

RST

Refugee
Survival
Trust

Refugee Survival Trust

Preventing Destitute Homelessness

Report



Community InfoSource

June 2013

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Summary

Community InfoSource was commissioned by the Refugee Survival Trust to investigate the Prevention of Asylum Seeker Homelessness in Scotland. Our report may be summarised as follows.

1. There is a substantial amount of research into asylum seeker homelessness arising from destitution. Many previous studies report on the experiences of support agencies in cities across the UK. The conclusions of these reports are broadly similar and include:
 - a) The belief that the asylum system treats asylum seekers unfairly, particularly in relation to the length of the process
 - b) The need for improved access to legal support, to healthcare and to adequate temporary accommodation, at both emergency night shelter level and medium term supported accommodation
 - c) The need to reform the system of Section 4 support
 - d) The need to restore an asylum seeker's ability to work, to allow them to earn an income and to help prevent destitution occurring
 - e) The need for good partnership working at local level to ensure ongoing support for destitute asylum seekers, including improved support for faith and charitable groups working in this area.
 - f) The need for awareness-raising amongst local people and related campaigning work
2. In undertaking our study, our research methods included the following.
 - a) Collecting information on a range of English projects, either through visits or telephone surveys, meetings etc.
 - b) Meeting with and collecting information from local agencies in the West of Scotland which provide dedicated support, advice, accommodation and food
 - c) Contacting residents of the Glasgow Night Shelter for Destitute Asylum Seekers (Night Shelter) that provides accommodation for that group of people
 - d) Conducting focus groups with residents of the Night Shelter and with destitute asylum seekers living in other peoples' homes in the city
 - e) Collating case studies of destitute foreign nationals, including a member of our research team
 - f) Monitoring eviction actions against asylum seekers in Glasgow Sheriff Court
 - g) Learning about a weekly help desk in a neighbourhood where asylum seekers are housed
3. Accurate data on destitute asylum seekers is very hard to find. Agencies record data in different ways and for different time periods. Nevertheless, it would appear that instances of destitution are increasing and include women and young people in this position.
4. Our investigation of English projects revealed a piecemeal approach, with faith groups and churches being significant drivers of support for destitute people. Projects provide a range of support, including temporary accommodation, advice, subsistence, and the encouragement of volunteering. Accommodation was provided through night shelters, houses leased from housing

associations, hosting in individual homes and spare rooms in shared rented houses.

5. In the West of Scotland, there is night shelter provision for 15 destitute people per night and some individual hosting. There is no supported housing, although agencies recognise this is desirable and some housing associations would be willing to make property available. There are ongoing concerns about funding shortfalls and the long-term sustainability of services.
6. User focus groups revealed a range of views. Night shelter users identified their key priorities as safety, shower facilities, places to go during the day, activities at weekends and legal support. Destitute asylum seekers who were living in other people's houses and who may be said to be 'couch surfing' saw as their priorities personal safety including a bedroom of their own, money for food and legal support.
7. The views of agencies and destitute asylum seekers in the West of Scotland, and the experience of projects in England have all helped to inform our proposals.
8. We propose the establishment of a new project which would have five key components:
 - a) A Destitution Surgery (at a venue which would be an initial point of contact for users)
 - b) The provision of legal assessment and representation
 - c) Emergency and supported accommodation with subsistence in some cases
 - d) One-to-one support through befriending
 - e) Volunteering for destitute people
9. The suggested accommodation would have three formats, namely
 - a) Emergency accommodation on the night shelter model
 - b) Hosting – we recommend giving agencies additional support to expand their database of hosts in individual homes
 - c) Medium-term supported housing provided through local housing associations
 - d) Including a basic level of subsistence
10. Proposals for how the project could be taken forward in the short term are by a Steering Group with representatives from all agencies providing services.
11. The groundswell of goodwill that exists at individual and organisational level in Glasgow suggests that a community based charity could be formed in the west of Scotland for this Project to support destitute asylum seekers in a "joined up" way.
12. The involvement of Refugee Survival Trust as a well established and respected charity would be beneficial in assisting with the raising of funds for the new project.

Section 1

Introduction

Refugee Survival Trust (RST) commissioned Community InfoSource (CIS) in November 2012 to prepare a scoping study and draft report for March, with a final report with proposed project plan and funding strategy in June 2013.

The Team for this project is: Sheila Arthur, CIS; Richard Morran, CIS; Alison Davis, CIS; Dr Duncan Sim, University of the West of Scotland; Margaret Sweeney, Glasgow Night Shelter for Destitute Asylum Seekers founder & chair and Ako Zada, previous occupant of the night shelter and Scottish Asylum Seekers Residents' Assoc committee member.

We started work in November 2012 and have attended three RST sub-committee meetings, one board meeting and one board strategy day. We have also submitted two progress reports, the draft report, an action plan and a summary report to RST.

Learning from other's experiences involved visits to English projects to obtain good practice information (section 3) and investigating wider research into destitution in the UK (appendix 1). Organisations (section 4) and destitute asylum seekers (section 5 and appendix 3) in the West of Scotland have been consulted.

The report is written in six sections with three appendices and a summary.

Case study 1 Night Shelter

Provided by a volunteer

A comes from a North West African country. There he was a young taxi driver actively involved in a political opposition group. In 2007 he played a minor but very visible role in his party's demonstration against the lack of human rights by distributing posters and carrying a banner in the front row of the march. There was a government forces attack on the demonstration ... and A was amongst those arrested.

He was tortured in prison and a specialist doctor from "Freedom from Torture" has written a strong report stating that there is clear evidence of torture (typical puncture marks in the relevant places where electrodes are applied etc). A's brother managed to pay for his unauthorised release from prison and for him to be smuggled out of the country.

In the UK, A started off in official Home Office accommodation, but this did not last long as his first case was turned down quickly. He has had a series of rejections since as his lawyer has presented appeals, fresh claims and also a judicial review. His major problem is persuading the Home Office that he would still be at risk if sent back. A has produced new evidence such as a search warrant and a supportive letter from his political party but the Home Office operates on a culture of disbelief and I expect A has a struggle ahead.

A is a nervous, slightly built 27 year old. He has had a real struggle to survive on the streets of Glasgow whenever his support has been stopped. He has been chased twice through Govan by the same gang. Normally he would 'couch surf' but he is running out of options and often has no credit to phone a friend. Once he was beaten senseless when trying to sleep by the Clyde.

He is currently on Section 4 support. He comes to the night shelter when he does not have accommodation and is very pleased to know he need never sleep outside again.

Section 2

Current situation in the West of Scotland

1 Method

The project team researched the current services in the West of Scotland through eight main methods

- a) Meetings, phone calls and seminars with a range of agencies who provide dedicated support, advice, accommodation and food.
- b) Twice weekly contact with the current users of the Glasgow Night Shelter for Destitute Asylum Seekers (Night Shelter) that provides accommodation for destitute asylum seekers.
- c) Investigation with other night shelter and temporary accommodation providers.
- d) Focus groups with users of the Night Shelter and a group of destitute asylum seekers insecurely lodging in other people's accommodation in the city.
- e) Researching and collating of case studies of destitute foreign nationals who are either asylum seekers or are homeless.
- f) Monitoring of the ongoing eviction actions of asylum seekers by previous or current providers of UK Borders Agency (UKBA) (now Home Office) accommodation, in Glasgow Sheriff Court.
- g) The experience of a project team member, who was engaged with UKBA and its associated sub-contractors, in application for and intermittent receipt of Section 4 payments and accommodation. Due to the interrupted nature of these services the project team member also experienced hosting, night shelter accommodation and the blocking of his weekly payments.
- h) Learning through information gleaned in a weekly help desk in a neighbourhood where asylum seekers are housed.

2 Facts and Figures on destitution in Scotland

The project team reviewed any figures it could collect on asylum seekers or refugees who are destitute. To take account of the lack of Scottish figures our approach was to examine previous studies and collect current estimates from any organisation or agency that regularly deals with asylum seekers: The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Scottish Refugee Council (SRC), Positive Action in Housing (PAIH), UKBA, Refugee Survival Trust (RST), British Red Cross and Glasgow Night Shelter for Destitute Asylum Seekers (Night Shelter) were all asked for any figures they held on destitute cases. We did not ask for personal data so it must be presumed there is some 'double counting' in the numbers provided.

3 Previous studies

We conducted a literature review on destitution in the UK that shows it is not a new phenomenon. This research is at appendix one.

In addition, poor administration of the asylum process exacerbates the situation of people in relation to their asylum claim and financial situation. Morag Gillespie's report, commissioned by the RST, SRC and the British Red Cross noted

“No one can say with certainty how many destitute asylum seekers there are in Scotland today. This is particularly the case in relation to refused asylum seekers who disappear from official statistics once they are refused and stop receiving asylum support. However the evidence from this research indicates that there are hundreds of people living in Scotland who have been forced into destitution, either because they have been denied a legitimate means of support by the government or because of errors and delays in the administration of a complex and inefficient asylum support system”

Gillespie M, 2012, Page 46, Chapter 5, Trapped: destitution and asylum in Scotland , Scottish Poverty Information Unit, Glasgow Caledonian University

The number of people affected through 'bureaucratic destitution' rather than UKBA or Government department refusal to give accommodation and financial support is considerable. Gillespie noted

“that 44% of all people that RST helped in the last 3 year period were entitled to mainstream benefits or asylum support and were not receiving it”

Gillespie M, 2012, Page 47, Chapter 5, Trapped: destitution and asylum in Scotland , Scottish Poverty Information Unit, Glasgow Caledonian University

4 UKBA information and procedure

This discussion about refugee destitution is taking place at a time of considerable organisational change, including the abolition of the UKBA.

The Agency was established in April 2008, following a decision by the then Home Secretary, John Reid, that the former Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate was not 'fit for purpose'. However, the UKBA itself was severely criticised earlier in 2013 in a report from the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, particularly in relation to its leadership and its failure to prevent an increase in the backlog of immigration and asylum cases; these had risen to over 300,000.

The Home Secretary, Theresa May, therefore stated, in March 2013, that it was a 'troubled organisation' with four main problems, namely its size, its lack of transparency, its IT systems and its policy and legal framework. She announced that the UKBA would be abolished and its responsibilities would be brought back within the Home Office, where it would be under the direct control of ministers.

The UKBA in Scotland were requested to provide the following information:

- 1) how many destitute asylum claimants there were in Scotland
- 2) how many asylum claimants, residing in Scotland, were receiving negative decisions that resulted in the permanent termination of support from the state

They were not able, within their current data collection systems, to provide precise Scottish information or figures, other than a figure of

“486 people in receipt of Section 4 benefit on the eighth of March 2013.”

Dunnion M, UKBA Scotland and Northern Ireland Region email 13.3.2013

Many figures cannot be disaggregated to a Scottish context. Such is the complexity of the asylum process with various avenues for appeal, that providing bald statistics could distort the picture as applicants enter and exit categories that are used by UKBA for data collection within their recording periods.

“The 2012 figures for the UK for failed asylum seekers in receipt of Section 4 benefit were 2,757, 19% more than the previous year”

Home Office Immigration Statistics October –December 2012 28.2.2013

In addition to this complexity there have been ongoing issues about UKBA’s handling of its asylum process that cloud the picture and make analysis of information very difficult. As recently as December 2012 the Parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee heard from John Vine, the independent Inspector of UKBA services on his most recent report

“I was shocked to find some of the things that I did on the asylum and legacy cases, because that has been in the public domain for such a long time. The management of the change, from the case resolution directorate to the case audit and assurance unit was so fundamentally flawed.....”

Question 2, oral evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, 4.12.12, John Vine, CBE QPM, Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration evidence.

In the same hearing Keith Vaz, MP, Chair of the Select Committee commented

“Turning to other aspects of your report, we were pretty shocked to learn about these 150 post office boxes and the 100,000 unopened letters that you discovered, as you published in your last report. How is it possible that you could discover that this had happened, yet senior people such as Rob Whiteman and others, who sit on the board and presumably know what is happening in their own organisation, are unaware of the fact that there were almost a tenth of a million letters that had not been opened”

Question 5, oral evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, 4.12.12, John Vine, CBE QPM, Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration evidence.

5 Other agency information

Four voluntary agencies provided us with their most recent statistics. The recording time periods are different for each agency.

The COSLA Strategic Migration Partnership did not have figures on destitute asylum seekers in Scotland.

The Night Shelter has provided emergency accommodation for between 10-15 persons per night over the last 12 months. The vast majority of these were single males but a small number of single females have been accommodated, either in the shelter or through temporary hosting, where this is more appropriate.

SRC has noted 116 appeal exhausted cases in the period April to December 2012 with a further 93 cases where support was terminated for a variety of reasons.

They also estimate that a significant number of their advice cases involve clients at the termination of UKBA support who are not appeal exhausted but are concerned with 'bureaucratic destitution' when claimants are transferring from UKBA support to mainstream Benefits Agency.

Case study 2 Night Shelter

Provided by a volunteer

D won his asylum appeal case in court in September 2012 when there was a positive decision made in his favour. Six months later, however, the UKBA has not confirmed this in writing. In the meantime, this man has received no official support.

PAIH provided emergency support to 285 cases in 2012 and arranged 586 nights of shelter outwith those provided in the Night Shelter. £30,400 emergency payments were made from the Hardship Fund. In relation to gender, 18% of their cases were female. In relation to age, 23% of their clients were under 25 and 3% were 60 years of age or over.

RST supported 741 people in the first 9 months of 2012/13, an increase of 38% on the 537 helped in the 12 month period 2011/12. In relation to gender, 26% of their cases were female. In relation to age, 5% were 60 years of age or over. The percentage of cases receiving emergency help while awaiting mainstream benefits or Section 4 was over 50%.

The British Red Cross were unable to provide any current figures.

6 Past provision in the West of Scotland

Glasgow/Scotland did have a pre-existing pattern of service delivery through 6 types of bodies prior to Serco/Orchard and Shipman winning the Home Office/UKBA COMPASS contract in 2012.

- (a) Scottish Government, Councils, Health Services, Colleges of Further Education
- (b) UKBA agents – Glasgow City Council, SRC, Refugee Action, Migrant Helpline, Ypeople (previously YMCA Glasgow), International Organisation for Migration/Refugee Action, Angel Group
- (c) Independent organisations – British Red Cross, Bridges Programme, Bridging the Gap, RST, Freedom from Torture, PAIH, Unity Centre, Glasgow City Mission, various Glasgow Integration Networks, National Coalition of anti-Deportation Campaigns, SRC, Refugee Action, Migrant Helpline, Scottish universities, Legal Services Agency, Ethnic Minorities Law Centre, the Night Shelter
- (d) Umbrella groups – COSLA Migration Partnership, Glasgow Destitution Network, Glasgow Homeless Network, Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees, Still Human Still Here
- (e) Faith groups – Churches, Mosques, Sikh Temples, Quakers
- (f) Housing Associations – social landlords with a history of providing accommodation for asylum seekers in the West of Scotland for the Home Office asylum support contractors

Many of these agencies are still involved in the provision of services but there has been a period of readjustment as the new Home Office COMPASS contract settled in from September 2012 with both housing and occupants transferring to the new sub-contractor.

There are a number of outstanding court actions in Glasgow Sheriff Court, commenced by Ypeople as previous accommodation provider to the Home Office, and continued by the new provider. These actions are to recover the property and to evict residents. In May 2013, the Sheriff ruled that there was no legal defence for one of those and at the time of writing an appeal is pending.

The lack of availability of accommodation in Glasgow has led the agencies responsible for providing housing under the UKBA contract to consider expanding to other local authority areas in Scotland, particularly those adjoining Glasgow City Council's boundaries.

The housing provider is required by the contract to consult with the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership before housing asylum seekers in new areas. In Scotland this partnership is led by COSLA. Before asylum seekers are housed in new areas discussions will take place with local authorities, police and health boards about the availability of suitable services.

Section 3

Experiences in England

1 Background

Across England a mixture of voluntary and faith based groups have established support and services for destitute asylum seekers and refugees.

We visited a range of provision in London, Manchester, Coventry, Liverpool, Birmingham and Middlesbrough. We telephone surveyed five other projects.

We also met with the founder of the *No Accommodation Network* (NACCOM) and attended one of their seminars with representatives from Nottingham, Sheffield, Bradford and Newcastle. NACCOM is an informal network of agencies established in 2005 that provide accommodation for migrants who have no recourse to public funds. These are people who have been made homeless and destitute. Many have fled persecution, but their asylum claims have been refused. For a mixture of reasons, many cannot return to their homeland.

The different models of delivery in English cities have grown 'ad-hoc'. There are a variety of types of night shelters, supported accommodation and private hosting in homes, but there is no single template for a service. For example in Birmingham it has taken 7-8 years to reach their current range of provision and structure.

It is clear that Christian groups and churches have been major drivers of support for these particular asylum seekers. It is also apparent that many groups provide a personal and caring service for this type of homelessness and destitution. We observed an organisational dynamism that flows from a desire to satisfy a clear need and to work 'round' the government and legal restrictions imposed on this sub-group of adults, who exist on the margins of British society.

We categorise our learning from these agencies under five main headings:

- a) Accommodation
- b) Advice
- c) Hosting in individual houses
- d) Subsistence
- e) Volunteering

The information collected is based on short interviews with staff or volunteers from 15 agencies and attendance at one NACCOM meeting. It consists of our reflections on the services provided and associated problems. It is **not** always publically available information.

In two locations we had a small amount of input from service users.

2 Accommodation

- a) Many agencies work with or provide a night shelter that offers a meal and a place to sleep for the night. In some areas e.g. Sheffield, this is a peripatetic service moving around different church halls during the week. The service users are predominately male and it is common practice for agencies to find a more suitable alternative, if women require shelter.
- b) Many agencies use night shelters as an entry level to other accommodation e.g. Birmingham. With initial referrals often coming from the night shelter this can also be the gateway to other support – food, travel, subsistence and more permanent accommodation.
- c) Due to the general scarcity of accommodation in London the agency provision is less developed. There are medium term accommodation services underway through a partnership between Praxis and Metro Housing and this will create a well funded model of accommodation.

There was a religious order providing accommodation tied to helping with chores but this was the only agency we found that operated such an arrangement.

- d) The need for agencies to register properties as 'Houses in Multiple Occupation' appeared to vary between local authority areas. There was no clear pattern and as the legislative requirements in this area differ between Scotland and England we did not investigate this in depth. The position in Scotland/Glasgow will be discussed elsewhere.
- e) Church groups have utilised and developed property that is donated or loaned by concerned members/supporters e.g. Middlesbrough. Ownership rests with the supporter and the supporting charity furnish, maintain and pay the bills on the dwelling.
- f) In Birmingham the model of Housing Associations/Registered Social Landlords (RSL) providing properties 'free of charge' to a charity is well developed and places less emphasis on individual property donation within their publicity.
- g) In general churches are at the forefront of providing accommodation. In Liverpool and Leicester former vicarages have been converted to multiple occupation dwellings that are leased to the supporting charity on a rental basis that covers the significant capital expenditure required to meet fire and safety standards.
- h) A model of self financed property has been developed to create mixed occupancy dwellings where refugees and destitute adults are housed together. This structure is viewed by NACCOM members as having excellent potential for growth due to its subsidy structure creating a steady income for the housing unit, thereby reducing the amount of finance that has to be independently raised. Rent that is covered by Housing Benefit, received by the refugee resident, subsidises the running costs of a service for the destitute resident.

- i) This model is also supported by an agency called “Green Pastures”, a Christian charity, originating in Southport in 1997, that assists church groups to end homelessness. They promote the self-financed model, where refugees will subsidise a bed space for a destitute migrant. They do not currently operate in Scotland but have 29 partners, predominantly in England and house 400 homeless people (not necessarily destitute migrants)
- j) All services comment on the cost of electricity / gas services, particularly in relation to heating, and the need to control what can be major expenditure if it is not properly supervised. Most charities describe the firm management required in this area to prevent spiralling bills. Some of the problems in this area emanate from the provision of unrestricted electricity/gas services in UKBA provided accommodation.

Case study 3

Provided by a volunteer

B is a very highly qualified, professional lady from a West African country about which the Home Office changed its country guidance some years ago at a time of change of government there. The current British policy is 'wait and see' and in the meantime no asylum seekers from that country are receiving positive decisions. There is, therefore, nothing solicitors can do to help.

This lady is a tiny, frail 60 year old. When I first met her, she was sleeping in the stairwells of Glasgow tenements. A private individual has since been paying rent for her for a small room.

As to her history, B was very badly beaten up and left for dead in a ditch at the time of her life going wrong in her country. She had tried to get help here from Freedom from Torture but the categories of victims they help are very specific, and their capacity limited, so generally people have to have been subjected to the ill-treatment in prison cells or army barracks, not, as in this lady's case, in her own home. Thus she does not qualify for this help.

- k) Organisations do not allow residents who are hosted or staying in their medium term accommodation to 'hide' from the authorities. They usually require residents to sign regularly with the UKBA using the agency office address. Residents are often forbidden from using their temporary accommodation address and all mail must be sent to the office address.
- l) There are mixed experiences on sharing of rooms – some projects insist on individual rooms while others have found that flexibility can allow some residents to share bedrooms and maximise the limited number of bed-spaces they provide.
- m) The maximum length of stay is a contentious issue. The need to emphasise the temporary nature of the accommodation and maintain joint work with the advice agency, to clear and limited timescales, is viewed as crucial. Placing time limits on occupancy is viewed by some agencies as necessary. One project is about to introduce a rule that after a set time period residents will have to return to the night shelter provision if their case has not been resolved satisfactorily. Time limits ranged from six to 18 months.

- n) Most services provide for males and females but sometimes tailor their medium term accommodation to take account of the predominately male night shelters.

In Leicester there is a 'women only' 3 year project that provides a property for 6 persons for a maximum of 6 months. This project was created because it was considered that women in Leicester while not the largest group of destitute were the most vulnerable. It **requires** users to consider, while living there, three options – attempting to access the asylum process, voluntary return or returning to destitution and will **not** offer a place unless these conditions are accepted.

They offer participants temporary accommodation and £35 per week and 20 women have been through the process. Six women have returned to destitution, three have been granted status and 11 received UKBA support again. There have been **no** voluntary returns. The agency view is that discussing voluntary return can throw light on information that will contribute to a fresh claim.

3 Advice

- a) All agencies are agreed on the importance of good advice **once** a person is settled in their accommodation.
- b) The differences between Scottish and English administration of legal aid has led to different procedures for asylum advice and representation from solicitors between the two countries. This makes their experiences in this area of limited applicability to Scotland. There has been the development of 'pro bono' legal advice in England but e.g. in Manchester this has created queues, twice per week at a clinic, with those at the front of the queue accessing the service.
- c) Many accommodation providers require the destitute claimant to have a knowledgeable agency / solicitor to discuss and promote the asylum seeker's current or new claim. Many accommodation charities **require** advice agencies to sponsor any potential resident and maintain a clear role in the case e.g. Birmingham. The advice agency is then required to work with the resident on future options within clear timescales set down by the accommodation provider.
- d) Some projects have involved staff, or in one case, social work students to support residents prepare their stories, prior to submitting a fresh claim. This is because they found that pertinent information has often been missed in the earlier legal process and a more relaxed collection of information can assist fresh legal submissions.
- e) The majority of projects had very close relationships with advice representatives but felt it was beneficial that they were separate from the accommodation/subsistence agency.

- f) There is clear financial pressure on quality advice, with one project struggling to sustain its income in 2012 and another making two advice workers redundant due to a lack of funding at a point that the Immigration Advisory Service had also closed down.

4 Hosting

- a) The provision of hosting in individuals' homes is a common type of service for agencies but there appears to be a greater focus on managed property (night shelters and dedicated flats or houses for medium term accommodation).
- b) Due to our concentration on agencies we obtained little sense of the scale of informal hosting amongst friends and fellow refugees in English cities. If one extrapolates on our West of Scotland knowledge and experience, it is likely that **informal** refugee or asylum seeker hosting is the single biggest provider of hosting. Agency provision provides for those who are more vulnerable or do not have a local network.

Case study 4 Hosting

Provided by a host

Positive Action in Housing in Glasgow has my name down as a host for a destitute asylum seeker. In 2012 they asked me to take a middle-aged woman from Somalia to stay in my home with me. She had spent a couple of nights in the Night Shelter. Not a happy event for a devout Moslem woman, already in distress, sleeping in the same room with men from many countries. They did rig up curtains for her to give some privacy.

The next day this distressed woman arrived with no luggage, not even a handbag, at my home. She spoke almost no English. In 2013 she is still with me. Her English has improved as she now attends English classes three days a week, but it is very slow. She has been found a lawyer who put a package together to apply for Section 4. The Home Office wanted a Somalian language expert to verify that she came from Somalia, a country to which the UK cannot return a person.

I would like to quote a letter from the Home Office of 9 March 2010 here, from Phil Woolas MP minister of State;

***"No person who has sought our protection need be destitute whilst waiting for an application to be decided.
Our policy is to support failed asylum seekers only when they are unable to leave the UK."***

My guest has received nothing. PAIH has provided her with some funds, particularly for bus fares to her classes. Otherwise I and some Somalian friends have provided food, friendship and small funds. She received the bus fare to travel by bus overnight to London from the lawyer, to meet up with the language expert who then wrote a positive report, which was added to the package requesting Section 4 support. No money was provided for her needs on the journey.

On December 24th she presented the package to the UKBA in Glasgow. At the end of January she received the rejection of her Section 4 request, with no reasons given. She is extremely distressed. The lawyers are putting together an appeal for a review. It is nearly a year since she arrived in Glasgow.

- c) In Manchester one agency provides over 40 host families but the type of help ranges from emergency hosting for a few days to a room for months. In one city the night shelter only operates five days per week and each week they have to arrange hosting places for the other two nights.
- d) One project in their annual report (in Liverpool) noted

“Hosting has become increasingly sporadic as there is not the capacity to work with potential hosts to the level this commitment requires”

Asylum Link, p 7, Report, May 2011-April 2012, Lankelly Chase Foundation

- e) In another city only four people were currently hosted while 15 were accommodated in shared rented accommodation. It appeared that obtaining suitable offers of rooms was becoming more difficult.
- f) In London we were told that, due to general housing scarcity and lack of ‘spare rooms’ organisational hosting was insignificant due to lack of offers of free accommodation.
- g) There appeared to be a common policy that, where a woman was in need of emergency accommodation or someone was particularly vulnerable, a reserve of hosting places could be called upon for short term assistance.

5 Subsistence

- a) Daily or weekly help with subsistence generally covers food, money and transport. We will not deal with clothes, toiletries or washing facilities in this report.
- b) Such help is often given to users who are accommodated in agency property or hosting, but not usually to those in night shelter provision.
- c) Many agencies do not distinguish between the three types of support but will find assistance with money and bus travel harder to provide than food which is often donated and is more available.
- d) The weekly amounts of cash that are given mainly vary from £8 to £20 per week, and some had reduced the amounts over the last year or so. Certain agencies have varied their payment systems to encourage residents to visit or engage with volunteering or communal activity. Food assistance can vary from cooked meals to food parcels.
- e) The need for agencies to constantly have funds to pay out weekly or fortnightly sums was a considerable pressure and time demand that appeared disproportionate to the amount of money being distributed. It did, however, serve as a mechanism to stay in touch with residents. This ensured that, once medium term accommodation was provided there was no respite from dealing with a future claim or assistance.

6 Volunteering

- a) A constant theme that was emphasised by most agencies was to keep adult users engaged with society through some type of volunteering activity. The need to encourage this when medium term accommodation was provided was viewed as essential.
- b) Many organisations had internal volunteering opportunities that allowed users to feel they were contributing to the organisation that was supporting them.
- c) While the general benefit to mental health was emphasised, organisations viewed it as a method to minimise the sense of passive victimhood within a complex immigration system.
- d) Many agencies have significant numbers of volunteers from their local area, contributing to their services and such cultures within an agency can play an important role in their delivery.

Case study 5

Provided by a volunteer

This lady, **F**, was demanded in marriage in a West African country by a powerful man in her tribe. Her mother was widowed and incapable of protecting her from adult genital mutilation, insisted upon by the powerful man.

F was so traumatised that she lost the power of speech. She has been destitute in Glasgow for years, facing problems of a unique nature on top of the normal deprivations of destitution.

A few months ago, F eventually got back onto Section 4 - but had a heart attack at the excitement of unlocking her front door for the first time.

Section 4

Organisation perspectives in the West of Scotland

We contacted 34 organisations in Scotland to ascertain their view on the predicament of destitute asylum seekers and clarify whether they wished to be involved in a future initiative to prevent homelessness and destitution.

To complement these discussions we invited a core of organisations to a private seminar based in Govanhill Housing Association in February 2013 to share views on the potential for West of Scotland services. 17 organisations attended. Particular attention was paid to ensuring that key groups in the current provision of support to destitute asylum seekers were present at the meeting. We were particularly pleased to have a representative of Glasgow Central Mosque. The RST presented the background to the study at the seminar.

We outline below the main themes that have arisen from these discussions under five main headings, in no particular priority:

- a) Accommodation
- b) Advice
- c) Hosting
- d) Subsistence
- e) Volunteering

1 Accommodation

- a) The view of the agencies was that medium term accommodation, in addition to the Night Shelter and hosting in individual homes, was necessary.
- b) Issues around how such provision might be financed and managed were recognised amongst agencies.
- c) The difficulty of raising the finance to support such an initiative was acknowledged by participants. It was agreed that such support **must not** create more competition for scarce resources amongst existing charities and faith groups.
- d) The use of Glasgow's general night shelter accommodation, as opposed to the specialist one for destitute asylum seekers, had not proved successful. There were a range of drug, alcohol, racism, food, cultural and potential violence issues that made the sharing of facilities too difficult.
- e) There were three main questions posed around management of accommodation
 - i. Would there be guidelines for access to accommodation. Would there also be weekly financial assistance for running costs?
 - ii. Where would people move to, when they had reached their time limit in accommodation, without any successful resolution of their case?

- iii. Would potential users have to be in the asylum system, signing regularly with UKBA? – some of the most vulnerable people are not ‘in the system’ for a variety of reasons but later have obtained permission to stay.
- f) A meeting was held with a sub-group of Housing Associations already involved for many years in providing flats for asylum seekers through UKBA service providers, to discuss the principle of a scheme and the detail of landlords’ concerns. The discussion covered many issues and there was agreement that such a project was viable.
- g) There was a willingness amongst three Housing Associations in Glasgow to provide unfurnished property for mutually agreed periods of time. Many of the Associations are also charities and appeared willing to consider providing flats at a peppercorn or nil rent.
- h) The legal requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation would affect how potential flats could be developed. Any property housing more than two unrelated people would require to be licensed, involving time and expenditure on registration and compliance before a flat could be used.

2 Advice

- a) The need to improve advice and advocacy services to prevent claimants becoming homeless and ensure all the grounds for their asylum claim are presented to the authorities was seen as a crucial element in any support.
- b) Problems were identified such as could an assessment be carried out as someone is about to become destitute and unsupported? Who could do this within the 21 day notice period?
- c) In relation to advice services, while it is clear that the availability of publicly funded Legal Aid is better in Scotland when compared to England, it is generally felt that some additional input of legal expertise to advice and representation will be needed.
- d) The statutory requirement of registration with the Office of Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) for volunteers could be facilitated by a local law charity which currently provides occasional and particularly asylum training. It was felt that there may be scope for some ‘pro bono’ services from the legal profession. Discussions have taken place with a university law clinic and a law charity about possibilities for legal advice.
- e) It is generally accepted that ‘good advice’ might prevent a number of people becoming destitute and homeless as many people fall through the net in the complex asylum process. In addition, to facilitate a reasonable turnover in any accommodation, additional advice will be required to assist with new or modified claims.

- f) The need for coordination amongst agencies was recognised and whether the current informal networks would need to be more formalised was raised.
- g) How individuals with mental health problems could be assisted was raised as the Night Shelter cannot take people with severe mental health problems.
- h) The role of volunteers was a constant theme of our discussions with Scottish (and English) agencies. A number of services are volunteer led and run or have a small core of part-time staff and an army of volunteers. It is clear that, if any service is to be sustainable for destitute asylum seekers, volunteer input will be considerable and will shape the image and persona of any service

3 Hosting

- a) The role and scale of **agency** facilitated hosting in individual homes in the West of Scotland is unclear. It is available through PAIH and Unity (current number of placements is around 10 between them) and an informal network of individuals. The priority is generally women and vulnerable men and may be for short periods while negotiations are ongoing with statutory bodies.

Case study 6 Hosting

Provided by a host

Q was a 23 year old man who had been set upon in a Glasgow street and his face had been slashed. The hospital had stitched him up, and realigned his jaw. His wounds were healing and he did not require any more medical attention. However he needed a safe place, with a caring adult to accommodate him. PAIH did not want to place him in a hostel, understandably.

As soon as he arrived, accompanied by a worker from PAIH, I beheld a bloody, bandaged head, slashes down through the forehead, cheek and chin covered with micropore tape, this all above a well-muscled, fit, sturdy body.

The following day he had his stitches out at the hospital, and returned to my flat looking very much improved. That evening he was talkative. He came to the kitchen and handed me a big photo of Q wearing full military gear, beside a man I recognised from the TV who was the President. Q had been one of his bodyguards, hence the strapping physique. He explained that he had received several death threats as a result of his work. The president insisted on him leaving, providing him with passport, papers, visa and money to come to the UK. He made his way to Glasgow because he had some friends here. This had all happened six or eight months before. By this time his money had disappeared, his visa was out of date, and he depended on his friends. The incident in Sauchiehall St had brought the police and the ambulance service to the scene, when his identity was discovered and resulted in him claiming asylum.

The next part of the explanation was interesting. While here he met and fell for a Scottish girl with whom he spent much time. He had been astonished when a man with a knife in his hand, in daylight, had jumped him from a doorway, and slashed his face, knocking him about. This was while he was walking along with her. Later it became clearer. As far as I understand it, she had not told him of a previous boyfriend she had had. This man had started stalking her. He was the attacker, who was now being sought by the police.

After ten days or so Q received his accommodation and Azure card under Section 4 support. When he left he thanked me graciously.

- b) Discussion with Interfaith Scotland has identified potential to broaden the network of hosting placements within their membership and this is an avenue for future consideration. If hosting was to become a larger resource some thought would need to be given to the staffing required to scrutinise and maintain a bank of short and medium term placements. Finance would also be helpful to provide subsistence and host allowances on a weekly basis.

4 Subsistence

- a) There is a network of charities and faith groups providing food, cooked meals, warmth and limited washing facilities across Glasgow. Some of these are general resources, available to all homeless, and some are targeted at asylum seekers. Such services are not dependent on grant aid.
- b) The development of 'food banks' amongst the general population is more recent and may complement much of the pre-existing provision.
- c) A few agencies provide crisis grants and bus tickets, many of which are part funded by the Refugee Survival Trust.
- d) Glasgow Destitution Network created a map in 2012 showing where these services are available. It is being updated and reprinted.

5 Volunteering

- a) Agencies consider that encouraging volunteering is important for destitute adults but it is felt that a number of traditional volunteering opportunities are not suitable for destitute adults where there is an inability to pay any travel or meal expenses.
- b) The role of volunteering for users of the Night Shelter is seen as important element of their support and engagement. It is viewed as crucial for mental health, self esteem and diversion from the daily grind of existing on charity to encourage people to take part in activities unconnected with their predicament.
- c) How agencies create banks of volunteers is an ongoing issue for groups. The Night Shelter requires an increasing number of volunteers to run its 365 day a year service and is seeking to expand its pool of helpers.
- d) The current umbrella organisations do not address recruitment of volunteers. Most services in this sector are heavily dependent on voluntary labour and there is a gap in how new participants are recruited.
- e) Many agencies have a programme of activities which are not specifically for asylum seekers or refugees and are operating within a climate of reduced assistance from government sources and increased competition for trust awards and public donations. To ensure that a group, barred from support from public bodies, receive new services is a major challenge. Some

organisations are unwelcoming to this group of people and also can be unsure whether they are allowed to help people with No Recourse to Public Funds.

- f) A Volunteer Project takes a lot of work to develop in a way which accesses, supports and recognises the people giving their time to it.

Case study 7

Provided by a volunteer

C is a 52 year old asylum seeker from a West African country. He has been destitute for several years now. His current lawyer says he has been badly treated not only by the UKBA but by legal representatives, unnecessarily making the case years longer than it should have been. For example, at one stage 2 different legal companies could not decide between them for over a year who had the man's file at that time, so that entire year was wasted.

This man has a number of health problems and for this reason is unwilling to move into the Glasgow night shelter for destitute asylum seekers. He simply does not know how he would cope with being forced to stay out between 8 am and 8 pm.

In the meantime, he has had a long series of bad experiences with other accommodation. At one time he lived in an abandoned caravan in Govan but there were problems with drug addicts. Later he stayed with someone who had agreed to take him in free but suddenly that man refused to allow him in any more - and held onto all of the asylum seeker's meagre possessions, demanding several hundred pounds for their 'release'. There was no way the destitute man could find money or dare go to the police. Another time there was a young adult son in the household which had taken him in but when the parents left, this young man treated the older man very badly e.g. insisting on him sleeping on the kitchen floor with no bedding, not allowing him entrance some days till after midnight etc. His latest misadventure was with a host who had again promised him free accommodation but suddenly presented him with bill for half the utility bills. He is currently staying with an asylum seeker who is on Section 4, and thus they are both at risk of being made homeless.

C has eye problems as a result of torture in prison in his home country. He has the HC2 form entitling him to free optician and dental treatment. This form needs to be replaced every 6 months. Recently he was asked to produce an old certificate to cover the provision of a pair of glasses many months before, with the threat of £100 if the document was not found within 21 days. Most fortunately, he carries all his papers on him all the time and had not thrown away the out-of-date certificate on getting a new one.

Section 5

Destitute user perspectives in the West of Scotland

Methods

In March 2013 we conducted focus groups to seek the opinions of two contrasting groups of destitute asylum seekers on their needs and issues.

The first Group was composed of men spending the night in the Night Shelter. The Night Shelter also provides accommodation for men who are migrants with 'no recourse to public funds' (mainly Romanians in their first year in the UK and Russians). On the survey evening, there were five asylum seekers and five migrants at our discussion.

The second group was composed of 'couch surfers', destitute asylum seekers who are sleeping in accommodation belonging to other people, often to other asylum seekers or refugees. Participants in the focus group said they had had suicidal thoughts since becoming destitute. The relationship with the person entitled to the accommodation can be reasonable but even in that small group (11 men, 3 women and a baby) there were people who had experienced unpleasant or threatening situations. These included:

- a) Being asked to move out with no warning,
- b) Being forced to make a financial contribution to energy bills when they have no access to funds,
- c) Having to sleep outside for occasional nights when the key holder could not be contacted to open the door and the destitute person having no credit on her/his mobile to phone someone else who might take them in,
- d) Not being allowed to use the kitchen,
- e) Being obliged to have sex, against their will, with the hospitality provider.

Standard questions were posed to the two groups:

- a) We wanted to know what their needs were.
- b) We then asked them, from the list created, what would be their top priorities.
- c) We asked each person to indicate three choices and we recorded this.

The answers reflected how different the current experiences and priorities were of the two groups.

Group 1 Sleeping in the Night Shelter

In Group 1, in addition to a place to sleep, four issues were dominant:

- a) The ability to access their accommodation during the day was the top priority. The current experience is of the men arriving in an exhausted state at 8 pm opening time. They want to lie down immediately, and often feeling deeply chilled as many of them wear leaking shoes and thus have soaking wet feet.

They have spent the day in libraries (which do not keep hours as long as the shut-out period of the night shelter) or simply walking the street.

- b) The second priority was access to a shower. This is not currently available in the Shelter. There are set times in another homeless day centre that a shower is available, but this is a long walk away and it involves going outside into the cold again immediately afterwards. The men feel that, for their dignity, it is very important to be clean.
- c) In third place were venues which were open on Sundays with activities and on Friday and Saturday evenings after 5pm. Libraries are generally shut at these times. At these times of the week the men have no option but to walk the streets.
- d) In joint third place, legal support was requested. This included a second legal opinion on an asylum case or being allowed access to legal advice without being asked to pay a large sum of money in advance. This latter situation affects people who are seeking residence in the UK but are not claiming asylum.

Thereafter there were nine lesser priorities:

- e) Access to a washing machine and drying facilities
- f) Various aspects of personal security:
 - (i) The safe storage of belongings was felt to be important. At the moment, there are very small lockers provided, that can only hold paperwork and mobile phones. The men would like all their belongings to be stored in secure, larger lockers.
 - (ii) Front door security was also important, with an apparent lack of appreciation that the entire worldly possessions of some people are stored on the premises.
- g) The possibility of a lie-in once a week was seen as very desirable. At present all users have to vacate the building by 9am.
- h) Access to bus tickets would make daily life more comfortable. Some of the men are not in good health and they find the long distance to the NHS Clinic for the Destitute and the Home Office premises, very demanding and often painful.
- i) A small amount of cash to allow for purchase of mobile phone credit and other small items would make a huge difference to their lives.
- j) It is considered to be very important that the organisation providing the accommodation has no links with the immigration authorities
- k) A proper bed to sleep on and smaller rooms to sleep in, with less people in each room was felt would make the Shelter more habitable.

- l) Access to an eating venue during the day on Sundays was lacking
- m) Information and introductions on how to volunteer were mentioned. Difficulties with travel expenses not being paid for people who were destitute was noted.

Stage prior to homelessness

There was discussion on what might have been useful **prior** to a person becoming homeless. The majority were definite that the following would have benefitted them:

- a) More information on their situation
- b) Where to get legal advice,
- c) Where there was emergency accommodation and support etc.

They would like to have been given leaflets such as the Glasgow Destitution Network map of facilities.

Group 2 Sleeping in someone else's home

The 'couch surfer' group, spoke about very different priorities, reflecting their very different living situation. The group held similar views on the priorities:

- a) The first priority was to have access to cash to be able to buy the food they wanted.
- b) The second priority was a desire to have his/her own bedroom. It is normal to sleep on a couch, in a public area, with an inevitable lack of privacy.
- c) The third priority was a legal advice project as they currently feel a great lack of support in this area. Following on from this, the opportunity of a second opinion on their case was viewed as an important feature of a legal advice project.
- d) Personal Safety. While this was a general feeling two examples illustrated the problem - the desire for a lock on the bedroom door and a key to the front door of the property to facilitate access.
- e) Access to education, especially English Language training. The uneven provision between colleges and the refusal by some institutions to allow destitute asylum seekers a full time or part time place on any course was problematic. Information about which colleges are still offering access to courses for destitute asylum seekers was desired.

Issues for Women

The three women from the 'couch surfer' group left the main group for a private discussion with a female Team Member. Two were between 30-40 years of age and one was approximately 60 years of age.

The women all talked openly about the difficulties of being destitute, with no money and no accommodation. The following nine issues were particularly related to their gender:

- a) Women are reluctant to offer hosting/couch surfing to other women.
- b) Male hosts start by taking the women in as friends and then become "over friendly".
- c) Sexual favours can be required to maintain the ability to stay in a man's flat. This may develop into sexual abuse.
- d) Domestic abuse, in the form of having to work as a domestic slave, is a common experience.
- e) Women are at particular risk of being stolen from, yet are frightened to go to the police as they are living at that property.
- f) Being made to feel unwelcome when trying to cook in the kitchen, if the main resident is around, is a common experience.
- g) Being made to feel that you have overstayed your welcome is common - yet you have nowhere else to go.
- h) Having no control over behaviour in the flat, such as smoking or loud music is a common experience.
- i) Where the hosts are asylum seekers and are not allowed to have others staying in the flat a 'couch surfer' is required to stay away from the house for long periods of time, when visits from officials are expected.

Case study 8

Provided by a volunteer

E has had a few spells of destitution in the last few years, but is currently back on Section 4. He had some terrible experiences when trying to survive without housing. If he had no credit in his phone, which was often the case, he did not always manage to find someone willing to let him spend the night on a floor. Once when sleeping outside he was robbed of the little he had. Another time he was sound asleep when attacked and beaten senseless.

He has had the HC2 form for a few years and has been careful to organise its replacement every 6 months. Although his teeth look beautifully white, some of them were broken during an attack and he requires some treatment. Each time he starts some treatment, the dentists put heavy pressure on him to have his teeth cleaned by their hygienist. The first time this happened, he did not know such treatment was not covered by the certificate and he was thus presented with a bill he could not pay.

He was recently asked by the health authorities to produce an old HC2 form covering some former treatment, with the threat of £100 if he did not present this within 21 days.

Section 6

Suggestions for a Project Structure

Reducing destitution, promoting physical and mental well being

1 Introduction

The suggested Preventing Destitute Homelessness Project takes into account the views expressed by destitute people, services surveyed in England and feedback from West of Scotland organisations. It builds on the strengths of existing provision to ensure more comprehensive support. It avoids duplication, while filling gaps in the safety net.

We suggest that the Project is designed for a three year period with quarterly monitoring and annual evaluation and review. We view three years as a preferred timetable because the key indicators for success require a reasonable timeframe for evaluation.

We anticipate that the Project will support vulnerable, at risk people each year by:

- a) Removing the risk of exploitation – including employment, criminal, sexual and trafficking
- b) Reducing physical harm
- c) Providing sustained access to justice
- d) Ensuring access to food, toiletries, and bus tickets for essential journeys
- e) Negotiating access to NHS and other mainstream services
- f) Improving, or halting deterioration of, mental well-being
- g) Improving physical health
- h) Improving integration

2 Project Services

The Project will have five key components developed to fill gaps or expand existing services:

- a) A Destitution Surgery for individual needs assessment
- b) Legal assessment and representation
- c) Emergency and supported accommodation and subsistence
- d) One-to-one support through befriending
- e) Volunteering

2 a) Destitution Surgery

A surgery would be held three days a week, three hours a day, at a clearly identifiable venue which would be the first point of contact for most service users.

A needs assessment of each person would be conducted at an initial interview by a support worker or a trained volunteer. This would include mental and physical well-being, financial situation, existing support and services being accessed. A skills and aspirations assessment could be included. Assessment would lead to possible referral to ensure appropriate support.

2 b) Access to Justice Legal Clinic

An 'arm' of the Destitution Surgery, this service would be overseen by legally qualified asylum lawyers. It would be staffed by specialist volunteers, lawyers working on a rota or law students, in conjunction with a currently operating law clinic. This would run two sessions per week.

2 c) Accommodation

The Project would also consider accommodation needs using three main West of Scotland resources

(i) Emergency accommodation

The Project will refer predominantly male users to the existing specialist Night Shelter for overnight accommodation and food. It would also assist the specialist shelter with its need for voluntary labour through improved training, and co-ordination of volunteers.

(ii) Hosting in individual homes

The Project would assist existing providers to develop their bank of available hosts (only ten currently available) to 60 to increase the availability of this service. It would plan to offer potential hosts a weekly sum to defray their increased costs, where this financial assistance was required.

Hosting is currently provided for women and vulnerable men and it is not envisaged this would change unless there was an increase in offers of hosting places for men.

(iii) Medium term supported accommodation

The Project would provide a bank of flats, leased from Housing Associations in the West of Scotland (at a peppercorn rent and maintenance free basis). Other property could be donated, purchased or leased via faith groups, philanthropists or student landlords. The occupants of the accommodation would be supported by housing staff.

2 d) Befriending and 'case work' support

Destitution Surgery volunteers would provide support using experience gained through the Night Shelter and the Scottish Guardianship Service (for young, unaccompanied asylum seekers).

This would provide one-to-one support to improve access to health services, welfare, social activities, and volunteering in order to prevent isolation.

2 e) Volunteering for destitute people

The Project would build on the track record of the Red Cross / SRC and other third sector organisations for volunteering with a 'time-bank' approach to the use of people's skills. It would refer to other agencies which provide activities and opportunities for putting existing skills into action.

2 f) Employability

The Project would refer to existing provision for the development of employability (including volunteering opportunities). These include:

- (i) community activities provided by housing associations involved
- (ii) faith-based organisations such as Bridging the Gap
- (iii) college courses
- (iv) community based organisations such as the Govan and Craigton Integration Network
- (v) refugee community organisations such as Karibu Scotland

3 Resources

- a) Staffing: within this structure there would be four positions:
 - i. Project Manager
 - ii. Destitution Surgery Officer
 - iii. Housing Officer
 - iv. Volunteer and Partner Support Officer

Plus three sessional Support Workers for the Destitution Surgery

These posts would comprise a variety of part and full-time positions. The details of these are in the Business Plan.

- b) Revenue non wage costs – breakdown is in the Business Plan
- c) Capital not significant – breakdown is in the Business Plan

4 The Structure of the Project

It is considered crucial by our team that the RST maintains its involvement in this Project. The charity has national credibility and is a well established agency in the field of asylum seeker and refugee support. RST is renowned and respected for supporting people at risk. Continued involvement would enhance its fundraising profile and would assist with raising additional finance to alleviate destitute homelessness.

To establish a new legal body will take some time and considerable effort. This could delay fundraising and the delivery of new services to destitute and potentially homeless asylum seekers. We consider there are benefits to using existing organisations, as the applicants for the first phase of grant bids.

Services could be provided by:

- Existing agencies with their own management and governance structures
- New services through a Service Level Agreement or partnership agreement

The Project could be managed by a steering group with representation from all agencies providing services. A separate constitution would not be needed in the first phase but a working agreement would be necessary to clarify roles, responsibilities, reporting procedures and accountability.

All accounting and finance procedures would be administered by the lead partner and any agencies providing part of the service would have a Memorandum of Understanding on allocation of funding and claims for expenditure.

A management structure that includes people who are, or who have been, affected by destitution would enable the Project to demonstrate democracy and best practice. How such participants could be involved in a steering group could be included in any grant applications.

A common model would be to have an Advisory group that runs in parallel to a Steering or management group allowing a broader constituency of people to participate in discussion on the service while having no direct responsibility for delivery and supervision. Our recommendation is to involve a majority of people who are or have been affected by destitution.

Possible options for organisational models for the immediate period, in no particular priority are:

1 One national organisation (RST) with two community based, well established West of Scotland groups – for example Bridging the Gap and one of Glasgow's Integration Network groups.

2 One national organisation (RST) with two West of Scotland agencies already delivering destitute services – PAIH and the Night Shelter

3 One national organisation (RST) with one West of Scotland agency already delivering destitute services – PAIH or the Night Shelter

4 Three national organisations - RST, SRC, British Red Cross

5 A new organisation with representatives from seven local and national non-governmental agencies and faith groups and eight individuals who have used or are currently using asylum destitution services.

The Trust would receive a percentage of the award/grants for coordination and there would be a service level agreement to deliver mutually agreed support.

Options could be reviewed in the light of fund raising awards or discussions with funders.

Please note that this report is complemented by the Business Plan

Case study 9 Night Shelter

Provided by a volunteer

G spent many months with us and then moved to Section 4 accommodation. She was our longest-term female resident and we all wanted to see her in more suitable accommodation.

G is a tiny, slightly-built 21 year old woman, a Tamil from an island in the Indian Ocean. She had been tortured before her escape to the UK and needed psychiatric support here, which she got through Freedom from Torture. Their specialist report is what allowed her case to be re-opened.

G spent her days in a Glasgow library, to keep warm as well as safe. The cold was a real issue for her at all times. We managed to get her some suitable clothes but the night shelter is difficult to heat, so she was generally uncomfortable. Wrapped in a sleeping bag, G often played cards with a couple of the men till late at night. Our food, too, was not to her taste, not being very spicy, and hers was too spicy for everyone else! We allowed G to do her own cooking and this helped to keep her happy.

G was very grateful to have had the security and welcome of the night shelter and very touched to be given a farewell party on her last night

Appendices

Appendix 1 Research evidence of refugee destitution

Asylum Seekers: Getting Refugee Status

During the 1990s, an increase in the numbers of people seeking asylum in the UK led the Government to separate asylum from other aspects of immigration. In 1993, for example, asylum seekers lost the right to be considered homeless and to have a secure tenancy in social housing. Later legislation introduced voucher systems for shopping; although these were later abandoned, a similar system called 'Azure cards' was introduced in 2009 for asylum seekers receiving Section 4 support. This is described in more detail below.

Most significant, however, was the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act. Subsistence levels for asylum seekers were set below the level of welfare benefits and they were excluded from certain forms of benefit, such as Child Benefit. The Act established the National Asylum Support System (NASS), later part of the UK Borders Agency (UKBA) and introduced compulsory dispersal for those people needing accommodation, to locations across the UK. Within Scotland, Glasgow became the only local authority to participate in the scheme, subsequently becoming the city with the largest number of asylum seekers. It contracted to provide 2,500 houses every year from April 2000 (Barclay *et al* 2003).

From 2006, the UKBA also contracted with private housing provider the Angel Group, and with the YMCA, to provide accommodation for asylum seekers in the city. But in 2010, the contract with the City Council was terminated following a dispute over funding for the programme. Initially the YMCA (later named Ypeople) took responsibility for the whole contract, but in September 2012, the contract was allocated to Serco. Because Serco are an international service company with no specific experience in the provision of housing, they have subcontracted the management of asylum seeker accommodation to the private housing management company Orchard and Shipman. The new contract is no longer Glasgow-specific, and so accommodation is currently being sought outwith the city; asylum seekers may therefore become more dispersed when they are housed in Scotland.

Indeed, the asylum regime in Scotland is rather complex. Legislation on asylum and immigration are matters for Westminster, and the UKBA is part of the Home Office. Yet the agencies which deliver services to asylum seekers in Scotland, including housing, education, health and social services, are the responsibility of the Scottish Government. Refugee settlement and integration are also devolved, and the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum's action plan (SRIF 2003) guides policy implementation and delivery of support services in this area.

The numbers of people seeking asylum have frequently overwhelmed the Home Office, leading to extensive delays in considering asylum cases; the uncertainty created has been one of the most difficult aspects of living with immigration control (Sales 2007). In July 2006, the Home Secretary announced that there was a backlog of around 450,000 asylum claims and established the Case Resolution Directorate to clear what became known as 'legacy' cases, within the following five years. It was estimated that the number of legacy cases within Scotland involved around 1,450

families¹. The previous year, the UK Government had developed a New Asylum Model, aiming to conclude asylum cases within six months, but the complexity of many cases means that this was always a rather unrealistic aim.

Research conducted by the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees (Sim 2009) indicated that many asylum seekers in Glasgow had had to wait some considerable time for their case to be resolved. On average, individuals involved in the study had waited almost exactly five years, with some waiting as long as seven years. Most had received status only within the previous year which reflects the fact that the backlog in dealing with asylum cases was only beginning to be tackled effectively by the Home Office.

When refugee status is awarded to individuals, this gives them leave to remain in the UK initially for five years followed (usually) by Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). Other decisions include Humanitarian Protection, lasting five years initially, followed (possibly) by ILR; and Discretionary Leave to Remain, lasting normally for just three years. All individuals given leave to remain in the UK gain rights to work, to free healthcare, to welfare benefits, to housing and to educational courses, although some of these entitlements may be constrained and may need to be paid for. Refugees often experience particular difficulties, not least the short 28-day timescale from the day that they are told they have leave to remain, in which they must claim benefits and apply for housing, so as not to put themselves at risk of homelessness. The period is typically shorter than this because of failures of communication or administration (Perry 2005).

Final asylum statistics for 2012 are not yet available. In 2011², the Home Office received 19,804 applications, an increase on the previous year, and made initial decisions on 17,496 cases. Of these, 25 per cent were granted asylum, 8 per cent were granted discretionary leave or humanitarian protection, and 68 per cent were refused. Those who are refused asylum have the right of appeal and, in 2011, 9,980 applicants requested an asylum appeal; 26 per cent of these were allowed, 67 per cent were dismissed, and 7 per cent were withdrawn. At the end of 2011, a total of 11,297 applications (received since April 2006) were pending a decision (initial decision, appeal or further review). The statistics show therefore that the majority of asylum claims fail, either at the initial stage or at appeal, and also that many cases take years to resolve.

Following a negative decision, the Home Office expects asylum seekers to return to their home country. However, it is recognised that this may not be possible, immediately and so destitute asylum seekers who are temporarily prevented from leaving are eligible for what is known as Section 4 support. This form of support is intended as both limited and temporary and involves the use of pre-payment cards called 'Azure cards'. In 2011, there were 3,788 decisions to grant Section 4 support and, at the end of 2011, the Home Office records 2,310 refused asylum seekers (excluding dependents) as receiving this support.

¹ Personal communication from Scottish Refugee Council

² <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/immigration-brief-q4-2011/asylum?view=Standard&pubID=1007880>

Why Does Destitution Occur?

The Home Office statistics described above provide an 'official' picture of asylum within the UK but they do not portray the whole picture. Firstly, to be eligible for Section 4 support, refused asylum seekers must not only be destitute but also be taking steps to leave the UK, albeit that they may be prevented from doing so temporarily. Section 4 support is set at £35.39 per week, which is only half of standard income support levels (British Red Cross 2010).

Second, many asylum seekers are frightened to return to their homeland because they believe that the position there is still unsafe for them. They fear what may happen to them and their families. This fear results in many people deciding to remain in the UK illegally, often making enormous personal sacrifices in doing so. Without financial support, and having (usually) exhausted their rights of appeal, they become destitute and have no access to basic services. The Refugee Council (McIntyre and Mogire 2012) describes these people as living 'between a rock and a hard place', and argues that the Home Office is wrong to refuse asylum in such cases.

Because refused asylum seekers are not legally allowed to work, they become reliant on the goodwill of friends and support from charitable sources, for food, health, money and safety. Some may work illegally in order to earn money to survive, putting themselves at risk of exploitation; some women may resort to prostitution. Lack of permanent accommodation is a major cause of concern, with individuals 'sofa surfing' in the houses of friends or using night shelters. Poor health (including mental health) is another major problem, with destitute asylum seekers often unwilling to access health services as they fear contact with the 'authorities'.

Crawley *et al* (2011) suggest that the continuing problem of destitution reflects failings on the part of central government:

Destitute asylum seekers use a range of strategies to cope with destitution and are forced to lead little more than a hand-to-mouth existence, with no hope that their situation will ever come to an end. Their overwhelming lack of access to institutional, social and economic resources denies them a sustainable livelihood, and results in a life that is robbed of dignity and unacceptable by human rights standards.

The survival strategies adopted by destitute asylum seekers are a consequence of asylum policy in the UK. That hundreds of thousands of people would rather live in poverty and in constant fear of deportation – reliant on friends, transactional relationships, commercial sex work or low-paid illegal work – rather than return to their country of origin, suggests the failure of government policy.

The actual numbers of destitute asylum seekers in the UK is not known. Crawley *et al* (2011) quote National Audit Office data for 2005 which suggest up to 283,000 refused asylum seekers living in the UK in 2005. More recently, Gordon *et al* (2009) suggest that the number of what they term 'irregular migrants' in the country is between 400,000 and 500,000, mostly living in London. Pinter (2012) refers to research at the University of Oxford which suggests that there were 155,000 irregular

or undocumented children living in the UK in 2007, many of these unaccompanied asylum seekers, but there do not appear to be more recent figures.

Researching the Problem

There have been a significant number of studies of destitute asylum seekers in the last ten years. A large number of national support agencies have conducted research, including the Refugee Council (Patel and Kerrigan 2004, McIntyre and Mogire 2012), British Red Cross (2010), Refugee Action (2006), Citizens Advice Bureau (Dunstan 2006), Oxfam (Crawley *et al* 2011), the Asylum Support Partnership (Smart 2009) and the Refugee Survival Trust (2009, 2010).

Data gathering has been undertaken in a number of ways. Some of the studies have relied on surveys of destitute asylum seekers who were using the organisation's services at the time. The British Red Cross interviewed 101 individuals, Refugee Action 125 and Crawley *et al* for Oxfam 45. The focus of the interviews sometimes varied so that the Oxfam report, while based on fewer interviews, explored in detail the various survival strategies adopted by the asylum seekers themselves. The Refugee Action report focused on the lack of access which destitute asylum seekers had to legal advice and support and the reluctance which many had towards applying for Section 4 support as this would involve a commitment to return to their home country. The Citizens Advice Bureau (Dunstan 2006) explored in detail the experiences of CAB clients of service delivery by NASS as well as the failings of the cashless Section 4 support mechanisms.

A number of studies obtained data from support agencies. Patel and Kerrigan (2004) for the Refugee Council interviewed support organisations and their report highlighted the strain which was being placed on voluntary bodies. Smart (2009), for the Asylum Support Partnership, worked with agency caseworkers to collect information on clients using their services. The Refugee Survival Trust gathered data from its experience of giving grants for the alleviation of destitution.

McIntyre and Mogire (2012) adopted a slightly different approach by focusing on refused asylum seekers from five particular countries – DR Congo, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe. By highlighting the ongoing political difficulties within those countries, they demonstrated the difficulties which asylum seekers would experience if they returned and therefore why they were so reluctant to leave the UK. This, the researchers suggested, showed why the UKBA was wrong to refuse these asylum claims.

In addition to these reports, which have generally had a UK-wide coverage, a number of local studies have also been undertaken involving interviews with asylum seekers, agencies or a mixture of both. In Leicester, the Leicester Refugee and Asylum Seekers Voluntary Sector Consortium conducted surveys in both 2005 and 2009. They estimate that there were around 168 asylum seekers destitute in the city, of whom over 80 had been destitute for a year or more. Almost one fifth of people were sleeping rough, many experienced health problems and children were particularly badly affected.

Larger cities had larger numbers of destitute individuals. Prior (2006), in his study of Newcastle, estimated that there were more than 300 in the city, of whom 20-30 were sleeping outdoors overnight. There were similar numbers in Leeds where the Joseph

Rowntree Charitable Trust has conducted a series of surveys, identifying how the problem has grown. In 2007, Lewis estimated that there were 118 destitute asylum seekers, 38 of whom had been destitute for a year or more. By 2009, Brown estimated the figures as 331 and 99 respectively. There had been an increase in the numbers sleeping rough (from 29 to 40) and, once again, children were identified as being particularly at risk.

Elsewhere, Malfait and Scott-Flynn (2005) estimated that there were between 1000 and 2000 destitute asylum seekers in Birmingham, while the North West Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (2011) suggested there were around 1000 in north west England, mainly in and around Manchester and Liverpool, the two main cities of asylum dispersal. The Partnership suggested that most destitute asylum seekers had come to the UK from war zones, while in Leeds, most came from Eritrea, Iran, Sudan and Zimbabwe. Three of these four countries were among those studied by McIntyre and Mogire (2012) and this reinforces the argument that destitute asylum seekers are unwilling to return to their homeland because they simply do not believe it is safe to do so – regardless of the views of the Home Office.

The specific needs of destitute children have been recognised by two reports undertaken by the Children's Society (Clarke and Nandy 2008, Pinter 2012). The reports highlight poor living conditions, often in temporary accommodation, fear, hunger and a serious impact on child development and emotional wellbeing. During these periods of destitution, children are often vulnerable to exploitation, violence, and abuse.

Finally, there have been some studies which have focused on the work of the UKBA itself and its processes. Both Hickey (2008) and Fishwick (2011) argue that the UKBA is failing unreasonably to offer Section 4 support to many refused asylum seekers, by not adequately acknowledging the various barriers that prevent many refused asylum seekers from leaving the UK. With no way of returning and a negative decision on their refugee status, they are left stranded without any means of support. Williams and Kaye (2010), similarly, point out the failings in the system, with around a quarter of initial UKBA decisions wrong and overturned on appeal.

The above reports represent a very substantial body of research in this area and there is substantial agreement that the present asylum system is simply not working. Most reports emerge with broadly similar conclusions, namely:

- the belief that the asylum system treats asylum seekers unfairly, particularly in relation to the length of the process
- the need for better access to legal support
- the need for full access to healthcare
- the need for temporary accommodation
- the need to separate Section 4 support from a requirement to return to the homeland
- raising the level of Section 4 support levels
- the restoration of an asylum seeker's ability to work
- an end to the culture of disbelief within UKBA and the negative stereotyping of asylum seekers
- the need for good partnership working at local level to ensure ongoing support for destitute asylum seekers

- better support for the faith and charitable groups working with destitute asylum seekers.
- the need for awareness-raising amongst local people and related campaigning work
- recognition of the specific needs of women and children.

The overwhelming conclusion was that destitution should not be used by government as a tool to be used to persuade asylum seekers to return to their home country.

The Position in Scotland

The position for destitute asylum seekers in Scotland is little different to that elsewhere in the UK. The Scottish Refugee Council undertook research (Green 2006) which suggested that there were at least 154 destitute asylum seekers, refugees and their dependents in Glasgow in February of that year. That figure included 25 children, who were particularly at risk. Almost half had been destitute for over six months and the largest numbers were from Iraq, Iran and Somalia.

A more recent survey was undertaken by Gillespie (2012) for the Refugee Survival Trust, British Red Cross and the Scottish Refugee Council. This involved a survey of destitute people, focus groups and analyses of SRC and RST case notes and grant information. It proved impossible to provide any convincing estimate of the numbers involved but the survey identified 148 destitute people in a single week. The RST had given grants in the three year period 2009-12 to 1849 people. So it was clear that, at any one time, there were hundreds of people in Scotland trapped in destitution. Over two thirds of survey participants were refused asylum seekers and 36 per cent had been destitute for over a year. Many people were unwilling to return to their home country and the countries from which most destitute asylum seekers came were Iran, Iraq, Sudan and Zimbabwe. This again reinforces the arguments made in other studies that countries with recent and ongoing experiences of major conflict remain unsafe for asylum seeker return.

As in other studies, most interviewees were living in accommodation provided by friends, church or other networks, while some were sleeping rough. Access to services was very difficult and many interviewees were experiencing health problems. They had few opportunities to get money.

One of the agencies most involved in the provision of emergency support to destitute asylum seekers is Positive Action in Housing. Their Lifeline Project assists with money, with access to lawyers, and access to health and housing services, including temporary shelter in the homes of volunteers or in hostels. In 2012, they provided emergency support to 313 destitute people. Of these 111 had been destitute for over a year. As elsewhere, destitute asylum seekers tended to come from a small number of countries – experiencing war and with poor human rights records – including Iran, Iraq, Zimbabwe and DR Congo. Positive Action in Housing's conclusions are similar to those which have emerged elsewhere. In addition, they argue for the devolution of Section 4 support to UKBA's Scotland office as a means of improving decision-making at a local level (Positive Action in Housing 2012).

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Appendix 2 The Brief from Refugee Survival Trust

RST

Refugee
Survival
Trust

Tender for Project:

Preventing Refugee and Asylum Seeker Homelessness in Scotland

Deadline for tenders: 12:00 noon October 10th 2012

1. Introduction

Refugee Survival Trust (RST) is a small volunteer-led charity which exists to prevent the destitution of refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland. We achieve this through a two-pronged approach of grant-giving to alleviate immediate need and advocacy work to tackle the root causes of destitution.

RST is seeking a consultant to scope and plan a new project to prevent homelessness amongst refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland. The project would aim to address and document homelessness at all stages of the asylum process with a particular focus on destitute refused asylum seekers which has been identified as an area of acute need.

At this stage it is likely that this project would include:

- A dedicated grants fund to prevent the homelessness of people at all stages of the asylum process.
- A partnership with housing association(s) and possibly other agencies to provide temporary accommodation to refused asylum seekers for a limited period while a needs assessment and appropriate referrals take place.
- Research and advocacy work to highlight the problem and lobby for changes to policy and procedures in order to address the root causes of homelessness in the asylum system.

2. Background

An increasing number of the clients applying for our destitution grants are now homeless. In 2010-11, 39% (253 out of 644) grants awarded were to refugees or asylum seekers who were homeless. In 2011-12 this increased to 61% (294 of the 495 main applicants supported).

There are many reasons that our clients are made homeless at different points in the asylum process. These include: new arrivals to Scotland who cannot immediately travel to Croydon to claim asylum and need temporary hostel accommodation until they can travel; those made homeless through administrative errors or unsuitable housing provision; those who have been staying with friends or family but the relationship has broken down and they need somewhere to stay whilst they secure long-term accommodation; refugees who are no longer entitled to asylum accommodation but are awaiting mainstream benefits and access to housing; and people who have been refused asylum and evicted from their asylum accommodation.

Destitute refused asylum seekers

Homelessness is a particular problem for refused asylum seekers. While their asylum claim is being processed, asylum claimants who meet UK Border Agency (UKBA) criteria are offered limited cash support and accommodation allocated on a no-choice

basis. However, those who have their initial claim and appeals turned down have their housing and support withdrawn after 21 days and are made destitute .

Those who are refused and forced into destitution include people who are unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin. A large proportion of these would have to return to areas of armed conflict or widespread violence and human rights violations, but they have not been able to establish that they, individually, are at particular risk. Many of them would have qualified for some form of protection had they applied for asylum in another country or had they applied in the UK in the past: Less than 1 in 10 people who seek asylum in the UK are granted protection outside of the 1951 Refugee Convention whereas prior to 2005 this was 1 in 4.

Many of them have experienced severe trauma and levels of mental health problems are high. People in this situation are left in limbo in the UK with no support and no right to support.

Current situation in Scotland

Until this year, the main provider of housing to asylum seekers in Glasgow (the only asylum dispersal area in Scotland) under a UKBA contract was the charity Ypeople. The charity had a policy of not seeking evictions and allowed people to stay in its properties at its own expense. This practice has masked the true extent of the problem and limited homelessness amongst refused asylum seekers in Glasgow.

This year, UKBA awarded a new 5 year contract for asylum accommodation and transport provision to the multinational company Serco which has subcontracted the company Orchard & Shipman, to manage the accommodation in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The contract is currently in transition phase between the old and the new providers. Serco will not follow Ypeople's practice of housing refused asylum seekers beyond the statutory requirements imposed by the UK Border Agency. As a result, the impact of the UK Government's policies will be greater in Glasgow, leaving more people homeless and destitute.

Voluntary organisations in Scotland have various small scale initiatives in place to support people in this situation. RST can currently pay for accommodation for vulnerable clients for very short periods and we have also supported the Glasgow Destitution Network (a grassroots network of churches, individuals and organisations) to establish a night shelter to provide temporary emergency accommodation. Positive Action in Housing also arranges volunteer hosts who offer asylum seekers a spare room. However, at present there is no project which provides stable medium term supported accommodation to people in this situation. There is also no ongoing monitoring being undertaken to document the full extent and impact of this homelessness and to lobby UK and Scottish Government and other agencies to tackle the problem.

Initial progress

To address this need we have conducted some preliminary work to develop a project to provide temporary support to people in the asylum process who are left homeless through a dedicated grants fund and to provide supported accommodation for homeless refused asylum seekers to enable them to consider their options including further legal submissions and voluntary return. The project we are seeking to develop would also document all cases of homelessness encountered to provide evidence for an advocacy strategy.

We have already built some positive relationships and found many stakeholders who are interested in working with us on such a project .

Our initial discussions suggest it would need to be delivered in collaboration with a range of partners and that careful plans for managing the accommodation would be required to target the most vulnerable clients and avoid various pitfalls. We would like to collate learning from existing projects across England which deliver similar services in their local areas.

3. Scope of the work

The consultant will be expected to:

1. carry out a scoping study,
2. prepare a project plan and budget,
3. Write a funding strategy for the project and disseminate findings.

1. Scoping study (months 1-4)

- Fully research existing housing projects for refused asylum seekers (including internet research and telephone and face-to face interviews with staff and visits to projects). This research should include collecting information on: management/partnership models, support offered to clients (including support and advice services), number of clients supported, length of time accommodated and processes for ending the period of supported accommodation), success rates in moving clients on to positive outcomes, advantages and disadvantages of the project models, budgets, monitoring and evaluation procedures and advocacy work, and funding models and sources.

Projects to contact include: The Boaz Trust (Manchester), Praxis (London) NACCOM (network of 26 agencies in England providing accommodation to destitute asylum seekers), Abigail Housing Association (Leeds), Hope House Birmingham, Action Housing Newcastle, Beacon Hosting Service(Bradford) .

- Meet with key partners and stakeholders in Scotland to get a full picture of current need and potential partnership models. (To include: Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations and individual interested RSL members, Glasgow Housing Association, Glasgow City council, Scottish Refugee Council, British Red Cross, Scottish Government Housing Options, Glasgow Destitution Network and night shelter, Orchard and Shipman, and integration networks).
- Hold a focus group with destitute asylum seekers who attend the Glasgow night shelter to learn about their needs and priorities.
- Provide updates to the Development Manager and Board at monthly intervals and then present draft report with project findings and recommendations to the RST Board after 4 months.

2. Project Plan (months 5-6)

- Convene a steering group of stakeholders in Scotland to plan the project and partnership working arrangements based on the findings of the initial scoping study

- Develop a viable project plan which should include both service provision and advocacy elements with a detailed plan of how the service with outcomes would be delivered and the proposed advocacy objectives.
- Produce a full budget for the project for 3 years
- Produce a full final report including the scoping study findings, proposed project plan and budget.

3. Funding and dissemination (month 7)

- Research funders and produce a funding strategy for the project
- Disseminate a public version of the final report to raise awareness of the issues and to share learning for the projects involved in the scoping study and other projects in other geographical locations.

4. Timescale and outputs

We are seeking tenders to deliver the work outlined above by May 1st 2013. It is envisaged that the project timescale will be as follows but the successful contractor will be expected to develop a detailed workplan.

Appendix 3

West of Scotland destitute user priorities

Destitute People Living in the Night Shelter

- 1st A showering facility
- 2nd A place to go during the day as well as the night
- 3rd = Activities on Sunday and Fridays and Saturday from 5pm
(as most libraries are shut)
- 3rd = Legal support (especially when no legal aid is available)
- 5th = A washing machine and drying facilities
- 5th = Security:
 - Safe storage of belongings
 - Larger lockers to store more belongings (current ones are small)
 - Front door security (when people go in and out)
 - A smoking area (which doesn't make the building unsafe)
 - A fire door (which is secure for people inside)
- 5th = A lie- in at least once a week
- 5th = Bus Tickets
- 5th = Cash
- 10th = A proper bed and smaller rooms to sleep in (with less people in each)
- 10th = Food on a Sunday (near-by to avoid travel issues)
- 10th = How to volunteer
- 10th = No links with immigration

Internet access, television and access to cinemas were also mentioned

Before losing your home, what might have helped

Information: Advice about what might happen or what to do
Legal advice and information

Knowing about emergency accommodation and support

Leaflets at Scottish Refugee Council with information about where to go to get help and support (SRC do not always give this)

Destitute People Living In Others' Houses

- 1st Money to be able to buy the food wanted (and vouchers not liked)
- 2nd = Own bedroom
- 2nd= Legal advice project (under the question heading on support)
- 4th Safety
- 5th Access to education, particularly English
- 6th A bedroom door lock and security for belongings
- 7th A front door key so control of exit and return times to house

Discussion on what needed now

Written in order of discussion

Safety

Own Bedroom

Different types and stages of homelessness:

- No front door key (and no control of exit & return times)
- Sleeping on couch (no privacy)
- No bedroom door lock or security of belongings
- Difficult to complain (no voice, no rights, might lose access)
- Feeling intimidated (by the person with rights to the accommodation)
- No safe area for children (house may not be child friendly)
- Having to share with a smoker

For comfort

- Shower
- Your own bed and bedding
- Washing machine and drying facility
- Kitchen access

Food

Money to choose own food (prefer not vouchers, cannot choose cheaper or culturally sensitive shops)

Individual cooking ability (access to a kitchen to cook for self)
as people have different cultures and needs (such as halal or vegetarian)

What support needed now

Volunteering opportunities

For mental health

For a letter of reference for case support (showing integration)

An advocate or befriender

Legal advice project

Knowledge about NHS and rights of access

Access to education (as no financial support so not eligible officially)

English language classes especially

Information on how to access even one day a week

An address for mail to be sent to: evidence etc

Before losing your home, what might have helped

Getting good advice (especially about housing rights)

Own lawyer to understand what can be done to help prevent destitution

More time after refusal before becoming homeless

Good legal advice for:

- housing rights
- own case
- preventing destitution

Better Scottish Refugee Council advice and more confidentiality (destitute people can be passed from one worker to another, all knowing your circumstances)

Issues raised during the discussion

Destitute asylum seekers can be expected to:

- Contribute financially to house costs (rent and or services)
- Or not to use gas or electricity
- Or contribute in other ways (see section on separate discussion with women)

Selection of residents by religious culture:

There was a feeling that cultural sensitivities were not always addressed. So in a future supported accommodation, perhaps people should share based on similar cultures.

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