

W-ASH SATISFACTION SURVEY REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Dec 2022

This is an independent review conducted by Togamawa Business Consultants LTD, on the engagement and experiences of people seeking asylum who have accessed the services of the Women and Asylum Seeker Housing Projects (W-ASH), run by Community InfoSource.

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This research project and report were funded through the New Scots Refugee Integration Fund

1 CONTENTS

2	The Woman and Asylum Seeker Housing Project.....	2
3	Acknowledgements.....	2
4	Executive summary.....	3
4.1	Introduction.....	3
4.2	The research.....	3
4.3	Key findings.....	3
4.4	Conclusion.....	4
4.5	Recommendations.....	4

2 THE WOMAN AND ASYLUM SEEKER HOUSING PROJECT

Community InfoSource runs the Women and Asylum Seeker Housing Project, W-ASH, which works in the Glasgow area and was started in 2015. It raises awareness among people seeking asylum and refugees, of their housing rights and supports them to secure these rights. The project support asylum seekers both in initial accommodation and dispersed accommodation in Glasgow, supporting them to secure safe and dignified housing through advocacy work with the housing provider in Glasgow.

Both initial and dispersed accommodation for people seeking asylum is provided through a home Office contract, for services in Scotland which is currently held by a private company called Mears Group. Since September 2021, newly arrived people seeking asylum to Glasgow are housed in one hotel in Glasgow.

The W-ASH project runs the following activities in Glasgow:

- Phone advice line, available daily
- a weekly outreach session at the initial accommodation hotel to support residents to know their rights and providing initial support
- Two weekly drop-ins, one for women only on Tuesdays and an open access on Thursdays, at the Albany Centre. Specialist housing casework and follow up
- Housing rights outreach information sessions at different community-based locations around Glasgow, informing asylum seekers about their housing rights and supporting them to realise those rights in the face of a hostile environment for those seeking asylum in the UK.

People seeking asylum are also signposted and referred to a wide range of support services, including statutory services and community organisations in the area where they are housed, to support their wellbeing and integration into the local community. This is done through the above-mentioned W-ASH drop-ins, phone service, one to one casework and outreach W-ASH involves volunteers centrally in the work that it does, with many volunteers having lived experience of the asylum system and relevant community languages. Volunteers support the project to build trust within communities, provide invaluable language support to breakdown accessibility barriers, and guide the direction of the project by feeding in current and recent lived experience of the asylum system. W-ASH supports volunteers to build their confidence, skills and future employability with training and personal development support while they volunteer.

For more information on the projects visit <https://www.infosource.org.uk/ash.html>

3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Togamawa Business Consultants would like to thank all those who participated in this research and for being open to share their views, including family and friends who supported. We would like to thank the Interpreters – Sanaa Alsabag and Said Denhshams who supported respondents who were fluent in other languages besides English.

We also would like to acknowledge the support of the CIS and W-ASH staff team; Gillian Wilson, Jennifer Baldyga, Natasha Saini, Jacob Strauss and Caroline Chingono in the initiation of the project and the Board of Trustees Sheila Arthur, Duncan Sim and Alvina Chibhamu for commissioning this very important research.

We would lastly like to thank the team of research assistants, Miura Lima, Ciara Regan and Elise Delafontaine, who worked hard in data collection and in putting this report together. Particular thanks go to Wilfred Zimunya -Togamawa Business Consultants for the technical support rendered.

This research would not have been possible without funding from the Scottish Government's New Scots Refugee Integration Fund.

4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Community InfoSource runs the Women and Asylum Seeker Housing Project, W-ASH, which works in the Glasgow area and was started in 2015. It raises awareness among people seeking asylum and refugees, of their housing rights and supports them to secure these rights. The project support asylum seekers both in initial accommodation and dispersed accommodation in Glasgow, supporting them to secure safe and dignified housing through advocacy work with the housing provider in Glasgow.

4.2 THE RESEARCH

In October 2022 Community InfoSource (CIS) commissioned an independent evaluation of the W-ASH project, aiming to secure feedback from users of the service, mainly people seeking asylum and a few new refugees who have sought support with understanding their housing rights to dignified and safe housing, and using that knowledge to secure these rights. This evaluation sought to examine to what extent the aim of the project has been realised and the impact its delivery has had on the service users and the lessons learnt.

Participants engaged in one-to-one interviews, an online survey and some focus group discussions in which they were asked to consider to what extent they now understood their housing rights, how this had impacted them and their experiences of using the service. A total of 105 users were contacted to take part in various aspects of the survey and of these 56 participated in various ways - 28 individuals were engaged in one-to-one interviews, 14 responded to the online survey and 14 participated in the focus group discussions.

4.3 KEY FINDINGS

- **78.5%** had been using the W-ASH service for less than a year
- **55%** preferred access to services through the telephone followed by WhatsApp (**45%**). **33%** indicated the drop-in service as their preferred mode of accessing W-ASH.

- **43.5%** mentioned phone support as the main element of service engaged with W-ASH to access support.
- **62.5%** were clear about the services offered and **37.5%** said they were not clear.
- **67 %** felt the service was welcoming, accessible (**38%**) and trusted (**41%**). Some respondents attributed their good experience to the attitude of staff in the W-ASH project.
- **57.5%** felt their housing situation had improved, while **42.5%** felt nothing had improved.
- **62%** of respondents said that they felt better informed about their rights around housing issues,
- **65%** felt that their health and wellbeing had improved as a result of using the service
- **Above 70%** of respondents felt their confidence in their ability to seek support for housing issues with their housing provider had grown.
- **79%** would be more likely to raise housing issues and complaints with their housing provider, due to the increased confidence.
- **71%** of respondents agreed they would recommend the service to other People seeking asylum and friends or had already done so.

4.4 CONCLUSION

Our first key conclusion shows that service users have had a positive experience of using the services provided by W-ASH. **Our second key conclusion** is that the project has clearly made a positive impact on the housing situation and wellbeing of service users. **Our third key conclusion** is that there is need to improve communication with service users through how CIS makes initial and ongoing contact to improve access. **Our fourth key conclusion** is that the project is building service users' confidence to advocate for themselves on housing issues

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of recommendations emerging from the satisfaction survey. These relate to the importance of enhancing the brand of the W-ASH project to enable a memorable impression on new asylum seekers, strengthen and widening their user data base and telephone service which offers a variety of languages, boost its outreach efforts and modes of sharing information. There is a clear sense that the W-ASH service supports service users with housing issues and builds their confidence, however more needs to be done to offer clarity on the W-ASH specific services. The staff and their attitude towards service users was highly praised, these skills need to be harnessed to produce a more consistent service experience for all.

The key is to continue explaining housing rights but also it may be beneficial to explore ways of talking about rights related to the Initial Accommodation, hotel stay and what service users are within their rights to ask for. The W-ASH staff could work closely in liaison with the hotel staff to ensure consistency of messaging as they are fears expressed by some respondents that exercising rights may affect ongoing asylum case claims.