

Notes from joint ACF & London Funders' meeting

Tackling migrant destitution: lessons for funders

4 July 2016 (11.30 am-2.30 pm)

Chair: Emma Stone (Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

Speakers: Julian Prior (Action Foundation), Ashley Horsey (Commonweal Housing Ltd), Colin Glover (The Connection at St Martin's), Mark McPherson (Homeless Link), Suzanne Fitzpatrick (Institute for Social Policy), Jacqueline Broadhead (Islington Council), Heather Petch (Joseph Rowntree Foundation), Matthew Smerdon (The Legal Education Foundation), Dominic Briant (Metropolitan Migration Foundation), Michelle Fuller (Praxis Community Projects), Sally Daghlian (Praxis Community Projects), Stephen Hale (Refugee Action), Maurice Wren (Refugee Council), Bharat Mehta (Trust for London)

Participants: Sara Harrity (A B Charitable Trust), Dave Smith (Boaz Trust), Patrick Jones (Cripplegate Foundation), Patrick Duce (Homeless Link), Alison Gelder (Housing Justice), Daisy Boehm (John Lyon's Charity), May Osman (John Lyon's Charity), Michael Pitchford (Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust), Danyal Sattar (Joseph Rowntree Foundation), Jonathan Peter Gibson (Joseph Rowntree Foundation), Alison Beck (London Catalyst), Victor Willmott (London Catalyst), Juliana Bell (Metropolitan Migration Foundation), Sarah Buxton (Network for Social Change Charitable Trust), Alex Bax (Pathway), Renae Mann (Refugee Action), Emily Bolton (Social Finance Ltd), Meg Brodie (Social Finance Ltd), Caroline Howe (The Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales), Thomas Flynn (The London Community Foundation), Catriona Slorach (Tudor Trust)

Staff: Cristina Andreatta (Association of Charitable Foundations), Natasha Kousseff (Association of Charitable Foundations), David Warner (London Funders), Mick Clarke (The Passage - Resource Centre)

1. Migrant destitution in the UK and interventions needed to end it

Suzanne Fitzpatrick (Professor, Herriot Watt University): reported on the findings of a recently published study entitled 'Destitution in the UK', focusing on those relating to migrants. The report focused on the following few questions: How should 'destitution' be defined in the contemporary UK context? How much destitution is there in the UK (in 2015)? Who is affected by it? What are the main pathways into and out of destitution? What are the experiences and impacts for those directly affected?

As part of this study, a census survey was carried out of users of 63 voluntary sector services providing 'crisis' help. To identify migrants, the following few questions were asked: what country were you born in? Have you ever claimed asylum? What are the things that may have been happening to you over past year that have contributed to you becoming destitute? Most migrants encountered had experienced the asylum system. Not many were other undocumented migrants.

The definition of destitution as endorsed by the general public is that people are destitute if they lack two or more of following because cannot afford them: shelter, food, heating their home, lighting their home, clothing and footwear, basic toiletries. People are also destitute if their income is so low (less than £70 a week after housing costs) that they are unable to purchase these essentials for themselves

The study estimates that there 1.25 million people, of whom 300,000 were children, experienced destitution in the UK at some point in 2015. These are conservative estimates - strict application of the definition above and focused exclusively on those cases that come to the attention of voluntary sector crisis services. The geography of destitution matches the geography of poverty.

The report found that migrants account for one fifth of destitute service users over the course of a year; one third at any one point in time. They often experience sustained period of destitution. Destitute EEA ('new EU') migrants appear to be in the most desperate straits of all, with least help available to them. There is scope for further migrant-focused analysis of the Census data.

Mark McPherson (Director of Strategy, Partnership and Innovation at Homeless Link): The Strategic Alliance on Migrant Destitution was set up in response to the appetite in the sector to tackle migrant destitution and to help non-EEA migrants with no recourse to public funds because of the complexity of their situation, in particular the need for immigration advice to assess their needs and potential solutions effectively. The Alliance was set up at a time where the migration and homelessness sector were experiencing cuts in funding. A different approach was needed but it was challenging to get people from different sectors on the same page. The Homeless Transition Fund which was DCLG money administered by Homeless Link with decisions made by an independent panel, received applications for funding for new projects to address migrant destitution and some of these were funded as pilot projects.

The Alliance aims to bring people together and create a common understanding about what good support looks like for destitute migrants. The Alliance was not set up to campaign for change, its role is to help find and develop practical solutions for destitute migrants. So far, there have been seven events across the country to bring people that are involved in these two sectors together in their local areas, to break down silos, promote discussion, share understanding of what support should look like. JRF supported the initial development of the SAMD – the events and info emerging from them. Going forward the work of the Alliance will focus on 3 areas - Greater Manchester, the North East and London – where it will seek to pilot a new approach to:

- increase supply of accommodation,
- promote an integrated model of support and consistent understanding of good quality advice,
- increase confidence to signpost people to the right services, make those solutions sustainable.

2. First panel discussion: What interventions are needed to end migrant destitution? Learning from current interventions that might help us improve future support for destitute migrants

Sally Daghlian (CEO, Praxis): There is a shortage of housing supply, many migrants living unsafely and are at risk of exploitation. There is a hostile environment where people have to be able to prove their eligibility, including not just asylum seekers but many young undocumented migrants, victims of trafficking, and other types of migrants. There are practical solutions to this. There are pathways out of destitution which include helping destitute migrants to access to basic services such as food, accommodation and advice rather than just supporting them to go home. You can't pursue a legal case if your basic needs are not met and this includes accommodation which is difficult to provide if people have no recourse to public funds. You can't be housed sustainable if you haven't resolved your legal difficulties. We need to work more in partnership to find new solutions but developing partnerships and getting them off the ground takes time.

Julian Prior (CEO, Action Foundation and Chair, NACCOM): The North-East in which Action Foundation operates is a significant asylum dispersal area. Action Foundation is an active member of NACCOM which

currently has 38 members, all of which are grass-root organisations trying to support destitute people in resourceful ways. Working in partnership is crucial, we are trying to develop a network so that different organisations can work together and fill the gaps. The challenge is to deliver support with the limited resources available. How can we do this more collaboratively so that different organisations can connect together, learn from each other and become more effective and sustainable? Over the next 3 to 5 years we want to make a transition from being an informal network towards becoming a more strategic network able to deliver support in a more effective way without losing the innovation and creativity it was born with. We also want to use grass-root experience to campaign for change.

Colin Glover (CEO, The Connection at St Martin's): There is a growing gap between what people want and what we can offer. We offer people support to return home through a reconnection programme. More recently, however, we have increasingly worked with rough sleepers that want to remain in the UK. So, we have created a migrant unit, self-funded, to carry out some detective work to ascertain the identity and status of the destitute migrants there are out there. We need to be more creative, and try to avoid encouraging dependency on our services by being very clear about what we can offer and what we can't do.

Stephen Hale (CEO, Refugee Action): We are involved in providing services on the ground in partnership, with Praxis and St. Mungo's delivering Street Legal, and the Red Cross through Lottery funded projects. We currently have a new project which provides frontline immigration advice and are trying to find ways to help people access legal advice as a way out of destitution. We believe more support is needed for frontline organisations to be able to increase their capacity as well as the quantity and quality of advice services they provide. These organisations need to be trained to provide good quality legal advice which is crucial to tackle entrenched destitution.

Maurice Wren (CEO, Refugee Council): Frontline migrant organisations ought to have conversations with housing organisations to establish what they can do to support destitute refugees. Housing associations (HAs) are too big to fail to act in this space. There are encouraging signs with BMER-led HAs having just launched a Migrant Pledge committing organisations to raise awareness amongst staff and commit resources, including housing if possible. It is crucial to encourage community responses to local destitution, so that innovative and creative solutions can be found to solve this problem in local areas. Frontline organisations need help to acquire accommodation as well as to increase their financial, governance and management processes. We need to unlock a massive asset base to take this work forward. The emphasis should be on doing things on the ground, at the local level. There is scope for a broader conversation about migrant integration, to find solutions that work for both migrant and poor British people.

3. Second Panel: Current models for supporting destitute migrants: opportunities and challenges for funders

Dominic Briant (Head of Metropolitan Migration Foundation): The sector is really busy, there are many organisations working in this space but we are trying to solve a very complex issue with an old fashioned approach. The sector does not need more compassion and kindness. We need to inject resources in a more effective and focused way. Access to legal advice and support is crucial. The demand is very high. Let's make this happen!

Ashley Horsey (CEO, Commonweal Housing): We use our resources to work with experts working in the housing sector to find solutions to what their clients face. Migration is a very complex area. We work with Praxis on a project which aims to provide free housing for those who have insecure immigration status and

are trapped in destitution. We have secured social investment funding from a range of social investors to enable the purchase of a range of houses in which to test this model. Commonweal leases properties to Praxis and Praxis in turn lets some of the properties to local authorities, who use them to house destitute migrants whom they have a duty to provide accommodation to, under Section 17 of the Children's Act. This delivers an income to Praxis and enables them to house other destitute migrants who are not supported by public bodies. We have 7 properties that can house 21 people. More social investments is needed in this area, it is important to bring to the table more social investors and frontline organisations to jointly find a model that can help transfer properties that can be used to tackle migrant destitution.

Matthew Smerdon (CEO, Legal Education Foundation): we help people to understand and use the law through grant-making and partnership building. We seek to promote the use of the law to solve problems. This is relevant for individuals and organisations that are faced with enormous pressure. The lack of knowledge of legal entitlements is one of the routes into destitution. In the sphere of immigration law we support a strategic legal fund, immigration advice, and initiatives such Street Legal and Future Advice Fund.

Jacqui Broadhead (Islington NRPF Team Manager and NRPF Network): local government receives no support from central government to support people with NRPF but we are supporting these people anyway to help them find pathways out of destitution. We don't fund legal advice directly but we do fund the local law centre and are closely following and promoting the Commonweal and Praxis model to find fresh solutions. The Home office is keen to impose new restrictions on the ability of Local Authorities to support destitute migrants with NRPF so it is crucial for Local Authorities to have a vision for how local statutory provision is affected in their local areas. For LB Islington this is about inclusion of all living in Islington including destitute migrants regardless of the boundaries imposed by Central Government.

Bharat Mehta (CEO, Trust for London): This is a difficult time, so we need now more than ever to build alliances and collaborate. Campaigning and influencing is a major priority. We also need to go upstream, we need to enable organisations to work with destitute migrants. A lot of people have access to support but don't know about their legal entitlements. We need to work more closely with the beneficiaries and their communities, to understand their needs better. We also need to look at what has already been done, what worked and did not work before.

In summary: The following few areas were covered in the presentations: the need to invest in and fund different approaches (to avoid using the same old medicine to treat new issues), the need to fund collaborative working as well as joining up local and national networks (across both the migration and homelessness sector) and encouraging funder collaboration.

4. Floor discussion: A few other points which were raised in the discussion:

- Many frontline organisations are struggling to get funded, who is going to invest in building their capacity to provide support for destitute migrants?
- Funders should get smarter in the way they fund and look to build partnership with other funders around these issues
- This meeting is an opportunity to bring frontline organisations and funders around the same table, who else do we need to involve in the conversation?
- What is the best way to provide immigration advice to individuals? We need to recognise the complexity of immigration issues. We need more partnership work and more capacity building for small organisations either to become OISC accredited so that they can give good quality legal

advice or to signpost more effectively to accredited organisations, but this signposting role that small and community rooted groups and organisations needs supporting/funding.

- Working together and sharing ideas is crucial but we also need to fund strategic communication around these to be able to engage in the conversation other actors and develop the evidence base that can help bring about policy change.
- We need a combination of grant-giving and social investment to make sure more accommodation and good quality legal advice are available. We need to invest more in practical solutions.

5. Closing remarks from Heather Petch and others from the floor: JRF published last year a report with practical examples of what has worked in terms of housing, immigration advice and support available. The Alliance has brought together frontline providers. What can funders do? Refugee and migrant communities have become more marginalised, there are thousands of people that are supported by these communities and live below the radar. We need to invest in frontline capacity and expertise building. We need to make sure these communities are heard and supported in the work they are doing and know where to signpost people to where they can receive the best advice. Good prevention work is also crucial. Patrick Duce is an Innovation Manager at Homeless Link dedicated to supporting SAMD and the 3 pilots it has identified in Manchester, North East and London. Patrick's post is funded by Migration Foundation and Samuel Sebba Trust but the pilots will need support to be developed. Other partnership work needs to be supported for instance in terms of access to immigration advice for destitute migrants in London, Stephen Hale pointed out that provider organisations have been encouraged to form partnerships but where is the collaboration amongst funders? And, as Sally Daghlian pointed out, partnerships take time and resources to develop effectively and this needs to be supported.

Funders were invited to be part of a follow up phone conference to be coordinated by Cristina to discuss appetite for funder collaboration.