

Institute for Public Policy Research



CLOSING THE GAPS

**IMMIGRATION STATUS
AND HOMELESSNESS**

**Amreen Qureshi
and Aleisha Omeike**

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SUMMARY

Homelessness in England is on the rise, including among migrants and refugees. This report shows how immigration status interacts with experiences of homelessness and destitution, setting out practical reforms to support people within the immigration system.

England is in the middle of a national housing crisis, characterised by a shortage of genuinely affordable and social housing, high rents and growing use of expensive temporary accommodation. The government's national plan to end homelessness aims to address this crisis, committing £3.5 billion worth of funding to expand homelessness prevention measures and halve long-term rough sleeping (MHCLG 2025a). Yet the plan will not work for everyone unless it grapples directly with immigration and asylum policy.

Immigration status has become one of the clearest fault lines running through England's housing and homelessness system. Around a quarter of people rough sleeping are non-UK nationals. The number of refugee households owed a homelessness duty has increased sevenfold since 2018/19.

Homelessness among migrants is driven by a number of structural factors. The same shocks that knock people into homelessness (loss of work, relationship breakdown, domestic abuse, illness) often affect migrants, people seeking asylum and refugees. But these can be exacerbated by a lack of family or social networks for those who have recently arrived in the country, language barriers and unfamiliarity with support systems, and specific challenges facing more vulnerable groups such as refugees. On top of this, there are complex rules in place determining eligibility for support based on immigration status.

Drawing on interviews with people with lived experience across London, the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the West Midlands, this report outlines how these challenges play out in practice. Case studies from each region reveal the interaction between experiences of immigration and homelessness – from people becoming street homeless immediately after leaving asylum accommodation to families on the 10-year route to settlement, cycling between overcrowded spaces, garages and temporary accommodation.

The report also highlights how immigration-related issues interact with wider drivers of homelessness. Participants described being pushed into homelessness when informal or insecure jobs ended, wages were withheld, or employers tied accommodation to exploitative work, and when domestic abuse was weaponised through threats about immigration status and access to services.

Alongside these challenges, the report identifies concrete examples of systems set up to address immigration barriers within homelessness services that have achieved rapid, measurable improvements in people's outcomes. Models that bring together specialist immigration advice, welfare expertise and housing support demonstrate that it is possible to prevent rough sleeping, resolve status and reduce long-term destitution for people subject to immigration control.

There is now a clear opportunity to bring these lessons into the heart of the national plan to end homelessness, so that it works for people subject to immigration control as well as for citizens. To do so, this report sets out a focused set of changes that the government should prioritise.

- **Ensure the new 42-day move-on period works to prevent homelessness:** The government should make sure that the 42-day move-on period aligns with the point at which an individual receives notice to leave asylum accommodation. It should also keep the 42-day timeframe under review to ensure it is reducing homelessness and revise the length if it is deemed ineffective. Where newly recognised refugees are unable to secure housing in this time, a clearer and more consistent approach to applying for extensions to asylum support should be provided.
- **Embed specialist immigration advice in homelessness and housing-led services:** Accredited immigration and welfare advisers should be embedded within homelessness support services and housing-led services so that status and eligibility barriers can be resolved alongside homelessness support. This integrated approach has already shown it can improve accommodation outcomes and reduce rough sleeping among people with restricted eligibility.
- **Introduce a ‘due regard’ duty to consider the impact of immigration and asylum policy on homelessness:** A ‘due regard’ duty should be introduced, requiring the Home Office to actively consider homelessness impacts when designing, reforming or implementing immigration and asylum policies. Joint work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to assess likely impacts on homelessness would help identify where proposed changes risk increasing destitution, and ensure these risks are recognised and mitigated.
- **Strengthen data sharing between the Home Office and local authorities to support homelessness prevention:** The government should ensure that existing commitments on data sharing are consistently delivered, so that local authorities receive clear and timely information to enable earlier planning and intervention and prevent people from falling through gaps in the system, including when people are leaving asylum accommodation.
- **Expand and adapt the Local Authority Housing Fund to increase housing options for migrants at risk of homelessness:** Expand and adapt the Local Authority Housing Fund so that migrant households with no recourse to public funds who are eligible for support under existing statutory duties – including families supported under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and adults with care and support needs – can access better-quality temporary accommodation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Secure, affordable housing is the foundation of stability, opportunity and participation in community life. Without it, people's chances to work, study and build a life are severely undermined. The government's National Plan to End Homelessness sets out a cross-government goal to halve long-term rough sleeping and prevent more households from becoming homeless before crisis point, backed by £3.5 billion of funding over the course of three years (MHCLG 2025a). Yet current policy responses often overlook one of the most significant structural factors – experiences of migration.

Immigration plays an important role in shaping experiences of homelessness across England. Migrants tend to have fewer social networks available to fall back on when they face financial challenges. Language barriers and unfamiliarity with support systems pose additional challenges. Moreover, certain cohorts may face particular issues – for instance, refugees can face difficulties accessing steady employment and are more likely to report long-term health conditions (Kone et al 2019).

This makes access to support particularly important. Under the current rules, immigration status determines who is entitled to help from local authorities, who can claim financial assistance to cover rent, and who must depend on voluntary support. Many migrants are subject to the 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF) condition which limits access to benefits and housing assistance (Johnson-Hunter 2025). Refugees are eligible for public funds, but they often experience delays in accessing support upon receiving a positive asylum decision.

This report explores the relationship between immigration, asylum and homelessness across London, the West Midlands, the North West, and Yorkshire and the Humber. Together, these areas capture the diversity and complexity of England's housing and migration landscape. London illustrates the consequences of soaring rents, strained temporary accommodation, and eligibility rules, with 13,231 people seen sleeping rough between April 2024 and March 2025 – the highest levels ever recorded (CHAIN 2025). In the North West, and Yorkshire and the Humber, the scale of asylum dispersal and the volume of people moving on from Home Office support highlights how abrupt transitions between asylum support and local homelessness systems can lead to homelessness and destitution when support is not aligned properly. In the West Midlands, rising homelessness among families is reflected in the extensive use of temporary accommodation, including for those within the immigration system (WMCA 2024).

Delivering on the National Plan's prevention goals will require much stronger alignment between the Home Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). To be effective for everybody, this collaborative approach has to extend to immigration and asylum systems, so that decisions about leave to remain, support entitlements and asylum move-on arrangements are aligned with the housing and homelessness systems. Without coordinated policy decisions and funding across these two departments, people subject to immigration control will continue to fall through the gaps between national systems and local responsibilities.

Drawing on qualitative evidence from people with lived experience of migration and homelessness, as well as quantitative data, this report helps to inform the implementation of the homelessness strategy so that it serves everyone facing housing insecurity, regardless of their immigration background.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research aims to understand the scale, drivers and impacts of migrant homelessness in the UK. It combines qualitative interviews and quantitative data to explore migrant homelessness across four English regions: London, the West Midlands, the North West, and Yorkshire and the Humber. Qualitative data captured personal experiences, while quantitative data illustrated the scale and pattern of migrant homelessness across the regions.

Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews along with short demographic forms collecting participants' age, immigration status and housing situation. Interviews focused on pathways into homelessness, service access and daily challenges. Each interview lasted around 45–50 minutes. Partner organisations helped recruit participants and provide safe spaces for interviews. Key partners included the Booth Centre (Manchester), ASSIST (Sheffield), Abigail Housing (Leeds and Bradford), RAMFEL (London – now known as Refugee and Migrant Justice) and the Hope Project (Birmingham). Their involvement in the research ensured participants felt supported before, during and after interviews.

In total, 22 participants, aged 24 and over, were recruited purposively through trusted voluntary and community sector partners. The sample includes people who were: seeking asylum, had limited leave to remain, had refugee status, had pre-settled status and people without legal status. Participants were experiencing a range of housing situations, including sofa-surfing, supported accommodation and living in temporary accommodation. Some also had a history of rough sleeping.

The small sample sizes and the sampling method mean findings are not nationally representative. Since participants were recruited via support organisations, perspectives of migrants disconnected from services may be underrepresented. Language and cultural factors may also have constrained how participants were able to express themselves.

All participants were fully informed about the study and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was strictly maintained through anonymisation and secure storage. Interpreters were provided where needed. Payments were offered to recognise participants' time.

TABLE 2.1**Breakdown of participant demographics and immigration status**

Category	Breakdown
Total participants	22
Immigration status	No legal status (14): Including awaiting an asylum decision (8); appeal rights exhausted (5); no current status (1)
	With legal status (6): Including pre-settled (2); settled (1); limited leave to remain (2); refugee status (1)
	Prefer not to say (2)
Gender	Female (11); male (11)
Age range	24+
Current housing situation	Temporary accommodation (5); sofa-surfing (4); supported accommodation ¹ (12); night shelter (1)
Experience of rough sleeping	4 participants
Locations	London (4); West Midlands (6); North West (4); Yorkshire and the Humber (8)

Source: Authors' analysis

Qualitative data were thematically analysed to identify recurring ideas and narratives across the regions and immigration situations. These findings, alongside initial recommendations, were then shared with stakeholders working across homelessness and migration in a policy workshop, in order to triangulate our findings and test the recommendations. Quantitative data from local authorities and national statistics were used descriptively to contextualise the findings.

A NOTE ON DATA GAPS

Detailed assessment of homelessness among migrants is limited due to disconnected data sources. Local authority data provides some breakdowns by nationality and immigration status, but is limited to those eligible for statutory homelessness provision. Rough sleeping counts identify nationality but rarely status (Whitehead and Rotolo 2021). Administrative datasets (Home Office, Department for Work and Pensions and housing systems) are not linked (NACCOM 2025), preventing cross-verification. This lack of data obscures the scale and nature of homelessness linked to immigration status and can limit the development of targeted policy responses.

1 'Supported accommodation' is used here to refer to accommodation provided through charities or specialist support organisations where housing was combined with some level of welfare, casework or resettlement support. This is distinct from local authority-arranged temporary accommodation under statutory homelessness duties.

HOW ARE WE DEFINING HOMELESSNESS?

There is no universally accepted definition of 'homelessness' in the UK. Different concepts and frameworks are used across academic research, legislation and policy analysis, each capturing distinct forms of housing insecurity.

Statutory homelessness is the definition that the government primarily employs because it is embedded in legislation and underpins local authority duties, funding arrangements and formal reporting. Under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017), a person (or household) is considered legally homeless if no accommodation is available and reasonable for them to occupy.²

When the eligibility criteria are met, local authorities have a statutory duty to act at earlier stages. The prevention duty is triggered when a household is at risk of homelessness within 56 days, while the relief duty applies once a household is already homeless.

For this research, we have adopted the typology developed by Heriot-Watt University and Crisis, which introduced the concept of 'core homelessness' to classify the most acute forms of homelessness. First developed through Crisis' Homelessness Monitor in 2017, this framework enables robust measurements of different forms of homelessness. Table 2.2 is an adapted version of the typology.

TABLE 2.2

Definitions of homelessness

Category of homelessness	Description
Rough sleeping	Sleeping in the open, like streets, parks, carpark and doorways
Unconventional accommodation	Sleeping in spaces that are not intended for normal residential accommodation (vehicles, tents, boats, sheds, garages, industrial/commercial premises)
Hostels	Communal emergency and temporary accommodation (TA) of certain types, primarily targeted at homeless people, including hostels, refuges and shelters
Unsuitable temporary accommodation	Homeless households placed in unsuitable forms of temporary accommodation (eg B&Bs, nightly paid or out-of-area placements)
Sofa-surfing	Individuals or family groups staying temporarily with another household – this excludes those who are part of the household's normal composition and typically involves overcrowded or unsuitable housing

Source: Watts Cobbe et al, *The homelessness monitor: England 2025* (Watts-Cobbe et al 2025)

² See: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/part/VII> and <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents>

3.

GENERAL DRIVERS OF HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness in the UK is rarely driven by a single event or a factor in a person's life. Rather, it arises from a combination of structural inequalities, constraints in the welfare and housing systems, and indirect causes that a person may confront in their life that trigger a pathway into homelessness. There is a wide body of literature on this, and it is well documented. While the list below is not exhaustive, we have highlighted eight key general factors identified in the existing literature as drivers of homelessness.

There is a shortage of affordable and social housing. Long-term inadequate supply has reduced access to stable housing, creating accessibility issues, especially for low-income households, with demand far outstripping supply. The declining availability of social housing further exacerbates the problem (Greaves 2024).

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are not keeping pace with rents. Local Housing Allowance is the cap on housing benefit and the housing element of universal credit for private renters, calculated on typical rents in their local area. Since LHA rates are currently frozen, they no longer reflect actual market rents, leaving many households with rent shortfalls (MHCLG 2025d).

Rising rents and cost-of-living pressures have reduced housing affordability. A growing proportion of households are now spending a significant portion of their income on housing, leaving little capacity to absorb financial shocks (Watts-Cobbe et al 2025).

The private rented sector has been a major pathway into homelessness. This is due to high rents, limited security and the historic use of Section 21 no-fault evictions. Although the Renter's Rights Act is abolishing Section 21 from 1 May 2026, the ending of private tenancies remains one of the most common immediate routes into homelessness (MHCLG 2025a, 2025b).

There are constraints in homelessness prevention and response systems. The rising demand for such services and the increasing use of temporary accommodation have placed excessive pressure on local authorities, who have reduced capacity for early intervention and prevention (Watts-Cobbe et al 2025).

Relationship breakdowns and domestic abuse can be a significant driver of homelessness, particularly among women. This can also include situations where family or friends are no longer able or willing to provide accommodation. Survivors of abuse, in particular, are forced to prioritise safety over housing stability, and access to support can be constrained by limited refuge capacity, strict eligibility thresholds and the need to evidence abuse, which can delay or prevent homelessness assistance (Kendrick 2024).

People leaving public institutions such as prisons, care or hospitals are also vulnerable to homelessness. This is especially the case in scenarios where they do not have settled housing at the point of discharge. Fragmented support, poor

coordination between services, and limited time to secure accommodation are all contributing factors, and for people who are vulnerable, this can quickly escalate into homelessness (Gannon et al 2024).

Mental health, substance use, and unmet support needs are factors that increase vulnerability. These factors often interact in a cyclical way, where poor mental health or substance use can contribute to tenancy breakdown, while homelessness further worsens these conditions. Without access to coordinated, wraparound support, individuals may struggle to manage rent or engage with services, increasing the risk of eviction or repeat homelessness (Greaves 2024).

4.

HOW IMMIGRATION STATUS SHAPES ACCESS TO HOUSING AND SUPPORT

Immigration status determines more than a person's right to live in the UK. It shapes their access to work, welfare, homelessness assistance and local authority support. These entitlements can determine how well an individual can withstand a financial shock, or whether that shock pushes them into destitution.

This matters because many of the drivers of homelessness are not unique to migrants. Rising rents, relationship breakdown and limited access to affordable housing affect people across the population.

However, a wider set of structural factors can increase migrants' exposure to homelessness. Many do not have established support networks in the UK to rely on in times of crisis, such as family or friends who can offer accommodation or financial support. Some also face challenges accessing the labour market, including language barriers, limited recognition of qualifications, and unfamiliarity with UK systems and employment practices. These factors can exacerbate pressures and reduce people's ability to absorb financial shocks or recover from housing instability, increasing the risk of homelessness.

At the same time, there are complex rules determining eligibility for universal credit, housing benefit, local authority homelessness assistance and social housing, depending on someone's immigration status. Table 4.1 sets out how different immigration statuses shape access to rights and entitlements, exposure to homelessness risk, and routes into support.

TABLE 4.1

How immigration status shapes access to housing, risk of homelessness, and support pathways

Immigration status	Access to rights and entitlements	Exposure to homelessness risk	Access to homelessness support
British citizens and people with indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)	Full or broadly equivalent access to mainstream welfare, housing and statutory homelessness assistance.	Exposure to homelessness is primarily driven by pressures such as affordability, income shocks and life events.	Full access to local authority homelessness duties, welfare support and housing services.
Limited Leave to Remain (LLR)	Entitlements vary. Some individuals have access to public funds, while others are subject to NRPF, which restricts access to benefits, social housing or homelessness assistance.	Risk increases for those subject to NRPF, on precarious or costly visa routes, out of work or facing delays and uncertainty in immigration decisions.	Access is conditional. Those with NRPF are excluded from most mainstream provision, but may under some circumstances receive support from local authorities (eg under safeguarding duties)
Refugee (granted status)	Entitled to work, claim benefits, and access housing and homelessness assistance	Risk is elevated during the transition out of asylum accommodation – particularly when the move-on period does not align with access to income, documentation or housing.	Full access to local authority homelessness duties, welfare support and housing services.
Person seeking asylum (awaiting decision)	Not entitled to mainstream benefits, may receive asylum accommodation and subsistence support under Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 if assessed as destitute.	Risk is concentrated at points where support is withdrawn, disrupted or changes suddenly. For example, after a refusal, withdrawal of a claim or when they have been granted status.	No access to mainstream homelessness services. May receive asylum support (including accommodation) where eligible, alongside voluntary sector support.
Refused Asylum (All Rights Exhausted)	Will no longer be entitled to asylum accommodation support. However, families with children may remain eligible for Section 95 support. Some may apply for Section 4 support if they meet strict criteria (eg they cannot leave the UK for reasons beyond their control). ³	Very high risk following loss of accommodation, particularly for single adults, with limited lawful income options, and restricted access to housing.	Limited to Section 4 support if granted, or continued Section 95 support for eligible families. Otherwise, reliant on emergency accommodation and voluntary sector support.
No Legal Status	Excluded from most benefits, social housing and formal homelessness assistance.	Persistent risk due to exclusion from the formal labour and housing markets, limited access to public funds, and barriers to seeking help.	Very limited access to support. Reliant on voluntary sector support and some local authority support where safeguarding or public health duties apply. In specific cases, survivors of modern slavery may be eligible for support through the National Referral Mechanism.

Sources: UKVI (2025), MHCLG (2026a), NRPF Network (2026), NACCOM (2025)

3 At the time of writing, the Home Office is consulting on reforms to asylum support that may further restrict access to support for individuals without status, while introducing a new Section 95A framework for certain families with dependent children. See: https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2026-0173/Reforming_Asylum_Support_and_Enforcing_Family_Returns.pdf

This table, read alongside the general drivers outlined in chapter three, shows that immigration status can play an important role in determining who is or who is not eligible for support if they are at risk of homelessness. At the same time, migrants may face additional barriers, such as not having informal support networks, facing challenges with securing employment, and language and cultural barriers, all of which can further reduce an individual's resilience to housing instability. This has important implications for the government's homelessness strategy, particularly in the design and delivery of interventions to protect migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum from homelessness.

5.

THE ASYLUM SYSTEM AND HOMELESSNESS

Many participants we interviewed who were seeking asylum described the difficulties they faced when routine decision points in their asylum journey triggered homelessness risk. Refusals, withdrawals and grants of refugee status marked sudden changes in eligibility for support and housing, often leaving individuals with little time or capacity to respond.

Participants frequently described having to navigate complex evidential requirements, limited access to legal advice and administrative barriers under significant time pressure; and often while trying to resolve their status and secure housing at the same time.

THE MOVE-ON PERIOD

Participants consistently identified the move-on period – the transition from asylum accommodation following receipt of a positive decision – as a clear pressure point in the asylum system.

Data from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) for 2024/2025 showed that 18 per cent of new people sleeping rough in London with known prior settled accommodation had come from asylum housing (CHAIN 2025). Additionally, MHCLG data shows that in 2024/25, 13,630 households required to leave Home Office asylum accommodation were owed a relief duty (MHCLG 2026b), indicating that the transition out of asylum accommodation is a significant pressure point in the homelessness system.

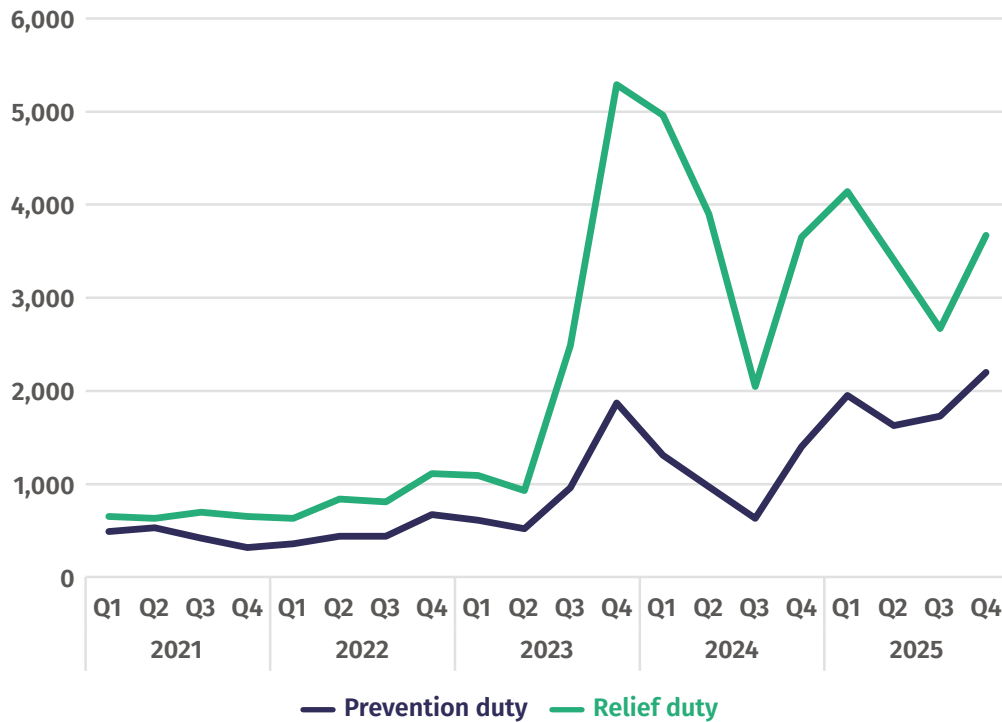
While awaiting a decision, asylum seekers are for the most part prevented from working and earning an income and therefore often rely on asylum support. But once refugee status is granted, it does not immediately bring relief to the individual, who must quickly secure housing and income.

This creates a sequencing problem, where individuals exit asylum support before they can realistically access welfare payments, secure housing or demonstrate their status. This is further exacerbated by issues related to the rollout of e-Visas as a replacement for Biometric Residence Permits, which have led to delays in proving status to landlords, employers or local authorities, reducing newly recognised refugees' ability to secure housing or income in time (Lindley et al 2025).

This problem has become particularly pertinent in recent years as the Home Office has sought to bring down the asylum backlog. The number of people leaving Home Office accommodation who are subsequently owed a homelessness duty has increased significantly in recent years, particularly from late 2023 onwards as the Home Office increased the pace of asylum decisions (figure 5.1). Both prevention and relief duties rose sharply during this period, indicating growing pressure on local authorities to respond to newly recognised refugees who have no secure housing place.

FIGURE 5.1

The number of households required to leave Home Office accommodation who are owed a prevention or relief homelessness duty has increased significantly in recent years
Homelessness duties owed to households leaving asylum accommodation 2021–2025



Source: MHCLG 2026b

These challenges are compounded by structural barriers in the housing market, particularly the limited availability and affordability of private rented accommodation.

The move-on process has been subject to legal challenge, prompting government reform. In 2025, a 56-day pilot was introduced to assess whether a longer transition period would reduce rough sleeping. At the time of writing (May 2026), the pilot has concluded, and an evaluation is pending. The Home Office confirmed in March 2026 a new notice period of 42 days for individuals exiting the asylum system (Home Office 2026a).

AHMED'S STORY: REPEATED HOMELESSNESS ACROSS THE ASYLUM JOURNEY

Ahmed (25–34, Yorkshire and the Humber, refugee status) arrived in the UK from Iraq in 2021.⁴ His journey here was long and traumatic, travelling through multiple countries before reaching the UK. Along the way, Ahmed was subjected to modern slavery and was later recognised as a victim by the Home Office. In total, Ahmed spent four years in the asylum system before being granted refugee status in 2025.

During this prolonged period of uncertainty, he experienced repeated periods of homelessness.

When Ahmed first arrived in the UK, he was placed in hotel accommodation with a strict curfew. After unintentionally breaching this rule, he was evicted and slept rough for three nights before being rehoused.

Ahmed became homeless again at the very point he was granted refugee status. Given 28 days to leave asylum accommodation and secure housing independently, Ahmed was unable to do so within this short timeframe. Anticipating this, he bought a tent in advance so he would have some shelter once the 28 days ended:

“I didn't find the support that I was thinking I would ... So I thought to myself, that's it, I will be street homeless, so I bought a tent.”

Ahmed was evicted and spent five nights sleeping in a local park, where he felt unsafe and isolated:

“It was scary ... drug addicts and drug dealers [were] there. I used to walk a lot at 4am ... because it was scary for me to sleep.”

Eventually, a Sheffield-based charity, ASSIST, provided Ahmed with housing, where he was staying at the time of interview.

APPLICATION WITHDRAWN OR REFUSED

One of the most acute features identified by participants was when an asylum claim was either refused or withdrawn by the Home Office, often based on non-compliance grounds. This can happen due to missed reporting, misunderstanding or administrative confusion.

One participant we spoke to shared her experience of being evicted. Helen explained to us:

“It was terrible for me, because I didn't expect that that they can kick you out of the house. I was very confused. I didn't know what to do. I remember I was just crying. I said, “So where am I going to go?” They told me, if you don't move out, they will come and keep me by force. So [they threw] me outside. It was really sad.”

(25–34, Birmingham, seeking asylum)

Following a **refusal**, claimants typically have 21 days before their asylum support and accommodation are discontinued, unless they have appealed the decision or fall within specific exemptions – for example, if a family has children under 18 (Home Office 2026a).

⁴ Pseudonyms are used throughout this report to protect participant's anonymity.

Where a claim is **withdrawn**, support can be discontinued immediately, with accommodation providers issuing a notice period (often a minimum of seven days) to leave. The Home Office (ibid) guidance states:

“There is no obligation to extend support even when a person faces imminent street homelessness. Caseworkers should consider whether the circumstances justify the exercise of discretion ...”

Additionally, UNHCR (2024) found that communication around support discontinuation is often inadequate. Many applicants never receive their discontinuation letters or Notices to Quit or receive them in significantly less time than the required notice.

While some individuals will ultimately have no lawful basis to remain in the UK following a refusal, and are therefore subject to immigration enforcement, this does not remove the immediate risks associated with the withdrawal of support, particularly where removal is not immediate or practicable. There is also limited visibility on outcomes for people leaving immigration detention, despite stakeholder evidence that this can be a point of acute homelessness risk.

FORTHCOMING CHANGES TO ASYLUM SUPPORT

Recent government announcements on asylum support and accommodation have raised concerns about potential increases in homelessness risk among people seeking asylum.

From June 2026, the legal basis for providing asylum support will change. The Home Office will transition from a statutory duty to support people seeking asylum to a discretionary power to provide support (UKVI 2026). This would mark a significant shift in the basis on which asylum support is provided, making it more conditional.

Under the new approach, support may be denied to people who are considered able to support themselves through work. This includes those who entered the UK on work or student visas before claiming asylum, or those who have been granted permission to work because their asylum claim has been outstanding for more than 12 months.

The Home Office has also stated that asylum support will be denied to people who have been deemed to have deliberately made themselves destitute, those working illegally, those who fail to comply with removal directions, and those who do not comply with conditions imposed on them, such as refusing to relocate to a different accommodation site (Home Office 2026b).

The full impact of this change, at the time of writing, cannot yet be determined. However, moving from a statutory duty to a discretionary power could increase uncertainty for people seeking asylum who are already at risk of destitution. It may also create additional downstream pressure on local authorities, homelessness services and voluntary sector organisations, if people lose access to asylum accommodation and support, and have no alternative source of income or housing.

The implementation of this policy should therefore be closely monitored. This should include tracking how many people are affected by the new rules, the reason support is withdrawn or denied, the number of people subsequently presenting to local authorities or voluntary sector organisations, and the impact this could have on rough sleeping numbers and temporary accommodation provision. Attention should be given to people with vulnerabilities, and to those who may still face barriers to securing work or accommodation, despite having permission to work.

6.

IMMIGRATION POLICIES AND PATHWAYS INTO HOMELESSNESS

Across our research, participants' experiences were not driven by a single policy but by the interaction of multiple factors inside and outside the immigration system. Immigration policies which determine access to support and the costs of visa routes often intersected with wider pressures, such as insecure work and lack of affordable housing.

Participants also highlighted additional challenges related to their experience of migration, including limited support networks, language barriers and unfamiliarity with UK systems, all of which increased complexity and hindered recovery from financial shocks.

These overlapping risks indicate that, although the causes of homelessness are not exclusive to migrants, immigration policy influences how individuals face and handle these pressures. This chapter examines how immigration policy interacts with these broader risks and shapes pathways leading to homelessness.

RESTRICTED ACCESS TO SUPPORT: NRPF AND HOMELESSNESS RISK

Participants consistently identified the no recourse to public funds (NRPF) condition as a key factor for homelessness risk, and described the challenges they faced of being unable to access support at critical moments. Tomasz described his experience:

“The problem with a situation like [mine], we’ve got no rights to nothing. That means we’ve got no access to even apply for any support, any house ... If I had access, I would be able to support myself. But I can’t get anything.”

(35–44, Greater Manchester, pre-settled status)

Sofia, who arrived in the UK on a spousal visa, described a similar experience following a relationship breakdown: when she reached out to her local council, they were unable to support her:

“They told me they couldn’t help me ... with temporary housing or anything. They denied me all kinds of help because I didn’t have [indefinite leave to remain] here [at that time]. So, it was a moment of anguish, of not having help from the government, not knowing what to do ...”

(35–44, Greater Manchester, settled status)

NRPF restricts access to key elements of the UK’s welfare system, such as universal credit, housing benefit, social housing and homelessness assistance. This limits access to a welfare safety net at the point that individuals experience financial shocks, which can increase the likelihood that common events escalate into homelessness (NRPF Network 2026).

In some cases, safety nets exist through discretionary or statutory powers. For example, families with children may receive support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, which places a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. However, these forms of support are typically reactive, inconsistently applied, and in some cases only accessible once homelessness has occurred. As such, they are often insufficient to prevent homelessness in practice for people subject to NRPf.

At the time of writing, the government is consulting on reforms that could further restrict access to support for some refused asylum seekers and families without lawful status.⁵

Despite these constraints, emerging models show that targeted interventions can reduce homelessness risk for people with NRPf.

CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH NRPf INTO ACCOMMODATION

There is clear evidence that practical interventions can offer a lifeline to people who have restricted eligibility and are at risk of homelessness.

One example is Greater Manchester's Restricted Eligibility Support Service (RESS), which integrates specialist immigration and welfare advice directly into homelessness services. Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, the Boaz Trust and the Booth Centre have partnered to offer wraparound support by helping individuals resolve their immigration status or clarify their eligibility for support while also providing homelessness support.

An evaluation of the programme showed measurable outcomes. Between October 2023 and March 2024:

- 377 people with restricted eligibility were supported
- 36 per cent experienced a positive change in their immigration status
- 13 per cent gained access to public funds
- 63 per cent of those who were sleeping rough were accommodated by the end of support (GMCA 2025).

Beyond this regional model, a pilot project commissioned by MHCLG, delivered by the Centre for Homelessness Impact, also supported people with restricted eligibility by offering temporary accommodation and specialist immigration advice. The Home Office contributed a single point of contact for immigration status checks and case escalations, helping services respond faster. The pilot took place across Wolverhampton, Coventry, Luton and Reading. At the time of writing, an evaluation of the pilot project is taking place, but the pilot was recognised in the National Plan for Homelessness (MHCLG 2025a), noting that "it is important that services can appropriately respond to migrant homelessness more broadly."

These initiatives demonstrate scalable approaches to supporting people with NRPf. Embedding specialist advice with homelessness services can reduce rough sleeping, improve access to support and prevent long-term destitution. This demonstrates a practical way forward in the short and medium term, while wider policy debates about the future of NRPf continue.

5 The consultation includes proposals affecting support arrangements provided by local authorities for certain refused families seeking asylum, families without lawful status, and some families pursuing Article 8 immigration applications or appeals. See: https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2026-0173/Reforming_Asylum_Support_and_Enforcing_Family_Returns.pdf

PROLONGED AND COSTLY IMMIGRATION PATHWAYS

Participants described how the length and costs of pathways to settlement contributed to ongoing financial pressure and instability.

Some migrants are on a 10-year family life route to settlement. This route requires repeat visa renewals at 2.5-year periods, each involving significant financial costs (Mort et al 2023). At the time of writing, the government is consulting on extending visa pathways under the earned settlement proposals to a default 10-year or 15-year route to settlement (Home Office 2025).

Participants in our research described the strain of maintaining lawful status under these conditions. Some reported borrowing money, working multiple jobs, or delaying applications due to cost pressures. These pathways can give rise to greater financial precarity over time, increasing the likelihood that individuals and families experience destitution and homelessness.

MARY'S STORY: LONG IMMIGRATION ROUTES AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

Mary (45–54, London, 10-year route to settlement) has been in the UK for nearly 20 years, yet remains on a temporary route to settlement. At the time of the interview, she and her family were living in temporary accommodation in a bed and breakfast.

Despite having secured British citizenship for most of her children, Mary, her husband and their youngest child remain on a 10-year route to settlement. The financial pressures associated with repeated renewals have shaped the family's living conditions over time. As Mary put it:

“People cannot eat. People have to start saving money ... to get their visa done ... to feed their family would be a problem. Even to pay house rent would be a problem.”

The family had experienced repeated housing instability, moving several times in response to rising rents and unaffordable housing costs. At one point, they were forced to live in a garage because it was the only option they could afford. More recently, after their landlords increased the rent beyond what they could afford, they were evicted and placed in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Mary was able to have her NRPf condition lifted through the ‘change of conditions’ process,⁶ enabling the family access to universal credit during periods of hardship. However, the repeated costs and uncertainty associated with the 10-year route to settlement continued to place financial pressure on the family and contributed to wider housing insecurity. At the time of the interview, the family had applied for a fee waiver and were waiting for a decision. They were also dealing with reduced household income linked to Mary's husband's ill health, which continued to place financial pressure on the family.

They relied on crisis support from the British Red Cross and Refugee and Migrant Justice (formerly known as RAMFEL). Mary described the repeated renewal cycles as a source of constant insecurity:

6 The change of conditions process permits an individual who has NRPf to apply for access to public funds where they are destitute or at ‘imminent risk’ of destitution, or where there are child welfare reasons or exceptional circumstances. People on the 10-year route to settlement and British National (Overseas) visa holders are the primary cohorts who are eligible for this (UKVI 2026).

“When we get to the end of that two and a half years (the remaining time left on their settlement route), my mind will be there.”

Mary’s experience illustrates how prolonged immigration pathways can trigger financial instability over time and leave families in repeated cycles of insecurity, destitution and risk of homelessness.

THE EARNED SETTLEMENT PROPOSALS: HOW THE NEW PROPOSALS COULD AFFECT PEOPLE’S HOUSING OUTCOMES

In November 2025, the Home Office announced proposals to reform pathways to permanent settlement (indefinite leave to remain). Under these proposals, some migrants currently on shorter routes to settlement could instead be required to spend a default of 10 or 15 years on temporary visas before becoming eligible. Progression along these pathways would be conditional, and for people on these pathways, the length of the wait could be lengthened or shortened depending on their circumstances or actions. For example, having a high level of English competency could shorten the qualifying route by a year. Earning at least £50,270 for three years could take off five. However, claiming benefits could extend the wait for settlement for another five to 10 years, while overstaying a visa for more than six months could add an extra 20 years.

Two elements of the proposals have attracted particular attention. First, their potential retrospective application means that individuals already on a pathway to settlement could be subject to revised eligibility criteria. IPPR analysis suggests that around 1.35 million people on routes to settlement in the UK could be affected by longer default qualifying periods (Morris 2026). Second, the proposals indicate that the route to settlement could be extended further where individuals claim benefits or fall out of status due to the inability to meet renewal costs or requirements.

These reforms are intended to strengthen integration outcomes and encourage sustained economic and social contribution. However, as the consultation process is ongoing at the time of writing, the evidence on their likely impacts remains limited. Initial analysis and responses from experts have expressed concerns that the proposals may affect individuals, families and communities, particularly by increasing the risk of poverty and homelessness (HAC 2026).

Individuals on temporary visas are typically subject to the ‘no recourse to public funds’ (NRPF) condition, which restricts access to benefits, housing support and statutory homelessness assistance. This exclusion places individuals at a heightened risk of destitution. More broadly, longer routes to settlement can create ongoing instability, even for those with access to public funds, as frequent renewals, visas costs and uncertainty can cause financial pressure and reduce the ability to sustain secure housing.

In the context of the government’s ambition to end homelessness, these proposals expose a policy tension. While intended to strengthen integration and contribution, the proposals may extend the period during which individuals are exposed to financial insecurity and homelessness risk.

INTERACTING RISKS: WORK, EXPLOITATION AND RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN

While the previous sections focused on the role of the immigration and asylum system, participants also discussed a range of overlapping factors that shaped their pathways into homelessness. These included poor working conditions, labour exploitation and relationship breakdown. Although not exhaustive, the themes explored here reflect the most consistently raised in interviews. These drivers do not operate in isolation, but they often interact with immigration status to compound the risk of homelessness.

Labour exploitation and insecure work

Participants consistently identified labour exploitation and insecure work as drivers of financial precarity and homelessness. They described exploitative or insecure work, such as irregular or withheld wages, excessive hours, or informal employment arrangements that offer limited protection. Delayed or underpaid wages limited their ability to meet their ongoing housing costs, while sudden job loss led to immediate housing instability (Wieltschnig 2024).

Linda described how her unstable job and underpaid work contributed to her homelessness:

“I worked for two years in a hotel. They don’t pay me the hours. I worked full-time, they pay me half ... it was a very bad experience.”

(35–44, Manchester, pre-settled status)

Another participant, Andreas came to the UK to work for a construction company. When the company shut down, he lost both his income and his housing, and he experienced periods of rough sleeping or sofa-surfing. He later entered an informal arrangement where accommodation was tied to unpaid labour – fixing the house he was living in in exchange for living there rent-free:

“I’m repairing, painting, changing the door ... [I was a] handyman. But I did not have money, and there was no electric.”

(45–54, Manchester, pre-settled status)

At the extreme end of the spectrum, modern slavery – such as forced labour, servitude, criminal exploitation and human trafficking – is characterised by coercion, control and practices such as debt bondage. Individuals may be prevented from accessing earnings or alternative employment and may be dependent on exploiters for housing. As a result, when they leave or escape these situations, they do so without access to income, housing or support, falling into immediate destitution (Unseen 2026; MHCLG 2025d). Shortcomings in the National Referral Mechanism mean that some survivors of modern slavery leave support without secure housing or income, increasing the risk of homelessness and re-exploitation (Tomas 2026).

Across this spectrum, labour exploitation acts as a driver of homelessness, while immigration precarity both increases vulnerability to exploitation and restricts routes out of it.

Lynn’s experience shows how exploitation and gaps in support can lead directly to homelessness.

LYNN'S STORY: ESCAPING MODERN SLAVERY AND FACING HOMELESSNESS

Lynn (35–45, Leeds, seeking asylum) described how her journey to the UK was shaped by coercion:

“I was smuggled here by loan sharks ... the purpose was so that I could repay them the debt.”

As a result, Lynn was in debt bondage for more than five years, working in warehouses and other forms of labour. This prolonged exploitation left her both financially and psychologically depleted.

After escaping, Lynn had no access to income or housing, resulting in immediate destitution, and experienced a year-long period of homelessness:

“I had no money ... I didn't have a fixed place to live ... [I would sleep] sometimes in the park, sometimes in the underground stations, sometimes on the buses.”

Lynn described feeling anxious and disoriented, and struggled to know where to seek help. Her eventual routes into the asylum system came through informal community support.

Lynn's experience highlights how pathways into homelessness are often shaped by overlapping challenges. Rather than a single trigger, her homelessness emerged from prolonged exploitation, loss of autonomy, unfamiliarity with the UK system, language barriers and a lack of financial independence. Her experience also highlights a critical gap in current provision, where individuals escaping exploitation are not consistently identified or supported, despite facing an immediate risk of homelessness.

Relationship breakdown and domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is a significant driver of homelessness, as recognised in the National Plan for Homelessness. The 2025 Rough Sleeping Questionnaire found that 69 per cent of women who had slept rough in the past year had experienced domestic abuse from the age of 16, compared to 31 per cent of men (MHCLG 2026c). For migrant women, these risks are further complicated by immigration restrictions, which limit the support available when leaving abusive situations.

Having a precarious immigration status or a visa dependent on a partner significantly amplifies this vulnerability. Street (2025) reported that almost a third of people with NRPF who engaged with Women's Aid services experienced abuse related to their immigration status. Perpetrators lied about renewing visas, destroyed immigration documents, and threatened to cancel visas if they fled or resisted abuse.

When a survivor does attempt to leave, their options for assistance are often severely limited. Most refuge accommodation relies on housing benefit to cover its costs, from which those with NRPF are excluded. Simultaneously, survivors are often locked out of local authority housing assistance, leaving them with a stark choice: remain in an abusive home or face homelessness with no safety net.

To further complicate this risk, data sharing between police and immigration enforcement deters survivors from reporting abuse or engaging with relevant authorities. This creates a tension between safeguarding priorities and immigration control.

There are mechanisms in place to support survivors, such as the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC) and the Domestic Abuse Indefinite Leave to Remain pathway. The MVDAC is intended as a temporary measure providing three months access to public funds while survivors apply for Domestic Abuse Indefinite Leave to Remain.

However, in practice, these mechanisms fall short of providing sustained protection from destitution and homelessness. The three-month period may not be sufficient to resolve complex immigration cases or secure stable housing, particularly where there are delays, evidential barriers or limited access to legal advice. Reflecting these challenges, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (2024) has described the concession as a “three-month sticking plaster”.

EMAN’S STORY: SURVIVING DOMESTIC ABUSE TO BECOMING HOMELESS

Eman, originally from Egypt, arrived in the UK in 1993 on a spousal visa. Her husband abandoned her a year later, taking her passport and her immigration documents. She approached the Home Office, but she was turned away. No legal mechanism existed at the time to support an abandoned migrant spouse.⁷

Eman spent three decades building an independent life. She worked in roles including interpreting for hospitals, courts and the police, paid taxes, and in 2004 purchased her own home. As she reflected:

“I worked with the court [as an interpreter], with the police, you name it – and not a single person asked me what is your status in this country.”

In 2003, Eman remarried. Her second husband subjected her to financial and psychological abuse. Following their divorce in 2017, Eman discovered that her ex-husband had reported her to immigration enforcement. Despite having lived in the UK for decades, she was required to report regularly to an immigration centre and, through legal advice, was placed on the 10-year route to settlement.

In 2024, Eman found that the locks to her house had been changed by her ex-husband, and her belongings and pets had been left outside. She immediately became homeless. What followed was a fragmented journey of sofa-surfing, attempts to access support from her local authority, and reliance on charities. Eman also dealt with a brief period of rough sleeping in parks and Tube stations. Her hardship had a severe impact on her life, and she reported attempting to take her own life.

At the time of the interview, Eman was being supported by Southall Black Sisters, who provided accommodation, counselling and a modest stipend. Eman’s case highlights how experiences of abuse, financial control and immigration precarity can increase the risk of destitution and homelessness.

⁷ The domestic violence concession was introduced administratively in 1999 and incorporated into the Immigration Rules in 2002, five years after Eman first sought support (Anitha 2010). At the time she approached the Home Office, no formal mechanism existed to regularise the status of an abandoned migrant spouse. Specific provision for victims of transnational marriage abandonment was not introduced until 31 January 2024, following the High Court ruling in *R (AM) v Secretary of State for the Home Department*, as set out in the Home Office’s ‘Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules’ (Home Office 2023).

7. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The government's National Plan to End Homelessness (MHCLG 2025a) is a renewed commitment to shift from crisis response towards prevention, with a focus on groups at increased risk of homelessness. It is a cross-government strategy, and migrants, including newly recognised refugees and non-UK nationals experiencing rough sleeping, are acknowledged within it. The framework also recognises that people leaving asylum accommodation are among the largest groups entering rough sleeping.

Alongside this, the strategy includes a proposed 'duty to collaborate' across public services, as well as an ambition that no one should be discharged from a public institution, including asylum accommodation, into homelessness. While this is an important step, elements of this ambition are already reflected in existing asylum accommodation contracts, and do not yet deliver on the level of coordination and early intervention needed to prevent homelessness.

The strategy may also sit in tension with emerging Home Office policy, such as the proposed reforms to Home Office support for refused asylum seekers and local authority support for families without immigration status, which could further restrict access to support for some groups at risk of homelessness. Moreover, recent Home Office figures show that the initial asylum backlog fell by more than half between March 2025 and March 2026, while the number of people housed in hotels fell by around a third in the three months between the end of December 2025 and the end of March 2026. While this suggests progress in improving the efficiency of the asylum system and achieving the government's objective of reducing hotel use, the rising number of people leaving asylum accommodation poses a risk of an increase in homelessness, reflecting trends observed in late 2023. Without sufficient support during move-on periods, more people leave asylum accommodation without securing stable housing, increasing pressure on homelessness services.

The policy recommendations set out in this chapter focus on how the National Plan can be strengthened and effectively delivered for people at risk of homelessness within the immigration and asylum system.

It is essential to contextualise these recommendations within the broader challenges related to housing and homelessness in the United Kingdom. Efforts to prevent homelessness remain constrained, particularly by the limited availability of genuinely affordable housing. While the measures outlined below are intended to reduce homelessness risks within the immigration and asylum system, their effectiveness will also depend on progress towards increasing housing supply and addressing wider systemic pressures.

PROPOSAL 1: ENSURING THE 42-DAY MOVE-ON PERIOD PREVENTS HOMELESSNESS IN PRACTICE

In March 2026, the Home Office introduced a 42-day move-on period for people granted refugee status leaving asylum accommodation. This is a welcome improvement on the previous 28-day period. **The priority now is to ensure that this timeframe functions effectively to prevent homelessness.**

In practice, the 42-day window currently runs from the date the decision letter is issued, rather than from the date of the notice to quit. As a result, individuals may have significantly less than 42 days to secure accommodation, particularly where there is a delay between the asylum decision and the issuance of the formal notice to leave asylum accommodation. This limits the policy's effectiveness as a measure to prevent refugee homelessness. **The 42-day period should be aligned with the point at which the notice to quit is issued**, or the decision letter and notice to quit should be issued simultaneously, so that individuals can begin seeking housing support.

Two further steps are required to ensure the 42-day period functions effectively. First, the policy should be subject to continued monitoring and evaluation over a defined period. This should assess whether individuals leaving asylum accommodation are able to secure housing within this timeframe or remain at risk of homelessness. A six-month monitoring period would provide sufficient evidence to assess outcomes.

This would not require new systems but could build on existing evaluation activity from the 56-day move-on pilot. **If evidence clearly shows that the 42-day timeframe is not sufficient to reduce homelessness, the Home Office should consider reviewing the length of the move-on period to ensure it is working effectively.**

Where newly recognised refugees are unable to secure housing or income within this timeframe, **access to extensions for asylum support should be clearer and consistent.** While Home Office guidance allows for discretionary extensions, including where an individual would otherwise face street homelessness, this process is not automatic and relies on case-by-case decision-making (Home Office 2026a).

In practice, this can create barriers to access. Requests are typically routed through third parties such as Migrant Help and assessed against broadly defined criteria, with no guarantee of extension even where an individual is at risk of homelessness. Recent legal proceedings have also highlighted limitations in how this discretion is communicated and applied. This includes a failure to clearly inform individuals of their ability to request an extension.⁸

Strengthening the clarity, accessibility and consistency of this process would help ensure that existing safeguards operate as intended. This could be implemented by revising Home Office guidance.

PROPOSAL 2: EMBED SPECIALIST IMMIGRATION ADVICE IN HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING SERVICES, ALONGSIDE HOUSING-LED PROVISION
Specialist immigration advisers should be embedded directly within homelessness and rough sleeping services so people can access expert support as soon as they seek help. Our research found that participants frequently approached local authority homelessness services but were unable to access support because staff lacked the expertise to navigate complex immigration situations and eligibility rules. **Embedding accredited advisers within services enables people to resolve status issues and access entitlements where appropriate.** Where housing-led models are in place or are being trialled, this advice should be integrated into provision so individuals can resolve status issues while in stable housing.

Existing Home Office mechanisms do not fill this gap. The Homelessness Escalations Service (HES) provides a route to confirm status and request case

8 The relevant legal case is R (Solomon & Others) v SSHD 2026. See: <https://www.judiciary.uk/judgments/samuel-solomon-v-secretary-of-state-for-the-home-department/>

progression for non-UK nationals at risk of homelessness. However, it is reactive, limited to crisis cases, and does not provide legal representation, or offer housing or ongoing support. It should therefore be used as a targeted escalation tool within a wider system of embedded advice.

Greater Manchester's Restricted Eligibility Support Service (RESS) combines homelessness support with accredited immigration advice for people at risk of homelessness who have no recourse to public funds. An evaluation of the programme found that 63 per cent of those who were rough sleeping when they entered the service were accommodated by the time support ended (GMCA 2025). The evaluation also indicates potential fiscal benefits, with modelling suggesting that the net saving to local government is £352,000 over five years (this does not include central government costs associated with providing additional public funds). These savings are primarily driven by reductions in rough sleeping and hidden homelessness, which, in turn, reduce pressure on emergency health, social care and criminal justice services, alongside smaller gains linked to improved immigration outcomes.

In Greater Manchester, this model operates alongside other provision, such as 'A Bed Every Night' (ABEN), which provides emergency accommodation for those excluded from statutory support. The combination of accommodation and specialist advice enables individuals to stabilise their housing while resolving their immigration status.

Further supporting evidence comes from Oxfordshire's NRPF Housing First project, which provides housing and intensive support for people with NRPF. Evaluation findings show that support costs are around £6,870 per person per year, substantially lower than the estimated cost of homelessness of around £30,000 per person per year, and within the typical range for Housing First services. **This suggests that targeted housing and support interventions can offer a cost-effective alternative to unmanaged homelessness (Aitkin 2025).**

Alongside these regional models, MHCLG funded a pilot project conducted by the Centre for Homelessness Impact across four local authorities – Wolverhampton, Coventry, Luton and Reading. The pilot offers temporary accommodation, combined with specialist immigration advice, to individuals with restricted eligibility. The pilot is currently being evaluated and has been referenced in the National Plan to End Homelessness, **indicating a growing recognition that immigration advice is a key tool for preventing homelessness.**

Operationally, larger councils could employ advisers within homelessness teams or commissioned services, while smaller areas could commission provision from trusted advice agencies and run regular clinics across hotels, hostels, day centres and outreach settings. Simple referral pathways would enable frontline workers to connect individuals to an adviser swiftly. This model could be supported through existing rough sleeping and homelessness grants, with national guidance setting minimum expectations, including access to accredited immigration and welfare advice. Local authorities should report outcomes such as how many people are helped, how many resolve status or benefits issues, and how many avoid or move out of homelessness as a result.

Overall, the evidence demonstrates that embedding specialist welfare and immigration advisers within homelessness and rough sleeping services is both operationally feasible and cost-effective. It supports earlier intervention, reduces destitution and enables people to move into stable housing.

PROPOSAL 3: PLACE A DUE REGARD DUTY ON THE HOME OFFICE TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS ARISING FROM IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM POLICIES

The government's proposed 'duty to collaborate' provides a critical opportunity to embed homelessness prevention across public services, including within the Home Office. **To be effective, this duty should ensure that immigration and asylum policies are developed and implemented with regard to their impact on homelessness.**

In this context, following the approach of the Public Sector Equality Duty, a 'due regard' duty could form part of the operationalisation of the duty to collaborate within the Home Office.

The Home Office should be placed under a duty to give due regard to the impact of immigration and asylum policy on homelessness. This would require immigration-related decisions to take account of the risk of homelessness, and for the Home Office to work with MHCLG to identify and implement mitigation measures where risks arise.

In practice, this would require formal processes for the Home Office to assess homelessness risks when developing or changing asylum and immigration policy, and to review existing policies where there is evidence of significant or unintended impacts. **Major policy changes should be accompanied by joint homelessness impact assessments with MHCLG.** Where risks are identified, the departments should agree on proportionate prevention measures.

A cross-departmental board or taskforce could oversee this work, review data on homelessness among migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum, and track whether policy changes are reducing homelessness and destitution. **This would support more systematic collaboration between departments** and would build on existing cross-government working arrangements – in particular, the Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. This group brings together ministers from across government (including representatives from the Home Office) with the aim of coordinating a whole-government approach (MHCLG 2025a).

PROPOSAL 4: STRENGTHEN DATA SHARING BETWEEN THE HOME OFFICE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO SUPPORT HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

The government should prioritise the consistent delivery and strengthening of data-sharing commitments set out in the National Plan to End Homelessness. In particular, this supports the commitment to improving data sharing for people leaving asylum accommodation, ensuring that local authorities receive timely information to prevent homelessness.

This proposal does not require the creation of new systems. Instead, it focuses on ensuring that existing commitments are consistently delivered, extended where necessary, and supported by clear accountability for timelines and outcomes.

The government has a commitment to notifying local authorities within two days when an individual is due to leave asylum accommodation. However, the implementation timeline for this commitment remains unclear. The January 2026 Public Accounts Committee hearing noted that local authorities were still being notified of people leaving asylum accommodation too late, and that data-sharing issues persist (PAC 2026). Incomplete or late notice limits councils' ability to meet their homelessness duties.

The Home Office and MHCLG already collate a range of relevant data, such as local-level asylum accommodation data through the Place Based Visibility Tool, asylum support discontinuation data, and homelessness data collected through

H-CLIC and rough sleeping statistics. However, these datasets could be used more systematically to support homelessness prevention or service planning.

Local authorities should receive clear, timely information to enable earlier planning and intervention. There should also be a clear pathway to resolve individual cases where immigration status or eligibility is unclear. Existing mechanisms, like the Homelessness Escalation Service, serve this function but could be strengthened and made more accessible. In practice, it has largely been used to address cases of rough sleeping. Expanding its remit and improving awareness among local authorities would help resolve issues quickly and prevent people from falling through gaps in the system.

The Home Office and MHCLG should also build on existing data-sharing commitments by incorporating asylum move-on into homelessness data and performance frameworks, including H-CLIC. While the National Plan focuses on improving notifications, there is currently limited visibility on what happens after a notification is made. Introducing indicators to track outcomes for people leaving asylum accommodation, alongside measures of how effectively local authorities can act on this information, would support smoother transitions out of the asylum system.

Finally, it is imperative that any data-sharing arrangements are **clearly framed around homelessness prevention, service planning and case resolution, rather than enforcement**. Clear safeguards on how information is used will be critical to maintaining trust and ensuring individuals feel safe enough to seek support without repercussions.

PROPOSAL 5: USE THE LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOUSEHOLDS WITH NRPF

The Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) is a capital funding scheme that enables councils to acquire or improve homes (MHCLG 2025c). It was initially used to support arrivals from Afghanistan and Ukraine, and the fourth round also supports families owed a homelessness duty (MHCLG 2025c).

The fourth round of LAHF (£950 million, 2026/27 to 2029/30), should be clarified to enable its use for a defined group of households with NRPF, who are already being supported by local authorities.

This proposal aligns with the government's focus on better-quality temporary accommodation and applies to households already within existing statutory frameworks, such as families supported under section 17 of Children Act 1989, and adults with care and support needs accommodated under the Care Act 2014, for whom local authorities are already providing accommodation or subsistence.

At present, many of these households are accommodated through high-cost, short-term arrangements, such as hotels and bed-and-breakfasts. Although intended as temporary solutions, local authority support is often required for extended periods. These arrangements can lead to sustained financial pressure without delivering stable housing outcomes.

Clarifying the use of LAHF-funded homes for this cohort would enable local authorities to use their existing housing assets more effectively, **replacing expensive emergency provision with self-contained accommodation. This would provide a more stable base from which households can resolve their immigration status, while reducing repeat homelessness and demand on crisis services.**

This proposal does not create new entitlements or conflict with immigration rules. It applies only to households that local authorities are already supporting under existing duties and powers.

In practice, this can be implemented through an update to LAHF guidance, allowing a defined proportion of properties to be used for this cohort where local authorities are currently supporting significant numbers of people with NRPF.

Even with a change in guidance, however, there are practical impediments to local authorities using LAHF for NRPF households. This includes the lack of funding available to councils to provide accommodation for NRPF households (which means councils must fully fund this accommodation themselves) and competition within councils for LAHF properties. Therefore, to complement the change in guidance, the government should consider a funding package to local councils to help with the costs of delivering their statutory duties to accommodate vulnerable cohorts with NRPF.

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