

Housing first for people with no recourse to public funds

Evaluation of Oxfordshire
Homeless Movement's
NRPF housing first project

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About Oxfordshire Homeless movement

OHM is a **partnership** of the many organisations helping those who are homeless in Oxfordshire. We all work to ensure that "nobody should have to sleep rough on our streets." If you think of these organisations as a community, then think of us as the Community Centre!

OHM's project work fills the critical gaps in services that others can't, and always working in partnership means that we have the best team for the job. We won't initiate a project where one of our partners is already providing a service—the aim is to avoid duplication and signpost to the best resources.

Our best team includes those with lived experience of homelessness. Being guided by people who have personally experienced homelessness through **LEAF**—the Lived Experience Advisory Forum means our work remains relevant and needed.

Our partnership was established because life is simpler when we work together.

Acknowledgements

Central to this report are the views and reflections of those supported through the NRPF project. Thank you to all the individuals who have shared their stories and insights so thoughtfully about what it is like living with NRPF.

A special thanks must go to the support workers working directly alongside people, without whom this project would not be possible. It is clear how important, and valued, this caring support is. Thank you to Eva, Hozan, Yana, and all the staff delivering this project.

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Illustration by [Ballon & Anvil](#).

Introduction

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is part of the United Kingdom's immigration control. NRPF restricts access to most public funds including social security benefits alongside some healthcare for migrants in the UK. This removes the safety net for people who can very quickly fall into destitution when their circumstances change. To mitigate this, Oxfordshire Homeless Movement deliver a project modelled on housing first. This provides accommodation, a support worker, and immigration advice to people who are homeless and subject to NRPF.

“Getting help from Connection Support in June 2021 - this is the first time I felt there is somebody who really cares about me. Beginning of 2022 I was granted a leave to remain. And I got this flat through a housing association. In February 2023 I moved to my own flat and have my own tenancy. I can relax here. If this support wasn't with me, what would have happened to me? The weather is cold, 100% I would have died”

Individual on the project

The project has supported 50 individuals with 48% of the cohort gaining some form of right to remain, and a further 36% still receiving support to regularise their immigration status. Across the cohort, 50% of people now have the right to work in the UK, most gaining this right as a direct result of the project. Of those who have left the project, 63% have access to public funds.

Safe accommodation and a support worker, alongside timely immigration advice, improves individual health and wellbeing and their ability to feel hopeful about the future. This project is a cost-effective way to lift people out of destitution and support them to participate and contribute to life in the UK.

Whilst the NRPF condition applies to most migrants within the UK - there will always be a need for this type of project. The project provides an effective solution supporting people to eventually become self-sufficient and move on from the project.

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Background

No recourse to public funds

The No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition restricts access to social security benefits alongside access to some forms of healthcare for migrants in the UK. Originally introduced in 1971, NRPF has expanded and now applies to most people subject to immigration control. This includes people on worker visas, student visas, Hong Kong British National route, UK Ancestry route, spouses of a British citizen or the parent of a British child, undocumented migrants, and people with limited leave to remain.

The extension of NRPF has been described as “*deeply classed, raced, and gendered*” (Dickson and Rosen, 2021, p. 555). 82% of people helped by Citizen’s Advice in relation to NRPF in 2020 were from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities (Citizen’s Advice, 2020). 54% of migrants to the UK are women (Jayaweera, 2018) and women are often at risk of domestic violence with this being a major route into destitution for migrants who are women (Jolly *et al.*, 2022).

The Home Office does not know how many people are subject to NRPF, but 3.3 million people have visas that would usually have an NRPF condition attached to it (McKinney *et al.*, 2024, p.9). This excludes asylum seekers who are subject to NRPF but can access a separate scheme of asylum support. As of June 2024, there were 225,000 people in the UK asylum ‘work in progress’ caseload (McKinney *et al.*, 2024, p.10). There are also between 594,000 and 745,000 people who do not have permission to be in the UK but who would be subject to NRPF (McKinney *et al.*, 2024, p.10). These figures should be treated with caution as there are variations in estimates across the literature.

NRPF clearly affects a significant part of the UK population. Most people with NRPF support themselves through work; in 2023, 20% of workers in the UK were migrants (Centre for Social Policy, 2024, p.9). Most people with NRPF contribute positively to the UK economy. The 2016 migrant cohort were estimated to make a total lifetime contribution of £35.4 billion to the UK’s public finances (Centre for Social Policy, 2024, p. 10).

However, if someone loses a job, their home, or has a relationship breakdown the NRPF condition causes them to very quickly fall into destitution and extreme poverty (Jolly *et al.*, 2022). There is no safety net to help people get back on their feet again. People end up homeless and destitute with few options for help.

There is statutory help available for families with young children, and in exceptional circumstances for vulnerable adults subject to NRPF. This is because Section 17 of the Children’s Act 1989 requires accommodation and financial support to be provided by

social services where a child is assessed as being in need. Similarly, some adults may receive support through the Care Act 2014 if the adult is assessed as having care and support needs (NRPF Network, 2025).

In providing this support councils in England spent £81.8million supporting 3474 households with NRPF in 2023-2024. In the Southeast - covering 14 local authorities including Oxfordshire - £9.4million was spent supporting 457 households in the 2023-2024 financial year (NRPF Network, 2024).

However, for single people and adults without dependents, there is no statutory support available. In these instances, projects such as the NRPF project delivered by Oxfordshire Homeless Movement provide a safety net to prevent people falling into destitution.

Housing first

Housing first is an evidence-based approach supporting homeless people with complex needs to stay in their homes.

Housing first services often support people with complex mental health issues, substance use issues, physical health needs, those with experience of domestic violence or trauma, and people with experience of the criminal justice system

There are seven core principles of housing first (Homeless Link, 2017):

1. People have a right to a home.
2. Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed.
3. Housing and support are separated.
4. Individuals have choice and control.
5. An active engagement approach is used.
6. The service is based on people's strengths, goals, and aspirations.
7. A harm reduction approach is used.

By 2020, there were over 100 housing first services operating across England. These are primarily funded through local authority and statutory funding, but 16% of services receive funding from philanthropic sources (Homeless Link, 2020, p.16). Housing first has been shown to work with high tenancy sustainment rates in the region of 80% at the 2-year mark (Johnsen *et al.*, 2022, p. 49).

Current housing first services are heavily skewed towards supporting white, working-aged men (Homeless Link, 2020, p.33). In the course of this research, no other housing first service supporting people with NRPF could be identified in the UK. This makes the NRPF Project delivered in Oxfordshire a unique service. The project is restricted in accessing public funding because it works solely with individuals who are subject to the NRPF condition.

Additionally, there is no opportunity to access individual housing benefit to contribute towards the cost of property rent as is the case in most mainstream housing services. This is because the individuals supported have NRPF and are not eligible for housing benefit. This NRPF project is entirely reliant on funding from private philanthropy and fundraising.

How does the project work?

The NRPF Project delivers a housing first style approach for people subject to NRPF who are homeless. The project is overseen by Oxfordshire Homeless Movement. It is delivered through a partnership of Asylum Welcome, Connection Support, SOHA housing, Edge Housing, and other charity partners in Oxfordshire.

The project aims to help people experiencing homelessness who have lost or don't have access to state-funded benefits and housing. It aims to support them to lead productive lives in Oxfordshire.

Providing the homes

At full capacity, the project supports 15 people with safe accommodation. SOHA Housing (a housing association) provide 6 properties (0.07% of their total housing stock) at a peppercorn rent, leased to Connection Support. Connection Support look after the day-to-day upkeep of the homes and pay for the utilities. The homes include a range of 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom, and 3-bedroom properties. In total these properties house 12 people at maximum capacity. The experience has been positive for SOHA Housing:

“This project felt like we were solving a very visible but also very stubborn problem of homelessness for people subject to NRPF. ‘Everyone In’ opened the door for us to NRPF because at that point we did take some residents who didn’t have UK status. I think that grew our confidence, as an organisation, but also for our front-line teams that we can run these specialist housing projects alongside our other operations. It’s also made us think further about other housing support we can find for people who struggle to access accommodation – it’s opened a few other doors.”

Senior Staff Member from SOHA Housing

SOHA Housing and Oxfordshire Homeless Movement took time assessing the legal landscape to ensure they were legally able to house people subject to NRPF. Advice was sought from Broadlands Housing Association who had run a similar scheme. Some of this approach has been captured in [NACCOM’s Working with Housing Association Toolkits](#). Significant attempts to increase the number of homes, through partnership with other housing associations, have been made but this has not yielded any results.

Edge Housing provide a further 3 rooms for people who would benefit from more intensive support on a day-to-day basis. Oxfordshire Homeless Movement pay for the support element provided to those in these rooms.

Housing first approach

A housing first approach is taken providing people with a safe home, alongside a designated support worker. There is a tailored support plan for each individual which is updated through quarterly meetings helping people to set their goals and achieve what they want to. A range of practical support is provided including attending doctor's appointments, attending immigration meetings, supporting maintenance of their home, and supporting individuals to build connections in the community.

In addition to this, 78% of individuals in the project (who had access to no other funds) were provided with subsistence payments ranging between £30-£50 per week. A bus pass was provided to 64% of individuals who required this. Others were supported to get a free bike from local organisations.

Each individual is supported by Asylum Welcome who provide immigration advice and support for people to regularise their immigration status.

Who is eligible for the NRPF project?

To be eligible for the project, people should:

1. Be single
2. Have no recourse to public funds
3. Be homeless, or at immediate risk of becoming homeless.

An additional criterion was shared by some but not all the staff team – that people need to have a viable route to gaining some sort of regular immigration status in the UK. One individual became ineligible for the project as they had no immigration prospects. This criterion should be discussed and clarified by the project partners and is listed in the opportunities section.

In the first few years of the project, only men were supported, but this was expanded to include a single accommodation unit that could support women. This was an important step recognising that women are often disproportionately affected by the effects of NRPF.

Who has the project supported?

The project has supported 50 individuals since 2021, of these:

- 15 people are currently in accommodation
- 2 people are on the waiting list
- 16 are no longer accommodated
- 17 were not accepted for accommodation but did receive support

Gender

Across the full cohort - 74% of people supported are male and 26% are female. Of those who have been accommodated, only 16% are female, and 84% are male. This discrepancy is likely due to the women's flat opening later in the project. This should be kept under review for opportunities to expand the support provision for women who are disproportionately affected by NRPF.

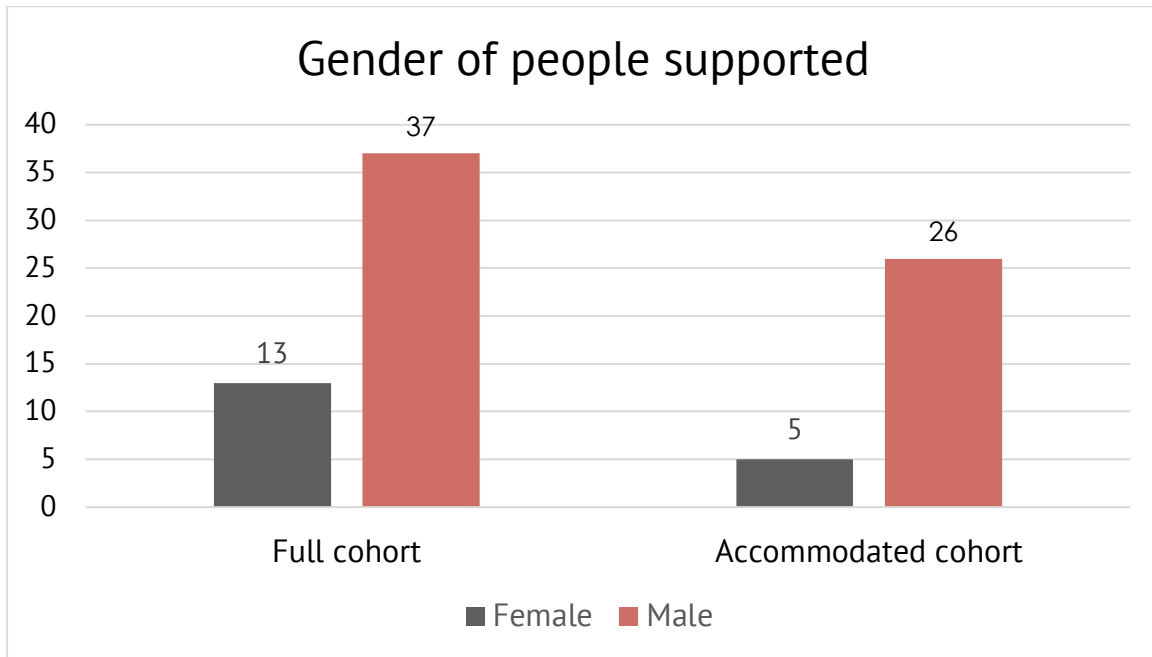


Figure 1: Gender of people supported (full cohort, and those in accommodation)

One woman supported by the project reflected on how important this provision is when compared against statutory support:

“The NRPF project is the best, it became a game changer for me because the system, for a long time, favoured women with children and single people like me were left out.”

Individual on the project

Age

The project primarily works with people aged 31-65 (58% of the full cohort, 52% of those accommodated).

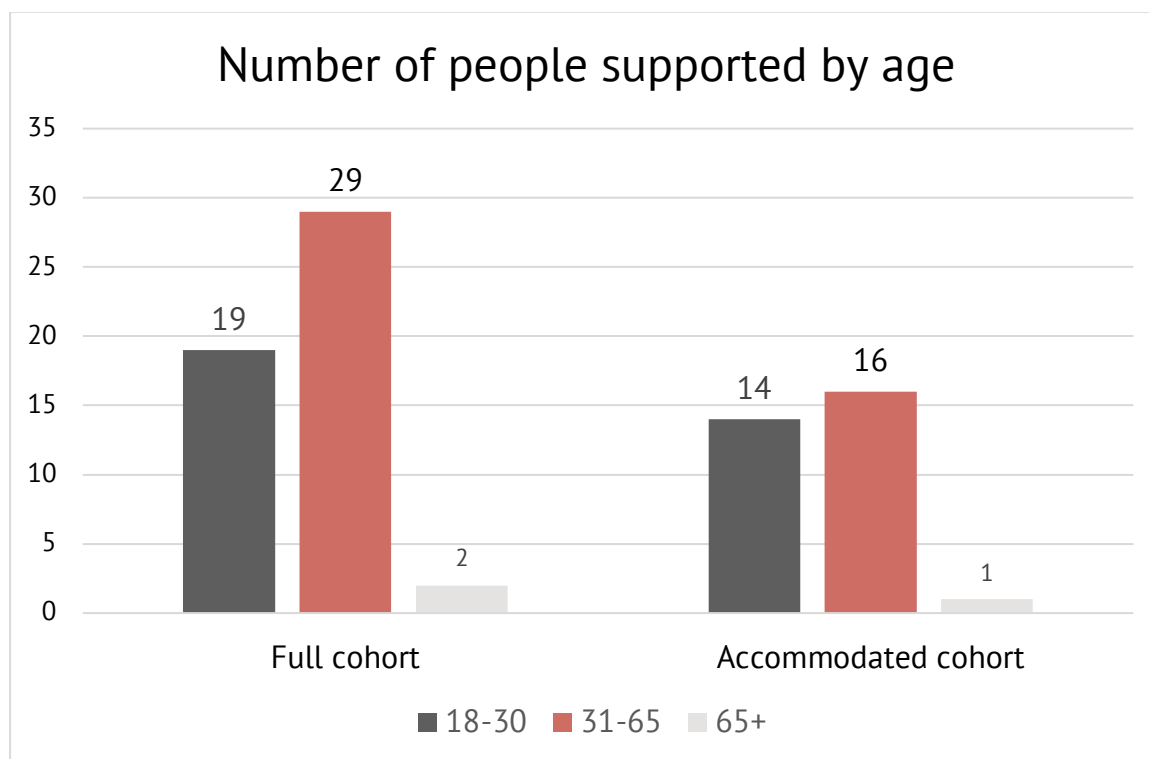


Figure 2: Number of people supported by age, across the full cohort and accommodated.

Referral routes

Most referrals come from Asylum Welcome (38% of cohort) and from St Mungo's and Oxford City Council when 'Everyone In' ended (26% of cohort).

'Everyone In' was a UK Government initiative to get everyone housed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This saw 37,000 people housed who had been previously homeless (Shelter, 2021).

Other referrals come from a range of charities working in the area. Sometimes there is pressure from these charities to accept individuals onto the project. This is challenging and takes time to manage.

For those accommodated, people spend 49 days on the waiting list before receiving accommodation. The highest waiting period was 177 days and the lowest is 0 days. Individuals spend on average 1 year 7 months in accommodation before moving on. The shortest stay has been 19 days and the longest is 3 years 4 months.

Financial cost

The project costs around £200,000 to £250,000 per year to run.

The main costs are on the housing first elements of this project – the support worker time and immigration support. A breakdown of the yearly costs is detailed in Table 1.

Item	Year 1 21 -22	Year 2 22- 23	Year 3 23 - 24
Housing			
Property Management	£49,000	£8675	£27,075
Edge - Support (3 x beds)	£0	£18,000	£20,400
Subsistence			
Bus pass and weekly subsistence	£0	£37,394	£38,282
Housing first support			
Support staff time	£0	£95,220	£103,891
Asylum Welcome - Immigration Advice	£0	£21,000	£22,050
Running costs (Oxfordshire Homeless Movement	£65,000	£7600	£8000
Total Cost	£114,000	£187,889	£219,698
Total number of people supported this year	21	28	34
Number of people in accommodation	15	21	22
Number of people not in accommodation	6	8	12

Table 1: Financial breakdown of NRPF project costs

What impact does the project have?

At the beginning of the project, a theory of change was developed by people with lived experience of no recourse to public funds alongside people with professional experience of homelessness and NRPF.

A theory of change is a specific and measurable description of the social change that a project is expected to have. It identifies what the change will be, how that will be measured, and what success will look like.

This evaluation is built around this theory of change, with research questions devised from this. This approach assessed whether the project is achieving the outcomes for individuals, and the anticipated changes for society.

A copy of the theory of change is found in Figure 3.

This research explores outcomes for six main groups of individuals supported:

1. *'Full cohort'* of 50 individuals. This includes people who received support only and those who received support and accommodation.
2. *'People accommodated'* is 31 individuals who have received accommodation. 15 currently accommodated and 16 who have left accommodation.
3. *'People not accepted for accommodation'* is 17 people not accepted for accommodation. These individuals have received support only.
4. *'People who have regularised status'* is 21 individuals who have left the project because of regularising their immigration status.
5. *'People who have maintained status'* includes 3 individuals who have maintained worker visas but left the project as they were supported into work.
6. *'People who have left the project'* is 32 individuals including 21 people who have regularised, 3 people who have maintained status and includes 7 individuals who left the project prior to regularising status.



Figure 3: Theory of Change Diagram

Change for individuals

Within the theory of change, several outcomes were identified for individuals that would increase wellbeing, health, and sense of belonging. These were:

- People feeling in a better place mentally
- People having a sense of belonging and community and feeling able to participate in community activities
- People feeling hopeful about the future
- People feeling safe
- People having more sense of freedom and choice
- People able to sleep better, rest, and function better.
- Physical health improvements

Each of these is considered except for 'People able to sleep better, rest, and function better' as there was a lack of reliable data to assess this.

Overall, the project is achieving significant positive outcomes for individuals.

However, the scale of change is restricted by external factors influencing individual's lives. This includes navigating immigration processes, people unable to access the support they need, people not being able to work, and having health issues often caused by homelessness and destitution.

"[navigating the immigration process] does affect your mental health. I remember the last statement; I started typing it on the computer around 10am and I wasn't finished writing till the next day. I wanted to finish it as I don't want to revisit these parts of my life, and how it affects me now. Talking about these things affects you, you know, it's not nice"

Individual on the project

"There is no list of rights and entitlements for NRPF. It's very hard to know what we are supposed to do. To stay asleep for 24 hours? It's just not healthy."

Individual on the project

Better mental health

This NRPF project improves levels of mental health and wellbeing for individuals supported. Levels of anxiety reduce at the point of being accommodated, and levels of happiness continue to rise throughout the entire duration of an individual's participation in the project.

Homelessness and health are strongly linked. Research from Homeless Link found that 82% of people who are experiencing homelessness have a mental health issue compared to 12% of the UK national population (Homeless Link, 2022, p.7). Across the interviews, and written material, mental health was a common theme. Individuals noted that the safe and secure accommodation, alongside caring support staff improved their mental health and wellbeing. This was described by several as providing the time and space to clear their mind or give them peace of mind to focus on healing, immigration cases, and participating in society.

Across the cohort, 62% of people engaged with mental health services during their engagement with the project. This rises to 71% of those in accommodation showing a positive correlation between those in accommodation engaging more with mental health services.

From Year 3 onwards, project participants have been asked to score the following statement on a quarterly basis:

'I am anxious about my current accommodation situation'

(0 being not at all anxious, and 10 being very anxious)

Figure 4 shows the response to this question for people accommodated. It shows the mean scores at four points in time:

1. Before being housed
2. The initial period after being housed (first quarter)
3. In housing
4. When a notice to quit has been issued.

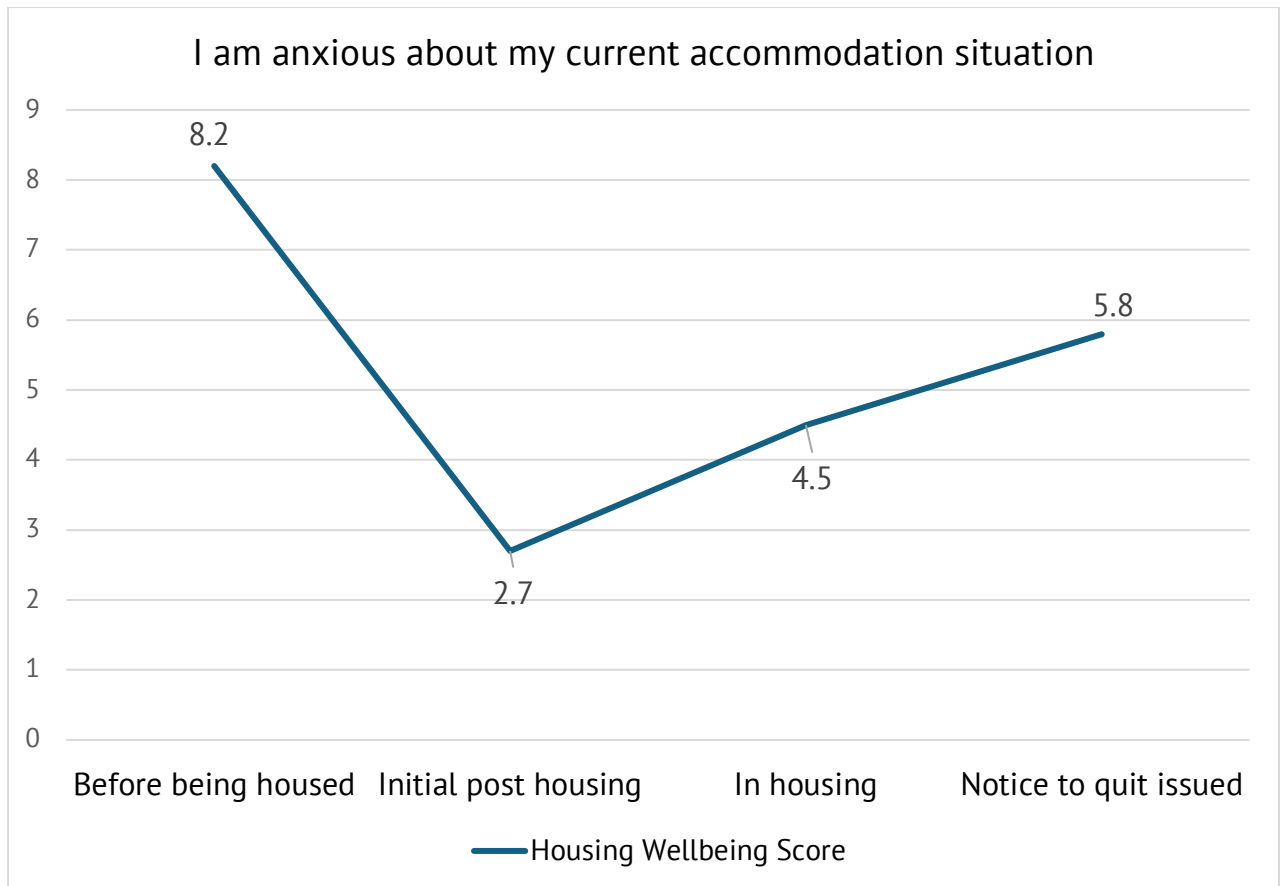


Figure 4: Housing wellbeing score for those in accommodation

The provision of accommodation through this project drastically reduces the levels of housing anxiety from 8.2 to 2.7. This is significant and shows that the provision of accommodation correlates with reduced housing anxiety. However, housing anxiety then increases throughout the duration of someone’s stay in the project.

A notice to quit is effectively an eviction notice giving people 3 months to vacate a property. These are mainly given when someone receives regularised status, with a few instances of people being evicted for threatening behaviour.

Consideration should be given to this continuous rise in housing anxiety and whether anything can be done to mitigate this. Whilst support is given to source move on options and several positive examples were identified, there is an opportunity for a more structured approach to move on that provides people with an increased sense of security. This would require additional staff time to be allocated to it.

From Year 3 onwards, project participants have been asked to score the following statement on a quarterly basis

'How anxious did you feel yesterday'

(with 0 being not at all anxious, and 10 completely anxious)

Figure 5 shows the responses to this from people accommodated. It shows mean scores at four points in time – before being housed, once in accommodation, the notice to quit stage, and the point of move-on.

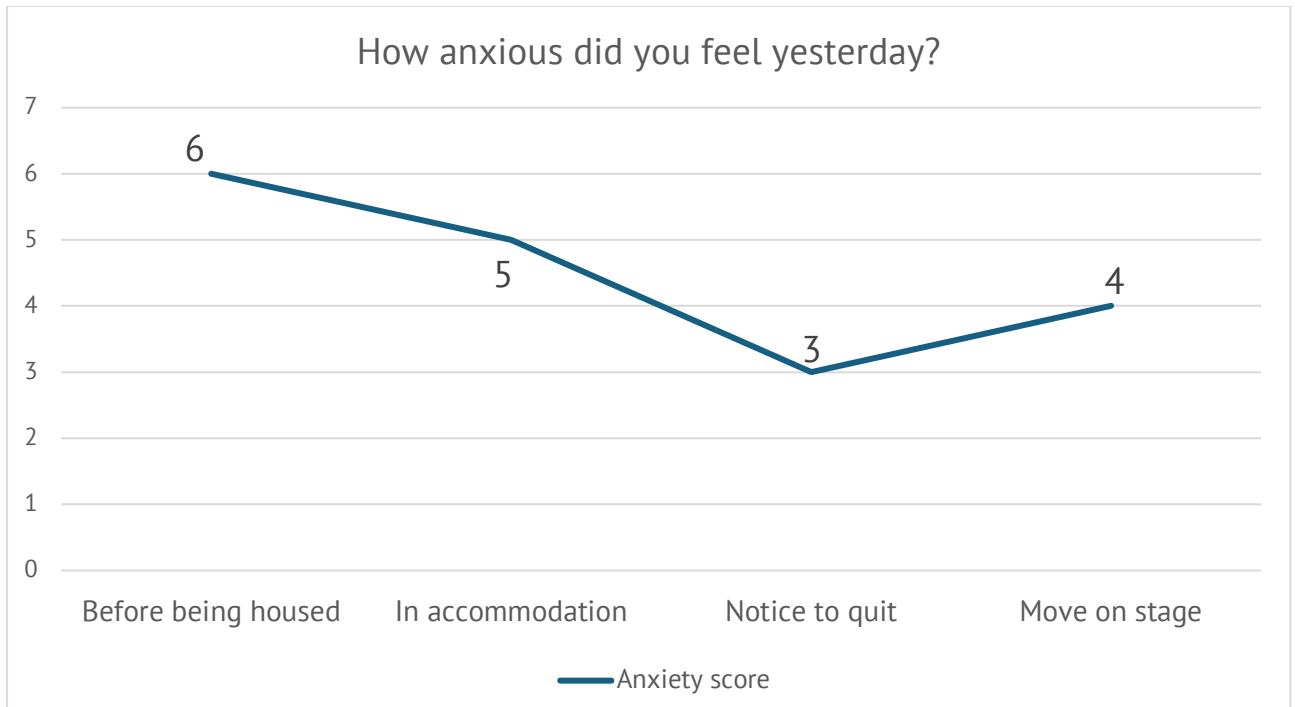


Figure 5: Anxiety score for those in accommodation

Levels of anxiety are highest at the point of being housed and continue to drop throughout the project until a notice to quit is issued. At the point of a notice to quit being issued, most individuals will have received some form of regularised immigration status. At the move-on stage – with data captured in the months between a notice to quit notice and someone leaving the project – anxiety levels start to rise again.

Again, this is perhaps not surprising as people are moving from a housing first level of support into the mainstream housing system. However, some thought should be given to this move on stage and if anything can be done to mitigate the rise in anxiety through more formalised move on routes, support plans, and referrals.

From Year 3 onwards, project participants have been asked to score the following statement on a quarterly basis

'How happy did you feel yesterday?'

(with 0 being not at all happy, and 10 being completely happy)

Figure 6 shows the mean response to this question from people accommodated at four main stages of the accommodation journey.



Figure 6: Happiness scores for those in accommodation

Levels of happiness increase as people move through the project. At the point of referral, people score an average of 4, which rises to 9 at the point of moving on from the project. This is very positive to see and reflects the wider changes in people’s lives as they move through the project.

One participant shared an example:

“Now I’m relaxed, I can work, I can build my life for the future, and it’s much better. You feel depressed when you are waiting for something important [immigration status] in your life, especially when you can’t work.”

Individual on the project

Sense of belonging and community

People supported frequently referred to feeling at home and having built connections and relationships. This included with the support workers who were compared to being like family or friends with one individual saying:

“I feel like home. They’re giving me the most beautiful thing, which is not money or the house, or the material things but this kind of love – the feeling of family”

Individual on the project

Support workers encourage people to participate in local groups – such as a knitting class or exercise group – alongside supporting people to build connection with people of the same faith or who speak the same first language.

Several interviewees spoke about the important of these communities to their sense of self and wellbeing.

“There’s a big, big community here. When I went to the mosque, I felt fine. If I sat there and chatted or prayed – my head would be normal again. The mosque is an important part of my community, otherwise, because of the things that happened to me, I would be dead”

Individual on the project

Those interviewed felt safe within the local community and areas they lived in. One person shared a story about the importance of a smile and hello from a neighbour, through to the reciprocal action of bringing in a neighbour’s bin. These actions made individuals feel welcomed and part of the community.

The role of the support worker is important in fostering this sense of belonging and community acting as a key link for people to participate in community life.

Feeling hopeful about the future

Individuals have hopes for the future, although many of these are tied to external factors such as immigration status and being able to work.

For people still in the project, many hoped to resolve immigration status and to contribute to society through work or volunteering with a strong desire to be self-sufficient. A few individuals expressed a desire to reunite with their family. One individual who had just received settled status, now hopes to reunite with their partner and children who they have not seen in 21 years.

“I want to move forward and be able to support myself”

Individual on the project

“I don’t really want to be helped...a bright day to me, would be one where I can provide, where I can stand on my own”

Individual on the project

“I’d like to find a use, or be useful to society, I’d like to do a lot more charity work”

Individual on the project

“Get myself an education. I am hoping to be able to study and earn money. An Apprenticeship?”

Individual on the project

“To be independent financially and responsible for myself”

Individual on the project

From year 3 onwards, project participants have been asked to respond to the question:
‘Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?’
 (0 being not at all, and 10 being completely.)

Figure 7 shows the mean responses to this question from people in accommodation at the four main stages of the accommodation journey.

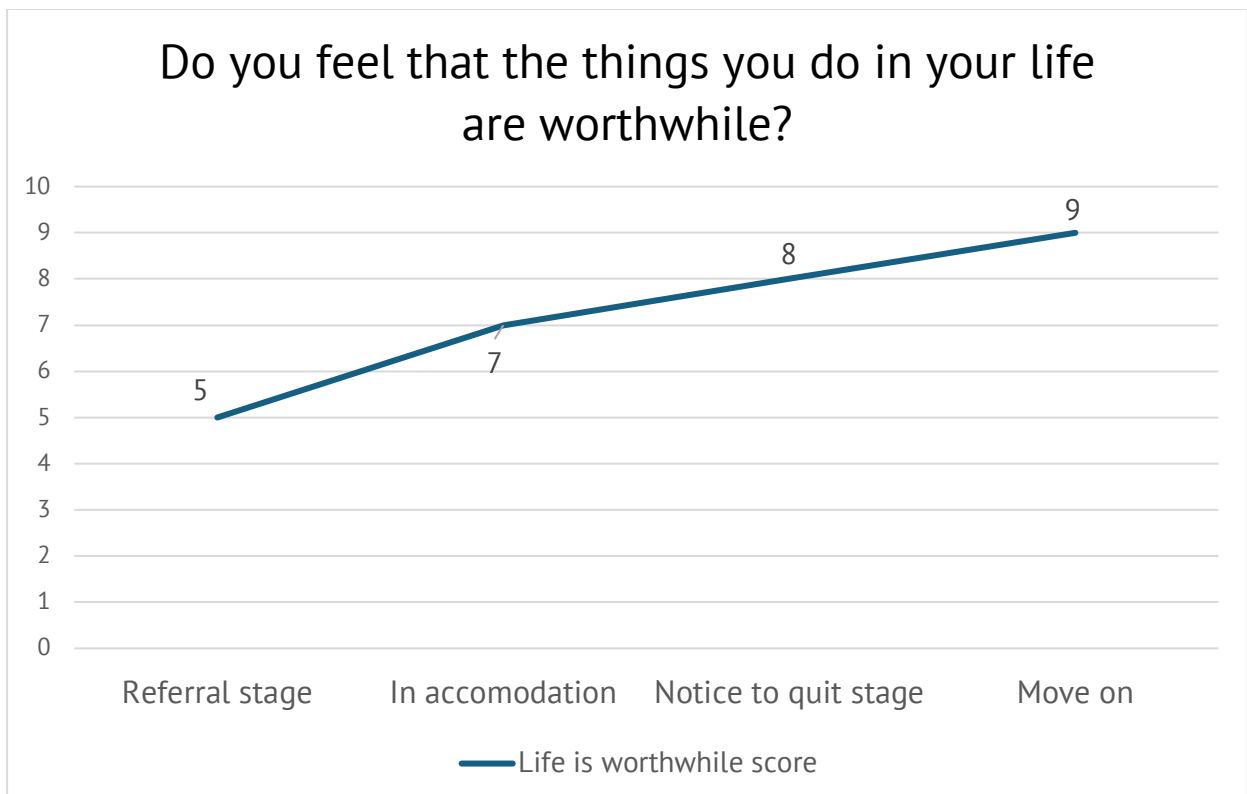


Figure 7: Life is worthwhile score for those in accommodation

Feelings of life being worthwhile increase as people move throughout the project. This is good to see and reflects the wider change and improvements in health and wellbeing for individuals as they progress through the project.

Interestingly, there isn't the drop off here at the move-on stage as seen in the housing anxiety, and anxiety indicators. At the point of move-on, most individuals now have regularised immigration status resolving what have often been years to decades of uncertainty and restrictions due to immigration status.

Freedom and making choices

People feel able to make some choices about their life. These choices are often because of the home and subsistence provided through the NRPF project. However, many feel restricted by immigration status limiting their ability to work and make bigger decisions about their life.

"I don't work, what would I do? It's kind of hard when you do nothing."

Individual on the project

"I want to work to look after myself. I don't want benefits. I want to work. Benefits are for those who cannot work because they are really disabled."

Individual on the project

Several people spoke about simple freedoms that having a private space to call home has given them. These are best expressed in participants' own words.

"In this new place, I'm free to say my prayers anytime without interruption. It's given me the ability to do so many things that I couldn't before. Being homeless is quite desperate. Even little things, like you've gotta be careful what you eat - you can't afford to have a bad stomach, because you've got no toilet."

Individual on the project

"Now I know, when I want to come back to the house, I can come back.... Now I am in control of my situation. Eat when I want, cook when I want.... Having your home means that you have a much fuller life."

Individual on the project

"When I was homeless, I couldn't do anything. Now, I can be fearless."

Individual on the project

“I think in my life; this is the first place I feel is my home. You know, the facilities, the support you get, and that no one can force you to do anything here.”

Individual on the project

“My favourite thing about the flat is coming back home and having a key. I like that if I don't feel like eating, I don't have to eat.”

Individual on the project

There are opportunities to strengthen individual choice within the project or at a minimum, to tell someone why a decision has been made.

One individual was concerned that their bus pass might end. The bus pass enabled the individual to dry their clothes at the local laundrette. Their bus pass had previously been stopped, and they weren't sure why that happened. They were very concerned it would happen again.

One individual did not have lampshades or curtains on their windows. This was resulting in peeping toms at the window. Had this individual asked for these items, they would have been provided by Connection Support. However, this process relied on the individual asking – which they were not comfortable doing given all the other support they were receiving. They felt like they were already receiving too much and did not want to be a burden.

One solution may be to provide a small personalisation budget for each individual to decorate and furnish their room. In other housing first services, this has enhanced individual choice, facilitated the act of homemaking, and to strengthened relationships between individuals and support workers (Johnsen *et al.*, 2022, p. 104).

From Year 3 onwards, project participants have been asked to respond to”

‘How satisfied are you with your life nowadays?’

0 being not at all, and 10 is completely

Figure 8 shows the responses to this question for people accommodated at the four main stages of the accommodation journey.

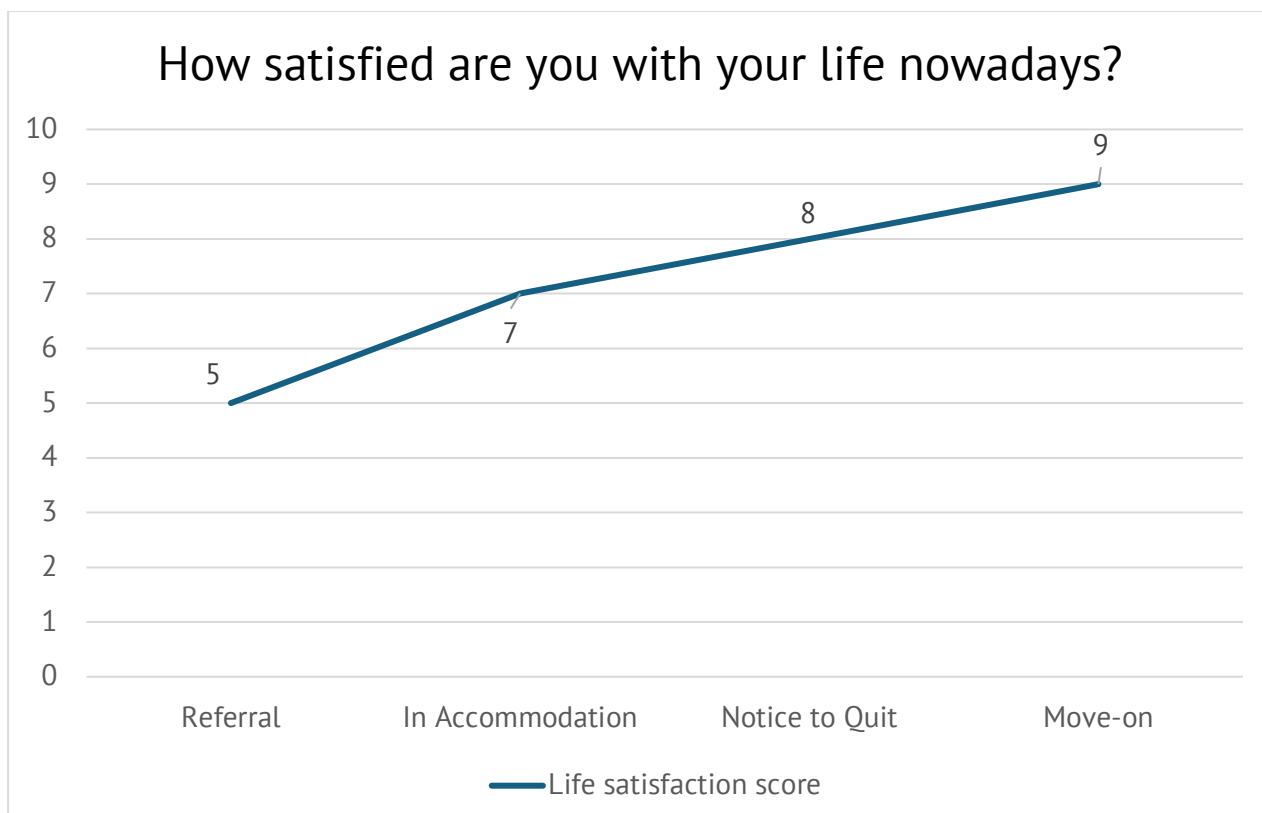


Figure 8: Life satisfaction score for those in accommodation

Life satisfaction scores increase most significantly at the point of accommodation and continue to rise throughout the project. This is very positive to see and reflects the significant change happening for individuals.

Again, it is interesting to note that there is no drop-off point at the notice to quit or move-on stage as is seen in the levels of anxiety scores. This shows the strength of the approach, and that wellbeing is not solely tied to the provision of a home.

Physical health

The project supports people to access health services they are entitled to, and the provision of a registered address has increased people's access to health services.

NHS treatment is not classed as a public fund for immigration purposes and can be accessed by people subject to the NRPF condition. However, immigration status does affect whether someone must pay for some types of treatment. Primary NHS healthcare such as GP services, dentistry, optometry, and pharmacists can be accessed by everyone. Most types of secondary and community NHS healthcare have a cost for people with NRPF unless they have indefinite leave to remain.

98% of the cohort are now registered with a Health and Social Care Partnership. Connection Support actively support people to get registered and to access the treatment they need. This included finding people GPs, reminding people to take their medicine, and helping people to attend appointments.

"Connection support saved my life. I had stomach problems, which I still have, and it had affected my mental health as well. Connection Support they help me a lot with this, I managed to see a doctor as well."

Individual on the project

Many individuals spoke of how good and supportive NHS medical provision. One individual shared that they felt guilty receiving this support, without being able to work and pay for it:

"I receive all of this medicine, but I wish I could work so I could pay for it"

Individual on the project

On one occasion, someone was only able to get a vital operation because they had been housed by Connection Support and had a home address to be released to. Prior to this, they had been unable to get the surgery.

Several individuals shared examples of their physical health being negatively affected whilst they were homeless. This included not being able to stay clean, being at the mercy of the elements, and several reports of people subject to physical violence.

“It’s a difficult prospect because there is no respect for you in society. One time, a couple of lads came up to me, wanting money and cigarettes. I told them I’ve got no money, I’m homeless. One of them punched me in the face. I wanted to fight back, but I’ve got into trouble because of fighting back. I went to the police station and reported it. The first thing they asked me, what is your address. They stopped taking me seriously, it was something that just pointed to me that you can’t even rely on the police either. It’s hard, it’s difficult being homeless.”

Individual on the project

When you are homeless, you think it is just going to be two or three days, then it’s weeks, and then it’s a month. Your lifestyle is deteriorating so quick and after two or three months - you feel a big deterioration. Even in public or with friends, on the bus, it can affect you, your clothes start smelling.

Individual on the project

This shows the importance of providing a home alongside the support to regularise status. It reduces the risk for individuals to be subject to external factors likely to affect their health.

Change for society

Within the Theory of Change, several outcomes for society were identified:

- A solution to NRPF that works – people move on so there is a flow of people through the project
- Reduced costs to society – physical and mental healthcare
- More people move into work and contribute to the economy
- Increased sense of community safety and collective wellbeing and optimism
- People able to make a social contribution to the place they live
- People feeling valued, settled, able to trust others – community cohesion.

These are each considered in detail except for increase sense of community safety and collective wellbeing. Individual wellbeing and hopeful outlooks were assessed as part of the individual outcomes section.

In total, the project has supported 50 individuals. There are four main categories of individuals, and the figures in February 2025 were:

- 15 people in accommodation provided by the project
- 2 people are on the waiting list for accommodation
- 16 people are no longer in accommodation.
- 17 people were not accepted for accommodation.

Support is also provided to the 17 people who were not accepted for accommodation through the project. 6 of these individuals either had or gained some form of right to remain. 3 were referred to another charity partner, and others disengaged from the project, moved out of the area, or were no longer eligible as they had no immigration prospects.

Overall, the project is delivering positive outcomes for society. This approach offers a lasting solution lifting people out of the destitution caused by NRPF.

Solution to NRPF that works

This project is an effective solution to mitigate the effects of NRPF providing a long-term and self-sustaining route out of destitution for people subject to NRPF.

Of all those who have left the project (32 individuals), 63% now have access to public funds compared with 0% at entry into project. 75% have the right to work, compared with 16% at entry into project.

For those who have regularised their status as a direct result of the project (21 individuals), these figures rise to 100% now having the right to work, and 95% now having access to public funds.

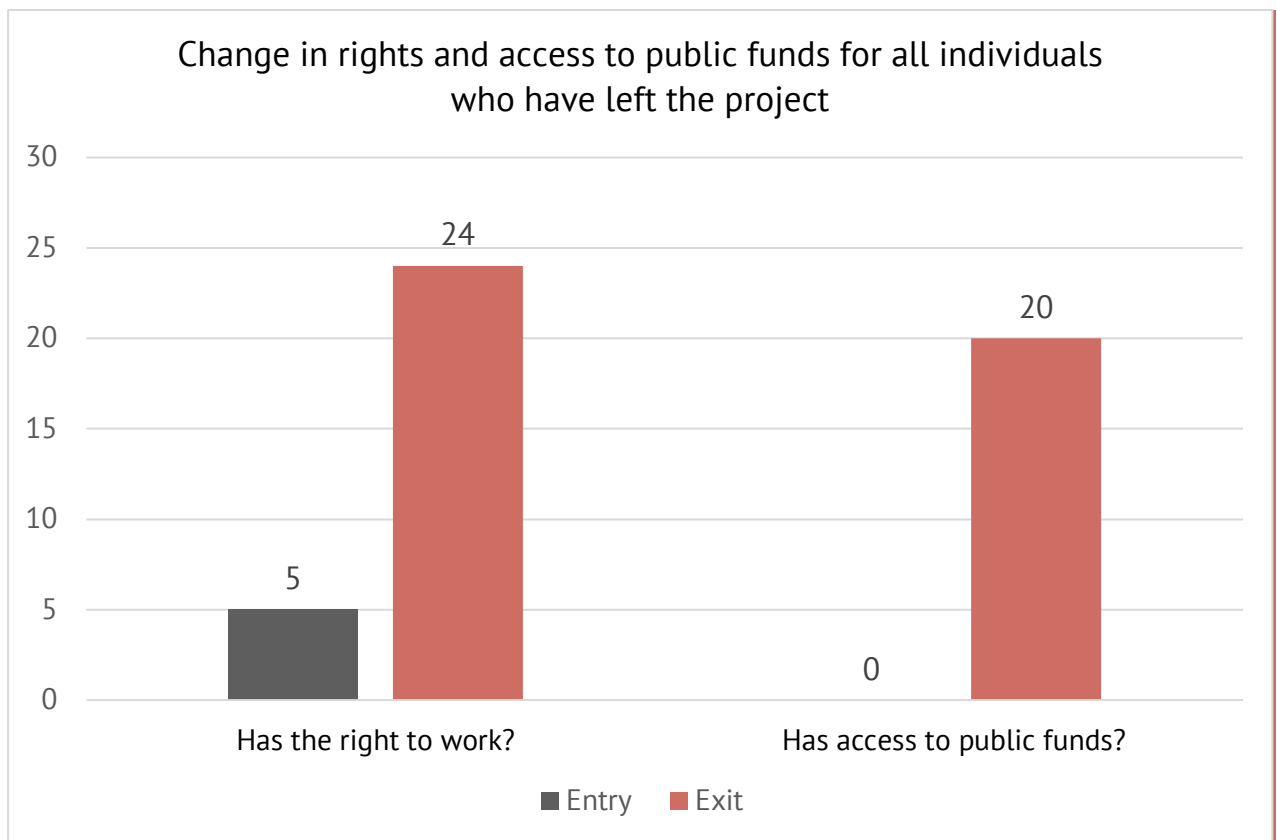


Figure 9: Entry and exit NRPF and right to work for those who have left the project

Immigration status of individuals at entry to project

Figure 10 shows the immigration status of individuals at entry to the NRPF project. Across the cohort, most people joined the project as adults who had been refused asylum (44%).

In total, 50% of those supported had been through the asylum-seeking process.

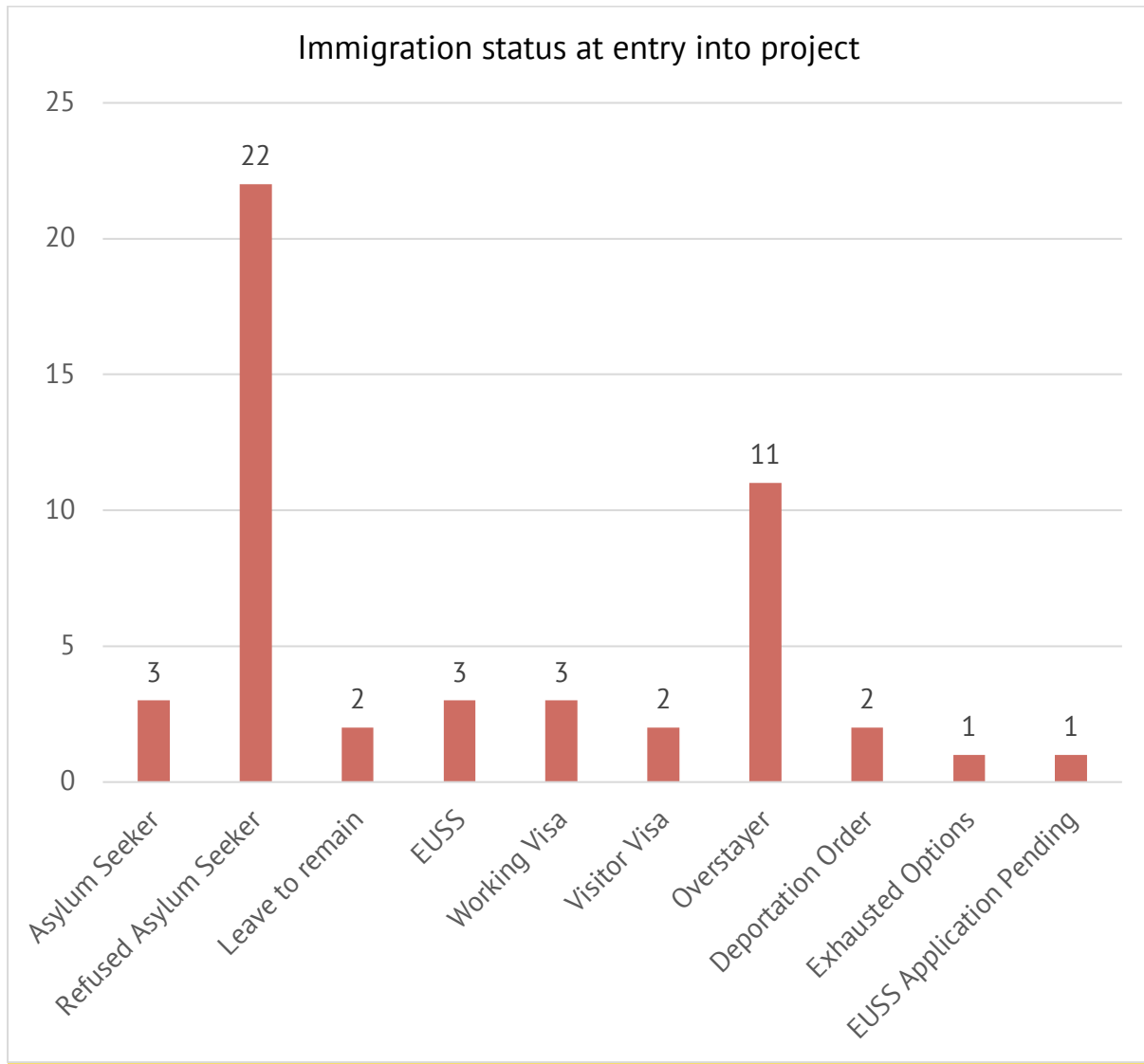


Figure 10: Immigration status of individuals when entering the NRPF project

Immigration status of individuals in March 2025

Figure 11 shows the breakdown of current immigration status across the whole cohort.

By March 2025:

- 42% of the cohort had gained some form of leave to remain
- 6% who had maintained their status on worker visas
- 36% of the cohort have pending immigration applications

This is an impressive resolution rate with 84% of the cohort either regularising their status, maintaining their status, or with a pending immigration application in.

In one instance, a deportation order was overturned and indefinite leave to remain granted.

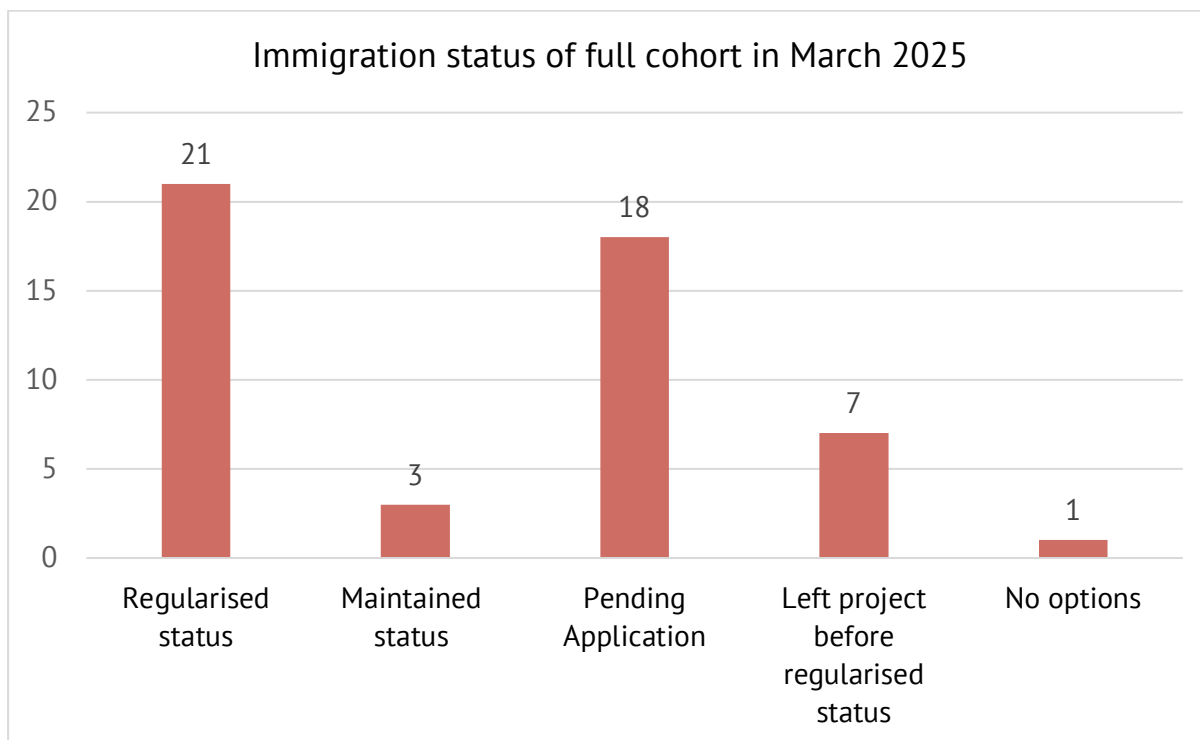


Figure 11: Immigration status of full cohort in March 2025

Only 16% of the cohort have left without regularising their status with most of these individuals moving away from the area before their status was regularised.

Immigration status of all individuals who have regularised status

The impact of the approach is strongest for those who have now regularised their status. **Of those who now have regularised status, 95% of these individuals now have recourse to public funds. 100% now have the right to work.**

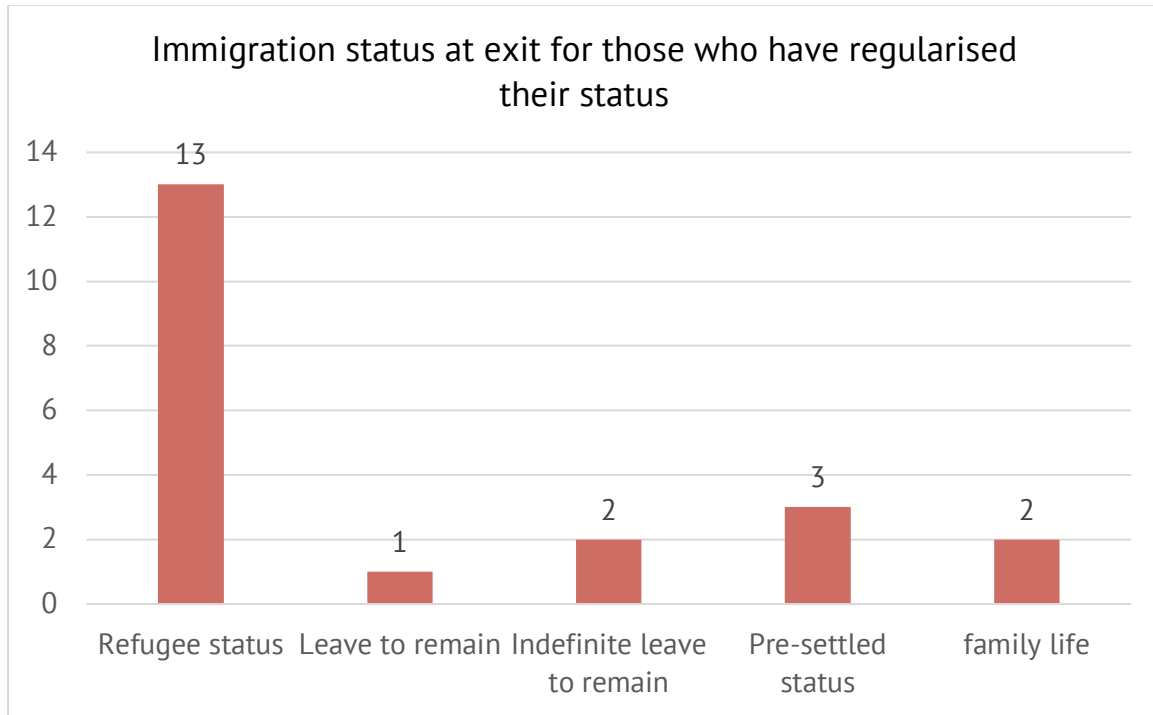


Figure 12: Immigration status at exit of project for those who have regularised status

This is an impressive turnover rate and shows that the project has long term and lasting impact. However, ongoing immigration advice is likely to be needed for many of these individuals.

For example, refugee status lasts for 5 years after which point you are eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). Whilst the usual £2,885 fee for ILR is waived for refugees, there is still a complex application process to follow. It is likely that these individuals would benefit from the continued support of Asylum Welcome at this point.

Housing status of individuals prior to joining the project

Prior to being housed, people arrive from a range of housing situations including a large majority that came in when the 'Everyone In' scheme ended.

After this, the next highest route into the project is through insecure or informal housing defined as 'sofa surfing' or staying with family and friends. For the individuals supported, this also includes sleeping on public transport or staying with people they have met on the street.

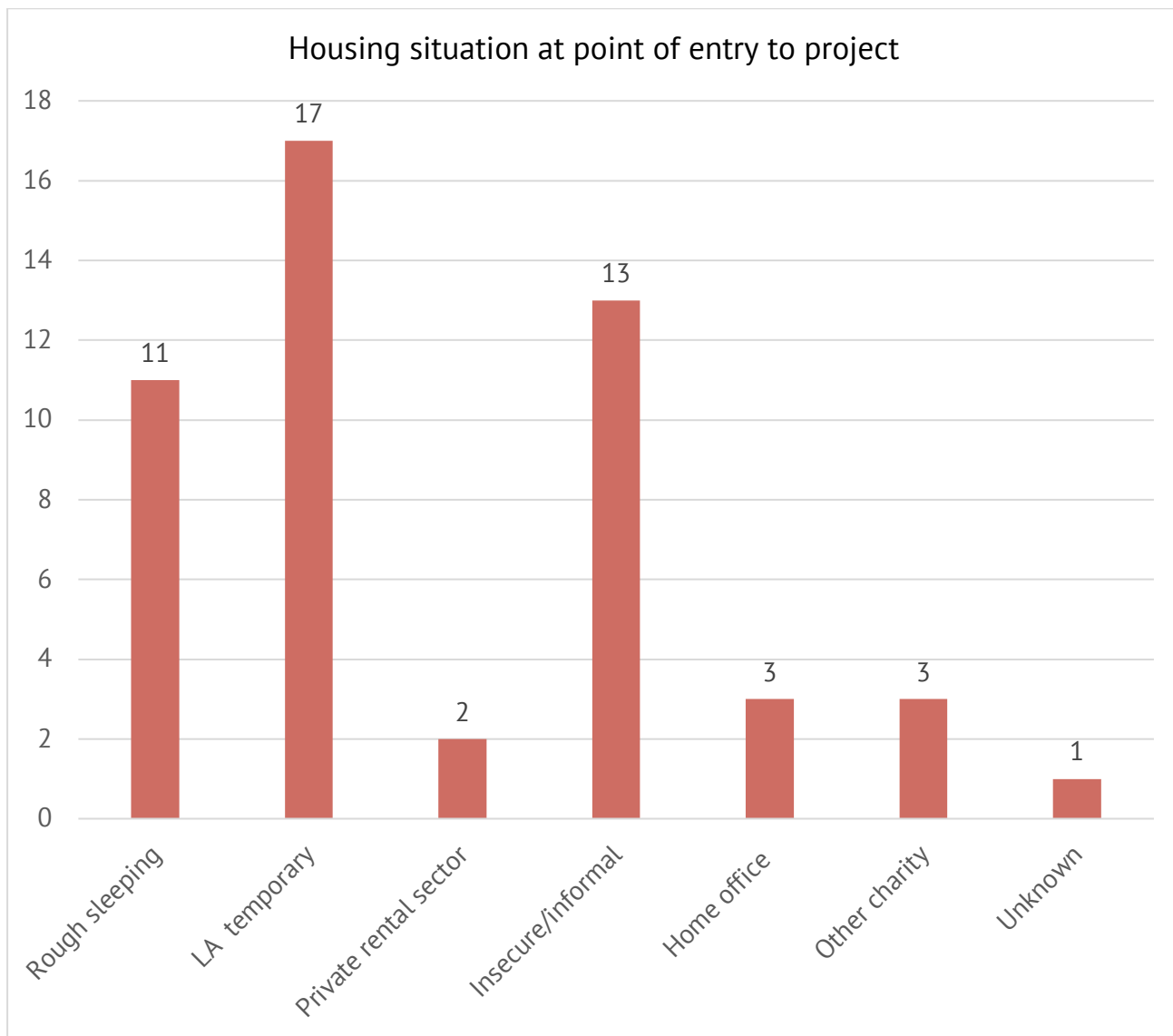


Figure 13: Housing status at point of entry to project

Housing move-on destinations for people who leave the project

For those no longer accommodated and all those no longer engaged with the project, they have moved into a range of housing situations. Most have moved onto some form of secure accommodation. There remain high levels of housing instability for people leaving the project, however.

The 'other category' includes people who have been detained or those who are deceased.

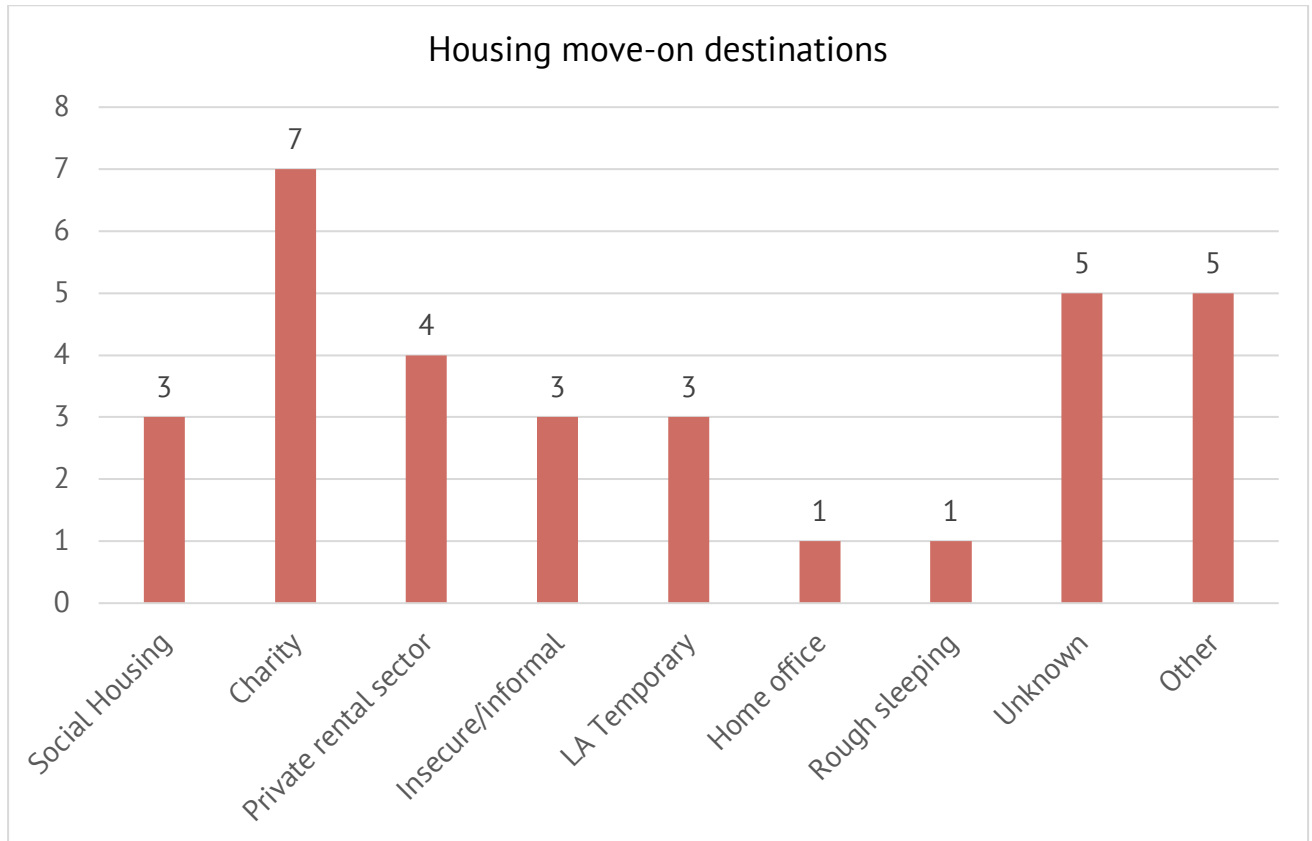


Figure 14: Housing move-on destinations for all who have left the project

The move-on stage for people is significantly impacted by the wider challenges of the housing market. Some success has been found with a direct match approach with SOHA Housing, but real challenges remain for people moving on from the project with lengthy waits on social housing registers and very high rents within the Private Rental Sector.

However, overall, the project is a highly effective way to mitigate the destitution caused by NRPF providing a route out of poverty through regularising immigration status. Whilst NRPF remains, there will always be a need for a project such as this. **As several interviewees remarked, without this project – there would be nothing, no support for people facing destitution.**

Reduced costs to society

The project is a cost-effective solution to reduce homelessness and mitigate the effects of NRPF. This service is cheaper than many other housing first initiatives which support the domestic population (who have entitlement to housing benefit). It is also cheaper than the average cost to the UK of an individual being homeless or of an individual housed through asylum accommodation. For those who are supported into work – the cost per person is cheaper than the net fiscal benefit contribution of an EEA/non-EEA migrants to the UK across their lifetime.

Costs of homelessness and asylum accommodation

Homelessness is estimated to cost the UK £1 billion each year, roughly £30,000 per person who is homeless (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012). These estimates are from 2012 and do include some costs such as benefit payments that people subject to NRPF are not eligible for. However, it also includes health care costs providing emergency care and the costs to the criminal justice system which would apply to people with NRPF. It is estimated that the NHS alone spends £4298 per person annually on healthcare for people facing homelessness, 4 times the cost for someone in the general population (Pleace and Culhane, 2016).

Similarly, asylum accommodation, costs the UK Government £41,000 per person per year (Institute for Public Policy, 2024). With 50% of people supported in this project having been through the asylum-seeking process, it is likely that the UK Government has already spent a considerable amount of money on each of these individuals.

None of this includes the human and social cost of homelessness.

Costs of the NRPF Project

This project, costs on average £6200 per person, per year, receiving support.

For those accommodated, the average cost is £6870 per person, per year. For those who don't receive accommodation, the average cost is £4640 per person, per year.

These figures should be treated with caution as they do not account for differences in support worker time provided for those in accommodation and those not in accommodation. It is likely that support workers spend more time with people in accommodation. To have factored this in, detailed timesheets would need to have been kept since the start of the project.

Value for money

This NRPF project presents good value for money compared with doing nothing and the known costs of homelessness of up to £30,000 per person, per year and asylum accommodation costing up to £41,000 per year.

The NRPF project is comparable in cost to other projects providing a housing first service, albeit with those who are entitled to public funds. These studies show housing first services range from £3492 to £10338 per person, per year (Johnsen *et al.*, 2022). It is particularly thanks to SOHA Housing’s provision of properties at a peppercorn rent that the costs of this NRPF Project are in line with other housing first services. Without this, the project would cost more per person.

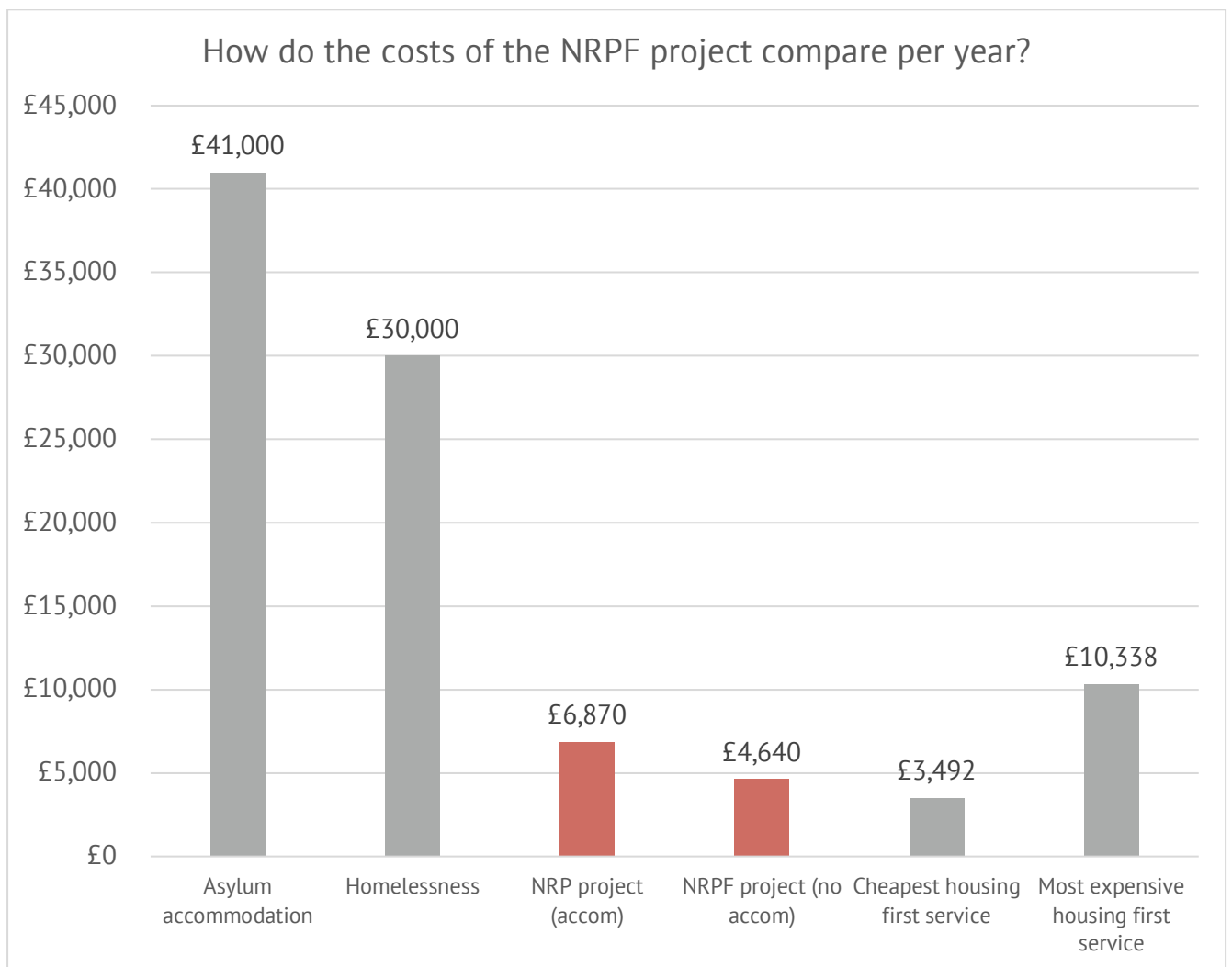


Figure 15: Costs of NRPF Project in comparison with other services and costs

With 50% of the cohort already gaining the right to work, it is also possible to consider the fiscal return on individuals moving into employment. The Centre for Social Policy estimates each migrant working in the UK contributes a net fiscal return of £36,000-£102,000 across their lifetime (Centre for Social Policy, 2024). Considering these potential returns, the NRPF project should generate a return for the UK economy.

However, during this research, we were unable to speak with enough people who had left the project to estimate any financial return to date. We are therefore unable to calculate and confirm what the cost-benefit of this work has been. We had also intended to produce cost benefit analysis modelled on the approach taken in Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder Evaluation (Johnsen *et al.*, 2022). However, there was a lack of available data across a big enough sample of project participants to undertake this. Further detail on delivering this in future is outlined in the recommendations section – it would include increasing the data capture at point of entry and at the quarterly tracking stages, alongside continuing to engage with people post move-on.

More people move into work

The approach succeeds in more people moving into work with 50% of the whole cohort now having the right to work in the UK.

42% of the cohort have gained the right to work because of regularised immigration status. This is in addition to a further 8% who had prior right to work before joining the project. A further 36% who have immigration applications pending.

There is a lack of data about long-term move on outcomes for project participants, but individuals have begun work as a cleaner, another in a café, one individual is now a taxi driver, and another has started a new job in a different area.

Of those interviewed, all expressed the desire to contribute through work, but some were frustrated at the restrictions placed upon them by immigration conditions restricting their right to work. People identified careers they wanted to do such as being a nurse, a boxer, a taxi driver, an engineer, or working for a charity supporting migrants. One individual told us they are attending a plumbing course in Abingdon, and whilst they aren't allowed to do the apprenticeship because of immigration status – they are upskilling themselves for the future.

Several noted that it is challenging living day to day when you're not allowed to work:

“Now I’m relaxed, I can work, I can build my life for the future, and it’s much better. You feel depressed when you are waiting for something important in your life, especially when you can’t work.”

Individual on the project

“I don’t work, what would I do? It’s kind of hard when you do nothing”

Individual on the project

For those who already had the right to work prior to joining the project, the loss of work was often linked to their homelessness. For example, when one individual’s place of work closed – they didn’t have enough money for rent and were given two weeks’ notice to vacate by the landlord. Others had been victims of exploitation by employers who had supported people to work in the UK on work visas.

One individual worked for decades as an engineer but when ill health meant they could no longer work, the NRPF clause left them homeless and without access to any support. We estimated that this individual had contributed more than £120,000 to the UK through national insurance and income tax.

People able to make contribution

Across the cohort, 56% of people had undertaken voluntary work – this ranged from working in a local charity shop, volunteering with the RAC, supporting a local mosque, and support with gardening.

For those in accommodation, this increased to 65% of people undertaking voluntary work which suggests that the security and safety of a home is correlated to an increased ability or interest in undertaking voluntary work. Frequently, people cited the restrictions around work as limiting their ability to contribute to society.

The role of the support worker is important in supporting people to participate and contribute to local life. This included encouraging people to attend local community groups and attending these with people for the first few times and supporting people to develop their own interests. People are supported to access training and activity that is of interest to them with 30% of the cohort accessing English as a second language courses, and 47% accessing other education and training.

People feeling valued and able to trust

People feel seen and valued because of the care and support received by the support workers from Connection Support and Edge Housing. People frequently spoke about staff being kind, about being prompt to deal with any issues, about going above and beyond to ensure people are safe – such as providing an emergency set of keys on a Sunday.

Others spoke of the help meaning everything to them, and that without it – they'd have been in a very different place.

Others described staff as being like family and people feeling treated as family. Some simply described feeling treated as a human had enabled them to start feeling like a human being again.

“My caseworker at Connection Support actually makes a point of coming to visit me at least once a week. I always look forward to that, I prepare my cups and biscuits, you know, it's a social visit as well. For the past seven years, I've hardly taken notice of my birthday, but now, first thing that morning my phone rings, 'Happy birthday!' It's all those little things that really matter. It's very empowering, you know, it makes you feel valued.”

Individual on the project

It was clear, however, that external factors make people feel undervalued – particularly the immigration system.

“I don't know how it would have been like if Connection Support haven't been here. I'm fortunate to have my family around but at least we have each other. If this project wasn't here, we'd be stranded in a country with nothing to depend on. It's really difficult even with the support I have.”

Individual on the project

“Not a lot has been done by the government to try and alleviate the suffering of a lot of people. And in my situation, in particular, I contributed to the British economy. But not only that, as a member of the Commonwealth. And British by descent. English and Welsh by descent

I paid all my National Insurance and then you get a politician who is telling me that no recourse to public funding is because public funding is a contributory based scheme. It doesn't hold any water. We feel let down by a system that doesn't care. I have served them [the British government] and they can't consider me. When I was homeless, it was just so dark for me, because that's all I had in my mind. I was disappointed. I felt let down by a system that doesn't care. We feel hard done by and let down by a government and a society that does not care.”

Individual on the project

What are the opportunities and next steps?

This report recommends that the project continues in its current form.

However, the impact for society and individuals would be strengthened by developing the move-on support structures.

There are also significant opportunities to use the learning from this project to influence how support for people with NRPF is provided.

In the following sections, there are opportunities for change and calls to action for funders, policy makers, and other organisations considering provision of a similar service.

Opportunities to strengthen the project delivery

There are opportunities to strengthen the impact of this work – particularly at the move-on stage which can be the most challenging for people.

Improving individual experience

- **Develop, agree, and formalise what a successful move-on is.** This should also agree what move-on support is provided from Connection Support (or other organisations). Project participants within the project should be involved in defining this.
- **Agree the conditions required for someone's move-on from the project.** For example, is this simply someone gaining the right to remain, or is it the removal of NRPF, a secure home to move into, having a way to support themselves etc. Could move-on partnerships be developed e.g. with local landlords, or local places of work?
- **Strengthen opportunities for participants to voice their feedback,** share insights, and to share knowledge with other participants but also within the sector. This could also include through the evaluation of the project with a peer research element.
- **Improve the condition of some of the homes.** This was identified by both staff and project participants as an opportunity to strengthen the approach. This included simple things such as providing home furnishings, alongside bigger issues such as dealing with damp. One solution could be introducing a small personalisation budget for people to make their house a home and choose what they have.
- **Consider whether the £30-£50 subsistence is still sufficient.** This hasn't increased since the beginning of the project, but inflation has.
- **Increase the available accommodation for those in the project.**

- **Increase clarity for individuals on the project around what support they receive, for how long, and how any removal of support is done.**

Support for staff

- **Review the staffing and hours allocated to the project, particularly for the support workers.** Staff time can feel stretched, and this reduces the time spent with people actively looking at how they could integrate, work, or improve their wellbeing. Time also needs to be made for staff to take care of their own wellbeing and it has been difficult to find this.
- **Expand training for staff – particularly in relation to mental health.** Support workers are dealing with some highly complex situations such as people with psychosis and suicidal ideation.

Supporting external organisation to engage

- **Clarify the eligibility criteria, particularly relating to immigration prospects.** Once this is clarified, share it externally to mitigate challenges from external organisations to accept certain referrals.

Strengthening the evidence

- **Clarification of language across the project** e.g. are people in the project described as clients, guests, participants, people etc.
- **Review the data capture at the point of entry.** This could include engagement with health services, criminal justice system and time spent in asylum accommodation.
- **Extend the data capture into the move-on period.** This could be done on a 6 monthly basis through an online survey with a shopping voucher for anyone who completes it.

For funders and those with resources

Without philanthropic giving, this NRPF project would not exist. This is because the project is unable to access public funding to support people with NRPF. Independent funders therefore offer a powerful and impactful source of funding for innovation in service design and new models of support.

Similarly, the project could not run at the cost it does without the significant 'in kind' investment from SOHA housing who provide homes at a peppercorn rent. In addition, charities across Oxfordshire provide in kind support through donations for furnishings, food, and resources for all those supported. All of this enables the project to run as it does.

There are significant opportunities for funders and those with resources to direct their resources to projects which have limited alternative sources of revenue.

Funders could:

- **Prioritise funding projects such as this which are ineligible for any public funding.** The funding of the NRPF project has enabled a different approach to be demonstrated in how to support migrants.
- **Leverage funding to support wider partnerships bringing in other funders.** For example, by committing to a multi-year grant that will strengthen applications to other funders, or by connecting organisations with funders who have shared ambitions.
- **Leverage their power to support policy and influencing work.** Funders and philanthropists have power to engage and influence helping to amplify the work of organisations funded. This is particularly the case for this work and there are opportunities for funders to use their profile to help gain coverage of innovative work such as the NRPF project.

Organisations with resources, such as housing associations, charities, or landlords, could:

- **Consider opportunities to provide homes or in-kind support to innovative projects such as this.** This would allow these organisations to increase their social impact and make lasting change for a group of people at particular risk of destitution.

For decision makers in government and councils

The need for this specific project is only required because of policy action from the UK Government – the application of the NRPF condition to migrants to the UK.

Research from the London School of Economics found lifting the NRPF condition for those with limited leave to remain would result in a positive net value of £428million over 10 years, while lifting NRPF for families with children would result in a positive net value of £872 million over a 10 year period (London School of Economics, 2022)

It is unlikely that the NRPF condition will be removed from the UK's immigration policy. However, there are opportunities to both review its effect and to invest existing UK resources more efficiently.

The UK Government could

- **Pilot funding for housing first services that support people with NRPF when they fall into destitution or as an alternative to asylum accommodation.** For every 1 person accommodated in asylum accommodation, this NRPF project can accommodate 6 people for the same cost.
- **Pilot funding for housing first services for councils already supporting specific groups of people subject to NRPF.** Councils spent £81.8m providing support to families, and vulnerable adults subject to NRPF. Pilot funding to deliver housing first services could provide a cheaper approach to extensive use of temporary accommodation.
- **Provide people seeking asylum with the right to work at an earlier stage.** People want to work, to support themselves and contribute. Providing the right to work could reduce the cost of the asylum system of support to the UK government.
- **Consider NRPF exclusions for individuals reaching a threshold of having contributed significant sums through national insurance and income tax.**

There are also opportunities for devolved governments, combined authorities in England, and the voluntary sector to mitigate the effects of NRPF taking learning from this project:

- **Targeted action to mitigate some effects of NRPF** e.g. providing free bus passes to asylum seekers such as this [scheme in Oxford funded by Oxfordshire City Council](#).
- **Develop existing support schemes for people with NRPF** – could additional support be offered such as immigration advice, or developing housing first approaches? For example, within Manchester's [A Bed Every Night schemes](#) – wraparound support could be provided for a longer term solution.

- **For devolved administrations, action can be taken to mitigate the effects of NRPF as explored by the Fair Way Scotland scheme.** This includes opportunities for change with NHS charging policy, which is a devolved matter, work to reform access to education, and right to work pilot schemes (Ang, 2025)

Conclusion

Whilst the NRPF condition applies to most migrants within the UK – there will always be significant need for this project. This approach protects against people falling into destitution through the provision of a safe home, support, and immigration advocacy. Most importantly, this approach creates lasting change enabling people to regularise their immigration status in the UK and to live independently, work, and contribute to the UK economy.

The approach is highly effective with 84% of individuals now having regularised their immigration status, or with a pending immigration application. For individuals leaving the project with regularised status, 95% of these individuals now have recourse to public funds and 100% now have the right to work. This means that they should not need to access the NRPF project again in future. This makes this approach highly effective at creating lasting change.

On an individual level, the benefits are profound and significant. The project improves individual wellbeing and sense of belonging, alongside making it easier to navigate the immigration system with specialist advice. For those receiving accommodation and support, life satisfaction and happiness levels rise throughout the duration of their engagement with the project.

It is a cost-effective solution to reduce homelessness – particularly for people seeking asylum who account for 50% of the individuals supported through this project. At a maximum cost of £6,800 per year, per person – this project supports 6 people every year for same cost that the UK Government pays for 1 person, per year in temporary asylum accommodation (£41,000).

This NRPF Project shows a way to do things differently. A way to provide support that is cost-effective and leads to lasting change and economic benefit for the UK. Most importantly, it offers a way to treat people with dignity.

“Having this status feels like being treated like a dog – left tied up outside in the cold, with no food”

Individual on the project

Methodology

This research sought to evaluate the impact of the NRPF project on achieving the theory of change and ultimately supporting people with NRPF to live fulfilling lives.

This research took a mixed methods approach. Data sources included secondary datasets compiled by Connection Support and Asylum Welcome, alongside stories, exit interviews, semi-structured interview and focus group transcripts. A range of individuals supported through the project were interviewed each receiving a voucher for doing so. Short excerpts from a focus group conducted by Philip Thorpe were kindly shared for this research.

A quarterly individual tracker compiled by Connection Support captured indicators such as engagement with health service, participation in volunteer activity, and whether someone received subsistence support. In Year 3 of the project, this tracker was expanded to include quarterly wellbeing scores and a housing satisfaction score. This uses UK Measures of National Well-being developed by the Office for National Statistics (Office for National Statistics, 2025). In total 7 quarterly scores were collected for each metric and analysed.

Limitations with this research include the use of secondary datasets compiled by different people across a period of 4 years. This means there is a small risk of data entry error. This has been mitigated by the researcher cross checking sources, and correcting the dataset where contradictions occurred.

The sample size for the ONS well-being measures is small and variable (ranging from n=4-15), and not representative of the full cohort. As the project progresses, the sample size will increase.

The research lacks insight from people who have moved on from the service. We were not able to get in touch with a high number of these individuals. This is not surprising given that the project creates the conditions for people to become self-sustaining and no longer need the project. However, the research would have been strengthened by capturing more insights from those who've moved on. There are recommendations about how to capture this in future.

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