

Changing Futures - Learning Report – Barriers for people with no recourse to public funds

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The immigration system creates destitution	People with no recourse to public funds include asylum seekers (pending a decision or failed); people under deportation orders; and certain categories of people with leave to remain. Reports by Government and The NRPF Network state there has also been an increase of EU citizens with no recourse to public funds in the UK. This cohort are unable to access benefits or mainstream support services such as NHS secondary care and have limited or no legal right to housing. Research by Warwick University and Assist Sheffield highlight that the majority of those with no recourse to public funds are at risk of or living in destitution, a situation driven and exacerbated by extended waiting times for those trying to attain legal status.
System barriers and cultural issues create gaps for vulnerable adults to fall through, driving further disadvantage	Research on Memory, Language and Silence: Barriers to Refuge Within the British Asylum System (2018) , reports from Migration Yorkshire , Community Care and Refugee Action highlight how language and other barriers, combined with complex legal processes they may not understand and a shortage of legal support, can increase the chances of individuals ‘falling through the cracks’ of the immigration system as they fail to meet its requirements. Research conducted by Strathclyde University with asylum seekers and refugees experiencing stigma and discrimination , Equality Human Rights and Migration Observatory highlights how behaviours linked to cultural identity can lead to stigmatisation, increasing the risk of discrimination and misunderstanding by or exclusion from the system. The British Red Cross reported how people seeking asylum in the UK are at risk of exploitation and have been exploited in the UK. When combined with experiences of Multiple Disadvantage, individuals can have increased social isolation and have difficulty accessing services.
Financial insecurity whilst their status is processed drives illegal behaviour	This cohort cannot claim benefits and, unless they have the right to work, have no stable income. The application process for limited financial provision under the Immigration and Asylum Act is complex and highly demanding without specialist support. Refugee Action and Oxfam wrote how system driven poverty and frustration increases the risk of illegal working, prostitution and criminal behaviour, which can result in a cycle of repeated contacts with the criminal justice system.
Provision of housing is limited and patchy and the system can drive homelessness	Although Local Authorities have no statutory duty to provide accommodation, they may use discretionary funding, which creates a risk of inconsistent responses. Charities may offer accommodation and small allowances; however, financial aid is limited. Refugee Council reported that thousands of new refugee’s face homelessness and destitution after being granted refugee status and given 7 days’ notice to leave accommodation, as although they have theoretical access to public funds, they are often evicted without documentation enabling them to access services.
Health is a key area of unmet need that creates crisis responses	People with no recourse can access a GP without payment, but not most specialist care (though this varies by type of non-status). Because of this, serious or chronic physical and mental health conditions often go untreated and are exacerbated by poverty, bureaucratic delay, and a sense of disempowerment, which compound pre-existing trauma. Financial support from Adult Social Care is not classed as public funds and while some people with no recourse meet funding criteria under the Care Act 2014 (if they cannot look after themselves, have been discharged from mental hospital, or are parents), most do not.
Support is inconsistent – specialist provision with legal aid is needed	Service provision for this cohort is inconsistent nationally and tends to exist in larger cities, where homelessness charities can be accessed alongside services specifically for migrants. Organisations such as The NRPF Network and Shelter advise that asylum seekers, failed asylum seekers and those on immigration bail who apply for funds and accommodation can be sent by the Home Office to regions throughout the UK on a 'no choice' basis and Refugee Action’s report on Hostile Accommodation there can be

overcrowding, lack of privacy and minimal practical and legal support beyond basic accommodation. Legal aid is theoretically available; however, experiences of supporting Changing Futures clients shows that many immigration lawyers work at capacity with limited provision for new cases.

Better understanding is needed of the system and pathways

The [NRPF Network](#) assists organisations supporting people with no recourse and has a database (NRPF Connect) which local authorities contribute to. Despite this, there is limited understanding of the complex categories of people with no recourse, pathways to status, or of support available both during the process and afterwards among service providers.

Better coordination among local government and third-sector organisations would improve the current levels of destitution and homelessness among people with no recourse.