



# Tackling Homelessness and Destitution amongst Migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds

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*A Report on the Extent and Nature of Accommodation provided by NACCOM Member Organisations.*

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## *Context for the Research*

NACCOM (The No Accommodation Network)<sup>1</sup> was set up in 2006 in response to increasing destitution and homelessness amongst asylum seekers and other migrants in cities across the UK. These are mainly people whose asylum claims have been refused, and who have not been returned to their country of origin. With no recourse to public funds, and fearing persecution and hardship if they were to return, they are left in a desperate situation, relying on the help of charities and friends, sofa-surfing and often becoming street homeless.

In 2010 the British Red Cross published a report entitled *Not Gone, but Forgotten*. The results of a survey they had undertaken with destitute service users showed that six out of ten respondents had been destitute for more than a year, and some for more than five years. 28% reported that they had, at some stage, been street homeless.

Our client group has no recourse to public funds, so there is almost no statutory funding available for those charities and voluntary organisations wishing to help them. Since refused asylum seekers do not qualify for Housing Benefit, NACCOM members cannot operate in the same way as most social housing projects. We have to devise new and innovative ways of providing accommodation.

Since our inception NACCOM has operated as a collaborative network, relying on the goodwill and expertise of member groups. By sharing resources and best practice, we have grown from 3 groups in 2005 to 29 projects connected to NACCOM running in 22 towns and cities across the UK. Regional focus meetings are held 4-5 times a year, as well as steering group meetings and an annual conference. In 2013 a grant from the Homelessness Transition Fund has enabled the co-ordinator, Dave Smith, to devote one day a week to supporting groups and organising meetings.

***“By sharing resources and best practice, we have grown from three groups in 2005 to 29 projects connected to NACCOM running in 22 towns and cities across the UK.”***

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<sup>1</sup> [www.naccomm.org.uk](http://www.naccomm.org.uk)

## *Research: Aim and Methodology*

The purpose of this research is to bring to public attention the work of the various accommodation projects being used for destitute asylum seekers and refugees, and quantify the support offered by NACCOM groups.

This will enable us to measure our impact and future growth. Member organisations will benefit from the data, and it will enhance our ability to apply for future funding and lobby local authorities and government on important issues around destitution. Above all it will shine a light on the problem of destitution itself, and the great need for expansion of current provision.

The research was carried out in the form of surveys sent out in April 2013 to all organisations in the UK involved with NACCOM who work with asylum seekers, refugees, and/or migrants. The questions used can be found in the appendix to this report.

The survey answers were then collated using Microsoft Excel, and the data written up into a formal report. In total 21 of the 29 organisations responded, but not all of these were able to respond fully to the survey questions due to workload or capacity.. This meant, for example, that we could not quantify the ratio of male / female clients.

It was also difficult to draw direct comparisons between organisations, as their schemes are very diverse, and hard to categorise. Nevertheless, we believe the results are a good reflection of the work carried out by NACCOM members.

We are indebted to the Homelessness Transition Fund for funding this mapping exercise.

***“Above all it will shine a light on the problem of destitution itself, and the great need for expansion of current provision.”***

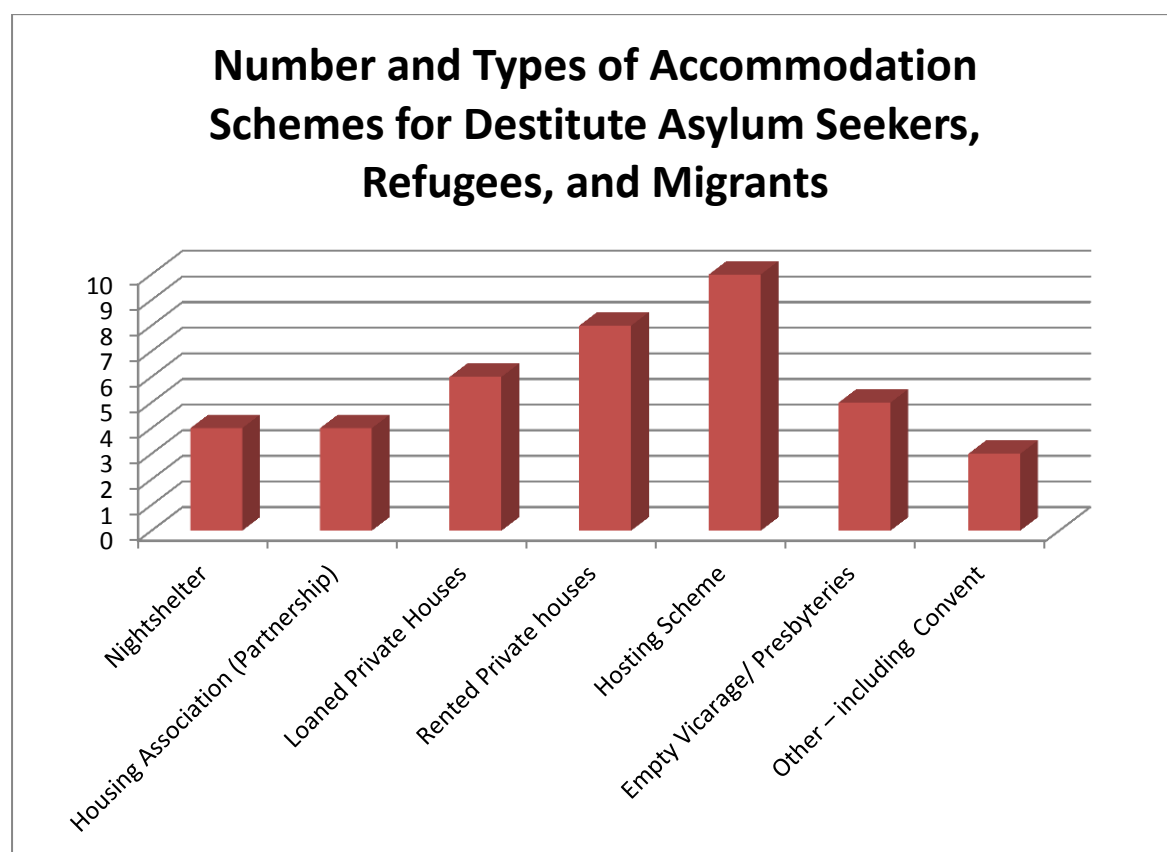
# ACCOMMODATION

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## *Operating Models*

There are several different types of housing model operated by the member organisations, and a number of variations of those models across the groups, so categorization is not straightforward. Several of the member groups use more than one type of scheme, depending on what is most readily available in their location. In total the 21 respondents operated 33 schemes.

As shown in the chart below, hosting schemes (volunteer host families or individuals who offer a spare room in their house) are the most common form of accommodation. They also tend to be the most easily managed and cost effective.



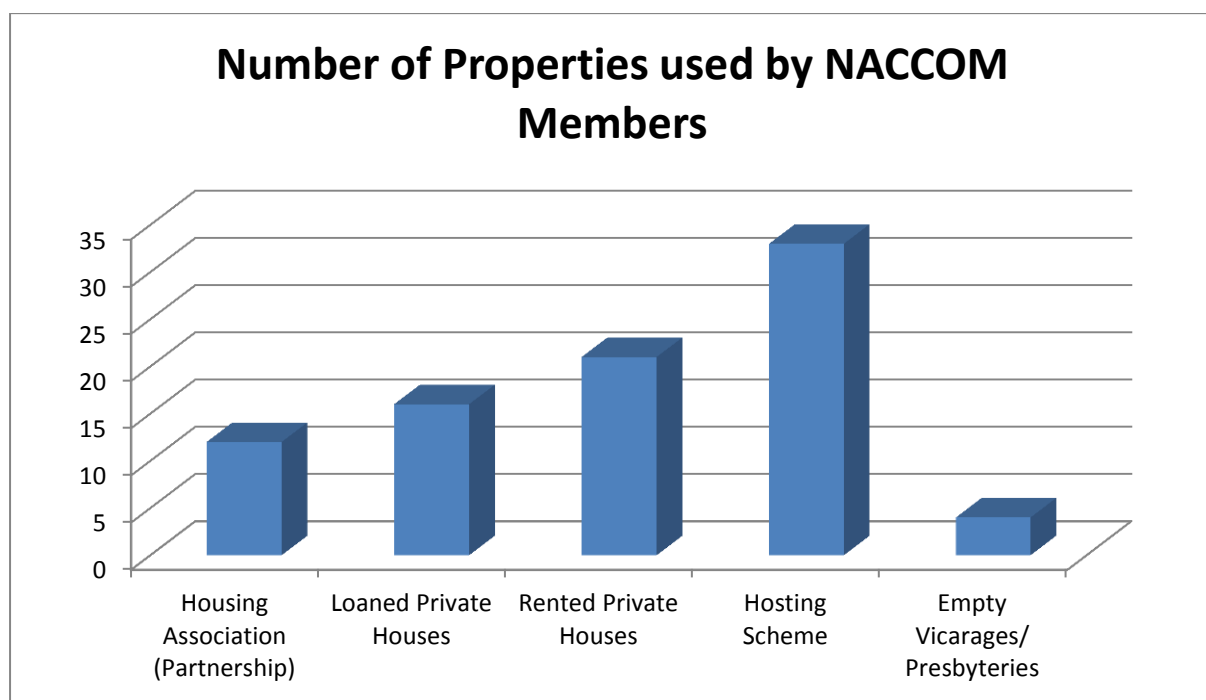
It should also be noted that some destitute migrants and asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds are able to access generic night shelters that do not rely on Housing Benefit, although these are relatively small in number, and fall outside of the NACCOM network.

# ACCOMMODATION

## Property Portfolio

The number of properties being used at the time of the survey is shown below. Properties will of course vary in size and number of people accommodated. Not all groups indicated the number of properties they were using, so the results are slightly below the true figure.

Most of those accommodated in the private rented sector are refugees, since they are eligible for work and benefits. Some schemes, such as Open Door North East, use the financial contributions of refugees to fund rooms for destitute asylum seekers within the rented houses.



### ***FAWAZ\****

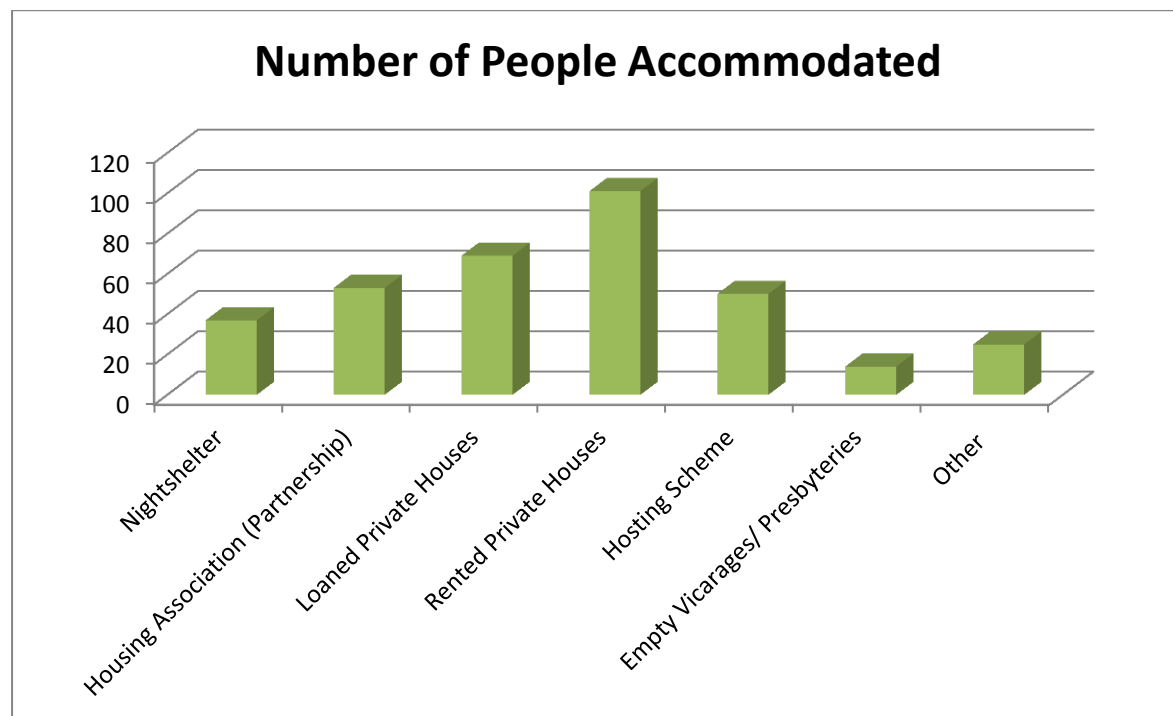
*'Fawaz', fled Syria in 2009, leaving behind his family and all his possessions. On arrival in the UK he claimed asylum but, without sufficient hard evidence of the persecution he had suffered, the Home Office did not believe his story and turned down his claim for asylum, with no right of appeal. He was kicked out of his supported housing and became destitute. He was referred to Beacon's Hosting Project in Bradford. With a sustained period of stability and support he was able to mount a fresh asylum claim and, after 19 months and several more refusals, he was granted refugee status in April 2012. He has recently opened his own barber's shop!*

\*Pseudonym used

# ACCOMMODATION

## Bed-spaces

The most crucial statistic of all is the number of people being accommodated. For each bed-space made available there is one less person in danger of homelessness, destitution and exploitation.



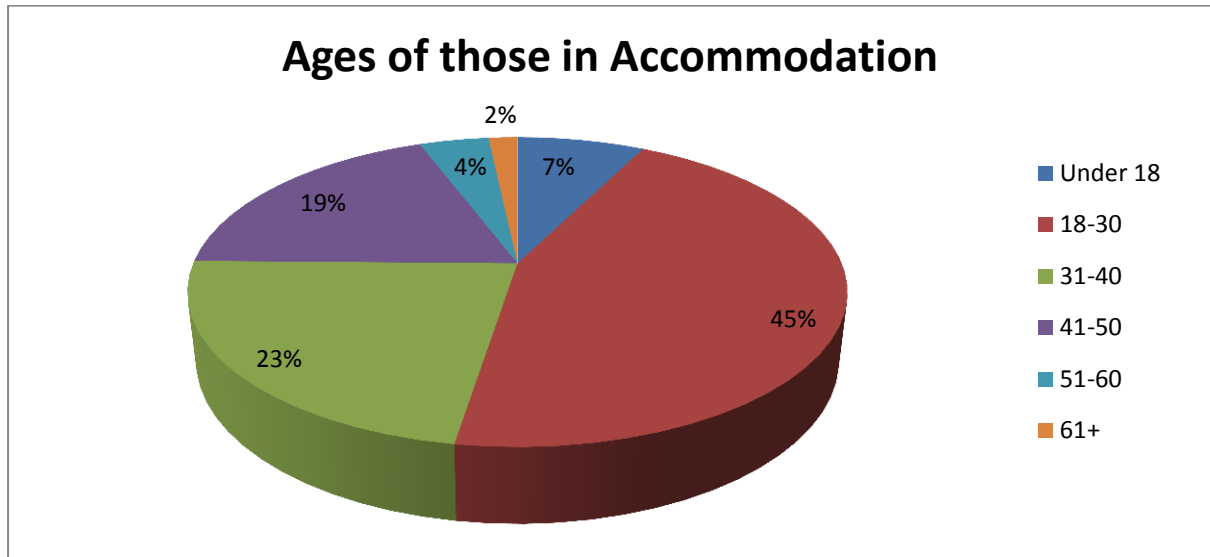
**The total number of people accommodated across the various organisations is 374, with rented private houses accommodating the highest number of clients.**

The night shelter tally of 37 was a snapshot counted on one specific night, and will be smaller in the summer months when some shelters close. Over the course of a year the number spending one or more night in a night shelter would exceed 500.

***HZ, from Lebanon, had been detained for over two years before being released on bail. He then spent three months sleeping at the Coventry Peace House night-shelter. He was referred to the Hope Destitution Fund and Hope Housing by Hope partner ASIRT. The Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre then applied for Home-Office support and accommodation on the basis of new asylum representations submitted by HZ. This application was refused, but an appeal against the refusal was successful, and HZ is now in Home-Office accommodation in Birmingham***

# AGE

## The Age Demographic



The majority of people in accommodation are between the ages of 18-30 with the second highest being those between the ages of 31-40. Those listed as under 18 are mainly children with their mothers, though some may be age-disputed minors.

### **SUZANNE**

*Susanne, from Nigeria: arrived in the UK when she was 12 with her father. She was subject to physical abuse and made to do menial tasks by her Aunt with whom she stayed. She ran away, and was placed in foster care for three months, but then returned to her aunt by Social Services*

*Around that time she realised that her father had never applied for leave to remain, so her legal status was under dispute. Susanne eventually escaped from her Auntie's again, but Social Services no longer had legal responsibility to care for her, as she had passed 18.*

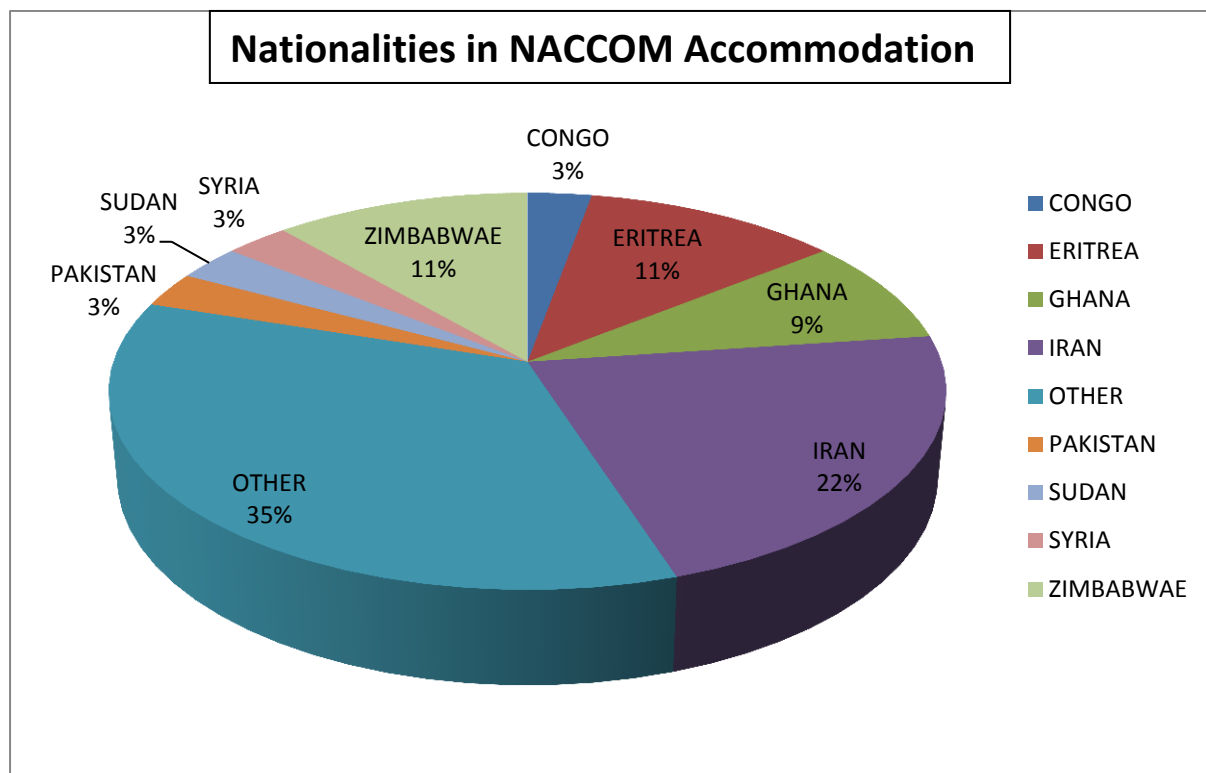
*She lived from friends to friends for a while until one mother contacted Praxis for help. Praxis organised a hosting placement in her area so that she could continue to study.*

*She has so far received 6-weeks' worth of hardship grant, which will continue until she is regularised. By the time her case has been processed by the Home Office this may need as much as £1,200 from the hardship fund.*



# NATIONALITY

These are the top 8 nationalities being accommodated currently across the various organisations. With the exception of Ghana they are a good reflection of the countries from which most asylum seekers come to the UK.



“Other” consists of the following 38 countries which each had a percentage below 3%: Bangladesh, Latvia, Somalia, Tanzania, Slovakia, Poland, Libya, China, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Israel, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Kuwait, Uganda, Philippines, Norway, Burundi, Ivory Coast, India, Malaysia, UAE, Guinea, Gambia, Malawi, Mongolia, Turkey, Algeria, Romania, Russia, Palestine, Kenya, Cameroon, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Yemen, and Lebanon.

## **CONSTANCE**

*Constance fled to The UK in 2002. Initially refused asylum, she was left homeless, depending on her friends and £10 per week. Her asylum situation caused stress and migraines, and she “... was crying all the time.”*

*Action Housing provided Constance with a safe place to live, bus vouchers and support. She got involved in community projects and classes. After ten years, Constance was granted leave to remain. Action Letting provided her with temporary affordable accommodation and dedicated casework support, which led to a successful claim for council housing.*

*Constance now has hope and independence. She continues to enjoy her classes and developing her hobbies, including sewing clothes and making jackets. She is currently working towards an NVQ Level 2 Care Certificate.*

# ACCESSING ACCOMMODATION

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## *Criteria for Deciding who to Accommodate*

Every member group receives far more referrals than there are spaces in their accommodation. It is therefore vital to have specific criteria for referrals. Some agencies work with particular groups like women or women and children<sup>2</sup>. There are a large number of different criteria used, but recurring themes were –

- **Vulnerability:** 70% of respondents rated this extremely important.<sup>3</sup>
- **Health:** 40% thought this was extremely important when assessing applications.
- One criterion that featured in a number of replies was the **strength of the client's asylum case:** some agencies would only take those with a reasonable chance of obtaining leave to remain within a specified period.<sup>4</sup>
- The other criterion mentioned several times was **compatibility with other residents** . It was felt that this reduced the likelihood of problems arising in shared houses.<sup>5</sup>

## *Referrals*

Although some projects will accept self-referrals, most will use the major refugee agencies such as Refugee Council, Refugee Action and the British Red Cross. Referrals will also come from local refugee organisations, day centres, council homeless departments, local homeless agencies, hospitals, churches and other faith groups.

*A, a young man from Iraqi Kurdistan, moved into NAT accommodation in 2010 following a street homelessness. He was very disorientated, and over time we realised his needs were more complex than originally anticipated.*

*A had real problems communicating with his housemates and was nervous around people. Despite a range of assessments and intensive support on personal hygiene and basic cooking, there was little improvement.*

*Then A said he wanted to go home. We liaised with Refugee Action and he was soon issued with papers and flown back to his family. The Choices worker also spoke to A after he returned and let NAT know that he was very happy to be back with this family.*

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<sup>2</sup> Fresh Start Leicester work entirely with vulnerable women: Hope Projects in Birmingham accommodate a variety of people, including vulnerable women with children. UK asylum legislation offers provision for children whose parents have been refused asylum, but not the parents themselves. Some council Social Service departments do all they can to keep the family together: others offer to take the children into care, leaving the parents destitute.

<sup>3</sup> Those deemed most vulnerable may have mental health problems, suffer from HIV or other serious illnesses, or be more prone to exploitation due to their sex or age.

<sup>4</sup> The main reason for this is to prevent blockages in the system. By accommodating those who are more likely to be granted leave to remain there is a quicker turnover, and waiting lists are shorter.

<sup>5</sup> Some clients with mental health problems cannot be easily accommodated, as their behaviour may cause stress to other residents. However, the threshold to qualify for community care is so high that they are rarely accepted into statutory accommodation, leaving them destitute and often street homeless.

# FINANCE AND STAFFING

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The way that projects are staffed and financed varied greatly. Some projects such as Refugee Housing Project have 8 full time staff members and fewer volunteers whereas other projects such as Glasgow Night shelter rely 100% on volunteers.

The total number of full time equivalent staff members in all the projects was **34.8** and the estimated number of volunteers across all projects is **621**.

Similarly some projects function with almost no income whilst the project with largest budget for 2011/2012 was The Boaz Trust with £280,000.

Methods of financing also varied greatly, for example, Positive Action in Housing obtained 100% of its finances through individual donations, whereas BEACON Hosting Project was financed 75% by charitable trusts and 25% by individual donations.

There were some problems quantifying volunteers, particularly as some respondents had not made it clear whether the numbers they gave related solely to their accommodation projects or the organisation in general, which may well be involved in a number of non-accommodation schemes like ESOL classes or mentoring schemes.

***“I came from my country to the UK to get help and protection from the government. But when I told them my story, they did not believe me. By that time I was very ill and I was in a very bad condition. They helped me for a while, after that they just kicked me out and I didn’t know where to go, what to do.***

***After that I met the Boaz Trust. They are not only helping me by giving me food and shelter, but they help me with morale and with a lot of things. Before I believed that in England the government is helping people and doing things, but I found the opposite. Without the Boaz Trust I would have died. I thank Boaz so much. Thank you for everything.”***

**Gebil, from Eritrea, now has a fresh asylum claim and is awaiting a Home Office decision on his case.**

## *Conclusion and Recommendations*

The work of NACCOM provides essential accommodation for some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in the UK.

Although member groups are often relatively small and under great financial pressure, the network continues to grow each year, with more projects providing more bed-spaces through innovative schemes.

By sharing good practice, information and expertise, member groups support each other and work together towards a common goal – of ending destitution amongst asylum seekers and refugees in the UK.

Although the growth of the network has been significant, from three projects accommodating around 40 people in 2006 to 29 projects accommodating 349 in 2013, the size of the problem is far beyond the capacity of the member groups to meet the great need. Even if the provision was to double every year, it would take decades to accommodate every destitute asylum seeker in the UK.

### **Therefore we call upon**

- Those who have a spare room in their house to consider making it available for a destitute asylum seeker.
- Private landlords to consider making some space available in their accommodation available either free of charge or at a reduced rate.
- Councils to assist NACCOM organisations in any way they are able, for example remitting council tax on properties housing the destitute.
- Faith groups and businesses to make empty properties available on rent-free leases to NACCOM organisations.
- Housing Associations to work with NACCOM to provide solutions, whether that is the use of empty properties in regeneration areas, resource sharing or partnership schemes.
- Government to provide end-to-end accommodation for asylum seekers until they are either granted leave to remain or leave the country. *This is the only **permanent solution** to the problem.*

In the meantime NACCOM members will continue to do all they can to assist their client groups. To this end we will undertake to monitor progress on an annual basis.

***“I look back at the time I spent being hosted by BEACON and am inspired to be a host one day when I have a place of my own. This was a life changing experience for me because I was offered help when I really needed it the most by a most selfless and loving individual.”***

**S.S (Zimbabwe). Jan 2011 (now granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK and completed barrister training!)**

## APPENDIX 1

### *List of NACCOM Projects<sup>6</sup>*

**Key:** N=Night Shelter: RPH=Rented Private Housing: LPH=Loaned Private Housing: MH = Mixed (Refugee & Destitute) Housing: Hs= Hosting: EV = Empty Vicarage / Presbytery: F=Financial support towards housing: O = Other

NR = No response to survey / question    R = Refugees    D = Destitute Asylum Seekers

<i>Project</i>	<i>Schemes</i>	<i>Numbers Accommodated</i>
<i>Scotland</i>		
Refugee Survival Trust, Edinburgh	F	NR
Glasgow Destitution Network	N, Hs	11D
Positive Action in Housing	Hs	15D
<i>Wales</i>		
Home4U, Cardiff	LPH, EV	8D
SHARE Tawe, Swansea	Hs	4D
<i>North West</i>		
Asylum Link Merseyside, Liverpool	RPH, Hs, EV	21D
The Boaz Trust, Manchester	N, LPH, RPH, Hs, EV	68 (60D/8R)
The ARC Project, Blackburn	NR	NR
<i>North East</i>		
Action Foundation, Newcastle	LPH, RPH	30 D/R
Open Door North East, Teesside	N, LPH, RPH, MH, Hs	69 D/R
<i>Yorkshire &amp; Humberside</i>		
Abigail Housing, Bradford & Leeds	NR	NR
BEACON Hosting Project, Bradford	Hs	7D
St.Augustine's Centre, Halifax	NR	NR
DASH Huddersfield	Hs	4D
Open Doors Project, Kingston-upon-Hull	O	NR
LASSN Grace Hosting Project, Leeds	Hs	NR
<i>West Midlands</i>		
Hope Projects, Birmingham	HA	30D
BIRCH Network, Birmingham	Hs	8D
Coventry Refugee Centre	HA, RPH	34R
Coventry Peace House	N	12D
<i>East Midlands</i>		

<sup>6</sup> As of April 2013, when the survey was undertaken. For full details of current projects, visit the NACCOM website at [www.naccomm.org.uk](http://www.naccomm.org.uk) and select the drop-down *Project* tab

<i>Project</i>	<i>Schemes</i>	<i>Numbers Accommodated</i>
Fresh Start, Leicester	NR	NR
Leicester Respite Hosting Scheme	NR	NR
Nottingham Arimathea Trust	HA, RPH, EV, O	13 D/R
Host Nottingham	NR	NR
<i>London &amp; South East</i>		
London Hosting Network	NR	NR
Spare Room for Forced Migrant, London	Hs	5D
Just Homes, Newham	RPH, LPH	14
Ipswich Town of Sanctuary Hosting Project	NR	NR
Brighton Voices in Exile	NR	NR
CAST, Southend	NR	NR
<i>South and South West</i>		
Bristol Hospitality Network	LPH, Hs	21D
Southampton & Winchester Visitors' Group	F	15D

## APPENDIX 2

### Survey Questions

Name of Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Project leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Office Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person who completed questionnaire (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which type of housing model(s) do you offer? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

TYPE OF SCHEME	DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS	REFUGEES	MIGRANTS
Nightshelter			
Housing Association (Partnership)			
Loaned Private Houses			
Rented Private houses			
Hosting Scheme			
Empty Vicarage/ Presbyteries			
Other - <i>please insert</i>			

2. How is the project financed? What was your income in 2012/13?

Total Income\* £\_\_\_\_\_ \*If your organisation has a wider remit, please do not include income that is not related to accommodation projects and those being accommodated.

Please give rough percentages for

Charitable Trusts	Individual Donations	Churches/other organisations	Fundraising events	Earned Income/ Social Enterprise	Other

Do you expect income for the next financial year to be lower  higher  or about the same

3. How many staff do you employ? (FT equivalents) \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many volunteers do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How much accommodation do you have for each of your housing models?

HOUSING MODEL	NUMBER of UNITS of ACCOMMODATION	NUMBER OF PEOPLE <i>Accommodated on average per night</i>
Nightshelter	<i>No of venues per week</i>	
Housing Association (Partnership)	<i>No of houses/flats/bedsits</i>	
Loaned Private Houses	<i>No of houses/flats/bedsits</i>	
Rented Private Houses	<i>No of houses/flats/bedsits</i>	
Hosting Scheme	<i>No of active hosts</i>	
Empty Vicarages/Presbyteries	<i>No of houses/flats/bedsits</i>	
Other insert		

6. Please describe your client profiles *at the time of filling in the form* :

How many people do you currently accommodate in each of these age categories?

\_\_\_\_\_18-30    \_\_\_\_\_31-40    \_\_\_\_\_41-50    \_\_\_\_\_51-60    \_\_\_\_\_61+

Please fill in and list the number of females and males for each nationality:

	NATIONALITY	MALE	FEMALE
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			

Number of children in accommodation (under the age of 18) \_\_\_\_\_

7. Which of the following criteria do you use for people who need accommodation? Please rate 0-5 where 0 is of no importance and 5 is extremely important.

Age	Gender	Children	Health	Strength of asylum Case	Nationality	Compliance with UKBA	Vulnerability	Other insert

8. How are the clients referred to you? Please give rough percentages.

Refugee Action / Council	L. A Housing / Homeless / Soc. Services.	Solicitors	Hospitals / GPs	voluntary Sector / RCOs	Churches / Other Religions	Self-referral	Other (state)



9. Please describe briefly your relationship with the local authority. How would you rate it on a scale of 1-5 (1=very poor, 2= poor, 3= okay, 4= good, 5= excellent \_\_\_\_\_)

10. Has the local authority (*tick all that apply*)

Given you any financial support?	Given you a council tax / other rebate?	Passed a motion condemning destitution?	Paid Housing Benefit direct to you?	Supported in another way? What?

11. Do you have any links with Housing Associations? Please rate the links from 1-5 (1=weak, 5= very strong)

Housing Association	Name of Main Contact	Rate (1-5)