



Using the PRS as a route out of homelessness for non-UK nationals

Community of practice

Meeting notes – 24 May 2021

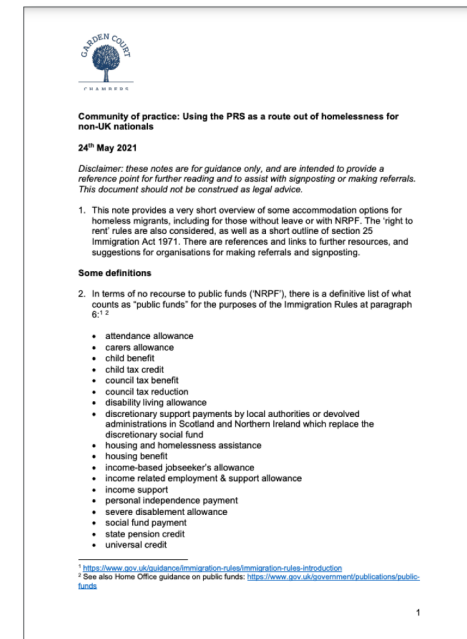
Policy overview

Matthew Ahluwalia, Garden Court Chambers

This note provides a very short overview of some accommodation options for homeless migrants, including for those without leave or with No Recourse To Public Funds.

The 'right to rent' rules are also considered, as well as a short outline of Section 25 Immigration Act 1971. There are references and links to further resources, and suggestions for organisations for making referrals and signposting.

See attached or request a copy from bestpractice@crisis.org.uk



Practice sharing.

Action Foundation

Ashley Community Housing

Practice sharing

Julian Prior, CEO, Action Foundation

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Action Foundation helps people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and new refugees moving on from Home Office accommodation. It provides accommodation and support with healthcare, bank accounts etc in order to give people the stability and time needed to regularise their status with the Home Office. Providing good legal advice is a crucial part of this.

The charity runs a number of projects:

- Action Housing supports asylum seekers with NRPF
- Action Letting is a social enterprise accommodating refugees at risk of homelessness at point of transition
- Hosting programmes for people with NRPF
- Alternative to detention programmes for women
- New projects supporting EEA nationals with NRPF.

It is funded by a 'cross-subsidy' model, however public money/housing benefit is clearly ringfenced.

NACCOM has lots of useful resources, including a report outlining the legality of accommodation and supporting people who have been refused asylum:

<https://nacom.org.uk/resources/>

Do you cover the Surrey area?

No, just Tyne and Wear. NACCOM has a useful list of 70 organisations across the UK.

What is the referral process?

The referral process is very tight. We work with two other charities who refer into us across two local authority areas.

Do landlords agree to lower rents?

Yes, all properties are below commercial rent, provided by philanthropic landlords.

Do you risk assess?

Shared accommodation is risked assessed, but we don't offer high levels of support.

Practice sharing

Tom Dixon and Emma Gaspar, Ashley Community Housing

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Presentation slides attached or request a copy from bestpractice@crisis.org.uk

Ashley Community Housing (ACH) provides safe, supported housing for refugees and migrants in Bristol, Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton.

The transition from asylum accommodation into independent living for newly-recognised refugees can be difficult. ACH's critical time intervention (CTI) project provides nine months of tailored to support to people in Bristol exiting Home Office accommodation. The support runs in phases (see presentation slides for detail on these and what support is provided).

People take a pre-tenancy survey before they join the project to see if their needs and immigration status match the support ACH can provide.

The pandemic and remote working has been a big challenge. Language barriers make speaking over the phone difficult. Face to face meetings have taken place in emergencies, and despite challenges, people are still hitting the goals they want to achieve. Of the 15 people being supported, 25% accessed in-house careers advice, 60% referred to Education and Training, and 56% accessed health advocacy.

Can phase one be extended?

Yes, this is done on a case by case needs basis.

How well does the 28-day move on period for refugees work in conjunction with Universal Credit?

Sometimes the letter or NI number doesn't arrive for a week. UC advances require verified identify and address. It also depends on how and when people present. Advance payments mean people start in debt – repayments can be negotiated.

How do you get exempt status?

This is easier in some areas than others. Often work with housing associations. Advisable to also have plans and documents for support provision. For reference: www.gov.uk/government/news/pilots-to-improve-supported-housing-for-vulnerable-people-extended

Group discussions.

Cross-subsidy models to help more non-UK nationals secure PRS housing

Property and landlord procurement for non-UK nationals

Access to immigration advice and other tenant support

Group discussions

Cross-subsidy models to help more non-UK nationals secure PRS housing

Questions

How are costs covered? Often accommodation is owned by the organisation or let by a philanthropic landlord.

Where in the country are you? In Scotland, housing law is devolved and there's a difference in opportunities available, though immigration law sits under Westminster.

How can you leverage the costs of accommodation?

For under 35's, accessing a one bedroom on local housing allowances rates is almost impossible.

Solutions

Praxis/Commonweal run a project for families and single women with children, including women with NRPF. Cross-subsidised using funding from local authorities accommodating families. Rented on a spot-purchasing basis. The service is pan-London, but would be better with formalised contract with borough as key contacts can move on.

Get buy in from your local authority housing team.

Support your landlords as well as tenants.

Resources

Scotland's route map to end destitution:

<https://everyonehome.scot/pdf/route-map-2.pdf>

Wales' work to become a nation of sanctuary:

<https://wales.cityofsanctuary.org/becoming-a-nation-of-sanctuary>

Full evaluation of Housing Migrants by Heather Petch & Sue Lukes in 2018:

<https://nacom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NRPF-Report.pdf>

A strategy to improve support for people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) living in Scotland:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-destitution-together/>

Group discussions

Property and landlord procurement for non-UK nationals

Questions

Seeing landlords leave the market as LHA levels create pressure in some areas – particularly in post-industrial areas where rents haven't risen. In Sheffield, prevention work shows that landlords are leaving the market and selling properties as quickly as they can.

Property prices went up in line with the rise in LHA rates. In Cardiff, there's a £100-£120 gap per month between rent and LHA, highly competitive as not much property available.

Landlords feel rules and regulations changed a lot recently and need more support. Have had bad experiences with local authorities.

A lot of landlords and agents still won't take benefits – still a negative connotation despite changes to the law. Sometimes insurance restrictions.

Solutions

Offer lifetime tenancy support to landlords. Offer 12-month rent guarantee, cashless bond and help with dilapidations.

Work often comes from recommendations – though it can take time to build this up.

Resources

Welsh Government's PRS leasing scheme offers grants to improve property standards: <https://gov.wales/private-rented-sector-leasing-scheme-guidance>

Alternative methods of housing supply? The Archbishop's commission on housing and homelessness considered options for becoming a housing provider (<https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/priorities/archbishops-commission-housing-church-and-community>) and the Salvation Army's Project Malachi in Ilford uses modular homes (<https://popuphostel-ilfordsalvationarmy.nationbuilder.com/>).

Group discussions

Access to immigration advice and other tenant support

Challenges

It can be difficult to get Legal Aid representation, and without this it can be challenging to know what to do in and who to answer questions in court. In Cardiff there's a lack of legal aid and solicitors to do judicial review work, and a number of legal firms have left the city.

If you're trying to access a Legal Aid solicitor from outside your area you have to provide a really good reason for doing so. Knowing where to refer people to – especially outside of area – for quality advice is key.

Question

Can we develop Best Practice on accessing legal advice? This would include good funding, referrals and support on persuading a solicitor to take on case for out of the area and how to find specialist advice.

Solutions

Advise organisations to take up Refugee Action's free frontline worker immigration advice: <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/level-1-support-training/>

Resources

In June, the Greater London Authority is publishing a report on access to immigration advice in practice in London.

Refugee Action is publishing a report on access to immigration advice in practice. Expected around September, check Refugee Action's website: <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/>

Other resources

Aire Centre (useful for young people): <https://www.airecentre.org/>

Public Interest Law Centre: <https://www.pilc.org.uk/>

Here for Good: <https://www.hereforgoodlaw.org/>

Public Law project: <https://publiclawproject.org.uk/>



Together
we will end
homelessness