

PRATICHI CHATERJEE  
& PHIL BROWN

# Navigating Statutory Homelessness Support: Impacts of Asylum and Refugee Policy

*University of*  
**HUDDERSFIELD**  
Inspiring global professionals

**Healthy  
Housing  
Initiative**



# Table of Contents

03

Definitions and  
Acronyms

06

Executive Summary

13

Roots of the  
homelessness crisis  
among new  
refugees

18

3. Homelessness  
among new  
refugees

19

3.1 After a  
successful asylum  
claim: The move-on  
period.

25

3.2 Navigating  
homelessness  
support

40

3.3 Navigating the  
rental housing  
market

50

4. Data on  
homelessness  
among new  
refugees.

57

5. Conclusions and  
Recommendations

59

Ways Forward

64

Appendix A

# Definitions and Acronyms

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>AIRE</b>	Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility service for asylum seekers provided by Migrant Help in England.
<b>Asylum</b>	Asylum refers to the protection that a nation state grants a person who has escaped serious threats such as political persecution, war or natural disasters in their home country. The protection arises from the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee.
<b>AASC</b>	The Asylum Accommodation and Support Contracts govern the relationship between the Home Office and the three companies contracted to provide asylum accommodation – Clearsprings Ready Homes, Mears and Serco.
<b>Destitution</b>	A condition commonly experienced by people seeking asylum who have no access to housing, income, or support due to restrictive policies or delays in the asylum process.
<b>LHA</b>	Local Housing Allowance is used to calculate the amount private renters get as the housing element of Universal Credit or as Housing Benefit. How much a person or family gets is based on the bedrooms they can claim for which will be determined by age, sex and the number of people.

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Main Housing Duty</b>	<p>A local authority owes a Main Housing Duty where they are satisfied a household is eligible (e.g. immigration status), in priority need and not intentionally homeless. The accommodation must be suitable and can initially be temporary until the local authority offers a private assured shorthold tenancy available for at least 12 months or social housing.</p>
<b>Person seeking asylum/Asylum Seeker</b>	<p>A person who has left their home country and has formally applied for asylum with a nation state seeking protection, arising from the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee, but whose application has not concluded.</p>
<b>Prevention Dury</b>	<p>A local authority owes a Prevention Duty where they are satisfied a person is threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance. It requires the authority to take reasonable steps to help the applicant/s to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available to them</p>

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Refugee</b>	<p>A person who, due to a well-founded fear of persecution (for reasons including race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion), is outside their country and unable or unwilling to return. Defined in the 1951 Refugee Convention.</p>
<b>Relief Duty</b>	<p>A local authority owes a Relief Duty where they are satisfied a person is homeless and eligible for assistance. It required the local authority to take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that suitable accommodation becomes available to them for at least 6 months.</p>

# Executive Summary

Homelessness among newly recognised refugees in the UK is not an inevitable outcome, but the product of policy decisions and systemic barriers that compound people's vulnerability at the very point when stability is most needed. People emerge from the asylum process with a view to rebuilding their lives but face abrupt transitions, fragmented support and a hard-to-navigate housing landscape, even for long-term residents. The consequences negatively impact people's chances of securing economic and social stability.

The report discusses evidence on how asylum and immigration policies have combined with housing market pressures to exacerbate the likelihood of homelessness for newly recognised refugees. Decades of policy reform, spanning dispersal, outsourcing, restrictions on employment, and the Right to Rent have systematically undermined refugees' ability to develop social networks, sustain themselves financially, and build the knowledge needed to secure housing. These long-standing constraints have produced conditions in which homelessness is not incidental but foreseeable. Against this context, the report calls for a more responsive, coordinated and humane approach to homelessness among new refugees.



## Why this Report, and Why Now?

The urgency of this report lies in the convergence of long-standing structural exclusions, on the one hand, and recent policy and social developments, on the other. The combination has resulted in homelessness among new refugees being recorded at the highest levels seen in recent years: statutory homelessness among people leaving asylum accommodation increased by 251% in 2023 – 2024 [1]. These increases followed the Home Office's efforts to clear the asylum backlog, which accelerated refugee status decisions, but without adequate planning for the housing transitions that followed.

At the same time, local authorities face severe financial strain, social housing supply is at historic lows, and the private rental market is increasingly unaffordable. These conditions mean that refugees are entering housing systems already under immense pressure, with predictable outcomes of destitution, precarity and homelessness. Their circumstances are further shaped by overlapping crises, where the maintenance of austerity measures and the increasing cost-of-living has exacerbated housing insecurity, with particularly acute consequences for people whose resources and rights have been systematically constrained.

Compounding the situation is the outright hostility and stigma in many areas of the UK directed at asylum seekers and refugees, that no doubt have consequences for their ability to establish a new life.

Despite the scale of this crisis, the period immediately following a grant of asylum status remains poorly understood and supported. It is at this point that many refugees experience their sharpest vulnerabilities, as they are required to navigate complex welfare and housing systems at the very moment they lose access to asylum accommodation. Much of the research and popular debate centres on the asylum process itself, while the critical post-

decision phase is often overlooked. Recently, there has been acknowledgement of the challenges of this period, reflected in the Home Office's resourcing of Asylum Move-on liaison officers to support people, especially those in hotels (i.e. contingency accommodation), during the move-on period from asylum accommodation, and work with local authorities. But at the same time Government decisions such as recent changes to the timeframe of this period, seemingly in response to political pressures, have exacerbated challenges for both new refugees navigating the process, and local government and voluntary sector organisations supporting them.

This report addresses the above gap. It brings together evidence on the structural drivers of homelessness for newly recognised refugees and provides clear illustrations, through diagrams and process maps, of how people move through, and are often failed by, the system. It also provides an overview of data at the national scale, and the regional scale of Yorkshire and Humber, to demonstrate the consequences of these drivers. In making visible the stages of transition and the points at which risks intensify, the report offers a new lens through which to understand refugee homelessness as a systemic outcome, rather than an individual failing.

In doing so, the report aims to provide timely, policy-relevant evidence on an area that has been neglected in both academic and public debate. Without urgent action to address these overlooked transitions, refugee homelessness will remain a structural feature of the UK's asylum and housing systems, with profound implications for integration, social justice, and community cohesion.

[1] NACCOM (2024) People who are initially refused asylum are slipping through the cracks: Urgent reform is needed. Available at: <https://nacom.org.uk/blog-people-who-are-initially-refused-asylum-are-slipping-through-the-cracks-urgent-reform-is-needed/>

## Key Findings and Recommendations

Our findings discuss the risk of homelessness or of poor housing circumstances in three critical areas:

### **The move-on period.**

People newly granted refugee status are given 28-56 days, to leave asylum accommodation, depending on their circumstances, and secure new housing while simultaneously navigating welfare applications, employment, and settlement tasks. Inadequate support under the current Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE), coupled with poor coordination between the Home Office, accommodation providers, and local authorities, leaves many without time or means to avoid homelessness.

### **Engagement with statutory homelessness services.**

On gaining status many new refugees face destitution and will be required, at least initially, to navigate unfamiliar, complex processes to access homelessness support, which do not account for their circumstances. Language barriers, limited advocacy, including legal support, and restrictive or inconsistent application of eligibility rules (for example on "local connection" and understandings of vulnerability) means that many are refused substantive assistance.

### **Access to the housing market.**

Discrimination in private renting, exacerbated by Right to Rent and welfare stigma, affordability barriers, limited orientation support, alongside social housing pressures are hurdles in accessing decent housing. Refugees face similar barriers to other low-income households but are especially disadvantaged because their social capital and economic independence have been eroded by restrictive asylum policies.

People face different risks shaped by their circumstances. Young single people are especially likely to be excluded from the main homelessness statutory duty. Restrictions on housing allowance force those with histories of trauma into inappropriate shared settings, and the organisation of asylum policies means that family reunification can lead to overcrowded accommodation. Families may face poor or overcrowded accommodation because of limited appropriate stock or a lack of safe asylum routes which lead to people joining family members later. Women, meanwhile, experience gendered vulnerabilities that increase exposure to exploitation and unsafe housing.



Our analysis of data from Yorkshire and Humber reveals the scale of the problem: with statutory homelessness, or threat thereof, among households with new refugee status rising by 175 % between 2022–23 and 2023–24, with over 2,000 households in the region owed a homelessness Prevention or Relief duty by local authorities (See Chapter 4). Over half of these cases were in West Yorkshire. Yet even this sharp rise likely underestimates the true extent of homelessness because of the invisibility of those who do not approach local authorities for support, data gaps regarding people who are refused an assessment and support, and inconsistencies across local authority data recording practices.

Taken together, these findings underline that homelessness among people who have newly been granted refugee status is not a marginal or short-term issue but a systemic outcome of immigration and housing policies interacting with wider crises resulting from previous austerity measures, welfare reform, and housing pressures. Refugees' experiences function as a barometer of the UK's broader housing crisis, where insecure accommodation, institutional under-resourcing, and discriminatory governance converge.

## Key Conclusions

- Homelessness among new refugees is structurally produced, not an accidental by-product of policy. The immigration and asylum policies set at the national level undermine the aspirations to prevent and end homelessness shared by local and regional governments and the voluntary sector.
- The point at which people's asylum claim is granted is a critical moment of policy failure, marked by inadequate time, poor coordination, and insufficient support.
- Statutory homelessness support can exclude people because of restrictive conditions, but also through inconsistent and sometimes inaccurate application of criteria which undermine access to housing.
- People with refugee status contend with systemic discrimination and exclusion in the housing market, exacerbating vulnerabilities created during the asylum process.
- Existing data does not accurately reveal the extent of the housing problems new refugees face, undermining the ability of policy and practice to effectively respond.

Based on this, we offer a series of recommendations focussed at the national policy level and at the regional and local levels. These are informed by a drive to re-prioritise a preventative approach to homelessness, which should be at the heart of housing policy and practice. Some of our recommendations require financial investment. Others can be enacted without substantive monetary resources, but do require significant political will and leadership, especially in the current context where there has been increasing hostility towards people seeking asylum and those with refugee status.

# Recommendations

## 1

### **Build an Asylum Process that is Responsive to People's Lives Post-decision**

- Lift the restrictions on employment for people awaiting a decision on their asylum claim.
- Invest in and expand access to English language classes during the asylum process.
- Ensure effective, properly resourced and coordinated information and orientation for people during the asylum process about life in the UK, post-decision. This should include better working together across different actors and organisations including the Home Office and its Asylum Move-on Liaison Officers, asylum accommodation providers, local authorities and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sectors.
- Actively enable people to build and maintain social networks whilst they wait for their claim to be processed.

## 2

### **Extend and Reform the Move-on Period**

- Increase the post-decision move-on window from 28 days to at least 56 days for all new refugees in line with statutory homelessness provisions.
- Develop a more coordinated and supportive move-on process that aims to prevent homelessness by allowing people adequate time and support to prepare for a new life.

## 3

### **Ensure Statutory Homelessness Support is Accessible and Responsive**

- Invest in local authority statutory homelessness support services and Refugee Integration Services.
- Provide support and training for housing officers on the specific rights and needs of newly recognised refugees.
- Invest in legal aid and introduce a right to housing advice at the point people gain refugee status.
- Share best practice across local authorities including on how different authorities respond to refugees during the move-on process.

# 4

## Reform the 'Local Connection' Rules

- Amend statutory guidance to ensure refugees are not penalised for relocating to areas where they have informal support, employment prospects or because of safety concerns.
- Explore the potential for better working across local authorities and develop ways to mitigate against people being penalised for relocation.

# 5

## Increase the Availability of Safe, Suitable Accommodation

- Invest in transitional housing pathways that offer stability after status is granted, including access to social housing and Housing First pilots as per need.
- Review local housing allowance rates to facilitate better chances at securing decent rental accommodation.
- Properly resource local authorities to enforce provisions of the Renters Rights bill with a focus on improving oversight of the private rental market particularly in relation to overcrowding and discrimination.
- Capitalise on recent commitments to public investment in housing by expanding good quality social housing in areas of high demand.

# 6

## Embed Trauma-informed and Culturally Competent Practice

- Require and resource local authorities and commissioned homelessness services to adopt trauma-informed approaches and culturally appropriate support for clients.
- Fund voluntary sector partnerships with refugee-led and community organisations who can provide relational support and system advocacy.

# 7

## Data

- The Home Office should make available data on the number of people granted an asylum claim at a local and/or regional level on a monthly or quarterly basis.
- Fill evidence gaps on the number of households with refugee status who have not been able to access statutory homelessness support.

## Report Overview

The report is structured in five chapters.

**Chapter 2** examines the historical policy decisions that have shaped the asylum process and created conditions of housing precarity for new refugees. **Chapter 3** focuses on the housing challenges and risk of homelessness that people face following a grant of asylum (or other humanitarian protection), highlighting three key junctures: the move-on period from asylum accommodation, engagement with statutory homelessness services, and access to the wider housing market. **Chapter 4** presents recent data on statutory homelessness among refugees from Yorkshire and Humber, while identifying persistent gaps in evidence that prevent building an accurate picture of the issue. **Chapter 5** sets out a series of ways forward at both national and local levels, framed around a preventative approach to homelessness.

The report builds on and expands the focus of previous research on refugee policy and homelessness undertaken by the University of Huddersfield, in partnership with Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber, co-funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The work has drawn on a number of sources. These include conversations with practitioners and campaigners, working across health, housing and migration, at the national level, as well as at the regional and local levels in Yorkshire and Humber. Multiple primary sources including legislation and policy records, submissions to Government inquiries, parliamentary debates and statutory homelessness data have informed our findings. Secondary sources include academic articles, research reports and guidance from legal, migration and homelessness practitioners. We also draw on a range of case studies and interviews from the collaboration with Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber.

The report is relevant to policy and practice in England and will also have some benefit for devolved nations in the UK, but legislative differences means that some findings will not be relevant for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Data and examples used throughout the report are often from Yorkshire and Humber local authorities, where our partners and collaborators are based.

## 2. Roots of the Homelessness Crisis Among New Refugees



In the UK, a person's immigration status has direct implications for their housing outcomes. For new refugees who gain their status via the 'asylum pathway', immigration law and policies over decades have created the conditions in which housing precarity is the default outcome. The political agenda to deter people from coming to the country by restricting access to social and economic resources, through legislative and policy changes, particularly in the 1990s and 2010s [2], has significantly undermined the ability to establish a successful life post-decision, where their asylum claim is granted (See Figure 2.1). The crisis of homelessness among new refugees today (discussed in the rest of the report) has its roots in this history.



[2] Phillips, D. (2006) Moving Towards Integration: The Housing of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Britain, *Housing Studies*, 21:4, 539-553, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673030600709074>.

**Figure 2.1 1990s–2010s Deterrence Based Legislation and Policies**

1999 Asylum and Immigration Act introduced significant changes to asylum seekers, through a dispersal on a no-choice basis to areas outside London and the SE

Access to local authority homelessness was rescinded, replaced by a parallel system of support under the National Asylum Support Service overseen by the Home Office. A range of institutions - housing associations, local authorities and voluntary sector organisations etc were contracted to secure and deliver accommodation

Critics claimed that dispersing people on a no-choice basis undermined their capacity to foster social and community networks, undermining the capacity to build a stable life post asylum

People seeking asylum allowed to apply for permission to work after waiting for decision to comply with EU law

The 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act - Restricted access to social housing by limiting the duty of local authorities under housing legislation to house people seeking asylum

**1993**

**1999**

**2005**

**1996**

**2002**

The 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act and the 1996 Housing Act changed entitlements to local authority homelessness assistance, restricting access for in-country applicants

In 2002 the Government abolished the employment concession which has allowed people seeking asylum to apply for permission to work where a decision on their claim had been outstanding for 6 months

The 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act prohibited support for asylum seekers who do not make a claim as soon as 'reasonably practical' after arrival. A successful challenge in the Court of Appeal in 2005 ended a less restrictive approach. The Act also impacted people with refugee status in where family members joining them had 'No recourse to Public Funds' which hindered access to social housing

In 2012 the provision of accommodation for people seeking asylum was outsourced through COMPASS. Private contractors (G4S, Serco and Clearsprings) became responsible for asylum across different UK regions. COMPASS has been criticised for poor quality of accommodation and a lack of adequate support. This introduced further separation between the system of asylum accommodation, operated by private contractors and local authority provision services. The separation created upheaval for the people transitioning out of the asylum system, or being granted refugee status

The Compass contracts were replaced with similar regional management through the Asylum Accommodation Support Contracts. Contracts are held by Clearsprings Ready homes, Mears and Serco. Local authority and refugee support staff have indicated that the problems of poor linkage and communication between accommodation providers and local services persist

**2012**

**2019**

**2010**

**2014**

Work rights for people seeking asylum limited to the shortage occupation list

The 2014 Immigration Act introduced 'Right to Rent' (R+R) clauses as part of the 'hostile environment' policy. R+R required landlords to check immigration status before offering a tenancy. Fears of being fined and imprisonment have encouraged discriminatory practices in the rental market, particularly where documents demonstrating a person's immigration status is not commonly accepted or understood

Contracts for support and advice to asylum seekers were centralised and outsourced to Migrant Help. Research indicates that under-resourcing and the prioritising of telephone advice over face-to-face support limits the effectiveness of the service

## 2.1 Dispersal and Disconnection

The 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act officially introduced compulsory dispersal of asylum accommodation across the country, on a no-choice basis through a national system, National Asylum Support Service (NASS) [3]. The new 'national machinery', delivered by housing associations, local authorities, the voluntary and private sector, was the result of increased pressures on local authorities in London and the South East, exacerbated by the national Government's restrictions on housing and homelessness assistance for asylum seekers.

The Act restricted mainstream social and economic support for asylum seekers on grounds that this attracted disingenuous claimants [4]. The accommodation it provided was often characterised by poor conditions and located in under-resourced areas, severing many from existing social and community networks. NASS also introduced a transition point for life pre and post-decision, with new refugees leaving the system facing enormous upheaval. This included navigating unfamiliar bureaucratic processes to access mainstream housing, employment and welfare, often in areas where they were socially isolated [5], increasing their vulnerability to homelessness.

This model of dispersal continues to shape the current system of asylum, embedding social isolation and limiting access to employment, education, and long-term housing opportunities into the process.

## 2.2 Outsourcing and Fragmentation

From 2012, responsibility for asylum accommodation was outsourced to private contractors under national framework agreements. The move intended to introduce simplicity and efficiency impacted on resources and support available to asylum seekers. Local authorities, under NASS, provided wrap-around services alongside accommodation delivery, which included language classes, access to health services and social workers [6]. The new outsourced model did not sufficiently incorporate these or enable robust connections with existing services in the local area that could benefit people once they had received refugee status.

Outsourcing marginalised local authorities, reducing their ability to plan, coordinate, and respond to the housing needs of asylum seekers and refugees in their areas. The further outsourcing of advice and support services in 2014 compounded these issues, creating a system marked by poor communication, reduced accountability, and limited pathways to effective support. Conversations with council and migrant sector staff we have had during this project indicate that these problems of poor linkage with local council and voluntary sector services persist today.

[3] Darling, J. (2022). *Systems of Suffering: Dispersal and the Denial of Asylum*. London: Pluto Press.

[4] UK Government (2013). *Home Affairs Committee – Seventh Report*

*Asylum*. Available at: [2] Phillips, D. (2006) *Moving Towards Integration: The Housing of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Britain*, *Housing Studies*, 21:4, 539–553, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673030600709074>.

[5] UK Government (2005) *Select Committee on Work and Pensions Fourth Report*. Available at: [2] Phillips, D. (2006) *Moving Towards Integration: The Housing of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Britain*, *Housing Studies*, 21:4, 539–553, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673030600709074>.

[6] Darling 2022

## 2.3 Restrictions on Employment and Housing Rights

The continued prohibition on employment during the asylum process has forced people into long-term dependence on inadequate state support, limiting their experience of formal employment in the UK and leaving them ill-prepared to afford private rent once refugee status is granted. The introduction of the "Right to Rent" scheme in 2014 added another layer of exclusion, making landlords responsible for immigration checks and institutionalising discrimination against people with precarious status.

## 2.4 Cumulative Effects

Taken together, these measures designed to deter asylum claims have had direct consequences for housing security. They have left new refugees entering the housing system with few resources, little social capital, and limited knowledge of the rental market. At the same time, local authorities face rising demand for homelessness assistance in the context of the continuing legacy of austerity-driven cuts, a chronic shortage of affordable housing, and widening inequalities in access to welfare. Refugees are therefore caught at the sharpest edge of a broader housing crisis. The roots of refugee homelessness lie in a deliberate policy trajectory that has prioritised deterrence over support and integration. Dispersal, outsourcing, restrictions on work, and landlord checks have not only failed in the policy objective of preventing asylum claims, but they have entrenched long-term precarity. Understanding these roots is essential: without addressing the structural drivers of homelessness, interventions at later stages of the refugee journey will continue to fall short.



# 3. Homelessness Among New Refugees



### 3.1 After a Successful Asylum Claim: The Move-on Period

Those whose refugee status is acknowledged by the UK Government are granted protection on grounds that they face persecution in their home country, while others, who do not qualify for this status, may be granted humanitarian protection. This usually gives a person or family household 5 years of leave to remain in the country, with the exact amount of time varying by case. Being granted status marks the start of an extremely disorientating process for people who have been living in asylum accommodation for months and even years, in most cases. Whilst the decision should bring relief, new refugees now face the task of navigating multiple state welfare and statutory processes to secure themselves in their new lives. As discussed in Section 2, this is against a backdrop of a de facto employment ban during the processing of their claim, of having had little opportunity to familiarise themselves with the housing market and limited experience, if any, of mainstream government administrative systems. The case of Amina, a mother with a young child granted asylum in 2021, demonstrates some of the initial hurdles and the emotional toll they take.

#### Case Study 1: Navigating the Unknown – Amina’s Story

Amina arrived in the UK in late 2019 after fleeing violence and insecurity. She was housed in asylum accommodation in the North of England with her young child. The living conditions were cramped and precarious:

**“It wasn’t a big house, and my room was also small... We had to seek medical attention because [my baby’s] skin started bleeding.”**

Despite the discomfort and a lack of privacy, she found a fragile sense of safety and began volunteering and taking language classes.

Receiving refugee status in 2021 should have been a turning point. Instead, it brought a sudden loss of support. She was given 28 days – the move on period – to leave her asylum accommodation. “It was a traumatic experience again,” she recalled. “They just said you have to go, no help with where.” With no guidance on housing or benefits, and no support worker to bridge the transition, she moved to another area where she had informal connections. But the new local authority refused to help: “They said I should go back to where I was before, but I didn’t have anyone there.”

She sofa-surfed for several months with acquaintances, an experience she described as emotionally exhausting and unstable. Caring for a young child in temporary spaces, she struggled with mounting anxiety. She was eventually able to access private rented accommodation, but only by accepting a room in a shared house that was poorly maintained and not suitable for her family. “The place wasn’t good. The food wasn’t good, and I was always sick. It’s probably because I was pregnant. I wasn’t well.” The lack of continuity between immigration and housing systems had long-term consequences. Without a stable address, she couldn’t access key services or open a bank account. Her health declined, and she felt increasingly marginalised. “Once you get your papers, you feel happy,” she said, “but the reality is you are alone. No one takes responsibility.”

## Limited Move-on Time

The move on period is a 'grace' period following grant of asylum, after which a person's entitlement to asylum support ends. In August 2025 following a brief trial of an extended 56 day move-on period, the Government re-instated the previous shorter time frame of 28 days for most single adults. The 56-day duration continues to apply, at the time of writing this report, for certain groups - pregnant women, people aged over 65 years of age and those with a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010 [7]. Multiple migration and refugee charities have criticised the reversion to the shorter time frame which will impact new refugees who are least likely to be receive substantive housing support from local authorities. Only the longer duration of 56 days aligns with the time periods in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which require relevant housing authorities, (i.e. the local authority in most cases), to assist eligible people threatened with homelessness within a 56-day window. This means only a subset of refugees will receive the full period of homelessness support.



Move-on presents multiple challenges because of the restricted time scales, and difficulties of communication and information sharing discussed below. For those in asylum dispersal accommodation, the clock to leave their accommodation starts from the date a discontinuation letter is issued, or the date a positive decision is made on their claim. This window to negotiate multiple critical tasks, vital to people's physical and economic security while transitioning into a new life, is extremely limited (see Figure 3.1). In this time new refugees will need to access their e-visa and immigration account, open a bank account, apply for universal credit, secure accommodation, and start the process of finding employment.

Compounding the situation is the fact that new refugees navigate the transition process whilst being relatively new to the country with many still building their English language skills. The near ban on employment for those seeking asylum, the secluded location of some asylum accommodation, and the fact that people can be moved multiple times in the asylum process, only exacerbates the challenges by undermining the ability to develop savings and social networks which can be sources of assistance and advocacy. Making full use of the move-on period is conditional upon processing times within government housing and welfare bureaucracies, which frequently do not run smoothly. For example, some people may leave asylum accommodation before receiving their first Universal Credit payment, that can take 5 weeks to commence from the point of application [8]. Such a situation leaves people homeless and without access to finances.

[7] Right to Remain (2025) Move On Support for Newly Recognised Refugees Available at:

<https://righttoremain.org.uk/move-on-support-for-newly-recognised-refugees-whats-changing-from-1-september-2025/> [8] NACCOM (2025) Written Evidence Submitted by

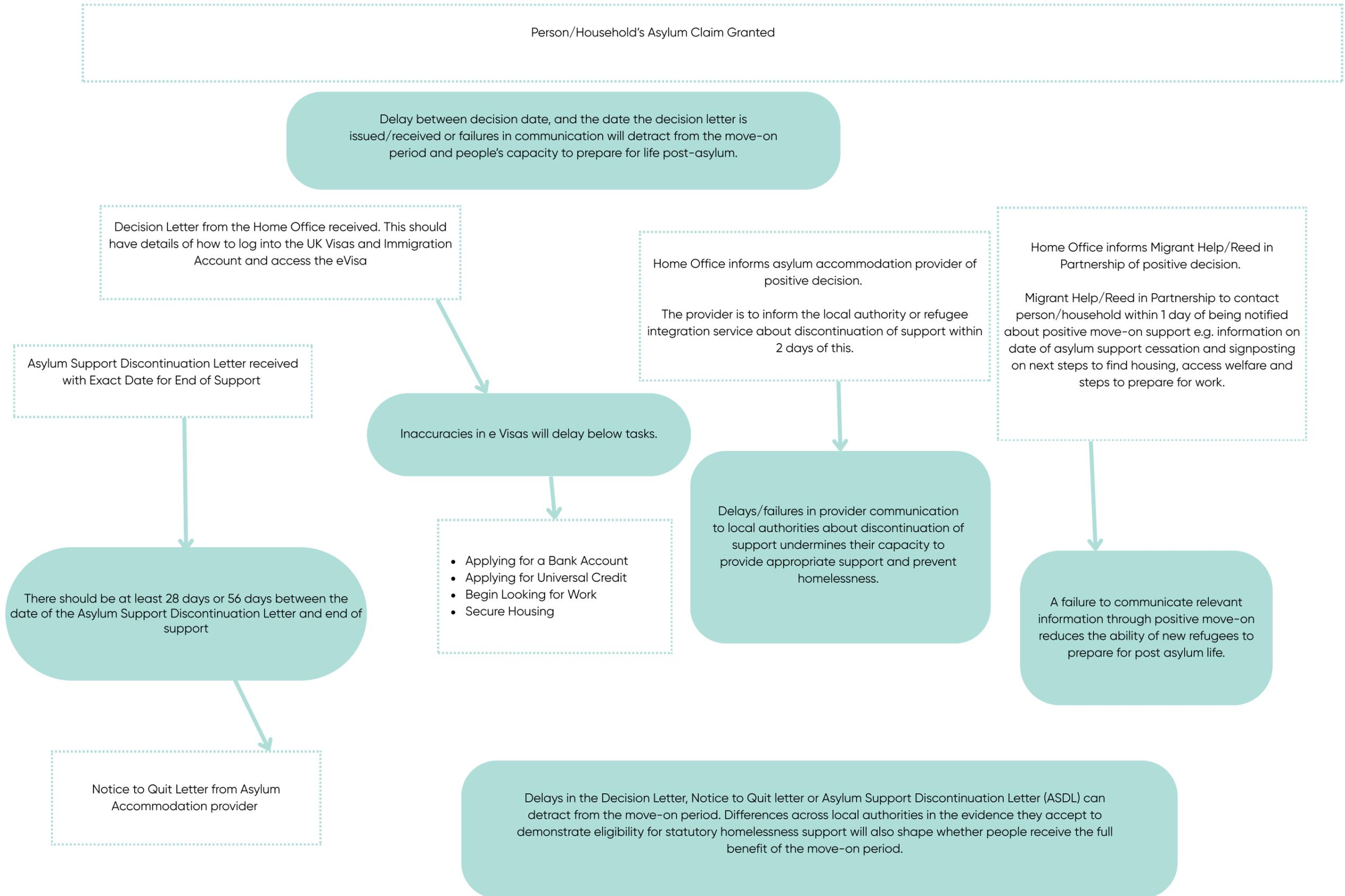
NACCOM. Asylum Accommodation Inquiry.

<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/22973/pdf/>

Other examples of organisational delays are seen in cases where local authorities have asked new refugees to wait until the end of the move-on period before they can access homelessness support (see Figure 3.1). The Asylum Support Appeals project found cases where councils refused to look for accommodation until refugees presented a 'notice to quit' letter from their asylum accommodation provider. The letter is issued very late in the move-on period, usually indicating 7 days to leave asylum accommodation (see Figure 3.1). Making local authority homelessness support conditional upon it, reduces the time people have to benefit from any council assistance to find housing, and to prepare for their new life in general [9]. Communications we have had during this project with migration and refugee charities indicate that this practice still continues.

[9] Hutton, C. and Lukes, S. (2024) Access to advice on asylum support and appeals. Available at: [https://www.asaproject.org/uploads/ASA0003\\_Access\\_to\\_Advice.pdf](https://www.asaproject.org/uploads/ASA0003_Access_to_Advice.pdf).

### 3.1 Communication and Coordination Challenges of the Move-On Period from Asylum Accommodation



## Information Provision/ Communication with New Refugees: Home Office and AIRE Support

The above situation is made worse by the significant scope in the move-on period for logistical mishaps, miscommunication, and the relaying of inadequate or inaccurate information, that detracts from the move-on time frame (see Figure 3.1). For example, a delay in new refugees receiving their grant letter or letters not being received because of a lack of up-to-date contact details, means the move-on 'clock' could have commenced by the time people are even aware that they have refugee status. Equally, errors in e-visas or an inability to access and manage their e-visas online, affects a person's chances of securing private rental housing, given that the visas are proof of identification required to demonstrate the 'right to rent' in England. Reports on recent problems with the e-visa roll out suggest that many people have or will be negatively impacted by processing errors [10].

In case of above delays in documentation and inaccuracies, the Home Office has contracted Migrant Help, via the AIRE contract, to support people in requesting a reinstatement of asylum support. But frontline organisations and people seeking asylum have found communication with Migrant Help to be challenging, because of a lack of or extremely slow responses, and long call holding times [11]. The ineffectiveness of the support, alongside delays and errors in documentation, add to the pressures of the move-on period, increasing risk of having to leave asylum accommodation without having secured any housing alternatives.

Providers of asylum services, as per the AIRE contract, are responsible for communicating information to new refugees to facilitate a smooth move-on [12]. In England, Migrant Help have contracted Reed in Partnership to inform new refugees about the move-on period and the date for cessation of asylum

Support. The positive move-on support includes information on steps to secure housing, welfare, and the booking of an appointment with the local Department of Work and Pensions for a work-focussed interview. While Migrant Help/Reed in partnership initiate contact, previous research has found that this contact does not always happen or at least is often unsuccessful in reaching new refugees. A 2019 survey of 37 'clients' across three organisations in Greater Manchester found that only 3 had been contacted by Reed [13]. The reasons behind this are unclear but may be due to inaccurate contact details for new refugees, language barriers or people's lack of awareness of the service, which means they may not be responsive to the call. This suggests that some people will not be aware of statutory homelessness support or approach the relevant council for this support, but no publicly accessible data is available on how extensive this problem is.

[10] Rimi, A. (2025) E-visa failures leave refugee to sleep rough as caseworker warns of Home Office chaos. Hyphen. Available at: <https://hyphenonline.com/2025/01/31/e-visa-home-office-refugee-homeless-benefits-housing-job-centre/>.

Bancroft, H. (2025) Housing worker blocked from seeing family abroad due to eVisa issues. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/evisa-uk-travel-problems-immigration-b2692700.html>.

[11] Hutton, C. and Lukes, S. (2024) Access to advice on asylum support and appeals. Available at: [https://www.asaproject.org/uploads/ASA0003\\_Access\\_to\\_Advice.pdf](https://www.asaproject.org/uploads/ASA0003_Access_to_Advice.pdf).

[12] Asylum Matters (2019) The Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Contract (AIRE) A Guide. <https://asylummatters.org/app/uploads/2019/11/The-Advice-Issue-Reporting-and-Eligibility-Contract-A-Guide.pdf>

[13] Refugee Action (2020) Wake up call: How Government Contracts Fail people Seeking Asylum. Available at: <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Wake-Up-Call-2020.pdf>

In November 2024 the Home Office resourced a team of Asylum Move-on Liaison Officers (AMLO) dedicated to delivering in-person support to people in some contingency accommodation, often hotels, to improve the move-on period. AMLOs work with local authorities and Migrant Help. The effectiveness of the service needs evaluation and there are questions as to whether this resource is replicating contractual obligations of the AIRE. The success of this measure depends on better working together across the Home Office, Local Authorities and VCS groups [14]

### Information Sharing with Local Actors: AASC Accommodation Providers and Local Authorities

As per the Asylum Accommodation and Support Contract, providers [15] (Mears, Serco and Clearspring Ready Homes) are required to inform the local authority that they are ceasing support, within two working days of being notified by the Home Office of the cessation of support after a person or family have been granted asylum. They must also inform the authority of the composition of the household, the date Home Office support will stop, any known service user needs, and any other information specified by the local authority to help prevent homelessness. The information is usually relayed to the council's housing options team, or the Refugee Integration Service [16] (RIS).

The above communication, however, does not always occur in a manner that enables councils to undertake effective homelessness prevention work. Serco, the asylum accommodation provider in Midlands, East England and the Northwest regions, in evidence to the 2025 Asylum Accommodation inquiry, noted that there was no discussion ahead of asylum decisions to engage with local authorities about new refugees' housing options. [17] Of the 28

submissions that we identified as coming directly from local and regional authorities or associated government organisations, 25 claimed that local authority housing teams did not receive data in a timely manner to assist people, or that the information received was incorrect, inconsistent or limited in detail. For example, some noted that people's contact details on [asylum support] discontinuation notices were incorrect or incomplete, making new refugees hard to reach. Others raised concerns about safeguarding risks, because information received in the notices did not contain sufficient record of a person's extensive needs.

[14] Yassin, A. (2025) New Refugees Need Help to Find Secure Housing. Available at: <https://www.glassdoor.org.uk/blog/new-refugees-need-help-to-find-secure-housing>.

[15] Asylum Matters (2019) The Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Contract (AIRE) A Guide. <https://asylumatters.org/app/uploads/2019/11/The-Advice-Issue-Reporting-and-Eligibility-Contract-A-Guide.pdf>

[16] In Yorkshire and Humber there are local areas with dedicated refugee integration services managed by Migration Yorkshire and delivered by local authorities or other partner organisations. The services have been co-funded by the European Union Asylum and Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) (see <https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/our-work/refugee-integration-service>). Similar services are funded by AMIF in Scotland, the Welsh Refugee Council and local authorities in England.

[17] Serco (2025) Written evidence submitted by Serco (AAC0099. Asylum Accommodation Inquiry. <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/136584/pdf/>

## 3.2 Navigating Homelessness Support

During or after the move-on period many new refugees will approach their local authority for statutory homelessness support, for which they are now eligible under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. The support is usually administered by housing officers in the 'housing options' or 'housing office' team of the council. It is intended to both prevent homelessness and assist people who have already been made homeless. The way this statutory assistance is structured and resourced creates multiple pitfalls across each of the different duties owed at various points, that reduce the effectiveness of support and can extend people's homelessness.

Many of the challenges that new refugees face in navigating homelessness support, are shared by others, including UK citizens and long-term residents. But relative newness to the UK, unfamiliarity with government bureaucratic processes, and language barriers can make the situation especially punishing for many new refugees.

We discuss the statutory duties and challenges in accessing homelessness support below, noting critical areas where people are at risk of not receiving the full housing support they are due, or where their homelessness may be extended for longer than needed. Given the lack of official data on refugees' experiences with navigating different phases of this support, our analysis is based on conversations with professionals from local authorities and Refugee Integration Services in Yorkshire and Humber, guidance from practitioners, and existing research reports. We also draw on empirical evidence from previous collaborative research with Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber. But further empirical investigation is required to understand the extent to which these issues impact new refugees.

### Accessing Statutory Homelessness Support:

Many people will face obstacles when approaching and making a homelessness application at the local authority Housing Options office. There is no prescribed form to apply for homelessness support, and in theory people can approach the council and explain their circumstances, including over the phone. But guidance from the Refugee Council advises creating a letter to explain one's situation [18]. Either way, navigating an unfamiliar process and institution, and doing this whilst facing language barriers will be extremely challenging as was the experience of an interviewee who participated in the Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber project.

Refugee Integration Services, usually affiliated with local authorities, across the country can help people access homelessness support at the point they are granted asylum. These services deliver tailored support to new refugees, assisting with access to housing, welfare, and employment. Some councils also embed refugee integration staff in their Housing Options teams, to provide tailored assistance. In Yorkshire and Humber 10 local authorities have Refugee Integration Services (see <https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/> for further details).

But nonetheless, conversations with staff from Refugee Integration Services indicate that some people may not approach the local authority for homelessness assistance or they actively decide not to engage. Currently there is no systematic data at a local or regional level as to how many people are in this situation.

[17] Serco (2025) Written evidence submitted by Serco (AAC0099. Asylum Accommodation Inquiry. <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/136584/pdf/>

[18] Morgan, C (2019) Making homelessness applications for refugees in England. Available at: <https://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/Chloe%20Morgan%20Paper%20-%20Good%20Practice%20Guide.pdf>

## Case Study: Grace's Experience with the Local Authority

After receiving refugee status, Grace approached her local housing office for help. She explained she had nowhere to stay, but the response was blunt: "We don't have anything." When she pressed for support, she was told to return with proof, though it was never clear what that meant. "I don't know what proof," she said. "I don't know the process. I was really lost." With limited English, no advocate, and no prior experience of UK systems, she found herself effectively shut out of the statutory support she was legally entitled to. Her account highlights how opaque processes and poor communication can extend periods of homelessness and compound distress - particularly for those unfamiliar with the bureaucratic norms of post-status life.

"I don't know what proof, I don't know the process.  
I was really lost."



## Initial Homelessness Assessment:

Research indicates that some people are unfairly denied a Homelessness Assessment and the potential support that may follow. Local authorities owe all eligible applicants, i.e. who meet immigration conditions, an initial assessment, where it is satisfied that they are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The assessment should be used to understand their housing needs and circumstances, but thoroughness varies and depends on resources [19]. A recent evaluation from the homelessness charity Crisis, found that of the people it surveyed who approached Housing Options teams for support, 17% did not receive any advice, assessment or support [20]. The work also found that people sleeping rough were disproportionately affected, as were single people. The project did not specifically focus on refugees, but those who gain status via the asylum route will be over-represented in the latter cohort – many are young single people. Crisis’s findings raise questions about whether and the extent to which new refugees are incorrectly denied an assessment and the support that should follow.

For the most part, new refugees will not be seen as ‘priority need’, given that many are young and apply initially as single persons without dependents. Consequently, they will not benefit from the more substantive housing duties that oblige local authorities to secure accommodation for people. Housing legislation, as it currently stands, does not adequately provide for people’s experiences as refugees to be recognised in decisions about priority need, which tends to focus on those with dependent children, pregnant women, victim/survivors of domestic violence, young care leavers and people with vulnerabilities like a serious health condition or a disability. The ‘other special reasons’ provided in legislation as to why someone might be seen as vulnerable, and classed as in priority need, leave room for significant

discretion. Where new refugees do have health conditions that would make them priority, medical evidence may be difficult to produce as some will not have sought help for their condition or have had the space to disclose their needs to local authority or voluntary and community sector caseworkers [21]. Under-resourcing of key government institutions like local authorities and the NHS can create delays in obtaining the necessary medical proof which could assist in accessing more substantive housing support. If the council finds that it has no duty to secure housing for a person/household, it will usually inform them at the end of the initial assessment, although it can still help in other ways (see Prevention and Relief Duties below). Recent research with new refugees from the Boaz Trust highlights that such news is a frustrating experience after an interrogative initial assessment, where people held an expectation of more support and advice, but where no concrete housing prospects are on the horizon [22].

[19] Sutton-Hamilton, C., Allard, M. Stroud, R. and Albenese, F. (2022) ‘I’d Hoped there’s be more options’: Experiences of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018-2021. Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/services-and-interventions/i-hoped-there-d-be-more-options-experiences-of-the-homelessness-reduction-act-2018-2021/>.

[20] *ibid*

[21] Lindley, A., Malmo, A. and Reed, H. (2024) Home Beyond the Home Office: Addressing Refugee Move-On Challenges in the Oxford Area. Available at: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/Report%20-%20Home%20Beyond%20the%20Home%20Office%20-%20Addressing%20refugee%20move-on%20challenges%20in%20the%20Oxford%20Area.pdf>

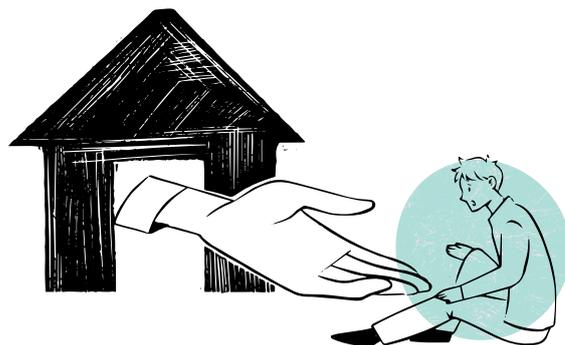
[22] BOAZ Trust (2025) FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING: Preventing homelessness in Greater Manchester among people recently granted refugee status. Available at: <https://www.boaztrust.org.uk/pages/boaz-report-on-refugee-homelessness-prevention>.

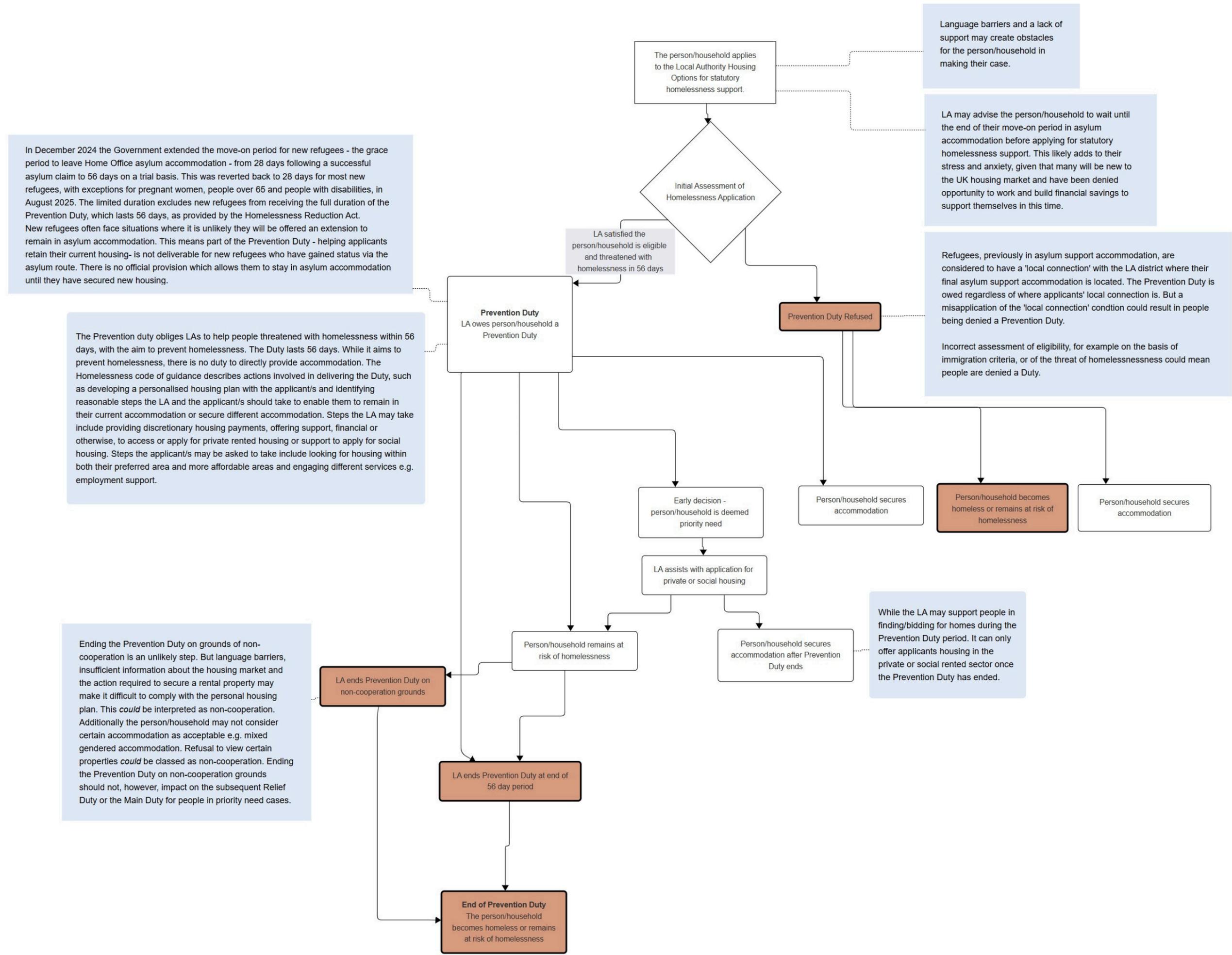
## Prevention Duty

### What is the Prevention Duty?

Following the initial assessment, where the local authority accepts a person is eligible for support and threatened with homelessness within 56 days, it owes them a 'Prevention Duty' (See Figure 3.2). For new refugees the Prevention Duty is generally owed during the move-on period where they still have access to asylum support and related accommodation, but are threatened with homelessness as their refugee status has been granted. The Prevention Duty lasts 56 days. It applies, regardless of whether a person or family household has a 'local connection' to the district of the council they have applied in, and whether or not they are classed as in priority need.

Under the duty local authorities must take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness but are not obliged to provide accommodation. The Homelessness Code of Guidance describes actions involved in delivering the Prevention Duty. These include developing a Personalised Housing Plan with the applicant/s, identifying reasonable steps the local authority and applicant/s should take to enable them to remain in their current accommodation (not applicable to new refugees), or to secure different accommodation. The local authority may be able to provide discretionary housing payments and offer support, financial or otherwise, to access or apply for housing. On the applicants' side, new refugees may be expected to look for housing within both their preferred area as well as more affordable areas, and to engage different services such as employment support. For new refugees who have given the local authority reason to believe that they are in priority need, it may assist them in bidding or applying for social housing or private rental housing. The authority is not, however, obliged to source or secure accommodation at this point, as that level of support is only offered for those who are already homeless (see Figure 3.2).





## Misapplication of Local Connection Conditions?

Evidence from Crisis's evaluation work, referenced above, suggests there are some cases of housing officers incorrectly withholding the Prevention Duty from people on the basis that they do not hold a local connection to the council's district. This misapplication of local connection criteria may be especially felt by new refugees (See Figure 3.2). Refugee integration and local authority staff we spoke with for this research indicated that it is not uncommon for people to move towns or cities following a grant of asylum, e.g. to look for work or to be in a place where they have community connections. Usually, they will not be considered to hold a local connection to their new place of residence. For refugees who have been in asylum accommodation, their local connection is normally the district of the dispersal or contingency accommodation they were housed in when granted asylum. But a Prevention Duty is owed to eligible people threatened with homelessness, regardless of the places of local connection. Incorrect interpretation of this condition may unfairly withhold preventative support from new refugees who have moved locations after recognition of their status.

## Non-cooperation

A local authority may terminate the Prevention Duty early where it decides a person/household is deliberately or unreasonably not cooperating with them, for example by not following mandatory steps agreed steps in the Personalised Housing Plan. This is an unlikely scenario, as it requires a warning and notice to be issued that the duty is being terminated [23].

Nonetheless, new refugees may be more vulnerable to such circumstances, for example in cases where there are language barriers that make it difficult to comply with the expectations of a local authority housing officer (See Figure 3.2). Equally, adhering to the plan may not be possible if people are not provided sufficient information about the housing market such as the types of properties they can expect to secure, and the action required to navigate the market. It may also be the case that local authority proposals are unfeasible or unreasonable and potentially unsafe. For example, where someone is expected to expand their housing options to include mixed gendered accommodation where they have experienced gender-based violence. If the council ends the Prevention Duty on grounds of non-cooperation, it will still owe the person/household the next duty in the statutory homelessness process – a 'Relief Duty' – owed once applicant/s have been made homeless. The Homelessness Code of Guidance also indicates that refusal to cooperate at the Prevention Duty stage should not affect people the council believes may be in priority need from receiving a more substantive housing duty in later stages of the statutory homelessness process [24], where the council is obliged to secure them housing [25].

[23] Homelessness Best Practice. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/@homelessnessbestpractice/search>.

[24] MHCLG (2025) Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-14-ending-the-prevention-and-relief-duties>.

[25] *ibid*

## Relief Duty

### What is the Relief Duty?

The Relief Duty is owed where a local authority decides a person or family household is eligible for support, is homeless and has a local connection to its district. For example, if the Prevention Duty period of 56 days ends with a person/household threatened with homelessness not securing accommodation, they are owed the Relief Duty. This duty is also owed, where someone approaches a local authority when they have already been made homeless, without necessarily having gone through the prevention stage. For example, where a new refugee is at the end of the move-on process and has already been evicted from asylum accommodation.

The Relief Duty lasts 56 days. The local authority is obliged to take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure suitable accommodation with a reasonable prospect that it will be available for their occupation for at least 6 months. Reasonable steps are to be included in the Personal Housing Plan, as with the Prevention Duty (see above). Action that local authorities may take include referrals to support services (e.g. mental health), information and advice, provision of rental deposits, payment of the first month's rent, or provision of accommodation etc. The Relief Duty does not include a duty to provide accommodation if the applicant/s are not deemed to be in priority need. This will be the case for most people who have gained refugee status via the asylum route. Local authorities can, however, choose to offer accommodation that temporarily relieves someone's homelessness (e.g. hostel accommodation) if there are no other options. The risk for people not in priority need is that the Relief Duty ends following the 56 day period, without them securing stable accommodation, leaving them to navigate homelessness without even this limited support (See Figure 3.3). In such situations the authority can choose to

continue some support e.g. by extending the Relief Duty, but it is unclear how useful or effective this is for people who are not in priority need.



Local authority relief duty lasts 56 days and applies where the local authority has established that the person/household is experiencing homelessness. The LA is obliged to take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure suitable accommodation with a reasonable prospect that it will be available for their occupation for at least 6 months. Reasonable steps are to be included in the personal housing plan. Action that the LA may take includes referrals to support services (e.g. mental health), information and advice, provision of rental deposits or provision of accommodation etc. The relief duty does not include a duty to provide accommodation if the applicant is not deemed to be priority need.

**Relief Duty**  
Local authority decides the person/household is owed a Relief Duty, as they are homeless, have a local connection to the district and are eligible e.g. on the basis of immigration status.

Person/household is not deemed as priority need

Person/household remains homeless

LA ends Relief Duty

The person/household secures accommodation with LA support.

The LA has no duty to accommodate applicants deemed not priority need. But under the Relief Duty it may offer discretionary housing payment and other support, financial or otherwise, to access or apply for housing



## Moving Places and Local Connection Requirements

In the case of the Relief Duty, unlike the Prevention Duty, where someone does not have a local connection to the district they have applied for support in, the authority can refer them to the council where it considers their local connection to be (see Figure 3.4). But this can put new refugees in a position where they have no access to statutory homelessness support in their current place of residence. As noted above, new refugees' local connection is usually the district of their final asylum accommodation. Many people, however, move to a different town or city on gaining their status. If the local authority, in their new place of residence, believes the applicant/s are in priority need, it has a duty to provide interim accommodation, until the notified authority has accepted the referral [26]. But should the person/household in question choose to stay in the area, e.g. because of social or future employment prospects, their risk of remaining homeless may increase as they will not be owed any support under the Relief Duty, and nor will the local authority have a duty to secure them stable accommodation, even if they are priority need. Challenging the local authority by requesting a formal review will be difficult for many people without legal or relevant casework support and know-how of the process.

Accessing the Relief Duty in such situations where someone has moved, will depend on demonstrating a local connection by other means. For example, that they have started work in the area, have close relatives there, are getting specialist medical treatment in the area, have lived there by choice for 6 months in the last year, or have lived there by choice for 3 years in the last 5 years [27]. The system of asylum dispersal, where people are distributed across the country on a no-choice basis, with no rights to work, means that most new refugees will not be able to demonstrate these other means. The quotes below demonstrate the frustration that some experience when denied local authority support after having moved to a new area.

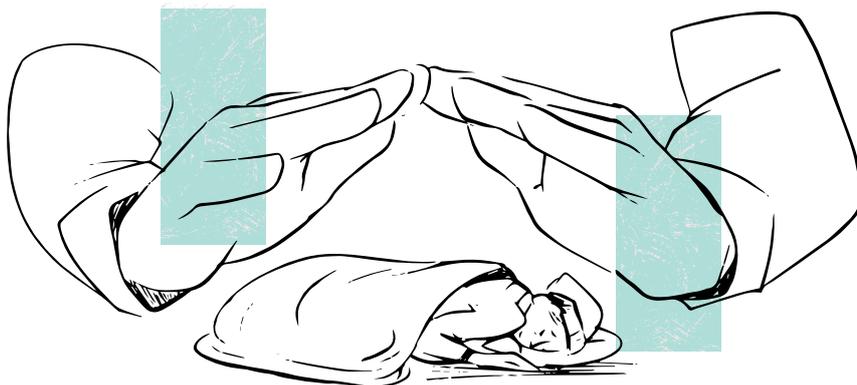
[26] Morgan, C. (2019) Making homelessness applications for refugees in England. Available at: <https://www-media.refugeecouncil.org.uk/media/documents/Good-Practice-Guide.pdf>.

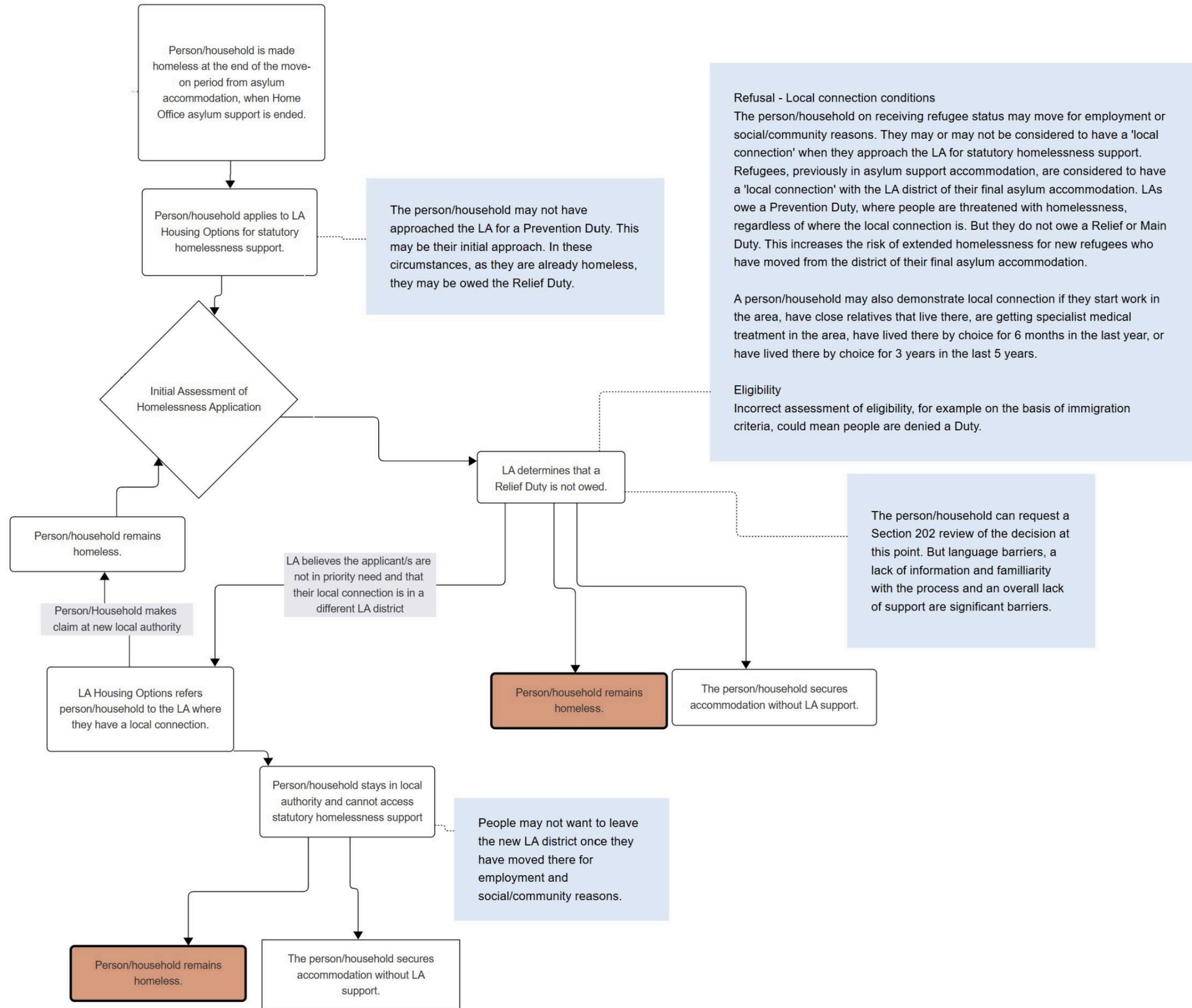
[27] Housing Act 1996 (c.52)

“They gave me 28 days to leave after I got my status. I went to another area because of some friends, but the housing team there said they had no duty to help. I ended up sofa surfing for months.” - Reza

“The housing people said unless I could show I was working in the area or had family here, they couldn't help. But how could I get a job without an address? It's a circle.” - Daniel

“When I got my refugee status, I moved to another city to find better opportunities, but it was like starting again from zero. The new council said they didn't know me, and I couldn't get any help” - Erez





## Priority Need and Interim Accommodation

The local authority has a responsibility to provide people who it believes to be in priority need with interim accommodation (see Figure 3.5), sometimes referred to as emergency accommodation, whilst it inquires as to whether the person or family meets the relevant criteria e.g. by consulting GPs about medical records. The interim accommodation duty is owed regardless of a person's local connection. Where interim accommodation is not appropriate, for example if it is too far away from schools and potential places of employment, it is difficult to challenge the offer on grounds of suitability. There is no legal mechanism that allows for an internal council review and applicants will need to access legal support to lodge a judicial review. Taking the legal route is unfeasible for most, given the lack of resources, of familiarity with the process and language barriers. Anecdotal evidence does, however, suggest that applicants and caseworkers do informally challenge unsuitable interim offers by taking it upon themselves to make their case informally.

The duty to provide interim accommodation can be ended in different ways. The local authority can end this duty when it ends the Relief Duty by making an offer of a shorthold private tenancy, available for at least 6 months under the 'final accommodation offer' or an offer of social housing under 'Part 6' of the Housing Act (see Figure 3.5). The interim duty can also be ended once applicants are informed that they are owed the Main Housing Duty, at the end of the 56-day Relief Duty period. This Main Duty will be owed where a person/household's homelessness has not been ended at the Relief Duty stage, for example where no suitable final accommodation or Part 6 offer was secured. Another way to end the interim accommodation duty early is if a local authority notifies the person/household that they are not owed a Main Duty, for example

if their enquiries (e.g. medical enquiries about vulnerability) found the applicant/s are not in priority need.

People who receive interim accommodation and then are later classed as non-priority, face the prospect of losing their accommodation. This means securing housing independently, albeit with some support from the local authority owed under the Relief Duty until that is ended at the 56-day mark (see Figure 3.3 above). The situation makes them more vulnerable to remaining homeless. The challenge is exacerbated as new refugees will be simultaneously navigating multiple critical tasks, such as managing Universal Credit applications, looking for employment or pursuing education. Applicant/s can challenge a decision of being non-priority need by asking the council for a review which can take up to 8 weeks and the council may ask for more time [28]. But this is difficult without legal support or guidance from a legal or housing professional.

[28] Shelter n.d. Ask for a review of a homeless decision.

Available at:  
[https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/homelessness/review\\_decision](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/review_decision)

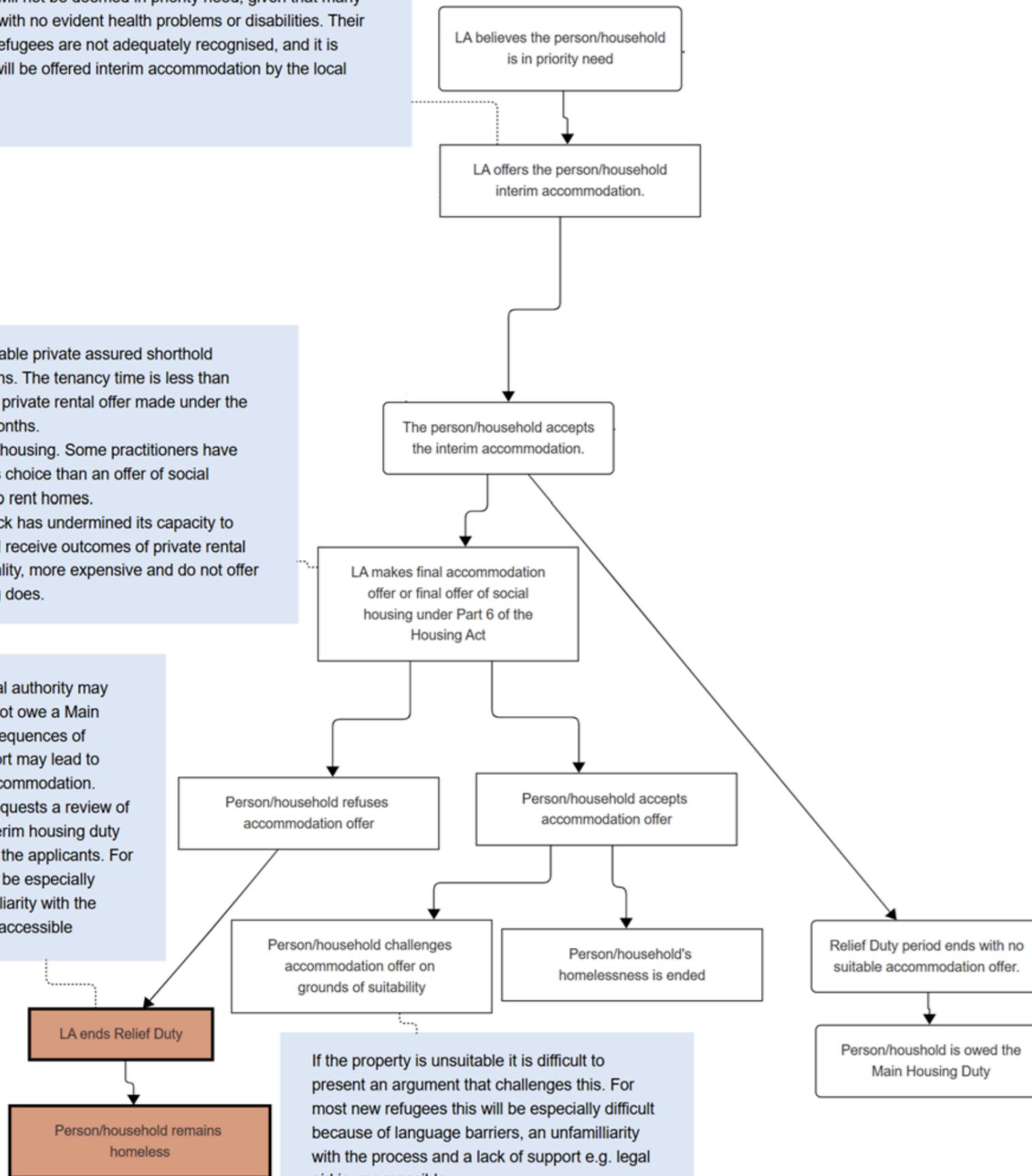
**Figure 3.5 Relief Duty: Priority Need, Interim Accommodation Duty, Final Accommodation and Part 6 Offer**

The local authority will secure interim accommodation if there is an indication that the person/household will be deemed priority need. Examples of applicant/s considered priority are households with dependent children, pregnant people, former naval, military or air force personnel, care leavers, prison leavers, and those who are vulnerable because of old age, mental illness, learning disability or physical disability or other special reason etc. Many people who gain status via the asylum route, will not be deemed in priority need, given that many are young people with no evident health problems or disabilities. Their vulnerabilities as refugees are not adequately recognised, and it is unlikely that they will be offered interim accommodation by the local authority.

An offer of final accommodation is a suitable private assured shorthold tenancy for a duration of at least 6 months. The tenancy time is less than what would be required of an equivalent private rental offer made under the Main Duty, which should be at least 12 months. The Part 6 offer is that of suitable social housing. Some practitioners have suggested this is likely to come with less choice than an offer of social housing under the Main Duty e.g. hard to rent homes. Limited investment in social housing stock has undermined its capacity to meet need. As a result, many people will receive outcomes of private rental homes which on average are poorer quality, more expensive and do not offer the security of tenure that social housing does.

If the person/household rejects this offer, the local authority may claim they have discharged their duties. LA will not owe a Main Duty. The LA must inform applicant/s of the consequences of refusal but language barriers and a lack of support may lead to miscommunication, and a loss of prospective accommodation. If the person/households refuses the offer and requests a review of the suitability of the accommodation then the interim housing duty will continue until a decision has been notified to the applicants. For most new refugees making such a challenge will be especially difficult because of language barriers, an unfamiliarity with the process and a lack of support e.g. legal aid is inaccessible

If the property is unsuitable it is difficult to present an argument that challenges this. For most new refugees this will be especially difficult because of language barriers, an unfamiliarity with the process and a lack of support e.g. legal aid is inaccessible.



## Non-Cooperation

The local authority may decide to terminate a Relief Duty where a person/household is deliberately and unreasonably not cooperating, although this is an unlikely course of action. Even so, as has been noted previously (see Prevention Duty) those not confident with English and unfamiliar with navigating the rental market may be at risk because of misinterpretations regarding their obligations (e.g. not attending property viewings). Equally managing multiple tasks during the move-on period or having insufficient funds for transport makes fulfilling these obligations difficult. There may be disagreements between the applicant/s and the Housing Options team on what constitutes reasonable steps or what kind of offer of accommodation is acceptable. At the Relief Duty stage, ending the duty on non-cooperation grounds means that the authority will also not owe people in priority need the later Main Duty, should they still be homeless, at the end of the 56-day Relief period. The authority still has a duty to secure them suitable accommodation, but anecdotal evidence suggests the offer will likely be less secure, tenure-wise, and of lower quality than private rental or social housing offered under the Main Duty [29].

## Refusing a Final Accommodation Offer or a Final Part 6 Offer

The local authority may offer those it deems to be in priority need, who it has a duty to accommodate, a final accommodation offer with a suitable private shorthold tenancy available for at least 6 months or a final Part 6 offer of social housing (see Figure 3.5). Limited investment in social housing stock over years has undermined capacity to meet need. As a result, many people will receive outcomes of private rental homes which on average are poorer quality, more expensive and do not offer the security of tenure that

social housing does.

The offers mirror the Main Duty, as in they are an offer of accommodation with a level of tenure security, but practitioners indicate that the security and choice are lesser than what is provided under the Main Duty e.g. hard to rent homes [30]. Local availability will determine whether people are made final accommodation or Part 6 offers, or whether the council provides them housing under the Main Duty at the end of the 56-day Relief period.

If applicant/s reject either a final accommodation or final Part 6 offer, where the council considers the property suitable, it can end the Relief Duty altogether. In such situations, the council will also not owe people the Main Duty. While it must inform applicant/s of the consequences of refusal, where the latter are not supported sufficiently to understand these conditions, or if language is a barrier, then their vulnerability to remaining homeless and losing out on housing increases (Figure 3.5). Advice from homelessness charities, such as Shelter, have encouraged people to accept the offers and challenge on grounds of suitability later [31]. Making such challenges will come with their own hurdles for new refugees who are relatively new to the country and are still building English language skills and knowledge of procedural norms.

[29] Homelessness Best Practice (2024) Homelessness Law Q&A Livestream 13th June 2024. Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISoyehtOCpE>;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixioCn1Mtiw>.

[30] Homelessness Best Practice (2024) What is the relief duty?

- Section 189B of the Housing Act 1996. Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixioCn1Mtiw>.

[31] Shelter n.d. Final Offers of Housing when Homeless.

Available at:

[https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/homelessness/final\\_offers\\_of\\_housing\\_when\\_homeless](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/final_offers_of_housing_when_homeless).

## Main Duty:

### What is the Main Duty?

The Main Duty is owed where the local authority decides that a person/household is eligible (e.g. on immigration grounds), homeless, has a priority need for accommodation and is not intentionally homeless, although the question of intentionality will be unlikely to arise for new refugees who have received status via the asylum route. Where people can demonstrate certain life situations [32] such as having dependent children, pregnancy or mental illness, they should be able to receive a Main Duty.

The Main Duty can only be owed once the Relief Duty has ended. The local authority in such circumstances is required to secure accommodation that is suitable for the applicant/s and anyone reasonably expected to live with them. Usually, people will be housed in temporary accommodation, until settled accommodation becomes available. This will especially be the case in major cities. Limited housing availability means that people may remain in temporary housing for months or years, much like UK citizens in similar situations. The accommodation may in fact be the same 'interim accommodation' offered during the Relief Duty period but may also be a different property.

The Main Housing Duty can include an offer of accommodation in the private sector. This should be an assured shorthold tenancy with a fixed term of at least 12 months [33]. The council could also make a final Part 6 offer of suitable social housing. The social housing that people can bid on or that they are allocated is subject to availability and how much of a priority applicants are considered in relation to other bidders, according to respective council policies.

As has already been discussed, local connection conditions may see new refugees who are in priority need denied any duty of accommodation by a local authority (see

Relief Duty above), including the Main housing duty, where they have moved away from the district of local connection on gaining refugee status. In these situations, people will be at increased risk of homelessness in a place where the council has no duty to secure them housing, despite any vulnerabilities.

## Refusing an Offer of Accommodation

Where applicant/s refuse an offer of accommodation made under the Main Duty, which the local authority considers suitable, it can end its obligations. While the council is required to communicate the consequences of refusal to applicant/s, language barriers or a lack of appropriate advice or support to understand the consequences can make such a juncture risky for new refugees. Guidance from the Refugee Council and Shelter advises that people accept any offer of accommodation, even where these are inappropriate, and ask for a review afterwards to avoid homelessness. For new refugees requesting such reviews and making an argument on grounds of suitability may be extremely difficult for a multitude of reasons already discussed.

[32] The Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 contain criteria which make people a priority need.

[33] MHCLG (2025) Homelessness Code of Guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/overview-of-the-homelessness-legislation>.

### 3.3 Navigating the Rental Housing Market

Navigating the rental market can be a daunting and frustrating process. New refugees, who are not considered to be in priority need, may receive some local authority financial support in this time to help secure a tenancy, like a deposit or up-front rent for a limited period, under the Prevention or Relief Duties. They may also be able to access a government integration loan which can support with housing costs, with amounts ranging between £100-£500 for a single person, and £100 to £780 for someone applying with a partner. In general, however, like many other prospective tenants, new refugees will have to negotiate an increasingly expensive rental market with limited resources [34]. The task of securing decent and stable housing is made more challenging for new refugees by a series of structural issues which we discuss below. The discussion is not an exhaustive list but provides an overview of problems identified in existing research and those brought to our attention by housing practitioners in West Yorkshire.



### Lack of Proper Orientation & Support

Case workers we spoke with explained that the transition from asylum accommodation to starting a new life and securing housing was a time of immense disorientation for new refugees, not only because of the significant change they now faced, but also because of a lack of sufficient information and support to access housing and context of the housing market itself. Their statements echo findings from research that has highlighted the challenges that new refugees face in managing homelessness or poor accommodation, whilst feeling let down by the system [35].

Recent research from the Boaz Trust has highlighted the sense of frustrations for those not deemed as priority need in local authority homelessness assessments, and who rightly or wrongly expected more guidance from the council on how to secure housing [36]. This group also complained about seeming inconsistencies in the treatment of different households. In response the project stressed the importance of supportive assessments that help people understand their needs and options. It also called for a follow-up pathway or adequate information provision for new refugees who are not in priority need, to help them chart a way forward. The recommendations are consistent with recommendations from caseworkers and researchers we spoke with in the course of this project, regarding setting expectations and providing better orientation and context to the local housing market. On multiple occasions it was stressed that this should start before people receive a decision on their claim.

[34] UK Government. Refugee Integration Loan. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/refugee-integration-loan/what-youll-get>.

[35] Brown, P., Gill, S. and Halsall, J. and Simcock, T. (2024) Homelessness, Refugees and Resettlement. Available at: <https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/publication/homelessness-refugees-and-resettlement>.

[36] Boaz Trust (2025) FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING: Preventing homelessness in Greater Manchester among people recently granted refugee status. Available at: <https://www.boaztrust.org.uk/pages/boaz-report-on-refugee-homelessness-prevention>.

## Discrimination: Right to Rent and Universal Credit

The “right to rent” clause of the Immigration Act 2014 has made accessing private rental housing more challenging. Whilst not specifically targeting refugees it has impacted migrant and ethnic minority communities in England. In requiring landlords to undertake identification checks to verify that tenants have a legal right to live in the UK, Right to Rent has increased hesitancy to rent to people who do not hold British passports, with landlords facing criminal prosecution for renting to those without appropriate status. An interviewee who participated in recent research from Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber project, led by the University of Huddersfield, claimed that:

“Even if you can show your papers, they look at you like you’re trouble. I had one landlord who said, ‘We don’t want DSS or refugees’ — just like that. They don’t even hide it.”  
— Birook

The experience is consistent with findings from a 2018 study, which concluded that 44% of landlords were less likely to rent to people without a British passport [37]. It also aligns with an investigation by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants whose mystery shopper exercise in 2017 found that Black and Minority Ethnic British citizens without a passport were more likely to be refused by landlords than those who could provide a passport [38].

Another form of discrimination that impacts new refugees, is the aversion to offering people on Universal Credit tenancies, seen in the private rental market. Legal cases and research have evidenced practices of landlords and estate agents refusing to rent to Universal Credit recipients and of being

.less encouraging to them as prospective tenants, a reality the above quote testifies to [39]. As with Right to Rent, new refugees will be disproportionately exposed, given that many will initially be forced to rely on Universal Credit because of the lack of financial savings.

The above forms of discrimination can be especially damaging for new refugees who lack strong social ties that longer term residents are more likely to hold, which can provide critical assistance at this stage [40]. Many new refugees, for example, will not have guarantors or referees that landlords and agents require prior to agreeing tenancies. While local authorities can offer some financial support, this is at their discretion when dealing with people who they have classed as not in priority need.

[37] Simcock, T. (2018) The Right to Rent Scheme and the Impact on the Private Rented Sector. Available at: <https://www.nrla.org.uk/research/special-reports/right-to-rent>.

[38] JCWI (2017). Passport Please: The impact of the Right to Rent checks on migrants and ethnic minorities in England. Available at: <https://jcw.org.uk/reportsbriefings/passport-please-2017>.

[39] Binner, A., Timmins, C. and Pryce, G. (2024) The local drivers of housing discrimination. Available at: <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/the-local-drivers-of-housing-discrimination/>

Wilson, W. (2023) Can private landlords refuse to let to benefit claimants and people with children. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN07008/SN07008.pdf>.

[40] Brown, P., Gill, S. and Halsall, J. and Simcock, T. (2024) Homelessness, Refugees and Resettlement. Available at: <https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/publication/homelessness-refugees-and-resettlement>.

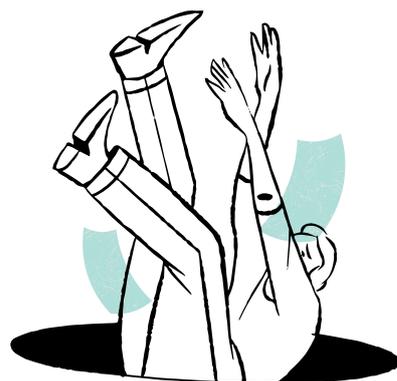
The experience of research participants, shared with the Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber project, highlight the barriers that a lack of support can present, with one participant explaining:

“You try to get a place, but they want so much money up front, deposit, rent, fees... You just don’t have it. And even if you do, you’re scared it’s temporary — you don’t know if they’ll kick you out after six months.”  
— Samir

In a different case study from the same project, Kiyon, a man from Iran, highlights both the discrimination he faced and the difference that material support made for him.

## Case Study: Experiences of the Private Rental Market

Kiyon, originally from Iran travelled to the UK in December 2019, and gained refugee status in 2021. He spent a couple of months searching for somewhere to live and experienced a lot of rejections because he was in receipt of benefits (“DSS”). He found that agencies were reluctant to give him viewings or showed him very poor-quality properties. However, the responses towards him changed when his English girlfriend put herself forward as his guarantor and lent him money for 6 months’ rent up front. He was then able to find a flat and rented it privately —he lives there to this day. It is a one-bedroom flat with kitchen and garden, in a complex with a garden, and he says he is happy living there. He now works part-time and has also been volunteering, supporting other refugees with English and translation, and accessing NHS services.



## Limited Housing Support for Young Single People

The structural set up of the asylum system, i.e. its absence of tailored support seen in other refugee pathways and the higher proportion of young single people gaining status via this route, means that as a cohort they are disproportionately affected by restrictions on the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). The LHA reflects the maximum help an eligible person or family can receive with their rent from the Department of Work and Pensions and is calculated to cover the bottom 30% of rents in the Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) of a local authority. The amount people receive will depend on their income and savings and their household size. LHA support is limited for people under 35 years of age who live alone, set only to cover the costs of a room in a shared house, as opposed to a 1-bedroom property, with some exceptions made for example for prison leavers or young people formerly in care. The rate takes no account of the amount of shared accommodation available in the area or the extent to which properties at the lower end of the market are in circulation. Most asylum route refugees are negatively impacted by this restriction, as they will very likely find themselves in a situation where initially, at least, they require financial support to secure housing, given the de facto ban on employment for people awaiting an asylum decision.

In the 12 months leading up to May 2025, the average rents in major UK cities outside of London around dispersal sites, like Sheffield, Cardiff, and Leeds, ranged between just over £650 and £1600 per month, significantly outstripping local housing allowance rates (LHA) [43]. Yorkshire and Humber local authorities saw shared LHA rates of between £70 to £96 a week in July of this year. As indicated in Table 3.1, the allowance falls short of median shared accommodation rents by between 7% to 23%. This reflects both the limits of the shared LHA rate, set to

the bottom 30% of rents, but also the Government's decision to freeze the LHA to 2024 rates, instead of linking it to rental increases [44]. The problem is acute for cities like Bradford, Leeds, and Sheffield, given the attraction they hold for economic and social reasons. Any shortfalls in rent can be covered by people's Universal Credit standard allowance, but that detracts from personal living costs. Local authorities may offer a Discretionary Housing Payment to top up shortfalls, these are distributed by need and circumstances and will usually be on a temporary basis.

Separate to the affordability concerns, shared accommodation may not be a physically and socially healthy option for those who have survived traumatic experiences. New refugees, like other private renters in England, face a market where 21% of households occupy housing that does not meet the Decent Homes Standard [45]. Overcrowding and poor conditions are not uncommon in shared accommodation, which will be the housing type that many single and young refugees will access, increasing exposure to harm [46]. Additionally, the interpersonal dynamics between housemates in 'stranger shares' can create environments where people feel socially unsafe or insecure, as the below quotes from another participant in the Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber project indicate [47].

[43] Where a local authority is spread across more than one Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) the rent and LHA for the BRMA that covers most of the authority's geographic area has been selected

[44] The North Yorkshire Council BRMA spans multiple former councils. An LHA has not been listed.

[45] Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (2025) Gender Refugees and Housing.

[46] McShane, S., Block, K., Baker, E. et al. (2025) Beyond shelter: a scoping review of evidence on housing in resettlement countries and refugee mental health and wellbeing. *Soc Psychiatry Psychiatric Epidemiology* 60, 1541–1562 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-025-02851-1>

[47] Wilkinson, E. and Ortega-Alcazar, I. (2018) Stranger danger? The intersectional impacts of shared housing on young people's health & wellbeing. *Health and Place* (60) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S135382921830902X>

	<b>Median Shared Weekly Rent in the BRMA [43] (Collated October 2023-September 2024)</b>	<b>Indicative LHA Shared Weekly Rate July 2025 (Frozen to BRMA rents collated October 2022-September 2023)</b>	<b>Shared LHA % shortfall on Median Shared BRMA Rent</b>
Bradford	£86.61	£75.10	13%
Calderdale	£93.00	£82.00	12%
Kirklees	£83.00	£72.80	12%
Leeds	£108.35	£80.00	26%
Wakefield	£100.75	£75.25	25%
Barnsley	£83.00	£72.80	12%
Doncaster	£86.50	£70.00	19%
East Riding	£101.50	£77.29	24%
Kingston Upon Hull	£101.50	£77.29	24%
North East Lincolnshire	£88.50	£73.00	18%
North Lincolnshire	£76.50	£71.50	7%
North Yorkshire (44)	NA	NA	NA
Rotherham	£91.50	£80.85	12%
Sheffield	£93.51	£80.55	14%
York	£123.47	£96.12	22%

Table 3.1 Shared accommodation LHA compared with average rents for a representative sample in the Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) collected by Valuation Office Agency (VOA) Rent Officers  
 Source: Source Shadow List of Rents 2025 (Collected 1 October 2023 – 30 September 2024)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shadow-list-of-rents-april-2025-collated-1st-october-2023-30th-september-2024> and Local Housing Allowance Rates <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/>

“You’re with somebody new, from a different culture, you don’t know... You don’t know, ‘If I ask them to leave the room, how would they respond?’ ... It was kind of difficult being in that situation, not understanding people’s different ways of thinking...”

“It was very hard. You know, there’s no privacy. That’s one of the things that, you know, that was very hard, you know... It was kind of difficult being in that situation.”

— Kiran

## Challenges of Accommodating Families

Pressures of the local housing market and stock have made it increasingly challenging to secure accommodation for families classed as priority need, with dependent children. Priority need families are often placed in temporary accommodation until longer-term social or private housing is available. Of the over 126,000 households in temporary accommodation in England 63.9% included dependent children (September 2024) [48]. London and the South East face this problem more extensively because of housing market pressures. In Yorkshire and Humber of the 3,500 households placed in temporary accommodation in September 2024, 1,680 were families with children, representing 3,660 children.

The data does not offer a breakdown of how many of these households are people with refugee status [49]. There is also no analysis of the extent to which people are matched to suitable properties in terms of size, safety and different family needs.

Families with refugee status in priority need, like others on the social housing register will find themselves competing for

for accommodation in a strained housing market. In Yorkshire and Humber waiting lists in places like Bradford, Leeds, Wakefield, are among the highest in the region, ranging between over 21,200 and 29,600 (See Table 3.2). Securing social housing will often see people bidding on properties, with success determined by the extent to which they are a priority compared with other residents and the availability of suitable properties.

[48] MHCLG (2025). Statutory homelessness in England: July to September 2024. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-july-to-september-2024/statutory-homelessness-in-england-july-to-september-2024#temporary-accommodation-table-ta1>

[49] MHCLG (2025) Tables of Homelessness. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>.

Local Authority	No. of Households on the Housing Register (Waiting Lists)
Barnsley	7,762
Bradford	22,559
Calderdale	9,595
Doncaster	7,673
East Riding of Yorkshire	5,238
Kingston upon Hull	6,764
Kirklees	13,920
Leeds	21,202
North East Lincolnshire	6,061
North Lincolnshire	6,062
North Yorkshire	9,476
Rotherham	7,188
Sheffield	17,685
Wakefield	29,685
York	1,507

Table 3.2 Households on Local Authority Waiting Lists in Yorkshire and Humber 2023-2024  
 Source: Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) Data: 2023-24  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-housing-data>

The pressures across both the social and private rental stock mean that accommodating specific requirements e.g. those of larger households or of people with disabilities, is increasingly challenging and can lead to households being separated or important needs being unmet [50]. The case below of the housing struggles faced by a disabled woman and their child after they received refugee status, illustrates the consequences of poor housing options.

### Case Study: Najma's Experience of Transitioning to Refugee Status

Najma was granted refugee status in November 2019 and with support from City of Sanctuary, she approached her local authority for help after Home Office accommodation support was terminated. She became homeless after the 28-day move-on period because of the lack of properties suitable for wheelchair users. The local authority placed her in a hotel where she lived for weeks. She was only allowed to spend the night in the hotel and had to leave every morning with her child and luggage and return later the day. She described the period as challenging and depressing because it was difficult for her to move around the city with her belongings in cold weather. Towards the end of 2019 she felt she could not live like this and stayed at friends' homes with her children. In early 2020 she the council finally provided suitable temporary accommodation and eventually a permanent two-bedroom council flat where she is still living.



[50] Brown, P., Gill, S. and Halsall, J. and Simcock, T. (2024) Homelessness, Refugees and Resettlement. Available at: <https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/publication/homelessness-refugees-and-resettlement>.

The lack of safe and organised routes to claim asylum makes it near impossible for many families to claim asylum together. Consequently, it has not been uncommon for people who claim asylum to later apply for family reunion visas and to be joined by partners and children [51], but this has made the accommodation they have already secured as single people overcrowded and unsuitable [52]. Research from the Boaz Trust notes that local authorities advise people to wait before applying for Family Reunion visas to ensure they have a plan to secure suitable housing, rather than relying on temporary accommodation when their family arrives [53]. But the research highlights that visas have taken months or years, and people are keen to start the process as soon as possible given that they may have been separated from family members for significant periods already. Where visas have been issued quickly family members must arrive within a certain time limit of the date of issue, making it unlikely that they will secure suitable accommodation in advance.

In September 2025 the Government paused new applications under the Refugee family reunion route as a way to tackle alleged 'pull factors' [54]. But advocacy organisations like Right to Remain have indicated that there is no evidence that family reunion visas drive irregular journeys, and in fact the removal of this safe and legal route could increase unsafe journeys as people are left with no other options.

## Women's Experiences of Housing

Approximately 25% of people granted asylum (2012 to 2023) are women, but in reality the number of women who gain a right to live in the UK through the asylum route is higher, as many will be included as dependents in the main application. Moreover, as already noted, many men on gaining refugee status apply for family reunion visas and are later joined by women partners and children.

A significant proportion of women who are refugees have been or become victim/survivors of gender-based violence[1]. Housing that enables safety, and stability is critical in these scenarios both while people wait for a decision on their asylum claim and after the grant of refugee status [56]. Research, however, has demonstrated that the circumstances that women navigate do not always deliver the housing security they need [57]. The SEREDA project, from the University of Birmingham, found that the move-on period from asylum accommodation posed risks for women who could not access Universal Credit or welfare payments in this time [56]. This sometimes led to destitution, with knock-on effects like increased vulnerability to exploitation. Anecdotal evidence from voluntary sector staff we spoke to for this project, raised concerns about the impacts of the immigration system on women experiencing intimate partner violence. Caseworkers have suggested that some women remain in unsafe homes because they do not

[51]

<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migration-to-the-uk-asylum/>

[52] Brown, P., Gill, S. and Halsall, J. and Simcock, T. (2024) Homelessness, Refugees and Resettlement. Available at: <https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/publication/homelessness-refugees-and-resettlement>; Boaz Trust (2025) FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING: Preventing homelessness in Greater Manchester among people recently granted refugee status. Available at: <https://www.boaztrust.org.uk/pages/boaz-report-on-refugee-homelessness-prevention>.

[53] *ibid*

[54] Right to Remain (2025) Refugee Family Reunion: what's changed, and what it means. Available at: <https://righttoremain.org.uk/refugee-family-reunion-whats-changed-and-what-it-means/>.

[55] Pertek, S., Phillimore, J. and Goodson, L. with Stevens, A., Thomas, S., Hassan, P., Darkal, H., Taal, S. and Altaweel, R. (2021) Forced migration and sexual and gender-based violence: findings from the SEREDA project in the UK. Research Report. University of Birmingham. Available at: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/iris/2021/sereda-full-report.pdf>. [1] Women for Refugee Women (2024) Our Vision for Good Asylum Accommodation. Available at: <https://www.refugeewomen.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Our-Vision-Principles-of-good-asylum-accommodation.pdf>.

independently hold refugee status and are included as dependent partners in asylum applications or on family reunion visas. While such women may be eligible to apply for permission to stay in the UK or for refugee status themselves [59], a lack of social and legal support makes leaving a harmful relationship and the dangerous housing circumstance it creates, extremely challenging. For example, inaccurate or unclear information about critical matters like whether they will have recourse to public funds and be able to access accommodation independently, undermine women's decision-making power. Survivors of sexual and gender-based violence will especially be impacted by the social and physical aspects of housing. Practitioners and advocates working with survivors have regularly criticised the use of mixed-gendered accommodation [60]. But there is little information on the extent to which women with refugee status are allocated such facilities and whether it is common for councils to provide these. There are, however, investigations which highlight the negative experiences of women who are still in the process of an asylum claim in mixed-gendered facilities [61]. The work has pointed to cases of harassment and abuse of power from both other residents and staff members. These findings likely resonate with the experiences of women who have already gained refugee status, but more detailed work is required to shed light on this. Neighbourhood and location are other important aspects adjacent to housing that are vital to creating a sense of safety. Some women have reported feeling particularly vulnerable in areas with little ethnic diversity where they have experienced racism and have had limited access to support networks [62]. But equally, research has pointed out the importance of attending to people's individual circumstances, e.g. sexual orientation, which will influence where they find safety. An LGBTQI participant from the University of Birmingham study referenced

above, for example discussed the local authority pressure they faced to accept housing in a diverse area, but this was not a suitable option for them, given they found the area conservative and did not feel safe there [63].

[59] Right to Remain (2025) Migrants affected by Domestic Abuse. Available at: <https://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/migrants-affected-by-domestic-abuse/>

[60] Just Life (2024) Temporary Accommodation for Women. Available at: <https://www.justlife.org.uk/news/2024/temporary-accommodation-for-women;>

Women for Refugee Women (2021) Written evidence submitted by Women for Refugee Women (COR0242). Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/22974/pdf;>

Solace Womens Aid (2022) Priority Need For Housing For Survivors of Domestic Abuse. Available at: [https://www.solacewomensaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/priority\\_report\\_2022\\_-\\_final\\_interactive.pdf](https://www.solacewomensaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/priority_report_2022_-_final_interactive.pdf)

[61] Imkaan (2024) Not Safe Here: The systemic failures to protect women and children from sexual violence and abuse in asylum accommodation Available at: [https://rcew.fra1.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/Not\\_Safe\\_Here\\_report\\_Rape\\_Crisis\\_England\\_\\_Wales\\_Imkaan\\_November\\_2024.pdf.](https://rcew.fra1.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/Not_Safe_Here_report_Rape_Crisis_England__Wales_Imkaan_November_2024.pdf)

[62] Meer, N., Peace, T., and Hill, E. Integration Governance in Scotland Accommodation, Regeneration and Exclusion Available at: <https://www.glimer.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Scotland-Accommodation.pdf>

[63] Goodson, L., Darkal, H., Hassan, P., Taal, S., Altaweel, R. and Phillimore, J. (2020) Conceptualising experiences of sexual and gender based violence across the refugee journey: the experiences of forced migrants from the MENA region in the UK. Working paper No. 46/2021, Birmingham: Institute for Research into Superdiversity Available at: [https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/iris/2021/conceptualising-experiences-of-sexual-and-gender-based-violence-across-the-refugee-journey.pdf.](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/iris/2021/conceptualising-experiences-of-sexual-and-gender-based-violence-across-the-refugee-journey.pdf)

# 4. Data on Homelessness Among New Refugees



We do not have complete data that covers the levels of homelessness among people with newly granted refugee status at the local, regional or national levels. For England, the Statutory Homelessness tables compiled by the Government from local authority data collection offer the most systematic and official account. They record the reasons that main applicants are eligible for the initial homelessness duties, i.e. a Prevention or Relief Duty, alongside a breakdown of the immigration status of the main applicant. This includes categories for people with refugee status and those with some other parallel forms of protection, e.g. humanitarian or discretionary protection. The data is collected at the initial homelessness assessment. Important information missing from the data set is the number of people who did not approach the council or who did not receive an assessment and subsequent support after gaining refugee status.

## 4.1 Statutory Homelessness Data: Refugees in Yorkshire and Humber

The most recent annual statutory homelessness tables made available, 2023 - 2024, show that a total of 324,990 households were owed an initial statutory homelessness duty, that is a Prevention or Relief Duty, across local authorities in England. Approximately 5.5% of these were households with refugee status or who had another form of humanitarian protection, representing 17,950 households (e.g. single people or family households). In Yorkshire and Humber, the figure stood at 2,072 households for the same year, representing 6.6% of households in the region owed a Prevention or Relief duty (See Table 4.1 in Appendix A for a further breakdown of local authority data). Over 55%, 1,149 households, are in West

Yorkshire local authorities, with places like Bradford, Leeds and Kirklees making up a significant number of these cases. The number of refugees who received homelessness support has increased since 2022 following a dip in 2020 and 2021, potentially because of pandemic related efforts to prevent homelessness. 2023 - 2024 saw a sharp increase because of the then UK government's efforts to clear the asylum backlog and the short-term changes they made to the move-on process, (see Table 4.2) [64]. Clearing this backlog continues to be a priority, and therefore there is a risk that homelessness among new refugees will be on the rise overall, should adequate resources not be deployed to support people in the move-on process and in navigating statutory homelessness support.

The statutory homelessness tables offer a rough indicator for how many new asylum route refugees have been made homeless or are at risk of homelessness following the grant of their claim. The different categories logging reasons as to why households are owed a Prevention or Relief Duty, i.e. why they face threat of homelessness or are homeless, includes having to leave Home Office asylum accommodation (see Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1) – a proxy for people newly granted refugee status. This figure totalled over 5,000 households between 2019 - 2020 to 2023 - 2024.

[64] NACCOM (2024) Migrant and refugee destitution and homelessness on the rise in the UK, says NACCOM. Available at: <https://naccom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/FINALP1.pdf>

## 4.2 Differences in Local Authority Data Recording Practices

We expected the data logged on the number of households with refugee status or other humanitarian protection owed a Prevention or Relief Duty (See Table 4.1), to be higher than figures logged for those facing homelessness because they had to leave Home Office asylum accommodation. The former should represent all applicants holding refugee status or humanitarian protection, whereas the latter we expected to represent recent refugees who have gained status via the asylum route and were supported in asylum accommodation. But yearly data, see Table 4.2, indicates that this is not always the case. A potential cause may be because some refugees' eligibility is being recorded differently, for example as limited leave to remain as opposed to refugee status. There should be clarification as to whether local authority practices differ in how they register information.

## 4.3 Differences in Local Authority Support Practices

The proportion of Prevention Duty versus Relief duty cases indicates: where refugees approach local authorities during the move-on period (a preventative approach), versus where they apply for support after the move-on period has ended, and they are already homeless, on leaving asylum accommodation. Figure 4.1 shows that while most Yorkshire and Humber authorities have a higher number of prevention cases, some places like Leeds and Sheffield do receive a significant number of people at the Relief Duty stage. Sheffield has consistently owed more households leaving asylum

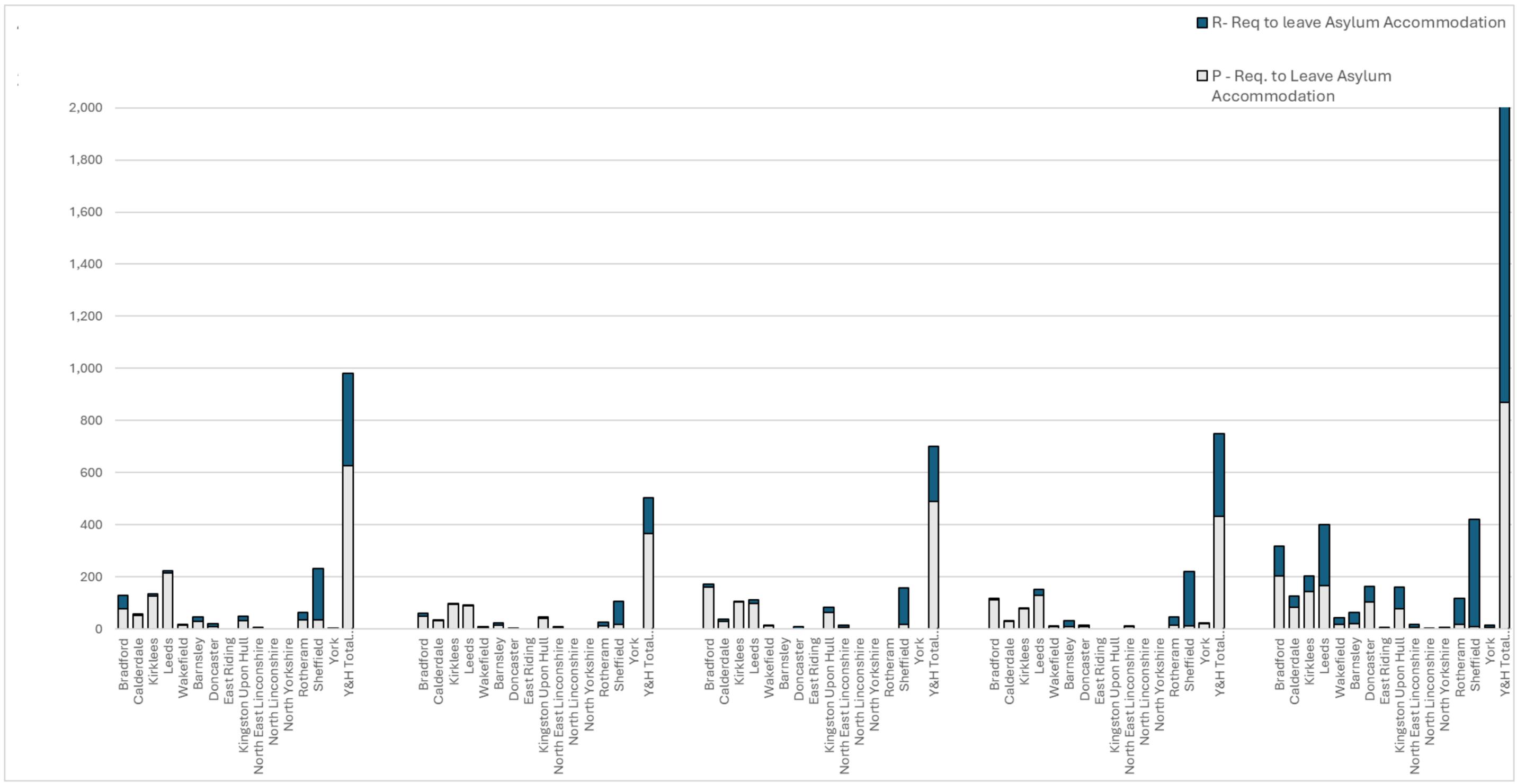
accommodation a Relief Duty than a Prevention Duty, suggesting that refugees primarily receive support from the council following the end of the move-on period. The reasons behind this and the consequences for people's housing outcomes are unclear. More investigation into different local authority practices and the sharing of different ways of working will be of benefit here.



**Table 4.2 Households owed a Prevention or Relief Duty in Yorkshire and Humber Local Authorities by Refugee or Protection Status and Households Owed a Prevention or Relief Duty Because They are Required to Leave Asylum Accommodation**

Year	Prevention or Relief Duty	Eligibility for Prevention or Relief Duty	Reason for Prevention Duty	Reason for Relief Duty	Total Owed Prevention or Relief Duty
	<b>Total Households</b>	<b>Households with Refugee Status/Other Protection</b>	<b>Required to leave asylum accommodation</b>	<b>Required to leave asylum accommodation</b>	<b>Required to leave asylum accommodation</b>
2019-2020	27,375	871	628	354	982
2020-2021	24,369	469	366	137	503
2021-2022	23,834	765	490	212	702
2022-2023	22,075	942	431	319	702
2023-2024	31,413	2,072	869	1,198	702
<b>Total</b>		5,119	2,784	2,220	702

Figure 4.1 Households Owed a Prevention or Relief Duty at Initial Assessment  
Reason for Loss of Accommodation: Required to Leave Asylum Accommodation  
2019 - 2020 to 2023 - 2024



## Gaps in Evidence

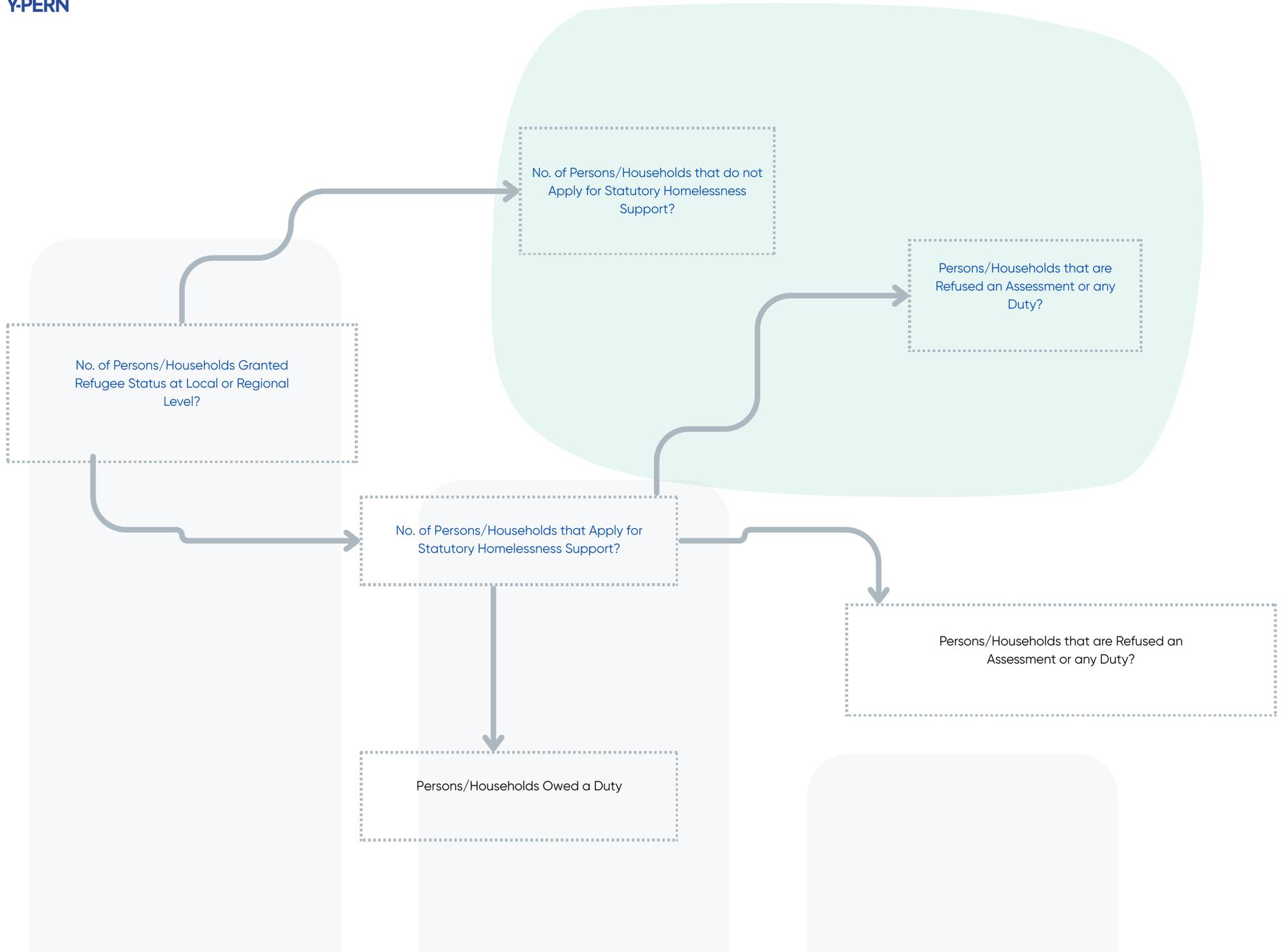
During the research, we made several Freedom of Information requests to the Home Office to obtain the number of people or households in asylum accommodation who were granted refugee status on an annual basis across Yorkshire and Humber local authorities, but these requests were not successful. This data on successful grants of asylum is available at the national scale but publishing it at the local authority or regional scale on a monthly or quarterly basis can help provide an indication of how many people are at risk of homelessness over a given time period, as most will have to leave asylum accommodation with little if any financial resources.

A second area where there is an evidence gap, is the number of households who face homelessness following a grant of asylum but have chosen not to approach local authority homelessness services or have been unable to approach this assistance (see Figure 4.2). A third is on the number who have been (incorrectly) denied an assessment and consequently any relevant statutory support. This information is not captured in the statutory homelessness tables. It is difficult to estimate how many new refugees face such situations and if the numbers are significant. Filling these evidence gaps can be a starting point to better understand how accessible statutory homelessness services are, and the extent to which there are discrepancies in decision-making.

The data will benefit local and regional government and charity sector organisations involved in planning, delivering and resourcing homelessness support at a local and regional level. It will also help inform those involved in advocating for change in policy and practice of the extent to which new refugees are falling through the cracks or being failed by statutory homelessness policy.



Figure 4.2 Missing Data: How Many People do not Receive Statutory Homelessness Support?



# 5. Conclusions and Recommendations



This report has shown that homelessness among newly recognised refugees is neither incidental nor an unintended outcome of asylum and housing policy. Instead, it is a consequence of decades of structural decisions which have deliberately restricted rights, and economic independence, whilst reducing support and fragmenting responsibilities across an asylum system already under immense strain.

The historical trajectory traced in Section 2 makes clear how compulsory dispersal, outsourcing of accommodation and advice, and fragmented support alongside restrictions on employment and housing access, e.g. through Right to Rent, have prioritised deterrence, over support and integration. Their cumulative effect has been to undermine people's capacity to establish stable foundations after recognition of their refugee status, increasing risk of homelessness and long-term vulnerability. Our analysis of the post-decision period (Section 3) discusses risks of homelessness or of poor housing circumstances among refugees, who at the end of a lengthy asylum process are expected to rebuild their lives in a housing landscape defined by unaffordability, and severe restrictions on social security. We discuss challenges across three areas. The move-on stage is the single most critical juncture where risk of homelessness is acute. The short timeframe is marked by poor coordination between the Home Office, asylum accommodation providers, and local authorities. The inadequacy of support mechanisms means that many refugees are set up to fail at precisely the point they are being asked to transition to independence. For those who engage with statutory homelessness support, complex rules, limited legal advocacy, and inconsistent decision-making can mean exclusion from duties that should apply under the law. Even where these duties are discharged, the demographic of many new refugees means they will not receive substantive support in the form of a Main

Housing Duty, given the nature of priority need conditions. Even where local authorities have a duty to house new refugees, housing market pressures mean that the accommodation will often be temporary or unsuitable, perpetuating instability. The situation is made worse by a hostile and restrictive rental market, with new refugees receiving little in the way of orientation to introduce them to this landscape. Navigating the market is fraught with challenges of racial discrimination, gendered inequalities and welfare stigma, alongside restrictions on housing support and limited or unsuitable stock.

Section 4 presents recent regional data that shows that the number of households with new refugee status, facing threat of homelessness or who have already been made homeless, on leaving asylum accommodation, has risen sharply in Yorkshire and Humber, with over 2,000 households owed a duty in 2023 – 24 – a 175% increase on the previous year. Yet these figures likely underestimate the scale of the problem, as they exclude those refused assessments and those deterred from applying; numbers that are invisibilised. Filling data gaps around the number of households granted refugee status and the proportion receiving homelessness assessments, can help provide a truer extent of housing need and more effectively inform policy and practice responses.

Across these findings, several cross-cutting themes emerge. First, high rates of homelessness among new refugees is the product of multiple factors including the legacy of austerity measures, welfare reform, and the cost-of-living emergency. Refugees, whose rights and resources have already been systematically constrained by policies designed around deterrence, are among those most acutely exposed to these overlapping pressures. Second, homelessness is shaped by different forms of discrimination. Some target people during the asylum process, restricting their support and

opportunities for independence, while others are more explicitly racialised and gendered, and work to reinforce the exclusion of people who already face marginalisation. Third, decent housing is not merely a logistical hurdle to be managed at the end of the asylum process but is the foundation of a stable life, pivotal to people's wellbeing and economic security.

The evidence presented here demands an urgent re-prioritisation of the principle of preventing homelessness within both asylum and housing policy. This needs to be done systemically to stop homelessness from remaining a structural feature of the lives of new refugees in Britain. The challenge, and opportunity, for policymakers is to reframe housing for people with refugee status or humanitarian protection, not as a burden to be managed, but as an investment in people, necessary for them to re-build their lives.

## Ways Forward

Based on the above, we make several recommendations to help realise better housing outcomes for people newly granted refugee status. Some recommendations are specific to new refugees, but others are more general and reflect the fact that the housing crisis in the UK impacts people across multiple backgrounds, including UK citizens and long-term residents, who share comparable challenges when trying to secure decent housing. Some measures require additional investment, but others are changes to policy and practice that can occur within the current system with political will and leadership, although this is not an easy task in the current political climate which has seen increasing hostility towards people seeking asylum and those with refugee status.

# 01

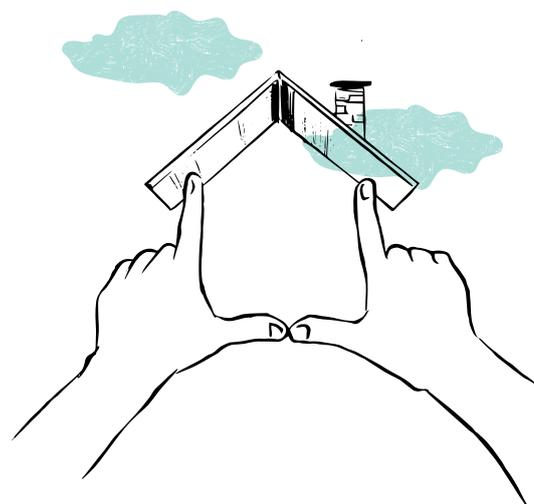
## During the Asylum Process

- Lift the restrictions on employment for people awaiting a decision on their asylum claim. Participation in the formal job market will allow people to exit the asylum system with formal work experience, a tacit knowledge of British employment practices and improved English language skills.
- Invest in and expand access to English language classes during the asylum process.
- Offer information and orientation for people during the asylum process about life in the UK. This should include information about the housing market, the different levels of support they can access on gaining refugee status depending on circumstances, and the actions they can take to secure accommodation.
- Actively enable people to build and maintain social networks during the asylum process. These will be a vital source of support for their post-decision life as refugees.

# 02

## Extend and Reform the Move-on Period

- Improve the accuracy and speed of processing of e-visas to allow for the best use of the move-on period.
- Increase the post-decision move-on window from 28 to at least 56 days for all new refugees.
- Develop a more coordinated and supportive move-on process that aims to prevent homelessness by allowing people adequate time and support to prepare for a new life. Changes should include a focus on the following:
  - Provide targeted casework support during the period, including for translation, system navigation, and early housing referrals.
  - Reform the positive move-on support offered under AIRE with properly resourced and accessible in-person service provision, with a view to instituting this after the AIRE contract expires. The Home Office's new model of Asylum Move-on liaison officers should be independently evaluated as to whether it is an effective, supportive and trusted alternative.
  - Ensure that new refugees receive critical documentation relating to the grant of their asylum, such as the decision letter from the Home Office, the Asylum Support Discontinuation Letter and the Notice to Quit Letter, in a timely and coordinated manner to make the best use of the move-on period.
- Develop a better coordinated working relationship and communication channel between multiple government authorities and organisations involved in the move-on process, including local authority housing options teams, Refugee Integration Services, asylum accommodation and service providers and the Home Office. This should include a focus on ensuring accurate and timely communication of information such as support needs. Relevant parties, e.g. local authorities, asylum accommodation providers, the Home Office etc., should also agree the information needed on letters issued to new refugees or in discontinuation notices, to ensure the efficient discharge of statutory homelessness duties.



## 03

### Ensure Statutory Homelessness Support is Accessible and Responsive

- Expand investment in local authority statutory homelessness support services and Refugee Integration Services.
- Offer support and training for housing officers on the specific rights and needs of newly recognised refugees, including documentation issues and support entitlements.
- Invest in legal aid and introduce a right to housing advice at the point people gain refugee status, to prevent avoidable delays in accessing assistance and unfair denial of assistance.
- Share best practice across local authorities including on how different authorities respond to refugees during the move-on process. An evaluation of the effectiveness of working arrangements in councils which embed Refugee Integration staff in their Housing Options teams, may be of benefit for other councils.

## 04

### Reform the 'Local Connection' Rules

- Amend statutory guidance to ensure refugees are not penalised for relocating to areas where they have informal support, employment prospects or because of safety concerns.
- Explore the potential for better working across local authorities and develop ways to mitigate against people being penalised for relocation.

# 05

## Increase the Availability of Safe, Suitable Accommodation

- Invest in transitional housing pathways that offer stability after status is granted, including access to social housing and Housing First pilots as per need.
- Review local housing allowance rates to facilitate better chances at securing decent rental accommodation:
  - Amend Local Housing Allowance rates to cover a larger proportion of properties.
  - Provide refugees who have lived in Home Office asylum accommodation the higher local housing allowance rate, currently offered to other institution leavers, when renting privately, to account for the challenges of establishing a new life after living in a controlled based.
  - Put in place workable measures to mitigate against impacts of increasing local housing allowance on the local rental market.
- Properly resource local authorities to enforce provisions of the Renters Rights bill with a focus on improving oversight of the private rental market particularly in relation to overcrowding and discrimination.
- Capitalise on recent commitments to public investment in housing by expanding good quality social housing in areas of high demand.

# 06

## Embed Trauma-informed and Culturally Competent Practice

- Require and appropriately resource local authorities and commissioned homelessness services to adopt trauma-informed approaches and culturally appropriate support for clients.
- Fund voluntary sector partnerships with refugee-led and community organisations who can provide relational support and system advocacy.

# 07

## Data

- Clarify if statutory homelessness data is being recorded consistently across local authorities.
- The Home Office should make available data on the number of people granted an asylum claim at a local and/or regional level on a monthly or quarterly basis. This will provide an indication of how many households face potential risk of homelessness every year and can support in the planning of local and regional homelessness services.
- Fill the evidence gap on the number of households with refugee status who do not or have not been able to secure a statutory homelessness support, to understand how accessible such services are, and the extent to which inaccurate decision-making negatively impacts people's housing choices.



						Prevention Duty	Relief Duty	Total
2023 - 2024	Total No. of households owed a duty	Reason for eligibility: Granted refugee status	Reason for eligibility: Other protection (e.g. humanitarian, discretionary)	Total	% Households with Refugee or Protection Status Owed Prevention or Relief	Reason for Loss: Required to leave Home Office asylum accommodation	Reason for Loss: Required to leave Home Office asylum accommodation	
Bradford	2,568	314	27	341	13.28%	204	113	317
Calderdale	1,132	70	2	72	6.36%	83	43	126
Kirklees	2,031	221	3	224	11.03%	145	58	203
Leeds	5,273	396	47	443	8.40%	167	235	402
Wakefield	1,730	63	6	69	3.99%	19	25	44
Barnsley	834	49	4	53	6.35%	22	42	64
Doncaster	2,730	137	15	152	5.57%	104	60	164
East Riding	1,087	11	0	11	1.01%	2	4	6
Kingston Upon Hull	3,331	69	6	75	2.25%	77	85	162
North East Lincolnshire	1,337	20	0	20	1.50%	7	11	18
North Lincolnshire	623	2	8	10	1.61%	1	0	1
North Yorkshire	2,619	15	6	21	0.80%	3	3	6
Rotheram	1,444	63	4	67	4.64%	18	100	118
Sheffield	3,938	446	48	494	12.54%	10	410	420
York	736	17	3	20	2.72%	7	9	16
<b>Y&amp;H Total 2023-2024</b>	<b>31,413</b>	<b>1,893</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>2,072</b>	<b>6.60%</b>	<b>869</b>	<b>1,198</b>	<b>2,067</b>

Table 4.1 Households with refugee or humanitarian protection status owed a Prevention or Relief Duty in Yorkshire and Humber local authorities in 2023 - 2024



Y-PERN, Maurice Keyworth  
Building, Leeds LS6 1AN

Contact@y-pern.org.uk  
y-pern.org.uk  
linkedin.com/company/y-pern  
@y-pern.bsky.social



Sign up to our newsletter!

