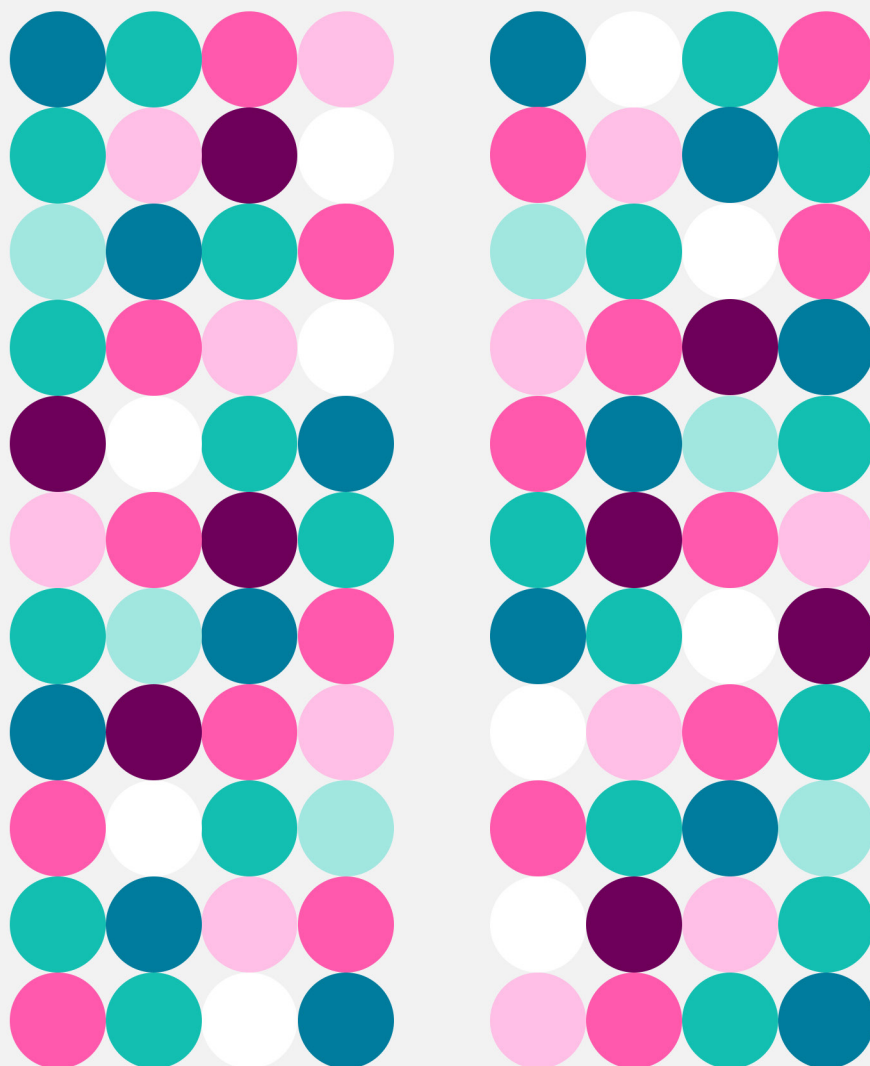


Unlocking the door

A roadmap for supporting
non-UK nationals facing
homelessness in England



Appendix 2

Exploring approaches to accommodation and
support for non-UK nationals: selected case studies

Appendix 2

The following case studies describe a selection of approaches and service models, which may form important parts of local strategies to address non-UK national homelessness. They were collected through interviews with local authorities, homelessness and immigration advice organisations as part of our research into homelessness responses to non-UK nationals with restricted eligibility. They explore:

1. Examples of local authority funding for accommodation targeted at non-UK nationals with restricted or undetermined eligibility in London;
2. Lessons learned and challenges faced by voluntary reconnection services;
3. Services providing early or outreach immigration advice for homelessness prevention;
4. A creative approach to co-producing homelessness strategies with non-UK nationals with lived experience in Haringey and Manchester.

1. RSI-funded bedspaces for people with uncertain or restricted eligibility

City of London provides three RSI-funded bedspaces at Caritas Anchor House hostel in the London Borough of Newham.

The bedspaces are targeted at rough sleepers with restricted eligibility who are EUSS-eligible and potentially work-ready. Most referrals come via the local authority's Carter Lane hostel or COVID-19-procured hotel. The bedspaces are managed via a service-level agreement and overseen by the City's Pathway Coordinator. Total annual funding for the bedspaces is £100,000: this includes all accommodation and support costs and £10,000 for personalisation budgets, theoretically replacing the need for Housing Benefit.

Most service users are already receiving immigration advice when they move into the bedspaces and have either made an EUSS application, or are about to do so. Where this is not the case, immigration advice is available via local solicitors or Praxis, a specialist migrant and refugee organisation.

Service users have access to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses to develop their language skills and support around their health and drug and alcohol needs.

Intended length of stay is 12 weeks, with a move-on target of eight individuals per annum. During the past 12 months, there have been seven positive moves, including one into a private rented tenancy and several into the City's Accommodation Pathway for Rough Sleepers, after these service users obtained EUSS status.

The London Borough of Lambeth provides eight beds for non-UK nationals in dedicated accommodation, which was formerly a supported housing project. Total annual funding from the council is around £315,000. This covers all accommodation and support costs and there is no separate Housing Benefit arrangement in place.

The bedspaces accommodate homeless non-UK nationals who are addressing their immigration issues and are work-ready. All have a history of rough sleeping and most are EEA nationals, which reflects the profile of local rough sleepers. The project also accommodates non-EEA, non-UK nationals who are ready to engage

with support and likely to obtain UK immigration status.

Immigration advice is provided via Praxis and local law centres. Immigration advisors are involved in needs assessments. Thames Reach provides visiting support around employment and education, as well as discussion of move-on options. Service users with low support needs move into the private rented sector, whilst those with higher support needs and settled status can enter Lambeth's supported accommodation pathway. There is no target length of stay, reflecting that resolving immigration issues can be a lengthy process.

Lambeth has access to additional funding which enables it to place eligible service users in alternative temporary accommodation with support, until a dedicated non-UK nationals bedspace becomes available. People with low support needs are accommodated in B&Bs (utilising RSI surge accommodation, Winter Pressures and Protect and Vaccinate Funding), whilst those with high support needs can temporarily access Lambeth's supported accommodation pathway, via a spot-purchase arrangement involving RSI funding.

Key learning

The examples of City of London and Lambeth indicate it is possible to provide a dedicated accommodation resource for non-UK nationals sleeping rough, with successful outcomes and at relatively low cost. Having an accommodation base facilitates service users' take up of support and this helps them resolve their immigration issues, move into work and longer-term housing. There are also likely additional benefits for local authorities around reducing substance misuse and anti-social behaviour associated with rough sleeping.

Carrying out a comprehensive needs assessment when service users join the service and which includes input from immigration advisers, is essential to identify their support needs and immigration status. Wraparound support is also needed, as many service users, including those identified as work-ready, may have additional needs relating to their health and/or substance misuse and which only fully emerge after move-in.

Adopting a multi-agency casework approach, which involves support services and local commissioners, is effective in identifying barriers to service delivery and can help improve move-on outcomes. Linking to the local authority's supported accommodation pathway provides an effective move-on route for service users with higher support needs.

Having access to additional flexible bedspaces, including B&B accommodation and spot-purchasing arrangements within supported housing projects, creates a valued pathway which enables non-UK nationals to begin their journey out of homelessness at an earlier point.

2. Voluntary reconnection

For some non-UK nationals facing homelessness, returning to their country of origin will be (or become) their desired or best option. Reconnection services aim to support homeless non-UK nationals to return safely and voluntarily. A reconnection service is by definition supportive and as such includes a number of related elements: immigration advice to understand rights and entitlements; sustainable accommodation in the destination country and support to link in with welfare, health and wellbeing services there.

As locally commissioned services, they are distinct from the Home Office Voluntary Return Service. The Home Office service provides more limited support options, focusing on financial assistance and travel arrangements, and only provides reintegration support in specific cases.

Routes Home is a pan-London service managed by St Mungo's. Funding comes via the Greater London Authority and central Government and totals around £820,000 per annum. There is also a small budget for UK-based residential detox, which is typically not available to people with restricted eligibility.

Routes Home works with verified rough sleepers of all nationalities, although currently 85-90% are EEA nationals. Referrals come mainly via outreach, but also day centres, Turnaround Hubs and hospital discharge teams.

Reconnection is one of three strands offered by Routes Home - alongside independent immigration advice and employment support. Routes Home's in-depth needs assessment and options appraisal with service users helps them make an informed decision about reconnection.

Once service users have agreed to return home, staff work with them to develop a safe travel and reconnection plan. As well as accommodation, this includes making links with welfare, health and wellbeing support in the individual's home country. Whilst they are awaiting reconnection, service users can access accommodation and welfare interventions. For people with low support needs this involves Routes Home accommodation in South London, whilst those with higher support needs are accommodated in reconnection beds in St Mungo's hostels across London. Routes Home staff may accompany service users with higher support needs on flights home.

What works?

Informed, timely and holistic intervention

A support-led model and discussion of a range of options are crucial to maintaining a solutions-oriented approach and to ensuring that leaving the UK is not routinely seen as the only option, when others might exist. The involvement of independent immigration advice and employing staff with language skills both help to ensure informed decisions are taken. Routes Home's offer of accommodation was also considered invaluable to help people stabilise and understand the choices they are making. This is particularly important given that taking up a reconnection offer may prevent a person from returning to the UK in the future.

It is important to make the reconnection offer at the most timely moment, informed by the pace, preferences and 'headspace' of the individual. Often, an individual may prefer to try other routes first, but may return to the option of reconnection at a later stage.

Reintegration

Liaising directly with embassies and consulates to obtain ID and travel documents increases the likelihood that reconnection will be successful. Developing a reintegration plan for the destination country provides some continuity, ensuring service users have suitable accommodation and are linked to health and/or social services and friends/family, if possible. Having a budget for detox in the UK makes it easier for service users to access rehab in their home country. Accompanying service users with higher support needs on the flight assists with in-person handover to relevant support.

Challenges

The variation in the quality and availability of homelessness services internationally, combined with the absence of long-term follow up on outcomes for those reconnected, drive concerns for some people around reconnection practices and what 'successful' reconnection truly looks like. The likelihood of facing difficulties re-entering the UK, especially post-Brexit, complicates the decision to take up a reconnection offer. Some people sleeping rough fear the stigma of returning to their countries of origin without having 'made a success' of life in the UK, while others are keenly aware that the support services or accommodation they need may not be available.

Whilst services like Routes Home offer a positive example to learn from, further research will be needed to explore an optimal model.

3. Early immigration advice for homelessness prevention

Praxis provides immigration advice and other specialist support to migrants and refugees in the UK.

Since 2018, Praxis has managed the **Hospital Immigration Support Service**. This seeks to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping for vulnerable homeless people with immigration issues and no recourse to public funds (NRPF) who are receiving inpatient care at London hospitals supported by Pathway teams. The service is funded by Greater London Authority and the London Borough of Newham.

Support is via a full-time OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) Level 2 advisor. The advisor assesses referrals from the Pathway team, provides outreach support and attends multi-disciplinary team meetings. Language support is provided by Praxis' in-house interpreting service and Language Line (funded by London Councils). The service also provides training and second-tier advice to clinical and other hospital staff.

Most work involves immigration advice, but the service also provides Section 98/Section 95 homelessness support to asylum seekers, support around Article 8 Human Rights Act and Care Act cases and to EEA nationals awaiting EUSS decisions. The advisor's involvement also helps identify existing immigration applications and speeds up the evidence-gathering process.

To date, advice has focused on supporting service users at the point of discharge. However, from May 2022, there will be a dedicated caseworker. This will enable the service to provide on-going support, including representation and applications to relevant services.

Key learning

Providing specialist advice within a multidisciplinary setting enables service users to resolve immigration issues and to access accommodation and support they need, including from social services. This ensures their safe discharge from hospital and also has benefits for the NHS in terms of preventing delayed discharge and repeat presentations. The hospital setting creates a degree of stability for service users and is an opportunity to advise people who have little or no other contact with support services.

Early needs assessment is essential to clarify service users' immigration status/eligibility. Pathway's multi-disciplinary meetings ensure immigration expertise is shared amongst the team and that all information needed for immigration applications is gathered in a timely way.

A dedicated caseworker role helps ensure continuity of support for service users after they have been discharged from hospital. It also enhances capacity for relationship building and information-gathering with clinical staff, to support Care Act and other applications on medical/health-related grounds.

The **No Recourse Early Action Model (NOREAM)** is currently being piloted in Hackney and seeks to improve outcomes for children and families with restricted eligibility, in partnership with London Borough of Hackney Children's Services.¹

1. For more information, see <https://www.noream.org/contact>

NOREAM identifies families at risk of homelessness at an early point and aims to provide a holistic targeted intervention, which prevents their need for more intensive support later on. The team includes social workers, a housing officer and an immigration advisor. The model involves outreach to encourage engagement with local authority support, social worker sessions to identify needs and refer to other specialties or services.

As NOREAM workers do not offer statutory support, there is no legal obligation to report undocumented families to the Home Office, which was seen to encourage trust and engagement with the project.² Despite this, early reflections from practitioners show that undocumented migrants were less represented among clients than expected, indicating potential persistent barriers to reaching this group.³

Multi-agency work is at the heart of the approach and includes monthly conferences involving Adult Services and Housing staff to advise on complex cases. The multi-agency approach is also intended to develop a transferable and scalable approach to 'migrant aware' practice for families with NRPF and to develop interdisciplinary practice within the borough.

Outcomes will be measured in terms of changes in adults' and children's reported wellbeing, access to education, GP and leisure services, immigration advice, and financial security.

4. Co-production with non-UK nationals with experience of homelessness

Legislative Theatre is a coproduction approach, which originated from Theatre of the Oppressed, first created in Brazil by Augusto Boal. The model uses theatre to engage community members alongside policy-makers in shaping policy decisions, including homelessness. It has been used to positive effect as part of the development of local homelessness strategies in Haringey and Greater Manchester (GM).

People with lived experience are recruited and trained to become facilitators or actors via homelessness organisations/networks and paid for their time. Local authority staff may work alongside facilitators/actors and access to interpreters is provided for facilitators who do not speak English easily.

In Manchester, a Legislative Theatre practitioner collaborated with GM Homelessness Action Network, Street Support Network and GMCA's homelessness team. This led to three plays, focusing on multiple disadvantage, funding and commissioning and structural racism in homelessness services. For the third strand, the partnership collaborated with the SAWN Network, working with a group of 12 migrant women, mainly from African countries. The performance depicted experiences of racism within social services, including discrimination within temporary accommodation, leading to harassment and unsafe living environments.

2. Ott, E., Albers, B., Bonin, E. & Mann, G. (2021) Pilot evaluation of the No Recourse to Early Action Model. London: What Works for Children's Social Care. Available at: <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Pilot-Protocol-NOREAM.pdf>

3. Begum, K., Flint, T., Hunt, G., Jolly, A. & Stronger, A. (2022). Reflecting on Early Help with Migrant Families: A View from Practice. *Practice* 34(3), 197-205.

All recommendations from the plays were included in GM's most recent Homelessness Prevention Strategy. These include: providing anti-racism training to frontline staff across Greater Manchester, to address structural racism within systems and services; prioritising recruitment of a diverse and culturally competent workforce, with a more inclusive recruitment process; safeguarding children within the asylum process and providing access to good quality legal advice from the start. Many have already been acted on, including coproduced job descriptions.

In Haringey, the legislative theatre process involved Katy Rubin, Legislative Theatre practitioner and Arts & Homelessness International (AHI). A core team of council staff and people with lived experience of homelessness and rough sleeping worked to create original plays based on their real experiences. The performance and session were used as a starting point for co-creating Haringey's new Rough Sleeping Strategy. Policy proposals were developed through the improvisation of scenes by audience members. These were then voted on and policymakers in the audience were asked to make commitments based on these policy proposals.

The process led to a number of specific Strategy recommendations, which included: increasing representation of people with lived experience in homelessness services and forums; developing local hubs and other integrated services, which offer in-person and online support; improving the response for homeless people with NRPF via online resources and a local NRPF accommodation and support pathway.

Key learning

The fully co-produced nature of Legislative Theatre builds trust with vulnerable communities and encourages their participation. This is particularly important for non-UK nationals, who often face additional barriers to engaging with the system, including discrimination and structural racism.

The shift in power balance between people with lived experience and homelessness professionals, ensures people with lived experience are framing the problems and generating the proposals. This format delivers more equitable policies and enables local authorities to see new perspectives and new ways of working. This potentially creates a big impact, although the number of facilitators/actors is relatively small.

The Legislative Theatre process requires significant commitment from people with lived experience and inevitably, some participants do not feel able to complete the process. This is one reason why paying people with lived experience is important, to place a value on their time and contribution. The experiences shared by participants may include sensitive information. It is important that they feel safe to do this and that confidentiality is maintained at all times, with particular consideration for sensitivities related to immigration status.

The approach is replicable in other local authority services and homelessness organisations. For example, facilitators in Greater Manchester have designed theatre-led training to improve cultural appropriateness within trauma-informed practice and are delivering this in several local authorities in the north west of England.



Homeless Link



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About Us

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

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