

Home Affairs Committee Inquiry into Asylum

Evidence from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Housing and Migration Network

Submission by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

April 2013

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) is one of the largest social policy research and development charities in the UK. For over a century we have been engaged with searching out the causes of social problems, investigating solutions and seeking to influence those who can make changes. JRF's purpose is to understand the root causes of social problems, to identify ways of overcoming them, and to show how social needs can be met in practice. The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (JRHT) shares the aims of JRF and engages in practical housing and care work.

The Housing and Migration Network was set up by JRF, HACT and the Metropolitan Migration Foundation to improve the housing circumstances of new migrants who are experiencing disadvantage and poor housing, whether as refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers or joining family members, and to bring about change in the places where recent migrants live, in solidarity with other longer term residents. This evidence has been prepared by three members of the network, Jenny Edwards, John Perry and Heather Petch.

Contact:

Julia Unwin
Chief Executive
Joseph Rowntree Foundation
The Homestead
40 Water End
York YO30 6WP

Email: Julia.Unwin@jrf.org.uk

Introduction

Housing is a key component of asylum support. Poor practice in this area and at transition points in the asylum process is pushing many vulnerable people into destitution. This is unacceptable in 21st century Britain.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry and does so jointly with the Housing and Migration Network (HMN). We focus on accommodation and related support and the destitution caused when this is inadequate and because of bureaucratic delays, inefficiencies and a fragmented system that lets people fall through the gaps.

Summary and recommendations

We recommend that the committee seek the following reforms.

A substantial improvement in the contracting of accommodation, learning from the lessons of the last contracting round:

- Undertake an urgent, published review of the performance of the current contractors in relation to the contract specifications, especially in accommodation standards and support for transition after asylum applications have been decided.
- Institute annual reviews of the costs of accommodation contracts, comparing actual payments with forecast savings and with comparable costs under the last stages of the previous contracts.
- In future contracts, take proper account of social value as required under the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.
- Ensure that 'payment by results' includes sustainable resettlement of those accommodated who subsequently get status/leave to remain.
- Carry out an updated impact assessment and equality assessment of the changed arrangements.

A commitment and urgent steps to ensure that destitution is not the devastating outcome of the asylum process for many people:

- Ensure that no one within or leaving the system is left without income sufficient to secure basic essentials of shelter, food, clothing and health. Take urgent action to eliminate bureaucratic delays and inefficiencies that leave people without the means to live (sometimes for very long periods) or without the status documents needed to resolve their circumstances.
- Ensure that public bodies and their agents e.g. UKBA, JCP, flag cases where people are at risk of destitution for special attention.
- Review the scope and processes for Section 4 support and increase the level to that of Section 95 support
- Compensate charities that carry the burden of supporting people left destitute by the inadequacies of the system, at a level that incentivises faster decision-making and improved customer service.

Housing as a key aspect of support to asylum seekers and refugees

The importance of safe, secure and stable housing is often overlooked. Government strategies for refugee integration have underplayed housing issues and failed to recognise that it is one of the foundation stones, providing a base from which access to other services and capacity to earn a living are made possible.

Accommodation must provide:

- *safety* –for people who have suffered severe disruption in their lives or even torture, rape or extreme persecution;
- *security* – accommodation they can depend on and will not lose at short notice;
- *stability* – from which people can register with schools and health services, begin to learn English and start to integrate.

Official research shows that the asylum process creates long-term housing instability: one in ten families who have been through the process eventually become homeless.¹

Critical stages in the asylum process

At any point during the process, if things go wrong with accommodation, people can lose the means to maintain a basic life. There are four critical stages:

- *Transfer from short-term accommodation* – the move to longer term accommodation, usually in dispersal areas, provided once asylum seekers leave their initial accommodation.
- *Management of longer term accommodation* – is it safe, secure and stable e.g. moving asylum seekers only when essential and taking account of their needs?
- *Granting of refugee status or other long-term leave to remain* – the transition to permanent accommodation is critical and often done at very short notice (in theory 28 days notice, in practice sometimes only a week).
- *Rejection of an asylum application* – people may not leave the UK and may not get Section 4 support and are then at extreme risk of destitution.

The background: asylum support under the dispersal programme

Asylum support before 2000 was largely run through local authorities but was then transferred to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) as an agency of the Home Office. More than half of support contracts were held by local authority consortia, mainly using social housing stock, with the remainder held by private providers who by the end of their contracts had developed their expertise, often having effective partnerships with their local authority (LA) counterparts.

The LA consortia and individual providers also often invested in ‘wrap-around’ services and provided local and regional leadership on community cohesion and other issues which require inter-agency partnership work. For example, in the West Midlands contractors used a formula to prevent inappropriate concentrations of asylum seekers or over-use of private rented stock in each area.

The early stages of dispersal were fraught with problems. This was partly due to inadequate preparations by the Home Office and inexperience on the part of some local authorities and providers e.g. lack of staff with cultural or language skills relevant to the new arrivals. These difficulties were augmented by a rapid increase in use of Section 95 shortly after dispersal began: from 27,800 cases in 2001 to 80,000 in December 2003.²

These administrative problems often caused considerable hardship and confusion to those asylum seekers who needed accommodation, especially those housed in places where they were the first asylum seekers, often in poor, largely white estates or neighbourhoods.³

However, as the consortia and providers gained experience, arrangements began to improve. Many landlords developed better support for asylum seekers to settle into their accommodation, recruiting staff with relevant language/cultural skills (including in some cases refugees who had been through the asylum process). They planned the allocation of accommodation so that clusters of people speaking the same language were formed, tried to avoid successions of moves so that asylum seekers could retain access to schools, health services, etc and they worked with communities that received asylum seekers to resolve difficulties.

While the contract payments from NASS were for accommodation services, they also enabled the provision of support services both by the landlords themselves and through the voluntary sector. As numbers of asylum seekers in particular places grew, mutual self-help also became possible. Several local authorities invested in wider facilities to benefit an area or created networks linking asylum seekers with long-established residents, which enabled initial problems of suspicion and hostility to be reduced.⁴

The following examples provide an indication of the kinds of services or joint projects that were developed in response to the NASS contracts:

- In Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the council set up a dedicated team to prepare host communities and support local community groups as they developed, including those set up by existing residents to welcome newcomers such as the ACANE centre in Byker.
- Bolton established six urban care and neighbourhood centres aimed at sustaining communities, promoting learning and employment, and combating crime, and available to all residents within the neighbourhood.
- Integration networks in Glasgow are groups of local agencies, community groups and volunteers who deliver services to asylum seekers and refugees in ten local areas.
- Various dispersal centres kept asylum seekers in the same house if they received a positive decision on their case, avoiding the homelessness after the 28-day period. One scheme in Nottingham housed 240 families for up to six months until permanent housing could be found.

There were also significant improvements when re-contracting took place in 2005 in relation to liaison with LAs and community cohesion requirements, and the need for a joined-up approach to tackling the 28-day period. Such requirements were

removed or diluted in the recent process and JRF and the HMN wrote to the minister expressing concern about this (See Annex 1).

In the later stages of the older contracts the provision of asylum accommodation and support was very significantly better than when it began ten years earlier, bearing in mind the very tight constraints of the asylum system: asylum applications being subject to long delays and many other problems, severely undermining asylum seekers' security; the very low level of financial support provided and the restrictions on asylum seekers working; often inadequate facilities to learn English, and other difficulties not related to the contracts themselves.

In summary, receiving asylum seekers was an accepted function in the many places where this had not been the case before 2000, and wider support and integration measures were in place – albeit patchily and often themselves insecurely funded.

Understanding this initial experience is important to appreciate the radical change brought by the UK Border Agency (UKBA) choosing to use solely new, private contractors from 2012. This decision meant that, effectively, practically all the experience built up over more than a decade of asylum dispersal was jettisoned.

New contracts under COMPASS

The COMPASS project was launched by UKBA in July 2009 to arrange new asylum support services to start in 2012. The new contracts were to be less detailed 'strategic partnerships' compared with the previous contracts, monitored against performance indicators.

The contract terms made little reference to cohesion and no reference to longer term settlement and integration goals, only to requirements to liaise with the local authority and the strategic migration partnerships on issues of 'social tension' and with the voluntary sector to provide support services. Much of the other detail, however, such as on standards of accommodation, was the same. But the transition was about to take place in a very different context: by 2012 the Section 95 caseload had fallen to around 20,000 cases, about 18,000 of which were in dispersal areas.

Tendering was through a crude form of reverse auction, with bidders reducing their bids until only one was left. This enabled private bidders to drive down prices, below levels acceptable to the previous consortia, with little or no account taken of their experience or of the wider social value offered by bidders. Contracts were awarded exclusively to large private companies, with SERCO, G4S and Clearel each gaining two contracts (four in England plus one each in Wales and Scotland/Northern Ireland).

Many problems arose from the failure to exercise 'due diligence' in the procurement process:

- Despite the contract specifying turnover requirements, some bidders did not meet them. One bidder 'won' four of six regions but subsequently pulled out, so although never a preferred bidder they essentially hijacked the e-auction.
- Clearel was a joint venture between Clearsprings and Reliance but Reliance pulled out and Clearsprings now hold contracts even though they did not meet the contract requirements.

- One of the compliance tests was showing housing management experience and having a supply chain of properties. The fact that G4S and Serco initially relied on social housing providers indicates that they did not meet the test.

The new contracts meant that asylum seekers already accommodated had to be moved to private sector lettings or else the new providers had to negotiate to keep them in their existing accommodation. UKBA says that by December 2012 more than 19,000 asylum applicants had moved under the new contracts with just over 2,300 applicants requiring a physical move.⁵ According to UKBA:

- The aim was to keep asylum seekers in their current properties, and although UKBA were 'not able to rule out the possibility of some moves...where people do have to move, we will try to keep them in the same locality'.
- Moves of children in school would be minimised or if needed would happen in school holidays.
- Those moved would receive induction advice about their new accommodation and local services.
- Providers would have to liaise with local authorities and housing providers about move-on accommodation for those receiving positive decisions.

In practice, the imperative for contractors was to secure accommodation quickly at the lowest possible cost. This often resulted in people being concentrated in the same low-cost areas already housing other vulnerable people, e.g. in parts of Stoke-on-Trent.

Knock-down prices inevitably produced a low-grade service. Little consideration was now given to asylum seekers' wider needs beyond accommodation. And in both the transition period and when the contracts were fully underway, serious problems emerged with the accommodation itself:

- In Glasgow, a period of grace was previously allowed to failed asylum seekers rather than summarily evicting them. This practice was no longer applied by the new contractor SERCO as it would be an extra cost, and so about 100 failed asylum seekers were simply evicted.⁶
- In Yorkshire, G4S had difficulties when its subcontractor, UPM, moved a mother and small baby from Bradford to Doncaster at short notice, into a property that had no cooker and no kitchen sink, where they had to stay for six weeks.⁷ G4S terminated the subcontract (though we understand there are also problems with its replacement).
- In July 2012, a Barnsley family was offered a move to either Hull or Newcastle and a family with a one-year-old child was moved from Sheffield to Stockton-on-Tees.⁸
- Leeds City Council had to continue accommodating a large number of asylum seekers when G4S failed to meet the contract deadline.⁹

With the contracts now fully underway, problems still occur:

- North of England Refugee Service reports the extremely poor conditions in a hostel run by Jomast, a subcontractor in Stockton-on-Tees, where typically 32

single mothers live with 38 children in very cramped conditions, and health and social problems are rampant.¹⁰

- Wakefield Council had problems with a contractor planning to use small rooms with multiple bunk beds, at far less than the accepted minimum space standards (6.5 square metres for a single person, 10.2 square metres for two).¹¹

Costs and savings under the COMPASS contracts

The Permanent Secretary assured the Committee on 5 March 2012 that the COMPASS contracts require 'a higher quality of service on a far larger scale'. However, it was clear when the process began that the main objective was to reduce the cost of asylum support, given that in the 2010 Spending Review the Home Office saw its budget cut by 25 per cent. Meanwhile the costs of asylum support were already in decline under the old arrangements. As the National Audit Office (NAO) reported in 2012, between 2009/10 and 2011/12 support costs fell by nearly half, to £285 million.¹² The six new contracts are worth a maximum of £1.7 billion over five years, although the Home Office expects costs to be kept down to £620 million.¹³ This implies an average yearly spend of £124 million, or less than half the 2011/12 figure.

To appreciate the significance of these savings it is important to bear in mind that the accommodation is being provided from two sources. One is from social landlords who provided it under the previous contracts, very likely at the same or perhaps at an even higher price. The other is the private rented sector, which in general for equivalent accommodation has rents which are 40 per cent higher than social sector rents. Cost savings can therefore only be achieved by procuring much poorer accommodation in less desirable areas, or by using the accommodation more intensively, or both.

Given this situation, the general shortages of accommodation and the flexible nature of the contracts, there is clearly scope for expenditure to rise and even exceed the costs under the old contracts, and still stay within the maximum amounts specified in the new contracts.

Reasons for problems that have occurred

JRF and HMN believe that the reasons for the problems are these:

- Bids for the new contracts needed to be backed up by organisational turnover of at least four times the contract value, making it very difficult for the experienced previous contractors to compete.
- Contracts were awarded principally on price, without regard to overall best value of the tenders and experience of the tenderers.
- The process selected by UKBA was a potent mix of crude price cutting and lack of due diligence.
- The process failed to observe the wider 'social value' of the consortium tenders, which would be required if the contracts were to be tendered now following passage of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. The Home Office could

easily have followed 'social value' principles in letting the contracts, but failed to do so.

- The successful contractors bid at levels too low to enable them to provide adequate accommodation, so the quoted savings offered very poor value for the accommodation procured.
- Assumptions were made by private contractors about availability of private sector accommodation that in many areas proved grossly optimistic: these appear not to have been tested by the contractors or by UKBA before the contracts were awarded.
- The experience of the earlier contracts and the 'learning curve' which those providers had to follow were ignored and the acquired experience largely lost, as few personnel moved across to the new contracts.
- Contractors or subcontractors were used who in some cases had no experience of providing this type of accommodation or whose main experience was in prison/security work, not in supporting vulnerable people. In turn, they frequently used staff with no housing management experience, unlike the previous contracts.
- Despite accommodation requirements being specified, in many cases contractors or subcontractors accepted property apparently without inspection or in disregard of standards; UKBA were inadequately equipped to intervene in such cases.
- Contractors have no experience of, and little interest in, the wider integration of asylum seekers or of the community issues to be addressed. Work on this – albeit far from comprehensive – done under the previous arrangements has been severely curtailed by:
 - loss of the income from the contracts.
 - voluntary bodies being severely affected by general cuts in spending both nationally and locally
 - the Migration Impacts Fund being ended in 2010 even though it was funded from visa fees: this funded integration/advice projects across England, most of which have now closed
 - the opportunities which existed for co-production with refugee-led organisations and/or other refugee support groups to provide services to asylum seekers have now been severely circumscribed. This is counter to the government's declared aims of promoting service provision by third sector bodies.

Asylum seeker destitution

The UK was one of the architects of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Under its Article 25, everyone has 'the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care'. In 21st century Britain this is sadly still not the reality as the refugee and asylum system has become a major contributor to destitution. Asylum seekers and refugees who are destitute and homeless are found in a variety of situations.

Sleeping rough (see case study in Annex 2)

Citizens' groups in a number of cities have investigated the situation of destitute people who have come through the asylum system:

- The Nottingham Citizens' Commission into Homelessness and Hope found one in five failed asylum seekers sleeping rough.¹⁴
- In London, where the most detailed records are kept, street count data suggest more than half those sleeping rough are from outside the UK; 40 per cent of these are from outside Europe, mainly Africa and Asia.¹⁵ Evidence suggests that a proportion are refugees with status who have not received proper documentation and/or effective support during the '28 day transition period' and failed asylum seekers and/or those awaiting decisions.

Immigration status of non-UK citizens seen rough sleeping 2011–12 (Broadway CHAIN data)

Immigration status	No.	%
Asylum appellant	8	0.5%
Asylum seeker	27	1.6%
Discretionary leave (DL)	3	0.2%
EU national	913	54.8%
Exceptional leave to remain (ELR)	7	0.4%
Failed asylum seeker	22	1.3%
Illegal entrant	41	2.5%
Indefinite leave to remain (ILR)	164	9.8%
Limited leave to remain (LLR)	47	2.8%
Overstayer	63	3.8%
Refugee	16	1.0%
Student visa	8	0.5%
Other	64	3.8%
Not applicable	282	16.9%
Not known	177	
Not recorded (possibly non-disclosure?)	1038	
Grand total	2880	100%

- Routes into hostels and accommodation are blocked if people have no ability to pay. In any case, 28 per cent of districts have no direct access to accommodation and no alternative emergency accommodation for people in need.¹⁶
- Women, young people and other groups at risk of violence on the streets tend to find the most out-of-the-way places to sleep and are less likely to be found by street outreach.¹⁷

In very marginal circumstances

- There are reported to be groups of people sustained by faith communities and sleeping around or inside places of worship in west and east London.
- Squats and derelict buildings are a common last refuge before the streets for many groups. They can contain many risk and hazards for people, from fire to assault.
- People are living in slum properties at the very lowest standard of private rented property exploited by the type of rogue landlord identified by the government 'Beds in Sheds' Taskforce.

Hosted by the generosity of others

- Most support for destitute people is offered from within their communities. This often involves enormous generosity from people who may themselves live at low levels of income. Pressure is placed on families who help others as they experience the impact of welfare reform and reductions in benefits.

Hosting schemes are provided by organisations such as Boaz in Manchester, Restore in Birmingham, Hope International and the Nightstop network. They recruit volunteer hosts who provide accommodation for people who would otherwise be on the streets. The No Accommodation Network (NACCOM) links these and similar groups.

Accommodation by charities and faith groups

- Hostels and supported accommodation are only available for people entitled to Housing Benefit. This blocks access off the streets for those whose appeals may be successful in the longer term. For example, half of destitute people approaching Praxis for housing advice can be supported back into statutory or voluntary services.¹⁸
- Winter shelters are available only for a few months each year and not in all areas. They generally entail moving each night. Night shelters are unable to provide advice and support and also often entail moving. They are a stopgap or respite help but no more than that.
- Temporary accommodation is offered by a very few charities focused on asylum seeker destitution who find properties at a peppercorn rent and offer help to people waiting for a decision to resolve their status. The Hope scheme in Birmingham, Arimathea in Nottingham, and Praxis in London use properties donated by housing associations and churches.
- ‘Solidarity’ accommodation is organised by organisations such as Emmaus communities who allocate small numbers of beds within the community for those who cannot contribute financially (see case study in Annex 2).

Destitution: Issues requiring resolution

Documents

People stuck for long periods in destitution have sometimes had their papers destroyed or stolen by those they have trusted. This can trap people who have every wish to return to their countries of origin. There is no resource to help those with support needs to stabilise and recover from the poor mental and physical health conditions they may have through destitution. Even where people have indefinite leave to remain it takes six months to receive reissued papers.

Stateless homelessness

There seems to be no solution for these hard cases, generally people who arrived in the UK as children and in adulthood rely on Red Cross food parcels. Again they may wait destitute for months or years before their issues are resolved.

Delays

Even for people who might have a route out of destitution, delay is an issue. It takes six to eight weeks for a decision on Section 4 support during which time people have nothing. If people were allowed to work it would offer a way out of dependency without support, but this is currently prohibited for most asylum seekers. Homeless Link found that for charities supporting asylum seekers, 41 per cent of cases were homeless as a result of their asylum support ending.¹⁹

Children Act requirements

It has generally been seen as easier to get help for families with children because local authorities have a duty to assess and meet the needs of a child to comply with Section 17 of the Children Act. However the perception of the charity National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS), which represents families with no other options than the streets, is that many local authorities are now refusing to conduct an assessment. Although help under the Children Act is required where someone is vulnerable, a common message is that 'there is no money' and parents (usually mothers) are warned that if an assessment is made they are at risk of losing their children because of their destitution.

Growth in destitution seems inexorable

Ten years ago when the Red Cross began providing food parcels in the UK they considered it to be a temporary measure. Changes in the National Assistance Act added to the problem. They now support 10,000 refugees of whom 6,000 are destitute, through Red Cross hardship funds of £3 million providing food, vouchers, clothing and a little cash to those with nothing. Many of these people have been destitute for years and experience all the physical and mental ill health that might be expected.

Notes

- 1 According to the DCLG family homelessness survey. See Pleace, N., Fitzpatrick, S., Johnsen, S., Quilgars, D. and Sanderson, D. (2008) *Statutory homelessness in England: The experience of families and 16–17 –year-olds*. London: DCLG.
- 2 National Audit Office (2005) *NASS: The provision of accommodation for asylum seekers*. London: NAO.
- 3 Carter, M. and El-Hassan, A. (2003) *Between NASS and a hard place*. London: HACT.
- 4 See examples in Perry, J. (2005) *Housing and support services for asylum seekers and refugees*. Coventry: CIH for JRF and HACT.
- 5 See www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/aboutus/workingwithus/workingwithasylum/compassprogramme (accessed on 4 April 2013).
- 6 Scottish Refugee Council (2012) *New provider of support services for people seeking asylum in Scotland*. Glasgow: SRC.
- 7 See www.24dash.com/news/housing/2012-06-01-Mother-and-baby-dumped-in-unsuitable-flat-by-Border-Agency-subcontractor (accessed on 4 April 2013).
- 8 Evidence to the Committee inquiry into G4S by John Grayson, September 2012.
- 9 *The Independent*, 19 November 2012.
- 10 *The Guardian*, 14 December 2012.
- 11 Correspondence with Wakefield Council.
- 12 National Audit Office (2012) *The UKBA and Border Force: Progress in cutting costs and improving performance*, pp 26. London: NAO.
- 13 Letter to the Select Committee from the Permanent Secretary, 26 April 2012.
- 14 Homelessness and Hope, *Report of the Nottingham Homelessness and Hope Commission*. Citizens for Sanctuary 2012
<http://www.citizensuk.org/chapters/nottingham-citizens/>
- 15 Broadway 'Street to Home' CHAIN bi-monthly reports on rough sleeping and the street population <http://www.broadwaylondon.org/CHAIN.html>.
- 16 Sample, E. (2009) *Emergency accommodation: A survey of provision in areas with no direct access hostel*. London: Homeless Link.
- 17 Reeve, K., Goudie, R. and Casey, R. (2007) *Homeless women: Homelessness careers, homelessness landscapes*. London: Crisis.
- 18 Praxis (2013) NRPF Temporary homes briefing (not yet published).
- 19 Homelessness among Migrant Groups - a survey of homelessness and refugee agencies across England. Homeless Link 2010.

Annex 1

Damian Green MP
Minister of State for Immigration
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1P 4DF

12 May 2011

Dear Minister

I am writing to you as Chair of the Housing and Migration Network to express our concern about the approach taken by UKBA in tendering for the new accommodation and transport contracts.

I note the Coalition Government's commitment to continue the UK's proud history of supporting asylum protection in the UK. I also recognise that accommodation is the largest support cost involved in meeting this commitment and that within the current public spending constraints the Government is looking to deliver this as efficiently as possible. However, I am sure you are also keen to see the new arrangements build on the significant improvements there have been in integration outcomes since the implementation of dispersal on a no choice basis in 2000.

At the last Network meeting we discussed our concern that the qualifying criteria for the contracting process has excluded the vast majority of local authorities or their relevant consortia from bidding by merging regions into single contract areas, requiring an extremely high turnover threshold and failing to differentiate between local authority and private providers. Yet the most effective local authorities have worked with voluntary and community groups and private accommodation providers – often within wider regional and area based consortia – to deliver a range of wrap around support services in addition to the basic accommodation contract. We feel this approach, connecting a diverse group of housing providers to a wider network of support and community development services is essential to deliver effective integration.

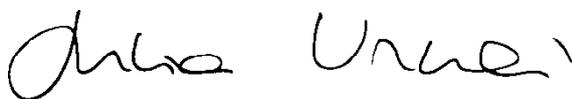
The qualifying criteria for the Compass contracting framework are clearly designed to procure mainly via a few national providers who, given the overarching objective of Government to drive down costs, are unlikely to be either as rooted in local communities or as motivated to invest in community infrastructure. This centralised approach seems to run counter to the localism drive of most areas of Government policy.

Moreover, with the demise of the short lived Refugee Integration and Employment Service it is now even more important that timely advice and support is available to prevent homelessness at the point of decision. Some years ago policies and procedures were put in place to ensure that Government departments, their agencies and those contracted to act on their behalf coordinated their systems so as to ensure that the transition process for refugees receiving a positive decision is delivered as quickly and effectively as possible.

Accommodation providers play an important role in ensuring refugees are supported during this transition period and hopefully this role will be emphasised in the final contract. It would also be useful to reconfirm the arrangements that should be in place across the relevant Government Departments/Agencies including UKBA, DWP and CLG, as well as the framework the UKBA intends to put in place in tendering for advice and support services.

Once again, I welcome the Government's commitment to protect and integrate refugees and look forward to your response to the issues raised in this letter so as to ensure that positive outcomes continue under any new arrangements in the future.

Yours sincerely



JULIA UNWIN
Chief Executive

Direct line : 01904 615901
Email : julia.unwin@jrf.org.uk

The Housing and Migration Network is made up of 20 organisations drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors and is supported by HACT with funding from JRF and the Migration Foundation. The Network's aim is to explore solutions to housing and integration challenges brought about by new migration to the UK with a particular focus on improving integration at neighbourhood level, where the impact of migration is most keenly experienced.

Annex 2

Case study provided by Emmaus UK Hamid's story (name has been changed)

Hamid, now aged 31, is from Uganda and first arrived in the UK as an asylum seeker in November 2008. Hamid was arrested as a result of his work as a youth campaigner in Uganda's Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), the main opposition to the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM). Hamid's father and elder brother were both killed as a result of their involvement with the FDC. Hamid was held in solitary confinement, mostly in the dark, and submitted to regular beatings, death threats and mock executions. During the later stages of his imprisonment he was severely tortured by his captors.

Eventually a family member paid someone to bribe a guard to release Hamid and he was put on a plane to the UK. On arrival, he was sent to an asylum processing centre. He says that the asylum process was not explained to him and he was not made aware of his right to legal representation. He was interviewed by officials who did not believe his story and refused his asylum claim. He was then sent to National Asylum Support Service (NASS) accommodation in the north east of England. He appealed against the decision but his claim was again rejected. He had not been able to gather further evidence to support his claim as he did not have access to funds to pay for specialist medical reports. Despite being in poor health since arriving in the UK, he was not able to address persistent medical problems as he was frequently moved around the country so was unable to keep appointments.

He was then taken into custody and put into a deportation centre for several months, despite a doctor in the centre testifying that he had been tortured. After two attempts to deport him, he was eventually released. However, he had no access to money or housing and was made street homeless. For a period, he lived in a skip. During this time, Hamid lived in constant fear of deportation, was unable to sleep and suffered constant nightmares.

Eventually, he was put in touch with Emmaus by a charity that supports refugees. Emmaus supported him while he gathered evidence and enlisted legal support. He was assessed for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by a European expert who provided medical evidence. Hamid then submitted a fresh asylum claim with this new evidence. He was given leave to remain in the UK for five years in January 2013, more than four years after he submitted his original claim for asylum. Since

arriving, he has also been diagnosed with tuberculosis, among other health conditions relating to his experiences of torture, and has undergone four operations.

Receiving leave to remain was an immense relief for Hamid and some of the symptoms of his PTSD are beginning to improve. He is gaining new skills during his time at Emmaus which has paid for him to have training to enable him to work with people with educational needs. He is keen to use his experience to support others going through the asylum process.