

**EMBARGOED UNTIL: THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER
2024, 00.01AM**



Migrant and refugee destitution and homelessness on the rise in the UK, says NACCOM

Hostile government asylum and immigration policies, and a lack of adequate and accessible statutory provision, are leaving thousands of refugees and migrants without somewhere safe and stable to live, with voluntary organisations struggling to plug the gap, says NACCOM, the UK-wide frontline network of refugee and migrant organisations.

New research launched by the national charity lays bare the shocking rise of destitution and homelessness experienced by people in the asylum and wider immigration system during the 2023-24 period. Based on unique data collected from NACCOM's network of 140 frontline organisations* and charities that provide accommodation and support, the briefing paints a bleak picture of the trauma, hardship and injustice endured by people who are left with nowhere to live, and in many cases no means to support themselves, because of their immigration status.

This year's data also reveals a particularly sharp increase in homelessness amongst new refugees, with record numbers seeking emergency homelessness assistance from charities directly after being granted refugee protection.

Key findings and insights from the briefing, *'Understanding destitution and homelessness in the asylum and immigration system'*, include;

Migrant and refugee destitution and homelessness are rising at an alarming rate, due to hostile asylum and immigration policies

- 2023-2024 was the first year on record that the NACCOM network has accommodated over 4,000 people in one year (4,146 in total) – a concerning milestone.
- The network provided accommodation, ranging from hosting and lodging placements to housing schemes and emergency accommodation including night shelters, for 11% more people than last year, and 82% more than in 2021/22.
- 4,212 people were given financial support by members. This is 10% more than in 2022-23. At least 1,214 people received both financial support and accommodation.

There is an ongoing refugee homelessness emergency

- More refugees are being unjustly forced to turn to the voluntary sector to provide accommodation when they have been granted refugee protection by the state and are legally entitled to statutory support.
- In 2023-24, NACCOM's members accommodated 1,941 refugee adults experiencing homelessness, a 99% increase on last year, and the largest cohort of refugees the NACCOM network has ever accommodated.
- Because of the previous Government's aim to clear the asylum backlog before the end of 2023, as well as short-term changes to the move-on process during August 2023, there has been a major increase in new refugees being evicted from asylum accommodation at speed, without enough time to access alternative accommodation and support.

Charities are increasingly providing a vital safety net and access to justice when statutory support fails

- For the first time, NACCOM members collectively provided over half a million nights of accommodation in 2023-24 (501,371 nights in total).
- Meanwhile, accommodation providers within the network provided asylum and immigration legal advice to 2,224 people, to enable them to access justice and move forward with their claim.
- This shows the extent to which a punitive, failing asylum system and barriers to accessing legal advice, coupled with a chronic lack of social and affordable housing and a general increase in homelessness and rough sleeping, is putting extreme pressure on the voluntary sector as well as local authorities. Charities including NACCOM members are increasingly having to provide a vital safety net for people who fall through the gaps in the asylum and immigration system, stepping in when statutory support fails or is withdrawn.

But the voluntary sector is at breaking point

- NACCOM's network accommodated 850 people sleeping rough at the point of accessing members' services – a huge 125% increase on last year's figure.
- Local capacity often can't meet soaring demand, resulting in several NACCOM members describing having to distribute rough sleeping packs, including tents and sleeping bags, for the first time for refugee rough sleepers.
- This year, members had to turn away more people than ever. In 2023-24 they were unable to accommodate 4,151 people due to lack of capacity – a staggering increase of 83%. This figure is likely to be a severe underestimation of the true scale of unmet need.

Recommendations from the briefing:

- Extend the 28-day move-on period from asylum accommodation to 56 days
- Introduce a duty to refer on the Home Office
- Ensure access to justice by improving the legal aid system
- Introduce a statutory process to help people understand the asylum system
- Lift the ban on the right to work
- End hostile environment policies including NRPF
- Repeal the Illegal Migration Act

Quotes

Bridget Young, Director, NACCOM;

“Our research shows that thousands of people each year are needlessly pushed into destitution and homelessness as they go through the asylum and immigration system. No one should have to experience trauma, hardship and injustice simply because of their immigration status, but this is the reality for so many.”

“Every member of our communities should be able to thrive, not just survive, but that’s impossible when you don’t have a safe or stable home, or enough to eat. Urgent change is needed to ensure that the asylum and immigration system doesn’t keep driving up levels of destitution and homelessness, and fuelling injustice in refugee and migrant communities.”

Leon Elliott, Policy and Research Coordinator, NACCOM;

“2023-24 was an incredibly challenging year for NACCOM members, but our survey is a record of the invaluable work they deliver in supporting people to find long-term routes out of destitution and homelessness. Whilst we know it is just the tip of the iceberg, our data underscores the reality of destitution faced by many refugees and migrants today, and the need for immediate action to end homelessness for all.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

*The 2023/2024 Annual Survey is the 11th iteration. Both NACCOM’s Full Members (that provide accommodation) and Associate Members (that provide mainly support services) were invited to participate, capturing data from their service provision across a 12-month period (for most members this was April 2023 to March 2024). 96 members responded this year.

For more information or interview requests, please contact hannah[@naccom.org.uk](mailto:hannah@naccom.org.uk)

About NACCOM

NACCOM is a national network of over 140 frontline organisations and charities across the UK, working together to end destitution amongst people seeking asylum, refugees and other migrants who aren't able to access public funds because of their immigration status. For more information, visit

www.naccom.org.uk.