BRIEFING | DEEP POVERTY AND DESTITUTION | SOCIAL SECURITY | HOUSING | WORK

Destitution by design: righting the wrongs of UK immigration policy in Scotland

This briefing outlines the immediate and longer-term action needed to address a hidden humanitarian crisis.

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1. Introduction

Rapidly increasing numbers of people experiencing homelessness and destitution are denied essential support due to immigration status. This causes great, unnecessary harm to individuals, local communities and services struggling to help. No one should be denied emergency support, wherever they are from. This briefing outlines immediate and longer-term actions needed to address this hidden humanitarian crisis.

Recommendations

- UK Government should require, empower and adequately resource local, regional and devolved governments to provide an immediate basic safety net for all, regardless of immigration status. The support must be sufficient to cover the essentials and support integration from day one.
- UK Government should commit to not legally challenging Scottish Government or local government for efforts to ensure that people with **no recourse to public funds (NRPF)/other restricted eligibility (RE)** have access to basic essentials until systemic reforms have been implemented. Reform should protect all those in the migration, asylum and European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) regimes from homelessness and destitution by design.
- Scottish Government should exercise powers in devolved areas to the fullest extent possible to ensure that all non-UK nationals in Scotland have full

access to health, social care, education, social security, transport and housing.

- Independent funders should co-invest with Scottish Government to rapidly scale up Fair Way Scotland, an effective model of integrated accommodation, cash, advice and support for all those facing extreme hardship as a result of current UK immigration policy.

This briefing summarises the findings of the report published by Heriot Watt University (https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/destitution-by-design-righting-the-wrongs-of-uk-immigration-polic).

2. Background

Successive changes to UK immigration law have explicitly aimed to create a 'hostile environment' for migrants, including by restricting their access to statutory supports like the social security system, and local authority housing and homelessness assistance. In the UK, 2.6 million people are here on visas that give them NRPF (Leon and Broadhead, 2024). A large but unquantified additional number of people have NRPF because they are in the UK irregularly, including those who have been refused asylum. The UK's exit from the European Union (EU) has brought some European nationals living in the UK into the orbit of these restrictions, including long-term residents who have not yet secured settled status under the EUSS.

Not all of those with NRPF/RE for support are experiencing or at imminent risk of destitution or homelessness. Some are working or studying, others are supported by family. But people with NRPF/RE who find themselves in difficulty have very limited options for assistance.

While quantitative data on the experiences of this group is scarce, available evidence suggests having NRPF/RE can leave people facing homelessness and destitution alongside employment struggles (not least because many are not permitted to work), and at increased risks of domestic abuse, poor health and other problems. Additional challenges – including racial discrimination, language barriers, a reluctance to seek help for fear it will negatively impact an immigration case, and inadequate access to advice and casework – exacerbate these difficulties.

The Destitution in the UK study (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023) estimates that in 2022, 1,195,800 migrants experienced destitution and over a quarter (27%) of destitute households were headed by migrants. Levels of destitution among migrants were estimated to have increased by 136% between 2019 and 2022, more than double the 61% increase in general destitution over the same period. The NRPF condition and other policies restricting access to benefits for migrant groups are recognised as key drivers of destitution for this group.

People with NRPF/RE can access some forms of healthcare, and local authorities have some duties to assist those in need, but access to such assistance is highly restricted (mainly provided to children or families under the Children Scotland Act, Migration Scotland & COSLA, 2024), and implementation of these duties varies. In 2021/22, only an estimated 18,000 people received such assistance from UK local authorities (Leon and Broadhead, 2024).

There have been numerous and long-standing calls for action to enable access to basic welfare and housing assistance for all who need it, regardless of their immigration status. However, UK immigration policy has gone in the opposite direction. Under the original provisions of the Illegal Migration Act and as transitional arrangements for European Economic Area (EEA) nationals come to an end, it is feared that more people will be affected by NRPF/RE over the coming years. While the new Labour UK Government's ending of the retrospective elements of the Illegal Migration Act has eased these concerns (Electronic Immigration Network, 2024), the immigration and asylum system remains deeply controversial and under intense scrutiny. The full implications of the change in UK political leadership for those with

NRPF/RE remain unclear, though continued efforts to clear the backlog of asylum claims will no doubt increase the demands on statutory and non-statutory services, particularly in relation to homelessness, over the short to medium term (Scottish Refugee Council, 2024).

Fair Way Scotland

Fair Way Scotland is a partnership of third-sector organisations that aims to prevent and mitigate destitution and homelessness among people with NRPF/RE. It pursues these aims by combining direct provision of support, advice, advocacy and accommodation services with a convening and influencing role through a strategic funding and learning partnership.

Direct service provision was mobilised in August 2022 across 3 Scottish cities: Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. Across these areas and with support from lawyers providing second-tier legal advice, Fair Way caseworkers provide specialist advice and advocacy to help regularise people's immigration status. In Glasgow and Edinburgh, Fair Way Scotland is also able to provide accommodation in dispersed community flats and linked weekly cash payments to a small number of people with NRPF.

In 2023/24, Fair Way partners provided casework support to 1,229 people across Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. This was a 65% increase on the number supported (744) during its first year of operation, 2022/23. Since Fair Way's inception, a total of 18 people have been provided with accommodation in

community flats and linked cash payments of £50–£60 per week funded via the Fair Way Scotland partnership. An additional 31 people were accommodated in Fair Way partner-provided (but not Fair Way-funded) flats. In this challenging context, the Scottish Government has recognised that achieving its ambitions to end homelessness and destitution in Scotland requires an adequate response to the issues faced by those with NRPF.

The study

This briefing summarises the findings to date of an ongoing mixed methods study that seeks to:

- develop a clear picture of the needs, circumstances and experiences of people with NRPF and at risk of destitution and homelessness in Scotland
- understand the effectiveness and impacts of Fair Way Scotland so far and identify those factors hindering and enabling the partnership in achieving its aims.

The report draws on data from:

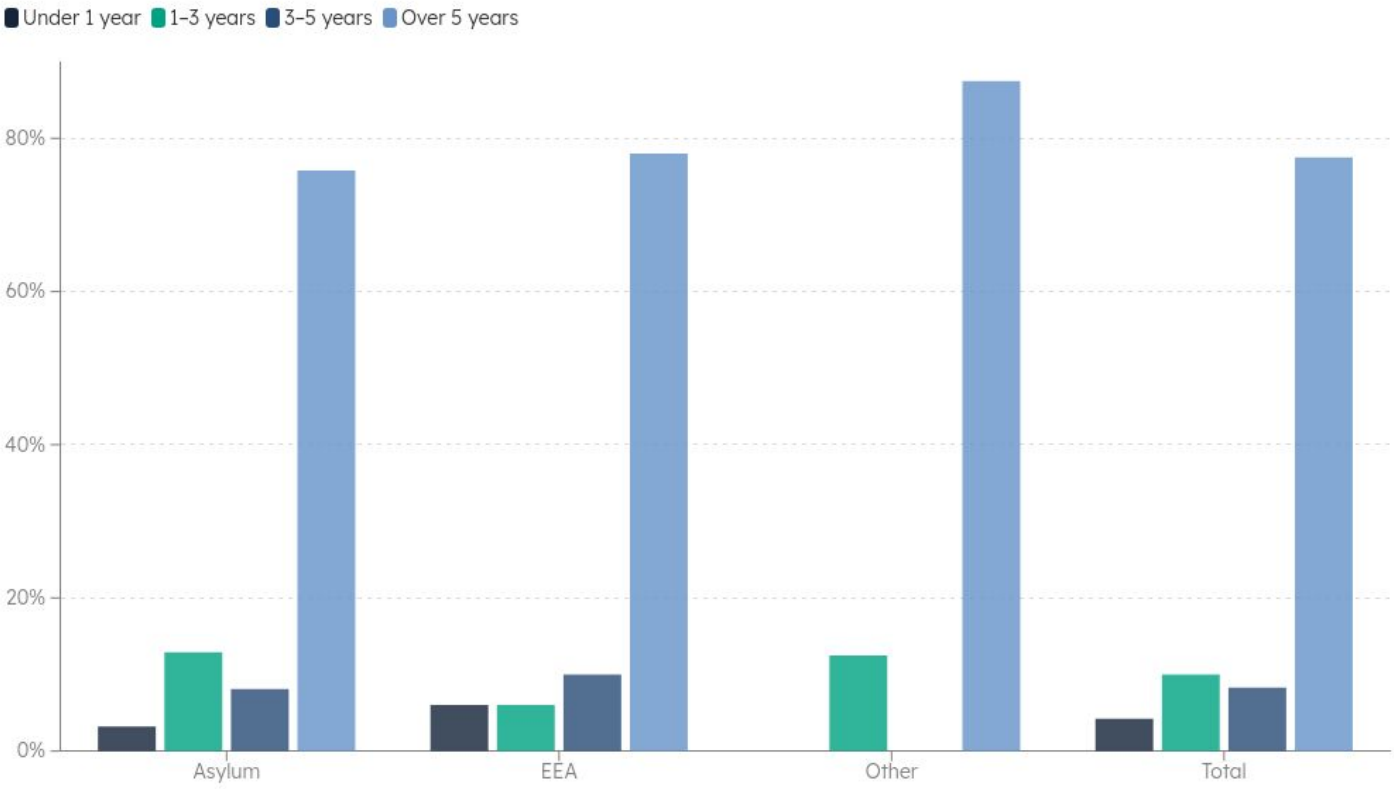
- a quantitative survey of people with NRPF receiving Fair Way casework support (n=138)
- in-depth qualitative interviews with 30 people with direct experience of NRPF
- qualitative interviews and focus groups with 17 frontline staff and other professionals supporting people with NRPF.

The research included representation of the 3 ‘main groups’ supported by Fair Way Scotland:

- people who came to the UK to seek asylum and have NRPF, for instance, because they have exhausted their rights of appeal following a negative decision on their claim (51% of survey respondents)
- EEA nationals with NRPF/RE (42%)
- a small other group, including people who came to the UK on spousal or student visas and have NRPF (7%).

Three-quarters of survey respondents had been in the UK for more than 5 years (see Figure 1), as had the vast majority of interviewees (23 of 30) – the majority of these (15) for a decade or more.

Figure 1: Duration of time in the UK



Note: Number of cases = 120

3. Housing and homelessness

Fair Way Scotland explicitly seeks to address homelessness among those with NRPF/RE, so it is perhaps not surprising that homelessness and housing insecurity are pervasive among those supported by Fair Way Scotland caseworkers. Nevertheless, the extent of housing need among those the partnership supports is extreme.

At the point of survey, virtually all (93%) participants were experiencing homelessness.

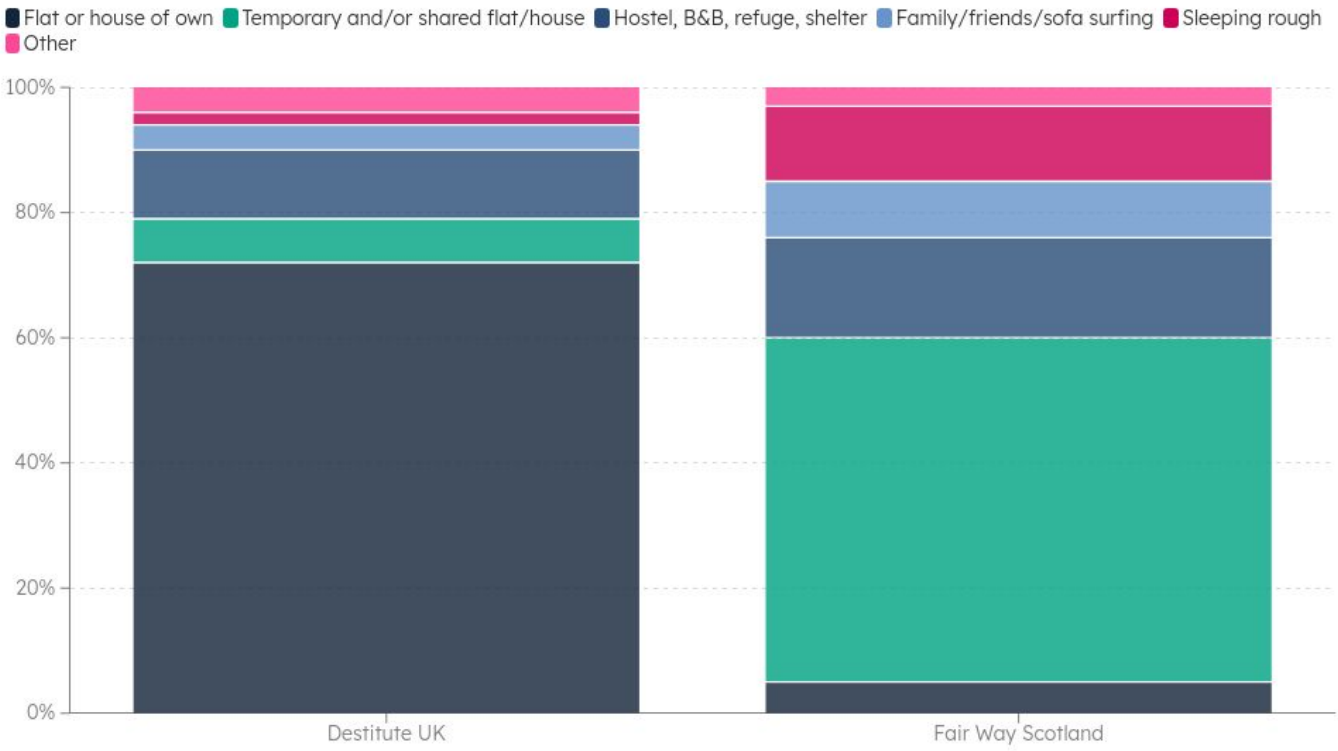
A high proportion (55%) of participants were in some form of temporary accommodation, provided by charities, local authorities or the Home Office. One in 8 (12%) were sleeping rough and just under one in 10 were 'sofa surfing' (9%), staying in hostels (8%), or B&Bs/emergency hotels (8%).

Hinata, who is aged 45–64 and has NRPF said:

> "I was told, you know, 'Are you getting ready to leave and find your [own] accommodation?' Now, I'm in this situation where I don't have public fund[s]… I cannot just go into council and ask for accommodation. If I have to leave here, I'm really not safe…They don't even actually say they would refer me to somewhere else or look for something. They just want to get rid of me. I find it very cruel."

Figure 2 shows the housing circumstances of respondents at the point of survey alongside the comparable profile for destitute users of crisis services[1] responding to the Destitution in the UK 2022 survey. The comparison makes clear that those with NRPF/RE accessing Fair Way support are strikingly more disadvantaged in housing terms than even this very disadvantaged comparator group. Most arresting is the finding that survey respondents are 8 times more likely than the destitute cohort to be in temporary housing and 6 times more likely to be sleeping rough, as well as 2.3 times more likely to be staying with friends or sofa-surfing and 1.5 times more likely to be in hostels/shelters or B&B.

Figure 2: Current housing circumstances of Fair Way Scotland survey respondents compared with destitute households across UK in 2022



Survey sample numbers: *Destitution in the UK* 2678, Fair Way 119.

Data regarding people's housing experiences over the last year underlines this picture of extreme housing need. Most (58%) participants had had to leave accommodation with nowhere else to go in the last 12 months and more than half (53%) had slept rough.

People in Edinburgh were more likely to be sleeping rough (or have experienced doing so in the last year) than those in Glasgow and Aberdeen, and those in Glasgow

and Aberdeen were more likely to be staying in temporary flats/houses than those in Edinburgh. One explanation for these differences is that people who came to the UK to seek asylum, who are concentrated in Glasgow, have access to forms of charitable and Home Office accommodation that EEA nationals (spread across the 3 cities) do not. Also relevant, however, are the acute housing pressures in Edinburgh (where a housing emergency was declared in late 2023)[2] and different local authority practices in relation to providing temporary accommodation to those with NRPF/RE, with Aberdeen City Council adopting a notably more generous approach than other areas.

Sofa surfing offered participants a way to avoid sleeping rough, and was experienced at some point in the previous year by 43% of survey participants. This kind of living situation had significant drawbacks, however, and for many led to anxiety and feelings of being a burden, material hardship as people sought to contribute from their meagre income, and risks of exploitation and, for women, sexual assault.

Home Office accommodation is an important source of support for the asylum group, but it is also profoundly insecure. Those residing in such accommodation face imminent eviction when a decision is made on their case. Over the past year, 60% of survey participants in this group had stayed in Home Office accommodation, but almost as many (50%) had been evicted from such accommodation over the same period.

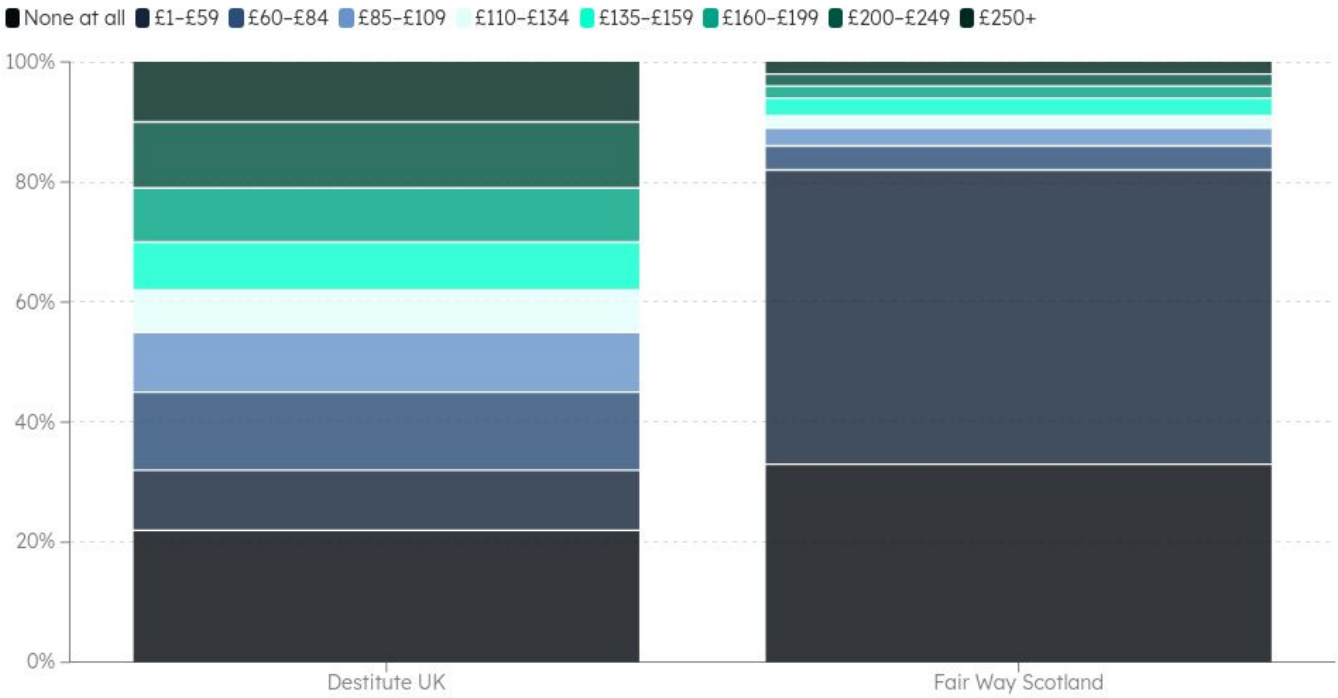
4. Destitution, incomes and deprivation

Destitution is ubiquitous among those with NRPF/RE being supported by Fair Way Scotland. This is partly because Fair Way is a partnership that deliberately seeks to respond to destitute migrants.

97% of survey respondents were destitute at the point of survey. Average incomes were exceptionally low, at just under £40 per week, with the vast majority (82%) reporting incomes of less than £60 per week and a third (33%) reporting no income at all.

As shown in figure 3, this destitution is considerably more severe and deeper than that recorded for the overall UK destitute population: just over half of the overall UK destitute population in 2022 had incomes of less than £60 a week, compared to 83% of our survey respondents.

Figure 3: Net household incomes reported in Fair Way and *Destitution in the UK* surveys by banded weekly values (after housing costs)



Number of cases Fair Way Scotland 114; *Destitution in the UK* 2678
Note: Those reporting 'None at all' here are generally referring to regular, recurrent income. Some of them, in response to a different question, may have also received occasional one-off or irregular amounts of money from family, friends, charities or begging.

Among those who did have some income, the most common source was the Scottish Crisis Fund, administered to this group by the British Red Cross (funded by the Scottish Government as part of the Ending Destitution Together Strategy and which ceased operation in Spring 2024) (32% of respondents). This was followed by other charities (30%), friends (22%) and family (19%). One in ten respondents or fewer received income from benefits (10%)[3] begging (9%) local authorities (7%) or other sources (including work) (5%).

Armands, an under-25 year-old EEA national, said:

> "[I've been paying for gas and electric] through the British Red Cross… money, [before] I just didn't have gas or nothing… It was like seven degrees. It's cold, yes… It's £100 per month. First month is already over, so it's only another two payments of £100. That's each month, right, so it's basically nothing."

Levels of material deprivation were exceptionally high, with around two-thirds of respondents reporting having gone without meals (66%), clothes (69%) and toiletries (63%) in the last month. Hunger and skipping meals were the norm, and the use of charities for essentials like food, toiletries and clothes was exceptionally high. Those we surveyed with NRPF/RE are 33 times more likely to be deprived of food and 69 times more likely to be deprived of clothing than single people of working age in the general population.

Those we interviewed highlighted having to go without other essentials that they could not afford, including public transport, job interviews and completing other administrative tasks and basic health-related aids like glasses. People seeking asylum who are reliant on ASPEN card payments faced additional barriers to travel.

Dhruv, a 25–34 year-old asylum seeker, said:

> "You can't [use your ASPEN card] on the bus because it's just a tap in… I think it's designed so it's as difficult as possible."

Reliance on charities and food banks to access in-kind support with essentials was extremely common. While these kinds of support offered valued routes to access food, toiletries and clothes, they were rarely sufficient to prevent people from experiencing extreme material deprivation and hunger. Access was inconsistent, often inadequate and sometimes non-existent, and some people found depending on such support humiliating and degrading. People with NRPF/RE also received support with essentials from friends or others they knew who were or had been in similar circumstances, pooling small amounts of income or food to make it go further or exchanging clothes.

5. Work

Most of those with NRPF/RE and accessing Fair Way Scotland casework support are not permitted to work in the UK (66%), including virtually all in the asylum group.

This was a source of deep frustration among those affected. Not only was people's ability to get by affected but also their sense of purpose, identity, relationships, ability to start a family and mental health.

Around one in 7 (15%) survey respondents were unemployed and seeking work. Barriers to work for this group included the challenges of accessing work while experiencing homelessness, language barriers and digital exclusion. A further 9% of respondents were not working due to ill health. These findings suggest that health and employment support for those entitled to work but with restricted access to statutory supports (notable EEA nationals with pre-settled status) may have a role to play in reducing experiences of destitution.

Very few survey respondents were in work (6%), though the proportion was higher for EEA nationals (14%), with roles in car washes, garages, factories and hospitality, including on delivery bikes, especially common. Evidencing their work history to secure a qualifying right to reside and entitlement to statutory support, including housing, is a key challenge for the EEA group as these kinds of work are often undertaken cash in hand with work records thereby hard to prove.

No one who participated in the survey was in education or training, largely reflecting barriers to accessing such opportunities for people with NRPF. Lack of access to such opportunities limits people's ability to engage in meaningful activities and their opportunities for social interaction, especially if they are unable to work. People with NRPF can access English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes but face significant under-provision and long waiting lists.

Experience of forced work over the last year was reported by 14% of survey respondents overall, with a higher incidence of 16% for the EEA group. Interviewees expressed extreme wariness about engaging in illegitimate forms of work due to fears this would affect their immigration status, fears of exploitation and a desire not to engage in any criminal activity. However, experiences of such work and exploitation were nevertheless common, as some did not realise the work they were undertaking was illegitimate or/and others felt they had little choice but to engage in such work to survive.

Engaging in illegal and exploitative work led to a range of harms and adverse outcomes, including having no access to sick pay or holiday pay, working in poor conditions for long hours for very low pay, not gaining entitlement to contributory social security benefits via National Insurance contributions, and the risk that being discovered as working illegally could impact their immigration case.

6. Health, trauma, victimisation and crime

Those with NRPF/RE and accessing Fair Way support have poorer health than the general population and other disadvantaged benchmark groups on a range of measures covering physical health, mental health and mental wellbeing. The asylum group, the small other group and women appear to have exceptionally poor mental health.

As shown in table 1, scoring low on a commonly used and validated mental wellbeing scale (the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Survey, WEMWBS) is 2–3 times more prevalent among those with NRPF/RE supported by Fair Way Scotland than the general population (40% compared to 17% for the general population).

Scoring in the very low range was 4 times more common among our survey respondents than the overall population (12% vs 3%).

Table 1: Proportion of survey respondents reporting poor mental health and wellbeing, by group/measure (%)

Measure	General population (%)	Asylum (%)	EEA (%)	Other (%)	All survey respondents (%)

Poor or very poor mental health	20	37	28	50	34
WEMWBS low range	17	50	27	50	40
WEMWBS very low range	3	15	26	25	12

(Number of cases; self-reported Mental Health 114; WEMWBS scores 119)[4]

Experiences of trauma, violence, threats of violence, stigma and disadvantage were very common among those we spoke to. People described experiences of political persecution, traumatic loss of family members, deep poverty and discrimination in their countries of origin. Whilst these experiences were most prevalent and extreme among the asylum group, they were also reported by others, with the Roma people we spoke to especially clear about their experiences of discrimination and disadvantage in their countries of origin. This was one factor that often explained people's sense of belonging and safety in the UK, despite the extreme deprivation they faced here, as explained by Lukas. People also recounted experiences of trauma and extreme danger on journeys to the UK, as well as violence and trauma after arrival, linked to their migration journeys, homelessness, and, in some cases, incarceration.

Lukas, an age 65+ EEA national, said:

> "Scotland is the only country I've ever known that I can take a breath, walk, without being told, 'Hey, he's black, he's white, he's gay, she's a lesbian.' Here's a country that's really free. She's got her flaws but she's just free. She's free. You can live here."

Despite their much poorer health, survey respondents reported using GP services at levels similar to the population average. Use of other health services, including ambulances, Accident and Emergency services and overnight stays in hospital was much higher than in the general population, however, indicating that members of this group underutilise primary care relative to their needs and rely more heavily on more expensive hospital-based emergency and urgent care.

Survey results also indicate higher engagement with criminal justice services than the general population. Our qualitative interviews with people with NRPF/RE and staff supporting them suggest that at least some of this offending is related to survival crime. However, the survey did not capture data on interactions with criminal justice services as a victim, which our qualitative data also suggests is common among this group, so statistics on the use of criminal justice services may be an underestimate.

This evidence on public service use indicates strong potential for savings in public service costs if this group are supported in ways that effectively reduce emergency use of health services and contact with police and criminal justice services.

7. Fair Way Scotland casework and legal support

The focus of Fair Way caseworkers is on progressing people's immigration cases to regularise their status or enable access to interim forms of statutory support. However, it is often extremely difficult to progress a person's case when they are in crisis. By necessity, caseworkers play a central role in addressing people's immediate and wider needs, including housing, food and clothing, and healthcare, by providing support directly and linking people with available services. While caseworkers were often able to piece together essential sources of support that protect people from the worst forms of hardship, sometimes these sources ran out.

A Fair Way caseworker said:

> "The hardest part is telling people, 'We don't have anything left for you.' That's probably the most time-consuming and the most, yes, upsetting for us as advisors to manage people's expectations, and have to be the ones to say that we've run out of sources for you now."

Those we spoke to enormously valued caseworkers' flexible and holistic approach. In some cases, caseworkers were able to deploy their expertise to almost immediately unlock access to essential support to which people had been entitled but unable to access for long periods. Caseworkers' role as mediators with the Home Office, local

authorities and lawyers was essential in the context of complex immigration law and other barriers, including language and experiences of trauma.

Demand for casework support has increased by 65% in the last year. Demand for casework far exceeds capacity, and services manage this differently. While some casework teams carry high caseloads and work flexibly, others cap caseloads to try to safeguard the quality and depth of support they offer. There are concerns that demand will increase further as routes through the EUSS narrow and given the enormous and increasing complexity of routes to settlement.

Access to professional legal advice and support is a key enabler of achieving positive outcomes for people with NRPF/RE, especially for those in the asylum and other groups and for EEA nationals with more complex cases. Access to appropriate legal counsel can be challenging given the limited capacity of the sector, particularly outside Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Second-tier legal advice available to caseworkers as part of the Fair Way Scotland partnership is an invaluable resource. It provides advice where caseworkers are not clear about what route to pursue and offers rapid answers to technical questions to enable faster progress, upskilling caseworkers over time with legal knowledge. This enables them to more effectively challenge wrong decisions by public authorities and provide a route to full legal representation for those they support.

Despite access to casework and legal support, some people with NRPF/RE are in circumstances that are intractable and extremely hard to resolve within the current UK legal context. This includes those who cannot access the evidence required to

progress their case via the EUSS or asylum system, EEA nationals who have arrived after the UK's exit from the EU and others who are here irregularly having arrived, for example, on spousal or student visas.

8. Fair Way Scotland accommodation and cash support

People staying in Fair Way accommodation with linked cash support tended to be very satisfied with their living situation.

Many report the transformative difference this accommodation had made to their quality of life, to have their own space, to live independently, to feel safe and to cook their own meals.

Some credited the accommodation as having saved their lives. While the cash payments provided are modest, the difference they make to people's lives is striking. Predominantly, people used the payments to buy food, and by doing so were largely able to avoid going hungry.

Given the exceptionally small scale of accommodation available via Fair Way Scotland and the highly limited alternative options for shelter for these groups, caseworkers often felt powerless to assist those they support who are often in dire housing need. There was extreme eagerness to scale up accommodation provision accessible to people with NRPF/RE across all 3 cities in which Fair Way operates, but particularly in Edinburgh where very few spaces are available and Aberdeen where there is currently no accommodation provision. A scaled-up accommodation offer was also seen to be a means to secure greater buy-in from local authority partners.

9. Conclusion

The levels of need, deprivation, disadvantage and trauma experienced by those with NRPF/RE whom Fair Way Scotland seeks to help amounts to a humanitarian crisis among a group often hidden from public view and whose basic needs have been intentionally neglected by Conservative and Conservative-led UK Governments since 2010.

If the newly elected Labour administration does not act swiftly, recent legal changes, including the Illegal Migration Act and the UK's exit from the European Union, will mean that the numbers affected are highly likely to increase.

While initial moves by the new Labour Government on migration and asylum issues have eased some concerns about the most pernicious and immediate impacts of the Illegal Migration Act (Scottish Refugee Council, 2024), the immigration and asylum systems remain deeply controversial. The full implications of the change in UK political leadership for those with NRPF/RE remain unclear, though continued efforts to clear the backlog of asylum claims will no doubt increase the demands on statutory and non-statutory services, particularly in relation to homelessness, over the short to medium term. The surest route to a sustained improvement in the experiences of this group is a radical change in UK immigration law that instead of seeking to create a hostile environment, prioritises people's ability to access the essentials required for a dignified and minimally flourishing life, while their cases are progressed fairly and swiftly.

In the meantime, it falls to philanthropic funders, housing associations, local authorities and devolved governments to mitigate the impacts of UK immigration policy and law using all the tools at their disposal, on both individuals, but also the public services and charities that bear the preventable and costly brunt of national immigration policy.

Fair Way Scotland has demonstrated how this can be done via an integrated offer of casework support, legal advice, accommodation and cash assistance. However, scaling up this response to levels that come anywhere near demand requires radically increased buy-in and investment from a whole range of social partners. This has, to date, not been forthcoming.

All levels of government and wider social partners should work together

The UK Government should:

- Require, empower and adequately resource local, regional and devolved governments to provide an immediate basic safety net for all, regardless of immigration status, through revised guidance, joint working and adequate funding. The support available must be sufficient to cover the essentials and support integration from day one.
- Commit to not legally challenging the Scottish Government and other devolved nations/regions for efforts to ensure that people with NRPF/RE have access to basic essentials. This commitment should hold until systemic reforms have been implemented that protect all those in the migration,

asylum and EUSS regimes from homelessness and destitution by design.

- Commit to fully addressing the harms associated with NRPF/RE, taking into account the particular needs of those with protected characteristics and/or specific vulnerabilities. At a minimum, future reforms should ensure all non-UK nationals in the UK can avoid destitution and homelessness and are treated with dignity and respect.
- Work with devolved governments, local authorities, and public and third-sector partners to improve data on the scale and nature of need among those with NRPF/RE. Identify clear pathways out of destitution/homelessness for each group.
- Process all immigration claims fairly and speedily, with adequate and effective protections in place for those unable to provide evidence on their application for legitimate reasons or who struggle to access and navigate the system.

The Scottish Government should:

- Exercise powers in devolved areas to the fullest extent possible to ensure that all non-UK nationals in Scotland have full access to health, social care, education, social security, transport and housing. Secure a commitment from UK Government not to be challenged in these areas until system-wide issues are addressed (see recommendation 2).
- Co-invest with independent funders, housing associations, local authorities and health partners to rapidly scale up Fair Way Scotland as an effective model of integrated accommodation, cash, advice and support for all those

facing extreme hardship as a result of UK immigration policy.

COSLA (the Strategic Migration Partnership) and Scottish local government should:

- Improve the efficacy, coordination and leadership of action to prevent homelessness and destitution among all migrant communities in Scotland. Support all local authority chief executives to provide unequivocal leadership on how local services can address the needs of this group effectively. Invest in staff training, capacity building and clear guidance to empower front-line teams.

Independent funders and Fair Way partners should:

- Scale up and share knowledge of Fair Way Scotland's integrated action learning, funding and delivery model to prevent and mitigate destitution, homelessness and other harmful impacts of UK immigration law. Work with partners to maximise the alignment and impact of all available resources and jointly build a credible strategy for change.

Housing associations should:

- Make available suitable accommodation for households with NRPF/RE now and commit to finding solutions to expanding new supply so it better meets the scale of demand across all groups experiencing homelessness. Support efforts to engage independent funders and consider offering accommodation at a concessionary rate.

These recommendations set out the steps that all tiers of government and other key actors need to take to address the humanitarian crisis that has been created by current UK immigration policy and to prevent an escalation of the most severe harms.

Wider reforms will also be needed to create a fair, effective and humane asylum and migration regime that is fit for purpose. These are reflected in the full list of recommendations included in the concluding chapter of the full report. Some of these steps could and should be taken rapidly to alleviate harm now. Other organisations with specialist expertise have developed their own recommendations, which offer an invaluable companion to this list.[5]

The UK Government has choices about how to reshape and reframe those systems and gain political and public support for a new approach. At the very least, it must ensure that no one in the UK is ever forced into destitution and homelessness, no matter where they are from.

Next steps

This briefing summarises the findings from the second major output of a 3-year JRF-funded evaluation of Fair Way Scotland. The evaluation runs for a further year (2024–25) and the final report will provide an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the partnership over a 3-year period. It will also provide a final opportunity to consider the contributions of wider social partners (funders, housing associations, local authorities and the Scottish Government) to prevent homelessness and destitution for this group and an opportunity to reflect on the implications of the

change in the UK Government in summer 2024 on the issues Fair Way Scotland seeks to address.

Notes

1. 111 crisis services across 18 case study areas were involved in the research including food banks, welfare advice providers, homeless hostels, domestic abuse services and Local Welfare Funds (Local Welfare Assistance schemes in England, the Scottish Welfare Fund in Scotland, the Discretionary Assistance Fund in Wales and Crisis Loans in Northern Ireland).
2. As of June 2024, 8 Scottish local authorities, including Edinburgh and Glasgow, had declared a housing emergency.
3. This may include benefits that do not count as public funds or cases where individuals had very recently attained settled status, for example, and access to benefits.
4. When coding the item ratings which go into WEMWBS scoring, responses of 'Prefer not to say' were coded at a middle level (3) while blank responses were coded as 'missing' (-9). Only those cases where all items were coded as missing (-9) was the overall score treated as missing.
5. See resources from JRF here (https://www.jrf.org.uk/neighbourhoods-and-communities/protection-for-everyone-in-our-communities), and the 3 million here (https://the3million.org.uk/eu-settlement-scheme-first-100-days).

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