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Vulnerable New Communities Study

For Barrow Cadbury Trust

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Background

Like much of the UK, Birmingham has entered a phase of super-diversity experiencing immigration at a scale, pace and complexity never experienced before (Vertovec 2008). The last ten years or so has seen a rapid increase in the number of migrants entering the city. Migrants arrive under a wide range of auspices. They include asylum seekers who were dispersed to the city under the NASS, now UKBA, dispersal programme. Research has indicated that the majority of asylum seekers choose to stay once they have been granted Leave to Remain (Phillimore 2004). Failed asylum seekers are individuals who have exhausted the appeals process. Some are supported awaiting deportation or voluntary repatriation whilst others are supported under Section 4, the provision of accommodation and meals, because their country is unsafe for return, they are awaiting judicial review, or they have made further submissions in respect of their asylum claims – this is often called a fresh claim. Probably the majority of failed asylum seekers go into hiding once they have exhausted the appeals process. They are not entitled to access any support from the state and are often described as “destitute”. Research undertaken for the Church Urban Fund in 2004/5 indicated that there were between 5000 and 10000 destitute asylum seekers within the West Midlands region (Malflait & Scott-Flynn 2005).

Also arriving are migrant workers. Since 2004, there has also been a steady increase in the number of migrant workers coming to the UK from the so-called A8 countries: Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary and Estonia as well as onward migrants from the remainder of the EU. Migrant workers also come to the area from a wide range of countries outside of the UK. They generally come to take jobs ranging from highly skilled tertiary level jobs, to low-skilled positions in agriculture, hotels and catering and manufacturing. Furthermore migrants also arrive under family reunion, or as spousal migrants. A final group of migrants are often described as undocumented and consist of those who reside in the UK illegally having arrived under a range of mechanisms. Some are trafficked into the UK, others come independently but illegally, and others arrived legally with a visa but subsequently their visas have expired. Little is known about the numbers of undocumented migrants in the UK. Estimates for undocumented migrants vary between 500,000 (Strangers into Citizens 2007) and 800,000 (IPPR 2009).

While some groups of migrants are self-supporting, others are dependent on the state, or on family, or a spouse, for support. Often these individuals, and undocumented migrants and failed asylum seekers who are not in receipt of Section 4 support, are classified as having no recourse to public funds (NRPF). The Home Office (no date) classifies public funds as including a range of income related benefits, together with housing and homelessness support. The full list of public funds is as follows:

- income-based jobseeker’s allowance
- income support
- child tax credit
- working tax credit
- a social fund payment
- child benefit
- housing benefit
- council tax benefit
- state pension credit

- attendance allowance
- severe disablement allowance
- carer's allowance
- disability living allowance
- an allocation of local authority housing
- local authority homelessness assistance

While research has explored living conditions of both migrant workers and refugees and asylum seekers and indicated that they are often housed in poor quality, over-crowded housing (see McKay & Winkelmann-Gleed 2005) with little knowledge of their rights, responsibilities or entitlements (see Robinson & Reeve 2006) little research has been undertaken into the needs of undocumented and hidden migrants within the region.

It was with regard to gaps in knowledge around migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) that Barrow Cadbury Trust funded a pilot project undertaken by the University of Birmingham to identify people with NRPF in Birmingham and examine their needs. The key research objectives include:

- To understand the needs of migrants with NRPF and the extent to which those needs are being met;
- To examine the gaps in service provision and representation for these groups;
- To explore the future needs and aspirations of individuals with NRPF and the kinds of support that might be offered to enable them to meet their needs.

This report sets out the methods and findings of a study addressing these research objectives.

Methodology

The research was undertaken in a collaborative fashion working with a range of third sector organisations that helped us to identify migrants with NRPF.

Twenty interviews were conducted with migrants who had no recourse to public funds. Interviewees were identified with the assistance of a wide range of organisations working in the deprived inner ring of Birmingham. All interviews were undertaken at a location selected by the interviewee and on an anonymous basis.

The sample was equally split between men and women. The majority (18) of interviewees were aged between 21 and 50 years of age (see Table 2.1) and came from a range of countries including: Angola (2), Albania (1), Burundi (1), Congo (2), Guinea (2), Iraq (1), Iran (1), Ivory Coast (1), Jamaica (1), Kenya (1), Kosovo (2), Pakistan (1), Somalia (2), and Zimbabwe (2).

Table 2.1: Age of respondents

Age group	Frequency
16-20	1
21-30	6
31-40	8
41-50	4
51-60	1
	20

The majority of respondents (12) were married, two were divorced and six were single. Some nine respondents were living with children, three had one child, four had two children and two had three children. Two respondents lived alone, five with friends and six with partners. A number of respondents had been living in the UK for several years with two men arriving before 2000 and 12 men and women arriving between 2001 and 2004. See Table 2.2 for details of arrival years.

Table 2.2: Year of arrival in the UK

Date of arrival	Women	Men
1996		1
1998		1
2001	3	1
2002	1	1
2003		3
2004		3
2005	1	
2006	1	
2007	1	
2008	1	
2009	2	

Data analysis and report writing

We analysed the qualitative data using a systematic thematic approach and used the findings to generate recommendations to help shape BCT's future grant making activities.

Findings

We explored with interviewees the range of reasons for not being entitled to support. Two women had overstayed on a visitor visa, two women and nine men were failed asylum seekers, two women had arrived on false passports as undocumented immigrants, one of whom was trafficked into the country to be a sex worker and four women and one man had arrived in the country on a spouse visa. Some examples of the stories of how they came to the UK or were granted NRPF status are given in the case studies set out below.

Woman undocumented migrant

A friend of mine in Albania told me that there is work in the UK. The work paid really well, he made it sound really fun and the money was good too. He told me that I would be looked after, I would be provided with a place to stay, there was no rent to pay. It sounded too good to be true, life in Albania was hard, there was no work and the pay was low. He got me into the country. You know through France, we travelled through a lot of countries. When I came here, I asked him about the work and he started to beat me and threatened to kill me if I didn't do what he told me. He had me locked up in a house. He would bring men back to the house and force me to sleep with them. One of the men I slept with helped me to run away.

Man failed asylum seeker

I fled my country for persecution and my family was in trouble after what my father was involved in (politics). My father was arrested and became a prisoner, then came in the UK. I claimed asylum, after one year my case was dismissed. I was forced to leave the hostel. They stopped giving vouchers, I couldn't attend college started sleeping in different places and some time with no food.

Woman on spouse visa

I married my cousin in Pakistan, he was from the UK. I married in 2005 and arrived in the UK in 2007. I'm dependent on his visa. He beat me up regularly. There were times when I couldn't see because I was losing consciousness. My mother-in-law would tell me to be patient with him and for the sake of the family honour I stayed with him. But one time, the neighbours heard my screams and called the police. The police asked me where I wanted to go. I told them I wanted to go from here, because I know that my husband would kill me, I didn't care where they took me. The police took me to the refuge. When I arrived at the refuge they told me because I did not have my indefinite leave to remain I may not be able to stay in the refuge for long. They were trying to find funding for me and sent me to so many organisations, I can't remember the names of any of them. But they seemed like housing related organisations. They didn't find anything, and it became frustrating for me so I told them I'm going to stay with relatives. My husband is threatening to deport me, if I don't go back to him. If I go back he will continue to beat me. If I go back to Pakistan, I will become a burden upon my parents, they are very old. It won't look good for my three unmarried sisters, you know what it's like, who will marry them after I come back having failed to make my marriage work? People don't care if the husband was violent.

Main difficulties faced

Having no recourse to public funds led to respondents experiencing a wide range of problems. As a rule all not of these problems were experienced by every respondent however it was common for individuals to experience a wide range of problems with the most common being language and cultural barriers, inability to work, isolation and loneliness and lack of access to services. In addition to the above problems many of the respondents also lived off low or no income, were dependent on others for everyday survival, experienced abuse or had to take low paid exploitative work. The range of problems faced included:

- Living off no or very low incomes. Seven women said that she knew of others who had to become prostitutes to survive. Respondents lacked money to meet their basic needs with insufficient money for food, transport, housing, clothing or medication
 - *“I have no money to pay for the solicitor and food” (woman)*
 - *“Most women go to prostitution and others get used by men and some women who are strong may end up being deteriorated and committing suicide or something terrible” (woman).*
- No access to services including medical attention or childcare
- Dependence on others, particularly for women on spouse visas
 - *“In Pakistan I would know where to go for help. I wouldn’t go on my own, my parents would be there for me. I know I could rely on them. Here I’m reliant on my in-laws and husband and they don’t tell me anything. They control everything what I wear and even how much food I get” (woman)*
- Abuse by others, particularly where women are dependent
 - *“We get bought and sold, betrayed. They (men) sell us and buy us, when they want too. They sell our bodies. They take advantage of us” (woman).*
 - *“They are more likely to be abused by anybody as they need somebody to take care of them, particularly when they don’t have any support it may be hard for them” (man).*
- Language and cultural barriers
 - *“The language, the people and the culture. Everything is different in comparison to my country and if you add to that my current situation with no support of any kind” (man).*
- No access to education, training or language courses
- Depression and isolation
 - *“Here people are so cold. Where I come from people live as a big family, but here you don’t even know the next door neighbour. I feel isolated and I live in fear of deportation. I become stressed” (man)*
- Long hours and poor conditions associated with unregulated employment
 - *“I had to travel three hours to work each day working 9hrs per shift. I am unable to pay rent / feed myself at the moment” (man).*
 - *“Sometimes people will take advantage of you. I’m working as a machinist making ladies underwear, I work in a factory and the boss pays me less than the other women working there. He knows he can get away with it, I’m illegal what am I going to do. He’s already threatened to report me to the authorities if I don’t do what he wants” (woman)*
- Constant fear of deportation
 - *“I live in constant fear of Home office who can deport me at any time” (man).*

- Inability to work
 - *“If it wasn’t for my boyfriend I wouldn’t have anywhere to live and no food or clothes. He pays for everything. I feel like I can’t add anything to the relationship. I’m not entitled to anything here, I can’t work legally because of my immigration status” (woman)*
- Nowhere permanent to live. Twelve respondents had been living in their current accommodation less than a year. Some 10 respondents were living in shared accommodation with friends or acquaintances. Often the accommodation was rented from the council or was provided by UKBA and the respondents were not permitted to reside there. In addition six respondents were living in privately rented housing.
 - *“I was moving around living with different people whom sometime didn’t like me and I had to move again. No money, no house and I couldn’t go to college” (woman)*
- Poor housing conditions. Many of the respondents were living in cold, damp, overcrowded conditions largely because they had “no choice”. *“I like nothing about my house. It’s just somewhere to live off the street” (man)*

The impact on ability to settle and well-being

With the exception of one undocumented migrant and one spousal migrant, who would like to have been able to leave the UK if their circumstances had been different, all the other respondents wished to settle in the UK. However settlement was difficult because they were unable to become part of the community. Particular concerns were voiced about being unable to learn the language and culture *“I am struggling as I can’t speak or write English, this make hard to settle/communicate with English speaking people” (woman)*. The vulnerability of NRPF migrants was increased by their being unable to communicate. Frequently their situation left them feeling unwell. Medical problems that had emerged since arrival in the UK included high blood pressure; diabetes; arthritis; migraine and headaches; flu; back pain; lack of access to contraception and panic attacks. Some of these conditions were viewed by respondents to have resulted from the stress associated with their status.

Women and men commonly spoke of feeling unsettled and uncertain, depressed and even suicidal.

“I don’t feel settled when no one cares about me seems. No freedom and you feel stress, depressed at all the time” (woman).

“I constantly live in fear now, that I will be found and sent back to Pakistan. I can’t face my parents. The look in their eyes after all that has happened. They know about my situation, I keep in contact with them over the phone but to go back and put my sisters through the misery too. No I can’t do that. My parents are poor and elderly, how are they going to take care of me too?” (woman).

“Some time I would cry and feel suicidal because I fell depressed” (man).

“It has impacted a lot because you can’t help yourself, your family or friends at home. Here, you are not useful. You feel hopeless and useless and you can’t actually do anything worth doing in the society” (man).

“I feel excluded, rejected, helpless and possibly no future in this country, My well-being is also affected as I am living a life without purpose because I can’t plan for even a short term. Sometimes, I feel depressed” (man)

Support mechanisms

Respondents were asked about the coping mechanisms they used to help them to deal with their situation. Some simply stated that they were unable to cope. This was particularly the case for male failed asylum seekers who felt responsible for supporting their families

“I have not been able to cope because I am not even able to provide for my family” (man).

Others outlined a range of responses they had adopted in a bid to cope. These included:

- Seeking advice from the Jobcentre
- Talking to friends, partners or relatives
 - *“I have a lot of friends, especially people from voluntary organisations, like red cross. Through their services I am gaining some peace of mind” (woman).*
- Engaging solicitors
- Learning English
- Doing voluntary work
- Gaining support from faith groups *“praying for my situation” (woman).*

While some respondents were too frightened to use local services in case they might be found *“I just keep myself to myself. I don’t want people knowing I’m here, they might report me to the Police or even worse to my in-laws/husband” (woman)*, others had in some cases used local support services. Faith and ethnic community groups were particularly important. Other services used included the GP, Learn direct, schools, Job Centre, colleges, Sure Start; local community centres, and the Red Cross; and the Central Mosque. The services used by men and women are set out in Table 3.1. Community and voluntary organisations were particularly important in providing those with NRPF with some support. Some were provided with vouchers and cash, food parcels and second hand clothes. Others gained access to counselling or childcare.

Table 3.1: Services accessed by respondents

	Women	Men
Doctor/GP	8 yes; 2 no	5 yes; 5 no
Accident/emergency	10 yes	2 yes; 6 no; 2 no answer
Dentist	4 yes; 6 no	2 yes; 7 no; 1 no answer
Immigration advice	6 yes; 4 no	9 yes; 1 no
ESOL	2 yes; 8 no	10 no
Housing advice	2 yes; 8 no	8 yes; 2 no
Social Services	1 yes; 9 no	9 no; 1 yes
Community organisations:	7 yes; 3 no	10 yes

We asked those who had experienced medical problems since arriving in the UK about the type of support they had been able to access. Those who were in the UK legally and were not trying to hide from the authorities or family did use GPs and had access medication. One woman was told she needed occupational therapy *“I was offered treatment but my occupational therapist thought that I needed a carer and I couldn’t as I do not have recourse*

on public funds” (woman). Another woman was HIV positive but unable to access treatment. Others tried to purchase what they needed from the chemist or used a friend’s medical card to access medical care and medication *“to get prescription from the GP with the help of my friends using their medical cards”* (male).

Where respondents were illegal their main concern was ensuring they were not found. The Pakistani woman hiding from her in-laws did not know whether she was entitled to help and was frightened of engaging with medical services because she might get reported *“I don’t know anything about accessing services. I have to be careful who I ask just in case they start asking too many questions”* (woman). An undocumented woman respondent went to see an African alternative healer. *“He gave me some medicines, they were tablets made up of various herbs and stuff. I wasn’t sure what was in them”*. Others spoke of using “alternatives” or going to hospital if necessary *“if something bad happens, I am sure I can use my friend’s medical card. I was also told that the hospital will not let me die because I am an asylum seeker”*. The main concern was that in order to access routine medical care they had to be registered with a GP which would make them traceable.

Needs and ways policy makers can help.

Respondents were asked about the kinds of support that they needed and were currently unable to access. Women in particular expressed concerns about being unable to gain access to support with childcare and contraception. One woman wanted an emergency phone line to be provided. All needed access to cash and suggested that they be paid in cash instead of vouchers so that they could buy the goods they wanted and pay for items such as bus passes that were currently unavailable to them. Alternatively it was suggested that failed asylum seekers and undocumented migrants were allowed to work so they could support themselves *“give them money to buy basic needs, allow them to work and get some money for themselves”* (woman).

Others discussed the need to attend college to learn English or to be able to access legal support to gain advice about their situation

“You know something, what people like me need is a place that we can go to get legal advice where they will not report us” (woman).

Several respondents outlined the need to access housing or to improve their existing housing.

Safety

Respondents were asked whether they felt safe. Not all responded. Women were least likely to feel safe; none said they felt safe while seven felt unsafe. Two men said they felt safe and three did not. It was clear that respondent’s perceptions about safety were influenced by their experiences.

Women respondents reported experiencing domestic violence (2), attacks upon their children (1), racist abuse (1), being “pushed around by men” (1) and being forced into prostitution (1). Women hiding from abusers were most fearful of being found. Women were also worried about safety in their areas generally. In two cases women had been warned by neighbours that the area was *“rough”* because of drug dealing and thefts.

Men were more likely to experience property related crime (2) and racism (2). Two respondents said they feared the Home Office and what may happen to them in the future.

Male respondents called the police about their experiences and were disappointed that “*nothing was done*”. The women were too frightened to call the police

“I didn’t report it to the police. If I do these men will find me and kill me. They are already probably looking for me. They told me that they spent a lot of money on me”

In the case of the racist abuse respondents did not feel the experience justified police involvement

“I never reported the racist swearing. What’s the point, they are only kids and it’s their country anyway” (woman).

Being NRPF had some effect on respondent’s ability to feel safe. This was largely because they felt they lacked the ability, having no access to funds, to move to safer areas. On the whole respondents felt that they were unlikely to be reported by the neighbours “*people assume that I’m legal. Why wouldn’t they?*” (man). The woman hiding from her in-laws was forced to live in an all-white area and feared being reported and deported to Pakistan.

“if I lived in an Asian area then people may tell my husband where I am and he would come to harass me and probably get me sent to Pakistan”

Social networks/support

Social networks were extremely important to some of the respondents. Most women reported at least weekly contact with one or more of the following: friends; relatives; church or mosque members; people from same community groups; the Red Cross (voluntary work); and Sure Start. Men reported contact with similar groups plus colleagues and advice centres. Those living with partners and/ or children expressed the importance of those family relationships. While friendships were important, social networks were often restricted to individuals who were family or in a similar position

“I don’t talk to anyone other than my boyfriend and his friends. Where I go to make friends?” (woman).

Only one respondent saw more than ten different people each week. Others saw between two and four.

Respondents were often ambivalent about whether they felt part of the community in Birmingham. Those who were part of a faith community, or who volunteered, felt they were part of something

“Yes, I attend the church ground every week and feel to be part of the community. They are aware of my specific situation” (woman).

“I feel as part of the community in Birmingham by participating in church activities, talks, seminars, presentation and carrying out the charity works. I also participate in our community meetings” (man).

But the lack of understanding of their position by the wider community coupled with the uncertainty of their situation often left them feeling that they were not part of wider society

“no, until I have settled status because I can be detained and deported anytime”
(male)

“no, I don’t consider myself as part of Birmingham community as I don’t receive any support like other community members” (male).

Membership of groups was important to many respondents. Half of the men and seven of the women said they were a member of a group. Groups included the African Apostolic Church; CIP; MEAF, church; parents’ group, central Mosque; a French speaking church; African communities; and a French speaking group. While most activities were local, some respondents travelled considerable distances, up to 30 miles, to attend worship at particular venues or to attend meetings with ethnic or religious peers.

Respondents lacked the resources or confidence to extend their social networks beyond trusted groups and while some women wanted to join women’s groups or attend faith based events they often lacked the money to travel or the language or confidence to attend. Men also said they wanted to spend more time with friends and in particular wanted to travel to other cities to visit friends and family but were unable to travel because they lacked funds. They wanted more information about local activities although some individuals were reluctant to engage socially

“I have a very caution life because of my status and I don’t trust people that I don’t know as I fear deportation” (male).

The majority of respondents (6 women and 8 men) had contact with people living outside of Birmingham. These included friends and family living elsewhere in the West Midlands, in London, and other parts of the UK, as well as family members at home and in different countries. Within the UK contact was made for advice, guidance, socialisation, to find out how they were faring, an exchange of views, information, life in general and for special occasions

“I’m in contact with family in London. I don’t really have anyone else. Most of the people I know are in London or Birmingham; I call probably every two weeks and visit them on special occasions like Eid” (woman).

Contact outside the UK was often made to access news and updates about political situations, to maintain relationships and to explore whether it was safe to return home

“some of my family members back home; whenever I can; mostly for the news and know if it can be safe for me to return” (man).

The Future

We explored the nature and extent of the plans respondents were able to make for the future. Clearly many respondents were waiting for their immigration status to change. Spousal migrants would be eligible to remain in the UK, no longer dependent on their spouse, two years after arrival. Four respondents expected to see their status become permanent in the next few months. One respondent planned to marry her boyfriend and change from being illegal to a spousal migrant. However 15 were unsure about their future status. This depended on whether they could raise money through undertaking “*small jobs*” to pay for legal assistance, and how the Home Office responded to their petitions. When asked whether

other NRPF migrants had successfully resolved their situation, some respondents described occasions within their communities where individuals had managed to resolve their immigration problems. In the case of asylum seekers this was sometimes through provision of new evidence but most often seen as “*a matter of luck*” (man).

Almost every respondent wanted to gain the permanent right to remain in the UK and get on with a “*normal*” life. Some of the aspirations women gave were to study as a health professional; settle in UK; aid children to come to UK; learn English; find a job; get status; go back to school; get a their own place and meet a new partner; find a husband and marry a boyfriend. Men, most of whom were failed asylum seekers, were focused upon sorting their asylum claims and aspired to resolve their situation; raise money for a lawyer; lodge an appeal with the Home Office and win the right to live in UK. Other aspirations covered gaining work, getting educated, going to University and getting qualifications

“for the moment I am focusing on resolving my situation. Then I should plan to study or work” (man).

All but one respondent, who wished to return to Somalia once she had resolved her personal situation, wanted to stay in Birmingham. The city was seen as a peaceful place that was multicultural, accepting of newcomers and generally safe

“Birmingham is a multicultural city it is not Indians, or African only but it is for everybody” (woman).

In addition respondents had built social connections in the city and were reluctant to start again somewhere else “*going somewhere else would take me backward, I would have to start all over again*” (man). Their children were settled and in some cases partners had jobs in the city which tied them there.

Conclusions and recommendations

It was clear from the interviews that individuals with NRPF face a wide range of problems many of which are beyond the scope of the statutory or voluntary sectors. Problems ranged from lack of basic necessities such as food, shelter and medication, for both themselves and their children, to lack of access to help with mental and other health problems. The inability to access training, language learning and legal support left them without a future. They lived in uncertainty trying to keep a low profile, and perhaps raise some funds to fight their case, through low paid, illegal employment. The inability to form social relationships outside their peers and gain access to information may also have restricted opportunities to improve their situation. Those who were part of a faith or ethnic group, or had the support of an NGO such as the Red Cross, benefited from material and psychological support that was critical to their ability to survive.

The situations of migrants with NRPF did vary both by immigration status and gender. Those who had arrived as asylum seekers and whose claims had failed tended to be networked to others in a similar situation, and to access some kinds of social, and in some cases legal support. Individuals who had accepted Section 4 support struggled to meet their basic needs using vouchers but they were housed, had access to most forms of medical attention and other services. Those who refused Section 4 because living in fear of persecution, they did not wish to be deported, were in worse situation; reliant on friends or acquaintances for support, and steering away from statutory services in order to avoid being traced.

The situation of spousal migrants varied. While relationships with spouses were good migrants simply waited to be permitted to remain. These individuals felt powerless within their relationships and often lived in some degree of poverty where partners were on low incomes or lost their employment. They were also unable to learn the language because they struggled to afford ESOL classes. Inability to speak English left them further isolated and prone to depression. Spousal migrants, whose relationships had broken down, were in an extremely weak position as their continued residence in the UK depended upon living with their spouse. The woman in this position feared both her husband and his family, and the state, and sought to avoid any contact with authorities whatsoever. She, and the other undocumented migrants, those who had entered the UK illegally, were in extremely vulnerable positions. They were reluctant to form relationships with others not in their position, fearful of seeking advice or medical care, and often open to abuse by employers and others. Within this study it was clear that women illegal or undocumented migrants were experiencing extreme levels of vulnerability with domestic violence and sexual exploitation relatively common.

There is a great deal of scope to provide support, in addition to the few services that are available to improve the lives of migrants with NRPF. The argument for increasing support extends from both humanitarian and policy objectives. Increasing the resources available to local organisations such as faith and ethnic based organisations, to provide for the basic needs of migrants is one mechanism that could help improve their situation but it should be made available to all who are NRPF rather than simply failed asylum seekers. There is a strong humanitarian case to provide support for those who are in hiding because of domestic violence or trafficking. While the Domestic Violence Rule means many risk engaging with authorities and seeking leave to remain, the absence of state support for this group mean that most cannot be aided by domestic violence refuges. Furthermore it was clear that women did

not know about the Domestic Violence rule and remained in hiding from the state even though this may not have been necessary.

The provision of free legal advice to individuals with NRPF could significantly improve their position. Refugees and domestic violence officers could link women to these services which currently are generally provided for failed asylum seekers. There also appears to be a need for some kind of “no questions asked” health and counselling services to help support those with NRPF unable to access statutory services. To aid access to cash, help to extend voucher exchange schemes might be encouraged. Furthermore services like Sydney Bridge, a social enterprise based in Leeds, which acts as a repository for unwanted clothes and furniture, could help to meet some of the basic needs of NRPF migrants. In addition it would be useful to undertake much broader research to identify the numbers of people in this position to underpin lobbying for a different approach to dealing with their immigration status. Finally the ability to speak English language helps individuals to access the information they need and to ask for help without being dependent on others who may abuse their position of power. Free ESOL provision within trusted organisations may be a way forward. Coupled with free internet and telephone access, improved ability to communicate would impact on individuals’ safety and mental health.

Recommendations

- Identify organisations actively supporting NRPF of all immigration statuses and provide them with small grants to help meet the needs of this group
- Undertake research to identify the numbers of undocumented women and children in hiding because of spousal abuse or trafficking
- Work with MRN to lobby for a change of policy around the treatment of such migrants by UKBA so that women and children can be supported whilst applying for leave to remain
- Lobby for the continuation of the Home Office supported Sojourners project
- Fund services such as ASIRT to provide legal advice for vulnerable migrants who have not arrived in the UK via the asylum route
- Work with organisations such as the churches and mosques to extend voucher exchange schemes and to provide food boxes
- Fund a “no questions asked” health service based in organisations such as the Piers Road Centre or ASIRT, encourage volunteering by NHS staff to help build the capacity of this service to provide for a wide range of needs including counselling
- Work with local charities to set up a repository of furniture, baby and other clothes
- Fund communication hubs providing free ESOL lessons, access to internet and telephones
- Fund a service to provide befrienders for vulnerable migrants to reduce their isolation

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