

# Commonweal Housing & Praxis Community Projects

## **Housing destitute migrants: Lessons from a pilot project 2015 – 2018**

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*Finally, and most importantly, we would like to thank all the residents in the scheme who were prepared to share their experience of the project. We are especially grateful for people’s openness which helped us to understand better the impact of the project on their lives. They did so in the hope that others could find their pathways out of destitution as they did. We hope so too.*

*Ceri Hutton, Sue Lukes and Heather Petch, October 2018*

# Foreword

## **Commonweal Housing's Perspective: Why is Commonweal interested in those with no recourse to public funds?**

*Commonweal is an independent charity working to pilot and champion housing-based solutions to social injustices.*

*Using our charitable funding we provide experts and partner organisations with the space and opportunity to trial and test new approaches designed to enhance housing equality and justice.*

*When approached by Praxis Community Projects to work on a project for people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), we first looked to find out more about the asylum system and were struck by the frequency of injustice, particularly in how many of these individuals faced homelessness.*

*The systemic enforced destitution of those who may have received a negative decision but have the opportunity to appeal or reapply is, in our opinion, not acceptable.*

*The rights or wrongs of the asylum and immigration systems is beyond our scope, instead we are focussed on finding ways of improving one element of it – enforced homelessness and destitution.*

*The dignity of safe and appropriate housing is to us a prerequisite for a system to work properly. Dealing with people as humans and treating them with respect, regardless of their status or claim, in our view is likely to ensure greater cooperation. A hostile environment tends, more often than not, to drive a problem underground causing a whole host of other issues for individuals and the state as a whole.*

*When we were first approached by Praxis Community Projects we immediately recognised the alignment of their desire to find and fund alternative forms of accommodation for those trapped with no recourse to public funds with our own strapline of "housing solutions to social injustice".*

*Organisations like Praxis across the No Accommodation network (NACCOM) have been finding ways to meet this basic humanitarian need for this specific group of people for many years. Frequently, these groups are reliant upon individual acts of benevolence and goodwill from property owners making homes available for free or at low rents. Such generosity is fantastic and long may it continue; but the inability of many support organisations to count on the ongoing supply of such accommodation meant longer term planning was difficult.*

*The big idea Praxis wanted to test was whether they could find some way of cross-subsidising the free bed spaces needed for those with NRPF – meaning they are prevented from working to pay themselves or accessing housing benefit.*

*Praxis' commitment to learning and adapting as the model developed and to sharing that learning so others also can benefit from their efforts was crucial in our decision to work with them.*

*Their proactive and honest approach towards not seeing their role merely as one of warehousing those trapped in the system, but of ensuring appropriate housing to allow people to progress applications and move towards resolution, was equally important to us.*

We are clear that in most of the projects we support the accommodation, we enable and facilitate aids transition – helping individuals move from a place where their past or perceived ‘status’ is dragging them down to somewhere – metaphorically and physically – where it is not.

The engagement by Praxis alongside our sector expert independent evaluation team of Sue Lukes, Ceri Hutton and Heather Petch (assisted by Jane Harris) has been exemplary. The desire to share thinking throughout with others, to welcome and challenge feedback has helped this evaluation report be an honest reflection of the action learning pilot, whilst ensuring areas of good practice and recommendations are well documented.

For this project and recently several others, Commonweal Housing has been engaging with forward thinking and imaginative social investors. Investors who trust their funds to Commonweal enabling us to scale up the number of homes we are able to provide. For this project we are indebted to our good friends at Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Trust for London, City Bridge Trust and Big Society Capital. Commonweal has developed a unique model of channelling social investment funding to support organisations and project ideas that individually might find raising such funding difficult. Undertaking the trying and testing not simply the tried and tested is what Commonweal does – insulating both investors and project partners from some of the risk that might otherwise prevent either of them progressing ideas. Fig. 1 sets out how this relationship works.

Running a pilot project and this evaluation report is not the end; Commonweal wants to hear from others who wish to take this learning forward. We will be working with Praxis and the of what is working helping others to deliver yet more housing solutions to this form of social injustice. If you are interested in helping us do get in touch [info@commonweal.org.uk](mailto:info@commonweal.org.uk)

Ashley Horsey – Chief Executive, Commonweal Housing  
October 2018

Fig.1

## How Commonweal works with partners to deliver projects through social investment



# Executive Summary

The No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)<sup>1</sup> housing project was a partnership between Commonweal Housing and Praxis Community Projects to seek solutions to the problems of destitute migrants with uncertain immigration status. They particularly wanted to explore whether a viable model could be developed in London for two different types of referrals with the expectation that income raised from supporting one group – families supported by local authorities under Section 17 of the Children Act<sup>2</sup> – would enable the provision of a service, including free bedspaces, for destitute single people. The pilot phase of this project extended over three years (April 2015 – April 2018) and was the focus of a formative and summative evaluation. This report summarises its learning.

## Top level findings

1. The model can achieve positive outcomes for all residents and help migrants on a pathway out of destitution. In the pilot, the lives of 46 households were improved. A third of them were single women who were destitute before the project supported them, and who then had a secure base and the support they needed to make sometimes dramatic changes to their lives.
2. The families supported got decent secure homes where children felt safe, and the immigration advice allowed them to ‘take stock’ of their immigration case and change its trajectory and outlook for the better. The holistic support underpinned this and other positive outcomes.
3. Of the small number of cases which had finished by the end of the evaluation, all those advised by Praxis had achieved a positive result, helped by the stable base offered.
4. The injustice the project responded to persists. Families housed under S.17 continue to experience sub-standard accommodation and in some cases advice, and destitute migrants whose status could be regularised continue to be at risk of ill-health, exploitation and abuse on the streets.
5. The main challenge to achieving lasting positive outcomes is the severe lack of affordable housing in London coupled with housing policies, welfare reform and immigration and asylum policies. As a result many residents have not yet achieved long term stability.

<sup>1</sup> Definition of NRPF found in Section 1

<sup>2</sup> Section 17 of the Children Act is referred to throughout as S.17 and a full explanation is found in Section 1

6. Building resilience through fostering mutual support in sharing arrangements and facilitating attendance at Praxis social groups which were available to residents once they had left the project are vital aspects to the support package and its ability to ensure enduring positive wellbeing, as well as immigration, outcomes.

7. The project provided a steep learning curve for Praxis but is now more financially and operationally viable with nine referring local authorities, 94% occupancy and 3 bedspaces available for single women.<sup>3</sup> Praxis is now looking to expand the service.

8. Other organisations can replicate this. There are a range of factors they need to take into account if considering this. The adaptations necessary in different locations, housing markets and organisations are detailed in the report. A comprehensive questionnaire covering this ground is included in the conclusions

9. Praxis was able to pay rent at about 63% of Local Housing Allowance rates which is a reasonable level for social housing providers and it is hoped that some will be actively interested in replicating or developing partnerships to do so.

10. Given the shortage of good quality immigration advice, which is an essential part of the model, it is likely that replication will require partnerships to deliver well.

11. The project most resembles a social enterprise rather than subsidy model, developing an income stream with which to do 'social good' by providing services that are also socially useful.

12. There is merit in growing provision for families placed by local authorities rather than seeing this simply as a means to an end. The holistic support and immigration advice on offer may achieve cost savings attractive to referrers as well as providing decent homes for families supported on S.17.

13. There are ongoing contextual risks posed to the model which will potentially influence its future viability, detailed in the report.

14. The three-year evaluation has been a key component in shaping the project as well as learning about it, made possible by the active engagement of all partners.



<sup>3</sup> In addition to those offered in the supporter supplied house, which was closed for repair work at the end of the evaluation period

# **The model: how it operated and was financed**

## **The model consisted of the following elements:**

- Commonweal used social investment to buy a portfolio of 7 suitable properties in outer London which it then rented to Praxis.
- Praxis managed the homes, provided holistic support to the residents and gave immigration advice and support to them via its advice team. It also rented a further house, offered by a supporter at a low rent, which it used as part of the project.
- Praxis marketed the accommodation and support package to local authorities who paid to refer families (mostly single women with smaller children) to whom they had duties under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 for accommodation, support and advice.
- Single rooms in each shared Commonweal house (up to 7 single rooms- one in each house) plus 3 further beds in the additional rented property were initially envisaged to accommodate destitute migrant women in need of stable accommodation to pursue regularising their immigration status. However due to the nature of family referrals (i.e. families with more than one child), only 2 or 3 of these single rooms in the shared houses were used for single women, who were also offered holistic support, advice and hardship financial support.
- The project was designed around sharing homes, mostly with a mix of single women and families.

## **Key elements of costings and finances for the model were that:**

- The income from clients funded by local authorities covered staffing (including 1 day a week immigration adviser time) and resident welfare plus the costs both of running the seven Commonweal properties as well as Laburnum Road.
- At current staffing levels and assuming 94% occupancy of funded bed spaces the project breaks even on a full cost recovery basis (i.e. including Praxis organisational overheads of about 12% of turnover as a cost to the project).
- The pilot has included a subsidy from Commonweal covering the rent required to meet the yield to investors. The actual average rent paid by Praxis is 63% of the Local Housing Allowance in those areas of London.
- The key added value Praxis brings is its knowledge of the client group and its ability to provide immigration advice and wrap around services to the residents of the scheme to support them to achieve positive legal and personal outcomes. This resource is provided at relatively low cost and its true cost is subsidised by Praxis' own fundraising.



## What the project achieved for its residents

- The project delivered 18 bedspaces for families and at least two bedspaces for single women (out of the seven single rooms initially envisaged) in seven Commonwealth properties funded by social investment, plus three bedspaces in a three-bedroom house let to Praxis by a supporter at a reduced rent. The inclusion of this house in the project allowed the pilot to increase the number of places available to single women.
- 46 households were accommodated and supported during the three-year evaluation period (April 2015 – April 2018) and 14 of them were non-S.17 cases in ‘free’ bedspaces (9 of them housed in the supporter supplied house). This equates to a ratio of one free bedspace for every 3.28 spaces paid for by local authorities under their S.17 obligations.
- The provision has served mainly women and children because sharing arrangements, which have been a part of the project, would not have been possible between men and families who usually have been headed by a single woman.
- All immigration cases dealt with by Praxis and finished by the time they left the project received positive decisions (9). Other cases were helped to progress, often resulting in access to the asylum system.
- Residents and referral agencies (mainly social services) valued the quality of accommodation, its management and the holistic support package provided including confidence in good quality immigration advice.
- Move on was often to temporary accommodation or accommodation contracted by the Home Office for asylum seekers. Praxis was only able to provide transitional support, although went out of its way to do so.
- The trajectory of continuing uncertainty when leaving the project, caused by shortages of affordable housing and the asylum system, was helped by an emphasis in the project on building resilience by: facilitating access to Praxis groups (which people could continue to attend after leaving the project); supporting mutual support within the shared houses; one-to-one support which connected people to services and helped them understand their situation better.

## Learning about the model

- **The properties:** Finding properties that were suitable for sharing was difficult and the properties purchased and let resulted in some constraints in the size and types of families that could be housed. Some were in parts of outer London that risked isolation, and this had to be managed.
- **Immigration advice:** the advice provided by Praxis was essential, as was the stability needed to use it. Some families had to be detached from bad advice and advisers which is easier to do while they are residents in the project through building trust. Immigration cases often take a long time to resolve, and some residents left before a final result, especially if they applied for asylum and so became entitled to Home Office support and accommodation. Of the small number of cases which had finished by the end of the evaluation, all those advised by Praxis had achieved a positive result. At least one referrer reported their belief that cases housed and advised by Praxis got results quicker than others they placed.
- **Support, move on and sharing:** A holistic support package provided by one organisation was invaluable, and more intensive resettlement support was sometimes provided to move on, which was valued. Many residents interviewed talked about time in the project as more like a temporary reprieve as they moved on to poorer accommodation with less support. The project focused on building resilience which enabled many to cope better with this, as did the much appreciated Praxis group work. Sharing has enabled some important friendships, but the mixing of households with children and single people does require an investment of time and thought into safeguarding.

## Learning about management, financial and costing issues

- The pilot phase involved many changes and adjustments but by year three there was more stability and confidence. By the end of the pilot the project was making a small surplus although this relies on external funding for some aspects of the services to non S.17 cases, including immigration advice, a rent subsidy from Commonweal and use of an additional house at below market rent. The model is needed, can be delivered successfully and is replicable, and Praxis is planning on some expansion, based on a continuing market for the service and interest from local authorities. This last is based on the value for money offered by good quality accommodation, better outcomes for families, reduced burdens on council staff and the greater likelihood of a positive decision arrived at more quickly as a result of Praxis' input, which means that the period families needed to be supported in Praxis accommodation was shorter than in other provision.
- The expenditure project budget was made up of: housing management (28%), supporter supplied house (3%), overheads (12%), bespoke support and advice (27%), yield to investors (30%). This was balanced by an income which derived from rental from local authorities (88%), Commonweal subsidy (10%) and 2% contribution from Praxis.

The break-even position thus involved significant levels of subsidy as the rent paid by Praxis to Commonweal is £32,000 less than the return to investors, with Commonweal making up the shortfall.

- If Praxis were to rent the properties on the open market the rent would be in the region of £126,000 per year – almost double the amount Praxis is paying Commonweal and around £30,000 more than the annual return to investors. This indicates that this type of project would be unviable for outer London at market rents.

## Learning about replicability

- **Other models of housing provision for destitute migrants** exist but comparisons are difficult across different housing markets, types of residents, and property offers. Most other models explored in this report focus on the needs of destitute asylum seekers and refugees in housing need but with recourse to public funds; a few of these rely on higher, 'exempt' rates of housing benefit.
- **A range of risks are presented by the policy context:** the levels of flux in key policy areas – housing and immigration – may affect the costs, processes and income of this or similar projects. Exempt housing benefit is under review, new licensing rules affect charities like Praxis but not housing associations, provisions in the 2016 Immigration Act not yet in force may both affect access to support for asylum seeking families whose claims have been unsuccessful and potentially make the Home Office the 'gatekeeper' for S.17 families needing local authority support.
- **Risks inherent in the model:** One of Praxis' 8 properties was provided by a supportive landlord, but has now been decanted to do major works, which illustrates the potential problems in planning and sustainability caused by such donations. More formal arrangements may offer more stability. Other significant risks were managed effectively within the project, including those posed by residents, the problems they brought with them and the safeguarding issues inherent in sharing, and form part of the narrative of this report.
- **Sufficient learning is available** to recommend replication of the model by other organisations and /or its adaptation to best meet their local circumstances.
- **Elements of successful replication** will include engaging with local authorities (if S.17 clients are to be accommodated) to identify the specific needs of families in their area and gear up to meet these, including putting robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place and being clear what proportion and type of the families in need they can accommodate. There are lessons about other ways of delivering the model involving the delivery of bedspaces for single destitute migrants with income from other groups as well as making significant contributions to their organisation's core costs and overheads. This is covered in a case study in the full report.
- **Existing housing providers** (including housing associations) may be able to hit the ground running in terms of housing management and deliver the model more cheaply because of the scale of their operations, available housing stock and expertise. The rent levels paid by Praxis would be viable for social landlords. However, they may need a partner to provide the immigration advice without which pathways out of destitution are simply not possible.

**We hope this report may inspire providers of housing and support to single destitute migrants** to explore the potential for meeting the needs of families, in particular those accommodated by local authorities under S.17, both as a way of turning their considerable expertise into an income stream and because these families are currently often ill served by what is available. It may also be possible that immigration advice and migrant support projects, frustrated at the lack of housing options for their clients – as Praxis was when it started talking to Commonweal about development of this pilot – will learn how they too can establish a housing project or seek a partner to do so armed with the Commonweal/Praxis experience to help bring people on board.

# 1. About the pilot project

## The Housing Context

Housing supply continues to lag behind need: of the new housing financed in 2017, only 20% was for affordable housing.

Demand remains high and availability scarce in London but price growth is slowing fastest in London and rising in the Midlands and Scotland. Possible interest rate rises add an element of risk to anyone seeking to set up a similar project.

Housing associations, while sharing some social purpose and a commitment to reinvest surpluses in more housing or social outcomes, are very diverse, ranging from large organisations with stock of 20,000 and over, to smaller more focused providers.

Among these are some that have made specific commitments to take action to promote migrant access to housing or signed a pledge to encourage migrant applications and help the destitute.

Homelessness has been increasing since 2010, with welfare reforms now providing a further driver.

Some organisations working with street homeless people especially in London now have some bedspaces available for migrants who cannot access benefits.

Although 2018 legislation requires local authorities to assess the needs and options for all those facing homelessness in their area, there are few new resources to support them in this. Even once migrants get leave to remain they are simply pitched into the mainstream homelessness crisis facing thousands.

There is a growing understanding, as Crisis wrote on its 50th anniversary in 2018, that “No strategy to end homelessness can be credible or valid without also including migrant homelessness. And no approach to ending migrant homelessness will be effective or justifiable unless the help is provided on the basis of need, and not on the basis of where someone was born.”<sup>5</sup>

This is the story of eight houses and the women and children who lived in them over three years. The houses were bought, and the people chosen, to be a pilot project to test some options for providing decent homes for destitute migrants in London. The learning from this is distilled in this report.

The project was a partnership between Commonweal Housing and Praxis Community Projects. They came together in 2014 to seek solutions to the problems of destitute migrants with uncertain immigration status. They particularly wanted to explore whether they could develop a viable model to house them in London.

## Why was the project set up?

Commonweal had initially explored the feasibility of piloting schemes in two locations: London and Birmingham. It had been inspired by projects round the UK<sup>1</sup> which were housing small numbers of destitute migrants with no access to either statutory services<sup>2</sup> or other accommodation because their immigration status – or lack of it – barred them from access to social security and other welfare provision.<sup>3</sup>

Some of these other projects rented rooms or homes to other migrants able to pay rent, usually refugees who recently got leave to remain in the UK but were in acute housing need, to help support free spaces for migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)<sup>4</sup>. However, in the London property market such projects have not generally succeeded in providing any significant numbers of homes.

### Commonweal Housing

harnesses social investment to provide innovative housing solutions to social injustice. They work with support providers to develop and test small scale housing pilot projects tailored to help vulnerable people to overcome the injustices they face. They then use the learning from these projects to demonstrate how these injustices can be resolved.

### Praxis Community Projects

provides practical, legal and emotional support for migrants in crisis or at risk, ensuring that their essential human needs are met and that they are able to overcome the barriers they face. They build community, challenge exclusion and discrimination, influence policy, improve services and inspire solidarity with migrants.

<sup>1</sup> Most of these projects are taken forward by NACCOM members (The No Accommodation Network). Appendix 2 gives examples of ‘other models’ which includes some of these.

<sup>2</sup> Such as statutory services for asylum seekers supported by the Home Office

<sup>3</sup> Particularly true since the Immigration Act 2014 introduced ‘right to rent’ provisions requiring landlords to check the immigration status of anyone to whom they intended to rent.

<sup>4</sup> See, also, Models of Accommodation and Support for Migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) by Hutton C. and Lukes S. commissioned by Housing Justice, NACCOM and Praxis, April 2015

As the private rented sector grows in importance, a raft of measures to tackle the worst of the sector have been promoted. From October 2018, many more homes, including those shared by two or more households, are subject to licensing by local authorities, which also involve minimum room sizes. Registered providers (like housing associations) are exempted but charities like Praxis are not.

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is a blanket term used to cover people who because of their immigration status (or lack of it) cannot access mainstream housing or benefits. 'Public funds' comes from the Immigration Rules<sup>6</sup> which specifies the benefits and services that some migrants cannot use if they need leave to enter, or as a condition of giving them leave to remain. Funds specified include most means-tested and disability benefits, access to council waiting lists and homelessness services and child benefit. Any other money derived from public funds which is used to support people subject to immigration controls does not fall within the definition of 'public funds' used for immigration purposes. This includes S.17 of the Children Act, for example, which is used by Local Authorities to prevent destitution of children and their parents.

Typically, migrants in the UK (to work, study, join family members or visit) may have an immigration status that demands that they support themselves 'without recourse to public funds'. However the term is also used to cover people who have no status or are waiting for a decision. Migrants who apply to stay on the basis of long residence or family life are usually barred from recourse to public funds but may apply to have the condition lifted if they are destitute (this is what is meant by 'lifting the NRPF condition'). EU migrants may face similar problems if they are deemed not to have a "right to reside".

While asylum seekers are at least initially entitled to support, destitution can occur because of errors, delays or poor decision-making. Some refused asylum seekers hoping to reopen their claims for asylum can get emergency support subject to conditions, but may not want it or not be able to manage the application process.

## No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

Praxis approached Commonweal with an idea for a scheme it believed would be viable in London. It was keen to develop a solution to the needs of many of its clients, both individual migrants with NRPF as well as families, some of whom were supported by local authorities under S.17 of the Children Act or were seeking help from Praxis to access this support. Praxis was aware that:

- There was an increase in migrant destitution, partly due to Government changes in immigration policy.
- Where local authorities had a duty to support children under S.17 they were usually housing families at considerable cost in unsuitable accommodation.
- Accommodation provided under S.17 was often outside London, leaving vulnerable families isolated and with limited help to access to support and immigration advice.<sup>7</sup>
- For clients to be helped out of destitution it was clear that a holistic package of support was needed which included decent housing, informal support networks and - crucially - immigration advice.

## Who was the project for?

At the outset Commonweal and its investors were predominantly interested in the ability of the project to provide free bedspaces and pathways out of destitution for those who had no other means of support. That drove the initial project, with S.17 families providing a means to earn income towards the project overall.

As the project wore on, it became increasingly clear that S.17 residents often had a range of needs and vulnerabilities which the project was also helping to meet. As a result, these residents became more and more a focus of the project. Nonetheless the housing and support for destitute migrants who were not supported by local authorities were central to the aims of the pilot.

5 <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/the-plan-to-end-homelessness-full-version/executive-summary/>

6 Technically, the reference to public funds comes from the Immigration Rules paragraph 6 which defines the benefits and services covered, but actually the bar on access to housing and benefits is written into the eligibility conditions.

7 Safeguarding Children from Destitution: Local Authority Responses to Families with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' by Compas, June 2015. By Jonathan Price and Sarah Spencer

## Migrant destitution - definitions

The term destitution is widely used to refer to extreme poverty, including homelessness, and there have been a number of recent attempts to develop more specific definitions.<sup>8</sup> NRPF conditions mean significant numbers of migrants experience destitution.<sup>9</sup>

In Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 it is defined as follows 'A person is destitute if: 'a. he does not have adequate accommodation or any means of obtaining it (whether or not his other essential living needs are met); or b. he has adequate accommodation or the means of obtaining it, but cannot meet his other essential living needs.'

### Migrants with NRPF and the support they are entitled to

The first robust UK wide study of destitution was commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and published in 2018. This study estimates that 1,550,000 people, 365,000 of them children, are destitute across the whole population. A quarter of these are estimated to be migrants (388,750) and around a quarter of the migrant group are children.

Migrants may be destitute and have "no recourse to public funds" (NRPF) for many reasons, including that:

- they have leave to remain but it is a condition of their stay that they support themselves (typically those coming to work, join family members, study or visit)
- they have leave to remain because of longer term links to the UK through residence or family but have not convinced the Home Office that they are destitute and so need access to public funds
- they have applied for leave to remain but are waiting for a decision
- they have an EU "right to reside" in the UK because they are the sole carer for a British child or vulnerable adult

## What was the pilot project model?

The pilot aimed to respond to both the needs of destitute migrants (single women) and S.17 migrant families. It incorporated the following core elements in its design:

### A portfolio of suitable properties

The project required a portfolio of decent, family-friendly properties which local authorities could contract as suitable accommodation for 'S.17' migrant families.<sup>10</sup> These were purchased using social investment co-ordinated by Commonweal. As far as possible, these houses needed to meet a minimum specification including being in a suitable location (relatively near services) and being suitable for sharing.

### A commitment to shared accommodation

Underpinning the project design was a commitment to properties offering, where possible, shared accommodation. This meant that families with children referred in by local authorities could potentially share a house with one or more single women with NRPF referred in by Praxis and others. Sharing was felt to be important for two reasons: for residents, as a way of fostering mutual support and learning and for the model, in addition, a way of helping the project stack up financially. Contract income from local authorities for S.17 client placements would help to support free bed spaces for single people with NRPF.

### Immigration advice

Immigration advice and support was an integral part of the 'offer' to both S.17 and destitute residents. This involved Praxis advisers assessing the immigration history and status of all new residents, and offering advice and support as required to try and help regularise their status and move out of destitution.

<sup>8</sup> Fitzpatrick et al (2018) Destitution in the UK 2018, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

<sup>9</sup> Petch H., Perry, J, Lukes S. (2015) How to improve support and services for destitute migrant, JRF

<sup>10</sup> Through statutory obligations imposed by S.17 of the Children's Act 1989

## Role of partners during the pilot project

- 50 local authorities on the NRPF Connect database spent a total of £43.5 million annually

- The average time a family or individual spends on support is just under 2.5 years<sup>15</sup>

- 30% of these households are dependent on support for 1000 days or longer.

- Of those whose cases were closed in 2017/8, only 3% returned to their country of citizenship. 11% had their support ended because they were found to be ineligible. 67% were granted leave to remain in the UK with NRPF.

- The immigration status for those in accommodation is: 57% with no current immigration permission; 15% lawfully present with recourse; 12% lawfully present with NRPF; 9% refused asylum seeker and no current immigration permission; 4% EEA national; 2% No record held by Home Office and; 1% asylum seeker.

Provisions in the 2016 Immigration Act (yet to be implemented) hand responsibility for assessing the eligibility for this support over to the Home Office, although local authorities would continue to provide it.

### Rough Sleeping in London

The CHAIN database counts all rough sleepers in London and identifies nearly 1000 rough sleepers during the year 2017/18 born outside the EU. "(Of those who responded to questions about country of origin/nationality) There were a significant number of rough sleepers from non-CEE (central and eastern Europe) European countries, ..., with Italy (126), the Republic of Ireland (119), and Portugal (115) continuing to be the most heavily represented. 458 (6%) people seen rough sleeping in the year were from African countries, and 416 (6%) were of Asian nationality (170 of whom were Indian)."

Only 15% of all rough sleepers in the CHAIN data are women, reflecting the fact that women rough sleepers tend to be more hidden and that homeless women are less likely to be rough sleeping.

### Commonweal Housing

- Mobilised social investment
- Purchased properties during first 18 months of the project (3 in Croydon and 4 in Redbridge)
- Managed risks for partners and investors
- Disseminated learning
- Encouraged others to get involved
- Commissioned and contributed to evaluation

### Praxis Community Projects

- Design and setup
- Contributed one property acquired on peppercorn rent in Croydon to project portfolio (Laburnum Road)
- Managed the properties
- Liaised with local authorities to secure referrals to Section 17 spaces
- Did assessments, admissions, and, where appropriate, move-ons for all clients
- Provided immigration and other advice to clients as requested and needed
- Provided a range of holistic support to clients, both within the properties and via the range of group work and support work at Praxis offices
- Contributed to the evaluation

## Praxis' role and input

The pilot project relied on Praxis' ability to deliver a range of different work and services, captured in Fig.2. This meant that in order to be successful, the project required Praxis to:

- Meet the needs of destitute clients whilst in the project
- Provide immigration advice and advocacy which would make a 'meaningful difference' to all residents whilst housed in the project
- Manage the portfolio of properties, including management of the buildings, to suitable standards and within the resources of the project
- Ensure ongoing referrals by making links with local authorities and convincing them of the value of the project

- they have no leave to remain or right to reside under EU law

People with NRPF generally cannot claim means tested benefits or get help with housing or local authority homelessness provision.

People with NRPF can apply to social services for help and may get accommodation and support if they are in a household with children (under S.17 of the Children Act 1989) or a vulnerable adult (via the Care Act 2014) and have leave, or an application for leave pending, or it would be an abuse of their human rights to leave them destitute.

Local authorities have to report such cases to the Home Office and the Home Office should prioritise their leave applications (or applications to change their leave so they can access benefits), but there are still long delays.

People with NRPF can also get help from charities or community groups if this is needed to prevent harm or to enable them to seek further support and/or leave to remain.

### **Local authority support for migrants with NRPF**

The NRPF Connect database is run by the London Borough of Islington and represents most of the local authorities with significant numbers of migrants with NRPF. This shows:

- 1805 households with children were supported by local authorities in the UK by the end of 2017/18 . Such families represented 71% of all destitute migrants supported by these local authorities <sup>11</sup>
- 1228 new households were accepted for financial support – a reported acceptance rate of 30% of cases. <sup>12</sup>
- These households had 4049 dependants, the great majority of them children.
- Each household cost an average of £41,689 over the total time to support

## **Holistic support**

A range of holistic support was provided to both S.17 and destitute residents in order to benefit them in a range of ways. This help included:

- Support for a range of practical and emotional needs
- Help in accessing key services such as health and schools
- Help in gaining access to community and social networks
- Shared spaces (with other residents) as an active benefit
- Move on support (once immigration status resolved)
- Support if they reached the ‘end of the road’ in terms of assessing their options

## **Getting appropriate referrals (S.17 and destitute migrants) into the properties**

### **Referrals from local authorities**

The project’s income depended on local authority engagement and a willingness to purchase bed spaces and it was hoped that local authorities would recognise the value of the service to them and refer to the project thus guaranteeing an income stream. Engaging local authorities required some explanation of the added value anticipated through the project for those commissioning the accommodation, which included the provision of trusted, supported accommodation and, importantly, immigration advice which could help clients regularise their status quicker and consequently ‘move them on’.

### **Referrals from organisations working with destitute migrants**

As and when spaces in the properties came up which were suitable for the placement of destitute single women, it was assumed that such spaces would be readily filled by Praxis and other providers in touch with destitute clients.

<sup>11</sup> London boroughs not on the Connect database at time of writing were Camden, Kensington and Chelsea, Kingston, Lewisham, Richmond, Sutton, Westminster and City of London

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/Documents/NRPF-connect-annual-report-2017-18.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*



# Praxis: The Work Involved

## REFERRALS + ASSESSMENTS

Securing suitable referrals involved regular communication with local authorities including marketing of the project by explaining its value, publicising vacancies and undertaking assessments to make sure it would be of benefit to families being referred. For non S.17 referrals, it was important to maintain good partnership working with various referral agencies, including Praxis' own advice team. By the end of the pilot project, Praxis had referrals from 8 different local authorities.



PRAXIS

## PROPERTY

Praxis supported Commonweal in the purchase process e.g. inspecting properties with Commonweal to check for their suitability. Praxis also utilised a property (Laburnum Rd) leased to it by a supporter at a below market rent.

## IMMIGRATION ADVICE

Immigration advice is essential to support a pathway out of destitution: some people benefitted from advice and advocacy from Praxis and direct referrals for representation; others had a legal representative before coming to the project but needed advocacy support to engage with the process successfully.



## HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Frequent home visits were needed to repair and maintain the homes. This required careful co-ordination and regular travel across London..

## HOLISTIC SUPPORT

A support worker would welcome residents, help them to access local services and visit often to check on their well being and the progress of their immigration case.

Social groups at Praxis such as 'Brighter Futures' and 'Wings' provided opportunities for social and emotional support as well as the chance to access multiple services under the same roof during each visit, including Praxis' immigration advice service.

## MOVE ON SUPPORT

People usually moved onto other temporary housing provided by local authorities under homelessness obligations or the Home Office if they had a protection claim as an asylum seeker or trafficked person. Standards of this housing was often not as high as the Commonweal houses and /or some distance from support networks. Praxis supports residents through the move-on transition.

### end of the road

If residents exhaust all legal options to remain in the UK then they would be given advice about assisted voluntary return. N.B. Only one person had to leave the project on this basis.

Redbridge  
4 properties



travel

Bethnal Green  
Praxis  
Office



Frequent travel between Praxis and the properties shaped this project, for both the team and the residents.



Croydon  
4 properties



## S.17

### and why it was important for this project

Section 17 or 'S.17' of the Children Act 1989 places a general duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need. An important part of this duty is to promote the child's upbringing by their families. S.17 support can include a wide range of services and for those who need it can cover accommodation and/or essential living expenses.

Migrant families seeking support from the local authority will normally need this where they have no recourse to public funds, are not able to access asylum support and are destitute. Local authorities can simply pay fares 'home' if families approach them who have no reason to stay in the UK, but if there is a current application for leave that engages human rights issues (such as a right to family and private life because of long residence), or the family includes a British child, then social services will usually have to support if there is evidence of destitution. For this reason, the project focussed on these clients: both eligible for S.17 support, and in the process of trying to regularise their status, thus potentially benefitting from immigration advice and support.

## Financial and legal arrangements for the pilot project

### Social Investment in property purchase

Social investment was vital to facilitating innovation in this pilot. It is not clear however if it has to be a feature in its replication. The costs to Praxis of social investment are examined in Section 4.

Commonweal purchased the properties with 100% mortgage finance using social investment from Big Society Capital and three charitable foundations – City Bridge Trust, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Trust for London. The investors receive a guaranteed yield from Commonweal of 4.1% on their investment (4.3% on acquisition price) which protects them from operational risk. Their investment is repaid from the sale of the property assets after 7 years (with option to extend) where any profit is distributed 75% to investors and 25% to Commonweal (with any loss on the property sales absorbed by the investors).

Commonweal's social investment approach involves the following key factors:

- Commonweal protects investors from operational risk and like any mortgage the investors have a 'charge' against the properties
- Minimising risks of project delivery partners through subsidising the rental payments. In the first year of the pilot Commonweal reduced the chargeable rent to support Praxis' ability to establish and pilot the scheme without affecting the 4.3% return agreed with investors.

### Lease arrangements

- Commonweal leased the properties to Praxis<sup>14</sup>
- Praxis in turn offer rooms in the properties on a shared housing basis to destitute migrants under a 'bare licence' (i.e. one for which no money is paid and, because there is sharing, no security of tenure is created).<sup>15</sup> Where relevant local authorities pay a fee for those families placed in the accommodation under S.17 of the Children's Act.

<sup>14</sup> N.B. A further property in Croydon – Laburnum Road – was leased by Praxis from a supporter at below market rent and this formed part of the overall portfolio of properties for the pilot project.

<sup>15</sup> These arrangements are outside the Immigration Act 2014 and 2016 'Right to Rent' requirements on landlords to check the status of occupants because no rent or licence fee is paid.

## The financial model

The project needed to deliver on its mission to provide free bedspaces and other services to destitute migrants with NRPF. In order to do this, the financial model assumed that:

- The income derived from fees charged to local authorities would be used to support the provision of accommodation for destitute migrants who receive no social services support, either in another property or in individual bedrooms within the pilot's property portfolio (on a mixed household basis).
- Financial viability to support this (which the model referred to as 'cross-subsidy') would be achieved through:
  - the project being deliverable within the project resources available
  - the project securing maximum occupancy from early on
  - local authorities allowing multiple occupancy, including sharing with women not supported by social services
  - local authorities paying fees in a timely manner

Section 4 provides more detailed information about the assumptions behind the financial model and how those were implemented by Praxis in the pilot.

## Learning by doing: evaluation in the pilot project

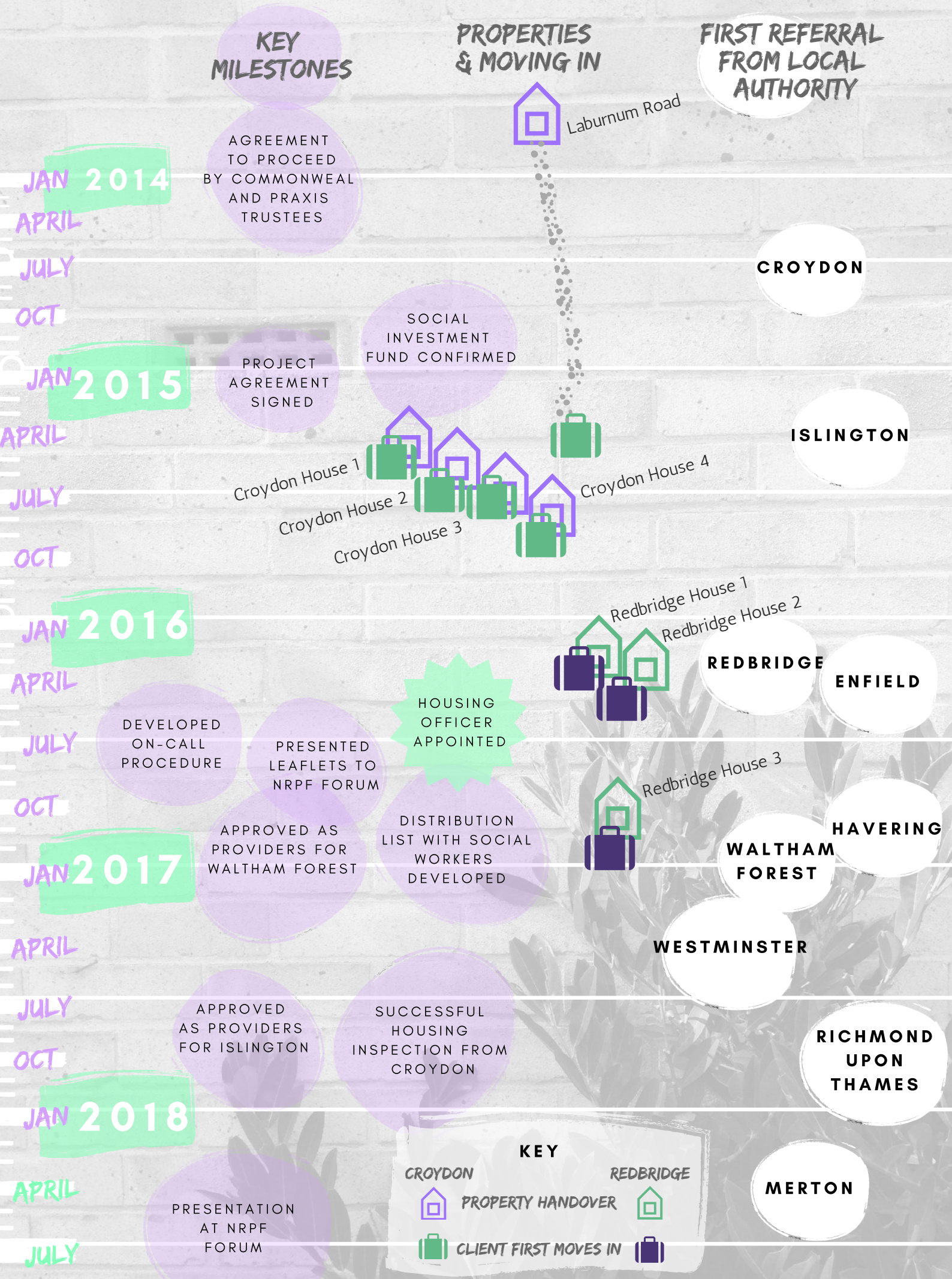
An evaluation was commissioned at the outset of the pilot to help those involved think, learn and shape the work as it progressed. This was an intrinsic part of the pilot's delivery which set out to test the following hypotheses:

- That a sustainable business model could be delivered which created (through what the model referred to as cross subsidy) accommodation for destitute migrants with NRPF
- That providing immigration advice as an integral part of the offer to residents placed in the accommodation would result in positive outcomes for residents, both relating to their immigration status and their individual sense of wellbeing and confidence
- That local authorities would find the added value of having S.17 accommodation provided by a specialist and expert asylum and migration support organisation, with integrated immigration and holistic support, an 'attractive and replicable' proposition.
- That the learning generated from the pilot would enable a clearer understanding of the costs, management and support structures needed to deliver a successful model and that these would be of use and interest to others considering replication, adapted to local circumstances.

The evaluation was also gathering information to help assess, at the end of the pilot, the key lessons learned. The story of the evaluation, including the framework developed with partners and used to test assumptions and progress throughout, is set out in Appendix 1. The content of this report is the synthesis of the evaluation's inquiry.

Fig. 3

# PROJECT TIMELINE





## 2. Lessons Learned

Learning was of paramount importance over the three years of this pilot. There was a clear steer from Commonwealth that the notion of ‘success’ or ‘failure’ was not relevant except in so far as it helped partners understand how such a project might evolve to better support destitute and disadvantaged migrants in the future.

To structure discussions about ‘the model’, the evaluation articulated a number of underpinning assumptions at the outset which were then interrogated over time<sup>16</sup>.

This section distils:

- Key lessons about the pilot, linking these to the experiences of running the project and the challenges faced in so doing which gave rise to these lessons
- The main contextual risks (in the political, social and economic context) which we learned about during the evaluation and which emerged as a potential threat or challenge for this and other similar projects in the future.

<sup>16</sup> Assumptions about the model were set out in the Evaluation Framework summarised in Appendix 1

# Finding the right properties

## Lessons

1. The balance of price and location within London is challenging and likely to remain so.

2. Getting properties only in one borough is risky given the way in which circumstances and commitments within local authorities can so rapidly change. Purchasing properties in two locations (South and North) secured more local authority interest across London.

3. Property location influences travel times needed for on-site support which needs to be factored into the staff / volunteer time needed .

4. Finding properties which appeal to multiple and geographically distant commissioners is particularly challenging with a small portfolio of properties, as in the pilot.

5. The inclusion of gardens in the property specification contributed in no small part to the positive outcomes which all residents, particularly mothers and children, gained from the project

6. Properties in a remote location risk undermining the potential benefits residents may gain from the project, notably in relation to gaining confidence and increased independence by linking with local events, facilities and services

## Experience and challenges behind the lessons

The most significant challenge resulting from purchase decisions was the isolation of residents. Two of the properties located right at the perimeter of London felt 'distant' to clients, sometimes alarmingly so. One had no mobile phone signal at all which meant that Praxis needed to install Wifi to ensure connection. This remoteness compromised some clients' ability to get connected locally, both to communities and to basic shopping facilities and services.

Commonweal and Praxis had a 'spec' for property purchase but inevitably this was balanced against a maximum budget. As a result, trade-offs occurred: to keep the number of bedrooms and the garden meant purchasing in the outermost areas of the cheaper boroughs.

An initial relationship with Croydon led to houses being purchased in that borough. Referrals then fizzled out from this local authority requiring Praxis to secure several more local authority partners.

The original idea was to have houses allowing sharing which required single bed spaces. However S.17 families sometimes needed more rooms because of larger families or children with special needs which meant no sharing was possible in some houses.

# Getting referrals from local authorities for S.17 clients

1. The model required multiple local authority referrers in order to achieve near maximum occupancy. This was not envisaged at the outset, and took time and resources to achieve.

2. Local authorities allowed sharing with non-S.17 clients. However, placing families with children in properties meant that some properties were effectively decommissioned for shared use with destitute clients.

3. Considerable work is needed to secure and maintain referring relationships from multiple local authorities. Time needs to be spent in relationship-building and ongoing and regular marketing of all potential vacancies.

4. Some referrers seemed to recognise the value of having additional support and wanted to place partly as a result of this. For example, an inspection report on Croydon properties noted the value of this enhanced support.

5. Local authority appreciation of having integrated support for this client group may have been sharpened by serious case reviews of clients placed outside London who had subsequently died. Such cases highlighted the risks of isolation and may have spurred interest in the model.

## Lessons

6. As the project gained reputation and momentum it seemed to get easier to fill voids with void rates decreasing year on year.

7. Location of properties is a factor in local authority decisions to refer.

8. The time needed for each individual referral is considerable. Praxis feels it underestimated the time needed to attract, assess and assist with moving in.

As part of its established advice and advocacy work, Praxis tackled local authorities failing in their duty of care towards vulnerable migrants, and sometimes put clients in touch with lawyers to pursue their legal rights. This continued with some of the residents referred into the project. One, for instance, was left with virtually no subsistence because of the failure of their social worker to take action and as a result had a breakdown: Praxis not only had to deal with the fallout from this but also challenge the local authority which had referred the client. Such delicate balancing acts are an inherent part of the model.

Location of properties was sometimes important to local authorities with some North London boroughs reluctant to refer to the Croydon properties. With the coming on stream of South London boroughs this is becoming less of a problem but illustrates the difficulty between matching property location and local authority appeal

At the outset Praxis put considerable effort into creating an agreement with Croydon Social Services, including drawing up a formal Memorandum of Understanding. In the event, however, referrals were not forthcoming for various reasons including the fact that the NRPF team did not engage and clients with higher needs than were meant for the project were identified for referral by the Disabilities Team. As a result, Praxis quickly had to engage with other local authorities and from 2016 on much effort was put into forging new relationships (see Project Timeline).

## Experience and challenges behind the lessons

Praxis was under pressure to maintain a high rate of occupancy for financial reasons. One of the challenges with this was that they had to prioritise income generating referrals, which often came with more than one child. This meant that in order to adhere to HMO legislation, there was often no space to take on a single women.

Praxis put effort into trying to engage various local authorities that, in spite of expressing interest, did not ever refer clients.

Having a small number of houses in which spaces only sporadically came up was a challenge for local authority engagement as Praxis could not guarantee spaces when they needed them.

Praxis managed to promote the model and get high occupancy rates as the project went on (94% in final year). However this involved dedicating a large amount of staff time to marketing, relationship-building and, promoting the high standards of care the project aspired to and gained.

# Finding and supporting destitute clients

## Lessons

1. 30% of all households accommodated (14 destitute women) were housed during the evaluation period. Two thirds (9) of these were in Laburnum Road whilst five women (10% of total households supported) shared with S.17 families.

2. In this model, various factors mean it may not always be possible to include a single destitute resident in all – or even most – properties.

3. Being a 'housing manager' responsible for managing risk in properties and safeguarding all residents requires a different approach from that of an advice provider where the priority is to do anything to help the client in front of you in desperate need. If an agency does both roles this difference needs to be acknowledged and managed.

4. Safeguarding and risk assessment are of paramount importance and will influence who is admitted into any such project. Accepting high risk and emergency referrals of destitute people proved impossible within this model.

Strengthening safeguarding procedures and 'vetting' destitute clients was increasingly recognised as vital. This was an evolution for Praxis as it meant having to deny some clients access and even (in one extreme example where a client was driven to desperate measures as a result of non-payment of subsistence by social services), reporting a client to the police for suspected possession of a knife. Praxis had always been 'on the side of the client' previously in such circumstances but the housing management and landlord role required that it forefront the wellbeing of all residents, not just the individual. This was a hard transition for some staff.

## Experience and challenges behind the lessons

Freeing up spaces to accommodate destitute single residents was challenging because i) Some local authorities preferred to place only 'their' residents ii) some families were too large to allow for any additional residents iii) issues around risk assessments for destitute (as well as S.17) residents iv) need to prioritise keeping spaces 'open' for local authority placements in the pipeline for financial reasons. These challenges in part resulted in the decision to keep Laburnum Rd (the property Praxis brought to the project portfolio) largely for single female residents to balance availability across the project.

The original plan was to take emergency referrals but it became clear that thorough assessment of all was necessary in order to ensure everybody's safety. This was particularly true of the single women (as social services generally assessed the S.17 clients) where there were some incidents of ex partners who may have tried to find and threaten the woman and would have posed a threat for others in the house.

Managing the expectations of those referring into the destitute spaces (primarily Praxis advice team and British Red Cross) was a challenge. Such client-facing teams were aware of vast need and the project could only ever deliver a few spaces. Their expectations had to be managed, including around the cessation of emergency referrals into the project.

At the outset it was not specified what gender the destitute beneficiaries of the project would be. Praxis and other providers were aware of large numbers of destitute and vulnerable migrant men and there was some hope initially that they might benefit. However, it became clear that for practical and safeguarding reasons it would only be possible to place women.



# Immigration advice as an integral part of the accommodation offer

1. Immigration advice was an essential component of ensuring that destitute clients move towards regularising their status.

2. Providing immigration advice to all gave everybody the opportunity to access 'quality' advice. This gave those who already had a lawyer the opportunity to unscramble the damage done by previous poor advice if they chose to take up Praxis' offer, which some did.

3. Being accommodated and supported by the project whilst receiving immigration advice produced benefits in terms of being able to ensure that appointments were kept, case progressed chased and the resident supported through uncertain and anxious times.

## Lessons

Take up on immigration advice across the project was not as high as anticipated. One reason for this was that S.17 clients formed the majority of households, and it was a precondition of S.17 support that they had to have made an application to regularise their status. This meant they usually arrived with a lawyer.

Managing the relationship between the advice and advocacy team and the new housing project was initially challenging. The advice team were initially expected to be 'on hand' for all new residents of the pilot, but were rarely able to refer clients into the project. In the last phase of the pilot this relationship became formalised with one day of advice staff time paid for by the project which felt more balanced and fair for all concerned.

## Experience and challenges behind the lessons

A challenge for the advice team was unscrambling poor advice and trying to assist clients who were still, for various reasons, wanting to stick with solicitors who, in the view of Praxis' specialist advisers, were not best serving their client's needs. In some cases residents realised over time that they would be better off changing adviser, but this took time.

Those who used the immigration advice on offer were often hugely appreciative and some very positive legal outcomes (in terms of their status being regularised, or their application for asylum being accepted) were achieved.

The fact that immigration advice was available on the same site as other holistic services (e.g. groups) meant that residents could combine visiting their adviser at Praxis with other activities which worked very well.

# Holistic support

## Lessons

1. The provision of holistic support was regarded as a key success factor of the model by all staff

2. The project's location in Praxis meant that clients of the pilot had access to a range of other support including group work. For many clients this proved an intrinsic part of how the project managed not only to accommodate them but also increase their confidence and self agency, with clients attending groups both during and after they were living in the properties.

3. Training a migrant support worker to be a housing officer yielded benefits for the project and its residents. The role of the 'repair guy' in accommodation schemes can feel distant and even intrusive, but Praxis ensured, by employing a housing officer with a genuine desire and motivation to help, that properties were managed respectfully and with attention to client care. This contributed in no small part to resident outcomes.

4. Having a range of workers at Praxis in contact with residents meant that vulnerable residents could be 'kept an eye on' in various ways and their needs responded to, including crisis needs, across the whole organisation.

Part of the holistic support was provided by the housing officer (from 2016) who ensured that properties were maintained but also provided a constant and reassuring presence for residents. This was noted as a highly positive aspect of the accommodation provided in an official inspection report by LB Croydon.

In some cases residents were very involved with Praxis as volunteers. This sometimes created tensions when 'pure' tenancy issues needed to be addressed. For instance, there was some tension when it was suggested that one resident (who had been a group work volunteer) should share with another individual who needed accommodation urgently: some of the sensitivity here was that she felt she had a 'special relationship' with Praxis which merited her needs being given more attention. It was resolved but there can be a challenging balance between being 'landlord' and 'supporter-enabler'.

## Experience and challenges behind the lessons

The benefits gained from the holistic support on offer varied as not all residents wanted or needed the same thing. Some wanted support, some didn't want support initially but then found out they did, and some kept themselves to themselves.

One of the elements of holistic support was to help residents connect to local services and this was particularly welcomed, in particular around GPs and child services.

Group work (at Praxis, mainly) was taken up by a number of residents and proved highly supportive and useful. Some credit it with helping them survive very tough times.

Those with existing social and community networks in place – particularly the case with those with older children – were sometimes not interested in the 'community linkage' element of the support on offer as they just wanted to maintain links (often around school attendance) where they had lived before.

# Sharing as benefit

## Lessons

1. There was an assumption underpinning the model that sharing would prove an active benefit of the model. In fact the picture was more varied, though some who did not wish initially to share ended up appreciating it. Where it worked well it created relationships of deep trust which persisted beyond their residence in the project.

2. The positive outcomes attributed to sharing were made possible only by careful housing management and contrast with the negative accounts by some residents of sharing elsewhere before and after the project.

3. Feedback from local authorities which had placed families in shared accommodation was that they were pleasantly surprised by how it had panned out in spite of in some cases initial concerns.

4. Where families with children share with single people the organisation must have or develop safeguarding expertise and ensure that safeguarding is considered actively at all stages.

## Experience and challenges behind the lessons

There were mixed views amongst referring local authorities about sharing. Concerns were to do with practical constraints regarding the number of children who could be accommodated and the number of boy children over 8 allowed if the property was shared as well as other concerns to do with mental health, personality clashes and placing children with special needs in a house with other adults.

Sharing produced benefits for the model when residents got on well: language skills improved through conversation; residents, including children, were 'cared for' informally by others in the house; those who were ill had people around to support them. One woman was helped to deliver her baby by another resident in the property.

There were personality clashes and difficulties which Praxis had to manage, some of which took quite a lot of time.

Not a challenge for the model as such, but the experience of being on one's own again after being in shared accommodation was isolating for some who found the move to single room accommodation elsewhere stressful, isolating and depressing.

# Move on support for residents

## Lessons

1. It was not always possible to 'move on' residents as quickly as anticipated as some were accepted into the project and then got 'stuck' as the complexity of their immigration case unravelled and they were subjected to often prolonged delays in decision-making. This is inevitable given the current immigration system and political climate.

3. The project aimed to help those at 'the end of the road' (i.e. with no possibility of regularising their status) with advice and support for what their options were, including voluntary return. In the event this was only needed by one resident.

2. The model provided significantly better accommodation than that which some residents moved into once the project had helped them regularise, or begin to regularise, their status. This is not a weakness in the model as such, but it does mean move on can be traumatic and depressing and support needs to be provided if the softer benefits of the project (confidence, wellbeing) are not to dissipate rapidly.

4. The amount of time needed for move on support was not factored in and was much greater than expected. This is almost an additional dimension of the project which ideally would be built in for the future.

## Experience and challenges behind the lessons

There were some residents (both S.17 and single women) who secured accommodation early on in the project and then, for a range of reasons, stayed put. The reasons for this related to various barriers to getting their immigration status resolved, but it posed a challenge in terms of showing how the pilot could in all instances speed up some form of case resolution.

S.17 residents are normally supported with their move on but for single NRPF residents there is no such support. The experience of move on proved so traumatic for some of these residents that Praxis had to spend a considerable amount of time supporting them and preventing them from doing themselves harm.

A key challenge in terms of meeting destitute residents' needs was in moving the residents on to less desirable - or in some cases any - accommodation. The contrast between their 'future' and the pilot accommodation could be stark: some found themselves facing life in a hostel after having lived with friends in a pleasant house with a garden.

# Managing and resourcing the model

## Lessons

1. Resources for the set up of the project within Praxis, (particularly given that it was its first venture into accommodation management) were “vastly underestimated”. It is necessary to ensure that a wide range of policies and procedures for all aspects of housing and risk management are in place and that relevant procedures (risk management, health and safety) are regularly reviewed and carried out and this takes resources and time.

2. Some elements of delivering this model were inadequately factored into its resourcing. This was particularly true of the time needed for: resident assessments; move on support; travel to and from properties and the intensive support required by some high needs residents.

3. Running a project whose financial model is based on local authorities referring and then paying for a service requires regular and anticipative communication. For example, Praxis learnt to send a purchase order to ensure they were ‘on the system’ of local authorities at admission stage.

4. Volunteers could undertake some of the support tasks delivered by the project co-ordinator, who was thinly stretched across eight properties and many more households.

## Experience and challenges behind the lessons

This was Praxis’ first venture into a housing project and it was not initially geared up to the work needed to ensure a high standard of property maintenance which safeguarded residents and managed all risks well. Much more work than anticipated was required to put in place policies, procedures and handbooks and undertake housing management.

It was not possible to cover all the housing management work needed without a dedicated resource so a Housing Officer post was formalised in 2016. This role ensured smooth move ins and move outs and safe and efficient maintenance of all properties.

Risk management became an increasing focus as the project progressed. Praxis had to introduce various risk procedures such as emergency contingency plans for fires and flooding and an out of hours phone number for residents. This latter was rotated amongst specific staff who joined the rota in return for additional days holiday. Praxis also got much more rigorous about assessments, introducing face to face assessments for all residents (including S.17 residents) as the project progressed.

Becoming more savvy about ensuring high occupancy and in ‘invoicing’ local authorities was also necessary. Local authorities can have long run in times, especially for payments.

# The policy context and the risks it presents to this model

We examined the policy context extensively during the evaluation and summarise here the key external factors and risks which may shape this and future projects.

**Uncertainty and instability in the policy context:** Brexit has introduced uncertainty, instability and paralysis into some areas of policy development. The government 'line' on immigration is also not clear: the 'Windrush scandal' led to the first Cabinet resignation following the 2017 General Election and, as a result, some aspects of the 'hostile environment' created for those with uncertain immigration status have been suspended, and some changes proposed not introduced. Brexit will require new immigration processes, laws and rules but the shape of these is also unclear. The immediate future therefore promises instability which is not normally good for investment.

**Public attitudes to migration:** for some time, public attitudes towards migration have been assumed to be negative. However migration seems to be decreasing in political salience: *"Immigration optimists now significantly outnumber pessimists on the economic measure, while on the cultural measure optimists and pessimists are now balanced. Before Brexit, pessimists were the larger group on both measures"*.<sup>17</sup>

**Challenging times for local authorities:** a funding gap of £5 billion is projected for 2020 and one in ten council chief executives surveyed in January 2018 feared their authorities would not have enough funding to carry out their statutory minimum duties in 2018/9.<sup>18</sup> This means that where projects depend on them for an income stream, there is a risk that costs will be forced down, or that in making choices about which statutory duties to abrogate councils will look first to those associated with less popular and/or influential populations like destitute migrants. Mitigating against this is current concern that failures to make proper provision for vulnerable children can lead to tragedy.<sup>19</sup>

**The relationships between local authorities and the Home Office may change:** the 2016 Immigration Act contains some significant provisions to change the whole basis of support for families with uncertain immigration status, including those who have applied for asylum but been finally refused. Briefly, the Home Office would assume responsibility for assessing such families' needs for accommodation and support, although local authorities would continue to provide it. These provisions have not yet been enacted, the regulations needed have not been produced and we understand there is no timetable for them at present.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, in the wake of the Windrush scandal, there are moves by some local authorities to distance themselves from the Home Office. Using projects like this one could well be popular with them, but the uncertainty about numbers and who will decide who gets support in the future makes planning difficult.

**Demand for affordable housing continues to outstrip supply in many areas:** this affects price for buying and renting. Possible interest rate rises add a further element of risk.<sup>21</sup> In areas of high demand, striking an adequate balance between affordability and suitable location is difficult, as has been the experience in London but it has been cheaper to buy than lease. In low demand areas there may be other choices but also other factors at play such as guarantees of return, the longer term values of properties in that market, suitability of areas, and safety.

**Providers of social housing are changing:** a significant proportion of the two million Housing Association stock is owned and managed by larger associations with stock of 20,000 plus. Some of these are place based with a strong commitment to contributing to their local community.

17 <https://medium.com/@robfordmancs/how-have-attitudes-to-immigration-changed-since-brexit-e37881f55530>

18 <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Council-tax-increases-not-enough-to-stop-cuts-to-services-warn-town-hall-chiefs/44801>

19 The serious case review arising from the death of Lynne Oluk and her daughter while placed out of borough by Croydon highlighted these risks

20 Anonymous Home Office senior official

21 [https://www.savills.co.uk/research\\_articles/229130/247530-0](https://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/229130/247530-0) – Buckle, C., McLaren, L., UK Housing Market Update July 2018, Savills]

Others have been formed by a series of mergers to increase their asset base, reach, credit scoring and ability to develop more housing – some of the larger players own upwards of 50,000 stock across the country with Clarion the first 100,000 association.

**Street homelessness and rough sleeping is increasing:** and remains a government policy priority. Within that, there is an emerging understanding that migrant homelessness may need additional resources and some local authorities and third sector providers have recognised that and set up specific schemes. The Homelessness Reduction Act which came into effect in April 2018 may also increase awareness. Women, however, remain a more hidden homeless population.

**There is a homelessness crisis across the board:** even when families get leave to remain they may face years of insecurity and frequent moves. The support needed for moving on is thus increased.

**Supported housing is in flux:** some projects (mostly outside London) raise income from housing and providing varying degrees of support to those in housing need, mainly newly recognised refugees. Their supported housing is funded through a mix of income streams including housing benefit, housing related support contracts and sometimes funds for specific areas of need. Policy around supported housing is therefore crucial to the success and sustainability of these models. Since 2011 housing related support services are funded by local authorities with the result that all those looking for it (e.g. older people, those with mental health needs) compete at local level.

**Housing benefit is under review:** income from rents is a significant funding stream for some destitute migrant housing projects. Some use ‘exempt accommodation’ status to charge rents to cover the extra levels of service they provide e.g. to newly recognised refugees. However, people in exempt accommodation risk being “benefit trapped” i.e. never able to earn enough to come off benefits and this provision is currently under review. Any change would not necessarily affect registered providers (like housing associations) as they are exempt from these restrictions, but it could affect models developed by others.

**Welfare reforms may affect migrants disproportionately:** The raft of benefit changes, many linked to the implementation of Universal Credit, are a barrier to providing housing for those on low incomes. Refugees and migrants may struggle more than the average claimant to understand and engage with welfare systems in the UK and so these changes (Universal Credit, especially the need for the tenant to pay rent rather than have direct housing benefit payments) combined with unstable employment and irregular incomes will affect them particularly as does the benefit cap which catches larger families<sup>22</sup>.

**Reforms in private rented regulation from October 2018 will cover more shared housing:** from 1st October 2018 mandatory licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) is extended so that smaller properties used as HMOs in England which house 5 people or more in 2 or more separate households will in many cases require a licence. New mandatory conditions to be included in licences have also been introduced, prescribing national minimum sizes for rooms used as sleeping accommodation and requiring landlords to adhere to council refuse schemes.<sup>23</sup> This more universal approach to licensing poses challenges for charitable housing providers such as Praxis who do not benefit from the exemption enjoyed by Registered Providers but are required to deal with the bureaucracy and expense of measures required to meet the licensing conditions.

22 NACCOM research due to be published in autumn 2018 looks at this: it was not available at time of writing

23 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/houses-in-multiple-occupation-and-residential-property-licensing-reform-guidance-for-local-housing-authorities>, 20 June 2018

# 3: Outcomes from the pilot

The pilot project hoped to achieve broadly the same outcomes for both its S.17 and destitute residents. For S.17 residents, there was the added dimension that the support could also benefit any children in the families. To find out how the project benefitted its residents we interviewed as many as possible whilst they were living in the properties and a few months after they moved on, if they did. We summarise what they told us here and case studies show how the project differently affected three of its residents.

We also summarise briefly the benefits for other stakeholders in the project who, it was also hoped, would benefit to some degree. These include local authorities and the project partners.

## Outcomes for residents

Over the lifetime of the three-year evaluation of the pilot:

- 46 households were placed in the project's 8 houses in total (S.17 + single, destitute women).
- 33 (70%) of the total were funded through S.17 and included between them 54 children.
- 14 (30%) of the total were single, destitute women placed by Praxis who otherwise would have had nowhere safe to stay. Some of these shared the donated house in Laburnum Road, some shared with families in the other houses.
- "By the final year of the project between two and three bedspaces in the 18 Commonwealth houses were being used at any one time to house single women with NRPF".

## Being housed, and feeling 'at home'

Residents all had a decent, well-managed and safe place to live during their term of residence and all were offered immigration advice and wrap-around support. They appreciated this:

*"They accommodated us when homeless and were checking on us whether we were all right ....always made sure everything in place always maintained well made sure we were comfortable which I really appreciate".*

For those who had been homeless and destitute, the accommodation was particularly welcomed and the conditions appreciated: *"the environment it is calm not rough or busy the street is quiet and the house clean."*

We asked residents whether or not they felt it had become home. In most cases women had not come to view it as home as they knew their time there was temporary. For S.17 clients in particular, it was sometimes better than other options both before and after, sometimes not. Some women with children, while they enjoyed the social contact involved in sharing, were relieved to move out into self contained accommodation afterwards.

Generally residents took a sanguine view: like most others in London with few resources, they had little choice about where to live and knew they would face long uncertainties before settling. They were grateful to stay in a decent home, not worrying about who they shared with, knowing that repairs would be done quickly. They were not surprised that some time after leaving they still had no permanent place to live. Some, however, identified the time spent in a Praxis house as a factor in building resilience to deal with that.



"It was a good thing ...being in the Praxis house. It was safe, and ...people were good, no problem and always Praxis people are coming and checking and that was great. Always. So I think that was very good. Last six years before that I was living in temporary accommodation but not like this. This was different accommodation. Bit of a rest from everything being there."

## Understanding their legal situation and status

Some residents were unclear about what was happening in their cases early on in their stay having had poor quality legal advice. Praxis advisers and project workers worked hard to deal with the problems that entailed, with some successes. One child protection social worker described the benefits of this for one of the families in the properties:

*... "towards the end of my involvement the casework was very useful: the solicitor the mother was working with was a bit shady and he had been working on no win no fee basis but the mother didn't realise this and thought he was working for free. The grounds of application are human rights but she had good grounds for asylum ... we cannot give that kind of immigration advice but the Praxis caseworker stepped in and pointed out all the difficulties with the application and took them off to get better advice and to make a proper legal aid funded asylum claim. It was great. ....she knew what she was talking about and got the mother out of the hands of a highly questionable solicitor. She had dealt with it before and she had the knowledge. It was very reassuring ... at least she knew what to do. As a child protection social worker I had no idea."*

Residents' awareness of their situation and their legal position also improved through the project. All those we were able to interview after they had moved out were quite clear about the legal process and their position in it. Some had resolved their problems, some had not, but their awareness and understanding had helped them.

Even the residents exhausting their options for immigration status and reaching the 'end of the road' seem to have gained a clearer understanding of their position.<sup>1</sup>

*"We only had two cases with women at the end of the road. The most dramatic was recently...a Red Cross referral ... where we had to tell a woman to leave who had been with us a few months. We gave her plenty of notice, but it was horrible. I spoke with her to explain the situation. I had to say 'we're really sorry we cannot help you unless you have fresh evidence'. She begged, I had to say 'we're really sorry we cannot help you unless you have fresh evidence'. We referred her to a night shelter as it was in winter. She was a destitute client ... she was supposed to apply for asylum [but] had a negative outcome and no fresh evidence to submit for a fresh claim. .... We had to tell her to leave and we did discuss AVR<sup>2</sup> but she wasn't interested. That was very hard."*

## Resolving Immigration issues

We reviewed information held on the casework database, which draws exclusively on the immigration work recorded by advisers on the Praxis case management system, to get an accurate picture of casework outcomes to supplement information we got from residents, staff and referrers in interview.

We reviewed 31 out of a potential 46 cases. There were various reasons why we did not review the remaining 15 including that they had not given consent or had not been resident long enough for their case to yield useful data.

<sup>1</sup> However, we were aware that some of those who refused consent or did not respond to our requests may have had more complex issues or more negative experiences

<sup>2</sup> Assisted Voluntary Return

Of these 31 cases:

- 14 had detailed casework done by Praxis staff
- 6 had their cases reviewed by Praxis staff in some detail (i.e. they had other advisers but Praxis staff checked on the quality of advice and representation)
- 8 were referred formally by Praxis to solicitors or other agencies for further immigration work
- 7 appeared to have had significant problems with the advice on their cases: this was a mix of people who had got bad advice or action from elsewhere which the adviser had been unable to correct or in some cases what appeared to be a problem with the relationship with their Praxis adviser (sometimes both)
- 9 of those actively assisted by Praxis had a positive final result by the time of the review.
- It was not possible to identify any with negative results.

The assertion by project staff that “we have achieved positive resolution in 95% of the cases so far” would therefore seem to hold true, though this only applies to those where there was a final immigration decision.

As noted elsewhere, the quality of Praxis’ casework was highly rated by referrers, who often made favourable comparisons with the legal advice their clients received from elsewhere. Praxis’ own records lead to similar conclusions, as do the client legal outcomes.

## **Accessing services**

We were given many examples of the ways in which the project sorted out access to services. The project ensured that all residents were connected with services they needed including GPs, and that they were aware of other local services in their area which may benefit them. It also helped residents access benefits which are often a minefield for those who have been destitute:

*“Ina helped me with the banking needed for the benefits. The banks needed proof of address and through her we got the account – she helped me with that. And [she got me the] form for child benefits and income support. I was very pregnant so I could not go to the groups.”*

In addition, the project referred into Praxis’ own services, particularly the groups. About 60% of residents we interviewed attended Praxis groups. Attending the groups was a great boon for many and complemented the more practical advice about service connection and accessing benefits. One staff member observed that the groups were useful for fostering mutual support as well as bringing people into Praxis where they could access other tangible advice provision around benefits and immigration.

*“How the mums enjoy the groups – that wasn’t anticipated, but it is amazing how much they enjoy them. They travel there together and a sisterhood has developed and that’s great. And they see the advisers when they are there – the fact that Safia also sometimes attends WINGS when she wants to catch up with clients. That works very nicely”*

Support of this type continued for some once they left the properties and was an important part of ensuring that move on was not as traumatic as it otherwise might have been. Referrers noted that this ongoing support was greatly welcomed:

*“What has worked well is the fact that those mums when they move on continue attending [at Praxis] not only for them but so that others can see that the project involves moving on out of the Praxis accommodation.”*

*“When exiting they assist clients to be mainstreamed, helping clients getting benefits and access to housing and also refer clients to nearest services.”*

Clients who had moved on noted that they missed the holistic support they had received, and continued to refer friends to Praxis because of the support they had received.

*"Whereas now when I have a problem with social worker or someone or something I have to Google and find things out whereas with Praxis everything was in one place."*

*"I can say that when we needed help we don't ask for it and don't know where to go but now I tell people I meet you don't have to suffer in silence go to Praxis I always recommend it"*

## **Increased sense of wellbeing and social connection**

The project benefitted residents to different degrees socially and emotionally. Some residents were particularly troubled and some had major problems, but most found that the time they spent in the Praxis property and in touch with other residents helped them connect better to others.

Some council referrers said that though they were initially not sure about the sharing, and had felt that some clients were not keen, many had come to see it as a positive experience for families they had placed, reducing isolation and loneliness and often fostering mutual support ... *"I wouldn't have wanted her there on her own"*. One (male) social worker noted that: *"It is also worth saying that when I visited I was always aware that the other woman in the house ....definitely checked me out as a visitor. It was very positive ... she didn't want a strange man there, it was good to keep an eye on me.... (they are) looking out for each other "*.

The case studies illustrate how strong some of the bonds of friendship felt for those in the properties: several said that, following move on, they still met others and felt that they had found a new family through the project.

## **Greater confidence and positivity**

Many of those who had moved on spoke about having a new sense of confidence following their time in the project. This seemed a vital contribution towards longer-term resilience which the project had helped build.

*"I used to go to schools. I wanted to be an accountant or a site surveyor but have been out of school for a long time and you wonder if your brain still works. I'm doing debt advice volunteering to keep myself going but don't think I will do it as a career. I am very good at maths and calculation."*

*"Now I'm on the right path I've got a place so now I am waiting for baby to get to a day centre and I can do something for myself: go to college or something and better myself and get a job. Before I was just waiting and crossing my fingers for God to answer me."*

Referrers to the project noticed the change in some of the residents:

*"She was having some pretty heavy therapy at the same time but her English improved and she got on better with me. She was having an easier time. Her physical stature improved, shoulders back, back straighter and got on really well with caseworkers and got a nursery place so didn't have to deal with a screaming three-year-old all the time."*

## **The experience of moving on**

Difficulties in moving on were talked about by a number of former residents in their follow up interviews, usually because they moved to NASS accommodation following positive developments in their asylum claim and the housing was not as good, the locations possibly further afield and uncertainty continued to worry them.

"I was [in Praxis accommodation] two months. Then moved into NASS accommodation .... I didn't like NASS accommodation and (I was) calling Praxis back as much, much better than NASS. [NASS] was very crowded, (I) had to share a room with another woman and negativity. NASS said if I refused there would be difficulties. ....To be honest it's not great but it is the fact that I can move on. This is not my life - a passage I am going through so holding it down."

Moving on was difficult for many S.17 residents as well. Some moved to NASS housing and others were in temporary accommodation for long periods. One former resident was still in a mixed hostel for both single homeless people and families with her disabled son. The only advantage was that it was wheelchair accessible but he'd had problems sleeping after the move and her life and aspirations had been put on hold whilst she hung on to the hope that eventually a suitable accessible place to live would come up. Another former resident was in her third temporary home and third borough since moving. However, she was optimistic and grateful to Praxis for its help when interviewed nearly two and half years after moving out.

## **Resident Stories**

### **1. Sarah's story**

Sarah and her baby were placed by a London borough in April 2015. She stayed in one of the Croydon houses for nine months during which time she shared the house with between one other and two women. She was 19 when she moved from a mother and baby unit, and before that had been homeless after the death of a relative who brought her to the UK as a child. She has a learning disability, cannot read or write, and was often beaten by her relative. When she became homeless she often found herself in risky or exploitative situations, and had little family or community support.

*"I was scared where I lived before.... I stayed at a family friends' house. It was a nightmare. Before that I was living in Edmonton. It was hell there because of things happening at that point of my life and in that time and place. I don't get that with Praxis - no one one's going to attack you, hide your food, treat you bad. No one is physical or hurting you emotionally."*

Praxis supported her to register with the GP and other local services but she found groups very difficult and was uncomfortable in one-to-one client-professional relationships although she worked well with Homestart.

*"It's different now. Praxis has made it different. They understand you, don't outcast you. The places I was before I was very outcast."*

Praxis also dealt with her immigration application and she was happy with the service:

*"Praxis was very good at explaining what they need from you and asking how you came to this situation. They're fighting for you, go out there to get lawyers for you, take a lot of strain off your back. I like the way they do things.... My (relative) had a British passport but didn't formally adopt me....They said [my case] would take up to 2-3 years, possibly less but that what matters is gathering all the information they need and as soon as that is done they will start filing that. I don't have to stress about it. I can get help with money for the fee and now I know I can relax."*

The biggest challenge for Sarah during her stay was in sharing accommodation. At the point of referral Praxis and social services thought that Sarah might benefit from the stability of the two older women living there. Initially she struck up a good relationship with one woman but for most of her stay she struggled.

Her upbringing meant she constantly felt she was being blamed and she was not used to negotiating. She also kept breaking the house rules by having her partner stay over at night. The more she isolated herself from her housemates the more she wanted her partner to stay. This was an extremely difficult situation for her, her housemates and the Praxis worker. However by the time she was interviewed she was very positive about Praxis and the house and admitted she'd done things that were wrong.

Sarah moved on into temporary accommodation because she was now pregnant and the new baby was diagnosed with a rare condition needing specialist ante natal care. In fact, the Praxis worker was making a move on visit when Sarah's waters broke early so she rang for the Doula. Sarah got her status shortly after giving birth, sooner than she had been led to expect and we found that she had coped well with a very turbulent year. She hoped to be housed by a local council. We interviewed her some months later. With her immigrations status sorted she was now about to start work.

"Now I can work I'm just so happy. I'm going to be doing cleaning in a primary school – that's Monday to Friday and part time schedule works around the kids. I got it through an agency, it took me a long time. Been looking for a year because I don't have experience so this job will give me that.

I've recommended a lot of people to Praxis as they give so much support: help with immigration and also give people somewhere to stay so a lot of good they do that changes people's life."

*Praxis helped me now so much that I'm able to access help from Government. Made my life so easy. Basically changed my life. I'm not going to lie – 5 years ago life was upside down and every organisation I turned to couldn't help me but Praxis never turned its back on me and told me keep going and gave me hope and help."*

*What I remember about the project is that I was living in an environment with other people in the same situation as me and there were activities with people in same situation and there would be discussions about issues that could be improved at Praxis. Praxis was engaging with us and letting us know that we were Number 1 in their life. It was so nice. Even if I didn't have anything to eat could go to Praxis and they would give you something. There's a lot of good things that Praxis has done..... I never thought I would be this happy. It started to feel like there was no hope, but everything just changed. If it wasn't for Praxis I don't know where I would be today. It's great that there are good people out there."*

## **2. Joanna's story**

Joanna is a single 60 year old woman who was referred in November 2015. She was thrilled to move in.

*"Yes. The whole night when I moved in I was praying, rolling on my carpet; thanking God. I never thought I'd get like this. Even before I came here [the UK] I was suffering and sleeping on floors, moving around. I feel safe in my own space. I can't believe it. .... I think they are doing very well. I don't see anything they could improve. There are a lot of others like me needing help. .... It's changed my life and now when I'm walking out I'm proud. I never thought I'd get a house like this before getting papers. No one in my community can believe it"*.

She lived in the Praxis house for a year. During this time she was helped by a reputable solicitor (who had been found by the referring NGO, Freedom from Torture) who had gathered extensive evidence about abuse before she came to the UK seeking asylum and as well as about the potential risks if she were to be returned to her country of origin.

The solicitor had also identified exploitation in households where she worked following her asylum refusal in the UK over 10 years before. From this work she was identified through the National Referral Mechanism as a potential victim of modern day slavery and thus entitled to Home Office support so moved out of the Praxis house. She was however then placed in Swindon, but Praxis and Freedom from Torture got her moved back back to the outskirts of London where she could continue to receive support from Praxis.

“Swindon was isolated to me. They give me money, warm clothes but don’t give mobile phones.

Praxis has been a light for me. It got me from a deep hole – how should I put it – a pit. You know if you fall in a pit and someone picks you up, don’t you call that a blessing? When I went to Swindon they were all checking on me ... As I’m now far away, I still come here to Praxis. They are so friendly and lovely. You feel you are loved. When you are hungry you are fed. If there’s any activity you get transport money. The only problem is if you are too lazy to join. Otherwise this has done a lot to my life. I will not forget them. I always keep recommending people in crisis to come here .... Since I’m getting old and my body is weakening I don’t know but now I’m in a house I have a good hope that everything will be all right especially as everyone says I have a good solicitor. Everyone I mention them to says they are good. I used to live in fear but when I went to Praxis House I stopped. I pray to God I get my status this year.”

Although Joanna seems to be getting little support from the Home Office contracted accommodation provider, she travels daily into Central London to attend various Praxis groups and activities as well as language classes and a ‘voice’ group at Women for Refugee Women who are preparing to present the experiences and view of asylum seekers in Parliament. She remains active and hopeful that she will get status.

### **3. Diana's story**

Diana stayed with various families via Refugees at Home and then moved into Praxis accommodation in July 2017. She was there for two months before moving into Home Office accommodation in another area of London. She has mental health problems and was glad of the short period of stability in the Praxis house, where she made friends. Praxis supported her in finding a legal aid solicitor as a victim of trafficking. She is waiting for a decision on her asylum case.

In her new home she shares a room with another woman.

*“To be honest it’s not great but the fact is that I can move on. This is not my life, it’s a passage I am going through so I’m holding it down.”*

In the Praxis house she made friends who continue to be supportive to her now she has left the accommodation:

*“We are very close, we organise dinner with the girls once a month now I have moved. [I like the] people and the environment there..... it is calm not rough or busy, the street is quiet and the house clean. [The project] really, really helped me and I’m so grateful for that. [It is hard] when you have been moving from one place to another, staying with families you don’t know and when I decided to finally to go [to the project] I was really happy and grateful. It was a space of my own without interfering from other families, it really changed everything for me.”*

She continues to attend Brighter Futures, a Praxis group, weekly.

“I’m coping well now and moving ahead. It’s still a struggle but it’s a fight and you have to keep going. I try to get busy, I volunteer in a legal firm in Kensington once a week. I do admin and reception work there. ...and they offered me training as a debt adviser ..so I am training until I am ready to leave”

My goals and dreams are still there but you don't know.... I don't know what will happen...I hope and pray it will work out very soon and can pursue my career, go back to school, achieve my dreams. Thank you Praxis for what you do."

## **Benefits for local authorities**

It was hoped that local authorities referring women into the service would benefit from the project by gaining a service they could trust, which brought benefits for their clients and which also represented good value for money. Interviews with local authorities showed that they had appreciated the following benefits.

Receiving a trusted, quality service which kept clients safe

Social workers reported that Praxis established robust standards and expectations for the service and how users were treated, and some welcomed the opportunity to show how better practice could produce significant impacts. Authorities continued to refer even when Praxis had challenged them or made a complaint on behalf of a resident. The option of referring to accommodation with good standards of support and inside London seemed particularly important to referrers following the deaths of Croydon out-of-borough placements.

The holistic package was valued as was their settled status (albeit temporary) from which other issues could be addressed. Typical comments were:

"[The project] held them in a position where we could address things. We worried about the mother but knew she was in a safe environment and so could do her therapeutic work. We knew the kid was safe and in school and people with an eye on her and right at the end a feeling that she was getting reasonable legal advice."

"For me it's the wrap around services they provide .... been immensely helpful."

"On entering the project and we know they are safe and don't have to worry about other things coming up (like) repairs not being done."

## **Improvements in client wellbeing**

The improvements in wellbeing were recognised by referrers and some recognised that the emphasis on getting a resolution to immigration problems contributed to this, especially where the advice was well regarded. One referrer in a local authority observed that:

*"Knowing what Praxis (was) doing on Windrush, knowing they had success elsewhere did increase my confidence ... (they are) not just a group of well-meaning people. You have some clout. We work with a lot of charities but it's helpful to have one that is in the national press."*

And another noted that:

"To be quite honest I can close my eyes and not worry. They have a great success rate. Their legal team also know what they're doing."

## **What referrers felt about value for money**

Referrers perceptions of costs were complex. One early referrer found the service too expensive and moved on to use a private rental agency. Some told us that they could not refer larger families because the need for two or more rooms put it outside their cost limits.

The key to concrete cost savings, however, was the ability to demonstrate that those housed by Praxis resolved their cases more quickly, so shortening the time that local authorities had to pay for their accommodation and support. Some councils certainly believed this and Praxis is moving people through the project more quickly than the averages recorded on NRPF Connect data<sup>3</sup>. One local authority stated with confidence that Praxis are “moving people through the process more quickly”<sup>4</sup> and two social workers in different authorities took a very positive view on cost savings which they felt had been achieved precisely because the service was holistic.

“For the ones I’ve placed – Yes [it’s cost effective] – why? (because they are) on our books for less time. They take up less staff time in dealing with repairs and all sort of bits and pieces. They deal with approaching other housing when moving out and if I have another officer supporting people it’s good. If [the client] has been out of the borough for x amount of time they have to apply to that authority and a lot of local authorities are not good about that and Praxis helps them to access it. And they put in the right legal application ....(for example) Zambrano (cases) get status with NRPF which is difficult for some legal providers but better for them (the clients). I would say yes they are cost effective for us for the ones I put in there”.

“If I had to bullet point what we’ve got out of it I’d say trust, good housing, good quality legal advice, good add on services, good entry and exit point and in the long run, good value for money.”

## **Benefits for project partners (Commonweal, Praxis and Investors)**

All partners regarded the project as having achieved a productive learning partnership assisted by the evaluation process. The four investors maintained a high level of engagement throughout and contributed learning which has informed this report.

Commonweal seeks to learn from and potentially replicate pilot projects that develop housing solutions to tackle a social injustice. Within Commonweal’s terms of reference this has been a successful project: injustices of treatment within ‘the system’ have been righted and learning produced. *“Commonweal are not experts in most of the areas of social injustice which our projects support, but what we do is do a very good line in passionate indignation on behalf of others. We recognise the injustice and want to support there. This project has done that for me.”*

For Praxis the benefits have been multi-faceted. The housing pilot contributes an additional service to their existing holistic offer to migrants who are vulnerable and at risk. “It’s helping us deliver on our key strategic aim – tackling migrant destitution”. Making this work with the grain of other services was not always easy, but the organisation has been able to respond to, learn from and act on the challenges met. Praxis’ profile as experts in this field has also been raised significantly ... “When Metropolitan was setting up their project in Derby they come to us for advice and support. And we are asked to speak about this project. So it has raised our profile.” A glowing report from Croydon licensing department after an inspection underlines a new recognition for quality in this area of work which they can build on. Finally they now have access to good quality data to show how their work changes people’s lives,<sup>5</sup> which has supported better advocacy as well as effective marketing of both their expertise and the service itself. This in turn has improved relationships with local authorities, underpinned by systems that now work well.

<sup>3</sup> Of course, Praxis residents are also on the Connect database, but since the numbers in this pilot are so small it is unlikely to impact the averages reported on length of stay and cost.

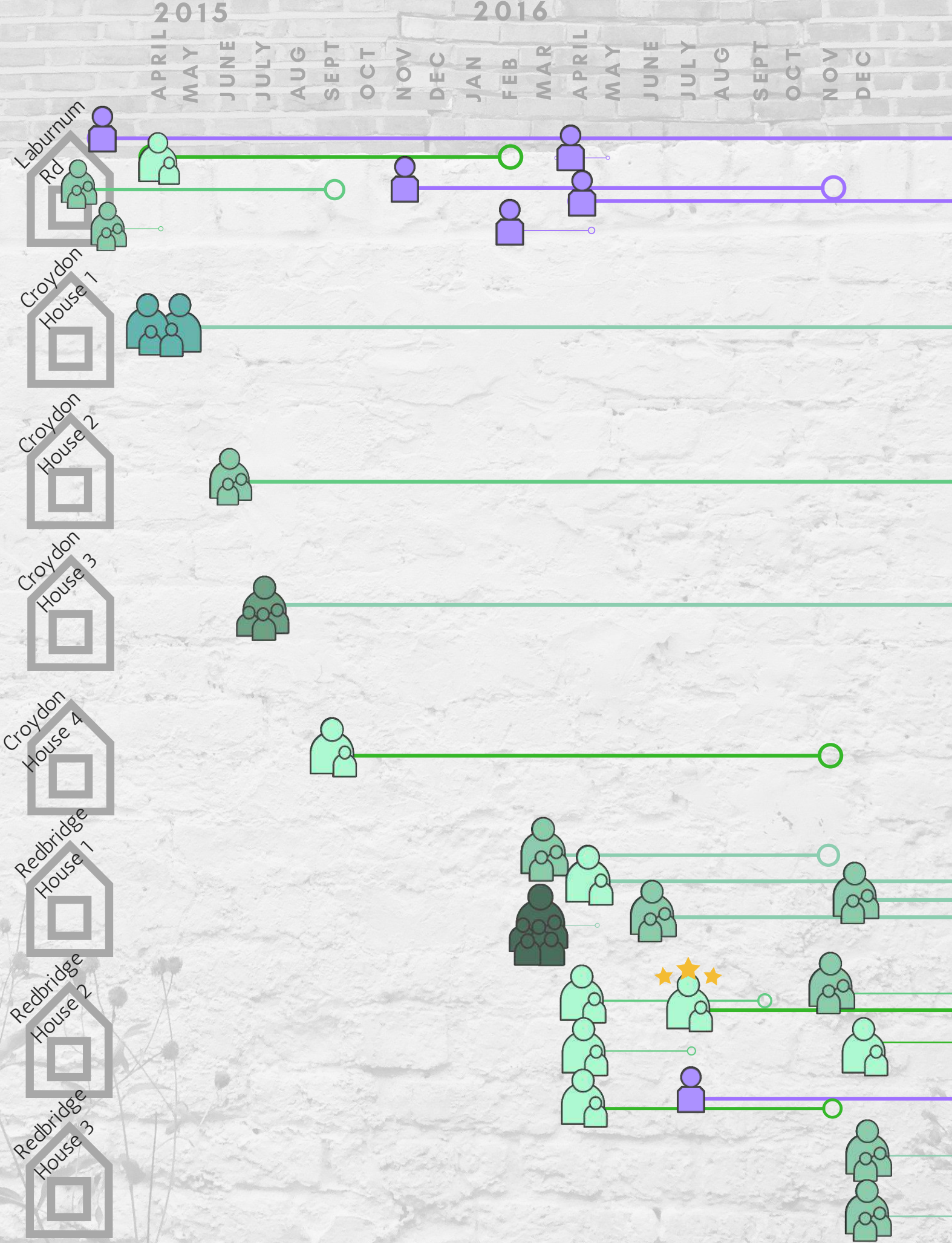
<sup>4</sup> It has not been possible to quantify this. The NRPF Connect data relates to the total time a household spends funded by a local authority and many of the project’s residents spent time before they arrived in other accommodation also council funded

<sup>5</sup> *“In all of the properties I have been very impressed with your commitment to the individuals living within the homes and your attention to detail in all matters. For example, not only do Praxis adhere to legislative standards, such as arranging for gas appliances to be checked each year by a Gas Safe contractor, Praxis go over and above good practice, such as testing the fire alarm system every month and fitting smoke detectors in several locations throughout the property. Each property has a file with all of the necessary documentation inside, such as inspection dates, actions carried out and Fire Risk Assessment reports. Each tenant is not just given a roof over their head; they are supported by officers, such as Carlos, who is welcomed by everyone.”*



# Resident Flow


Fig. 4



# KEY

Pregnant 

Disappeared 

Single, destitute adult who would not otherwise be housed without the project 

Adult + 1 child 

Adult + 2 children 

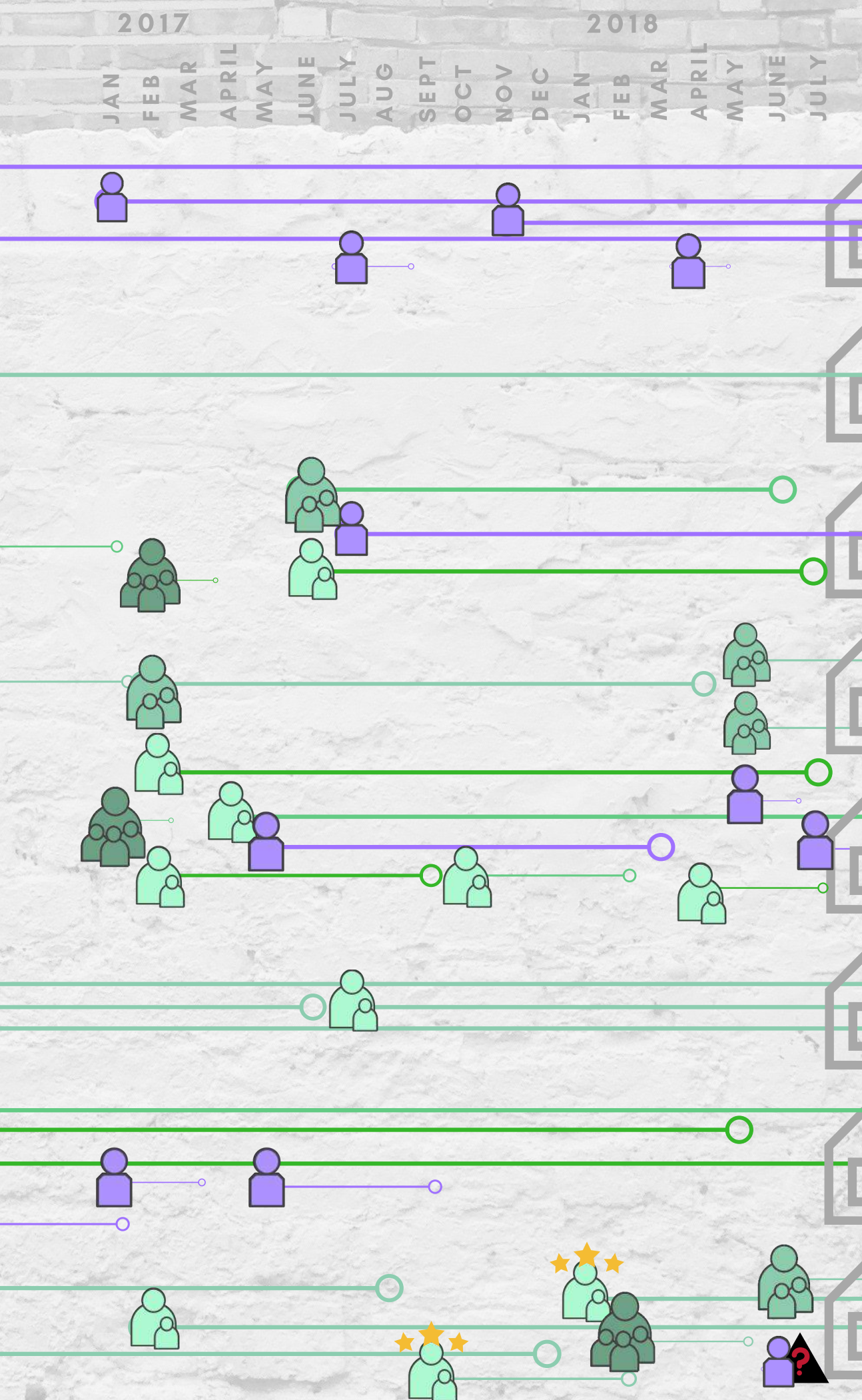
Adult + 3 children 

Adult + 5 children 

2 adults + 2 children 

## NOTES

This flowchart spans a period slightly longer than the three-year evaluation period which ended on 30th April 2018. This accounts for any apparent discrepancies in terms of numbers of residents mentioned in the body of the text.



# 4. Financial and costing issues

This section explains and analyses the costs of delivering the model described in earlier sections. It includes a commentary on the impact of changing some of the assumptions built into the Praxis model and provides:

- A description of the revenue generated and costs incurred by Praxis in implementing the model described in Section 1, including assumptions made.
- A sensitivity analysis, which explores some of the assumptions and explains how the project financials would change if different assumptions were made about income or costs.
- Comment on the replicability of the model by other organisations or in other areas of the country.
- A case study of Action Foundation, another provider of housing and support for destitute migrants (specifically destitute asylum seekers) with income from lettings to support this service (see also the table provided at Appendix 2 for overview information about other models including Action Foundation).

## Key points regarding the model and its costs

- The project utilises seven Commonweal properties, funded by social investment. Within these seven properties, there are 18 bedspaces used for Section 17 (S.17) no recourse to public funds (NRPF) family referrals from local authorities, and up to three bedspaces for single women with NRPF who are not supported by S.17 (we call them “single women with NRPF” in some of this report). A further three bedspaces for single women with NRPF are available in a house let to Praxis by a supporter at a reduced rent (Laburnum Road).
- Income from S.17 clients funded by local authorities covers both the costs of running the seven Commonweal properties and the costs of running Laburnum Road, as well as staffing and resident welfare costs. 46 households were accommodated during the three-year evaluation period and 14 of them were non- S.17 cases in ‘free’ bedspaces (9 of them were housed in Laburnum Road). Over the lifetime of the evaluation this equates to a ratio of one free bedspace for every 3.28 spaces paid for by local authorities under their S.17 obligations.
- The original proposal was for 7 spare rooms (one per Commonweal property) to be used for single women with NRPF. However, due to the nature of some family referrals or the mix within properties (e.g. characteristics of referrals), it was apparent that sometimes these single rooms could not be used for NRPF service users, for example the make-up of families may have meant spare rooms needed to be utilised for children, or referring authorities may have stipulated that single women with NRPF could not share with the family, for whatever reason. By the final year of the pilot availability for single women with NRPF settled at up to 3 spare rooms within the Commonweal properties being used plus specific use of the three rooms in the Laburnum Road property.

- At current staffing levels and assuming 94% occupancy of the 18 funded bed spaces the project breaks even on a full cost recovery basis (i.e. including Praxis organisational overheads of approximately 12% of turnover as a cost to the project).
- The break-even position assumes significant levels of 'subsidy'. The rent paid by Praxis to Commonweal is some £32,000 less than the return to investors, with Commonweal making up the shortfall, acting as an indirect subsidy. If Praxis were to rent the properties on the open market the rent would be in the region of £126,000 per year – almost double the amount Praxis is paying Commonweal and around £30,000 more than the annual return to investors. This indicates that this type of project would be unviable in outer London at market rents.
- Rental cost consideration will be unique to any potential replication project: there will be regional variations in rents; another organisation may have different sources of finance, meaning purchasing property could be achieved at varying (interest or yield) costs; and some organisations who have access to existing owned housing stock, or liaise with dedicated housing providers, will face different rent or interest costs and potentially far cheaper, especially if located in areas of lower housing demand. We have calculated that the rent Praxis pays to Commonweal averages at 63% of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rents which is a reasonable level of rent for housing associations and other housing providers motivated by social purpose.
- The key added value Praxis has brought is its ability to provide immigration advice and wrap around support to residents of the scheme, so as to support them to achieve positive legal and personal outcomes. This resource is provided at relatively low cost and its true cost is subsidised by Praxis' own fundraising.
- There is potential for savings to boroughs who are willing to work with a dedicated housing project that includes immigration advice and support services. Savings could be in the form of reduced nightly S.17 costs due to faster case resolution (see page 40), or reduced burden on social services due to the crucial wrap around support Praxis provides.

## **Income and costs associated with delivering the Praxis model**

Fig. 5 shows income and costs for the Praxis NRPF project. These are budgeted figures for the year ended 31 March 2019 based on 2017-18 actual expenditure. The assumptions made in the 2018/19 budget are based on Praxis' experience of delivering the project for a full financial year in 2017/18. The project income and expenditure statement shows that:

- The project generates net income of £284,286 (gross rent of £302,286 less 6% voids).
- We have estimated that the immigration advice necessary for this project is 0.4 FTE. This is half funded through the project budget with the costs of the other 0.2 FTE borne by the advice team budget.
- Total running costs for the seven Commonweal houses plus Laburnum Road (see below for more detail on Laburnum Road) are approximately £166,000 – this includes rent and all housing management costs (with an estimation of staff time spent on housing management). Housing management is approximately £93,000 per annum across 8 properties.

## Housing management definition and costs

A standard definition of housing management has been used and applied to the costings which include direct costs of property management including repairs and maintenance, utilities, renewals, internal furnishings, legal costs and Council Tax plus staff time spent on other housing management functions including referrals and lettings (which in this project includes scheme promotion and marketing of bedspaces), referral management, move-on support and support of sharing arrangements.

N.B. Rent has been excluded from the housing management costs because, as outlined above, rents are likely to vary significantly in different schemes. The costs of council tax, maintenance and renewals might also vary by provider and by geographical area, but the differences in cost would be unlikely to make a significant difference to the overall position.

- Praxis has experimented with different staffing levels and has found that the required complement to run the project effectively and achieve the desired outcomes is:
  - A housing co-ordinator (1 FTE), who supports the residents and liaises with councils.
  - A housing officer (1 FTE); 0.6 FTE of this post is dedicated a housing management i.e. repairs and maintenance and 0.4 FTE to client support.
  - Oversight from Praxis' head of services; approximately 40% of her time during the set-up period of two years which is expected to reduce to 30% as the project becomes more established and includes external liaison and promoting and marketing the project.
  - 60 days' locum cover for annual leave and sickness for the housing co-ordinator and housing officer.
  - An immigration adviser (0.4 FTE – see above) to undertake case work on behalf of residents of the project.
  - 24 hour out on-call system which is required by Local Authorities.
- There is provision in the 'Client costs' budget for a hardship fund of £12,000 to help cover day-to-day expenses for single women with NRPF.

## A note on Laburnum Road and the cost of housing non S.17 cases

Laburnum Road is a three-bedroom house rented to Praxis at a reduced rent by a supporter of the project. Praxis has included this property in the NRPF project and uses it to accommodate single women with NRPF (and no other statutory support). The income from local authorities for their placements of families in the seven Commonweal houses, and assuming a void rate of 6% per year, is sufficient to cover the running costs of Laburnum Road. This ensures that at least three people who have no recourse to public funds can be housed at any one time.

Annual running costs for Laburnum Road are included within overall housing management, and subsidised rent is approximately £9,600.

**Fig. 5: Project specific income statement**

<b>Gross rental income</b>		£302,286	
Charitable funding towards immigration advice costs		£6,924	
Less Voids (at 6%)		- £18,000	
<b>Net Revenue</b>			<b>£291,210</b>
<b>Property related costs</b>			
Housing Management	£93120		
Rent	£7356		
		<b>£166646</b>	
<b>Other project costs</b>			
Staff time, immigration advice, other costs	£73983		
Client costs	£13500		
		<b>£87483</b>	
Overheads		<b>£36502</b>	
<b>Total costs</b>			<b>£290,632</b>
<b>Surplus</b>			<b>£578</b>

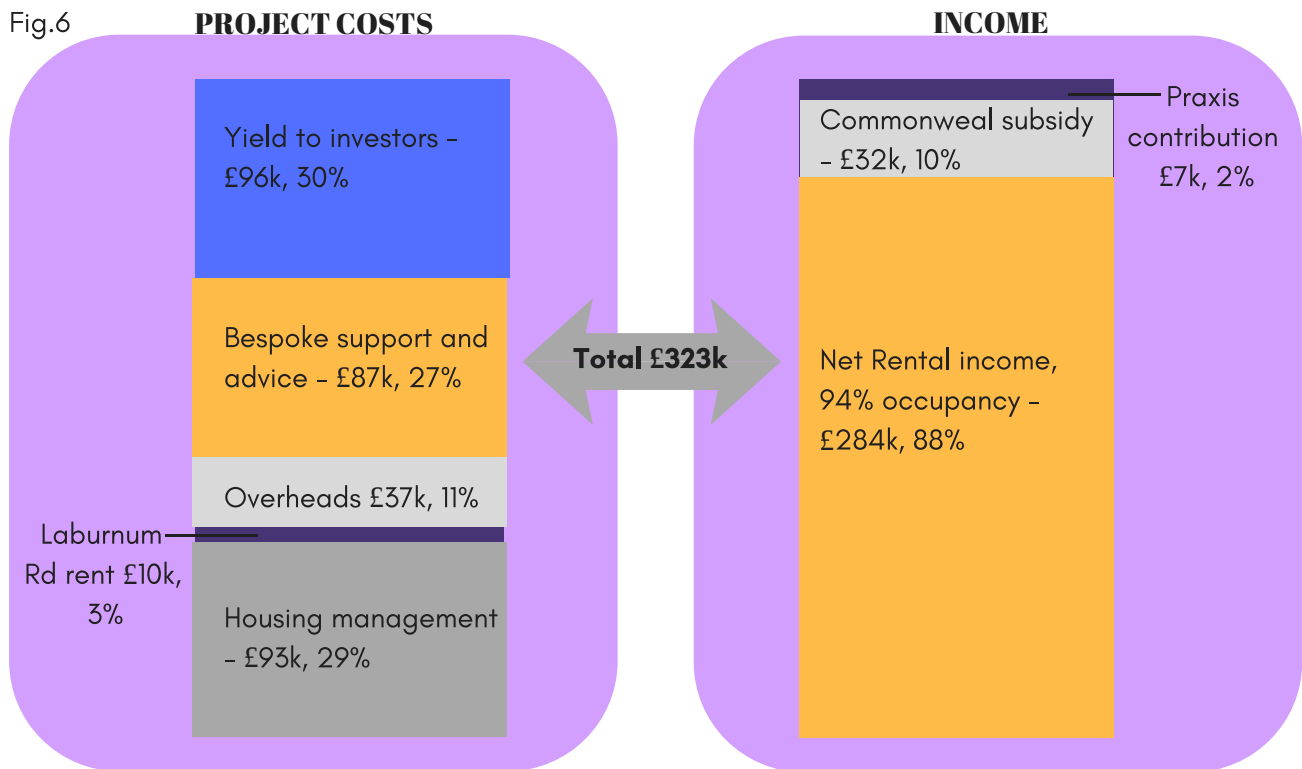
**Notes to Project Specific Income Statement:**

- Net revenue is calculated on the basis of nightly spot purchase rates at 100% capacity, less arrears, less voids. Income from other streams is negligible but note that other resources within Praxis are essential to delivering on project outcomes, in particular immigration advice.
- Other costs Include subsidised rental income paid by Praxis, and other non-staff housing related costs, e.g. repairs, renewals, utilities bills.
- See p45 for housing management definition and costs.
- Other project costs include support staff costs, project management, dedicated immigration advisor time (calculated as 0.4 FTE) and other staff costs e.g. on call costs, travel costs etc.
- Client costs relate to monies spent on events, interpreting services and a hardship fund for NRPF clients.
- Overheads are £36,502 and are calculated as a percentage of staff cost. This is in line with Praxis overhead charge to cover essential organisation cost.

N.B. Interested parties are invited to contact Praxis and Commonweal for more information.

## Fig.6: Project income and costs for delivering 21 bed spaces, including three for people with no recourse to public funds

The infographic below (Fig. 6) illustrates the key cost components of the Praxis model and the proportion of income spent on each.



## Sensitivity analysis

We considered the question of how Praxis' figures might vary in different circumstances or if the project were to be replicated by a different organisation. This section shows how the overall position might change if some of the assumptions about cost and income were different.

It is important to note that it is difficult to say with certainty what is a 'standard' cost benchmark for a supported housing project, as projects described as 'supported housing' are so diverse. In 2016 the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA, which became 'Homes England' in January 2018) published a report on understanding the cost differences in supported housing. This was based on an analysis of the accounts of providers, which found considerable variation across the sector. The HCA noted that:

*The precise estimate of associated social housing costs is sensitive to the inclusion or removal of more specialised supported housing organisations, with model estimates varying from £8,400 to £14,000 per unit. There is likely to be considerable diversity with the cost associated with each supported housing unit in the sector, for example by the client group and the level of service supplied.<sup>28</sup>*

To calculate Praxis' unit costs we excluded the cost of an immigration adviser and the hardship fund for NRPF clients, which are not housing costs, but included rooms used for single NRPF residents who do not receive statutory support. These costs are at the mid to higher end of the cost range for supported housing providers (£11,000 - £12,000 depending on the number of single NRPF rooms being supported). This is not surprising considering the specialist nature of the project and the need for a relatively high level of support for at least some of the clients as well as the distance between properties. Moreover, most Praxis units will house mothers with children, which means there is often more than one person per unit, and housing children presents particular challenges and demands on resources.

To understand how the model might be applied differently, we have identified the following variables which might change in a different geographical area or under the management of a different provider:

- Number of single NRPF women supported
- Voids
- Rent or mortgage payable (property cost)
- Project management costs
- Housing management costs

Given that the overhead charge is almost certain to vary from provider to provider and in order to compare like with like, we focus here on the **contribution** the project might make towards an organisation's central costs. In other words, stripping out the project overhead costs gives a truer reflection of what the project actually costs to run. In considering whether or not it is worthwhile to run a project, organisations will (or should) look first at whether the project makes a positive contribution towards the underlying costs of running the organisation. If it does then the next question might be: 'is the contribution sufficient to justify running the project?'

The project in its current form makes a **contribution** of £37,081, meeting Praxis overhead target contribution i.e. of approximately 12%.

If the following assumptions were adjusted the position would be different:

- **Exclusion of Laburnum Road:** Removing Laburnum Road from the project would mean that it would generate a bigger surplus, which could be used to cover the costs of housing people with NRPF in one of the income generating rooms used for families. However, the resources freed up (£19,000 - the annual rent and running costs) would only enable Praxis to make available one additional room per week, rather than the three it provides in Laburnum Road. Making more rooms (e.g. three) in the seven Commonweal properties available for women with NRPF to compensate for not having access to (an equivalent of) Laburnum Road would reduce the contribution to approximately £5,000.
- **Voids:** The budgeted figure of 6% voids for the 18 funded bed spaces (based on 2017-18 actual voids) allows for an average of one bed space per year to be unfilled. Increasing the allowance for unfilled spaces to 12%, or two beds, would decrease the contribution by £18,000. If three funded bedspaces were consistently unfilled then the project would make a negative contribution after Praxis overheads.



• **Rent payable:** the total cost of the seven Commonweal properties was £2.24 million on the open market, and the rent paid to Commonweal by Praxis is £63,976 per year (2.85% of purchase price). The yield paid to investors by Commonweal is 4.3% (£96,406 per year), implying an annual subsidy by Commonweal of £32,430. A review of current private rental rates for three-bedroom properties in Croydon and Redbridge reveals that the average monthly rent being advertised is approximately £1,500. If Praxis were to rent the properties on the private market the annual cost would be around £126,000 – almost double the rate Praxis is paying to Commonweal and around £30,000 more than the total yield to investors. These figures would vary considerably in different parts of the country and/or if a higher or lower yield is negotiated with investors and/or if existing properties are utilised either belonging to the project provider or leased to the scheme.

• **Project management:** the project would need oversight, but it is possible that if Praxis, or any other organisation, had more than one project of this type or more experience of running this project, the charge for project management would be less. A reduction in project management time would increase the contribution to overheads. However, the spot purchasing commissioning model requires ongoing marketing and promotion with Local Authorities at all levels.

• **Housing management:** Praxis is not a housing provider and is not able to take advantage of the economies of scale that might be available to a specialist organisation with a bigger housing management function. For an organisation thinking of replicating this model and already managing housing stock, the cost of housing management could be significantly less – a 50% reduction in staff time spent on housing management could increase contribution by around £18,000.

Fig. 7 below summarises the impact of changing these assumptions. Clearly these adjustments are not exclusive, and any combination of assumptions could be changed.

**Fig. 7: Impact of adjusted assumptions about costs and income**

Assumption	Increase in contribution	Reduction in contribution	New contribution
Original contribution (surplus per figure 5 minus overheads)			£37,081
Remove Laburnum Road and maintain three additional bed spaces for non-paying NRPF clients in place of income generating S.17 referrals.	£19,000	£50,380	£5,701
Increase voids to 12%		£18,000	£19,081
Remove Commonweal subsidy		£32,430	£4,651
Rent at market rates for outer London		£62,064	Negative – project would be unviable
Reduce housing management cost by 50%	c.£18,000		c.£55,000

# Replicability of the model

Replicability is dependent on financial viability. Key cost considerations are unique to any potential replication project – in particular, the costs of rents, contributions to overheads and housing management as well as additional funding and subsidies available. The costings provided in this section are intended as an indicative guide and the replicability issues are addressed from a financial perspective. Replicability is considered in the context of all aspects of the evaluation in the next concluding section.

The following are key considerations in terms of replicability:

**Subsidy and other funding** is available to this project. The model as set out in figure 5 assumes an annual subsidy of £32,430 to make up the difference between the 'rent' paid by Praxis and the agreed yield for investors. If the model were to be delivered with the provider paying market rents for outer London (approximately £126,000 per year), the model would make a negative contribution. However, even without the Commonweal indirect subsidy, there would be a positive contribution in the current model. The other funding included in the project budget is of a negligible amount although it makes a contribution to a vital ingredient – immigration advice (see below).

**Access to suitable housing units at a viable rental level** is crucial to replicability. Projects working in different regions will face different rental costs, and different organisations may have different sources of finance, meaning purchasing property could be achieved at varying (interest or yield) costs. Organisations who have access to existing owned housing stock, or liaise with dedicated housing providers, will face different and potentially far cheaper rental or interest costs.

Some housing organisations, housing associations, for example, may be able to operate the model at lower cost in using existing stock and benefitting from the greater scale of their housing management and support operations.

The level of rents paid by Praxis average at 63% of LHA rent levels in London and could make partnering to deliver the model attractive to social housing providers.

**Bespoke support and advice including immigration advice** is also vital to achieving pathways out of destitution. Housing organisations that have access to suitable housing units at a viable rent level need to ensure that they have built in adequate resources for provision of specialist and holistic support, including immigration advice.

**Use of Laburnum Road** as a further 'subsidised' resource complicates the picture in terms of replicability. Laburnum Road enables Praxis to deliver on the key objectives of housing people with no recourse to public funds. Without this resource at its disposal Praxis would be able to offer fewer bed spaces. Praxis has been able to offer up to 3 bed spaces to single women in the shared houses for families in the last two years at any one time excluding Laburnum Road.

Of course, access to the Laburnum Road property alters the model slightly – as per the sensitivity analysis, not using Laburnum Road would enhance the contribution but would then reduce the capacity of the project to provide accommodation for single women with NRPF – a key outcome.

Having a property that is held specifically for women with NRPF was certainly a positive for the project, in particular because Praxis wasn't able to utilise every spare room in the seven Commonweal properties for single women with NRPF as had been envisaged at the planning/early set-up stage.

In the end, up to 3 rooms in the 7 Commonweal houses were available for this purpose. As such, the additional 3 rooms in Laburnum Road as a dedicated resource for single women with NRPF has been vital.

**Safeguarding considerations and increased costs in housing families** have to be considered in planning and delivery, in particular the associated safeguarding responsibilities in housing children, but also the unpredictability of family make-up and needs which may constrain the capacity of a project to provide for non S.17 single NRPF women.

**Attracting business from local authorities seeking accommodation for NRPF S.17 families is crucial.** The outcomes of the pilots for families have been overwhelmingly positive. In addition we have identified potential for savings to boroughs who are willing to work with projects able to offer the holistic service required to support families out of destitution. Savings could be in the form of reduced nightly S.17 costs due to faster case resolution (see page 40), or reduced burden on social services due to the crucial wrap around support Praxis provides.

## Case study: Action Foundation<sup>29</sup>

Action Foundation (AF), based in the North East, also applies a cross-subsidy model. It has 19 houses, which it rents from private landlords and has purchased one house with a combination of low interest loans (one from Commonweal Housing) and donations. Currently 'Action Housing' has capacity in five houses to accommodate destitute asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds and in its relatively new hosting project. The principle is that the income generating element of the project will subsidise the non-paying clients. Action Foundation manages the project as three separate cost centres:

- Action Housing and Action Hosting (shown in Fig 4 below as one cost centre) are for destitute clients (i.e. those whose asylum claims have been turned down) with no recourse to public funds. Housing and hosting costs are fully supported by AF and clients receive a weekly allowance from other charities and travel vouchers from AF.
- Action Letting is for refugees who have recently gained their right to remain. AF provides intensive support; clients qualify for exempt status which is paid through Housing Benefit from Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland Councils.

In the last year the ratio of NRPF clients to those who pay rent has been 1:3.6.

AF does not provide immigration advice 'in house' but signposts clients to trusted partner agencies. According to the latest income and expenditure figures supplied by Action Foundation, the cross-subsidy model makes a significant contribution to project overheads. This does, however, rely on charitable fundraising to supplement income from Housing Benefit and Supporting People.

## Overview analysis of Action Foundation project budget

Action Foundation include similar costs to Praxis although their model does not include the costs of weekly allowances (travel costs are provided, however) or immigration advice. These vital elements of the support package are provided by partner organisations.

**Budgeted costs and income for 2018/19 are as follows:**

	<b>Action Housing/hosting* £</b>	<b>Action Letting £</b>	<b>Total £</b>
<b>INCOME</b>			
Supporting People contract		17,125	17,125
Housing Benefit and service charge (based on 85% occupancy)		427,977	427,977
Grant income (restricted for Housing/Hosting and Lettings work)	56,330		56,330
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>56,330</b>	<b>445,102</b>	<b>501,432</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
<b>Direct running costs</b>			
Housing/Hosting*	58,222		58,222
Letting		149,862	149,862
<b>sub total</b>	<b>58,222</b>	<b>149,862</b>	<b>208,084</b>
<b>Direct salaries</b>			
Project Manager, Resident Support Workers & Hosting Co-ordinator	62,204	124,722	186,926
<b>sub total</b>	<b>62,204</b>	<b>124,722</b>	<b>186,926</b>
<b>Total Direct Costs</b>	<b>120,426</b>	<b>274,584</b>	<b>395,010</b>
<b>Action Foundation project overheads</b> are based on turnover for each project. The contribution from Action Housing/Hosting is 20% and from Action Lettings is 45%	28,222	63,499	91,721
<b>Total expenditure for all projects incl. o/h</b>	<b>148,648</b>	<b>338,083</b>	<b>486,731</b>
<b>Project surplus / (deficit)</b>	<b>(92,318)</b>	<b>107,019</b>	<b>14,701</b>

\*Both Action Housing and Action Hosting provide beds for destitute migrants

## Comparisons between the Praxis and Action Foundation models

It is difficult to compare the business models of two projects operating in very different housing markets and different parts of the country. The income generating dimensions of each project are also different: Praxis accommodates children and their parents under contract to local authorities; and Action Foundation receives enhanced Housing Benefit to provide an intensive support package including helping refugees to gear up for, find and settle in a new (permanent) home.

Both projects have been able to offer free bedspaces, as well as make a reasonable contribution to their organisational overheads. Action Foundation is able to provide a higher ratio of free spaces (over 20 in total each year including Action Housing and Action Hosting provision), but operates in a cheaper housing market area, manages three times the number of properties and has been running the scheme for longer. Action Foundation is about to develop new income generating services which meet the needs of migrants, potentially including alternatives to detention.

Praxis has been able to guarantee that three out of its 21 bedspaces will be used as free provision for single women with NRPF at any one time (in Laburnum Road) and usually 3 additional spaces in the Commonwealth houses. Inevitably the uncertainties around the size of potential S.17 families being referred to the project mean that planning a specific level of free bedspaces provision in all houses is challenging.

# 5: Conclusions

We draw the following key conclusions from our work with partners on this pilot project:

## What the model can achieve

1. The model can achieve positive outcomes for all its residents and can help migrants on a pathway out of destitution. Over the three-year evaluation period, the lives of 46 households were improved and that number continues to rise since April. Around a third of these were women who were destitute before the project supported them.
2. For the S.17 families housed and supported (32), benefits related to having a secure, decent home where children could feel safe after, in some cases, previously appalling housing conditions. This produced benefits for parents as well as children and allowed some, through Praxis' advice offer, to 'take stock' of their immigration case and change its trajectory and outlook for the better.
3. For the destitute women housed and supported, benefits could be dramatic as the project provided a safe home and haven for those previously homeless and exploited, with wrap-around support for the wide range of mental, physical, social and emotional needs such a history produces.
4. There seems to be a correlation between having been placed in the project and gaining positive immigration outcomes. Of the small number of cases which had finished by the end of the evaluation, all those advised by Praxis had achieved a positive result. The stable base and support has helped make best use of the specialist immigration advice on offer.
5. A scan of the policy environment suggests that the injustice underpinning the project is not going away. Families housed under S.17 are continuing to experience sub-standard accommodation and in some cases advice, and destitute migrants whose status could be regularised continue to be at risk of ill-health, exploitation and abuse on the streets. Most are single men though the effects can be more severe for single women.
6. The main challenge to achieving lasting positive outcomes is the severe lack of affordable housing in London coupled with housing policies, welfare reform and immigration and asylum policies. Options for decent housing are severely limited<sup>1</sup> once their immigration status begins to be resolved. This means that whilst the model provides an important period of stabilisation to help people out of destitution they may still have a long time to wait for stability in their immigration status and housing circumstances once they leave the project.
7. Praxis provided transitional support and went out of its way to help people access homelessness services and with moves but long term resettlement was not costed in to the model. As a result. building resilience through fostering mutual support in sharing arrangements and facilitating attendance at Praxis social groups which were available to residents once they'd left the project are vital aspects to the support package and its ability to ensure enduring positive wellbeing, as well as immigration, outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> Both for asylum seekers accommodated under Home Office contracts with private providers and people qualifying for housing under homelessness legislation.

## Management and sustainability of the project within Praxis

8. The project provided a steep learning curve for Praxis but the project is now more financially and operationally sustainable with a number of positive changes embedded. Over the 3-year pilot Praxis increased the project's visibility, stability and viability: it improved its expertise and management of a supported housing service, created a more stable staff structure and expanded contacts with local authorities. Nine of these now refer into the project and the project enjoyed, in its final year, 94% occupancy. The project now also guarantees at any one time 3 bedspaces for single women and there is the potential for more depending on the permutations of needs and rooms available for S.17 families.

9. As a result Praxis have decided to expand the service by taking on at least one and potentially more Commonweal properties which have been vacated at the end another pilot project. This is likely to make the current project viable in any terms, as these can generate more income from referrals and possibly accommodate more non S.17 women as well.

## Financial Model

10. Given that the model was developed as a pilot within Praxis, with an emphasis on learning and a significant subsidy to ensure that, the costings and budgets for the pilot stage do not reflect the likely operation of the model in future years. Certainly the staffing levels are quite high in relation to the number of properties and bedspaces. It would be useful to explore incorporating volunteer time into the model to undertake some of the support functions.

11. The potential cost of replication by other organisations<sup>2</sup> depends on a number of factors including whether property is already owned and available for the project or needs to be leased at either a market or subsidised rent level. Decisions around replication by other providers also need to bear in mind that different elements of the model could cost more or less depending on the existing expertise and resource base of organisations interested in replication. Housing associations for example would spend less on housing management but may need to buy in specific immigration advice.

## A social enterprise approach

12. At the outset of the project the business model was referred to as 'cross subsidy'. There were some concerns that the term might be problematic in attracting referrals from local authorities. This does not appear to have been the case. However the scheme has required some grant funding and other kinds of subsidy to deliver effectively on the mission to support pathways out of destitution. We have concluded that the term cross-subsidy does not describe the model well. Looking at Praxis and other models covered in Appendix 2 we believe that what is in place is in fact a social enterprise approach. Access to subsidised properties purchased through social investment and an income stream from fees for local authority placements has enabled Praxis to develop capacity and provision: like social enterprises, it has developed an income stream with which to do 'social good' by providing services that are also socially useful.

## Potential for replication

13. The model is replicable. It will need adaptations to be effective in different locations with different housing markets and delivered by a range of organisations with different levels of the expertise needed to achieve positive outcomes for destitute migrants. Good quality immigration advice is in short supply all over the UK but scarcity is greater in some places than others. In many areas and/or in the case of different kinds of providers, especially if they are primarily homelessness or housing organisations, more partnership working would be needed for effective replication.

<sup>2</sup> Examined in detail in Section 4

14. There is merit in growing provision for families placed by local authorities rather than seeing this simply as a means to an end. Whilst Praxis' per night fee is higher than the average paid by London local authorities, referrers are beginning to identify the cost savings of a service that provides holistic support which social workers can rely on. They also importantly recognise that the model progresses cases are more quickly (within the parameters of a slow-moving immigration system) because staff are vociferous and knowledgeable in their advocacy support. It was apparent that even S.17 families entering the project with a legal representative in place gained benefits from this.

15. Contextual risks to such a project are multifaceted and explored in Section 2. One of the key risks is the degree of uncertainty in housing and immigration policy. On the other hand, there is little sign that the need for projects to tackle destitution will decline. Questions are posed below to help manage risks for those considering replication.

## **Considering setting up a similar project? Here are the questions you need to answer:**

### **Access to suitable properties**

- Is the location suitable? – safety, access to other services, access to existing networks
- If leased or purchased with loans and/or social investment will the scheme be viable?
- Is a partnership with others e.g. housing associations, possible to access some properties as part of a larger scheme?
- If donated from people or organisations (e.g. churches, housing associations motivated by charitable, social, religious purpose or out of solidarity) are you able to plan and guarantee consistent service to residents?
- What type of properties will meet the needs as well as establish and maintain viability? E.g. is sharing feasible for the groups whose needs are to be met and what sort of permutations of rooms and sharing arrangements would work?
- Are the properties suitable for families, often single parent families, with small children and often children with disabilities e.g. accessibility, steep stairs, working lifts if in a block etc.
- What are the local licensing requirements and how will these affect the scheme?
- Are the properties energy efficient?

### **Housing management**

- If you have not managed housing before how will you develop the expertise and resources to do so well and safely?
- Are there local housing associations or other organisations with housing expertise who might partner with you to manage the housing?

### **Referrals**

- How many local authorities are likely to want to refer and what are their relevant policies e.g. procurement (some align with the policies of their housing departments for homeless families) and per night contract fee?
- Are there changes in policy on the horizon which could affect local authority policies and provision?
- What sort of families are local authorities likely to refer for a specific price? Note that it may be helpful to review 'ideal' cases so that you can plan and cost accordingly.
- What are the referral routes for non S.17 destitute migrants with NRPF i.e. the organisations who are in touch with them?
- Are the non S.17 cases you want to house people whose asylum claim has been unsuccessful or other migrants?

### **Immigration advice**

- What sort of immigration advice, advocacy and representation is needed to support local destitute migrants?
- Is the expertise and capacity available locally? Note that even if the expertise exists it is highly likely that capacity will be limited, partly because limited legal aid is only available for a few specific types of immigration cases.
- How will immigration advice, advocacy and representation be accessed and resourced?
- Do you need to employ a worker with specific legal expertise and at what level of OISC accreditation (level 1 is basic advice/signposting; level 2 advice and advocacy; level 3 representation and/or a qualified solicitor)

### **Support including:**

#### **Safeguarding**

- Do you have adequate safeguarding policies to protect vulnerable adults and children?

#### **Meeting basic needs**

- At what level do local authorities pay the basic support allowance and how is payment made?
- Is there a local charity providing weekly allowances and/or ways of meeting basic needs for non S.17 cases? If not, how will this be addressed?

#### **Access to local services**

- Do you have sufficient information about relevant local services?
- How do you plan to support people to access local services?

#### **Sharing and mutual support**

- Sharing can be a source of mutual support – how will you ensure sharing arrangements can be as positive and mutually beneficial as possible?
- Do you or a partner organisation have the expertise/capacity to run groups e.g. for mothers and babies, for single women, young people, campaigning groups?

#### **Meaningful activity**

- Most non-EEA migrants with NRPF are not able to work; are there ways you can provide opportunities for people to develop skills, support each other, be empowered to engage actively with progressing their immigration case?

#### **Move on options**

- What are likely to be the move on options available to people?
- How will be people be supported with moving on and seeking and/or settling in new accommodation?
- Is move on accommodation likely to be nearby, far away, temporary or more permanent? What are the implications of move on options for residents? E.g. some people may be moved into the asylum system and NASS accommodation which could be far away and of a poorer standard

#### **Building resilience and empowerment**

- Outcomes will vary hugely and some residents may be a long way from stability in their housing or a positive immigration/asylum decision when they leave the project. In what ways can the projects support people to build their resilience in addition to meeting basic needs and creating at least temporary reprieve and stability.



## **Financial model**

- Are you able to provide the service needed to support people out of destitution at a price local authorities/public sector commissioners are prepared to pay?
- Will the financial and housing model sustain bedspaces for non S.17 cases and how many?

## **Risks**

- What are the risks for your organisation? How can you mitigate them? Answers to this will depend on your reading of the above in relation to your organisation, circumstances and area of work.
- What is the appetite for risk of your organisation?

## **The role of evaluation**

This evaluation has been a key component in shaping the project as well as learning about it. This has been possible through the active engagement of all partners in the learning process, especially Praxis staff who despite much internal change in the first 18 months of the project were exemplary in their ability to improve and adapt the service. Commonweal has been a supportive and positive partner throughout, making adjustments in response to emerging challenges, for example by subsidising the rent required to deliver the agreed return to investors. And investors have been diligent in their contribution to the learning about the project's development and outcomes. This engagement, listening and flexibility has been an essential component of the project's ability to grow and learn.

## **To conclude**

We hope this report may encourage providers of housing and support to single destitute migrants to explore the potential for meeting the needs of families, both as a way of turning their considerable expertise into an income stream and because these families are currently often ill served by what is available. In some places it's possible that immigration advice and migrant support projects, frustrated at the lack of housing options for their clients will learn how they too could establish a housing project or seek a partner to do so armed with the Commonweal Praxis experience to bring people on board. The project and the information in this report is also a challenge to existing housing providers, including housing associations, which have the scale, pool of properties and housing management experience to deliver housing for people in desperate need in partnership with organisations that understand those needs.

The Praxis pilot will continue and there are plans for its expansion. It is possible that further changes may be made to refine it. Nonetheless we conclude that the model is needed, can be delivered successfully and is replicable. We offer this report as proof of that and to encourage, inform and challenge others to do as well.

# Appendix 1:

# Methodology

The evaluation, commissioned at the outset of the project, was an essential element of the work. It was both formative and summative in nature, helping both shape the project as it progressed and summarise lessons and achievements at various points over the three year period it covered.

Scoping discussions with all key project stakeholders (Commonweal, Praxis and investors) during 2015 helped develop an **evaluation framework** which structured the evaluation inquiry and activities. This had three distinct areas of focus:

1. **Process evaluation of model:** involved identifying the key components of the model and specifying the assumptions which underpinned them to assess, track and shape whether such assumptions had been correct as the project progressed.
2. **Outcome evaluation:** involved identifying the anticipated outcomes for key beneficiaries of the project in order that the fieldwork could explore and seek to evidence the degree to which these had been achieved. Desired outcomes (and their indicators) were identified for each key 'beneficiary group' of the project, which included both types of client (Section 17 and 'Destitute' clients) as well as others identified during scoping: Commissioners/Referral agencies; Investors and; Commonweal and Praxis.
3. **Tracking the context for the work:** involved identifying the key contextual information in order that this could be 'tracked' through the evaluation and reflected on in planned sessions to inform both the pilot and future planning.

## Evaluation team

The team was Ceri Hutton, Sue Lukes and Heather Petch who together brought extensive evaluation experience as well also policy and subject experience around housing and immigration. This was a deliberate choice for Commonweal who wished to ensure that the project benefitted not only from the process of formative evaluation but also the added value of policy intelligence and insight which they could bring to bear on the work.

## Fieldwork

The evaluation was iterative, with two interim reports being produced in July 2016 and July 2017 and a final summative report in 2018. Fieldwork was conducted between April 2015 and the end of April 2018. Over this three year period a range of methods were used to gather information and reflect on the project and its context:

Shaping and scrutinising data collected by Praxis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Praxis to develop a set of data-gathering tools which could be integrated into their own initial assessment and welcome work with residents and which gathered baseline information about residents state of mind and wellbeing.</li> </ul>
Resident interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing client information and statistics provided by Praxis as well as the regularly updated property log</li> <li>• 32 interviews with residents who gave their consent were conducted 10 - 12 weeks after they arrived in the project. This was 70% of the 46 households accommodated in the evaluation period. Of those not giving their consent, several were only in the project for a few days.</li> <li>• 12 'outcome tracking' interviews with ex-residents who had 'moved on from the project to explore what had happened to them subsequently. This was 45% of the total number of 27 residents who moved on. As eight of these 'moved on' residents had not given consent to be contacted, the percentage of those responding who had given their permission to be contacted was 63% (12 out of 19 ex-clients).</li> </ul>
Interviews with local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 interviews with local authorities referring to the project were conducted over the three year period.</li> </ul>
Interviews with key project stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal interviews with key stakeholders (Praxis and Commonweal staff) at the three report iterations.</li> <li>• Praxis staff interviewed included all project staff plus the CEO and immigration advisers.</li> </ul>
Steering Group attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular attendance at the project Steering Group (held quarterly) to gather information, report and test particular topics.</li> </ul>
Sounding Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convening a Sounding Board of policy and practitioner experts twice during the life of the pilot to reflect on the broader policy context for a project working with migrants with NRPF. The papers prepared for and added to at these sessions proved invaluable for understanding the policy context and the potential for replicability of the project.</li> </ul>
Costing analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A cost analysis of Praxis' model was commissioned by a costing expert, Jane Harris at Cordis Bright. She worked with Praxis and other providers to identify the costing and subsidy elements of the model and contribute to the overall evaluation findings around financial replicability</li> </ul>
Investor workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An expert session with social investors was convened towards the end of the pilot to consider issues relating to this for future projects</li> </ul>
Interviews with other providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evaluation kept a watching brief on all other significant providers of similar models through the NACCOM network and other work.</li> <li>• Information was sought from other providers through interview and by email about their models and how they operated and were costed</li> </ul>
Informal discussions with Praxis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Particularly during the first two years, the evaluation team held several informal discussions with Praxis staff to discuss the development of the project, feeding back views obtained from the evaluation and wider context to help shape the work</li> </ul>
Iterative reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The reporting 'points' during the evaluation provided a useful time to gather and check on progress, not only of the project but of the evaluation itself.</li> </ul>

# Appendix 2: Overview of other providers

The following table compares the Praxis model with the approaches of other providers of accommodation for destitute migrants. Where elements of the table are incomplete it was not possible to gather the information required. Otherwise all details were obtained and correct in September 2018 but these projects have been adapting and/or growing at quite a pace in recent years.

Most of the models selected are members of the NACCOM (No Accommodation) network and use income from housing and support services provided to other groups able to pay rent to help deliver free bedspaces to destitute migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and not eligible for any form of statutory support until their immigration status is determined.

Four of these providers are, like Praxis, operating 'cross-subsidy' models, mostly renting to refugees who have recently had a positive decision on their asylum application but find it difficult to access suitable housing and often need support to do so. These organisations have been established and grown both individually and as a network over the past 10 to 14 years. They operate predominantly in areas of dispersal and have focused on the needs of destitute asylum seekers.

Open Door North East now manages 35 properties, Action Foundation 20 and Boaz and Nottingham Arimathea 19 each. Each of these organisations has between 16 to 28 free bedspaces available for destitute asylum seekers at any one time with the Boaz Trust supporting 40 destitute migrants. Each of the organisations has started to purchase their own properties and are exploring whether they can provide services to other groups.

Hope Projects restricts its housing activity to accommodating destitute asylum seekers with a high chance of success in their asylum claim and housed and through this work supported 38 clients out of destitution last year.

The last four models included in the table represent different approaches even though several are members of the NACCOM network. They include:

- Two very different homelessness organisations: i) The Kings Arms (a small/ medium sized organisation operating in Bedfordshire) and ii) London-based St Mungo's started providing free bedspaces to EEA migrants with NRPF as part of their rough sleeping services, usually funded from contracts with Local and Central Government. Over time they have recognised the often less visible needs of non-EEA rough sleepers/those at risk of rough sleeping and have started to develop and/or explore ways of meeting their needs including the provision of free bedspaces. St Mungo's has had some support from the GLA and other LAs to support destitute non-EEA migrants but is also reviewing how it can utilise its own resources to provide free bedspaces as part of a recently agreed Migrant Strategy. It is already providing over 23 bedspaces to non-EEA destitute migrants and resources and works in partnership with Praxis and Refugee Action to provide immigration advice.
- Metropolitan Housing Partnership is a large housing association and is utilising some of the restricted funds of its Migration Foundation to resource innovation in provision for destitute migrants. It has funded some of the providers listed and the NACCOM network and is funding hostel and S17 provision in Derby.
- 1000 for A Thousand Homes is a solidarity based grouping using crowd funding to provide support and housing for a destitute migrant family.

<b>Organisation + location</b>	<b>Praxis- London</b>	<b>Action Foundation Newcastle, Gateshead &amp; Sunderland</b>
<i>Mission &amp; focus</i>	Provides holistic services to migrants that “recognise that people bring strengths and that whilst needing specialist legal advice, accommodation and support, service users can also become agents of change.”	Supports refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants experiencing isolation in Tyne and Wear and provides opportunities to help them overcome their exclusion. It runs Action Lettings (housing for rent) and Action Housing and Action Hosting targeted at those who are destitute with NRPF.
<i>Housing &amp; financial model supporting destitute migrants</i>	<p>Social investment (SI) to purchase 7 houses. Commonweal leads SI partnership (p’shyip) of 4 charitable social investors, bears risk &amp; subsidises rents</p> <p>Local Authority (LA) fees for Section 17 (S17) clients helps to support:</p> <p>At least 3 ‘free’ bedspaces at any one time (14 destitute women over 3 yrs) Contribution to overheads of 35%</p> <p>Additional grant funding raised for some costs</p>	<p>Properties secured mainly from supportive individual owners/landlords (l’lords). Purchased 1 property using SI from Commonweal</p> <p>Housing benefit (HB) income for around 60 bedspaces per year (p.yr) includes higher rate based on ‘exempt’ status &amp; covers: Contribution towards: 16 ‘free’ spaces p yr plus 7 in hosting scheme (only established in 2016/17 &amp; is growing). Contribution to overheads (Lettings – 45% &amp; destitution project – 20%) Additional grant funding raised for some costs</p>
<i>Access to decent properties in suitable location</i>	<p>7 houses in 2 outer London boroughs providing 18 bedspaces (Croydon &amp; Redbridge)</p> <p>A 3 bed house leased at below market rent from a supporter and used for non S17 residents only)</p>	20 houses in Newcastle, Gateshead, Washington & Sunderland
<i>Housing management provision</i>	<p>1 Housing Manager &amp; 1 Support Worker (days)</p> <p>Repairs, utilities &amp; maintenance &amp; 24 hr call service</p>	<p>Experienced housing manager &amp; resident support workers</p> <p>Intensive supported housing management Repairs, maintenance, utilities &amp; 24 hr cover</p>
<i>Referrals &amp; occupancy</i>	<p>9 LAs Praxis &amp; Red Cross for destitute spaces</p>	<p>Asylum seekers and refugees. Local refugee groups refer. Provision for destitute clients focuses on most vulnerable</p>
<i>House sharing &amp; whether accommodate NRPF &amp; paying residents in same house</i>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Most non S17 women in Lebanon Rd but do mix</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Do not mix NRPF and paying residents nor genders in the same house</p>
<i>Access to immigration advice</i>	<p>Yes, 0.4 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) immigration adviser</p>	<p>No – Refer to partner agencies Potential OISC level 1 or 2 to be developed in house in near future</p>
<i>Access to holistic support incl. basic needs, ESOL move-on</i>	<p>Yes incl.</p> <p>Cash payment of £25 p wk for non S17 cases</p> <p>Praxis group work</p> <p>Support for transition when leaving project</p>	<p>Yes – high level of supported housing provided to meet exemption requirement incl. move-on support to permanent housing</p>
<i>End of immigration process</i>	<p>Provide information on voluntary return Services</p>	<p>Provide information on voluntary return services and refer on if appropriate</p>

<b>Organisation + location</b>	<b>Nottingham Arimathea Trust Nottingham, Nottinghamshire and Derby</b>	<b>Open Door North East (ODNE) Middlesbrough (M'boro) &amp; Stockton</b>
<i>Mission &amp; focus</i>	Provides supported housing for destitute asylum seekers, newly recognised refugees, and migrants that are victims of trafficking or modern slavery.	Provides a range of services supporting the wellbeing, livelihoods and integration of those seeking sanctuary in the UK. Began housing refugees in order to cross subsidise accommodation for Asylum Seekers left with NRPF
<i>Housing &amp; financial model supporting destitute migrants</i>	<p>HB income includes higher rate based on exempt status.</p> <p>8 shared houses (7 in Nottingham and 1 in Derby), of these:          -6 are shared between refugees and asylum seekers          -2 entirely for destitute asylum seekers (may mix in future).</p> <p>2 family homes for refugees.</p> <p>9 x 1 bedroomed flats for refugees which house singles, couples and small families</p> <p>1 destitute asylum seeker living in a sustainable community in the county of Nottinghamshire.</p> <p>Properties are leased below market rent from:          4 from HAs          2 Anglican Diocese          5 PRS          9 flats from Christian social investor Green Pastures          1 free bungalow</p>	<p>35 houses – 3 owned; 2 privately owned &amp; rent free; 1 rent free from an RSL; and 29 privately owned &amp; managed by ODNE as a social lettings' agent for a management fee of 8.5 to 15% of the gross rental income.</p> <p>House 96 refugees, 16 NRPF asylum seekers &amp; 2 EU migrants</p> <p>Costs of housing 16 destitute asylum seekers covered by rental income from refugee/migrant lets</p> <p>Recently provided 2 spaces under S18 Care Act and S17 housing for 2 destitute migrant families which contributes to income stream</p>
<i>Access to decent properties in suitable location</i>	Seek properties mainly in the NG7 area of Nottingham – particularly close to Hyson Green as this is the preferred location for most asylum seekers and refugees in Nottingham. Properties also in NG2, as this was available, met the needs and is a 2nd preferred location for refugees and asylum seekers.	<p>31 houses in M'boro &amp; 4 in Stockton (asylum dispersal areas).</p> <p>ODNE have focused on procuring houses in areas such as central M'boro (TS1) which is preferred by refugees to more suburban areas</p>
<i>Housing management provision</i>	<p>Repairs, maintenance &amp; utilities</p> <p>5 staff including: Support Worker; Housing Manager; Resettlement Officer; Deputy CEO and CEO</p> <p>All staff participate in duty rota system (24 hr)</p>	<p>2 and ½ staff including experienced private sector housing manager</p> <p>Repairs, maintenance &amp; utilities</p>
<i>Referrals &amp; occupancy</i>	<p>Referrals from Nottingham &amp; Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum (NNRF), British Red Cross, Derby Refugee Advice Centre, and Street Outreach Team.</p> <p>Occupancy is usually around 98-99% however currently have an unusual contract which is reducing occupancy</p>	From drop-in service & local agencies
<i>House sharing &amp; whether accommodate NRPF &amp; paying residents in same house</i>	Yes - see previous in column 1	Yes: 3 shared houses have a mix of NRPF and those paying rent. The others are either all NRPF or all refugees. Some houses are refugee/migrant houses on assured short hold tenancies with no sharing other than family members.
<i>Access to immigration advice</i>	Working on getting OISC accreditation currently. Aiming to provide level 1 initially	Yes signposting to specialists but need greater capacity & working towards 2 staff gaining OISC level 1
<i>Access to holistic support incl. basic needs, ESOL move-on</i>	<p>Holistic Support is based around the 'Outcomes Star' model and action planning. ESOL Women's group.</p> <p>1 Support Worker &amp; 1 Resettlement Worker Resettlement support for all refugees &amp; people who have survived modern slavery/human trafficking</p> <p>All staff have experience and collaborate to support the needs of residents. Staff have allocated case loads</p>	<p>Drop-in service including women only drop in</p> <p>Weekly food and cash on bank holidays</p> <p>Weekly cash from another provider.</p> <p>Cash help for appointments costs</p> <p>Move on support (although some housing is potentially permanent)</p>
<i>End of immigration process</i>		Provide information on voluntary return

Organisation + location	King's Arms Project - Bedford	Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing Migration Foundation (MTVH) - London, South East & Midlands
<i>Mission &amp; focus</i>	King's Arms Project Bedford delivers services to empower people on their journey out of homelessness, providing outreach, accommodation and opportunity to help people out of poverty. It believes that there is no such thing as a hopeless case. "We refuse to give up on anybody and believe that every homeless person can have a bright future."	Large, recently merged housing group which owns/manages 57K homes and includes a supported housing arm. It also has a fund –the Migration Foundation – which is restricted for migrant beneficiaries and is funding innovation in service provision for migrants with a specific interest in vulnerable and destitute migrants.
<i>Housing &amp; financial model supporting destitute migrants</i>	<p>18 nightshelter bed spaces and 25 Move-On Housing bed spaces for single homeless people, and one house (4-bed spaces) for NRPF clients fully funded by the Ministry for Housing Communities &amp; Local Government's 'Controlling Migration Fund' (awarded via the LA). Acuteness of EEA homelessness problem in the area attracted special resources (25 rough sleepers in Bedford NRPF, majority EEA)</p> <p>LA funding of additional 8 rooms from 01/10/2018 will provide bedspaces for, in total, 14 NRPF with the right to work i.e. EEA nationals migrants (with 2 rooms available for couples)</p> <p>Involved with Syrian Resettlement and Community Sponsorship. Exploring local need and model of provision for destitute asylum seekers with NRPF plus those leaving nearby Yarlswood Detention Centre</p>	Property belongs to MTVH, and the service is currently fully funded by the Migration Foundation. N.B. The Foundation is also exploring provision for 20 Section 17 destitute migrant families in Derby to demonstrate within the organisation that there is a market for their expertise in providing migrant housing and support services and that not all provision in this area of need has to funded out of charitable sources.
<i>Access to decent properties in suitable location</i>	Lease properties from private landlords for single homeless and NRPF provision. Challenges re costs and location including some local opposition. Partnership with HA and local community for refugee resettlement and community sponsorship schemes.	1 x 10 bedroomed house for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds in an area of high need in Derby.
<i>Housing management provision</i>	Costs of housing management incl. maintenance, & utilities fully covered by grant	3 members of staff, including a project manager
<i>Referrals &amp; occupancy</i>	Through local rough sleepers initiative/outreach teams	Referrals from local charities.
<i>House sharing &amp; whether accommodate NRPF &amp; paying residents in same house</i>	Yes Migrant NRPF houses are separate from other homelessness provision New LA funded scheme will include couples.	Yes
<i>Access to immigration advice</i>	No - Refer on to Bedford Refugee & Asylum Support	Most clients already have legal representation (i.e. asylum seekers submitting a fresh claim) or are receiving support from the referral organisation, but we are currently developing a partnership with a legal project to support us with more complex cases.
<i>Access to holistic support incl. basic needs, ESOL move-on</i>	Yes with an emphasis on engagement with ESOL & employment training service. Move-on support. Currently exploring how support needs & context will differ for people with no right to work e.g. asylum seekers & other non-EEA migrants & for EEA migrants post Brexit	The project offers a small hardship grant, receives food donations from local businesses, supports residents who want to volunteer or access employment, and offers opportunities to socialise and play sports. Residents supported to move into more sustainable tenancies in the area, once they are ready to do so.
<i>End of immigration process</i>	Reconnection services is voluntary for EEA migrants. Many have been in UK for significant period of time & have refused previous offers of reconnection support before coming to King's Arms Project	Advice on voluntary return when resident is running out of options in terms of fresh claims / new evidence not being forthcoming. We can also support clients who are going through this process, as it can take some months to gather all the necessary paperwork to return the country of origin.

<b>Organisation + location</b>	<b>St Mungos: London, the south east and west and the Midlands</b>	<b>1000 for One Thousand Brighton</b>
<i>Mission &amp; focus</i>	St Mungo's vision is that everyone has a place to call home and can fulfil their hopes and ambitions. It provides support directly to clients to prevent them becoming homeless, or to respond to it and help them recover; builds relationships with communities and the wider public, aiming to increase understanding of homelessness and empathy towards the people who experience it ;and advocates for policy change by combining its clients' voices with the organisation's experience of what works.	'No borders' solidarity group providing crowdfunded and community-based support in Brighton
<i>Housing &amp; financial model supporting destitute migrants</i>	23 bed spaces for NRPF non-EEA nationals receiving immigration advice from Praxis and Refugee action as part of the 'Street Legal' project. Bed spaces for people with no or low support needs only & funded through a mixture of sources, including the Big Lottery, the GLA (contract for services to tackle Rough Sleeping) & unrestricted fundraised income from St Mungo's 19 bed spaces for a mix of EEA and non-EEA nationals with NRPF funded through the GLA & incl. 3 bed spaces suitable for people with higher support needs. Just starting 18 mth pilot of other ways to include NRPF bed spaces into existing projects using St Mungo's fundraised income to fund 9 bed spaces & are in conversations with local commissioners at the moment to agree where these bed spaces can be offered within our existing stock. In addition exploring how to include NRPF bed spaces whenever reconfiguring existing buildings owned or occupied on a long lease. As part of this project we will soon have 3 NRPF bed spaces in a project in Southwark which will be available to the local outreach teams to refer into	Raise £3,000 p month from crowd funding (mainly standing order commitments) of supporters and rent out 2 houses (which are rented at below market rents from supporters). The combined income supports a house for a stateless family of 5
<i>Access to decent properties in suitable location</i>	Mungos is a large provider of services to homeless people and owns some of its properties/has extensive access to leased private rented sector units. Mungos also arranges temporary 'meanwhile' use of some properties owned by social landlords which are awaiting refurbishment or change of use	Houses from sympathetic landlords in Brighton
<i>Housing management provision</i>	Usually provided in hostels Managed by Mungos from within existing resources incl repairs, maintenance & utilities costs	Informal Housing maintenance & utilities
<i>Referrals &amp; occupancy</i>	For Street Legal clients and referrals for Street Legal come from outreach teams across London and 'No Second Night Out' (NSNO) service	Anyone in need
<i>House sharing &amp; whether accommodate NRPF &amp; paying residents in same house</i>	Hostel provision with shared facilities	
<i>Access to immigration advice</i>	Yes from Street Legal partners Praxis &/or Refugee Action	No but support residents to access advice
<i>Access to holistic support incl. basic needs, ESOL move-on</i>	Yes as part of services to tackle rough sleeping	Informal  Subsistence payments
<i>End of immigration process</i>	Advice on voluntary return	



<b>Organisation + location</b>	<b>Boaz Trust Greater Manchester</b>	<b>Hope Projects Birmingham &amp; West Midlands</b>
<i>Mission &amp; focus</i>	Exists to support people who have become homeless at some point in the asylum system with an emphasis on helping asylum seekers out of destitution. Developed refugee housing project to support this mission	Hope exists to overturn flawed refusals of asylum. Housing, together with financial support and legal advice, are the 3 pillars of its approach to achieving this
<i>Housing &amp; financial model supporting destitute migrants</i>	<p>14 houses are donated by sympathetic individual donors for peppercorn rent. Others rented including 3 from Green Pastures (a Christian Social Investor) and 2 from Arawak Walton Housing Association (HA)</p> <p>20% of Boaz income from refugee housing and support.</p> <p>Client support mainly charitable grant funded</p> <p>Income from renting 28 rooms (in total) to 15 male refugees &amp; 13 female refugees covers: approx. 56% of cost of spaces for 43 destitute asylum seekers (24 male, 19 female)</p>	<p>Most of 12 properties secured from housing associations &amp; individuals at ground/peppercorn rent levels</p> <p>Mainly grant funded</p> <p>38 destitute asylum seekers housed out of 60 supported with cash from Hope Projects</p>
<i>Access to decent properties in suitable location</i>	<p>19 houses currently in Manchester (17) &amp; Salford (2). Soon-to-be one in Bolton rented from Bolton at Home.</p> <p>Some properties treated as HMOs/licenced</p>	<p>12 houses in Birmingham</p> <p>Use of 2 spaces in Wolverhampton</p>
<i>Housing management provision</i>	<p>Housing Manager</p> <p>Arawak Walton HA provide housing management incl. rent collection for a £550 p house fee p yr (pays for Arawak Walton to employ 0.5% f/t equivalent rent collector)</p> <p>Maintenance, utilities &amp; 24 hr cover</p>	<p>2 part-time Housing Support Workers</p> <p>Utilities &amp; maintenance incl quite a lot of DIY &amp; resident engagement</p>
<i>Referrals &amp; occupancy</i>	<p>Asylum seekers and refugees.</p> <p>Referrals from 23 orgs. Current waiting list 150</p>	<p>Only destitute asylum seekers. All referrals from Hope Steering Group. The referral agency continues to provide support. Cases with best chance of success housed.</p>
<i>House sharing &amp; whether accommodate NRPF &amp; paying residents in same house</i>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Separate refugees paying rent &amp; destitute asylum seekers</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<i>Access to immigration advice</i>	<p>Yes. Used to retain legal adviser (not actually employed) but now have 1 day a week drop in from Greater Manchester Immigration Advice Unit</p>	<p>Yes employ 1 F.T. legal rep.</p>
<i>Access to holistic support incl. basic needs, ESOL move-on</i>	<p>Yes- 1 FTE Support manager and 2.8 FTE support workers (1.6 FTE for 40 refused asylum seekers &amp; 1.2 for 30 refugees) = caseload of 4.5 p day incl move-on support</p> <p>For destitute clients with no means of support, £10 per week plus money for travel costs to specific meetings / appointments as needed</p>	<p>Yes - mix of Hope support and continued support of referral agency</p> <p>Group work &amp; peer support encouraged</p> <p>Cash payment provided from fundraised income</p>
<i>End of immigration process</i>	<p>Provide information on voluntary return</p>	<p>Advice on voluntary return</p> <p>Services BUT only take on cases with highest chance of success</p>

# Appendix 3:

## List of those interviewed and consulted during the course of the evaluation (2015 – 2018) listed by category and date order

(Some of those listed were interviewed more than once, and some provided only basic information)

### **Project Partners**

Ashley Horsey	<i>Commonweal, CEO</i>
Jean Demars	<i>Praxis</i>
Safia Mun	<i>Praxis</i>
Amy Doyle	<i>Commonweal</i>
Anne Marie Harrison	<i>Praxis Adviser</i>
Bethan Lant	<i>Praxis Casework Manager</i>
Carlos Gomez	<i>Praxis, Housing Management and Key Worker</i>
Mel Steele	<i>Praxis, Head of Advice</i>
Marteka Swaby	<i>Interim Housing Manager &amp; Service Development Lead</i>
Safia Mun	<i>Praxis, Project Manager for NRPF project</i>
Sally Daghlion	<i>Praxis, CEO</i>
Maria Iglesias	<i>Praxis, Head of Housing and Service Development</i>
Sean Macneil	<i>Praxis Adviser</i>
Brother Vaughan	<i>Praxis Adviser and Caseworker, Praxis</i>
Dalia Suchodolskiene	<i>Praxis Adviser and Caseworker</i>
Jessica Costar	<i>Praxis Interim Project Manager</i>
Kerrin Raulefs	<i>Praxis Adviser and Caseworker</i>
Ina Wyatt-Gosebruch	<i>Praxis Interim Project Manager</i>

### **Project partners - investors**

Douglas Gunn	<i>Trust for London</i>
Jules Tomkins	<i>Esmee Fairbairn Foundation</i>
Tim Wilson	<i>City Bridge Trust</i>
Natasha Malpani	<i>Big Society Capital</i>
Freddie Waite	<i>Big Society Capital</i>

### **Referring Local Authorities**

Jacqueline Broadhead	<i>LB Islington and NRPF Connect</i>
Moira Keen	<i>London Borough of Croydon, Children's Services</i>
Curtilis Bristol	<i>LB Islington, NRPF team</i>
Marjorie Simpson	<i>LB Croydon</i>
Pete Whiting	<i>LB Redbridge</i>
Grace Enniful	<i>LB Havering</i>
Vanessa Williams	<i>Westminster City Council</i>
Anneta Pinto-Young	<i>Social Worker, LB Croydon</i>
Thuvia Jones	<i>NRPF Officer, LB Islington</i>
Anca Andreopoulos	<i>NRPF Team Manager, LB Islington</i>
Amelia Card	<i>Social Worker, LB Merton</i>
Joseph Bediako	<i>Social Worker, LB Waltham Forest</i>
Alastair Hird	<i>Social Worker, Westminster City Council</i>

**Referrers of single women with  
NRPF - non-Section 17 cases**

Chloe Desbenoit *British Red Cross*  
Fissaha Tesfagabir *Red Cross*

**Policy and practice overview**

Henry St Clair Miller *LB Islington and NRPF Connect*  
Jonathan Price *Compas, University of Oxford*  
Alex Sutton *Paul Hamlyn Foundation*  
Dominic Briant *Metropolitan Migration Foundation*  
Patrick Duce *Homeless Link & coordinator of the Strategic Alliance  
on Migrant Destitution*  
Kathleen Kelly *Assistant Director, National Housing Federation*  
Helen Greig *National Housing Federation*

**Providers of (non housing) support  
services to migrants with NRPF**

Abi Brunswick *Project 17 (Lewisham)*  
Michael Bates *Birmingham Community Law Centre*  
Helen Hibberd *Hackney Migrants' Centre*  
Santok Odedra *Refugee Action (Fresh Start destitution project for  
women)*  
Sarah Taal *Hope Housing and Migrant Women's Project*

**Non- London Local authorities**

Kevin Mannion *Oxfordshire Social Services*  
Phil Cryer *Bradford Metropolitan District Council*

**Other providers of housing for  
people with NRPF**

Geoff Wilkins *Coordinator, Hope Projects, Birmingham*  
Julian Prior *CEO, Action Foundation*  
Phil Davis *Coordinator, Hope Projects, Birmingham*  
Caron Boulghassoul *CEO, Arimathea*  
Ros Holland *CEO, Boaz Trust*  
Paul Catterall *CEO, Open Door (now NACCOM)*  
Hazel Williams *CEO, NACCOM*  
Simon Cook *King's Arms*  
Jakob *1000 for 1000 project*  
Juliana Bell *Metropolitan Migration Foundation (Derby project)*  
Sylvia Tijnstra *St Mungos*

**Housing associations**

Dorian Leatham *Chief Executive, Arhag HA*  
Jakki Moxham *Chief Executive, Housing for Women*  
Irmani Smallwood *Business Development Manager, Evolve (formerly  
known as South*  
Cym D'Souza *Arawak Walton HA & Chair, National BME Network*  
Dominic Briant *Director Metropolitan Migration Foundation, Thames  
Valley Housing*

**2016 Sounding Board Participants  
(the model and replicability)**

Ashley Horsley	<i>CEO Commonweal Housing</i>
Ceri Hutton	<i>Evaluation team</i>
Heather Petch	<i>Evaluation team</i>
Henry St Clair Miller	<i>LB Islington/NRPF Connect</i>
Irmani Smallwood	<i>Evolve Housing</i>
Jacqui Broadhead	<i>Operations Manager for NRPF team at LB Islington</i>
Jean Demars	<i>Praxis (project initiator when housing lead at Praxis)</i>
Jonathan Price	<i>Compas, Oxford University</i>
Michael Bates	<i>Lawyer, Birmingham Law Centre/ Central England Law Centre</i>
Michelle Fuller	<i>Praxis volunteer and resident of project</i>
Sally Daghlian	<i>Chief Executive Praxis Community Projects</i>
Simon Sandberg	<i>Consultant working for Lambeth Social Services</i>
Sue Lukes	<i>Evaluation team</i>
Zaiba Qureshi	<i>Director of Operations, Housing for Women</i>
Juliana Bell	<i>Metropolitan Migration Foundation</i>

**2017 Sounding Board Participants  
(financing the model)**

Abi Brunswick	<i>Project 17</i>
Ashley Horsey	<i>Commonweal</i>
Cedric Boston	<i>ARHAG</i>
Ceri Hutton	<i>Evaluation Team</i>
Heather Petch	<i>Evaluation Team</i>
Henry St Clair Miller	<i>NRPF Connect</i>
Jane Harris	<i>Evaluation Team</i>
Julian Prior	<i>CEO, Action Foundation and Chair, NACCOM</i>
Kevin Mannion	<i>Oxfordshire Social Services</i>
Michelle Fuller	<i>Praxis Service User and Volunteer</i>
Sally Daghlian	<i>Praxis</i>
Sue Lukes	<i>Evaluation Team</i>

**2018 Sounding Board Participants  
(social investment)**

Jess Brown	<i>Connect Fund, Barrow Cadbury Trust</i>
Sarah Forster	<i>CEO, The Good Economy Partnership</i>
Jonathan Gibson	<i>Joseph Rowntree Foundation</i>
Douglas Gunn	<i>Trust for London</i>
Jaishree Mistry	<i>Homeless Link</i>
Jules Tompkins	<i>Esmée Fairbairn Foundation</i>
Freddie Waite	<i>Big Society Capital</i>
Wren Laing	<i>Big Society Capital</i>
Hannah Davey	<i>City Bridge Trust</i>
Ashley Horsey	<i>Commonweal Housing</i>
Sally Daghlian	<i>Praxis Community Projects</i>
Sue Lukes	<i>Evaluator</i>
Heather Petch	<i>Evaluator</i>

# Appendix 4:

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