

ACCOMMODATION IN LONDON
FOR ROUGH SLEEPERS
WITH NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS
AND THE POTENTIAL FOR
DEVELOPING A REFERRAL PATHWAY

July 2014



A Housing Justice Report to
the Greater London Authority

INTRODUCTION

There are a number of long term rough sleepers with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) living on the streets in London, some of whom have been there for many years. In the light of recent changes in the entitlements of EU nationals to welfare benefits in the UK, it can be considered that this group now includes EU nationals without access to benefits. However, this report is concerned exclusively with non EU nationals, for whom access to benefits is not conditional on their employment status, but intrinsic to their terms on which they are in the UK.

The GLA is working in partnership with the Home Office and outreach teams to seek resolution of the highest priority cases. Outreach teams use, for example, the Street Legal teams in West, Central and East London. For many, this would mean them being granted some type of leave to remain and the chance to build a life away from the streets. For others it could mean return to their home country, voluntarily where possible but in some cases by removal or deportation.

One barrier to resolving these cases and a key reason that so many remain on the streets is the lack of accommodation available to house people while the necessary casework is being undertaken and support provided. This often makes it difficult to sustain casework with the individuals in question. The GLA believes that church, faith-based and other community groups providing accommodation to people with NRPF could make a valuable contribution to this.

As a result, Housing Justice was commissioned by the GLA in autumn 2013 to map current accommodation provision for people with no recourse to public funds in London and to investigate the possibility of creating a framework for matching accommodation offers with referrals of street homeless clients with NRPF from outreach providers.

Specifically, this work was agreed to be undertaken in the following three stages:

1. Mapping and describing the range of accommodation options and support offered to people with NRPF by faith and community groups in London.
2. Testing the willingness of groups providing this type of accommodation to cooperate with GLA/outreach/Home Office partnership initiatives and detailing any barriers to cooperation.
3. Should some willingness be indicated in Stage 2, developing an appropriate and robust framework for matching accommodation offers with referrals and making recommendations about how this might be implemented.

This report sets out the findings and conclusions from Stages 1 and 2, and suggests next steps.

1. Context – How many people are there with NRPF in London?

The majority of people with NRPF live “below the radar”, without status and unable or unlikely to exercise rights including to accommodation or other statutory assistance. Most people in this situation house and support themselves and their families by working in the informal economy.

The administrative description NRPF encompasses the situations of many people in different categories, including these main groups:

- people whose claims for asylum have failed, including those for whom the claim has not been properly or fully assessed;
- trafficked and forced migrants;
- spouses of people with residency rights whose relationships have broken down;
- people who have entered the UK by clandestine means; and
- work, student and tourist visa overstayers.

For people unable to support themselves by working or other income, their accommodation and other needs are also generally speaking being met informally. This help comes firstly from within people’s own families, communities and/or church or faith networks.

While some research has been done to gauge the numbers of people in this situation, estimates vary considerably. For example a 2009 report from the London School of Economics for the GLA¹ suggested that there could be as many as 518,000 “irregular migrants” in London.

The following table of the number of asylum seekers has been provided by Praxis based on recent Home Office figures.

Category	No. of cases
New asylum claims	23,000
Asylum backlog	74,000
Live immigration cases	3,500
Immigration backlog	21,000
Migration Refusal Pool	174,057
TOTAL	298,057

¹ “Economic impact on London and the UK of an earned regularisation of irregular migrants in the UK” Interim Report from LSE London, by Ian Gordon, Kathleen Scanlon, Tony Travers and Christine Whitehead 16/02/09 <http://bit.ly/1INNFLq>

The Red Cross provide assistance to destitute asylum seekers, including food parcels and other basic help. Their “Not gone, but forgotten” report from 2010 includes the data that there are 10,000 destitute asylum seekers nationally, of which 28% report sleeping rough. It is likely that more than half of these clients are in London

CHAIN Data²

CHAIN records information on people who are seen sleeping rough by outreach workers in London, including nationality and immigration status where this is known. In the 2013-2014 report a total of 6,508 people were seen sleeping rough and had their nationality recorded, of which 3,437 were not from the UK. Of these, 1,767 were from outside the EU.

Table 2 shows the immigration status of rough sleepers from CHAIN, where known

Table 2: Immigration information

Immigration status	CEE	Other Europe	Rest of world	Total
EU National	1342	326	12	1680
Indefinite leave to remain (ILR)	8	15	287	310
Overstay		1	58	59
Limited Leave to Remain (LLR)	1		52	53
Illegal entrant		4	39	43
Failed asylum seeker			27	27
Asylum seeker			25	25
Refugee			25	25
Discretionary leave (DL)			8	8
Student visa			8	8
Asylum appellant			6	6
Exceptional leave to remain (ELR)			6	6
Other	4	10	32	46
Not applicable	13	77	37	127
Not known	33	29	161	223
Missing	562	190	39	791
Total	1963	652	822	3437

Adding together those who voluntarily describe themselves as overstayers, illegal entrants, failed asylum seekers and those on student visas there are at least 135 people who can definitely be said to be with NRPF. To this should be added a significant proportion of the 1,187 people in the categories Other, Not applicable, Not known or Missing.

Accommodation and other assistance available from statutory services

Asylum Support (formerly NASS) is the Home Office department responsible for providing housing and other assistance to people seeking asylum in the UK. This includes Section 4 (hard case) support to people whose claims have been refused but who have not returned to their countries of origin. Section 4 help is provided on condition of reporting, which entails someone demonstrating that they are taking reasonable steps to leave the UK. This requirement and the

² CHAIN Street to Home Annual Report 2013-14

http://www.broadwaylondon.org/CHAIN/Reports/S2h2014/S2H%20full_2013-14%20final.pdf

fact that the accommodation is also almost always outside London and sometimes in areas where there are few people of the same nationality as the refused asylum seeker can deter people from taking up accommodation to which they may be entitled under Section 4.

Local authorities can in certain circumstances provide assistance, including basic subsistence and housing, under the 1948 National Assistance Act. This assistance is only given to more vulnerable people and families, such as those with severe health needs or disabilities.

When funding for accommodation is available many providers will arrange accommodation, often B & B or other temporary provision.

2. About Housing Justice

Housing Justice is the national voice of Christian action on housing and homelessness. As well as information, policy and campaigning work Housing Justice supports better and more coordinated services for homeless people, especially by working together with churches and church linked community organisations.

Housing Justice helps facilitate co-ordination of Church and Community Night Shelter schemes in London through our Winter Shelter Forum. HJ's Shelter Liaison Worker is taking this work forward with funding from the Homelessness Transition Fund, including through facilitated action learning and by developing and piloting the new Housing Justice Shelter Quality Mark.

The organisation has good links with the network of churches and others working to provide accommodation and other help to people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). HJ has worked for several years with NACCOM, the National No Accommodation Network, and helped organise 2 London conferences in collaboration with NACCOM, Praxis and others in 2011 and 2012. HJ also has excellent working relationships with the Jesuit Refugee Service in the UK

In partnership with Praxis and others in the London network HJ helped to set up London Hosting, which seeks to increase the provision of accommodation by volunteers offering a spare room to those who are destitute and with NRPF.

3. Research survey

A survey of church, faith and community accommodation providers was carried out by Housing Justice. The survey was sent out to the following organisations and groups who provide year round accommodation and other assistance

- Catholic Worker – Giuseppe Conlon House and the Catholic Worker farm
- Spare Room Project
- Just Homes
- Praxis
- Jesuit Refugee Service
- House of Divine Compassion – Franciscans in Plaistow
- Emmaus
- Missionaries of Charity

The survey was also circulated to all 29 London Church Winter Shelter coordinators, and through the following networks:

- London Church Leaders – network of London Church Leaders and also ecumenical Borough Deans
- London Churches Refugee Network
- London Interfaith Network
- Islington NRPF network.

Survey Questions

1. Do you provide or have access to accommodation for people with no recourse to public funds?
 2. How do people access this accommodation? Is there a usual referral route?
 3. How is the accommodation funded, if at all?
 4. How many beds/spaces are available?
 5. Are they temporary or permanent? And are they available all the year round or for part of the year?
 6. Are the beds available to people regardless of their support needs, e.g. mental health, drug/alcohol or other support needs?
 7. Are they available to men/women/either?
 8. Would your group be interested in the development of a cooperative framework of referrals and support with a joint GLA and Home Office initiative?
 9. If not, what would be the barriers to cooperation?
 10. Are you aware of any other accommodation providers with whom we might be in contact?
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4. Survey findings

Most of the groups and organisations providing year round accommodation responded to the survey, as well as some of the church night shelter coordinators. Information on their number of beds was also gathered from other sources to add to the survey responses.

The table at the end of the report gives a breakdown of the number of beds available.

Accommodation available - year round

Organisations which operate all year round include some providing basic night shelter dormitory accommodation, to those in which people have their own rooms, including in hosts' own homes. In total there are **232 beds** - 126 for men and 104 for women. With some exceptions these organisations all either provide housing casework assistance directly or signpost / refer people to other organisations to provide this service. Most organisations make sure that the people they accommodate are also receiving advocacy and casework support e.g. to appeal an asylum claim.

In all cases the accommodation is many times oversubscribed. Referral into the accommodation is usually by local advice and support services, homelessness and migration charities and agencies, including day centres and outreach teams, and churches. Local police also help people with NRPF to access accommodation.

Accommodation available – winter shelters

Church shelters are an important extra source of accommodation during the cold weather period. In the winter 2013-2014 a total of **386 beds** were available for some or all of the season. As these are all beds in dormitories the provision is in practice mainly for men, although where space is available church shelters also try and provide a separate sleeping area for women. At the most basic level this is a separate screened off area in the church hall. None of the shelters will accept children. Most winter shelters also provide some casework assistance, or at least make sure that their guests have access to such assistance.

It should be noted that winter shelter beds are for anyone who is homeless and in need, including people who would be counted hidden homeless e.g. sofa surfers. They are not exclusively for people with NRPF, and are also full most of the time and with waiting lists.

Funding

Funding for both year round providers and winter shelter is from non-statutory sources, including grant making trusts, donations or through voluntary self-funding.

How people access the accommodation: Local referral pathways

Between local outreach teams and day centres and accommodation providers there already exist local referral arrangements. When spaces become available for people with NRPF, accommodation providers will inform local referring organisations, rather than the other way round. Informal waiting lists are usually in operation. Similar arrangements are in place between Night Shelters and local churches and homelessness agencies.

Potential interest in a cooperative referral system

Survey Question 8 asked: Would your group be interested in the development of a co-operative framework of referrals and support with a GLA and Home-Office-funded initiative?

While there were only a small number of survey responses to this specific question, the responses noted here have been tested in conversation and in forums and are consistent with the views of accommodation providers, including shelter coordinators. Overall, respondents were cautious about a referral framework. Key factors here were a lack of capacity and concern that any such arrangement might compromise accommodation providers' flexibility and independence. Responses are set out below.

- This might be of interest if it brought together all the available NRPF resources with agreement that they would accept a referral from a central co-operative framework. (comment from a day centre/referring agency).
- I would be extremely concerned to link our housing programme to any Home Office-funded initiative. In relation to the GLA, I would be more open to discussion. However, more bed spaces are needed, rather than more referrals to an already over-subscribed service. If the GLA wants to use our expertise and fund further beds for the exclusive use of the Outreach teams, then I would be open to propositions and interested in taking part. If a central referral system was being discussed for the current provision, then it should be independent from both GLA/Home Office and decided through forums like London Hosting network. (NRPF accommodation provider)
- Yes, subject to these safeguards: The GLA or London boroughs do not acquire exclusive nomination rights. The identity and confidentiality of guests is protected. Information about guests should not be passed to the Home Office. (NRPF accommodation provider)
- Possibly, but already have more referrals than we can accommodate (NRPF accommodation provider)
- Doubtful (Shelter).
- Yes (Shelter).

Barriers to co-operation

Survey Question 9 asked: If not, what would be the barriers to cooperation?

Key themes here include existing referral arrangements, capacity, concern about a loss of direct connection with clients, and the risk of deportation.

- a) Loss of direct contact with an NRPF organisation; b) A natural desire for your referral to have maximum priority; c) An inability to make a direct case for your client whom you know personally d) Another layer of bureaucracy possibly; e) Sometimes due to changes in funding, projects like this have a lack of permanence as funding streams change.
- We do not wish to put our guests at risk of detention or deportation to a country where their lives, liberty or capacity to survive would be at risk.
- Set up to serve our own borough, so only take referrals from referral agencies here.
- Will only take referrals from Praxis/London Hosting.
- Already oversubscribed with people with local connections.

5. Conclusions

Number of rough sleepers with NRPF v. current accommodation provision

The figures from section 2 give some indication of the number of rough sleepers with NRPF, conservatively at least 1,000 people per year are seen by outreach workers in London. This may well increase in the future.

The total provision of year round beds is currently 232. To this may be added a proportion of the 386 Church Night Shelter beds available in the cold weather period between November and March. But it must be emphasised that at any one time there are only a very few beds potentially available for new referrals.

Addressing barriers to a referral pathway: Developing additional accommodation

Without some initiative to increase the provision of accommodation available to people with NRPF there is limited appetite amongst providers for the development of a centrally coordinated referral pathway. Local borough outreach teams and day centres already refer directly to winter shelters, when bed spaces become available. In addition the small number of beds and voluntary administrative capacity of year round NRPF accommodation providers is a significant barrier.

There is certainly potential for the development of further accommodation. Praxis and the London Hosting group have had some limited success in accessing housing association voids/hard to let flats, e.g. with Metropolitan HA, Family Mosaic etc. Street Legal East have recently recruited a worker with the specific role of increasing provision, including through hosting or with commissioned homelessness hostel providers.

Hosting has developed more rapidly and provides more accommodation in cities other than London. Reasons for this are likely to include: the cost of living in London and property prices (people with spare rooms often need to let them out for additional income); stronger existing local church and community friendship networks; and the perception that the needs of destitute people with NRPF can be met by the community in one's own town or city, whereas in London this response may be considered a "drop in the ocean". The London Hosting network is keen to further strengthen hosting capacity in London, which is thought most likely to happen most sustainably on a borough by borough community development basis.

Other possible sources of accommodation include redundant vicarages, presbyteries, convents and other religious accommodation; empty property including commercial property such as offices, warehouses, flats above shops, which could be let on a temporary or short life basis along similar lines to that let by Camelot or traditional short life type arrangements. The potential for short term temporary lets in residential properties at low/zero cost may be increased since the criminalisation of squatting, but this has not been tested.

Addressing barriers to a referral system: administrative capacity of accommodation providers

Local accommodation providers, including hosts and shelters, are usually community activists, operating their service voluntarily in addition to other roles including paid work. While a

centralised referral pathway is certainly not being sought by providers at this time, some extra administrative capacity for matching vacancies with referrals could be useful and achievable.

Addressing barriers to a referral system: Home Office

A significant barrier on the part of some faith based NRPF accommodation providers is a generalised distrust of the Home Office. Its systems are widely viewed as dysfunctional and unresponsive to the genuine claims of people seeking asylum in the UK. It is notable that there is a greater willingness to consider cooperative arrangements with street outreach teams supported by the GLA, rather than with the Home Office itself.

To address the perception of a lack of accountability some facilitation to bring together Home Office Immigration Enforcement staff and officers with NRPF accommodation providers and others may be useful. While there will certainly be differences of views a constructive dialogue should be facilitated.

6. Next steps

A round table meeting of accommodation providers, outreach workers, representatives from the GLA and Home Office

Various other organisations are working on the issue of assisting homeless people with NRPF. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has commissioned work in this area, as part of its broader work on destitution. London Funders has had conversations with some of its members who are interested in assisting this group, also often as part of wider work on destitution. And Praxis has secured funding from the Homelessness Transition Fund to commission research to provide an overview of accommodation for those with NRPF and how this is funded and to identify best practice. HJ and NACCOM are working with Praxis on this project, and we anticipate that this report will form a useful contribution to the research. A number of these organisations and HJ are part of a national strategic alliance coordinated by Homeless Link.

Housing Justice is well placed to encourage and coordinate the contribution to this work of faith-based accommodation providers who are interested in developing their provision for homeless people with NRPF. To identify what these providers consider they could usefully and realistically offer, HJ will convene and facilitate a round table meeting. This will bring together accommodation providers, representatives from migrant and refugee organisations, outreach teams, and representatives from the GLA and the Home Office. It would also be good to involve potential funders known to be concerned about this issue, through the umbrella body London Funders.

The aims of this round table would be to

- Consider how to increase provision for people with NRPF.
- Explore the practicalities of developing a referral pathway or other dedicated provision to be used by outreach workers seeking accommodation for rough sleepers with NRPF.

Discussion in this area needs to draw out the considerable expertise and practical energy of activists from churches and smaller charities, some of whom have provided assistance to destitute migrants and refugees over many years.

An Open Space facilitation style could be most useful in facilitating open dialogue and bringing everyone together with a problem solving mind-set.

In preparation for the round table a smaller steering group will be drawn together with representatives from

- NRPF Accommodation providers
- Church and community night shelters
- Homelessness service providers
- Outreach workers
- Migrant and refugee organisations
- GLA

A separate initial dialogue with Home Office staff might be helpful, to negotiate the agenda and to build trust and commitment around the process.

The steering group needs to ensure that the meeting brings the right people into the room and achieves its shared objectives.

Alastair Murray, Housing Justice
a.murray@housingjustice.org.uk

APPENDIX

Accommodation available in London to people with NRPF

**Year-round accommodation
– number of beds in London available exclusively for people with NRPF**

Organisation/Project	Male	Female	Type of accommodation
London Catholic Worker – Giuseppe Conlon House	20	0	Night shelter - Shared dormitory
London Catholic Worker Farm	0	18 (total includes children)	Own rooms
Just Homes	0	6 – 10 (includes children)	Supported accommodation own rooms
Praxis - Temporary Homes	5	14 (includes children)	Supported accommodation own rooms
Jesuit Refugee Service – “At home”	1	1	Hosting scheme with potential for expansion
Spare Room	4	6	spare rooms provided by volunteer Hosts in their own homes
Sisters of the Church – St Michael's Convent	0	7	Supported accommodation own rooms
Society of St Francis – House of Divine Compassion		10 (includes children)	Supported accommodation own rooms
Emmaus Community - Greenwich	1	1	Supported accommodation own rooms
Emmaus Community - South Lambeth	1	1	Supported accommodation own rooms
Year-round shelters which accommodate homeless people including those with NRPF			
Shelter from the Storm (Islington)	18	18	Year round Shelter – very basic dormitory accommodation
Highway of Holiness (Haringey)	40		Year round Shelter – very basic shared dormitory
Missionaries of Charity - Gift of Love	41	0	Shared rooms
Missionaries of Charity - Home of Peace	0	15	Shared rooms
TOTALS	131	101	

Hostel beds

Note: There are also a handful of hostel beds available to people with NRPF on a temporary basis. Hostels include the Church Army Marylebone Project for women, and local authority commissioned beds at the Olallo Project. Street Legal is working to increase this provision.

Church Winter Shelters

– all (except Haringey) provide basic, temporary accommodation to people with NRPF

Borough: Shelter name	Mixed Men + Women	Dates of opening/no. of beds (if any) set aside for people with NRPF?
BARNET Together In Barnet Winter Shelter	15	1 October 2013 – 30 April 2014
BRENT ROUTE 18 WINTER SHELTER	25	4 November 2013 – 31 March 2014
BROMLEY WINTER NIGHT SHELTER	12	16 December 2013 – 17 March 2014
C4WS HOMELESS PROJECT	15	1 November 2013 – 31 March 2014
CROYDON CHURCHES FLOATING SHELTER	14	1 November 2013 – 31 March 2014
EALING CHURCHES WINTER NIGHT SHELTER	14	1 December 2013 – 31 March 2014 6 beds
HACKNEY WINTER NIGHT SHELTER	15/25	Spaces: 15 from 1 Nov-23 Dec 2013, 25 from 30 Dec 2013-31 March 2014.
HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM WEST LONDON CHURCHES NIGHTSHELTER	35/70	4 November 2013 – 13 April 2014 (plus 2nd circuit 7 Jan – 25 March 2014 in Hammersmith & Fulham) Spaces: 35 (plus 35 on 2nd circuit)
HARINGEY CHURCHES WINTER SHELTER (ALL PEOPLE ALL PLACES)	12	9 December 2013 – 9 March 2014 (only people with local connection and access to benefits)
HARROW FIRM FOUNDATION WINTER NIGHT SHELTER	10	6 January – 30 March 2014
HAVERING HOPE4HAVERING	15	1 November 2013 – 31 March 2014
HILLINGDON WINTER NIGHT SHELTER	10	January – March 2014
HOUNSLOW THE SHELTER PROJECT HOUNSLOW (TSPH)	15	1 December 2013 – 28 March 2014
ISLINGTON CARIS ISLINGTON CHURCHES COLD WEATHER SHELTER	15	1 January – 31 March 2014
KINGSTON CHURCHES WINTER NIGHTSHELTER	12	1 December 2013 – 28 February 2014 (provisional)
LEWISHAM 999 CLUB WINTER SHELTER	25	2-24 December 2013, 2 January – mid March 2014
MERTON WINTER NIGHT SHELTER	12	2 December 2013 – 9 March 2014
NEWHAM NEWWAY	15	21 November 2013 – 1 February 2014
REDBRIDGE COLD WEATHER SHELTER	25	5 December 2013 – 28 February 2014
LAMBETH and SOUTHWARK THE ROBES PROJECT	15	November 2013 – April 2014
TOWER HAMLETS GROWTH	15	1 November 2013 – 1 June 2014
FOREST CHURCHES EMERGENCY NIGHT SHELTER	30	1 November 2013 – 31 March 2014

WESTMINSTER CHURCHES WINTER SHELTER	15	25 November 2013 – 13 April 2014
TOTAL	386	