations.

CRMC made a direct approach to [Orbit Housing Association](#) regarding the possibility of acquiring properties on a peppercorn or below market rent. Orbit offered a 3-bed and an 8-bed house on 10-year leases on peppercorn rents with a full repairs and maintenance service. The fit was a relatively straightforward one as these properties had previously been used for supporting people contract provision

and when this came to an end the properties were not suitable for general needs, having already been converted to HMOs (with the provision of wired smoke alarms and fire doors throughout)

A second Housing Association, [Citizen Housing](#), was also approached and made a void 3-bed property available rent free with a full repair service. This property was originally due for demolition and redevelopment, however delays in the planned work made it possible for the property to be offered to CRMC for several years. The area has now been developed and the property was handed back.

Cross-subsidy

CRMC's primary housing work is in the provision of supported housing for newly granted refugees and other migrants at risk of homelessness who have the right to work and access to public funding. The provision of rooms to people who have the right to rent cross subsidises the provision of rooms for people with NRPF while they receive internal legal and non-legal casework support to resolve their precarious immigration status.

The charity currently manages a total of 11 properties and has 60 beds available. 11 of these beds are within the housing associations' properties. 2 of these 11 beds are reserved for people seeking asylum or other migrants with NRPF who are then supported to either regularise their immigration status or re-enter the job market to a point where they can pay rent and sustain a tenancy.

Management Agreement

The properties have not been formally leased to CRMC. The management agreement stipulates that housing association staff must be used for repairs and evictions.

Key Observations and Insights

- CRMC have senior staff with Local Authority and mainstream housing sector experience, which is a real asset in building links and partnerships with mainstream housing and homelessness sector.
- CRMC recruited a board member who had a senior staff role within a local Housing Association, which aided negotiations and ensured better understanding of the ethos and business model of each party.
- CRMC have an excellent reputation within the city and do commissioned work for the City Council, including more recently leading on the Ukrainian crisis response. This positioning has been very useful in raising the charity's profile and in negotiations with Housing Associations.

- CRMC's core work with people with recourse to public funding aided negotiations with a local Housing Association who did not have any shared accommodation on offer within its portfolio. Partnership with CRMC could therefore be seen as filling a gap with low risk to the HA.
- CRMC took on property with no immediate alternative use, thereby reducing voids and local blight where future demolition and remodelling is planned.

Case Study 5: EYST – Share Tawe – Swansea City

<https://sharetawe.wordpress.com/>

<https://eyst.org.uk/>

Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST) was set up in 2005 by a group of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds in Swansea. It aimed to fill a gap in provision for young BAME people aged 11-25 by providing targeted, culturally sensitive and holistic support to meet their needs. Since then, EYST has expanded its mission and vision to also meet the needs of BAME young people, families and individuals, including refugees and people seeking asylum living in Wales.

Share Tawe was originally a project of Swansea City of Sanctuary but was adopted by EYST in 2021. It seeks to offer hospitality through accommodation and support to people seeking asylum with NRPF in Swansea. Up until 2021, accommodation was offered through volunteer hosts offering rooms in their own homes.

Housing as an alternative to hosting

In 2020 the Covid-19 crisis hit and it became very difficult to both retain and recruit new hosts. The then management committee of Share Tawe also became aware of the difficulties newly granted refugees were having in finding affordable accommodation in Swansea.

The management had sight of NACCOM's [Housing Toolkit](#) which contains a number of case studies showcasing member projects involving the cross-subsidising of beds for people seeking asylum with NRPF through the letting of rooms to refugees.

Share Tawe were aware of [Pobl](#) Housing Association's presence and work in Swansea, so arranged an introductory call. Following several meetings, Pobl made the offer of a two-bedroom flat at standard market rate.

Share Tawe had at this time begun the process of a hand-over to EYST, who lacked experience in housing management and had concerns over affordability as they would need to fundraise to run the flat.

A member of NACCOM's Network Development team was invited to a three-way meeting with Pobl and representatives of Share Tawe and EYST and was able to both explain how cross-subsidy was working in other settings and was also able to model, through a spreadsheet, how it might work with a two-bedroom flat.

Partnership Agreement

Unlike many of working partnerships involving NACCOM members and Housing Associations where the property is leased to the member by the Housing Association, Pobl agreed that they would retain full control of the flat both in terms of day-to-day management and in directly running the house as a home for one newly granted refugee and one person seeking asylum with NRPF.

EYST agreed to be the referral partner signposting newly granted single refugees in need of accommodation to Pobl. Refugees were offered a shorthold tenancy agreement with Pobl for a single room in shared accommodation for a rent inclusive of utilities, council tax and broadband. The rent is based on the Local Authority shared accommodation rate plus a top up of 50% of the cost of the utilities, council tax and broadband.

The second room is made available to EYST to house someone who has NRPF who would otherwise be destitute. The only criteria are that they are the same sex as the refugee housed, and they sign an occupancy agreement recognising that they have no tenancy under law and agree to engage with both EYST and external support agencies as directed in order to undertake a full review of their asylum claim and work towards submitting a fresh claim at a future date.

The shortfall in the rental value between the two-bedroom LHA rate and a single shared accommodation rate is Pobl's charitable gift to EYST. EYST are responsible for paying to Pobl the second 50% of the utilities.

EYST retain the option, if they wish, to pay for both rooms for allocation to two people seeking asylum with NRPF. This gives them greater flexibility as need arises.

Benefits for EYST

- Low risk as the property is not leased and they have no day-to-day management responsibility.
- Flexibility in allocations depending on need.
- The opportunity of Pobl allocating further properties to the project as need arises.
- Although not a formal supportive housing scheme, EYST is able to concentrate on what it does best: client support.
- Minimal cost to the charity if one room is let to a rent-paying refugee who becomes Pobl's tenant.

Benefits for Pobl

- Pobl were able to step into the market in providing affordable accommodation to newly granted refugees at risk of homelessness in Swansea.
- Pobl were able to demonstrate a response and a commitment to [Tai Pawb's](#) "Deeds not Words" campaign to support initiatives that reduce homelessness or the risk of homelessness amongst BAME communities in Wales.
- Pobl achieves almost full cost recovery, so the project represents value for money while achieving real social good.
- Positive publicity and enhanced reputation in Swansea.
- Refugee tenants are supported to navigate life in the UK so are better prepared to be independent tenants of Pobl at some future date.

Case Study 6: Hope Projects/Housing – Birmingham

<https://hope-projects.org.uk/about-hope/>

Hope Projects has existed since 2003 and became a registered charity in 2010. Hope Projects began Hope Housing in 2007 as a destitution fund connected to Birmingham Law Centre and with limited experience of housing work but a clear vision of overcoming poor asylum application decisions through the provision of legal support linked to housing.

Hope Housing Project provides emergency short-term accommodation to people seeking asylum while they are supported to overturn poor initial asylum decisions. As demand for a place in Hope Housing is always higher than availability, referrals are assessed to ensure there is a reasonable chance of positive move on back into some form of statutory support following, for example, the submission of a fresh claim. Funding raised largely from grant-making trusts covers electricity, gas, water, council tax and other bills such as repairs, maintenance and management costs.

Partnership Working with Housing Associations

Hope Housing has benefited greatly over the years from established contacts with key individuals such as church leaders and politicians, as well as from partner organisations and local Housing Associations. When Hope Housing was started, letters were written to all the members of the Birmingham Social Housing Partnership (a network of Housing Associations in the city) requesting properties on peppercorn rents. However, all the successful approaches to Housing Associations were through personal contacts with staff or board members of Housing Associations via a Hope Project board member who had professional contacts with Housing Associations at the time.

Agreements were negotiated with 5 Housing Associations, including [Bournville Village Trust](#) (BVT), Longhurst Group and Midland Heart, who are all members of the [Homes for Cathy](#) group of HAs. Each Housing Association felt that the proposal was compatible with their general values, ethos and social good, and each had a clear understanding of local need facing people seeking asylum left with NRPF. Once negotiations were completed with BVT, it was easy for others to follow suit and a total of six 2-4 bed houses were provided rent-free on three-year leases. At the end of the initial three-year period, negotiations led to leases being extended by three years. This has been repeated on several occasions and the houses are still being made available to Hope Projects rent-free. One Housing Association has stopped renegotiating the lease but continues to provide and maintain the properties.

All of the Housing Associations continue to be responsible for external repairs and maintenance while internal repairs and maintenance are the responsibility of Hope Projects. The question of replacing boilers when needed has always been a grey area and subject to individual negotiation.

Other services/benefits

BVT is one of several Cadbury family trusts that have a strong West Midlands focus. Over the years, Hope Projects has managed to access small amounts of funding from trusts linked to Housing Associations such as BVT, which have contributed towards the running costs associated with Housing Association properties.

Key Observations and Insights

- From its inception Hope Projects had fostered strong foundational connections with local politicians, faith leaders and charitable trusts.
- Having a board member with senior management experience within a local Housing Association made it much easier to make the ask and negotiate locally.
- Being able to communicate a clear vision linking time-limited housing with focussed legal support to overturn poor asylum/immigration decisions aided negotiations.
- Each initial three-year lease has been renewed with each Housing Association providing stability, enabling Hope Projects to focus on overturning negative decisions and achieving positive move-on for clients.
- Housing Associations have both individually and collectively recognised the benefits and corporate good of supporting Hope Projects.

Further Reading

For a more detailed case study on Hope Projects and their work with Housing Associations please read [Housing Associations and Provision for Destitute Migrants - A practice pack](#), a resource produced back in 2012 by [HACT](#) (Housing Association Charitable Trusts) Housing and Migrants Network, Joseph Rowntree Trust (JRF) and Metropolitan Migration Foundation to help Housing Associations link their charitable mission and status with meeting the needs of people seeking asylum with NRPf.

Partnership working with Spring Housing Association

[Spring Housing Association](#) (SHA) is a small values-based social housing provider which was set up in Birmingham in 2014 with a particular focus on migrant communities. As a new organisation, SHA were looking for refugee sector partners when the now Director of Hope Projects (who was working for Refugee Action at the time) met with senior staff in 2015 to discuss how to support the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS).

In December 2016, Spring Housing Association became the housing provider for the SVPRS across the West Midlands, providing accommodation in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. SHA works in partnership with [Refugee Action](#) in delivering support to the families that arrive under SVPRS.

Working with Hope Projects

In 2018 Hope's new Director continued to develop the relationship with SHA, who had already, on occasion, used some of their **out-of-scheme** (outside normal allocation process) housing for people with NRPF while referring those accommodated to Hope Projects for both legal advice and destitution payments. In 2016 and again in 2021, Hope Projects were offered houses by individual donors in locations that were not ideal for accommodating people seeking asylum with NRPF. Rather than completely turn down the offer, Hope Projects reached an agreement with SHA whereby SHA manage one of the properties as a home for refugees, charge a 25% management fee, find tenants and manage voids, and pass on any surplus income to Hope Projects, which helps cross subsidise its own provision for people seeking asylum with NRPF.

Other Benefits of Partnership Working

In 2022 HP invited the CEO of SHA to join its board of trustees, bringing a wealth of housing and related senior management experience. The close working relationship between Hope Projects and SHA has led to Hope Projects providing legal training to SHA staff on asylum and immigration matters.

SHA also provide newly granted refugees with supported accommodation (exempt accommodation) and have been a driving force behind regulatory change and bringing quality into the sector. Finding appropriate move-on accommodation for people when they receive a positive decision on their asylum application has become more challenging, however the relationship with Spring Housing allows vulnerable individuals who get LTR when with Hope Projects to move directly into Spring Housing accommodation.

Key Observations and Lessons

- Intentionality on the part of senior management at both SHA and Hope Projects to build relationship and understanding has allowed each to focus on their strengths and seen a number of win-wins benefiting both organisation and clients.
- Having a board member with senior management experience within a local HA has brought a wealth of housing management knowledge as well as wider knowledge and expertise.
- The established working relationship provides a platform for exploring new things together in the future.

Case Study 7: Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing

<https://www.mtvh.co.uk/about-us/>

Metropolitan Thames Valley (MTVH), formed from the merger of Metropolitan Housing Trust and Thames Valley Housing Association in 2018. Metropolitan has its origins in the provision of good quality, affordable housing for the 1950's Windrush generation of migrants from the Caribbean. MTVH's main areas of operation are London the South East, East Midlands and East of England.

Migration Foundation

As well as being a Housing Association whose roots are in migration, MTVH created the Migration Foundation which has a vision to reduce migrant destitution, including amongst refugees and people seeking asylum, and to make migration work for migrants and their communities. The Migration Foundation is the only fund dedicated to tackling migrant destitution in the UK. MTVH recognises that migrant destitution is a national issue and MTVH's Migration Foundation exists to serve both residents and non-residents.

One of Migration Foundation's strategic goals is to see better housing, support and opportunities for migrants to participate in society and to tackle the circumstantial reasons for destitution. MTVH has a number of initiatives that directly support this goal. For more information on the Migration Foundation, its aims and strategic goals, go to [Migration Foundation](#).

Refugee Resettlement Work

Like many Housing Associations, MTVH has been involved with refugee resettlement work, originally with Syrian resettlement but more recently the ambition of supporting 50 Afghan families to be resettled. Meeting this target has proved challenging to date, especially in the East Midlands due to the lack of availability of 4-bedroomed general needs properties.

Re-Start House Derby

In Derby MTVH run a supported hostel for men with 10 self-contained one-bedroomed flats accommodating a broad range of migrants at risk of homelessness, including newly granted refugees and people seeking asylum with no recourse to public funds, people making a fresh asylum claim, people from the European Economic Area (EEA) countries and others with NRPF conditions. There are two larger rooms on the ground floor that can cater for people with mobility issues.

The project is fully funded by the Migration Foundation. Referrals can be made from local charities (but not Local Authorities) and a holistic approach is taken to support those housed who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness on account of their immigration status.

Depending on their immigration status, residents can receive small hardship grants and food donations. Residents have opportunities to socialise, play sport and grow in confidence and are supported to volunteer or access employment if they have the right to work.

While most residents already have legal representation or are receiving support from referral organisations, MTVH are currently seeking to develop a partnership with a legal project to support people with more complex cases. As part of this process, they have subscribed to [Free Movement](#), and intend to explore their legal advice services for such cases.

The project also supports clients to move into more sustainable tenancies in the area, once they are ready to do so, and can also provide accommodation and support to those signing up for the Home Office's Assisted Voluntary Return Scheme.

Re-Start Point

[The Restart Point Project](#) came about following conversations in 2015 with various organisations working in the refugee/migrant sector, including NACCOM, about finding new ways of accommodating people experiencing destitution. MTVH felt they needed a service that showed commitment and met the needs of all migrants who were homeless or at risk of homelessness and which could demonstrate what could be done.

The building had become vacant after Derby City Council decommissioned an older people's mental health service. At the time the building's value was such that a sale would have brought minimal financial gain and to convert it for another use would have been expensive and again promised minimal financial gain. MTVH therefore carried out a needs assessment and found that tackling the high level of local migrant homelessness was a high priority that also fitted perfectly with their ethos and history.

Running Costs

While the building is owned by MTVH, day-to-day running costs are paid for by the Migration Foundation. While housing benefits/rents could be claimed from those who have status, MTVH decided it would be better to cover all costs and make the project as homogenous as possible in terms of funding and support given to those accommodated.

Connected services

MTVH have developed a transition process, encouraging people to budget and save for a deposit if they have leave to remain.

Residents are given a licence agreement which, as MTVH customers, means they are eligible for wider support such as employability and debt advice.

If residents have recourse to public funding, they can apply to join the [Derby Homefinder](#), a choice-based lettings scheme that advertises social housing in Derby that is available to rent. Once they have joined the housing register, they can log in to bid on properties. They can also join MTVH's own hard-to-let waiting list for properties available for direct provision that are not on the housing register. MTVH also have a tenant welfare fund which, following an assessment, enables people in need to apply for support in acquiring white goods and other items needed to set up their home and live independently.

Possible replication of Re-Start Point?

Nottingham is a city that has been considered for replication but to date a suitable property with a reasonable stock value and condition has not been found.

The Migration Foundation's current relationship with MTVH also places some limits on the ability to potentially make money from rents and other investments that might release capital to purchase, refurbish and grow a portfolio that could generate sufficient income to cross subsidise more beds for people left with NRPf.

Partnership with Micro Rainbow

<https://microrainbow.org/>

MTVH are currently working on a partnership with Micro Rainbow to provide housing for LGBTQI+ people in London. Micro Rainbow (MR) is a charity which, since 2017, has been supporting LGBTQI+ asylum seekers and refugees with safe housing in a number of cities across the UK. MR also provide activities to tackle isolation, foster social inclusion and move-on, including employability, education, training and volunteering opportunities.

The relationship between MTVH and Micro Rainbow has been developing for some time. The first work MTVH did with Micro Rainbow was funding an evaluation of MR's management systems and in supporting capacity building. MTVH then acted as a critical friend in reviewing MR's safe houses.

Motivations

MR's work with one of the most marginalised and persecuted groups within the refugee and asylum-seeking community fits with MTVH's general ethos and objectives. MTVH typically only offers external support for projects that they wouldn't do themselves because, for example, they lack the specialist knowledge and expertise. MR has the expertise and mission to support the LGBTQI+ community and MTVH consider themselves an LGBTQI+ friendly organisation. A senior staff member of MR has also been invited to join the Migration Foundation's advisory board.

The London Housing Project

In certain circumstances a Housing Association may have estate redevelopment voids that may stay empty for a number of years. MTVH currently pay [Guardians](#) for placing working professionals in development voids which provides protection of the property and maintains community. MTVH are in discussion with MR about making some former supported housing units which need minimal repair available on a site in London undergoing an 8-year redevelopment programme. Micro Rainbow has been tasked by the Home Office to directly support Afghans identified

as having LGBTQI+ support needs. Initially MTVH are looking at making ten 1-bed flats available for the project. This would be a supported housing community. MTVH will cover some costs and provide housing management and training such as debt support. MR will provide specialist and community support. Some costs will be picked up by Micro Rainbow and the Home Office who refer vulnerable people who are LGBTQI+ to MR. Once granted leave to remain, individuals housed by the project will be able to put themselves forward for Local Authority social housing provision but will also be able to apply directly to MTVH.

Potential for the future

There are 50 units on site which will become empty over the next few years. MTVH hope to be able to scale up, either with Micro Rainbow or other refugee and migrant sector accommodation partners.

Looking further forward, MTVH are considering building a brand-new transition accommodation for people experiencing homelessness as part of the scheme and looking at having some rooms available for people with NRPF.

Other support for Micro Rainbow

Until recently, the MF was funding a Micro Rainbow staff position working on MR's NRPF project in Leeds, which is a single house for people with NRPF. MF also provided funding for a project aimed at supporting LGBTQI+ Afghan refugees arriving in the UK under a Government protection scheme.

Legal Support Provision

The Migration Foundation recognises the challenge nationally in finding immigration lawyers for people seeking asylum and others subject to immigration control. With this in mind, one of the Foundation's strategic priorities is access to justice. MF have made a substantial grant to the [Justice Together Initiative](#), a collaboration of funders with a vision for people who use the immigration system to be able to access justice fairly and equally, so that they can move on with their lives.

Approximately half of the Foundation's grant making goes either directly towards funding access to justice or forming an element of the work of grantees working with refugees and people seeking asylum. In the East Midlands, MF works in partnership with OISC registered charities and legal firms to fund provision, which includes university law clinics.

Consideration is also being given to the MF paying for an initial legal opinion on the merits of people being referred for a place at Re-Start [Point](#) in Derby.

Case Study 8: Nottingham Arimathea Trust

<https://www.nottinghamarimathea.org.uk>

Nottingham Arimathea Trust (NAT) was started in 2007 by the Church of England Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham where a house was allocated to the Trust from surplus housing stock to begin to meet the growing need of people seeking asylum with NRPF.

The charity now manages over 20 properties and provides accommodation and support to around 70 people including people seeking asylum with NRPF, newly granted refugees, victims of modern slavery or human trafficking and other vulnerable migrants in Nottingham and Derby.

Alongside accommodation, individuals are supported to access legal support either internally or externally so they can work towards submitting fresh claims for asylum; or if they are refugees, long-term independent accommodation.

Background to Housing Association support

In 2013 Nottingham Citizens, a Citizens UK local chapter, was formed (an alliance of schools, universities, trade unions, faith groups, charities and community groups) which came together to fight injustices. One of the first pieces of work undertaken was to look at homelessness in Nottingham, which highlighted the injustice of people seeking asylum left with NFPF. The outcome of this work was the offer of properties from two local Housing Associations.

[Framework Housing Association](#) identified two houses which were not subject to Government funding via the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), which both regulates and funds Housing Associations. These properties were made available to NAT for their cross-subsidy work with people seeking asylum with NRPF. The houses were a 4-bed and a 2-bed and were initially provided rent-free for three years on rolling leases with a three-month notice period. Later, Framework had grown, resulting in a full audit by the HCA, making it difficult to continue providing these houses for free when there were people with recourse to public funding who were considered priority need. Following renegotiation, a market rent was applied to the 4-bed, whilst the 2-bed was handed back as NAT felt this would not be economical to run as part of its cross-subsidy model. Although close to a full-market rent the 4-bed was kept as it was already set up as an HMO and Framework agreed to continue with providing a full repairs and maintenance service.

In 2015 NAT began to develop a relationship with another Nottingham Housing Association called Tuntum, who are a traditional Housing Association established by members of BAME communities to provide affordable housing for those communities in Nottingham.

The relationship began when Tuntum agreed to be the Housing Association mentor for NAT who were using a Big Lottery Local Sustainability Grant to explore whether it was appropriate to become a Registered Social Landlord (RSL is another name for a Housing Association), which would then have allowed NAT to apply for Government funding administered by the HAC. A proposed change in the Government's position regarding the funding of supported housing led to NAT not pursuing RSL status. However, a strong relationship with Tuntum had by then been forged, which meant that NAT's then CEO was able to shadow and learn from Tuntum's senior leadership team as well as their board. At the time Tuntum were looking more closely at their own direct provision for refugees and agreed to provide NAT with three 3-bed houses at market rent, which were converted and licensed as small HMOs (Nottingham has local licensing for any property where two or more households are living together). Tuntum provide a full repairs and maintenance call-out service. NAT use the houses to provide single rooms for both newly granted refugees leaving Home Office accommodation and beds for people seeking asylum with NRPF as part of their cross-subsidy model.

Summary of Current work with Housing Associations

- NAT currently has 4 properties on five-year leases from Framework and Tuntum Housing Associations.
- All houses provided are currently 3-bed houses.
- NAT pays a monthly rent for each house, which equates roughly to the LHA family rate for the property size.
- NAT receives a higher income than the LHA family rate by letting individual rooms to newly granted refugees at risk of homelessness as part of a cross-subsidy portfolio.
- The houses are set up and managed as small HMOs. Each house accommodates a mix of people with NRPF and newly granted refugees.
- The Housing Associations deal with emergency callouts. NAT passes emergencies on to the Housing Associations.

- Both Housing Associations provide a full repairs and maintenance call-out service and are responsible for plumbing, electrics and annual gas certification, energy performance certification (required for lettings) etc.
- NAT is responsible for internal decoration.

Key Lessons and Observations

- **Find common ground in mission:** Tuntum is a BAME-led Housing Association and, for them, supporting BAME communities was a key motivator in agreeing a partnership with NAT.
- **How can a win-win be achieved?** Framework HA is a collaboration formed from two local church homelessness organisations. They are focused on eliminating homelessness and realised refugees were a group that they don't normally work with. A partnership with NAT, who have particular knowledge and expertise, was an easy way of supporting this client group.
- **Invest time in building relationships.** NAT's CEO intentionally reached out to a local Housing Association to gain information, advice and guidance on a separate and related matter which led to the establishment of a relationship, respect and working knowledge of the charity's vision and mission, ultimately leading to the offer of property.

Case Study 9: Open Door North East – Middlesbrough Teesside

<https://www.opendoornortheast.com/>

Open Door North East (ODNE) provides housing and a range of other support services to people seeking asylum, refugees and other migrants in Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees and other areas of Teesside.

ODNE owns, leases or manages 38 houses in Middlesbrough and Stockton-on-Tees, providing accommodation for approximately 20 single people seeking asylum and 100 refugees and other migrants.

The letting of rooms to newly granted refugees, as well as whole properties to refugee and migrant families, not only provides homes to those at risk of homelessness but also cross-subsidises the provision of rooms to people seeking asylum left homeless with no recourse to public funding (NRPF) and no legal right to work or rent. Once housed, people with NRPF are supported to regularise their immigration status through a combination of internal and external non-legal and legal casework.

ODNE began housing people with NRPF in 2003 with the gift of a rent-free house before expanding initially by renting houses to accommodate more people with NRPF who are excluded from Home Office support, and then renting and subletting to newly granted refugees who were at the time low priority need with the Local Authority homelessness team.

ODNE developed its housing portfolio by working with ex-student landlords and first-time investors interested in providing shared accommodation to refugees. ODNE now owns three houses bought with individual financial gifts and grant funding (including from the [Quaker Housing Trust](#)). A number of other privately owned houses are provided rent free; One was bought in 2022 by the social investment charity [Green Pastures](#), while another has been provided on a pepper corn rent since 2016 by [North Star Housing Association](#).

Background to Housing Association Support

2015 saw the Syrian Refugee Crisis hit Europe. This coincided with ODNE applying to North Star Housing Association for a small community grant to start a women's enterprise project designed to upskill both refugee and migrant women and other women living in the same deprived wards in Middlesbrough.

The project was successful not only in upskilling and empowerment but also in fostering community cohesion amongst women who ordinarily might not mix together.

The project also drew the attention of the North Star Board to the charity's core work of housing both newly granted refugees and people seeking asylum. In early 2015, through his involvement with the Strategic Alliance for Migrant Destitution ODNE's then CEO was introduced to the then CEO of North Star Housing Association a member of [Homes For Cathy](#) group of Housing Associations.

Negotiations

In early 2015, ODNE made representations to senior management at North Star about their work and their need to access additional housing, both for people seeking asylum with NRPF and for newly granted refugees at risk of homelessness.

Three things were key to these negotiations:

- Firstly, that housing support should be time limited and not indefinite, with each individual housed with NRPF having an action plan to work towards positive move on which in most cases meant getting to a position to make an application for Home Office support following a fresh asylum claim.

- Secondly, that there was a clear business plan of a self-funding sustainable housing model based around the cross-subsidy of rooms for people with NRPF through letting to newly granted refugees and other migrants.
- Thirdly that there was no reputational risk to North Star and their board were satisfied that any offer would fit with their charitable objectives.

What was provided?

In July 2015, a 5-bedroom 3-storey townhouse was offered at a peppercorn rent. The property had become difficult to let due to the [Bedroom Tax](#).

North Star agreed to install fire doors and a smoke alarm system to bring the property up to HMO standard. North Star's decorating contractor agreed to redecorate the property for free as part of their agreement with North Star to deliver a certain amount of third-party charitable work each year. All refurbishments other than the provision of carpets were at no cost to ODNE. The lease agreed was a one-year rolling lease for the peppercorn rent of £1 with a six-month notice period on the part of the Housing Association and a two-month notice period for the charity.

Under the terms of the lease the housing association is responsible for all external repairs and maintenance plus internal repairs and maintenance except for painting and decorating.

Annual gas safety checks and certification plus checks and certification of the fire alarm system are also the responsibility of the housing association.

Key Insight and Observations

- The brokering of an introductory meeting with appropriate senior members of management at North Star greatly helped the process.
- Knowledge of ODNE's wider work to tackle homelessness and foster community integration and resilience helped negotiations. ODNE had, for example, been awarded BAME Community Organisation of the Year award in 2014, which raised its profile within the mainstream housing sector and with North Star.
- ODNE's then CEO had prior experience within local government of working with senior housing managers.
- North Star had access to difficult-to-let housing stock that was not subject to Homes and Communities Agency (formerly Housing Corporation) grant funding.

- North Star understood the business model, ethos, and aims and objectives of ODNE in tackling migrant homelessness.
- The property has now been leased to ODNE for seven years providing a home for a mixture of newly granted refugees and people seeking asylum with NRPF.
- ODNE's initial financial outlay was limited to the provision of carpets, furniture, white goods, and other communal kitchen equipment.
- Although a 5-bedroom property, ODNE made the early decision to manage the property as a 4-bed following fire risk assessments and the lack of a second bathroom. The 5th attic bedroom has been used for much needed storage of spare furniture items.

Case Study 10: Safe in Scotland / Simon Community Scotland

<https://www.simonscotland.org>

<https://www.safeinscotland.com>

Safe in Scotland – formerly Glasgow Night Shelter for Destitute Asylum Seekers – has been preventing homelessness among people seeking asylum since 2011. Safe in Scotland is now part of the homelessness charity Simon Community and continues to provide safe, dignified accommodation and trauma-informed support for people experiencing asylum-related destitution in Glasgow.

Safe in Scotland (SIS) currently provide 24/7 accommodation 365 nights a year for up to 17 individuals at a time. Guests have access to dignified private accommodation and are given time, space and support to explore their options and regularise their immigration status together with access to other services to help improve their wellbeing.

Collaborative Working

SIS are now also one the delivery partners in [Fair Way Scotland](#); a partnership between refugee and homelessness charities, including the Scottish Refugee Council, Refugee Survival Trust, Simon Community and Turning Point, who are working together to provide information, advice, support and accommodation for people left destitute with NRPF. Fair Way Scotland grew out of the Everyone Home Collective, which itself grew out of discussions that took place during the Covid-19 pandemic about keeping people with NRPF safe and supported.

Partnership with Housing Associations

SIS have access to a decommissioned former supported living hostel that was no longer deemed appropriate for its original use. The former hostel is situated above a row shops in Glasgow which has been provided since June 2019 by Queens Cross Housing Association (QCHA) on a £1 per annum peppercorn rent. The facility is made up of 17 bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms and access to communal facilities, and in some cases their own kitchenette.

How the partnership came about

On joining the then Glasgow Night Shelter, the new Director had a clear vision, supported by the board, to find a more dignified and holistic alternative to the mattress-on-the-floor dormitory style overnight accommodation. While this had been the norm for the preceding ten years for anyone seeking asylum facing homelessness and destitution in Glasgow, and with the best of intentions, research clearly showed that night shelters were not appropriate accommodation for anyone.

Between 2017 and 2019, intentional networking took place, including a meeting with the Glasgow and West of Scotland Housing Forum of Housing Association. This led to conversations with senior management at QCHA who already had an interest in refugee issues and were providing several flats to the Refugee Survival Trust, and other Housing Associations with an interest in this work.

QCHA offered the 17-bed former hostel subject to SIS making a successful business case and receiving the approval of the Housing Association's Community Board, which has 50% tenant representation. Once approval was reached in 2020, QCHA agreed to undertake a number of upgrades, mainly to meet fire safety requirements and an application for an HMO.

The Lease

An initial 1-year lease was agreed which has since been renewed annually. This is a standard rental lease where the Housing Association looks after the structural elements of the property, the installation and maintenance of fire alarms, dealing with leaks, building security and the heating and hot water system and internal wear and tear, while SIS generally maintains the interior of the property but not damage that goes beyond wear and tear.

Project Management and Funding

The SIS Director has both fundraising experience and experience of developing and delivering capital projects, which meant that the project was able to be prepared during the Covid-19 pandemic and has generally made for a smoother working partnership with QCHA.

HMO regulations require 24/7 staff cover, by two people. The high cost of sustaining this is the biggest fundraising challenge to keep the project going in this location.

Other work with housing associations

The [Scottish Federation of Housing Associations](#) (the membership body for, and collective voice of, Housing Associations and co-operatives in Scotland) is a strategic partner in Fair Way Scotland and has raised awareness amongst its members of Fair Way's need to access Housing Association stock. Stock availability is, however, constrained by the requirement in Scotland that 90% of housing is allocated to general homelessness provision. That said, to date [Mary Hill Housing Association](#) have committed to lease up to ten properties to accommodation providers within the Fair Way partnership at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates.

Key Insights and Observations

- Having a project lead with clear strategic vision and transferable project management and fund-raising skills has been a key factor in the effective implementation and success of Safe in Scotland to date.
- Linked to the above point, intentional networking and communication of strategic vision led to the release of a property.
- Covid-19 and the focus of statutory bodies in finding workable solutions for people with NRPF, coupled with Covid-19 funding streams, helped get Safe in Scotland's hostel open and operational.
- The HMO and the fire risk assessment requiring 24/7 staffing is making the project very expensive to run and threatens its long-term viability.
- QCHA have been very generous in their support, provided it does not cost them more than it would if the property was left empty.
- The high demand for social housing in Glasgow is cited as a reason why more housing associations have found it difficult to offer stock.

Case Study 11: The Gap Newport – Newport Wales

<https://thegap.wales/>

The Gap Wales is a charity committed to serving the people of Newport, South Wales, and the surrounding areas. Their mission is to find opportunities to ‘fill the gap’ where existing services and charities are not able to meet the needs of members of their community.

Newport is currently home to about 450 people seeking asylum and a larger number of refugees. The Sanctuary is a project of The Gap and supports people from refugee and asylum seeker communities by building friendships, restoring a sense of belonging and community, and providing emotional and practical support such as housing.

One of the challenges facing newly granted refugees in Newport is accessing both social and private rented housing, which has been made worse through the removal of the Severn Bridge toll, which has enabled Newport to be an affordable commuter town for people working in Bristol. Newport has grown by 10% since the last census, double the growth of Cardiff, its nearby big city neighbour.

Background and local strategic vision

The Gap had been engaging with [Tai Pawb](#) (the Welsh charity promoting equity and social justice in housing) and the work of the Welsh Refugee Coalition that led to the Welsh Government launching its National Sanctuary plan in 2019 and commissioning two reports: the first produced by Tai Pawb, looking at improving [Housing for Refugees](#) living in Wales; and the second looking at [accommodation provision for people seeking asylum](#) with NRPF. Both these reports included examples of housing schemes developed by NACCOM members in England to address homelessness amongst newly granted refugees and people seeking asylum left with NRPF.

In February 2020, The Gap’s Project Manager attended the Ending Migrant Homelessness Conference organised by Crisis, NACCOM and Homes for Cathy group of housing associations, which brought together housing associations, charities and other accommodation providers to share ideas and explore solutions for expanding accommodation provision, specifically for people experiencing homelessness and destitution as a result of their immigration status. The conference served its purpose and gave The Gap confidence that, in their words, “If they can do it, why can’t we!”

Getting to know one another

The Gap's evolving relationship with Housing Associations in Newport had three strands:

- Firstly, in 2020 Tai Pawb began conversations with housing associations about their [Deeds Not Words campaign](#), which aims to tackle, amongst other things, racial injustice and inequalities in housing across Wales. These conversations led to a meeting between The Gap, two local housing associations ([Pobl](#) and [Newport City Homes](#)) and a member of NACCOM's Network Development Team who was able to provide an overview of a number of the successful partnerships between Housing Associations and refugee charities in England.
- Secondly, other formal and informal meetings took place, including a chance meeting between a Pobl manager and a senior staff member from The Gap who recognised each other's lanyards while walking in town.
- Thirdly, The Gap began to raise its profile with local housing associations and the city council through its intentional actions to support the local community, which included environmental improvements in one of the poorest wards in the UK.

The offer from Pobl and the project outline

Pobl identified a three-bedroom flat that was already set up for use as supported accommodation in the difficult-to-let inner city ward where The Gap had been working and which was also popular with people from a BAME background.

The property was empty and time and was an oddity in their housing stock. Pobl recognised that an offer to The Gap would both fit with its charitable objectives and directly contribute to reducing refugee homelessness. The property was leased to The Gap to allow it to begin a supported housing scheme for newly granted refugees.

While the flat is managed by The Gap, Pobl undertake all internal and external repairs and maintenance, allowing The Gap's staff to focus on the provision of support.

Pobl shared its existing supported housing expertise to help The Gap set up the right operational policies and procedures, and guided them through the application process with Newport City Council. A key aspect of this was satisfying the council of the vulnerable nature of newly granted refugees and making the argument that they are in need of supported housing.

The project aims to provide around six months of intensive short-term supported living with eventual planned move on to a secure tenancy either with Pobl, another housing association or in private rented accommodation.

The Gap provide all wraparound support, including benefits, ESOL, employability and move on.

The Gap work with a local letting agent to help clients move on into secure private rented accommodation.

The Gap now have access to a second three-bed property from Pobl, allowing them to provide three supported beds and three rooms for refugees who need less support and may be working.

The vision is to build up the provision organically to 12-15 beds and to be able to cross subsidise some provision for people seeking asylum left destitute with NRPF whilst they are supported to regularise their status.

Other things that Pobl did

Pobl also had a number of one-bedroom flats in the same street and, recognising that at the time the street had a 50% void rate and a history of drug dealing and antisocial behaviour, Pobl also put in place a local letting policy to achieve greater control on who could be housed in the street. This approach transformed a street and has led to 100% occupancy, with at least 78 % of the properties let to those in priority housing need, including a lot of single male refugees who were supported by the Gap.

The Gap were also eager that their properties are therapeutic, relaxed and safe spaces, where new refugees can recover, process their experiences and plan for the next part of their life.

Other things The Gap did

Recognising the importance of community cohesion in bringing about change in a local area, The Gap intentionally engaged refugees in implementing practical improvements, including the clearing and replanting of raised beds with vegetables, herbs and flowers, as well as facilitating the construction of a mural. These initiatives reclaimed the street, leading to a significant reduction in crime and antisocial behaviour to almost zero, as well as zero voids.

The offer from Newport City Homes

Newport City Homes were not able to offer housing stock but did make a shop available on a peppercorn rent for 12 months with the possibility of negotiating an extension.

Welsh Government had funded the conversion of offices into accommodation but had insisted on shops being retained beneath.

The shop is being used to develop an income generating social enterprise through the provision of bicycle repairs and secure bicycle storage.

Key Insights and Observations

- The ongoing relationship and technical support from NACCOM's Network Development Team was seen as invaluable in gaining deeper understanding and insight into the development and running of a shared accommodation supported housing project.
- Attending the Crisis/Homes for Cathy Ending Migrant Destitution Conference helped shape the vision and coupled with early support from Tai Pawb, gave The Gap confidence to start conversations with local Housing Associations.
- The Gap's community cohesion work helped in building a relationship with the prospective housing association partner.
- The Housing Association saw a win-win in making a difficult-to-let property available in an area where The Gap had presence and influence.
- Newport Council's recognition of newly granted refugees as 'priority need' helped in The Gap's application to have their accommodation treated as Exempt Rent Supported Accommodation.

Thank you for reading.
Please get in touch via the contact details below
if you want to find out more about our work.
Please note hard copies are available via the NACCOM office (details below).

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